Embodied gender/sex identity and English language teaching: Two narratives and dissident identities from Colombia

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Little is known about the professional identities of teachers of English in terms of how their gender identity is related to teaching practices. This study discusses how teachers of English narrate their gender identities and how embodiment influences their teaching principles, beliefs, and experiences. The study draws on a critical and decolonial understanding of gender/sex as embodied and its relation to embodied teaching practices. This narrative study is based on interviews with two gay Colombian teachers at a Bogotá (Colombia) private language centre. Findings reveal that the participants' teaching practices are permeated by gender performativity, indicating that orthodox pedagogies do not consider the influence of factors like gender, age, race, social class, and level of knowledge.

Introduction

Professional identity has been linked to various factors, including social relationships, emotions, and personal experiences (Johnston, 2012). Professional identity studies tend to be distorted by a dependency on foreign knowledge, policies, technologies, and teacher training that are valued above all (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012; Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Le Gal, 2019). Teacher education programs appear to obey economic demands rather than the needs of teachers and students (Banegas, Corrales & Poole, 2020; González, 2007; Lopez et al., 2021).

Relations of power (Foucault, 1996) shape the teacher's identity in the classroom, expressed in interactions with people and institutions (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lucero, 2019). This reveals the "tension between investment in various forms of belonging and the ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts" (Wenger, 1998, p. 188). This means that teachers' identities are shaped through interaction with academic community members and discourses established, imposed, and normalised in a top-down fashion. Such discourses seem to ignore the range of identities, offering a fixed category that excludes teachers who express themselves in other ways (Castañeda-Peña, 2018; Fausto-Sterling, 2019).

The Western idea of professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Kaasila et al., 2021) means that a "successful" and "highly-effective" teacher must satisfy the global/capitalist system's demands. Teaching practices become standardised, stigmatising "pedagogical performances" that teachers' race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation may shape. Little is known about what teachers of English do in the classroom and what this reveals

about their professional identity, especially when their practices are "gendered" due to their non-normative sexual orientations.

Teaching is a political act embedded in power dynamics that must be analysed within many contradictory positions that reinforce unjust practices (Madge et al., 2009; Cachelin & Nicolosi, 2022). This study draws on the decolonial approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2014), which questions static notions of professional identity. Examining these notions through the lens of gender may enrich the understanding of embodied pedagogical practices. Therefore, this article asks: What gender/sex identities and teaching practices are narrated when the embodiment is used as an analytical lens to comprehend teachers of English professional identities? The aim is to study embodied gender/sex identities and pedagogical practices as alternatives to unveil teachers' experiences.

Theoretical framework

In terms of teacher education and professional practice, there is a case in Argentina where comprehensive sexual education was explicitly included as course content in initial teacher education (Banegas et al., 2020). Student-teachers had the opportunity "of designing and adapting materials, activities, and complete lesson plans which revolved around aspects of sexuality and gender as social constructs" (p. 17). In Colombia, Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2017) introduced the experience of teaching an optional course about language and identity, focusing on gendered identities. In-service teachers, who took that graduate course, appeared to embrace the idea of thinking further about classroom interaction, materials use, and activity design with views of inclusion which helped some build systematic research about their practices (e.g., Chaparro, 2021; Benavides-Buitrago, 2021). Also, Castañeda-Peña (2019) has argued that it is paramount to consider in teacher education not only students but teachers' sexual and gendered identities as "understanding this could result in educational policies at a general level helping teachers at a particular level to make more gendered discourses available for […] learners" (p. 127).

Jackson's (2007) seminal work, exploring the lives of gay and lesbian teachers in the USA, illustrated teachers' struggles in an essentially homophobic school system. The study informs how identity negotiation also shapes teaching practices, where LGBTIQ+ teachers are trapped by the coming out dilemma and the phases they go through when they decide to do so. Vitanova (2018, p. 36), in the USA, argued for the inclusion of intersectional identities to understand teachers' agency (e.g., coming out) because identity markers such as gender, race, and sexual orientation "depend on the specific contextual factors and on specific relationships with others within particular time frames." This also implied that no generalisations could be made in these studies that ascertain LGBTIQ+ teachers' identities. In the USA, Paiz (2018), drawing on queer theories, advocated LGBTIQ+ inclusive approaches that make social justice central in education. Nevertheless, other studies have explored disability and gender issues within the bullying spectrum (Methlagl, 2002).

This resonates with Banegas et al. (2020) and with Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2017, 2021) in the sense that

> queering […] teaching must begin with teacher preparation. It must not solely be left to graduate students to queer their teacher training. Guiding graduate students through both modeling queer pedagogies and curating a critical list of readings on LGBTQ+ issues […] is vital to preparing future practitioners and researchers to queer their practice" (Paiz, 2018, p. 270).

Paiz made further recommendations for teaching practice in his most recent work (2021). This concise review presented a significant concern for the comprehension of language teacher education, drawing on frameworks that comprise ideas of diversity and social justice. However, considerable work needs to be done to understand the lives and teaching practices of LGBTIQ+ language teachers, as Castañeda-Peña (2019) claimed. In that direction, Ubaque & Castañeda-Peña (2020, 2021) have explored English language teachers' non-normative corporalities and sexual orientation identities. Yet little is known about how teaching practices are embodied by language teachers who have non-conforming sexual orientations. This study contributes to educational research that asks about the professional identities of teachers of English in terms of how their gender identity is related to their teaching practices.

Moreover, this study posits that professional identity is the mechanism by which teachers of English enact not only their knowledge and beliefs but also their own "embodied gender, or gender in the body" (Fausto-Sterling, 2019, p. 533). This means that teachers' performances (i.e., embodied pedagogical practices) display systems of beliefs, professional self, and embodied gender. Therefore, the embodiment must be understood partly in societal norms that govern specific representations of people's bodies. For example, some Colombian schools make both students and teachers follow a dress code and subject them to rules about hair length, makeup use, etc. Students' bodies are required (i.e., disciplined) to remain silent, sit down or engage in specific physical education exercises.

Additionally, depending on their gender, bodies are judged and prevented from teaching specific subjects. The first law regulating the education profession in Colombia (Decree 2277 of 1979. Article 46. Causes of Misconduct) forbade homosexual teachers to teach, defining them as "aberrant." This changed just at the end of the 20th century. Three decades after, acknowledging the presence and professional identity of homosexual teachers of English in Colombia (Lander, 2018) and how their embodied pedagogical practices manifest remains underexplored. This could be mirrored across educational world contexts.

Bodies have not been considered to understand teachers' subjectivities. Tobin and Hayashi (2015) argued that academic fields often ignore bodily practices. This also means that bodies have colonised existences (Galceran, 2016). Colonisation not only prohibits "inhabit, or embody, the room – the classroom" (Alerby et al., 2014, p.

20), but it also privileges dominant discourses of 'normality' in teacher education (e.g., Cabezas-Galicia et al., 2012; Phillips, 2014).

This chimes with the idea that "social agents are endowed with habitus, inscribed in their bodies by past experiences. These systems of schemes of perception, appreciation, and action enable them to perform acts of practical knowledge" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 138). Therefore, the embodiment is an ongoing process achieved through performativity (Butler, 1990) and practices where identities and subjectivities are produced (Harman, 2016). Professional identity may then be explored through the performances of gender identities embodied in teaching practices.

Embodied gender/sex

In this study, gender is understood as arrangements of social performances (Butler, 1988; Cameron & Kulick, 2003) expressed in how one dresses, talks, thinks, and uses gestures, among other expressions of identity. These social performances represent the self, immersed in a social context that hegemonically sets the rules for individuals. The context in which these gender performances shape the norms of gender practices, either implicitly or explicitly, imposes patriarchal and heteronormative restrictions on individuals who are not white, male, and heterosexual, reinforcing the traditional dominance of male values (Bourdieu, 2001).

This article acknowledges gender as a constitutive element of the colonial matrix (Fabbri, 2014) and considers gender identity a vehicle for self-realisation in daily life choices. Assuming a gay, transsexual, bisexual, female, or male identity, how a person behaves is a personal decision that challenges the idea that gender is either a man or a woman (Stoller, 1984). This is why gender needs to be understood from a decolonial standpoint (Destremau & Verschuur, 2012). It is not enough to accept the existence of multiple and varied genders or acknowledge the traditional oppression of other genders by men. Along with straight women and men, there is a wide variety of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans/cross-gender people worldwide whose identities are further shaped and intersected by their race, society, or religion. Such intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) examines "how systems of domination interact and impact individuals' identity and subject formation in ways that exceed the mere simultaneity of systems of domination" (Celis et al., 2016, p. 347). Therefore, it must not be ignored what a black, indigenous, or immigrant woman means, nor should it be overlooked what it means to be a gay person who is also black, living in poverty, and living in a rural context. All these gender situations imply involvement in various types of intersecting social struggles.

For teachers whose gender identity is not normative, their bodies may be forced to adjust to their profession's social norms. For example, a male body may be expected to physically represent the social meaning of his heterosexuality (Connell, 2005; Bourdieu,

2001). Consequently, there is a need to understand the whole spectrum of gender/sex in pedagogical practices.

Embodied pedagogical practices

The role of the body in language teaching is not new. Most language teachers were taught to use total-physical-response strategies in which the language was communicated through physical actions. Rosborough (2014) argued that

> the role of embodiment, including gesture, as a [device which mediates learning interactions], needs a more comprehensive exploration if we are to understand the meaning-making processes [which take place] between teachers and the young [language learners]. (p. 229)

Current trends in ELT (English language teaching) research prioritise the dissemination of procedural knowledge, which enables teachers to become "good" teachers (Rosas-Maldonado, Bascuñán & Martin, 2020; Solmaz, 2021). These standardised practices imply that specific skills are being imposed hierarchically, but they also standardise acting and being in the class (Castañeda-Peña, 2018). Heteronormativity is a way to colonise a teacher's professional identity (Lander, 2018).

Gender identities have been studied in ELT (Sunderland, 2000). Despite this interest, the body is still under-explored to understand how language teachers could depart from the conventional pedagogical norms. Indeed, non-normative bodies of language teachers perform their identities in the classroom through their everyday presentation of themselves. Take, for example, intonation, gestures made to pronounce specific sounds, warming-up exercises, or interactions to establish rapport. ELT teachers should be allowed to abandon a universal teaching script and transform it through a multidimensional physical presentation of the self, which embraces their gender/sex identities. In the words of Reimers, "the important question is not what signifies a body, but what does a body do" (Reimers, 2020, p. 117), that is, to subvert an education that rests on heterosexual values by expressing the embodiment of queerness, since, she adds that "non-confirming subjects become more visible in their corporeality, sexuality, and deviance than conforming bodies, and [...] this has pedagogical implications" (Reimers, 2020, p. 120).

Therefore, any study of professional identity should look at the interplay between gender/sex identity and the pedagogical practices embodied in them and consider other factors in identity, like upbringing, race, and ethnicity, because "the world is made up of overlapping fields (e.g., sexual field, political field, education field), within which the habitus operates" (Hanckel et al., 2021, p. 265).

Method

This study's locus of enunciation (Mignolo, 2009) is that of Colombian researchers who also teach English and advocate sexual and gender diversity in the language classroom

(Ubaque & Castañeda-Peña, 2021). Hence, "the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (Grosfoguel, 2008, p. 2) should not be overlooked. Accordingly, the study draws on critical and decolonial epistemologies, which seek to go beyond Eurocentric notions of the production of knowledge (Moya, 2011). Decolonial epistemologies refer to possibilities of knowing that delink from modern/colonial thinking (Knobloch, 2020) and are separate from the strategic essentialism imposed by modernity. Also, a narrative research approach (Barkhuizen, 2013; Creswell, 2007) was adopted to comprehend the expression of embodied gender/sex identity in the English language teaching by the two teachers of English.

Participants

'Daniel' and 'Roland' were asked to narrate their pedagogical practices and experiences. Daniel is twenty-six years old and holds a bachelor degree in foreign languages. Daniel has worked mainly for a private institution in Bogota, Colombia, teaching children and adults. Ronald is forty-two years old and has worked primarily for a public school in Bogota, Colombia. He has gained experience teaching children from impoverished zones of the city. They share a teaching scenario where they are requested to employ task-based learning (Chen & Tseng, 2021) and are encouraged to develop good communication skills. Daniel and Ronald were invited to collaborate in this study since their experiences and practices were of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). They worked at the same language center as Author 2 and Author 3. This is why, after informal conversations, it was apparent that their life experiences could help comprehend gender/sex identities and pedagogical practices.

Daniel and Roland collaborated to narrate unspoken experiences; this means that telling stories is a co-construction because both tellers and researchers contribute with an interpretive dimension (Nigar, 2020). Not only were they invited for being accessible (Andrade, 2021), but they were also interested in examining their teaching through the lens of gender to enrich their and the researchers' understanding of embodied pedagogical practices. Although Daniel and Roland did not participate in the thematic analysis, they did participate in the reading, organisation, and selection of the experiences to be disclosed. We opted for a member-checking stage (Candela, 2019; Birt et al., 2016) as we intended to reduce bias in selecting their experiences. Their names, as disclosed in this manuscript, were their chosen pseudonyms.

In that sense, a narrative perspective throws more light on embodied gender/sex and pedagogical practices. Participants' narratives trigger their versions of an event within a particular focus (Barkhuizen, 2017; 2021; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020).

Ronald and Daniel conversed about their pedagogical practices four times in twelve months. These conversations were embedded in a professional development program based on research and intended to open a dialogue where they were free to ask questions and express their emotions, judgments, and evaluations in a spirit of "solidarity, with

affection, among equals" (Ortiz-Ocaña & Arias-López, 2019, p. 12). Any authority criterion (Beverly, 2013) was disrupted by resorting to Spanish as one more possibility to converse. This way of conversing eliminated any position of power and a hierarchy implicit in modernist research approaches (see Creswell, 2007). This aimed to reinforce a horizontal dialogue (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020).

All conversations were audio-recorded, and their privacy was guaranteed using consent forms. This became an ethical resource to protect Ronald and Daniel's disclosed experiences. Therefore, consent forms became an instrument to reclaim research agency for narrators, far from being a mechanism of epistemological control. This article only discusses excerpts from narratives that both Ronald and Daniel authorised. Therefore, the narratives were co-constructed by thinking of a common starting point in which "we recognize[d] ourselves, [thought] about ourselves and reconfigure[d] ourselves […] wondering who is the "other" in the world and me" (Rivas-Flores et al., 2020, p. 59).

Results and discussion

Thematic analysis was used, following some level of patterned response or meaning (Finkelstein, Sharma & Furlonger, 2021). Merging the thematic and narrative methodology gave a clearer idea of how the two teachers represented themselves through narrating their gender-based practices. Arranging the events into sequences and then grouping into themes made understanding the unique experience of being gay teachers of English in Colombia easier.

Ronald's embodied teaching practices

Ronald teaches in both the public and private sectors. For him, there is always room for innovations, whether or not they emerge from the system. Thus, it was necessary to discuss his awareness of the contexts in which he teaches, since by knowing where he must lead, he not only can attempt to *rupture* the Eurocentric canon imposed on ELT, but he can also embody his actions in praxis.

The following excerpt helps to explain that:

> I think that my activities depend a lot on my creativity. I want my students to interact, stop, and play roles. I base that on the parameters of the institution. If we have to make an assessment, an evaluation, then we do it! It can often be very academic and very close to what the place requires, *but I can say I will do it on another occasion. Differently, I will do it this way - and that is where I, as a person, come into play when I approach these activities.*

The italicised text presents a discursive but experience-based *rupture* where Ronald delinks from standard procedures, inserts his pedagogy, and re-envisions his teaching skills. By doing things differently, Ronald begins reclaiming his agency as a teacher who links his teaching with the knowledge from his personal experience. Even though most teachers might do this, the violence exercised over homosexual teaching staff (Lander, 2018;

Decree 2277 of 1979) cannot be forgotten in Colombia. That is why this delinking becomes salient. The following excerpt also illustrates Ronald's critical perspective:

> I always want to convey what I am as a person… what Ronald has experienced in his life; when I advise my students, it is about things that have to do with what I have lived. I might say - no, friend, do it again, reevaluate it, try again - because I know from my experience that it will bring some kind of learning or benefit. […] I believe that almost always, all these experiences have to do with what the person experienced, and for me, they had something significant, not only as a teacher ... *but I also feel that there was a process and beyond the content, I would like to share, based on who I am.*

Ronald's own experience echoes Wink's (2000) description of critical pedagogy in which there is an "impetus that causes people to reflect and read to understand their past and future better; it gives us the courage to learn, relearn, and unlearn what we used to know about teaching and learning" (p. 23).

Indeed, what Ronald now knows is the result of his introspection. Ronald's interest in sharing *"who he is"* and what he knows delinks from language teaching's Eurocentric thoughts (Mignolo, 2007). Ronald eschews standardised methods and prescriptive terminology, contesting the heteronormal matrix dominating language pedagogy. Ronald's approach to teaching is precious when set against conventional practices, like the communicative method or task-based learning (see Richards & Rodgers, 2001), which barely go beyond the technical aspects of language. Ronald is not just the consumer of pre-packaged practices (Giroux, 1997) because he is thinking about the discussions around gender in his teaching practice. Ronald breaks the traditional rules – canonical and linear – about how things could be done in a language class from a gender perspective, fighting "the construction and imposition of the terminology" (Kumaravadivelu, 2014, p. 12), as seen below:

> I am an actor in my classes, and when I say that, I do not mean that I wear a mask or do something different from my ordinary life; I try to represent what I want to explain kinesthetically. At the basic level, I act out the language as a clown. The same as in the English class: my voice changes when I want to transmit a message. I jump, scream, […] and feel that this is part of my personality. This just represents what I want to convey, but as a person as such, I am not a gay teacher of children; I am a teacher; someone who has certain behaviors, and specific movements that are left to the free interpretation of the student; I *am not going to present myself to the students as either straight or gay or anything, just as a teacher, and that allows each child to see my identity in their way. I always try to create that freedom in the classroom:* if you are a boy or a girl, be whatever you want to be...when we talk about girls, we always wonder if they like driving cars. For me, there is no problem; that is where it returns to and connects with my personal experiences and with what is being discussed today.

Ontologically speaking, Ronald enacts who he is (a language teacher over a gay teacher). This teaching standpoint reflects Ronald's perspective regarding teaching English and how to deal with sensitive issues like gender with his school students. This enactment reminds the "responsibility [for] incorporating a gender perspective to help educational institutions [fight against] gender inequities" (Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2017, p. 140). In that regard,

Ronald has a subtle, emancipatory approach to the meanings of gender. He appears to construct a gender territory free of prejudices or impositions. This practice, which is pedagogical indeed, is inherent in ELT and educational research in general since ideas about gender are deeply rooted in patriarchal and misogynistic mechanisms which uphold binary categories such as male/man vs. female/woman teachers (Castañeda-Peña, 2021).

Ronald's teaching raises issues about power as he frees students from stereotyped gender representations (Litosseliti, 2006). This liberatory strategy advances the idea that

> there is not [one] particular masculinity, but masculinities; and there is no single femininity, but femininities, both masculinities, and femininities constitute and reconstitute subjects by permanently establishing changing asymmetrical relationships in the contexts [in which] they participate (Castañeda-Peña, 2009).

Consequently, in Ronald's experience, more than a way of teaching, his classroom behaviour is a way of being a teacher whose ideologies, beliefs, and sense of self are represented. Ronald's narrative shows the need to tackle gender/sex issues with students and not overlook such topics. Also, this gender/sex awareness is represented through the embodiment of the teaching, through sharing experiences that shape and reshape who the teachers are.

Daniel's embodied teaching practices

Daniel works in a bi-national English language teaching center. Daniel has a high level of expertise that has emerged from his identity as a gay teacher of English: *"I define myself by gender. I am a gay, a homosexual man, Amen! I am a gay teacher of English".* His gender/sex identity, embodied in his pedagogical practices, is part of his professional identity. In our conversations with him, he speaks of his identity from a different border (González, 2007), challenging his profession's heteronormative canon and disciplinary standards (Borg, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Tekin, 2019).

One could delve into his notion of gender/sex to understand Daniel's professional identity. Therefore, although one might agree that "a unified concept of gender/sex solves certain theoretical problems [...] such a category does not tell us how gender/sex becomes *of* the body" (Fausto-Sterling, 2019, p. 534); this is why Daniel, by defining himself as a gay teacher, affords a clear outline of his characteristics as a teacher of English. It is thus worth analysing how his gender/sex identity is embodied in his pedagogical practices in more detail, as shown below:

> [..] I am a gay teacher of English. It is very curious because I see myself as a man; I like to dress as a man, although sometimes not everyone sees it that way. I want to look sexy, a sexy man, but at the same time, look like a gay teacher who plays a lot with everything around him. As for sex, gender, etc., when I talk about this with my students, I tell them that I am gay […] I make many jokes and play music, and from that and the way I dress and many other things, they can change their idea of the typical teacher.

By incorporating his gender identity into his teaching and sharing who he is with his students, Daniel allows them to rethink their idea of the persona of a teacher. Now, although Daniel's behaviour, expectations, and attitudes may have to do with the dilemma of the male/female dichotomy (Litosseliti, 2006), he creates his identity from a subjective view of his body. Therefore, the embodiment of which Daniel speaks shatters socially determined ideas of how to act in the classroom and transforms them into expressive mechanisms. Daniel establishes "meanings of sense, motivation, and self" (Fausto-Sterling, 2019, p. 6) to relate to others.

Daniel also embraces the feminine and masculine nuances that emerge as a subjective sense of himself. Here, Daniel creates his professional identity by linking embodied gender/sex and pedagogical practices based on his perception of his body (Weber & Mitchel, 1995) and what he does with his body (Butler, 1988). As Hall et al. (2007) suggested, "embodiment concerns the body we are and, as such, enables an understanding of the dialectical processes of identification as they unfold in particular social contexts" (p. 535). Thus, how Daniel embodies his gender identity in his teaching means that

> ... after how bodies inhabit different sexes and genders and what social structures make those inhabitations possible, is not to suggest that any of those categories are incidental or meaningless. How we embody gender is how we theorize gender, and to suggest otherwise is to misunderstand both theorization and embodiment (Salamon, 2006, p. 378).

This requires further discussion in Colombian ELT and educational research worldwide. The excerpt below narrates part of Daniel's pedagogical practices:

> I am someone who does not like the label of an English teacher. For me, I am an educator with a Master's degree in education, and because I see education as a whole act and a political statement, teaching is the noblest thing there can be for me. To teach someone something is a charming act; I teach more than being skilled at communication. So, whatever he is, Daniel, the gay teacher, is more than that label: I am an educator; the fact I am gay is extra.

That statement echoes Biesta (2012), who spoke about the need to "think differently about education and about what teachers should be able to do" (p. 10). In that respect, Daniel's view of education as a political statement (Nieto 1999; Giroux, 1985) is, in fact, a form of knowledge that emerges from Daniel as a subaltern subject and transforms education into "one of the privileged forms of political expression in pedagogical practices" (Martínez et al., 2003, p. 69). Daniel exercises political empowerment by embodying his gender/sex identity in his teaching. The fact that Daniel can think of his teaching as a political act and integrate both his teaching and gender/sex identity as part of his daily practice allows, contrast his reality with how, at least in Colombia, teacher education programs have, if not neglected, underrated the importance of humanising student-teachers so that they may attain "gender awareness, reflect on it [in] the context of their practice and find strategies [...] to eliminate gender inequalities" (Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2017). This has made in-service and pre-service teachers feel uncomfortable about gender issues, and it is a topic to be examined in educational

research across contexts and school subjects. Nevertheless, Daniel reclaims these onto/epistemological rights and shows that teaching is also an ideological practice.

Looking critically at Daniel's narrative, he seems uncomfortable about the conventional notions of ELT pedagogy, based, as it is, on canonical knowledge, which leaves little room for understanding pedagogy as "practical because it is performative action in the network of relationships that is everyday life, [not merely an abstract and theoretical reflection]. It is an action with others, constitutive of senses, and subjects" (Espinel-Bernal & Heredia, 2017, p. 21). This is why Daniel's language pedagogy is interwoven with being and becoming human; after all, this is what pedagogy is really about.

To finish this section, it could be argued that the identity of a teacher is a "critical component in the socio-cultural and socio-political landscape of the language classroom" and a "crucial component in determining how language teaching is played out" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). Thus, two conclusions could be drawn from Daniel's narrative. First, his narrative is an example of the kind of embodiment that challenges the binary notion of gender and throws light on non-heteronormative identities in the field of ELT. Furthermore, this kind of challenge entails insurgent practices of resistance, (re)existence, and (re)living (Walsh, 2017).

Conclusions

Teachers' professional identities are rooted in dominant notions of teaching and being. At least in Colombia, it appears that most ELT programs prioritise acquiring teaching skills and using conventional procedures rather than experienced-based methods. However, this situation has provided an opportunity to question the "Western-oriented, center-based knowledge systems [that teachers of EIL (English as an international language) in peripheral] countries almost totally depend on" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 15), as well as the accepted notion of teacher identity in the field of ELT. Conclusions are not meant to be definitive, nor do they apply to the whole area of ELT in Colombia, worldwide educational research, or all gay male teachers; instead, these conclusions are an invitation to raise awareness about the limitations of standard practices in education and how they exclude alternative ones. While it is true that both Ronald and Daniel experience their gendered-embodied teaching practices differently, what seems relevant is to understand that the body itself is a territory in dispute for their professional identity. This identity dispute is fueled when gender/sex identity intervenes. Recognising these struggles should be part of the identity studies of educational research, considering how educational systems regulate bodies and sexualities.

This was the case for the embodiment of homosexuality, as a prohibition, in the teaching profession in Colombia two decades ago. However, it seems clear that for the two cases of the participating gay teachers, in different ways, their gender/sex embodiment transgresses their invisibilisation in their pedagogical practice. Consequently, it is possible to argue that the homosexual body, the diverse body, is installed in the frontiers or borderlands of dominant pedagogical discourses, fracturing them. In this way, the

embodied pedagogical practice connects with gender/sex embodiment and recovers its agency challenging the heteronormative construction of the body in the teaching profession. Therefore, these topics should be part of initial and continuing language teacher education. Being a teacher of English goes beyond an instrumental and technical approach to the profession. In that regard, the narratives in this study enrich the understanding of the personal representative of embodied gender/sex. For example, they question some of the premises of coloniality that Quijano (1992) called the structures of domination. Thus, when Ronald thinks of his teaching as a *liberatory practice* where students can choose whom they want to be, it re-signifies the role of gender/sex in ELT. Thanks to his confidence in his identity, he has been able to cope with and thrive in a colonial framework that limits teaching to acquiring the right "skills/competencies" and ignores the importance of social factors.

As a result, the dominant ideology, which regards teachers as empty vessels who must follow conventional procedures, is challenged by the possibility of adhering to the teacher's embodied gender/sex identity. This causes Ronald conflict to juggle and position his teacher identity over his sexual identity; he says: "*I am not a gay teacher of children, I am a teacher; someone who has certain behaviors, certain movements.*" This shows how his gender/sex identity embodiment supports his embodied pedagogical practice and further extends his identity construction as a language teacher. Although Ronald's gay identity is subsidiary from his perspective, it cannot be denied that it is also constitutive. This means intersectionality between embodied pedagogical practices and gender/sex embodiment constituting his professional identity as a language teacher. This understanding of identity as intersectional should also be included in language teacher education and educational research.

Embodied pedagogical practices imply an ideological and political stance. Daniel's experiences enable reconstructing of a non-hegemonic practice that transforms specific domination structures that ignore the importance of gender identity. For example, when Daniel says: "*So, Daniel, the gay teacher, whatever he is, is more than that label: I am an educator, the fact I am gay is extra*", he displays a critical agency that may be regarded as "dissident and innovative, oriented against and beyond what is perceived as unjust, unequal, unacceptable" (Rebughini, 2018, p. 3). Likewise, this further extends his identity and construction as a language teacher. This also gives meaning to the lived experience of a gay teacher in terms of his embodied pedagogical experience. Briefly, Daniel finds how to position himself in a fractured professional identity to dignify himself as an educator.

These narratives help understand how embodied gender/sex in English language teachers may challenge the hegemonic notions that govern the profession, ignoring such factors as gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, and social class. They reveal the hollowness of those stereotyped, heteronormative assumptions of what a teacher of English should be like. More research into how these dissident identities are embodied in the language classroom is needed across contexts and school subjects in educational research.

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