Facultad de Humanidades y Educación

Magister en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

THE SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY ON A LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ENHANCEMENT COURSE

Tesina de Posgrado para alcanzar el grado académico de Magister en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

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“Education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioral outcomes of the students unpredictable.”
(Stenhouse, 1975)
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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research was attempting to understand some of the sociocultural factors influencing the professional identities of a group of five Chilean English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers before, during, and after a language proficiency enhancement course with the aim of obtaining an international certification. The study followed a qualitative epistemology and the data collection strategy attempted to reach its triangulation consisting on a demographic questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, and one autobiographical narrative. The data was analyzed with thematic coding and CHAT (Cultural-Historical Activity Theory). Some major findings involved were related to some participants reporting the perception of English language certifications as an imposition that could affect their working stability and income, others described a link between their language proficiency levels and the pedagogical activities they could do in the classroom, despite being a general trend towards other factors (i.e., interpersonal factors) as more significant components of their identities as EFL teachers in Chile. The conclusions of this study supports other investigations that bring to light the question about the relevance that language proficiency examinations should be given in our national context.

Keywords: Teacher Identity, Language Proficiency, Sociocultural Theory, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory.
RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de esta investigación era entender algunos de los factores socioculturales que influenciaban la identidad profesional de un grupo de cinco profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera antes, durante, y después de un curso de mejora de su dominio del idioma orientado a la obtención de una certificación internacional. El estudio siguió una epistemología cualitativa y la estrategia de recolección de datos apuntaba a alcanzar su triangulación mediante un cuestionario demográfico, dos entrevistas semiestructuradas, y una narrativa autobiográfica. Los datos se analizaron utilizando codificación temática y CHAT (Teoría de la Actividad Cultural-Histórica). Algunos hallazgos relevantes tuvieron relación con la percepción reportada por algunos participantes de que las certificaciones de inglés eran una imposición que podía afectar su estabilidad laboral e ingresos, otros describían una conexión entre sus niveles de dominio del idioma y las actividades que podían hacer en el aula, pese a que se presentaba una tendencia general hacia otros factores (i.e., factores interpersonales) como componentes más significativos de sus identidades como profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en Chile. Las conclusiones de este estudio apoyan otras investigaciones que traen a la luz la pregunta sobre la relevancia dada a los exámenes de dominio del idioma en nuestro contexto nacional.

Palabras clave: Identidad docente, Dominio del idioma, Teoría Sociocultural, Teoría de la Actividad Cultural-Histórica.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The development of teachers’ professional identities is not considered to be a process that takes place in isolation. Professional development (PD) is considered one of these meaningful instances where educators could be provided with valuable social opportunities to explore and reflect on different areas of their professional selves (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Furthermore, PD is also regarded as crucial for instructional practice (Noonan, 2018) and as a significant opportunity for pre-service, novice, and experience teachers to understand, analyze, and question their own lay theories regarding the profession (Sugrue, 1997).

Although professional development could be understood as a space where different teachers share and encounter the same materials and learning environment, this definition may not seem to effectively satisfy the wide diversity of learners and learning experiences that may possibly arises in such instances (Noonan, 2018). Following the same line, the author also proposes to take into consideration the construct of teacher professional identity as a viable alternative to bridge this gap between more traditional PD courses and the need of personalizing them to the different realities and expectations of the in-service teachers taking part in them.

The educational context where this study took place was related to private lessons for Chilean in-service teachers needing to certify their language proficiency levels by sitting for the examinations C1 Advanced or B2 First from Cambridge at the end of the year 2019. The PD course was provided by a local educational entrepreneurship and the sessions were scheduled depending on the participants’ availability under the form of private lessons with a maximum of two students per class. The lessons were personalized responding to each participant’s self-reported needs, wants, and necessities after an initial diagnostic test in which all the skills
involved in the exam have been evaluated and dialogically reflected on (Macalister & Nation, 2009). Originally, the present degree thesis project was designed with the aim of understanding the influence of this PD instance (i.e., the language proficiency enhancement course) on a group of Chilean teachers professional identities. Nonetheless, during the development of the study, the need to understand the different sociocultural factors influencing teacher identity during a language proficiency enhancement course gained relevance and was raised as a more prominent aim.

The participants of this study were five EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers currently working in Chile. Three of them were educators with a bachelor’s degree on EFL teaching, and the remaining two participants were nursery and elementary school teachers working in two different bilingual schools who needed a language proficiency certification in order to comply to the demands of their working environment and who have postgraduate courses related to TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). The first of these two participants already completed a diploma on TESOL for YLEs (Young Learners of English) and the second is currently a candidate to a Master’s degree on the discipline.

1.1 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The main goals of this research were to understand, observe, and interpret the different factors influencing the professional identities of a group of Chilean teachers before, during, and after having completed a 20-hour-course to prepare to sit for either B2 First or C1 Advanced Cambridge Examinations. The methodological approach designed and selected to undergo this task followed a strict qualitative epistemology since it aimed to understand the phenomenon of
teacher professional identity through a view that prioritizes the depth of the data obtained and that observes the phenomenon from as many multiple realities as possible (McKay, 2006).

In concrete terms, the data collection strategy selected for this particular encompassed narrative autobiographies, semi-structured interviews, and a final focus group conducted to explore the different views of the participants as well as to give them the chance to clarify, discuss, and expand any point stated in the rest of the data collection instruments; intended to provide additional relevant data that could result meaningful to the aims of this research. The findings will be analysed through thematic coding and Cultural Historical Activity Theory with the intention of understanding how the social environment of the participants influenced their relationship to the language proficiency certifications and how their identities were affected during the PD process (Foot, 2014).

On a recent study within the Chilean context, Salinas (2017) explored the role of PD programs as a microcontextual factor on the professional identities of in-service Chilean EFL teachers and reported positive changes in the cognitive dimension of professional identity construction; however, they were not explicitly related to PD instances where language proficiency was not the main focus but the use of technology, EFL methodology, and collaboration among peers. From a different perspective, Park (2012) reports that English language proficiency levels could affect a teacher’s professional and social standing in the discipline. Although this last author does not explicitly refer to teacher identity, it could be possible to establish a connection between her ideas and a sociocultural view of professional identity in second and foreign language education. Something similar happens with Chacón (2005), who identified a relation among self-reported language proficiency levels, self-efficacy,
TEACHER IDENTITY IN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

and the methodologies and activities implemented by teachers in the classroom, thus providing some insights of the potential expected results that could arise from this degree thesis project.

1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Traditionally there has been some sort of worldwide consensus when regarding language proficiency as the most relevant aspect of the subject knowledge of an EFL teacher in different parts of the globe (Chacón, 2005; Richards, Conway, Roksvist, and Harvey, 2013; Nel, 2010). From a national perspective, it can also be stated that our country has also been taking part as an advocate to this trend. As expressed in the Framework for Good Teaching, subject knowledge has been put forward by the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) as the very first domain of the aforementioned framework, emphasizing its relevance (CPEIP, 2008). The relevance of language proficiency in our own local context has been further emphasized by the recent program “English in English” created by MINEDUC and aimed to in-service EFL teachers currently working in the public or subsidized educational systems in the country (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2019). Nonetheless, the aforementioned program does not restrict itself strictly to a language proficiency enhancement but also consider other variables such as curricular design and language teaching methodology.

It has not resulted uncommon for non-native speaker teachers (NNSTs) to question their own worth as valid users of the language, even developing what Bernat (2008) has referred to as impostor syndrome –the self-perception that oneself is not as competent as others may perceive or need the individual to be—, which not necessarily will be related to the educator’s real capacity nor to their students and other stakeholders’ perceptions.
Conversely, it has also been stated that teachers actually need a certain level of language proficiency in order to provide their students with some meaningful and comprehensible input (Nel, 2010). While it has also been reported that the level of language proficiency of an EFL teacher could have an impact on the methodologies and activities used by them in the classroom (Chacon, 2005), some criticism has been raised in relation to the demands for language proficiency levels as some certain assurance that an EFL teacher is a competent professional despite being evidence that the two variables are not necessarily related (Barahona, 2018). In general terms, the possible relationship among these variables—EFL teaching methodology and language proficiency—remains relatively unclear, bringing to light the question of why should Chilean EFL teachers be concerned about their language proficiency levels.

As a possible perspective to understand the aforementioned phenomenon and how it affects education professionals (i.e., the reasons behind teachers need for higher proficiency levels), the construct of teacher professional identities could provide some valuable insights. Norton (1997) presents us with the concept of identity in relation to power struggles and voices that need to be heard, which could be related to imposed and resisted identities in Chilean EFL teachers demanded to enhance their own language proficiency levels by external stakeholders (e.g. public and private school owners and managers), thus not promoting agency towards this area of professional development in foreign language teaching professionals in the country. Salinas (2017) supports this previous idea through the concept she refers to as macro contextual factors on EFL teacher professional identity formation, particularly referring to the demands imposed by educational policies and the impact they could have on the levels of self-confidence of teachers.
In order to understand the influence of language proficiency on Chilean EFL teachers professional identities, a group of five education professionals who were interested in taking part of a 20-hour-training course for either the exam C1 Advanced or B2 First from Cambridge, which they would be sitting for by the end of 2019, were selected as the participants of this study. The general information of the participants can be summarized on the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Working Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Private Tutor (part time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>British Bilingual School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Pre-school teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>British Bilingual School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Pre-school teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Language Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Language Institute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Summary of the basic demographic information of the participants of the study.

It results relevant to mention that while most participants are taking the course in the form of private self-paced lessons, participants 4 and 5 decided to take the course together on the same schedule since they are the only case of two colleagues working at the same institution.

In general terms, this study aims to understand the initial motivations of the participants to sit for this type of test, how they perceive themselves as language users, and how they imagine passing—or failing—this type of examination could affect their personal and professional lives.
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As a preliminary approach, two research objectives are proposed:

- To understand the sociocultural factors influencing the relationship between language proficiency and teacher identity.
- To interpret the changes in the identities of a group of teachers taking a language proficiency enhancement course.

The research question that will be guiding this project is the following: what are some of the sociocultural factors that influence teacher professional identities on a group of Chilean EFL teachers during a language proficiency enhancement course?

1.4 THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis will follow the experiences of a group of Chilean EFL teachers taking a train course to sit for the C1 Advanced exam from Cambridge in order to understand the possible changes that their professional identities could undergo. In the second chapter, the rationale and theoretical underpinnings sustaining this study will be expanded in detail through a thorough literature review focusing on the subject of this study (i.e., language proficiency) and its object (i.e., teachers’ professional identities). Chapter 3 will explore the data collection strategy sustaining this research and the arguments sustaining those methodological decisions. Finally, chapter 4 will present the analysis and interpretation of the findings as well as the conclusions and implications of this study.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework for this research will be constituted by a series of constructs starting from an abstract level with the Socio-Cultural Theory and gradually moving towards a more concrete connection to the research subject (i.e., English language proficiency) and object (i.e., teacher professional identities) of this study. As an introductory summary, the following image is intended to present the organization of contents to be guiding this section.

Image 1. Concepts guiding this theoretical framework.
2.2 SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

Sociocultural theory (SCT), a perspective originally proposed by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, provides us with the view of human mental development as an ongoing mediated process that is situated in context. This notion was created in response to a what Vygotsky acknowledged as a “crisis in psychology” caused by the perception of the discipline strictly following the principles of natural sciences (Lantolf, 2000). Unlike most cognitive approaches in psychology at the time, one distinguishing feature of the sociocultural theory is an unprecedented consideration to the specific social contexts where learning and interaction take place. What is more, Esmonde and Booker (2016) support this idea by claiming that learning does not occur in isolation and that higher order thinking process need social interaction in order to have an environment to manifest themselves. The relevance of this construct to this particular study can be related to the conception of the participation metaphor (PM) as a viable complement to the acquisition metaphor (AM) in relation to language learning (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), and thus provides the general groundings needed to understand this project.

Within SCT, the concept of mediation takes some considerable relevance since it acts as the necessary link between individual cognitive process and the social and academic environments where they take place (Esmonde and Booker, 2016). The concept on itself entails the idea of a need of a mediator, which can be either another person, a physical object, or a symbol, as a necessary requirement for an individual to be able to monitor –or mediate—theyir own cognitive processes, including language processing (Lantolf, 2000). As a concept, it should be noted that mediation should not be perceived as ideologically neutral since, on its very essence, it involves an asymmetrical relation of power between a novice and an expert (Esmonde and Booker, 2016).
Nonetheless, it should also be considered that such relation is intended to be oriented towards the novice to be able to effectively internalize the needed skills or knowledge in order to gradually be able to perform their thinking processes without the explicit mediation of the expert (Lantolf, 2000).

2.3 SELF

According to Harre (1987) in Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), the notion of self could be understood only by contrasting it with the concept of person. The later corresponds to the public image or perception given by others through social interaction and the former can be defined as “the still centre of experience” that an individual could have on their own contexts in terms of time, place, levels of responsibility, and social standing. It is also stated by Harre and Gillet (1994) (as in Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000) that the concept of self is dynamic and it is in continuous development through social practice. These notions should provide a link to the following concepts composing this framework.

2.4 IDENTITY

Norton (1997) defines identity as the manner in which individuals understand their relationship to the world, how this relationship is co-constructed across time and space, and the potentialities for the future that people may have. This perspective could also be related to the previously aforementioned concepts of self and person (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000) since Norton (1997) also relates her conception of identity as connected to a desire of recognition and power, as well as a conception of language as one of the instance where these desirable features can—or cannot—be realized, thus leading to forging, developing, imaging, or resisting new potential identities within a language learning environment (Norton, 2017).
From a more general perspective, Pennington (2002) views identity as the set of unique characteristics that distinguish one individual from the others. Additionally, she also shows some agreement with Norton (2016) on the multiplicity and dynamism of identities depending on the interaction with one’s context in specific social situations. Following the same argument, Norton and Toohey (2011) emphasize the idea of certain specific identities being perceived as more appropriate than others at certain target language communities, thus reinforcing the notion of some identities being imposed or resisted in certain contexts.

2.5 TEACHER IDENTITY

Morgan (2004) points out that the professional and personal identities of a teacher continuously develop parallelly as two relatively simultaneous processes that result from struggles of power and knowledge that naturally take place in discursive instances within social interactions. Supporting this point, Noonan (2018) puts forward a conceptualization of teacher professional identity considering three different domains: personal experience (i.e., related to aspects that are framed outside a traditional classroom view, such as race, gender, and sexual orientation), professional context (i.e., specific needs for PD and constraints derived from institutional settings), and political domain (i.e., national and international regulations and educational policies). All these previously mentioned points are somehow summarised by Coldron and Smith (1999), who claims that a teacher professional identity can be understood as the way is teacher is seen by their own selves and others, while also being socially legitimated.

2.6 NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER TEACHER IDENTITY

Even though factors related to the aforementioned personal dimension of identity, such as race (Noonan, 2018), have been soundly refuted to be relevant in the language proficiency levels
of foreign language teachers, there is a significant discrepancy on this perception between sociolinguists and the general population (Amin, 1997). On this type of situation, it may not result uncommon to develop what Bernat (2008) refers to as “impostor syndrome”, possible leading to Non-Native English Speaker Teachers (NNESTs) to question their own validity as language and content experts on their field, ultimately being able to carry a significant negative impact on those teachers’ personal and professional identities.

2.7 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

The language proficiency level of teachers has been assigned different roles across history, which has been partially caused by the way the concept is conceived. According to Chacon (2005), language proficiency is considered the most important area of content knowledge for a foreign language educator. This statement is partially supported thanks to the strong influence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the current teaching methodology trends, heavily relying on the teacher’s proficiency level in the target language in order to communicative effectively with their students. This idea seems to be somehow taken even further by Nel and Müller (2010), who refer to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis to raise awareness of the impact that the language proficiency levels of teachers could potentially have on the quality of the input that their learners receive, provided that they could be the most frequent and largest source of input in the target language for this students.

From a different point of view, Barahona (2018) questions the relevance given by teacher training programmes—and professional development programmes—to language proficiency enhancement while somehow neglecting the development of pedagogical skills. Nonetheless, Richards, Conway, Roskvist, and Harvey (2012) describe a possible correlation between
language proficiency and classroom practices by foreign language educators, thus proposing a potential plausible link between the two types of knowledge.

2.8 CHILEAN EFL TEACHER IDENTITY

To the extent of this particular study, Chilean EFL teachers correspond to—in their vast majority—NNESTs currently working at any level of the Chilean educational system in the area of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). For this reason, most of the features mentioned in previous sections of this framework, such as the impostor syndrome mentioned by Bernat (2008) or the role of the teacher as a source of input mentioned by Nel and Müller (2010) could be expected to occur in the linguistic context of the country as well. Salinas (2017) also makes reference to a recent specific constraint, caused by the educational policy aiming to align the EFL teaching methodologies in the country to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards, thus implying a change towards a more communicative approach to teaching the foreign language. Along the same lines with the criticism made by Barahona (2018) to the teacher training programmes in the country, Abrahams and Farias (2010) also express some concern regarding what they called the “divorce” between pedagogical skills development and linguistic knowledge. Moreover, the same authors also comment on the lack of flexibility in the standard national curriculum and the lack of resources and opportunities for innovation in some educational settings in the country.

In general terms, starting from the Sociocultural Theory provides this theoretical framework with some of the necessary underpinnings that could lead to some understanding regarding Chilean EFL teacher professional identities. It also results relevant to observe how identities can be imposed on teachers in our national context in response to educational policies, international
standards, and some misinformed expectations from the general population due to beliefs against the proficiency and quality of NNESTs.
CHAPTER 3: REFERENTIAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter corresponds to a referential framework of some of the research articles on the focus of this thesis, which will be described and analysed with the intention of gaining some deeper understanding on the influence of language proficiency on teacher identity and some relevant sociocultural factors. Notwithstanding, some of the selected studies to be examined in the present section may have been based on a different construct (e.g., self-efficacy) but could be able to provide some interesting discussions that may guide the route of this thesis project.

In order to provide some clear understanding regarding the organization of this section, the articles will be discussed from two distinctive perspectives:

3.2 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INFLUENCES PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

Carmen Chacon (2005) carried a study with the objective to measure the self-reported values of self-efficacy of 100 Venezuelan EFL teachers from 51 different schools in different areas of the profession, including classroom management, instructional strategies, and the teachers’ ability to promote students’ engagement. On her research, the measurement of the participants’ language proficiency levels only depended on their own personal self-reports as part of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale and some semi-structured interviews they answered to. Although language proficiency was not explicitly mentioned in the questions of the interview, the author reported that several of the interviewees commented on their language proficiency level in relation to other factors involved in the interview such as classroom management, instructional strategies, and the general activities carried out in their classrooms.
Even though Chacon (2005) did not explicitly consider identity as one of the constructs of her research, the similarity of her context to what could be found on this study is likely to provide some valuable insights to the development of this thesis project. Along the same lines, the communicative view she presents to language proficiency together with its relevance as an important component of an EFL teacher’s subject knowledge aligns with the objectives and intent of this present study and the expected outcomes to be discussed by the end of the research process.

Showing some degree of agreement with Chacon (2005), Nel and Müller (2010) reflect on the of a limited lower level of English language proficiency from the teachers on their learners in the South African context. This study collected some insightful data from both teachers and learners through portfolios and results insightful to this degree thesis since it also involves a certification. Among the relevant conclusions, Nel and Müller (2010) remark the impact of the input provided by teachers on their students’ learning process, somehow highlighting the importance of English language proficiency for EFL teachers.

As a Non-Native English Speaker Teacher (NNEST), Park (2012) stands for the value of non-native teachers, stating they should not feel less capable than their native peers due to language proficiency levels, and particularly pronunciation. This concern is also shared by Bernat (2008), who puts forward the concept of “impostor syndrome” in relation to NNEST who do not tend to have the same levels of self-efficacy that their native speakers peers should do –in their perception—, thus feeling as less capable EFL teachers as a whole and limiting the type of activities they would attempt to implement in their classrooms.
3.3 SHOULD THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY BE QUESTIONED?

Salinas (2017) presents an insightful analysis of the impact of different contextual factors on teacher professional identity in Chile where twelve EFL teachers acted as the participants and were administered a deep semi-structured interview. She reported some relevant results including a negative impact from institutional demands leading to bureaucracy, some neutral responses related to professional development, and some positive responses related to appreciation either by students or peers.

From a cognitive dimension, Salinas (2017) proposes a positive relationship between professional development and the construction of teacher identity. Nonetheless, Salinas and Ayala (2018) as well as Barahona and Ibaceta-Quijanes (2019) criticize the imposition of language proficiency as a predominant aspect for professional development for teachers in Chile, which these authors describe to be preferred over methodological and pedagogical programs for in-service teachers and even pre-service teachers in their training programs (Barahona, 2018).
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the present degree thesis is to understand some of the factors that could influence a group of Chilean EFL teachers’ professional identities during a language proficiency enhancement course preparing them to sit for specific language proficiency examinations. The course was designed on the basis of specific skill training for the exams B2 First and C1 Advanced from Cambridge using an emerging curriculum that was created and discussed with the learners depending on their own particular needs and lacks (Macalister & Nation, 2009). On the first parts of this chapter, an in-depth contextualization of the participants and the educational setting where this study took place will be provided. On a following section, the research methodology selected for this thesis will be presented and justified starting from the epistemological level to the data collection tools composing the data collection strategy used in this project.

4.2 CONTEXT

4.2.1 Cambridge Examinations and the Common European Framework of Reference.

The Common European Framework of Reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) was designed between 1993 and 1996 in order to provide a viable alternative to measure the language proficiency levels of different users through descriptive schemes, which would be later realized into communicative actions by the Can-Do Statements (North, 2007). The framework is divided into different levels ranging from A1 (basic user) to C2 (proficient user). For the sake of this study, some general descriptions from B2 (upper-intermediate) and C1 (advanced) levels will be presented.
**Table 2.** Some salient features from B2 and C1 levels (North, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to argument giving and understanding the different</td>
<td>The ability to express themselves effortlessly in different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>points of view available.</td>
<td>situations while showing command of a broad range of lexical and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>grammatical structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to adapt to social interactions fluently and</td>
<td>The ability to use organizational patterns and cohesive devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effortlessly, being able to adapt to changes in register and</td>
<td>accurately and effortlessly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>style.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to monitor and correct one’s performance accurately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.2.2 The CEFR and the Chilean Context.**

The Chilean Ministry of Education currently demands in-service teachers working in the public and subsided school systems to have a certified B2 level according to the CEFR. Moreover, it is also being demanded that pre-service teachers graduate from their undergraduate programs holding a C1 certification of their English language proficiency. Nonetheless, Rojas (2013) points out that 94% of the teachers that took part in the previous national teacher evaluation (video-recorded lesson) were not considered to have achieved—or at least shown—a B2 level of language competence. The arguments provided were raised during the delivery of the recorded lesson and included: a weak command of the language given by the misuse of certain grammatical forms, inaccurate pronunciation and a lack of oral fluency to the expected level.
Conversely, within the national context it results common for private schools, universities, and language institutes to require a certification of their language proficiency level to their teachers during selection processes. In some particular contexts (e.g., bilingual schools) this may not only apply to EFL teachers but also to their elementary and nursery school teachers. Along the same lines, some language institutions even consider such certifications as an important part of their selection criteria to hire new teachers or determine their wages.

4.2.3 The participants.

This study involved the experiences of five participants taking the previously detailed course to prepare for the examinations C1: Advanced and B2: First from Cambridge. The present section of this chapter will be aimed to provide an in-depth characterization of each of the teachers who joined this research as its participants. At this point, it results necessary to state that all the contextualization to be presented in this section has been authorized to be shared as part of this research, and that the participants’ private information will be respected by giving them a code (i.e., numbers 1 to 5), which will be used to identify them during the remaining parts of this study.

The group was composed by two women and three men who were involved in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching at different levels and educational settings in Chile. All of them are Chilean citizens currently living in the V region and their ages range from 26 to 36 years old. Three of the participants were licensed EFL teachers whereas the two other participants were nursery school teachers working in bilingual schools who needed to enhance their language proficiency levels and had also engaged into professional development activities related to EFL teaching at postgraduate level.
Participant 1 (Age: 31) is a teacher of English as a foreign language with a master’s degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and three years of experience doing private lessons as an additional source of income. Basing on his responses from the demographic questionnaire that was administered at the begging of the study, he declared that he is interested in sitting for the exam to aim for better professional opportunities.

Participant 2 (Age: 36) is a nursery school teacher with a diploma in Teaching English to YLEs (Young Learners of English) and has 11 years of teaching experience. She is currently working in a British bilingual school, and is required by her institutional context to certify her English language proficiency level to a B2 of the CEFR in order to ensure her continuity in the school for the following years.

Participant 3 (Age: 26) is also a nursery school teacher working in a different British bilingual school. She has for years of experience and is currently a candidate to a master’s in TESOL. Her English level is already certified at B2 of the CEFR and she is currently aiming to obtain a C1 certification as a further step to her professional development for personal reasons.

Participants 4 and 5 (ages: 33 and 27 respectively) are teachers of English as a foreign language currently working part-time in a local language institute as their main source of income. On their particular cases, it should be mentioned that their institution actually considers these examinations as a requirement to determine the teachers’ hourly rate as well as their monthly wages. The two of them also have expressed some concern regarding the certification as a viable opportunity for better job opportunities.
4.2.4 The Course.

The participants were offered a 20-hour-course, starting with a needs analysis through an informal conversation which would serve as an initial stage of a diagnostic test where the participants would also be informed of the methodology to be used during the course. The sessions would be initially divided into ten blocks of two chronological hours, but some adjustments were made in case any of the participants needed so. It should also be mentioned that most of the participants were interested in taking their sessions individually (participants 1, 2, and 3), whereas participants 4 and 5 asked to take the course together in a common schedule for both of them. In some particular occasions (three sessions), participant 1 requested to have his classes using a blended learning approach, where some feedback and discussion sessions would be delivered via Skype. These last instances were the only cases where the course was not realized through face-to-face interaction.

The course syllabus was continuously designed and re-designed in collaboration with each of the participants following the approach of a personalized emergent curriculum aiming to respond to the individual and distinctive needs and experiences of each of the subjects in order to work with a specific focus on their individual requirements (Jones & Nimmo, 1994). Furthermore, an emergent curriculum also respected the participants professional identities as part of the teaching community since their knowledge and perspectives were constantly listened to and considered as an important aspect to make their overall experience more meaningful (Norton, 2001).

Pedagogically speaking, the course followed a strategy-based approach for the receptive skills and a genre-based approach for the productive skills (Harmer, 2008). For reading and listening, the participant and the teacher (in this private lesson setting) would work together on an
individual sample paper for the exam, to then proceed to discuss the answers and try to reach the most appropriate strategies for each question (e.g., identifying parallel language between the correct alternative and a reading or listening text).

In the case of speaking and writing, the participants would be presented a set of different samples of a genre (e.g., a report) and would be asked to identify some of its most salient features. After a brief discussion, they would be asked to write their own sample and then to edit it appropriately following the exam regulations.

In general terms, the course was strictly self-paced and the participants—as learners—had a voice to decide where they needed more support and which skills they needed to invest more time to.

4.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

This study has been designed to be implemented following a qualitative research epistemology. Qualitative research can be characterized as a world view in which reality is not conceived as a single and objective truth, but as an array of equally valid views constituted by several different multiple realities (McKay, 2006). Due to the specific nature of this study, it results considerably relevant to attempt to understand the individual differences caused by the influence of a language proficiency enhancement course on each of the particular teachers/participants’ professional identities, since it could not be assumed that all the participants will show the same type of changes in their professional identities—if any—in response to a potential improvement in their command of the English language. The need to understand these diverging experiences from each of the participants of this study guided the decision of basing this project on a qualitative epistemology (James, 2008).
Along the same lines, it should also result necessary to find some viable alternatives that allow us to gain some deeper understanding behind the reasons and motivations sustaining the aforementioned possible changes in the participants professional identities. Additionally, the preponderance of the national and institutional contexts on the teachers’ need to enhance—and certify—their language proficiency levels needs to be provided some framework that facilitates its correlation. The connection between the recently stated contextual factors and the professional identities of the participants of this study could be provided by considering Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

The conception of self presented in CHAT (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004) could provide this research with a deeper and richer insight on the connection between personal and contextual factors on identity formation since this framework effectively promotes a conception of self as both a personal or psychological construct as well as being influenced by social or contextual factors through an individual’s own history. Furthermore, it should also bring the possibility to strengthen the connection between the external demands for teachers to improve—or at least show some improvement by obtaining a certification—on their English language proficiency level and the imposed identities that these demands could promote on the group of teachers participating on the current study (Norton, 2017).

As a summary, a qualitative research epistemology and some general theoretical foundations from CHAT should be expected to provide a considerably solid research design that leads towards deeper understanding of the influence of a language proficiency enhancement on the professional identities of the group of teachers taking part on this study.
4.3.1 The data collection strategy.

According to the types of research described by Van Lier (1988), as cited in Mckay (2006), this particular study corresponds to the “watching” category since the variables are less controlled and structured and the objective of this research is to understand some potential changes on teacher identity after the language proficiency enhancement course. It is for this reason that this project considered relevant to include a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and narratives as its sources for data collection.

4.3.1.1 Demographic questionnaire.

A demographic questionnaire (DQ) was administered during the first session of the course in which this particular study took place in order to understand some relevant aspects of their professional and personal selves, as well as their academic context and current working environment. DQ provided some general background of each of the participants, including: their personal information (e.g., age, city of origin, and city of residence), professional information (e.g., the university and program where they studied, postgraduate courses, years of working experience, and their current working environment), and some language proficiency information (e.g., certifications taken and when they sat for those exams).

The last section of this demographic questionnaire involved “Why do you want to prepare for the exam?” with the intention of gaining some additional data on the participants initial motivations to take the course. According to Stetsenko & Arievitch (2004), all this could lead to some understanding related to the participants’ conception of self in Cultural Historical Activity Theory by retrieving some significant preliminary insights on their own personal histories in relation to professional development and language proficiency certifications.
4.3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews.

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted following a qualitative paradigm. According to the initial plan, they were intended to be administered at the end of the third and seventh sessions. Additionally, a third interview was originally expected to be included in the final session of the course where this study was implemented, but it was not possible to carry it out due to the national contingency that will be expanded on the limitations section of this paper.

Interview 1 (I-1) was administered through WhatsApp audios outside of class time with the intention of fully respecting the participants time as students taking the exam training course. Nonetheless, and under their own preference, interview 2 (I-2) was administered during class time.

4.3.1.3 Auto-biographical narratives.

First person narratives have been historically marginalized as a valid source of research data. Nonetheless, in the later years have been acknowledged as valuable sources of data, particularly under a sociocultural perspective (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). For this study, the participants were asked to write an autobiographical narrative related to their teacher identity by answering the following set of questions to guide their writing process: 1) Why did you become a teacher? 2) What makes a good teacher? 3) What do you need to improve as a teacher? 4) How important is English proficiency for you as a teacher? 5) How important should language proficiency be for teachers in general?

This data collection instrument was presented to the participants as a preliminary writing assignment during the first sessions of the course. Other than serving as a source of data, these writing also were used as a way for the participants to monitor their own writing process and
negotiate feedback before facing the specific genres of the exams. It also results relevant to point out that the use of autobiographical narratives to understand teacher identity has been regarded as a valuable tool in past studies.

4.3.2. The data analysis procedures

In order to gain deeper understanding on the research question guiding this study, a qualitative epistemology that could allow for a view of the multiple realities of the participants in relation to the constructs involved was preferred (McKay, 2006). Along the same lines, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) also provides an in-depth view of the participants past and present realities and how their contexts affect their construction and re-construction of selves (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). This research design raises the need of a particular data analysis procedure involving thematic coding under the light of CHAT for all the data collection tools involved in this research project.

Thematic analysis is a widely used data analysis method in social sciences that results particularly useful to the scope of this investigation due to its flexibility in allowing categories to be raised inductively in response to the common patterns found in the different sources of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In general terms, this would imply identifying commonalities in the discourse of the participants among the different sources of data collection used in this study before raising categories that could represent the gist of what was said by different participants in different extracts.

Conversely, CHAT enriches this study by providing a view of activity that goes beyond a subject influencing an object but that also takes into consideration the role of a community and the rules or demands a subject has from that community (Foot, 2014). Moreover, CHAT also
considers the role of agency both at a subjective and inter-subjective level, which can be reflected on the possible reasons provided by the participants of this study to sit for an English language proficiency certification and its potential consequent effect on their professional identities (Oswald & Perold, 2015).

In concrete terms, the demographic questionnaire is the only source of data that would not follow these procedures, at least as a whole—excluding the last question, which would follow the analysis with thematic coding and chat—. In the case of the interviews, they will be transcribed using the exact words of the participants before undergoing the analysis process. Finally, the autobiographic narratives will follow the procedure described in the previous paragraphs of this section.

4.3.2.1 The coding system.

This first section will be intended to explaining the coding system used in this study to present, analyze, and subsequently discuss the findings. In order to provide a clear organization and structure, the participants will keep the same code they had on the previous chapter (i.e., participants 1-5). Along the same lines, the data collection instruments will be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Questionnaire</td>
<td>DQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>I1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>I2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Representation of the coding system for this study.
As a further, an example of a quote using this system will be presented in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P5B</td>
<td>Each teacher has their own essence, so I think it is not easy to say what makes a good teacher since teachers can find their own ways to be excellent professionals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. A comment of participant 5 on the narrative instrument applies within the data collection strategy of this study.

The only further consideration to the coding system would be related to the cases with interviews, where the question would also be included as part of the code, as exemplified on the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P111Q2</td>
<td>I want to be certified because it will contribute to my skills as an English teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Example of the coding system for individual questions in the interviews.
4.3.2.2 The categories of analysis.

In order to approach the research question guiding this degree thesis project: “What are the factors that influence teacher professional identities during a language proficiency enhancement course?”, some categories were raised from the data collected during this study. Prior to summarizing the findings, the categories that will be leading such discussion will be presented on the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Factors</th>
<th>Methodological Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Factors</td>
<td>National context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Summary of the categories raised from the data analysis.
CHAPTER 5: Findings and discussions

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter of this degree thesis will be composed of two main sections. In the first part, the presentation of some relevant findings from the data analysis that could lead to meaningful insights related to understanding the sociocultural factors influencing teacher identity in a language enhancement course. In the second part of the chapter, those findings will be discussed and contrasted in light of appropriate and significant academic literature that could lead to some deeper understanding of the research question guiding this study.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

During the course of this research project, there were some significant contextual limitations on a national level, which will be further explored on the following paragraphs.

5.2.1 Contextual limitations.

On October 18th, 2019, a set of social demonstrations started to take place all over the country in response to what was considered a general perception of social inequality in several different areas. This situation had been causing considerably serious levels of disruption to small businesses in the area, public transport has been impaired, and a general feeling of safety and security has been affected (Dube, 2019). Under these conditions, the original planning for the course was detrimentally influenced in the last two months of the study. The participants’ levels of attrition were affected, which caused two of them (participants 3 and 5) to resign from the course a month before its completion. Thus, they were not able to answer the second interview from the data collection strategy.
5.3 FINDINGS

From the categories presented at the fourth chapter, some findings emerged and will be exemplified along this section of this thesis report.

5.3.1 Language proficiency is related to improved pedagogical practices.

Some participants proposed some clear links between their language proficiency level and the activities they could carry out in the classroom, this was exemplified by Participant 1 in extracts such as:

“If teachers have more language competence, there will be a wider range of activities which could be done in the classroom. For example, with a larger and better quality of language teacher skills, innovative activities could be done. In fact, improvisation will be more meaningful as it consequently will contribute in students’ learning” (P112Q2).

From an arguably similar point of view, albeit not as explicitly, Participant 4 may also be said to have proposed a link between the language proficiency level of a teacher and the activities—or actions—that may take place in a classroom, which can be observed in the following extract:

“Right. I have wondered the same, but to be honest I would say that is quite crucial nowadays because if you’re teaching, eh, English, right? Could be as a foreign language or as a second language is, huh, essential that you master or that you handle what you teach, right? Imagine that, for example, you are preparing some students, for example, to certify their level of English, but you don’t actually handle the level, huh, is not consistent, right? So, I would say
that that’s the reason we should have our, eh, English certified by a back-up. Right? Yes.”

(P4I1Q2)

5.3.2 Language proficiency is not determinant for an EFL teacher.

Interestingly, the participants also proposed some different characteristics—rather than language proficiency—as the most significant factors on an EFL teacher identity. One example can be found on the following extract:

“In terms of being able to transmit a message, or being able to convey ideas, I do not think that a high level of proficiency is necessary. Being highly proficient in a language is not necessary in order to communicate. On the other hand, for me as a teacher of English and Portuguese, it is important to help my students to speak and write the language they are learning the best they can” (P5B)

Showing some degree of agreement with the ideas put forward by Participant 5, P2 also comments on the value of other features, such as interpersonal skills, that could have a more significant impact than language proficiency on EFL teacher identity and practice:

“I think, hmm, is, huh, a good teacher or an excellent teacher is not always, eh, that one speak perfect English. I think you are not only a person who can speak another language. A teacher has to be a lot of, skills and abilities, social abilities with the students have to be empathy, have to listening at the students and try to identify, eh, what activities or what strategies has to use with each student.” (P2I2Q3)
5.3.3 Teachers sit for these exams because of the consequences they may imply.

The participants expressed diverging concerns regarding how passing or failing the language proficiency certification could affect them, including their own self-perception as professionals and the reactions it may trigger in others.

Regarding the consequences or failing the exam, the responses somehow varied:

| “I think there are not consequences of passing or failing the exam. Maybe passing [stutters] I will have an extra, um, money here at school, and failing, well, I will have to prepare it more to pass, eh, the second time with a, a good level, but nothing happens.” (P3IIQ5) | “What could be the consequence, the consequences of passing or failing this exam? I think that the consequences, um, by passing it’s, um, great because I will feel more confident as an-as an-as an English language teacher. Um, I will have more tools to share with my students, and I think that all positive things if I take this. On the contrary, if I fail this exam, I think I will feel a little bad, uh, um, at the beginning, but also that I think I will feel a little bad, uh, um, at the beginning, but also that I | “And then I had to study and concentrate a bit. Then, I had to, I, eh, I take the first time, eh, FCE I didn’t pass, so I had to prepare and take it again; and, then, I passed it. And then immediately because I was like pressured I would say by my, my boss I had to take the, the CAE, the C1; and then, I realized that I wasn’t really, eh, prepared for that. So I took it and I was about to pass it and this would be, eh, the fourth, eh, the fourth time that I will |
### Table 7. The participants’ expectations about the exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>participant</th>
<th>expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>I have to work, to keep working in order to take this, this level, C1 at least, but I’m not thinking negatively. I think that I most likely will pass this by working hard and in the pace that is required by my, my teacher advisor of this exam. So, I’m really confident to pass this in December” (P1I1Q5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>I take the exam. I’m not really proud to be honest, but it’s something that I have, I will conquer it [laughs]. Yeah, I [inaudible] that I have to do it and, eh, I’ll do my best.” (P4I1Q3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to some of the possible reasons behind the relative difference in confidence between P1, P3 and P4 regarding the examinations, it should be pertinent to remember their contextual differences, since P1 is not currently required to hold a language proficiency certification, P3 already fully complies with her job requirements, whereas P4 is highly dependent on his test results to increase his income or ensure his working stability. On his particular case, it should be pointed out that the only viable alternative for him to get a raise on his wages in his current working environment is by certifying a higher level of English language proficiency.
### 5.3.4 Teachers are aware of the role of language proficiency on their working environment.

The participants of this study commented on several meaningful instances about their insights in relation to the consequences having—or not having—a certain level certification could have on their professional lives, particularly from their real or ideal employers on their particular working environments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I personally think that the main motivations for a teacher to reach a certain level of English competence is due to internal obligations. An illustration of this is the motivation to teach at university. Some English teacher needs certain level of English and certifications to improve their curriculum, and then, they have more possibilities to teach in that level. (P1I2Q4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think there are not consequences of passing or failing the exam. Maybe passing [stutters] I will have an extra, um, money here at school, and failing, well, I will have to prepare it more to pass it, eh, the second time with a, a good level, but nothing happens. (P3I1Q5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And then immediately because I was like pressured I would say by my, my boss I had to take the, the CAE, the C1; and then, I realized that I wasn’t really, eh, prepared for that. (P4I1Q4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First one, eh, is when you has, you are, eh, an external obligation. For, for example, from your boss or for the school where you work. Eh, I think, eh, that is, that is a one motivation. (P2I2Q4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarly, on several occasions, the participants expressed some concerns or knowledge regarding the relevance of language proficiency levels for EFL teachers in Chile, of which some examples can be found on the next table:

| "When it comes to language proficiency I would say is an issue for many colleagues because they may feel threatened to sit for an international examination to measure their level of English because some of them teach L2 in a vulnerable context. Currently the Ministry of Education is asking the teacher to certify their language proficiency with a C1 level. Nevertheless, they are supported by a course or guidance to learn some techniques to sit the exam as well as receive feedback in their performance.” (P4B) |
| "However, it seems that external obligations will appear because of the government is requiring to teachers to be certified in one of the top English levels.” (P1I2Q4) |

Table 8. Knowledge of the participants about the national standards.

Hereby, some participants showed a degree of awareness regarding the ministerial requirements for EFL teachers in relation to the national demands and whole expressing how they relate to them. Conversely, Participants 2 and 3 puts forward a relevant consideration regarding the need for a specific language proficiency level for certain specific working environments:

| “English proficiency in my school is very important because we are in an immersion program were teachers need to speak in English all the time and teach the different assignments in English too, so it’s highly important the proficiency you have in the language so that you can teach as its expected. And I think that in general, the language proficiency has a strong relation |

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to the context were you teach because in some schools maybe it’s not so important to be the best English teacher and to have a determinate level of English.” (P3B)

“I think it depends of the, eh, in which level that English teacher is working because if you are working in a pre-school level, of course, doesn’t matter if your teach-if your English is very, eh, eh, is very perfect, it doesn’t matter because you, you have to speak, eh, but basic and, and the activities in the classroom are very, eh, basic for the boys and girls.” (P2I2Q2).

Table 9. Context awareness regarding language proficiency from the participants working at bilingual schools.

5.4 DISCUSSION

The notion of English language proficiency as an important aspect to an EFL teacher’s actions in the classroom has not been strange to literature (Chacon, 2005). Nonetheless, such situation may seem to be more closely related to what Barahona (2018) and Salinas (2017) refer to as a “historical demand” for language proficiency without being necessarily related to any current theoretical underpinnings. Even though the participants show to be potentially aware of their likely role as input providers (Nel & Müller, 2010), particularly the nursery school teachers P2 and P3, it was not possible for this study to gather more significant data on how they explicitly related those notions. Furthermore, this conception of them –P2 and P3—“needing” to prove a high level of English language proficiency may be possibly related to an imposition or a socioculturally constructed agreement from their context rather than a research-based decision that effectively takes into consideration the current knowledge about the priorities for an EFL teacher (Barahona and Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2019).
It is also plausible to consider the presence of what Bernat (2008) referred to as “impostor syndrome” on some of the Chilean teachers who took part in this study due to their non-native status and, in cases like Participant 4’s, their lack of the required qualifications for his current working environment. Nevertheless, it could not be fully asserted whether his self-efficacy as an EFL teacher may be actually related to his current language proficiency level (Chacon, 2005), or to other factors that somehow go beyond the scope of this study as could be the case of test anxiety—regarding his repeated attempts to pass C1: Advanced—or the demands from his work environment and the consequential validity issues that may arise on the potential increase on his income in case of passing the exam or the possibility of his working stability being negatively affected in case of failure. Even though Norton (1997) proposes identity in connection to the expectations an individual may have in relation to their future, the limitations of this study somehow hazarded the opportunity to explore further if this was the case for the participants, especially P4.

Notwithstanding the previous arguments, it could still be possible to propose that the participants of this study also shared an influence on their teacher professional identities related to what Salinas (2017) considered micro and macro contextual factors (i.e., their own engagement and the influence of external demands from the state as well as their current, former, and prospective employers).

All things considered, the presence of some internal and external factors that influence the participants’ teacher identities before, during and after a language proficiency enhancement course could be proposed, at least within the scope of this study.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study was designed to gain some general understanding on some of the different factors that may have influenced a group of Chilean EFL teachers’ professional identities during a language proficiency enhancement course. In general terms, the findings may seem to show a series of factors influencing teacher identity during the process of a language proficiency enhancement towards a certification, with the most relevant of them being: 1. A belief that language proficiency has an influence on pedagogical practices, 2. Without disregards to the first point, that language proficiency is not the most important aspect of a Chilean EFL teacher identity and practice, and 3. That the need for a language proficiency certification is generally mediated—or even imposed—by authority figures such as school principals or even the Chilean Ministry of Education.

Despite providing some insightful findings, there were some highly relevant limitations to this study, which could have clearly affected the amount and quality of data that could have been obtained during this study.
6.2 IMPLICATIONS

The present study could be considered for reference on the experiences of in-service EFL teachers needing to approach a language proficiency certification. Furthermore, this research may be useful to raise some important questions regarding the impositions placed on EFL teachers in Chile and how their identities might be affected by them.

Even though the pedagogical implications of this degree thesis project may not be so explicit, the relationship between language proficiency and EFL teaching methodologies still remains interesting and worth exploring further.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A similar study with a higher number of participants where data could be collected more thoroughly and rigorously could be an interesting to observe the findings of this research on a contrastive manner. Along the same lines, it could also be potentially beneficial to approach a similar study with pre-service teachers in order to understand the factors affecting their professional identities during a language proficiency enhancement course and also to compare them to the findings raised from this degree thesis.

Finally, as it was previously mentioned on the limitations sections, the possibility of working from the beginning with a research question oriented to the factors that influence identity reconstructions in these settings together with administering the data collection strategy more rigorously could lead to deeper findings that could contribute the field with more significant insights on the issues discussed during this study.
REFERENCES


TEACHER IDENTITY IN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY


APPENDIX: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

1. Autobiographical narrative

Dear Participant: The following instrument corresponds to an autobiographical narrative related to your personal history as a teacher.

The answers you provide will be used as part of the data collection for a thesis proposal and a possible further research article. Nonetheless, none of your personal information will be disclosed at any point and your confidentiality will be fully respected during the entire process.

If you have any inquiries, please remember to contact me at director@radicalenglish.org.

Name:
Number:
Date:

Write a narrative text considering the following questions. You don’t have to answer the questions individually. You have to use them to guide your writing into a story. You can organize your story in the order you prefer.

1) Why did you become a teacher? 2) What makes a good teacher? 3) What do you need to improve as a teacher? 4) How important is English proficiency for you as a teacher? 5) How important should language proficiency be for teachers in general?
2. Demographic questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong> __________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong> __________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>City [Birth]:</strong> __________</td>
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<td><strong>City [Residence]:</strong> _______</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Profession:</strong> ______________</td>
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<td><strong>University:</strong> ______________</td>
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<td><strong>Postgraduate Course:</strong> _______</td>
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<td><strong>University:</strong> ______________</td>
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<td><strong>English Certification:</strong> ______________</td>
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<td><strong>Level of Certification:</strong> ___________</td>
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<td><strong>Year of Certification:</strong> ______________</td>
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<td><strong>Years of working experience:</strong> ___________</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current working environment:</strong> ______________</td>
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**Why do you want to improve your English level/prepare for the exam?**

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