

Processes of EFL Teacher Identity Formation: A case study of two Algerian teachers

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Introduction

Many empirical studies investigated language learner identity in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), other studies focused more broadly on language learning in general (Hirano, 2008, Norton, 2000; and Norton & Toohey, 2002; Ricento, 2005), while others explored teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). However, few studies have examined language teacher identity, and more specifically the processes involved in EFL teacher identity construction (Tsui, 2007). Hence, this paper attempts to explore the processes of teacher identity formation of two Algerian EFL teachers using narrative inquiry to look at their lived experiences as EFL teachers and former learners of English.

To operationalize this study, let us first look at how Connelly and Clandinin (1999) define professional identity in terms of “stories lived by” which provide a story-line that teachers use to make sense of themselves and of their practices. In dealing with teacher identity formation, Clandinin and Huber (2005) for instance stress the importance of considering the context in which teachers live inside and outside of the classroom in the school setting as well as outside of the whole school system. The various environments that teachers navigate inform their practices and pedagogical choices, and impact who they are as practicing teachers.

When looking at research on teacher identity in recent years, we notice that research has focused more on the issue of native-English-speaking teachers (NEST)

versus nonnative-English-speaking teachers (NNEST) in the field of TESOL (Griffin & Mahboob, 2006; Lazaraton, 2003; Nemtchinova, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003) or on racial and gender identities (Kubota and Lin, 2009; Lin, 2004). Such research tended to focus on one single aspect of the English language teacher identity and looked at it from an atomistic and simplistic perspective. Language teacher identity is the sum of complex intertwined factors that might be addressed separately but never in total isolation from one another. On the surface level, research on NESTs-NNESTs seems to have less significant implications for the Algerian context for a multitude of reasons.

First, Algeria can never be that attractive to NESTs because to be employed as a teacher in K-16, you need to be a graduate of the Ecole Normale Supérieure (Normal Schools for Teacher Training), hence foreigners who are NESTs cannot be employed unless they get a special work permit that is very difficult to get. Here, I would open parentheses to point out that even Algerian nationals who pursue their education abroad cannot be employed as educators unless they apply for equivalency to their degrees at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Once the equivalency is awarded, they will be employed. This is a process that is known for being quite long and arduous.

Second, the wages in Algeria are not that attractive because the standard of living in Algeria is too low compared to that of the U.S. or the U.K., or to the wages offered to NESTs in the Middle East, for instance, because the Algerian currency is devalued. However, in the last couple of years, some collaboration has been promoted by the local Algerian authorities, enacted by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), mainly through cooperative programs principally with the U.S. Department of State via the English Language Fellow Program whereby U.S educators in TESOL are sent overseas to promote and foster English language teaching (ELT). Besides from 2007 to 2011, British Council Algeria also provided in-service training for a thousand English teachers

in “enhancing classroom management, developing communication skills, and treating errors” by British Council experts.

In this regard, empirical studies are needed to examine how successful these programs are in terms of particularity, practicality, and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) in relation to the Algerian context and to what extent Teacher Training Schools are involved in these programs given that they are the sole and unique institutions in charge of teacher education in Algeria. In addition, no studies have addressed gender-related issues in Algeria. From my personal experience as an English teacher and teacher educator, I believe that gender is a relevant factor to consider given that the majority of EFL teachers are females, but working in male-dominant administrations.

Another important aspect of teaching in general and not only of English teaching in Algeria is that teachers work under rigid regulations. They are required to strictly follow the national curricula because at the end of elementary, middle, and high school, students take a national exit exam to pass to the next level. Teachers are frequently blamed whenever students perform poorly in these exams. Worse, at times teachers have to follow and cover the entire curriculum regardless of the students’ mastery of the program being taught. Some teachers, especially those who have permanent teaching positions and tenure, take the initiative of instilling changes in the syllabi they use. Syllabi in Algeria are not developed by teachers but rather imposed on them. As a matter of fact given that teachers are accountable to the school’s administration and to the MoNE, they tend to follow the national curricula to the letter. This explains why teachers may experience struggles and conflicts between what they actually do, want to do, and what they believe they should be doing in their praxis.

As a matter of fact, given that teachers have to consider a multitude of factors related to their belief-system, character, attitudes, working environment, working conditions, and living conditions among other things that impact their praxis inside the

classroom; their professional identity cannot be considered from a unique perspective. This explains why studies dealing with the multidimensionality of professional identity focused on the “set of sub-identities” (Mishler, 1999, p. xv) and how they interrelate to form a professional identity. The sub-identities a teacher possesses should “more or less harmonize” and, more importantly, should “not conflict [with other sub-identities]” (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, 2004, p. 122) in order to be successful. Hence, professional teacher identity involves a personal and social realm. The personal realm is self-centered and the social one is mainly related to the professional context in which teachers evolve, and the relationship between the personal and the social is to be thoroughly investigated. It not only affects teachers’ agency but it can even inhibit it.

Finally, the relation between teacher agency and the social structure where teachers are trained and later teach is not static; it is dynamic, ongoing, situated and is constantly being negotiated. The Algerian context has seen so many changes because of the educational reforms implemented throughout the last two decades and especially in English Language Teaching (Miliani, 2000) and which are often times controversial. Certain institutional policies constrain teachers and limit their agency. Besides, lack of resources and professional training opportunities characteristic of the EFL workplace, and Algeria is no exception, makes teaching a challenge during times of reforms and instability. In light of these conditions, the present study aims to explore the processes employed by two Algerian English teachers to negotiate and construct their professional identities using narrative inquiry as a research method.

Theoretical framework: Wenger’s social theory foregrounding identity

Identity is a slippery concept and research on identity as narrative is among the most debatable topics in anthropology, sociology, and education (Juzwik, 2006). As a matter of fact, because identity in essence is subject to change over time and space, it is crucial to discern the processes involved in teacher identity formation for the resulting

identity is context-driven and influences teachers' subsequent practices. Given the *particularity* of EFL contexts, teacher identity plays a crucial role in developing pedagogical practices that are *particular* to this context, *practical* and *possible* (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Teacher identity stands as an empowering or disempowering force in the classroom for the pedagogical practices the teacher chooses, promotes, or develops in and beyond the classroom, and for the teacher's professional growth and development within the various communities to which she belongs as well.

Within the Community of Practice (CoP) framework, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning occurs through active participation in the "practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities [through *social engagement*]" (p. 4) (for a detailed description of CoP, c.f. Lave & Wenger, 1991). Hence, the definition of identity that I adopt for this study is informed by Wenger's (1998) theory whereby identity is "a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities", it is also "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2000, p. 5).

Based on the previous definitions, I view teacher identity in this paper through autobiographical narratives as a dual process: (1) the process of one's past and ongoing learning trajectories, and (2) the process of negotiating membership in the different communities of practice (CoP) to which one belongs. This definition of identity inherently accounts for its development in terms of imagining who we will be in light of the previous learning experiences we had, and how we position ourselves in our current environment in terms of where we belong, to what extent we do actually belong, how much freedom or restrictions we have in this particular environment. In other words, it demonstrates the processes of identity formation, viz. *identification*, i.e. with whom do

we identify? and *negotiability*, i.e. how and to what extent do we negotiate our membership and involvement in the CoP through participation and agency, belonging and power that socio-cultural theories attempt to explicate?

Clearly, socio-cultural theories offer a good perspective to look into how identity, in this case teacher identity, develops across time and space through a dialogic relationship between the self and the members of a social CoP. Before becoming members of their CoP at school, teachers had already been members of other CoPs within their teacher education program or university program, and with other teachers within the in-service programs they took part in and, if lucky enough, within international professional organizations if they can ever afford membership. In other words, teachers will be negotiating their identities on many levels as they are constantly part of different CoPs at the same time. Moreover, the processes involved in teacher identity formation are to be viewed within an activity system that has its roots in the cultural and historical activity theory which is based on Vygotsky's theory (1978). In the scope of this study, I will be focusing, as I already mentioned, on Wenger's (1998) dual process of identity formation of identification and negotiability.

Identification

Wenger (1998) proposes a very comprehensive model of identity formation. According to him, identity "define[s] who we are by the ways we experience our selves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify our selves" (149). He further states that this is done through our community membership, learning trajectories (where we have been and where we are going), reconciling different memberships into one identity, and developing global discourses. In the case of this study, teachers will define themselves through the investment they make by being members of different professional communities in different contexts through negotiation and meaning making within those various communities, and this is how their identity is being formed.

Undoubtedly, for those teachers the investment made in the self will be conceived in relation to co-operative factors that will help them either associate with other members of that particular community or differentiate themselves from them. Thus, identity will be defined by the different activities engaged in through participation as well as the activities not engaged in through non-participation. The latter might be accompanied by tension. Simply put then, identification plays out mainly through *participation* in the different social groups in which one is involved by being an active member who interacts with other members in the group. Identification, however, is a very important process that gives a sense of belonging to certain communities and is thus interpersonal.

Negotiability

Negotiability “refers to the ability, facility and legitimacy to contribute to, take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration” (Wenger, 1998, p. 197). By negotiating meaning, for instance, we give sense to events and practices, and determine participation and degree of participation, and actions engaged in. As teachers we might, for instance, decide whether or not to take part in the communal pedagogical decisions within our schools, or how much involvement to invest. Clearly, formation of communities per se gives rise to “economies of meaning” where various participants have various degrees of “ownership” over the meaning that essentially defines those communities. In meaning making, members take on different roles that vary according to the power relations in which they are involved. Yet, those meanings do not have a static position; they are negotiable and can thus gain or lose power. They are dynamic and ever-changing; those who created them may lose ownership over them. Others can take them over and re-negotiate them. Wenger (1998)

argues that inability to develop ownership of meaning because of the power relations at play often leads to non-participation and at times even to marginality which is often accompanied by stress and tension and may result in frustration, in my opinion. Ideally, identification and negotiability lead to membership and ownership of meaning respectively.

Finally, there are three processes that can be a source of identification and negotiability. These are *engagement*, *imagination*, and *alignment*. By *engagement*, Wenger refers mainly to *mutual* engagement which facilitates the creation of communities of practice whereby individuals contribute to one another's development in a dialogic situation. *Imagination*, however, is both an individual and collective activity by means of which we create new images of the self and the world by transcending time and space. It involves distancing ourselves from reality, stepping back and not engaging in the present practice. Imagination involves an awareness of past actions and potential future developments for actions and meanings by us and others. In other words, imagination entails self-awareness, self-reflection, and ability to reposition oneself within the community and imagine new configurations for the whole community. Finally, *alignment* emphasizes common patterns of action to which one adheres and which, in turn, helps to connect to and coordinate with the broader community and thus has a positive aspect. Conversely, alignment might be seen as having a disempowering effect when one blindly follows the rules and an empowering effect when one goes beyond the rules and creates new meanings.

In essence, it could be argued that teacher identity can be constructed through the processes of identification and/or negotiability and will involve engagement, imagination and / or alignment. Thus, the following research questions are formulated to address how two Algerian English teachers construct their identities. What I want to know is:

- (1) How identification and negotiability interact to form teacher identity?
- (2) What is its subsequent impact on their practices? And finally,
- (3) Does their former learning experiences interfere in this dual process?

Method

Participants

The participants in this small-scale research are two Algerian EFL teachers pursuing their graduate studies in the United States. The first participant, Nadia, is an experienced high school EFL teacher who has also served as a teacher coordinator. This means that she was involved in working with her English teacher colleagues to ensure that the curriculum be covered and that the course progression meets the requirements for the national Baccalaureate exam which is the high school exit exam. Being a teacher coordinator involves preparing and implementing pedagogical activities to share with one's colleagues and writing administrative reports. The second participant Lamia has been teaching at the university for 7 years before joining graduate school in the U.S. Unlike Nadia, she has never been involved in administrative or pedagogically related issues and decision-making with her colleagues because she was a part time teacher and had no official position or status. She would be the equivalent of an adjunct at U.S. universities. These teachers were chosen because they belong to two different generations of teachers, have varying teaching experiences in two different contexts; one has a long history teaching and the second much less. Besides, one was full-time and the other was part-time. These differences will inform us better about the processes involved in teacher identity formation and how much they influence it.

For ethical considerations, before I started this study, I scheduled a debriefing session with the participants. During this session, I provided a brief description of my research topic, its goal, and its benefits both to the participants themselves as well as to the EFL field in Algeria. To ensure their privacy and confidentiality, I assured the

participants that no information that might help identify them will be disclosed and that I will use pseudonyms.

Instrument: Narrative inquiry for teacher identity formation

Narratives have a temporal development in that we understand and make meaning out of our current experiences as they grew out of our past happenings and significant events, but also as they foreshadow future decisions and behaviors. Narrative inquiry seeks to understand human experience that varies from one individual to another. The understandings we reach are multiple, localized, and contextualized truths embedded in the narratives that the research participants tell and which are situated in space and time.

After selectively recruiting the research participants, I asked them using narrative prompts to write a personal narrative whereby they trace and reflect on their learning trajectories and teaching experiences in Algeria. During data collection, I conducted many skype sessions with the research participants. Hence as they shared their narratives with me, I also shared my experience with them and elicited more information from them. The endeavor of participants sharing their lived experiences ended by a final lengthy and exhaustive narrative that forms the data of this study.

Data analysis

The data yielded by the participants' personal narratives were analyzed chronologically. I started with their experiences as language learners from middle schools, where they first started to learn English, through university, and then their teaching experience until they left Algeria to start their graduate programs at American universities. However given the limited scope of this paper, I focused on key periods of their learning and their teaching experiences as they relate to Wenger's (1998) processes of identification and negotiability. Second, informed by Tsui (2007), I identified the major conflicts they faced as language learners and then as teachers of English to investigate any potential incidence of their lived experiences as learners and then as

teachers in an EFL context. Narrative inquiry involves participants going inward and outward, forward and backward in their lived experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000); inward because there was much introspection for auto-analysis, and outward as they shared it, forward as they projected and envisioned their future teaching praxis and backward as they revisit their lived experiences and practices.

Results and Discussion

The results yielded by the teachers' narratives have been classified in three main themes that highlight: (1) how past EFL learning experiences shape future EFL teaching experiences, (2) how teachers as former learners of English consider the CoP concept as a myth and feeling "no belonging" to any CoP, and last but not least, (3) when negotiating one's position in the workplace, how power related issues emerge and affect subsequent agency.

Past EFL learning experiences shaping future EFL teaching experiences

After Algeria got its independence from France in 1962, a massive postcolonial Arabicization program was launched. The aim was to restore Arabic as the country's official language to consolidate national unity. Many Algerians who have been educated in French had to learn and use Arabic at some points in their careers. Arabicization policy was generalized, but it was very controversial (For more details about language planning and education in Algeria, c.f. Benrabah, 2007). This language policy, however, did not prevent encouraging the teaching and learning of other languages such as English mainly, as well as Spanish, Italian, and German, among others. French was thus taught as a Second Language (L2) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). When first meeting Nadia, all our exchanges were almost exclusively in French. We rarely used Algerian Arabic. When pondering these exchanges, I realize that Nadia had most of her

schooling in French and this explains her native-like fluency in French. Besides, she is from a middle-class family whose members were mostly educated in French.

When recalling her EFL learning experiences, Nadia stressed the fact that her English teacher in middle school had a big impact on her. This was the first time she discovered English, and thanks to his exceptional teaching pedagogy, she told me during our first meeting that she “fell in love with English”. The positive learning experience with her teacher impacted her choice of which foreign language to learn in high school. Nadia, at that time, had the possibility to switch to another foreign language but, given her positive experience in learning English, she chose English. She reported:

I first learned English in middle school. At that time, we used the audiolingual method and we had a *very very good* teacher. In high school, I could have chosen another foreign language but because I liked the way that teacher taught English I decided to stick to English. I had a very smooth and positive English learning experience. (Nadia, personal narrative, emphasis in original)

The impact of such positive learning experiences on future teaching pedagogy is clearly articulated by Nadia again in the following excerpt of her narrative:

My English teachers were simply fantastic. They would never make negative remarks to students, hurt them or laugh at them even though it was very difficult not to laugh at some classmates’ pronunciation. When I started to teach I understood how important teachers’ reactions and feedback are to students’ responses. (Nadia, personal narrative)

On the other hand, Lamia also linked the effective English teachers she had at school, and who were full of energy, with her first teaching experience as highlighted in the following excerpt:

When I was at school, my English classes were good, especially during the first years of instruction. My English teachers used different types of methods. What I liked in my classes was the energy that my teachers brought to the class. When I first taught, I was young and full of energy and my students felt closer to me more than to other teachers and we had mutual trust. My teaching philosophy didn’t

change but in the future, I'll use many things I'm learning now. (Lamia, personal narrative)

Both narratives from Nadia and Lamia go hand in hand with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) claim that past experiences inform present and future experiences. The past learning experiences of both teachers informed and influenced their teaching experiences so far as well as their future teaching practices, after finishing their studies as they envision their future praxis.

On the surface level, there might seem to be a cause-to-effect relationship between the teacher's own learning experience(s) and her prospective teaching pedagogy. However, the relationship is not that simple. One has to keep in mind that any teacher had learning experiences in the subject she teaches and in other subjects as well. These learning experiences help teachers shape the way they envision who a teacher is and how a teacher is to behave. Along this line of thought, in another excerpt of her narrative, Nadia wrote:

When I was a student, I used to compare my teachers, not only the English teachers throughout my education but also the other teachers. It was clear that English teachers had something peculiar that the others did not. It took me time and even teaching experience myself to discover that there was something particular about this language and that is why I became an English teacher. (Nadia, personal narrative)

In her narrative, Lamia too compared the teachers she had:

I didn't like the other classes where I had teachers who dictated the lessons because they were too teacher-centered; the students didn't have time to talk or ask questions, just write. It was not good unlike the English classes. (Lamia, personal narrative)

Nadia's and Lamia's memories show clearly that they constructed their identities as teachers by means of imagination. Imagination, still as learners, enabled them to

reflect on their lived experiences, and to imagine what a “good” teacher is in their eyes, and to imagine some practices as future teachers. Imagination helped them to construct their identities as teachers because “much of what teachers know about teaching comes from their memories as students, as language learners, and as students of language teaching” (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p. 401). In other words, teacher identity is constructed well before becoming a practitioner teacher. It has its origins in one’s learning experiences as a student, language learner and student-teacher.

The community of practice myth, feeling “no belonging”

The first striking result that came out of the narratives of the lived experiences of Nadia and Lamia is that both could not identify with a CoP. In both participants’ narratives, EFL learning has been a purely personal endeavor, which by no means related to a CoP in their belief. Part of the reason why Nadia believed no CoP existed for EFL in Algeria is because of the dominance of French. Nadia was unequivocal about this:

I never practiced English outside school. My belief is that we had no CoP in our English classes in Algeria and least outside them. Not many of us were interested in learning and using English. In fact, French was very dominant even within English majors. (Nadia, personal narrative)

For Lamia, however, no CoP really existed despite the slight group work she had to do with her classmates because of the existing tension. She wrote:

Throughout all my education, I never felt I was part of a CoP, a concept I discovered in my MA classes, because of my female classmates’ jealousy and rivalry. Group work was rare and I was a good student. I always had good grades. English was not really spoken. We used Arabic and French. (Lamia, Personal Narrative)

Later, throughout their narratives they used the term CoP but without being convinced of it at least as far as their learning experiences were concerned. Nadia wrote:

I never conceived of my English classes as a CoP. Clearly, it was a community but for sure not of practicing English. We used to go to class, to be together, to spend some time together but I have the impression that we practiced nothing. (Nadia, Personal Narrative)

A prevalent theme in the two participants' narratives is "not belonging" to any CoP. They did not conceive of themselves as belonging to any community throughout their learning experience, and later during their teaching experience. Membership to the communities they belonged to were negotiated under tension as will be shown later. These excerpts can be analyzed and interpreted either as a refusal to belong to, or it shows the extent of marginalization in the group as they felt English could not be spoken in their community because of the rivaling French or widespread Arabic depending on the groups' dynamics. Lamia explained that if the group members mastered French, they will use more French, otherwise they have recourse to Arabic while Nadia pointed out that they spoke mostly French especially at the university.

When both participants entered university, and started their English language and literature programs, they developed what might be termed "communities of learning" and not communities of practice as they conceived them. In other words, these participants acknowledged that a community was formed at the university but just to learn English, to do exercises together, to help one another but not to practice English. In fact, these participants understood a CoP as a community where eventually they would use and speak English only. As long as they did not speak English, then their groupings cannot be called CoP. These findings suggest that English served as a linguistically mediating and defining tool for becoming a member of the CoP (Norton, 2000).

These participants, up to the point when they were writing their narratives, fail to recognize that it is possible to stand back and position themselves in relation to the practice of English. The fact that they contributed in their communities as learners at the university shows that they were active members, but who were aligned to the common

practices in the students' CoP at that time. Here, alignment is to be seen as an identification process of these participants which they use to position themselves within their community. A common feature of students' communities of practice in Algeria is that its members do not necessarily speak English. This is the way these teachers aligned to the already existing CoP rule patterns because they reported that if they used English, they would have been considered snobbish and showing off.

Alignment, then, was seen by these participants as having a negative connotation because they did not misalign and create new rules. The very fact that they followed the commonly agreed upon systems of rules whereby members of study groups work together on the assignments, help one another over various tasks, and collaborate together without speaking English gave them the impression that they were not developing a CoP. However, despite the participants' impression, they were still using and practicing English. The tasks, activities and assignments they were working on were for the different English classes.

In school when I had to work with my classmates, it was to help them because actually I never needed their help. Group work should be two-ways. I was doing well in my English classes. If I try to speak English, some of them will laugh at me or remind me implicitly that I was showing off. (Lamia, personal narrative)

In this account, Lamia's understanding of participation is that it has to be mutual, while participation does not necessarily have to be mutual. By mutual I mean that all interlocutors in the community, in this case the group members, have to interact in English and actively participate to learn from one another. Lamia felt she was learning nothing from her peers, while Nadia was more aware of the groups' dynamics. She stated: "during group work, I knew in advance that my classmates expect me to do most of the talk and explanation. I was better than they were and had to contribute more. I spoke English more than they did". Again, this shows that the participants considered

the use of English to be exclusive. Nadia's view of this community reveals another mode of identity construction at play, which is engagement. In Wenger's (1998) model, engagement is a characteristic of the expert practitioner. In light of this, Nadia can be seen and was indeed an expert member in her community. She felt she was responsible, and thus got engaged in helping her classmates. Conversely, Lamia's account shows that she perceived herself as excluded despite her active participation in the study group. Her participation is questioned because she contributed, but did not believe she actually belonged to the study groups. She wrote "[b]eing all the time good in English, I felt I was constantly wasting my time whenever I did a group work. I knew better than the other classmates".

These teachers, when they were yet language learners, had their own conceptions of what language learning and language use were. They used these conceptions subsequently as shaping lenses of the communities they were involved in by fully engaging and participating in them, or engaging without a real sense of participation.

Negotiating one's position in the workplace: Power and agency

Being an English teacher and teacher educator, I find Wenger's (1998) social perspective on identity formation ideal to account for the related and emerging issues of power and agency that English teachers face in Algeria and possibly elsewhere. Such issues influence teacher identity formation, and the way teachers subsequently position themselves in their respective societies or various CoPs. Power related issues are worth looking at because they not only impact teacher identity development, but they also impact their relation with their students, the hierarchy within the school and administration in general, and their overall social positioning.

The two participants displayed different processes of negotiating their identities but were alive with a sense of challenge that was preceded by a sense of not knowing

where to position themselves at times, and other times by imagining their own practices as teachers.

Imagination is empowering in that it enables individuals to reflect on their positions within a CoP. It also shapes one's perceptions by exploring previous and current practices whether they are his/her or someone else's as a previous teacher or colleague for instance. Informed by Wenger (1998), we can claim that the participants learned through imagination by reflection and exploration. Such reflections and explorations will shape a new teacher identity. Both teachers reflected on their previous EFL learning experiences, and were conscious about how they helped them shape their subsequent pedagogies as EFL teachers. Nadia, for example, linked her first day of teaching to her first English teacher:

Getting a teaching position was extremely arduous and challenging. When I first entered the classroom to teach, I remembered my first English teacher. So my first teaching experience was awesome. I was active, motivated, and so eager to teach. Now, I learned so many new things to use in my future teaching position. (Nadia, personal narrative)

Here, Nadia portrayed an identity of the teacher she imagined herself performing once she finishes her M.A., and starts teaching at the university in Algeria. However, unlike Nadia, Lamia did not know where to position herself, and how to enact her identity. She still envisions new ways of doing things. In other words, she had a trade-off imagination that was to take a new shape under a new administrative configuration.

I started teaching the fall following my graduation...Because of the shortage of English teachers at the university level they allow us to teach right after graduation, I would say nearly for free. Some classmates thought it was exploitation. But I could not say no to my professors. When I taught many classes, there are things I didn't like about my former professors but I couldn't say no or challenge them because they were working in the administration. I felt like I had to respect them. It was until that professor was no more in charge of the

administration that I felt somehow released and could then implement some of my ideas successfully (Lamia, personal narrative).

Interestingly enough, both teachers had to identify themselves as members within a new CoP, a community of teachers where experienced and novice teachers had to co-exist and negotiate the terms of good practice that Nadia for instance experienced and voiced in the following excerpt:

When I first entered the classroom to teach, I was really excited because it's a whole new experience and occasion. You feel somehow that you are a new person but it also made me think and analyze what I was doing and what else I wanted to do. I constantly thought about how I was teaching... When we had meetings it was not easy to say what I really thought about what a problem was or how to address it. At the beginning, I wanted to prove to myself that I can do something, that I can share my thoughts but hesitated a lot. (Nadia, personal narrative)

As novice teachers, both Nadia and Lamia were on the surface level non-participants in their respective CoP. However, their narratives show that they were deeply engaged in their profession and fully participating on a deep reflective level. The point is that they were not acknowledged by their working environments, and had to negotiate more powerful positions. This in *itself* says much about how teachers negotiate their identities, and reposition themselves depending on the institution where they teach. Both had to achieve a sense of transition, whereby they could step onto an acknowledged active participatory role as shown by Lamia's experience below:

I think with time and as I taught new courses, I had to develop self-confidence for myself as a teacher first. I still could not share my thoughts concerning the teaching techniques verbally but realized I have to show them in practice. Teaching is challenging but rewarding. I was doing well. In later meetings, if I wanted to say something about my course I could do it and felt strong and confident about it. (Lamia, personal narrative)

Clearly, identities, then, are constructed out of the interplay between identification and negotiability which will ultimately lead to issues of power. We have seen in the case of both Nadia and Lamia that although they were teaching in different institutions, and had different if not opposed ranks, they had at the beginning to align with the already existing school or university dynamics, but keeping in mind through imagination their interests and conceptions - of what “good” teaching is - which were competing with, and challenging the dynamics at play until they enacted them by putting them into practice, and proving to themselves, and to their colleagues that they were successful.

Conclusion

Examination of the processes of identity formation of Nadia and Lamia has identified a number of features that bring some new understanding from the learning experiences of both participants as EFL learners, and how they impacted positively their identity formation as future teachers of English. Their past EFL learning experiences shaped their future EFL teaching practices. Imagination was key in developing their prospective identities while being students. This same process will still be at work as they were envisioning their future teaching after finishing their M.A. TESOL programs. These findings suggest that teachers have to be aware of their impact on their students. In this study, the impact was positive, but it also suggests that there is possibility that teachers impact negatively their students. As EFL teachers, we have to be very cautious about the images we project, and about how we influence our students.

The participants in this study did not believe they were part of a CoP as learners because they were not speaking English continuously. Their understanding is that a CoP of English has to be totally linguistically mediated in English. Besides, they had their own conception of what language learning and language use were, and these influenced their engagement in various activities in their learning communities without having a real sense of participation.

Another crucial finding is that the participants kept negotiating their identities through alignment to the already existing school or institution's order, and only through engaging in negotiating meaning, could they really fully participate in their respective communities as both claimed ownership over the meanings they made. Here again, imagination was at play. Both had to imagine themselves performing what they believed was "good practice" in their communities, and then stepped onto putting them into practice.

Imagination, alignment, and engagement have been used in identifying and negotiating their identities as teachers. These are not mutually exclusive processes, and they have no order of occurrence. The ongoing and dynamic interaction between identification and negotiability resulted in a teacher identity that is situated in time and space, but was open to re-negotiability.

Implications for Teacher Education and Future Research

Throughout this study, both teachers were moving back and forth in their learning and teaching experiences by reflecting on them. Reflection is a key aspect in identification, negotiability, alignment, imagination and engagement. As a teacher educator in Algeria, I believe that including a course on Reflective English Teaching in teacher education programs can turn out to be very useful, and will yield some important insights in teacher identity formation, development and (re)negotiation especially at times of pedagogical instability and educational reforms. The Algerian educational system has been the arena of tremendous changes and reforms. Programs are revised and changed, teaching methods are superseded, new textbooks are designed, but nothing is really done in terms of teacher education known as initial teacher training or pre-service teacher training. Some attempts are being made within in-service teacher training in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, and British Council Algeria as I have

already mentioned earlier. However as a proponent of critical pedagogy, I believe that we have to provide transactional spaces for teachers and student-teachers to reflect on their identity formation.

So far in the current system, there is no reflection component in EFL teacher education programs. Incorporating a course on *Reflections on EFL Teaching and Learning* in teacher training programs in the final year of the course work along with the practicum student-teachers perform will be a venue where they can share, articulate and reflect on their own EFL learning trajectories and teaching practicum. In doing so, they will be mentored by their teacher educators who will help them relate their lived learning experiences to better inform their prospective teaching practices.

Mindful of the results of the present study, it is worth identifying some possible future research in teacher identity studies in the Algerian context that can further examine the processes teachers employ to construct their identities. One possibility is to focus on gender related issues, and their impact on teacher identity formation because both participants were females. Male teachers may employ different processes of identity formation, and may react differently in the CoPs they are involved in. Finally, teachers' pre-service and in-service trainings are worth investigating in terms of their core components, and how they empower prospective teachers and practicing teachers respectively.

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