

## An EFL Student-Teacher's *Cuir* Identity: Narratives From a Pedagogical Practicum Experience

Identidad cuir de un profesor practicante de inglés: estudio narrativo desde una experiencia de práctica docente

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This article analyzes the *cuir* identity of an EFL student-teacher within the context of his pedagogical practicum. We adopt the term *cuir* as an analytical category to explore how notions of teacher identity and language pedagogy are mutually constructed. The paper challenges the traditional language pedagogy paradigm and its binary-disciplinary and heterosexist constructions of standardization. The findings documented that the construction of *cuir* emerges from the experiences in the body in oppressive situations. Also, a *cuir* identity is sometimes not risked on certain occasions and, in others, is enacted in transgressive ways through pedagogical practices. This study discusses how the *cuir* can be articulated with education, traditionally seen as a locus for normalization, dis-gendering, and dis-embodiment.

*Keywords:* identity, language teaching, student-teachers, teacher education

Este artículo analiza la identidad *cuir* de un profesor practicante de inglés en el contexto de su práctica pedagógica. Adoptamos el término *cuir* como categoría analítica para explorar la construcción mutua de las nociones de identidad docente y pedagogía de lengua. El artículo desafía el paradigma de pedagogía de lengua tradicional y sus construcciones binarias-disciplinarias y heterosexistas de estandarización. Los hallazgos revelaron que lo *cuir* emerge de las experiencias en el propio cuerpo en situaciones opresivas. Asimismo, una identidad *cuir* no se arriesga en ciertas ocasiones y, en otras, se escenifica de manera transgresora a través de las prácticas pedagógicas. Este estudio discute cómo lo *cuir* puede articularse con la educación, tradicionalmente vista como un espacio de normalización, desgenerización y descorporeización.

*Palabras clave:* enseñanza de idiomas, estudiantes-maestros, formación docente, identidad

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## Introduction

Becoming a teacher is a multi-dimensional process (Hinchion, 2017) in which symbolic interactions shape and determine identity work (Ó Gallchóir et al., 2018). Although teacher identity has been widely defined as an individual process of construction of the self within language teaching and learning contexts (e.g., Marschall, 2022), most of these definitions only account for the psychological and individual dimensions of teachers' identity. Although significant, these definitions are separated from "the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks" (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 5) and the histories such identities embody.

Carrillo and Flores (2018) have explored identity—specifically in preservice teachers—using qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to the authors, this is due to the intricacy of understanding teacher identity from one-sided interpretations. We agree that this unidimensional view has not reasonably accounted for enactments of multiple ways of becoming a teacher (e.g., LGTBIQ+ identities). On that note, this study aims to contribute knowledge about teacher identity from diverse subjectivities and understandings.

For example, in the Colombian teaching and learning scenario, Castañeda-Peña (2018) highlights that in language teacher education, efforts are more laden toward identifying decontextualized and unitary manifestations of teachers' identities (i.e., studies on language teachers and students' gender identities that challenge an idea of identity as stable, unique, and idealized). Such limiting perspective has erased other forms of being and existing that inhabit the educational scenarios (see, for example, transgender identities and non-normative corporalities of EFL teachers in Ubaque-Casallas & Castañeda-Peña, 2020). The *queer* has not been broadly analyzed regarding teacher identity. This is echoed by Lander (2018), who claims that much more needs to be documented to broaden our knowledge of the issues associated with understanding queer language teacher identities and their influence on language teaching and learning.

Nonetheless, since the notion of queer seems to be nested in a different history that materializes beyond the realities of those inflicted by the gendered colonial wound, we adopt the notion of *cuir* since it is not just a deviation from Spanish phonetics or a mere nativization, but this is also a decolonial choice that enunciates a geopolitical and body-political positioning that the word "queer" does not possess (Valencia, 2018). We will elaborate further on this in the theoretical section.

As for the pedagogical practicum in English language teaching (ELT), this component of teacher education has served for decades as a pathway for student-teachers to acquire content and practical knowledge (Morales Cortés, 2016). Although such a perspective has existed for many decades, its orientation has been mainly toward strengthening disciplinary knowledge (Lucero, 2015). This has caused, at least in Colombian teacher education programs, the emergence of a professional canon of knowledge and identity rooted in colonial legacies. As a result, language teachers' subjectivities (i.e., their being, sensing, and emotioning) have been erased, silenced, and ignored. However, since "knowing, sensing [and emotioning] are interrelated and indissociable of human condition and praxis" (Mignolo, 2021, p. 36), the pedagogical practicum becomes a relevant space to materialize the decolonial doing claimed in this paper.

In this line of thought, since we consider that colonialism is nested in the idea that English language teachers and educators are at the periphery of hegemonic power structures on the geographical, political, social, and language levels, we argue that their identities are, at the same time, relegated to disciplinary logics of coloniality that silence them. For instance, one still encounters an immovable discourse in *Licenciatura* programs that maintains a vertical logic regarding teacher education (Pennycook, 1998). This logic is imposed on the pedagogical practicum, in which the ideal is still to do, think, and be like the native speaker. Nevertheless, considering that since "merely tinkering

with the existing hegemonic system will not work; [and hence] only a fundamental epistemological [and ontological] rupture will” (Kumaravadivelu, 2014, p. 80), language teacher identities need further exploration to move beyond this colonial lens.

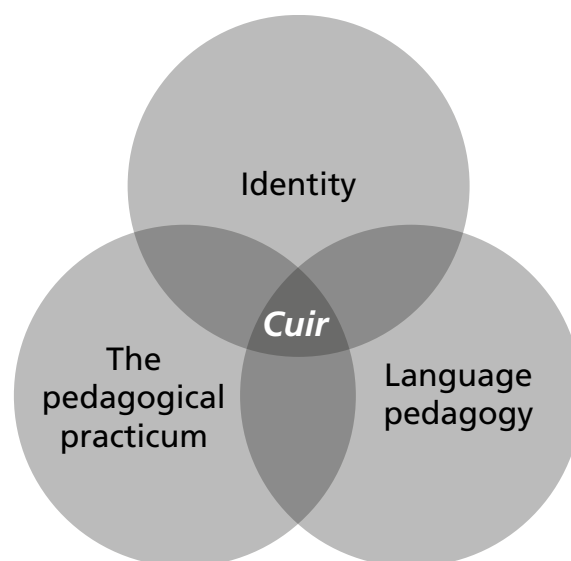
Accordingly, we are interested in approaching student-teacher *cuir* identity from the pedagogical practicum experiences. We believe that since the Western understanding of teaching practicum has constructed a colonial-disciplinary logic in which student-teachers' subjectivities are ignored (Ubaque-Casallas & Aguirre-Garzón, 2020), exploring their identities from the *cuir* lens in a situated milieu like the teaching practicum offers a fresh glance and an opportunity to unchain and contest the rigid paradigm imposed over the notion of identity in teacher education.

The study reported in this paper opens room to contend with fixed identity-like discourses in the teacher education field as part of colonial workings that operate to prevent the emergence of other existing identities.

### Theoretical Considerations

In this study, we document the identity of an EFL student-teacher from the *cuir* perspective. We enunciate ourselves from a decolonial thought, option, and standpoint (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) to converse with the forms in which Anthony (the participant's chosen pseudonym) deploys his identity concerning his English teaching practice. Figure 1 shows the theoretical foundations that underpin this study and how they converge in the *cuir* dimension, where Anthony's experience is narrated, situated, and struggled. We consider that a *cuir* perspective allows the analysis of the spaces in between since these become narratives that encapsulate not only “a wide range of non-normative sexual and gender identifications” (Gray, 2016, p. 225) but also manifest against the only heteronormative-unidimensional known way of becoming a teacher (Castañeda-Peña, 2018).

Figure 1. Theoretical Considerations: The *Cuir* as an Analytical Category



Consequently, the analysis of *cuir* presented in this paper is constructed through a situated idea of language pedagogy that co-emerges as a constituent of Anthony's experience in his pedagogical practicum. In this regard, this study does not aim to expand on research about the pedagogical practicum as an “opportunity [for student-teachers] to become aware of practicing the theories, methods, and techniques they studied alone or in conjunction with the process of teacher education” (Köksal & Genç, 2019, p. 896). Instead, we intend to regard it as a window to document how a student-teacher's locus of enunciation (Grosfoguel, 2011) becomes visible by employing the *cuir* as an analytical category to understand identity and language pedagogy.

### *Cuir* Identities

In the available literature, it is not easy to define what the term “queer” (English word) means, nor is it convenient to try. Defining queer can be inconvenient since every attempt limits the semantic essence behind the term (Halperin, 2003). In this line of thought, defining queer would mean, at least for us, representing the existences, histories, identities, and subjectivities

of those who have been wounded by the rhetoric of modernity (i.e., representation). Defining it would also imply an attempt to speak about a constituted world. Therefore, although we understand the queer as “an umbrella term for diverse non-heterosexual identities” (Morandini et al., 2016, p. 911), we also believe it is a fluid and changing notion (Callis, 2014) that allows a more situated and dynamic opportunity to escape gendered labels when documenting student-teachers’ identities. Along with these definitions, we hold the view that the term itself must be situated within the local histories and experiences of those wounded by the colonial regime.

Although there are studies that certainly shorten the gap regarding the study of queer identities (see Nelson, 2004), they cannot and should not be expected to account for the identities of Colombian English language teachers because—as Mignolo (2021) argues—other global situated models cannot serve all local histories. In fact, in the Colombian context, Castañeda-Peña’s (2021) literature review accounts for varied identity studies conducted in the country, and the author concludes that these studies are still scarce and there is space for situating research interest within the local histories of those who narrate their experience. Therefore, we resist employing the term queer and choose to adopt the word *cuir* (Spanish phonetics) since the latter supposes a geopolitical look toward the South and from the borders and peripheries (Valencia, 2018). Not only does the term *cuir* become an analytical category to situate student-teachers’ identities within the educational field, but it also enunciates “the constant border crossing where we can establish dialogues through differences to question the despotism of rigid identities” (Bello Ramírez, 2018, p. 110).

We suggest that more research on how language teachers’ identities and *cuir* co-emerge is needed to extend the conversation since an overt colonial logic has made LGTBQ+ identities invisible (Enrico & Castro, 2021; Paiz, 2018). This is perhaps the result of the imposition of the “modern-colonial system of

gender” (Lugones, 2008, p. 76), which has caused *cuir* teachers and *cuir* teacher practitioners to, unwittingly or not, camouflage or conceal their sexual orientations, hindering the free deployment of their identities. One influential factor in that phenomenon is the institutional or social pressure that might risk their career possibilities (Lin et al., 2020). On this basis, although some counter-hegemonic practices have been eroding those logics by “opening a whole scope of epistemological, epistemic and pedagogical alternatives for the oppressed, the border, dissidents, the difference, the *queer [cuir]*” (Enrico & Castro, 2021, p. 162), there is still a need to understand the *cuir* enounced in the practicum as a locus of student-teachers’ identity (re)constructions.

### Language Pedagogy

Language pedagogy is not just about developing competencies and skills. Nor is it only about improving the skills and techniques teachers need for teaching, along with the theories, beliefs, and value systems (Richards, 2017). Although we accept that the former assumptions present a joint theoretical and procedural ground in teaching a language, they result from a logic in which the notion of pedagogy has been oriented toward “the meeting of standards representing a certain level of acquisition of [any] skill” (Granados-Beltrán, 2018, p. 175). We concur with Granados-Beltrán in that language pedagogy also seems to have an ethical goal that is not considered when the notion of pedagogy is taken apart from those who enact it.

In this paper, language pedagogy is grounded on a perspective toward “an essential methodology within and for social, political, ontological, and epistemic struggles for liberation” (Walsh, 2013, p. 29). If a student-teacher’s *cuir* identity is to be documented, language pedagogy is a category that must be explored as the relationship between identities and pedagogy is indissociable. On the one hand, identities are pedagogical tools (Motha et al., 2012). For example, Morgan (2004) asserts that a teacher’s identity is a pedagogical resource for language

education. On the other hand, language pedagogy, as far as this study is concerned, is the means through which identities are enacted (Ubaque-Casallas, 2023). These two assumptions make us think far from a pedagogy that “operates through the imposition of identities and selection of specific knowledge as human ideals to achieve” (Bello Ramírez, 2018, p. 113). This is a language pedagogy that not only implies a conversation toward the otherness but that embodies one’s identity.

### The Pedagogical Practicum in English Language Teaching

As part of teacher education programs in ELT, the pedagogical practicum is a locus for identity construction. Although it is conceived as an opportunity to elaborate and improve the knowledge prospective language teachers have obtained throughout the educational process (Nguyen, 2014), it is also a moment of learning (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018). However, the pedagogical practicum in ELT has barely been explored as the scenario in which non-disciplinary student-teachers’ identities are forged.

From an institutional stance, the Colombian Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, n.d.) endorses the idea that in the pedagogical practicum, “the undergraduate student addresses knowledge in an articulated way and from different disciplines that enrich the understanding of the educational process and the teaching function in it” (p. 5, translated by the authors). Such a perspective is limited to the transmission and application of ELT disciplinary knowledge (Lucero, 2015) as if it were the main, the most, and only substantial development area for student-teachers. We can infer that this configuration of a modern university catered to institutional discourses of neutrality (i.e., those that assume practices as devoid of contextual factors—hence unproblematic—and subjects as fixed entities) also limits the deployment of other ontological relations.

This vertical logic in the pedagogical practicum in ELT indicates who student-teachers should be. Their

identities and subjectivities are not considered crucial in language teacher education. Therefore, “since academic colonialism [is still] present . . . teacher education programs should help student-teachers and educators foster local knowledges” (Ubaque-Casallas & Aguirre-Garzón, 2020, p. 141) but, at the same time, open space for other identities that have been hidden and subalternized by the North/Eurocentric rationale installed in language teacher education programs.

## Method

### Narrative Research

This study adopts a narrative perspective. From this investigative lens, we assume that:

Narrating implies putting what has been lived into words, as ideas and emotions; re-signifying experiences, filling one’s own history with meaning by re-naming and re-creating a series of events, which rather than responding to chronological and objective order, respond to a logical and subjective framework, which accounts for a particular and complex configuration in the face of the events. (Arias Cardona & Alvarado Salgado, 2015, p. 172)

In this sense, we recognize in the narration a possibility to incorporate “an ethical and political bet of those who [like us] want to re-think the traditional ways of conducting research and approaching the subjects with whom it is investigated” (Arroyo Ortega & Alvarado Salgado, 2016, p. 138). Moreover, we acknowledge that a narrative perspective offers a pedagogical character from which space is opened for student-teachers to account for their identity construction processes. In other words, narratives constitute pedagogical sites when subjects construct and share them with others (Goodson & Gill, 2011). In such sites, onto-epistemological constructions can occur where subjects make sense of their professional selves.

On the other hand, the narrative perspective we propose for this research positions us in a space



of co-construction. In this sense, this study moves away from our role as “researchers” and proposes a “detachment and disengagement from the Western/Eurocentric/colonial episteme” (Ortiz Ocaña & Arias López, 2019, p. 156). On that note, we propose from our locus of enunciation (Anthony’s and ours; Grosfoguel, 2011) a collaborative construction on the narratives of a student-teacher concerning his *cuir* identity. Therefore, we contend that by hearing his *cuir* story, not only can we document and understand but dwell in the spaces of struggle from which he has formed his identity in a dominant context that is heteronormative and that defines the boundaries of authenticity and recognition.

### Context of the Study

This study was conducted at a private university in Bogotá, Colombia. Anthony belonged to a program that trains student-teachers to strengthen English teaching and learning knowledge and abilities in foreign language educative contexts as practitioners. Anthony attended the school assigned by the university to do his teaching practicum three to four days a week for one semester. On that basis, as one of the researchers is a teacher educator at the university where Anthony studied, he invited Anthony to converse about his experiences as a teacher-to-be. This researcher did not participate in the data collection process to minimize any influence over the participant. Thus, the second researcher was in charge of collecting the data. Ethics approval and informed consent were obtained before the study.

The conversations occurred during one semester, every other week, and took place in one-hour meetings at the university. They were held in Spanish since Anthony desired to express his thoughts in his L1. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English by the researchers, trying to keep the ideas as verbatim as possible. The transcripts were then shared with Anthony for verification and adding or extracting ideas. At the time of the study, Anthony was in his twenties, and most of his teaching experience had been

with kids and teenagers, the most common population for the teaching practicum in the Colombian context.

### Data Analysis

In this study, we are interested in developing a vision of narrative that distances itself from the extractivist legacy of narrative research, which means the mere extraction of information from participants without their active participation (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020). In this sense, since canonical approaches to research have made participants maintain a passive attitude in the knowledge process, making them feel different, alien, distant, and observed (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2007), we attempted to interact, converse, and dialogue with Anthony, not as an object under study but as a subject whose ontological reality is valued (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). This meant listening to Anthony speaking from his locus of enunciation (Grosfoguel, 2011) as a *cuir* student-teacher. Thus, the analysis reflects Anthony’s own intervention in the narrative knowledge-making process through a series of conversations in which sensing and emotioning were key to connecting, to feeling together.

Methodologically speaking, we selected a holistic approach to analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998), in which Anthony’s experience could be first divided into sections or segments of narratives within the broader narrative to be further analyzed regarding the rest of the story. Segmenting Anthony’s experience allows for a more granular examination of specific moments, interactions, and contextual nuances that might be overlooked in a more generalized analysis method. However, since there is a political and transformative sense that we reflected in the analysis of the experiences reported here, we choose to think of Anthony’s experience as a mechanism “of a transformative project” (Beverly, 2013, p. 354) that invited us to speak of a decolonial doing.

In the narratives, we adopt a position of indwelling in which we aim to understand “the person’s point of view from an empathetic rather than a sympathetic position” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 25). Hence,

we are not talking here about an information collection process but about a sustained process of co-construction of knowledge (Arias Cardona & Alvarado Salgado, 2015) that begins from Anthony's *cuir* locatedness. We speak of a process that comprises our epistemological position, a process that does not look for epistemic legitimacy or methodological validity but encourages us and others to release the beliefs we have taken for granted. In essence, we speak of a process that allows us to avoid the knowing-known subject epistemology (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2003) mainly present in the traditional and canonic objectivist research paradigm that has also dominated teachers' subjectivities. Our commitment is our decolonial doing from which we resist controlling subjectivities through knowledge.

## Findings and Discussion

### Anthony's *Cuir* Experience

This analysis starts from Anthony's *cuir* locatedness (Grace, 2000). This means we situate his *cuir* narrative in an institutional heterosexuality construction of the teaching practicum that restrains and erases his identity as a *cuir* student-teacher. With this, we do not mean to build an exotic notion of what being *cuir* means, but we seek to both denounce that *cuir* teachers come into sight as the victims in teacher education (Lin et al., 2020) and to make heard a marginalized voice that has been silenced (Ferfolja, 2007).

Anthony's construction of *cuir* emerges from his experiences with his body in oppressive situations. For him, being *cuir* means being *marica*.<sup>1</sup> Both being *marica* and young are enacted through language pedagogy and

are constituent dimensions of his self as a language teacher. As such, his own lived experiences are the primal source of knowledge that started the production of *cuir* discourse. This reasoning is defined by Planella and Pie (2012) as *incarnated knowledge*: pedagogical knowledge that is informed by the lived experiences in the bodies of those who are oppressed by colonial structures of power. Anthony considers that educative contexts (not only as institutions but as communities of people associated with them) subalternate and make invisible the subjectivities of those who, like him, do not conform to specific standards. This is even more evident in his narrative at his pedagogical practicum stage as he enacts space-dependent performativity. This means that he can or cannot deploy his *cuir* identities as these are subordinated by the nature of such contexts. The following excerpt corresponds to an experience narrated by Anthony in a virtual English class:

Being a *marica* teacher in Colombia is problematic, especially in elementary schools. In fact, once at the practicum, I was giving a typical class, and some third graders left a microphone on. I listened to a girl saying: "Is that the teacher? He looks weird and too young." That kid! Because of my age and my appearance, I have been judged a lot. People do not take you seriously, neither do kids. I am used to introducing myself by saying my age, yet I avoid telling them my [sexual] orientation. Just because of my age, people do not take me seriously; imagine if I told them I am a *marica*. I believe that as a young man and as a *marica*, one is very exposed to being judged, especially in the school context. These biases are complex; one tries to play along with it, *to play it safe*. However, it is not only my age; it is the fact that I dress and act based on who I am. I wear light colors; I do my nails when I teach. I am a *marica* teacher; that is what I do, who I am. My classes, I think, are English; the only difference is that I choose not to imprison who I am. The problem, I think, is that I have been exposed to being perceived based on people's own representation of what being a male teacher in a school setting means. Besides, if you think about it,

<sup>1</sup> The word *marica* cannot and should not be translated. Using the word *queer* would imply that you "have to be white, you must have money; you must have a nice body to start with. Besides, using the word *queer* is a word that is written in English" (AJ+ Español, 2019, 0:07, translated by the authors). Conversely, the word *marica* is nested in the local histories of the LGTBQ+ community in Colombia; it is situated within scenarios of struggle that the LGTBQ+ community has experienced. The word *marica* can only be understood within the realm of *cuir*.

in Colombia, a mature gay man can be respected, but a young one may not. I think it is also an issue of social positioning and the respect you get with time.

Anthony's incarnated knowledge and *cuir* located-ness recognize that being a *cuir* teacher is hard when the pedagogical practicum is situated in the elementary school stage. It is a space in which Anthony feels watched and judged. This is because, according to Planella and Pie (2012), "the normalizing judgment is a constant in mainstream pedagogy" (p. 275). Interestingly, although the pedagogical practicum has been thought to be generally about knowing and doing (Kemmis et al., 2014; Lucero, 2015), it has barely been explored from its limiting dynamics. From Anthony's narration, the pedagogical practicum is both a normative and a disciplinary-based logic that mainly serves student-teachers to re-configure their perceptions of teaching as a profession and a practice (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). However, as it is believed in this study, the pedagogical practicum goes beyond this functional view. Instead, it is a scenario in which identities are built, contested, and re-signified in and through oppression, violence, or erasure.

In the excerpt above, Anthony refers to his age. We believe his self is built from his age, as it is a notable dimension of identity (Mason & Chik, 2020). Furthermore, as age can be seen as socially constructed—hence used as a dimension to privilege or marginalize subjects (Andrew, 2012)—it seems to bring forth prejudice toward a person (Greenberg et al., 2002). Moreover, Anthony is aware of the heteronormative implications age brings to his *cuirness*. His age is a matter of representation by others that is indissociable from his subjectivity (i.e., his feeling and emotioning) and his appearance as a non-normative teacher. His *being young* intersects his *cuir* identity as a young student-teacher when he chooses to wear light-colored clothes and enter the school scenario having his nails done, two heteronormative practices that have been socially assigned to women in Colombia but that Anthony enacts in his teacher body.

Anthony identifies with *cuir*, for he constructs himself as a *marica* student-teacher. *It is who he is*. Both notions allow him to avoid feeling exposed, permitting him to perform differently. This performativity is mediated by the locus, where he enunciates himself in his *cuirness*, yet he tries to *play it safe*. This is what we refer to as space-dependent performativity. For Giraldo (2016), "the term *marica* hides an additional burden [religious and political in Colombian tradition] that terms such as *queer* or *gay* simply do not possess; others are their stories, others their battles" (p. 21, translated by the authors). In Anthony's case, being a *marica* is a means to build his own identity, the identity of a teacher who exists within the border of a disciplinary and heteronormative identity in which student-teachers' subjectivities have been made invisible. Interestingly, his language pedagogy also becomes a pathway to perform and emerge from his colonized existence in his attempt to exist, as we will see in the excerpt below.

I give super open-minded classes, and we [Anthony and his students] can talk about many things. I like to offer specific debate topics that interest me in classes. One day in *bachillerato*,<sup>2</sup> we were looking at art, talking about art . . . I asked students: "Is this art? Is this not art?" We discussed avant-garde paintings. I said, "This is like a black painting with a white spot." In one of those sessions, I put the image of a Mexican painter in which Emiliano Zapata is riding on a horse with his penis on the outside in heels. Students were very interested in that. This activity allows us to reflect on how people went to lynch others at the Palace of Bellas Artes and how people made it to the entire Mexican government to make them remove the painting. You see, history was also there, not only language. Come to think of it, doing this in my classes reflects somehow my positioning, my ideology, and those kinds of things . . . even my pain as a *marica* many times. Doing this is how I think one can reflect one's identity and the topics that interest

<sup>2</sup> Spanish word for High School.



you. For example, I like architecture, and I have talked about architectural places in Bogotá that I find exciting; those things are the ones through which one begins to demonstrate who one is.

Anthony's pedagogy contests and transgresses traditional notions of language pedagogy. It is transgressive as it is not bound to, nor is it restricted by, the disciplinary canon in which non-native English language teachers and student-teachers have been constructed as subaltern professionals (Kumaravadivelu, 2014). Instead, it goes beyond this logic and

advocates that identity is not an objective to be formed but something to put at risk. It is about opening any educational space to the disruptive possibility that otherness has as a transforming difference capable of astonishing and destabilizing the subject. (Bello Ramírez, 2018, p. 119)

Anthony's constructions of a transgressive pedagogy can also be seen as a trans-pedagogy (Bello Ramírez, 2018), for it can re-imagine other practices that mobilize possibilities, teaching, learning, gender, the body, the *cuir*, and other possible pedagogical worlds. This pedagogy becomes a scenario to re-exist, a means to "open and engage venues and paths of decolonial conviviality, venues and paths that take us beyond, while at the same time undoing, the singularity and linearity of the West" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 3).

Pedagogy is then a critical component of identity. Nevertheless, the term pedagogy has not distanced itself from the instrumentalized construction that prioritizes Western/North methodological and linguistic foundations (Ubaque-Casallas, 2021). Therefore, Anthony's pedagogy allows us to think of a form of trans-pedagogy as it becomes "an ethical orientation that anyone can incarnate [which] implies an opposition to the reproduction of heterosexual norms in the classroom. It means to create creative alternatives to historicize and denature the normal and the normative" (Bello Ramírez, 2018, p. 116).

Such a trans-pedagogy makes identity visible, significant, and necessary for teaching. Moreover, this trans-pedagogy opens room to think of space-dependent performativities as *cracks* that, "for many of us, are the place of our location, agency, and everyday struggle" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 82), a place in which we can humanize ourselves and others through our doings as teachers. Not surprisingly, Anthony's identity emerges from colonial (i.e., heteronormative, gendered bias) cracks to re-signify language pedagogy as it becomes the personal enactment of his identity.

Anthony's pedagogy and being a *marica* student-teacher also challenge the static notions of identity in teacher education. We link this claim to Hall (1997), who argues that "identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being" (p. 4). Importantly, it is in this *becoming* that Anthony's pedagogy becomes an action (Castañeda-Peña & Méndez-Rivera, 2022) in which his subjectivity (i.e., sensing and emotioning) fragments the representations of an English teacher. Representations that are mainly and mostly linked to competence and performance in teaching the target language but that silence and reject embodied and gendered constructions of the self. Somehow, Anthony's pedagogy can be seen as a process of resistance and re-existence, of self-affirmation through which he aims to recover what has been silenced and dispossessed (Mignolo, 2021) in his path of becoming an English language teacher.

If you ask me what I do at school, or at least in the classroom, it makes me feel comfortable. I know that school may be difficult at times; it can hurt you badly. Colleagues, parents, and even students may pack who you are in a label. However, I consider that being a *marica* who teaches English is an opportunity for me to educate others in what they have not been educated in. I mean, we learn at home the norm. What I am doing is to undo that.

Before we close the analysis of Anthony's experience, we believe it is relevant to consider his pain as a *marica* student-teacher. When it comes to language pedagogy, it cannot be denied that it has, for many years, been crossed by abysses of silence and nullity that have naturalized expressions of inequality and violence against individuals. The same pedagogy has silenced many of those it claims to educate. Either because it is just a disciplinary imposition or because it dictates who they are to be. In one way or another, Anthony's language pedagogy, in the excerpt above, intersects with his pain. However, we do not think it is a pain-based pedagogy. As Flores (2016) points out, it is seen as:

A poetics of harm, not as a vindication of pain, . . . a condition that allows disarming those pedagogies of ignorance that inform our educational work, (re) inventing other emancipatory pedagogies, other school practices . . . other ways of knowing the body and affections, which are based on bodily autonomy, sexual self-determination, and mutual relationship. (p. 17)

Anthony's pain and pedagogy create a space in between that unmasks and makes us seek to transform ourselves and the world (Anzaldúa, 2002). From such an intersection, there is an evident fight against the oppression of the logic of identity. There is also a pedagogy that starts from the experience of the *Other*, from the consciousness and expression of multiple intersections and openings in thinking about identity. We believe it is a way of thinking and feeling from otherness, from spaces not yet inhabited by academic rationality.

Finally, since "our identity is not what we are, but depends on how and where we have been classified, how we are seen, and how we see what we see" (Mignolo, 2021, p. 448), Anthony's pedagogy and experience serve as instruments to reflect upon our wounds in teacher education. Either as English teachers, educators, or student-teachers, we have not, and cannot, escape from the already imposed classifications (e.g., non-native, black, gay, *marica*, indigenous, mestizo, immigrant, non-

proficient, women, peasant, etc.) we must deal with in the academia. Therefore, by acknowledging that "being a teacher is someone who shows the difference and takes charge to interrupt the repetition of the normal" (Bello Ramírez, 2023, 2:28:00, translated by the authors), one's pedagogy becomes the path to make identity a mechanism of liberation and re-existence.

### Final Thoughts

We contend that education, as a locus for normalization, dis-gendering, and dis-embodiment, is a fertile ground for the doings of decoloniality and its projects. In essence, in this study, Anthony's identity was contested from the *cuir* lens to erode the heteronormative frame imposed on him. The results showed that the construction of *cuir* emerges from Anthony's experiences in the body in oppressive situations. Also, a *cuir* identity is sometimes not risked on certain occasions and, in others, is enacted in transgressive ways through pedagogical practices. This analytical exercise tries to challenge the colonial paradigm that makes other multiple identities invisible (i.e., *cuir* identities). Anthony's voice is an attempt to challenge static categories about student-teachers' identities. His voice encourages an epistemology of location (Haraway, 1995; e.g., *cuir* locatedness) that regards being a *marica* student-teacher as a political act that transgresses the logics of modernity and its history of classification of subjects as "marginalized, injured, pathologized and precarious" (Bello Ramírez, 2018, p. 110).

From the experience documented here, we can draw some final remarks. First, considering that experiences of oppression or violence are lived differently alongside "Souths" and "Norths," Anthony's incarnated knowledge, voiced from the borders and cracks, invites us to re-think pedagogies that break away from the rigid categories that build our identities (Anzaldúa, 2002). Anthony's *cuirness* projects his local history and experience materialized in his attempt to become an English language teacher. As a result, we believe the

pedagogical practicum can no longer be subdued to the colonial disciplinary logic in which there is just one way to become a language teacher. Acknowledging the complicities of the patriarchal Eurocentric model of society with multiple forms of oppression of women, sometimes men, children, LGTBIQ+ communities, and other diverse subjectivities (Battiste, 2013), teacher education programs and teaching practicum contexts need to turn into safer spaces for student-teachers to become, do, and exist.

Second, in a context where education, and specifically language pedagogy, systematically attempts to dislocate practices, normalize, judge, and censor bodies, gender, and age—in a nutshell, eradicate the diversity—Anthony's identity configures space-dependent ways of being and doing in language teaching. In some cases, his *marica* and young selves are subdued in some pedagogical contexts, manifested in him not risking them or, as he says, playing them safe. In other spaces, he mobilizes a pedagogy that transgresses the notion of the body that, in traditional pedagogy, is inexistent. In other words, his trans-language pedagogy is his way of healing the wounds produced by inhabiting a space shaped by the heterosexual norm, which includes binarity in gender or corporality (Bello Ramírez, 2018). This trans-pedagogy becomes a means to exist within a system that has eradicated other forms of existence different from the linguistic one. It is an epistemology of the self. It leads us to think that this epistemology is a matter of where we are located; therefore, knowing is a question of perspective and not only of access (Tadeu da Silva, 2001).

In conclusion, although we align with the idea that modern societies only know how to structurally reproduce the colonial matrix of being in the world, this paper, as mentioned above, intends to share the idea that these violent and oppressing configurations of identities are not exercised in the same way for all subjects in all contexts (Enrico & Castro, 2021). Notably, in Anthony's narrations, we concluded that subjects (women, men, trans, *cuir*, *marica*, diverse, etc.) and

bodies are understood better from the contextual and life conditions in and through which they are constructed. Therefore, the versions of the subjective self, enacted in and through Anthony's language pedagogies, make us question how the *cuir* can be articulated with education, traditionally seen as the locus of normalization, dis-gendering, disembodiment, and order. It also makes us contest the pedagogical practicum in its onto-epistemological normative nature. Finally, inspired by the work of Davidson (2005) on the analysis of different intersectional identitarian dimensions in a school context, we should ask ourselves, "What might educators learn from experiences and expressions of alternative masculinities [femininities and other identity variances] and the successful synthesis of competing identities that are traditionally dismissed, excluded, villainized, or ignored by dominant patriarchal societies?" (p. 24). This might help us revise our colonial subjectivities and, in so doing, challenge such conceptions and practices to, hopefully, think of a pedagogy that embraces other valid ways of existing and inhabiting this world.

The study's limitations concern the extendibility and generalizability of the findings. Each person's encounters and articulations of *cuir* identity are deeply personal and contingent upon their distinct circumstances, making it challenging to generalize findings across diverse contexts. Therefore, this variability becomes a pivotal consideration for future research endeavors and practical applications. Embracing this offers a pathway for more nuanced, contextually sensitive research and practice that honors the diversity and complexity of *cuir* identities within educational contexts.

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