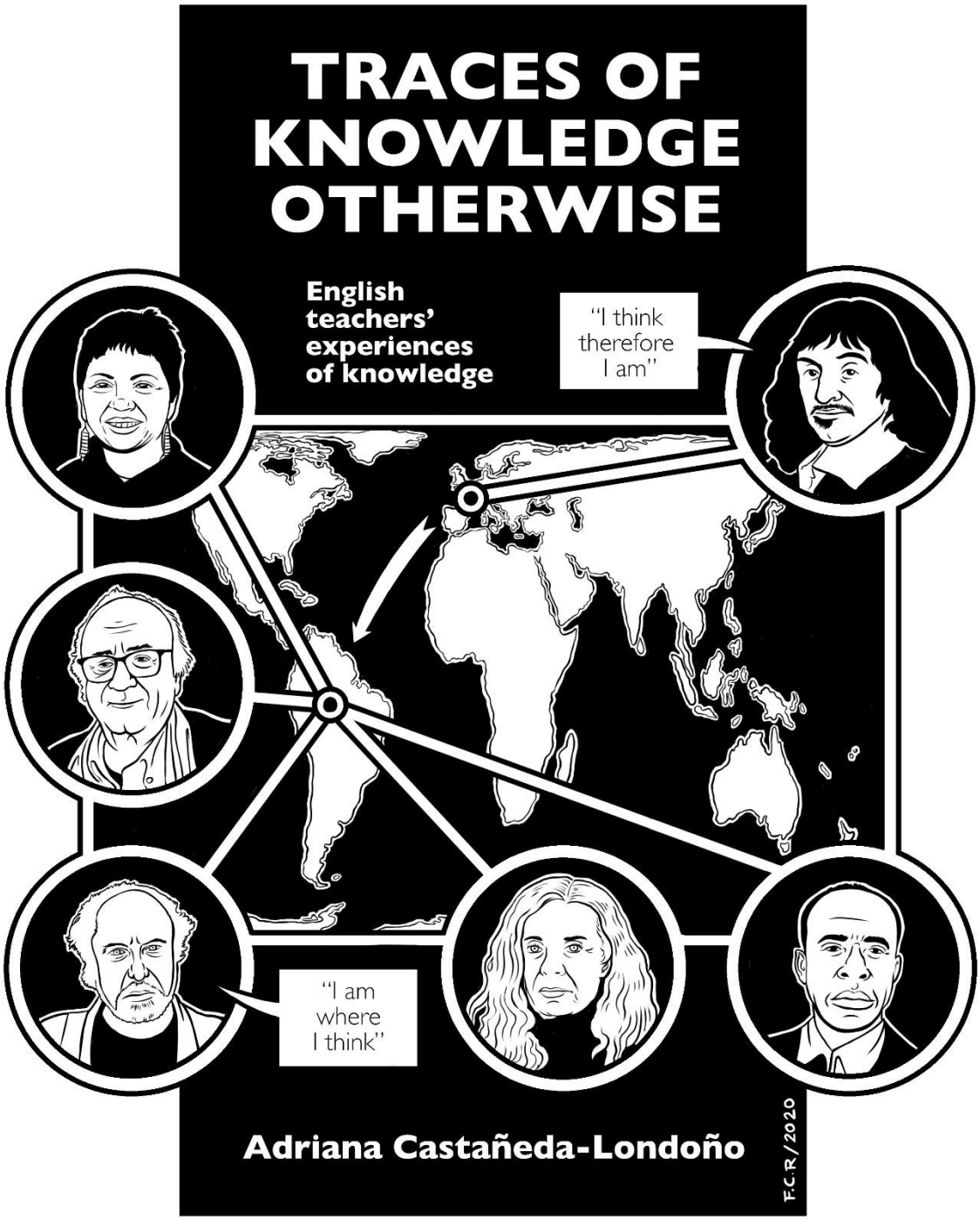
TRACES OF KNOWLEDGE OTHERWISE
English teachers' experiences of knowledge
"I think therefore I am"
"I am where I think"
Adriana Castañeda-Londoño
F.C.R/2020

Doctorado Interinstitucional en Educación DIE

Emphasis in ELT Education

TRACES OF KNOWLEDGE OTHERWISE…
ENGLISH TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF KNOWLEDGE

By

Adriana Castañeda-Londoño

UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE CALDAS

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING EMPHASIS

MAY 2021

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By

Adriana Castañeda-Londoño

Carmen Helena Guerrero Nieto, PhD

Thesis Advisor

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE CALDAS

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

DOCOTORADO INTERINSTITUCIONAL EN EDUCACIÓN

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"…Llevo el Sur,
como un destino del corazón,
soy del Sur,
…

Sueño el Sur,
inmensa luna, cielo al revés,
busco el Sur,
el tiempo abierto, y su después.

Quiero al Sur,
su buena gente, su dignidad,
…

Te quiero Sur,
Sur, te quiero".

Solanas & Piazolla, 1980

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to express by deepest and heart-felt gratitude to the next crew for their vital contributions to my life as PhD student:

- My parents, Elvira and José, for giving me the gift of life.
- My partner, Guillermo, for his patient and generous attitude along the process.
- All my relatives and close friends for their love and encouragement.
- My two research advisors Dr. Helena Guerrero and Dr. Pilar Mendez for their insights in different stages of the process.
- The Director of the PhD in Education at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas: Dr. Harold Castañeda-Peña for having introduced me in the world of research since my master's degree thesis, years ago.
- My professors Harold, Helena, and Pilar for introducing me to the Epistemologies of the South.
- My research participants: Alex, Lorena, Javier, Josué, Alejandra, and Andrés, for opening their hearts, minds, and bodies, and letting their writings and lives be known by others.
- My partners of the ELT Emphasis: Yolanda, Julia, Edgar, Carlos, Alejandro, and Jairo for listening to me and caring about my research interests.
- Dr. Alvaro Quintero Polo for having me allowed to co-tech the course of language acquisition through which I got acquainted with the teachers who participated in the study.

- My illustrator Felipe Camargo Rojas who managed to picture with such beauty and strength the participants' testimonial narratives.
- My drafts readers for their generous, honest, and enriching feedback: Maritza, Jorge, and Edgar.
- My proofreader Randall Barfield for his respectful work with the revision of some of the manuscript sections.
- My jurors: Dr. Bonilla, Dr. Macias, and Dr. Medina for their insightful comments.

Abstract

In this dissertation, I look into the quest for English teachers' knowledge. Such inquiry is informed by theoretical tenets of the Epistemologies of the South (Sousa Santos, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2016, 2018) and Decolonial Thought (Mignolo, 2013; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). While the issue of knowledge has called the attention of local scholars as it has been said that teachers' knowledges have not been considered when framing public policy in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Cárdenas, 2004, González, 2007), my interest goes beyond the categorizations of knowledge that have been persistent in ELT education, namely those of cognitive or socio-cultural perspectives of content knowledge, methodological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, to name but a few.

I focus my attention on practices of knowledge that come into play in the acts of teaching and learning as narrated by participating teachers like tipping moments in their professional lives. What teachers narrate reveal knowledges that might go unnoticed when teaching and learning. What I mean is, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, methodological knowledge are not the only arrays of knowledge that teachers develop. Other ways of knowing or other relations teachers develop towards knowledge might not have been sufficiently explored in the ELT field leading to a waste of valuable experience. I would like to advance the idea of a teachers' 'ecologies of knowledges' (Sousa Santos, 2006). In order to do so, I expand the idea of knowledge as the experiences that we live in the flesh and blood based on the geopolitical location of our bodies (Mignolo, 2000). I embrace the co-existence of scientific and other forms of knowledge within

teachers' construction of their being as teachers –co-existence that is still unexplored.

I begin the dissertation by exploring a few philosophical understandings towards knowledge starting with Plato and Descartes; I also introduce a post structural perspectives (Foucault), and finally, I introduce a decolonial horizon (Mignolo, Walsh, Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres, Sousa Santos). Besides, I bring to the conversation the work of Chicana Feminist writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa when it comes to defining the concept of knowledge. These authors become the backbone of the methodology and findings presented in following chapters. I also provide a conceptualization of knowledge within the ELT area while finding some existing tensions within the field regarding teachers' knowledge which I back up with empirical data. I attempt to show the co-existence of different types of knowledge be them institutional or personal in the configuration of teachers' beings.

In the methodology section, I take hand of one of Chicana Feminist traditions to find out a suited approach to trace teachers' knowledge; I am talking about the tradition of using testimonies to disrupt grand narratives about isolated knowledge production along with instances of communal meaning making or communal interpretations. Using testimonial narratives goes in tune with other Latin American efforts to reclaim cultural truths that go unnoticed in the neoliberal knowledge economy. Similarly, the participant teachers' testimonial narratives unveil those seminal experiential knowledges that sometimes are taken as "teachers' tacit knowledge" but which are hardly ever documented. The results chapters show each one of the six participants' struggles, cognitive tensions, and

bodily reactions to face the conflicts of teaching, learning, and living. Some other knowledges are traced, such as the families' epistemologies, the knowledges gotten in previous personal and social struggles, or the reconfiguration of the knowledge of ethicality in the face of challenging teaching situations.

Key Words: Teachers' knowledges, geopolitically located bodies, teacher's emotions, families' epistemologies.

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Chapter I: Towards the Study of Invisibilized Knowledges

Introduction

Theories frequently represent knowledge as something given to us in the manner of lectures, books, manuals, articles, talks by experts, dissertations, literature reviews, results articles, methods to teach, approaches to teach, social practices like lessons, and the like. Such knowledge may be attributed the characteristics of being pristine, uncorruptible, aseptic, unproblematic, degendered, declassed, deracialized, devoid of bodies, geographies, emotions, and conflicts of the knowing subjects. At the end of the day, each teacher might get to notice that knowledge as accumulation of theories, practices, and the like, is not as relevant as one might think because what is at play when teaching and learning is life itself. Thus, knowledge for teaching is intersected by life experience.

We know theories for many issues that have to do with English language teaching; however, I am more interested in what Gloria Anzaldúa calls ‘theories in the flesh’, that is, how the experiences lived in flesh make up our teaching personas; how experiences of joy and sorrow, historical episodes, or teachers’ family epistemologies, come into play when entering classrooms. Often, the knowledge for teaching English is reduced to knowing the code, the method, the strategies to teach. I mean the overprivileged knowledge of the language and the methods excel in relevance compared to other forms of knowing that go unnoticed when teaching. The other forms of knowledge have remained as Grosfoguel (2016) would say in the ‘zone of not being’ or as Sousa Santos (2014) would argue: an ‘absent epistemology’.

‘Knowledge’ is a singular noun in English and such characteristic gives an account on how the world understands of it conceptually speaking. The Western canon of thinking conceptualizes of knowledge as a single entity, but along the document, I will also use the more flexible and embracing word ‘knowledges’ (Sousa Santos 2007, 2009). By English language teachers’ knowledges, I not only refer to teachers’ experiences, theories, beliefs, actions, and skills (Díaz Maggioli, 2012) that teachers are supposed to hold, but I also include the realm of the silenced, or invisibilized knowledges as seen within a Decolonial view.

In this inquiry, I decided to appropriate the word *knowledges* because I agree with Sousa Santos (2009) when stating that we should move from a canon of knowledge (the one that entails one single way of looking at time, social classification, and that naturalizes hierarchies, and holds a productivity driven mind-set) to an ecology of knowledges whose intention is to allow a more horizontal relationship between scientific knowledge and other ways of knowing. An ecology is about recognizing how plural and heterogenous knowledges are and the need for a respectful interrelation among them. (Sousa Santos, 2007)

In what follows readers will find first, the underlying causes and reasons why I got interested in the theme of teachers’ knowledges. Second, I will approach the umbrella term of knowledge from a philosophical stance. Next, I will move on to a conceptualization of knowledge in the English teaching area through teachers’ knowledge base, cognition, personal epistemologies, and socio-cultural theory. Third, I will bring about my own epistemological positioning towards a re-conceptualization of teachers’ knowledge moving forward to the concept of teachers’ *knowledges*. I will explain the extant gaps/tensions around English

Language Teaching (ELT) concerning teachers' knowledges. As well, I will introduce the research question and objectives. I will share an initial exploratory stage through which I noticed the potential the theme of knowledge had in empirical terms. I finish the chapter with some concluding remarks.

From Knowledge to Knowledges

What is knowledge? Who defines what knowledge is? What kind of knowledge(s) is/are constructed by teachers? What do they do with it/them? Who acknowledges that/those knowledge(s)? Do teachers share what they know? And if so, how? Do teachers participate in learning opportunities? If so, how? These are some of the questions that first puzzled me in my inquiry towards teachers' knowledges. This interest in knowledge stems from three sources. First, the realization that teachers have many ideas to reflect, and share based on their expertise as I could witness visiting several classes along my three year-experience being a teacher supervisor some years ago. The conclusion that I drew from the supervision practice is that teachers aim at coping with institutional standards while developing their own repertoires made of ideas, plans, questions, activities, *in situ* decision-making, appropriation of new trends, and analysis of students' beings to teach their lessons better and better. I believe that knowledge is re-enacted; it comes to be lived each time students and teachers, or teachers and teachers get together to talk, to learn, to socialize.

The second reason why teachers' knowledges is a relevant research topic for me is that while revising literature in teacher education, there appears to be a tension regarding the recognition of teachers' knowledges. In the local academic community, for example, González (2007) carried out a critical evaluation of

Colombia's Ministry of Education professional development policy for English teachers and found out that local policies did not recognize the locally produced knowledge. A similar assertion is found in Cárdenas' study of the nature of teachers' research in a professional development program (2004). Cárdenas (2004) declares that research is a site for hegemonic dispute, and there is a lack of connection among actors and expectations. Especially, there is a lack of recognition of teachers' ideas when it comes to political decision making. One of the issues that disappointed teachers after they carried out research is that their voices were not considered when, for example, designing public policy and curriculum change.

In a similar vein, Diaz-Maggioli (2012) poses that some professional development programs have an underlying premise that "teachers need to be fixed" (p. 2), and that premise hinders actual success in those programs. In fact, Díaz-Maggioli says that such programs are driven by the belief that students' failure to learn is because of the teachers' lack of knowledge on how to teach. Given these ideas, I do believe there is need to inquire about teachers' experiences of knowledge and to acknowledge their voices as intellectuals who have been silenced (Apple, 2006). That way, we could possibly overcome the *abyssal thinking* (Sousa Santos, 2007) that has policed the boundaries of what is considered teachers' *knowledge* and has decided what the *true* procedures, practices, contents, models, and discourses should be like in English Language Teaching (ELT) grounding the ELT epistemology in a sort of static framework. (See for instance, Freeman, 2018)

Finally, it seems to me that teachers' knowledges have historically been conceptualized from a modern vision of a fixed canon. I want to problematize such fixed idea using conceptual tools from the decolonial turn. In this way, I align with Luke (2004) when acknowledging the need to crack the dominant logic over teachers' pedagogic knowledge as such knowledge is taken as generic methods of universal efficacy. I do agree with the idea that English teaching is an intellectual field, and teachers ought to dig into their "distinctive ways of knowing" (Luke, p. 90) which modern abyssal thought in ELT might have monopolized.

Explaining My Epistemological Stance in the Search for Teacher's Knowledge

The quest for knowledge has been a human pursue ever since Plato. His tradition has been so strong that traces of such epistemological stance are still seen in current schools of thought. Some of his towering remarks are that knowledge is eternal and unchanging, and that enquiry follows hypothetic-deductive paths e.g., from a definition of something to elements that suit such a definition (Welbourne 2014, Goswami, 2007)

Plato taught us the conditions under which a certain idea can be considered knowledge. Such conditions were belief, justification, and truth. The first (belief) should be considered because a person might not 'know' something if he/she does not believe in it. Justification provides a step towards knowledge in that it is the evidence of reason that provides support to a belief. The third condition is that the object of enquiry be true, that what we grasp as knowledge be true, and that it represents reality accordingly. To this final idea, one could wonder who defines

what the truth is. Welbourne (2014, p. 125) asserts that in Plato's view, "the objective world is the essential domain of knowledge".

Plato's contribution to education is undeniable, especially because we have built our epistemological grounds upon his understandings of knowledge. An area of knowledge such as ELT has held the belief that professionalism has to be in specific ways, which in turn has come to be true based on reasons grounded on empirical data or procedures but from inner circle countries from North America or Europe. A case in point is the tradition of using methods to teach that has long been replicated in the Global South. Mirochnik (2000), Siegel (2003), and Southerland et al. (2001) make the case that we still conceptualize the world from Plato's perspective. Such a view might restrict our understanding of the world for different reasons. First, the notion that knowledge is something that exists prior to the epistemic beings, the assertion that the truth is what counts as real knowledge, the perspective that knowledge is eternal, pure, and awaited to be discovered, in some way, might entail that knowledge is something very difficult to grasp.

Such standpoint did not approach the fact that knowing beings construct knowledge with a view that is colored by race, identities, gender, previous experiences, or personal assumptions; therefore, a theory of knowledge like this one might fall short in accounting for knowledge conceptualization in a broader sense. Particularly in our field, the notion of what is the truth of ELT has been pervasive in that static views of what teachers' knowledge ought to be like permeates professional development programs with ideas such as teachers' knowledge base *must be* this, pedagogical content knowledge *is* that, teachers' declarative, experiential, and procedural knowledge *must have* this and that. The

use of these vocabularies underlines a canonic status of knowledge that must be admittedly followed by teachers. (I will develop these ideas further in this chapter)

With the flourishing 18th century Enlightment project of vigorously pursuing limitless material progress, modernity philosophers proposed the idea that reason had to dominate and explain all phenomena while securing progress. The project of knowledge as a reliable grasp of truth is extended to the work of Descartes who stated that reason is but the only way that guides us towards knowledge. Postmodern and poststructuralist waves of thought have attempted to break down this grand narrative (Sim and Van Loon, 2004). Poststructuralism, as an epistemological stance and practice born in the 1960s, challenged deeply Plato's and Descartes' thought. Some founding remarks are skepticism towards knowledge and its limits, rejection of the authoritarianism of truth, criticism of the dependence on binary oppositions such as mind/body or self/other. Regarding knowledge, poststructuralism questions the modern assumption that we can arrive at secure knowledge, and that such knowledge is built based on norm. In the ELT field, one could question whether through the communicative approach, one can really have a path to secure learners' attainment of English knowledge if we locate poststructuralism as a glance to analyze such feature of ELT thought, or if learners should be seen in binary distinctions such as high-achiever/low-achiever.

Within poststructuralism a disruption in the hegemonic order is an opportunity to study the periphery, a chance to decenter monolithic ideas. Thus, disruptions are not negative but come to be the underlying causes of knowledge advancement (Williams, 2014). A view like this one favors greatly a re-conceptualization of English teachers' knowledge because historically teachers

have been conceptualized as recipients of alien knowledge, objects of imposed policy, or reproducers of pre-packed practices. A decentering/poststructural approach to teachers' knowledge is aimed at understanding teachers' own appropriation, management, learning, or unlearning of knowledge. Given these ideas, I wondered: do teachers de-center from established truths in ELT? What sort of unnoticed knowledges circulate along hegemonic ELT knowledge?

Coming back to the introduction of some tipping points in the evolution of Western epistemology, what could be said about knowledge within poststructuralism? Let us take Michel Foucault's (1980) re-interpretation of the modern logic of thought. Foucault taught us that what turns out to be considered knowledge is defined by a historical convergence of connected elements, some of them are social constructions such as normality. Certain knowledge has power to become the normal, the norm. Foucault's approach to knowledge is of critical style in that it invites to re-think the categories of truth and power. The dyad power-knowledge ought to be simultaneously considered in epistemology because there is a relationship between power formations and recognized knowledges (Foucault & Gordon, 1980).

Therefore, and bringing up Plato again, to justify a belief the category of power must be considered (Alcoff, 2013). What comes out to be the truth or knowledge is connected to who holds the power to say that something is considered as such. Let us take an example. Historically, what has come to be considered 'knowledge' in ELT has been mostly conceptualized in a North American-Eurocentric way. Hence, drawing on Phillipson (1992), foreign authorities have had the right to say how to best teach English, when to start the teaching of

English, the characteristics of teachers, and what sort of knowledge teachers need to have.

Foucault's view of power is not meant to be thought as monarchical, static rule, rude domination, or something essentially negative. Instead, it can be thought as subtle assignments of subjective roles or positions of power that go from person to person depending on the context (Feder, 2014). For example, in an ELT context, a teacher could hold the institutional power of knowledge to help students construct their own knowledge of the English language. Simultaneously, the so-called "high achievers", may hold power (allocated by their own knowledge) to answer all the teacher's grammar/vocabulary questions constituting themselves as knowing agents in the context of the English lessons.

Through the analysis of the historical conditions and their underlying assumptions, Foucault studies the themes of "breaks" and "obstacles" within epistemology. Breaks refer to moments in which science deviates from conventional understandings of data and new understandings emerge. Obstacles are elements that prevent epistemological breaks. It appears that our own frames of current *truths* are taken as real and do not allow us to think outside the box. Why are these concepts of "breaks" and "obstacles" useful to conceptualize teachers' knowledge? I think it is because within ELT, and particularly teachers' education we do not frequently deviate from the normalized visions of *the must be, must have, and must do* discourses which have framed teachers' education and professional development. Therefore, Foucault invites us to deviate from current understandings of what the teachers' knowledge must be like to dig into the normalized practices and visualize new understandings out of them.

A case in point is the debated use of the mother tongue in ELT. Concepts such as translanguaguing (Garcia & Lin, 2016) or the transit from language to language for meaning making purposes has turned out to be a 'break' in ELT's understanding of bilinguals. However, some simplifying perspectives conceive of bilinguals as faulty; the use of multiple tongues is, in fact, seen as an obstacle to develop proficiency in the English language.

Reflections framed within poststructuralism regarding knowledge helped me expand my perspectives about the theme of teachers' knowledge, intending to overcome my initial naïve approach towards it; however, this framework might fall short for a conceptualization of knowledge in the periphery of the Western thought, like the local context of Bogotá. That is why, to problematize what it means to know within certain geo-politically located bodies (Mignolo, 2013) in a context of the Global South, I decided to abandon poststructuralism as a framework of analysis. This decision is political as political education is. I take hand of the Decolonial turn to excavate what Escobar (2003) calls the knowledge otherwise, that is, the ways in which subjects from the Global South, particularly English teachers experience their relations to knowledge. I acknowledge the enormous contribution of poststructuralism to understand knowledge; nonetheless, I step back in using it as a personal epistemological lens in this dissertation. There are a few reasons for that decision. Alvarez Gallego (2016) explains that from a Foucauldian perspective:

> "We are far from considering the pedagogical practice as what is done in the classroom or the school… the pedagogical knowledge is understood as what is said, or what is thought, or what is investigated about such practice. We do not consider the idea that the subject of pedagogical

knowledge is the teacher either, which does not mean that he does not produce knowledge" (p. 89). (My translation)

This excerpt encapsulates my stepping back from the poststructuralist perspective because it hints at what Castro Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007) have pinpointed, which is the supposition that because we do not have colonial administrators in former colonized lands, the nation-states of the Global South live in a decolonized and postcolonial world. What I mean is, the current world system is not only sustained by capitalism as a matrix but also by the net of relationships around it including cultural and educational content. I agree with these authors when stating that we need to find a new language that accounts for the complexity of the current state of affairs. More specifically, I concur with them when they say that "we need to look 'outside' of our paradigms, approaches, disciplines and fields of knowledge" (p. 17). The way I see it, poststructuralism is, as such, a critique from Europe to Europe in its epistemological ground, no wonder why it uses its own European logic and system of thought for such a critique; however, given my own geopolitical location in the Global South, I cannot help problematizing the concept of knowledge from such location.

Authors such Mignolo (2007) explains, every thought is localized. Nonetheless, he says, "there is a general tendency to understand the constructed thought based on the European history and experiences as if they were de-localized" (p. 33) (my translation) or as if they could fully explain what happens in the whole planet. Likewise, I move away from poststructuralism as a framework because according to Stone-Mediatore (2003), we need to dig into ideas such as storytelling that go further than "cooperate produced knowledge…"(p.12) This

author states that despite needing stories in our lives, “current theories of knowledge recognize in stories no epistemological value… Poststructuralist theories, although critical of the traditional commitment to a pristine truth, similarly identify narrative as a central means by which truth is “distorted and undermined”. (Stone-Mediatore, 2003 referring to Spivak p. 17)

On the contrary, as readers will notice in the next chapters, I give full value to storied knowledge to trace the knowledge otherwise. Indeed, there is a tradition of narrative knowledge in ELT (See Golombek & Johnson 2004) which acknowledges that “teachers' knowledge is largely structured through stories and that story, for many, is epistemologically the most authentic way to understand teaching from the viewpoint of the teacher.” (Golombek & Johnson 2004, p. 308). However, the approach to narrated knowledge here is quite different as it will become evident. Particularly, Golombek and Johnson (2004) used narratives produced by teachers to understand “how and when teachers have internalized an idea or activity, how and when they have truly mastered it.” (p. 310). The use of narratives in their study was primarily utilized as being a cultural tool that mediated teacher’s development, and therefore as cognitive vehicles to get to teachers’ inner cognition, not as sources of knowledge per se.

Poststructuralism is not de-localized nor unbiased, neither its kin postcolonial studies. Postcolonial studies share a concern with the Decolonial Turn of denouncing the colonial mechanisms of sustaining the current world system as it is and foregrounding the subalternized groups’ needs; however, they differentiate in the fountains from which they drink. In other words, the Decolonial Thought does not support its claims in French poststructuralism as postcolonial studies do.

Big names from elite, privileged groups such as Spivak, Bhaba, or Said draw heavily on Derrida, Lacan and Foucault, which of course is not something to demonize but to reflect the extent to which former colonized peoples are actually able to de-link for the colonial matrix. This conundrum poses a challenge for the Decolonial Turn projects in the sense that despite aiming at de-linking from the Western thought, it would be a utopia to completely do it in a lifetime for the colonial system of thought has had an entrenched history of more than 500 years. Still, there is hope that other ways of living, thinking, feeling, perceiving, and knowing can have the right to exist and be recognized. And then, steps should be taken towards such aims.

For Castro Gomez and Grosfoguel (2007), there are both similarities and differences between the Postcolonial Critique and the Decolonial Turn in terms of understandings of the global phenomenon of capitalism and the different forms of domination, epistemological, and ontological colonialism. The Postcolonial Critique, stemming from areas such as literature, philosophy, or history, has approached the European discourses and practices towards progress. This tradition has evidenced the ways in which non-European cultures have been constructed as the 'inferior others' by Western Europe. Under this Postcolonial perspective, prominence is given to the systems of meaning, the semiotic impact of mass media, and the discourses that construct people in certain ways. Such elements determine the world's economic and political relationships.

From a Decolonial perspective, one drawback of this approach expressed by Castro Gomez and Grosfoguel (2007) is that it overlooks how the racial discourses structure the world in a way that economically impacts the Global North

and the Global South in terms of access to and benefit of privileges. In that train of thought, white people receive privilege and Global South peoples are given less-well-paid jobs and fewer opportunities to thrive; Similarly, the nation state governments of former colonized countries are ruled by a tiny elite that mirror the colonizers' ways of being. Such elites despise the broader population sustaining and deepening inequality, resource exploitation, and violence.

On the other hand, the Decolonial Turn conceptualizes of culture as always interrelated with economy, race, and hierarchies of privileges or lack of access to privilege. Due to the impact of the 'coloniality of power, knowledge, and being' of former colonized societies, it is impossible to think of a fully decolonized world. In other words, despite living in societies that became independent from colonial power, such liberation has been only partial, probably in terms of administration and law; nonetheless, there is still a seminal and entrenched presence of the multiple and heterarchical relations of power that constrain former colonized peoples coming from Western colonial global powers.

Another critique to the Modern-Cartesian approach to knowledge stems from the Decolonial Turn in terms of the colonial understandings of knowledge. Grosfoguel (2013) explains that the Cartesian view of knowledge is what has stood out, for at least three hundred and eighty-three years in the university context. In that train of thought, there continues to be a tendency to see that knowledge is more valid if it aims at neutrality, impartiality, and universality, that is, if it aims at not being framed within a particular location, a particular body, a particular geography, or a particular person. Within the ELT field, the tendency of developing universality in terms of teaching methods, ways of evaluation, levels of

achievement, types of knowledge held by teachers also entail that the Modern-Cartesian approach has an impact in the way of conceptualizing knowledge for teaching.

Getting a Grip on English Teachers' Knowledge.

In the extant professional literature I read, some typologies of teachers' knowledge have been constructed. For example, Shulman (1987) framed some categories of knowledge which included, at least, a. general pedagogical knowledge, b. pedagogic content knowledge (how specific topics are suited for the students in terms of their diversity, interests, skills) c. special professional understanding of learners, groups, classrooms, d. educational ends, their philosophical, and historical grounds. The sources of this set of knowledges are various, namely, the literature in each discipline, the institutionalized processes of knowledge, and teacher's own wisdom gained through practice. Shulman (1987) asserts that teachers convert understandings, skills, and attitudes into pedagogical representations. Teachers comprehend what is to be learned, and how it should be taught. Shulman (1987) did acknowledge that teachers' knowledge is much more than what has been described here, and he calls for a continuous re-interpretation of the above-mentioned categories. Hence, in this dissertation I aim at re-interpreting teachers' knowledge from a perspective that takes hand of sociology (of absences and emergences, Sousa Santos, 2007) and epistemology (from a Decolonial perspective).

Carr and Kemmis (1983) cited in Richards (1990) suggest that the concept of professionalism in an area is determined by the theoretical knowledge provided through established methods and procedures. Drawing on these concepts

Richards (1990) states that English teachers' knowledge base is composed of linguistics, language theory, and practical components like methodology and practice. This field has had a progressive change in paradigm when it comes to saying what counts as teacher's knowledge. Teaching at first was based on common sense knowledge. In the 50s of the twentieth century, what counted as knowledge to teach English was theoretical grounds in grammar and pronunciation. Between the 70s and 90s of the former century, the English teachers' theoretical basis expanded to knowledge of discourse analysis, second language acquisition, interlanguage, syntax, phonology, syllabus, and curriculum design, as well as testing (Richards, 1990). Teachers' knowledge was evaluated on the extent to which they suited the profile of a good teacher based on experts' opinions as well.

Two more recent characterizations of teachers' knowledge -James (2001) and Richards and Farrell (2005)- expand a lot more on what constitutes teachers' knowledge. James (2001) mentions a personal, a disciplinary, and an educational dimension of knowledge. The personal dimension refers to values, beliefs, and understandings that are constructed in the pedagogical practices. The disciplinary component incorporates didactics. He adds other elements such as development of skills in research, professional reading, theorization, attitudes, as well as feelings.

Richards and Farrell (2005) refer to knowledge considering the language as code and its teaching procedures. They suggest of core areas like grammar, discourse analysis, phonology, evaluation, language acquisition, methodology, curriculum development, items already proposed in Richards (1990) to define

teachers' knowledge. But in this updated conceptualization, they add ideas such as pedagogical knowledge that consists of ability to teach different populations. Within their perspective, teachers also embrace new areas of teaching and experiences for the personal and professional advancement.

From a socio-cultural perspective, Diaz-Maggioli (2012) addresses the issue of how teachers come to know in ELT. The author states that teachers develop a specific knowledge that is enlightened by both personal and academic theories. Language turns out to be the object of learning because teachers make explicit their implicit knowledge. For him, the English teaching field has a defined knowledge base that set criteria on "what teachers need to know and be able to do" (Díaz-Maggioli, 2012, p. 5).

The author also describes four traditions that have historically built teachers' knowledge appropriation: namely, look and learn, read and learn, think and learn, and participate and learn. In the first tradition, 'look and learn', there is a learner and a master. The learner gains a static body of procedural knowledge which is expected to be applied across contexts and that results in students' learning. The triumph lies in replicating methods and techniques provided by the master. This approach fosters the idea that there is one single way of knowing to teach, Díaz-Maggioli says.

The second tradition, 'read and learn', refers to having access to literature and research in ELT. The teacher learns theory and develops a strong theoretical basis. This tradition also has a dogmatic emphasis in that what theory/research says is what teachers are expected to replicate in their classroom with scarce consideration of the context. The third tradition, 'think and learn', suggests a

change in the role of teachers from consumers to producers of knowledge by becoming researchers of their practices. This idea is backed up in Schön (1983) cited in Diaz-Maggioli (2012) when he explains that teachers' practices are the outcome of the relationship between their tacit knowledge and the teachers' lived experience in the context of their teaching. By having a reflection upon their own practices, teachers make explicit what is implicit and can examine their knowledge. Thus, it can be assumed that teachers do create knowledge as they reflect upon their practices.

The last tradition that Diaz-Maggioli (2012) describes is participate and learn. It is framed within a socio-cultural perspective and does not restrict the sources of knowledge. Instead, it aims at seeing knowledge as the result of a construction within a community of novice teachers and more experienced ones in which skills, knowledge, and dispositions are built and characterize a community of practice. What I find puzzling here is the assumption that more novice teachers are learning from the more experienced. I wonder if that is experienced in such a way by teachers. Could it be that teachers look for solitary opportunities of learning? Could it be that novice teachers share what they know with the more experienced ones?

A conceptualization of teachers' cognition in Borg (2006 cited in Díaz-Maggioli, 2012) suggests that teachers' knowledge base is composed of their thinking and decision-making. For Díaz-Maggioli (2012, p. 18), teacher knowledge is made of their "principles, experiences, theories, dispositions, beliefs, skills, and actions that inform –directly or indirectly- teachers' experiential evolution in the classroom". However, it should be noted that teacher's knowledge is constantly

evolving because it is framed within historical and social contexts. Sometimes, we have framed teachers' knowledge like something static as seen in the traditions of *look and learn* and *read and learn*. Now, if it is recognized that teaching is historical and social. How do these traits come to be visible in the teaching-learning process, or what role do they play in teachers decision-making?

With '*think and learn'* and '*participate and learn',* we are moving to a more poststructuralist comprehension of knowledge that needs to be carefully examined. For example, under what circumstances do teachers think and learn or participate and learn? What does it mean to come to knowledge these ways, and how do they have an impact in teachers' own epistemologies? If, as Maggioli (2012, p.18) states: "the more [teachers] interact, the more they evolve", how is it that it happens? how does teachers' knowledge evolve? Are teachers' 'folk theories' (Widschitl, 2004) 'unsophisticated understandings' that come to be 'polished up'? (Diaz-Maggioli, 2012). These were some of the puzzles that inspired me to embark on the inquiry of teachers' knowledge.

Another area in which teachers' knowledge has been explored is within the theme of personal epistemologies. This concept refers to the study of "how individuals come to know, the beliefs they hold about knowing, and how these ideas shape practices of knowing and learning" (Hofer, 2000, p. 378). People hold beliefs about knowledge and knowing that comprise epistemological theories. What is interesting about this theme is that the concept of personal epistemologies waves between the tensions of modernism and poststructuralism in that people adjust their knowledges along a continuum which I will briefly describe.

Perry (1970) in Hoffer (2000) indicated the path students followed towards meaning making in their academic trajectories. In Perry's study, participants experienced knowledge first through a binary stance towards knowledge: self/other, good/evil etc., but then they evolved to a pluralistic view of knowledge (one thing may be as possible as another). Afterwards, they had a view of knowledge towards relativism (knowledge as dependent and contextual). For Hofer (2000), there are two areas that comprise personal epistemology: the nature of knowledge (what knowledge is for a person) and the nature of the process of knowing (how the person gets to know).

The two dimensions are also composed of other themes: *nature of knowledge* which is related to certainty of knowledge and simplicity of knowledge. *The nature of the process of knowing* is connected to sources of knowledge and justification of knowledge. Certainty of knowledge, Hofer says, is the extent to which one sees knowledge as "fixed or more fluid". It appears that within lower levels of development in an area, absolute truths are treated with certainty. In higher levels of development, knowledge "is tentative and evolving". The item of "simplicity of knowledge" evolves from facts which are interconnected to knowledge that is highly contextual. Regarding the *source of knowledge,* the evolution goes from thinking of knowledge as originated outside the self, in authorities for example, to conceptualizing the self as a knower who constructs with others. *"Justification for knowing",* Hofer (2000) states, is about evaluating knowledge claims using criteria like authority, expertise, or inquiry. At one end of the continuum, one might explain knowledge relying on authority and expertise, then at a higher level of development, one could use inquiry.

The study of personal epistemologies, as a seminal part of teachers' ecologies of knowledges, has a key role in that these previously explained dimensions are hidden pillars of explicit knowledges teachers build. By accounting for personal epistemologies as founding pillars in teachers' knowledges, we can get to explore how teachers' knowledge evolve from authority to inquiry (if that is so), or what the sources of teachers' knowledges are. Other developments by Johnson (2006), Freeman (2019), Freeman, Webre, and Epperson (2020), acknowledge the need to continuously revise what constitutes 'the knowledge base for English teaching' foregrounding a socio-cultural and a situated learning theory perspective respectively that re-engineer such concepts as 'teachers' ways of knowing legitimacy', 'teachers' mental lives' 'situated cognition', disciplinary knowledge', 'knowledge for teaching' to name but a few.

Considering the above-mentioned ideas and the further to come in this manuscript, our world is epistemologically diverse (Sousa Santos, 2009, 2016), and even more when it comes to the knowledge for teaching. However, such diversity in ELT teaching is still unmapped because mostly the conversation about the knowledge for teaching revolves around recognized concepts based on distinguished authors of the Global North. Hence, the epistemological stance that grounds my interest in finding out other components of teachers' ecologies of knowledges is tied to two constructs: *the sociology of absences* and *the sociology of emergences* (Sousa Santos, 2007). The former refers to understanding why certain forms of knowing have been constructed as non-existent. The latter refers to the need to acknowledge the existence of other ways of thinking about and enacting knowledge.

In accordance with Kumaravadivelu (2003), teachers have been primarily constructed as customers of knowledge produced by authorities. From a perspective of *absences* (Sousa Santos, 2007), this claim means that the knowledge produced by teachers, on their own, might be taken as not existing, irrelevant, probably incomprehensible, or not satisfactorily examined. The visibility of the experts may overshadow teachers' own forms of knowledging (Bárcena, Larrosa & Mélich 2006). I wanted to embark on a decentering effort to conceptualize teachers' knowledges as a sociology of emergence. What I mean is that exploring teachers' knowledges from a bottom-up stance expands the commonplace perspective of framing teachers' knowledge exclusively on disciplinary knowledge that concerns grammar, assessment, second language acquisition, curriculum development, pedagogical knowledge, or didactics to name but a few.

To this respect, Cárdenas et al., (2010) argue that the preparation of teachers, dependent upon applied linguistics, initial teachers' education, and in-service qualification, has certainly relied on methodological aspects and the learning process, in short, how to qualify foreign language teaching. For them, teachers' knowledge base, its growth, the initial knowledge, and its connection to in-service advancement has not been sufficiently tackled. In this train of thought, the more sophisticated concept of teacher cognition: what teachers think, know, and believe have not received enough attention but are worth being studied within teachers' professional development processes.

There is a strong connection between the ELT field and modernism. Modern science continuously holds a tension between regulation and emancipation (Sousa

Santos, 2009). Everything considered scientific knowledge is regulated and recognized. This tension is also experienced in ELT, which is a highly regulated knowledge, particularly teachers' professional development. Within the epistemology of absent knowledges, we deem necessary to identify the absent themes and the reason for the absence. This is to say that by finding how is that teachers experience knowledge, we could possibly have an expanded view of reality as the epistemology of the absences calls for finding out suppressed realities. If we take educational practices, say a classroom or a teachers' reunion, they are social practices of knowledge within or outside the frame of the institution. Thus, both institutional and non-institutional knowledges coexist concurrently. The epistemology of absences, where I feel comfortable locating this inquiry, asks for the voices of the absent agents and demands listening to subjectivities historically silenced.

While reviewing literature in English teacher education and practice, there appears to be a continuous validation of the concept of teacher knowledge base (for example, Shulman, 1987) in international and local academy (see for example Pineda Baez 2002, Cardenas & Suárez 2009, Macias 2013, Fandiño 2013, Freeman & Johnson 1998, Freeman, 2019, Asl, Asl, & Asl 2014, Mu, Liang, Lu & Huang 2018) that probably leads the concept to have the value of a grand narrative in the field of ELT turning the idea of knowledge for teaching into a monolithic object.

As the concept of teacher's knowledge base has gained terrain as a hegemonic pattern, other ways of knowing and experiencing knowledge may have

been underexplored in certain Global South contexts such as Bogotá, Colombia. (See an extension of this argument in the literature review section). I have used the term Global South and will continue to do so along the document. In this research, the concept of Global South does not literally mean the south as divided by the geographical equator, although sometimes the South is also a geographical location. The Global South here is the metaphor of the division between North America and Europe in respect to the rest of the world and the geopolitical impact of globalization and capitalism created by Europe and North America in different regions of the planet including their impact in the way we conceptualize of knowledge (Dados & Connell, 2012). The bulk of research about teacher's knowledge base has been framed within The Global North academies, but more voices of teachers from the Global South should also be included.

In this project I question the concept of knowledge base as being exclusively composed of linguistics, language theory, and practical components like methodology and practice (Richard, 1990) or more normatively speaking as a base composed of "what teachers need to know and be able to do." (Díaz-Maggioli, 2012, p. 5). If the concept of knowledge base is traced back, one can get to see two genealogies in it. One is the cognitive root (Shulman, 1987) in the need to professionalize teaching in the North American context as clearly and carefully delineated as possible. The other genealogy of the concept of knowledge base is also found out in computational sciences referring to systems that required a storage of information to be retrieved so systems worked well.

Extrapolating this idea of computational sciences to the ELT field, Freeman, Webre and Epperson (2019) state, “the information had to be accessible, which meant it had to be compatibly organized, so it could be searched and compiled according to the task at hand.” (p. 6). They find similarities between this idea of storing in computational sciences, and how a knowledge base for teaching English works; hence, they describe the knowledge base for teaching as a “socio-professional storage system” (p. 6) that is bound to a specific work, time, and place. Such storage re-generates like a software because each new knowledge generation substitutes a previous existing one solving shortcomings or adding new insights. The first generation of knowledge in ELT answered the question what to teach and appeared to be highly influenced by psychology and linguistics. The second generation of knowledge focused on how to do the teaching, and thus pedagogy played a key role. The third generation, highly influenced by the work of Shulman regarding Pedagogical Content Knowledge, highlighted the role of teachers as knowledge holders of their context, classrooms, and students. The fourth generation is more geared towards conceptually reaching better students’ learning. Thus, it has two dividing branches: subject matter (content, applied linguistics, etc.,) and knowledge for teaching (language acquisition, methods, curriculum, assessment).

Twenty years after the first approach taken by Freeman and Johnson towards knowledge in 1998, the reengineered version of 2019 by Freeman, Webre and Epperson acknowledges that the matters of positionality and authority weight when it comes to defining what knowledge is worth for English teaching. Freeman

et al., (2019) concede that authorities in academic disciplines definitely “shape what is valued.” (p. 7). They integrate the concept of identity now in this new version and acknowledge the connection pedagogy-identity. They further go on to mentioning the criticism of how the privilege of race and social position structure disciplinary knowledge; however, they fail to fully integrate this proposal in a way that really problematizes the ways in which ‘the privilege of race’ does structure disciplinary knowledge. The voice of the Global North experts may continue to shape such recent conceptualizations.

As a matter of concern Freeman (2018) brought up the question posed by Yep (2007): “what are the disciplinary, collective, and personal consequences when whiteness is the invisible and universal norm of the knowledge produced?” (Freeman, 2018, p. 7 citing Yep 2007). In my view, the question foregrounds the need to inquire why The Global North epistemologies continue to dominate on the discussion of what the knowledge for teaching must be. However, when analyzing what should constitute “the knowledge base” for English language teaching, Freeman et al., (2019) come back to saying that it should consist of at least one of the next generations or “patterns to think of how knowledge has been understood” (p. 15), briefly outlined above and as observed in the table:

Generation	*Key issue*	*Versions in ELT*
Disciplinary knowledge *(what)*	**If** this is *the knowledge needed to teach languages,* **how is the knowledge used?**	1.0: linguistics + psychology 1.1: + literatures 1.2: + sociology & anthropology
Knowledge of pedagogy *(how)*	If this is *how to teach languages,* **are differences in teaching deficits in knowledge evidence of individuality?**	2.0: + 'innovative methods' & SLA 2.1: + Communicative Language Teaching 2.2: + eclectic teaching; 'best methods'; 'post-method condition'
Knowledge-in-person; in-place *(who* **and** *where)*	If this is *how individuals use knowledge in teaching, if personal experience and context shape what they do,* **what do language teachers have in common?**	3.0: PPK & identity 3.1: PCK & transforming subject matter in teaching 3.2: knowledge as 'contextual, contingent, and developmental'
Knowledge-for-teaching *(why)*	If this is *how knowledge works in the process of teaching ...*	4.0: Knowledge-for-teaching languages 4.1: English-for-teaching

Table 1: Source Freeman et al., (2019, p. 15)

Back in 2006, Johnson had brought up the idea that teachers' previous experiences mattered as much as their contexts. The author reflected that teachers' learning was a lifelong process as teachers participated in classrooms, educational programs, and other socially situated spaces in which they needed to socially negotiate their learning experiences. In fact, Johnson (2006) already recognized L2 teachers "as users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how to best teach their L2 students within complex socially, culturally, and historically situated context" (p. 239). Johnson also proposed "positioning teachers' ways of knowing that lead to praxis as legitimate knowledge" (p.241). However, what frequently happens is that teachers' knowledge as it is produced by them may undergo a process of codification or 'academization' that virtually their voices hardly appear in journals; therefore, such knowledge gets lost in the words of the experts.

My argument, therefore, is that the knowledge base of teachers has historically consisted of knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of the aims of education. And some reengineering efforts have also been made to talk about it (Freeman & Johnson 1998, Johnson, 2006; Freeman 2018, 2020). Freeman et al., (2020) in fact acknowledge the exhausted claims towards knowledge base in ELT when saying that: “We need to closely examine - and perhaps move away from- the basic concepts which we have relied on to build the knowledge base” (p. 11).

Personally, I think experts in the ELT field have been asking the same question on and on: what does the knowledge base for teaching English consist of? However, we are lagging behind in understanding knowledge as an experience lived in the flesh, that is, accompanied by instances of struggles, contradictions, challenges, fight for recognition of hidden epistemologies that may not align with scientific frames. There is a wealth of research related to the concept of knowledge base in the ELT field that does not delink from its modern epistemological root of conceiving knowledge as:

a) Something passed from educators to teachers to be. (Deng, 2018)
b) Objects stored in the mind and cumulation of facts.
c) Theory to be practiced in the acts of learning and teaching. (Ord and Nutall, 2016)
d) Knowledge generations that recycle themselves on and on. (Freeman, 2019)

In that train of thought, it is important to uncover other ways of conceiving knowledge that may have been made invisible by the Western canon of thought. Because the concept of knowledge-base has not overcome its modern epistemological root and has not been conceptualized with other lenses in ELT, there is a dearth of understanding of how English language teacher experience their own relations to knowledge. Certainly, we, people of the Global South have the right to reclaim the right to enunciate (Mignolo, 2000) and counter-story tell our cultural truths; therefore, we should reclaim the right to express how we experience our relations to knowledge within geopolitically located bodies in the Global South.

Statement of the Research Interest

Elsewhere in this paper I have given an account of some assertions towards tensions between teachers' actual knowledges and their recognition in policy making and curriculum change (González, 2007, Cárdenas, 2004). Similarly, I have quoted Díaz-Maggioli (2012) in his remark that oftentimes professional development programs rely on the assumption that there is something wrong with teachers' knowledge, and they need some sort of fixing disregarding the fact that teachers may truly become intellectuals (Apple, 2006). I have also brought to this chapter the concept of abyssal thinking (Sousa Santos, 2007) which is the kind of epistemology that does not acknowledge other views of the world but its own. Similarly, I have said that I want to problematize teacher's knowledge not from a purely interpretive perspective but intending to de-link (Mignolo 2012) -even if just partially- from Western Epistemology.

Consequently, as Sousa Santos (2009) states, living in Europe or North America is not the same as living, in let us say, Colombia. Reality is different. This

assertion is also inferred from Fals Borda & Mora Osejo (2004) when they say that life in the tropics cannot be compared with life elsewhere. The world is diverse. Thus, it is not good to monopolize it in one single universal theory of knowledge. A single, general theory cannot account for the plurality of the world. Hence, we need to explore plural ways of knowing. This claim may also be extended to teachers' knowledges. There may be many knowledges teachers construct that we are not aware of because historically they have not been explored. Oftentimes teachers have been silenced as they have been constructed as recipients of alien knowledge, objects of imposed policy, reproducers of pre-packed practices. Considering the afore-mentioned ideas and the pieces of evidence from a few teachers' voices on their tensions, assumptions, assertions, and concerns, I set out to explore the next research question and objectives:

Research Question

How does a group of six English language teachers experience knowledge(s)?

General Objective

To characterize this group of teachers' experiences of knowledge(s).

Specific Objective

a) To find out relations to knowledge and sources of knowledge otherwise in which teachers also draw on in the acts of teaching and learning.

An Exploratory Stage for the Current Study

In what follows, I will introduce some pieces of evidence that helped me sustain the quest for digging into teachers' experiences of knowledges. The set of reflections come from some questions sent to a few acquaintances' emails (partners, colleagues, and ex-colleagues, see appendix 1) to explore knowledge

for the first time. I prepared some questions based on what I had read in terms of the Epistemologies of the South (Sousa Santos, 2007, 2009), postmethod pedagogy, (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and tensions found in the literature towards the recognition of teachers' knowledges (Cárdenas, 2004, Cárdenas et al., 2010, González, 2007). Four teachers replied the email with their reflections.

Three female and one male teacher responded a series of questions (see appendix 1) though here I am just sharing two of the teachers' responses which best summarize this interest. Each teacher had around 8 years of experience in the teaching of English by the time I prepared this initial stage in 2017. Marcela pursued a bachelor's degree in Spanish and English, a master's degree in Applied Linguistics. She worked as a teacher educator. Carlos studied bachelor's degree in English teaching, and had worked as a teacher, supervisor, fellowship program trainer, and at that time, directed an extension program. He had finished his master's degree in Education.

Cases for the Sociology of Absences and Emergences

Another reason why I wanted to research the topic of teachers' knowledges has to do with the many cases in which teachers' knowledges are called into question institutionally. For so long, I have heard anecdotes from my colleagues about situations which undermined their status of knowledgeable beings.

Marcela: They told me that what I had designed was not worth of a pre-service teacher level.

> I think teachers, especially, are many times called into question by students, other colleagues, or bosses. One experience I remember was when I started working at XXX University with pre-service teachers. I had to work with two more teachers in the testing creation process and I was assigned the listening exam. They had been working at that place for long and had lots of

> experience. I designed the exam by using the knowledge of testing (which was really reduced at that time) I had. After my colleagues revised it, they talked to me and told me that what I had designed was not worth of a pre-service teacher level, and that I needed to reconsider my knowledge on testing if I really wanted to stay working there. I remember I questioned myself about not knowing something as planning a test, which is part of the teaching main knowledge. I felt angry and bad some days after, but then, I decided to go and talk to them and tell them to help me. They gave me some directions, and that has been one of the most priceless pieces of information I have gained in my disciplinary knowledge. (Written reflection)

What is interesting out of Marcela's narrative is that the comment by colleagues meant a tipping point for her to construct knowledge about testing. This experience followed the path of more experienced teachers introducing the more novice ones into knowledge (Díaz-Maggioli, 2012) When reading this piece, I wondered: What sort of knowledge does Marcela cultivate to construct tests? How has that knowledge evolved? How did she emotionally cope with being positioned as lacking expertise?

Carlos: the envoy argued she couldn't believe how a young teacher like me could perceive learning in such terms.

> "I remember many experiences in which I felt that my knowledge as a teacher was called into question. It has happened to me especially when I am dealing with education administrators (say the head of a school, the director of a university department) or a policy maker (say envoys of the Ministry of Education). I remember one specific event in which an envoy of the Ministry of Education was telling us how to organise an English language lesson and asked us if we (the teachers) considered memorising a valid technique for teaching English. Every teacher in the room reacted by saying that memorising was an old-fashioned technique that had proven to be useless. However, I reacted by saying that despite the fact everyone was disregarding memory as an important factor in language learning, I dared to say that memory was more important than one can imagine; if we consider that information processing models have long argued that learning occurs only when information is used and rehearsed repeatedly until it becomes part of the human long term memory storage. Despite the fact that I cited the authors of a couple of information processing models, the envoy was simply astonished at my argument and argued she couldn't believe how a young

> teacher like me could perceive learning in such terms. She was not alone; most of the audience looked quite puzzled with my ideas and decided to continue providing opinions that were more aligned and celebrated by the Ministry envoy. My reaction was, by far, of frustration as I felt that some discourses have gained so many roots in education that they can make a process look completely diabolic, even if you happen to find some theoretical support for it. (Written Reflection)

I noticed that in Carlos' story there was an institutional discourse enacted in the authority of the Ministry envoy who did not consider memorization as an appropriate learning experience. Carlos' knowledge although backed up with theory in 'information processing models' was not acknowledged. On the contrary, he looked like having dated knowledge for a person his age. However, what one wonders is how Carlos' personal epistemology accommodates with institutionally mandated knowledge.

Not only questions come out of Carlos', and Marcela's stories. Absences and emergences are intertwined ideas that come across because events that appear to be the natural and common place in teaching hide meanings. Thus, my project aimed at reclaiming this sort of knowledges that have been called into question. To the question: do you think teachers are recognized as intellectual? Why? Why not? Marcela and Carlos mention a lot of thought-provoking ideas that allowed me to dig into the intersection of personal reflection, societal recognition, and the contribution of English teaching to the broader society on the one hand, and some support towards the study of teachers' ecology of knowledges. Let's start with Carlos:

> "Generally, English teachers are not perceived as intellectuals for many reasons, I am going to try to list some reasons that, in my opinion, might prevent the academic community from believing in English teachers' intellectual capabilities:

1. English teaching was formally recognised as a profession very recently, and it has not matured enough.
2. People tend to believe that teaching English is a mere act of translating words and pronouncing a group of sounds appropriately.
3. The epistemology of English teaching has resorted to other disciplines because knowledge of the field is still dependent on fields such as psychology and pedagogy in a great deal.
4. Social recognition of teaching professionals is extremely poor. Someone in this field is perceived to have chosen this profession as a desperate last choice.
5. English teaching is not believed to be an area that can actually contribute to the development of any other field of knowledge.
6. The spread of English teaching institutions that employ low-cost workers as teaching professionals have contributed to creating a simplistic image of what's implied by the process of teaching a language.
7. Research results in the area might end up being a bit too ethereal for a society driven and crazy for ready-to-use and "practical" knowledge.
8. It's believed that a good software can actually produce better learners and learnings than those in the English classroom." (Carlos' reflection)

Carlos' reflection shed light on the need to research in more depth teachers' knowledge. Given his assertion that English teaching is not believed to contribute to other fields of knowledge, this project attempts to plant a seed towards a contribution of English teaching to the field of epistemology in ELT and possibly within sociology. Carlos also mentions that this profession is still in 'its teenage' so to speak. Consequently, if the English teaching profession is to mature, studies towards a configuration of how knowledge is experienced by ELT professionals, framed in a bottom-up perspective, are required.

On the other hand, Marcela comments on the fact that being an intellectual is thought of a stereotype, but not in the sense Giroux mentions it. Here I also infer some reasons to study teachers' experiences of knowledge:

> In the context of 'licenciaturas' [Bachelor's Degrees] where I have been lately working, I think it depends on the subjects you teach, students consider you're an intellectual or not. If you teach research, didactics, methodology, pedagogy, practicum, or any related field, they might consider you an intellectual. But, if you teach the language class, they tend to see

> you just as the English teacher. Obviously, in places where we just teach English to other careers, those students do not see you as an intellectual. I think it happens because in people's imaginary studying or teaching languages is not an important career, a career that gives you too much money or that you can be on a par with Law or Engineering. Also, as teaching a language many times has been reduced to teach structures and vocabulary, students do not see how a teacher who doesn't teach 'content' could be an intellectual. Finally, I think in our country we might have a misconception on what an intellectual is because many people think that this kind of people are the ones who wear 'mochilas', read a lot, and speak about certain topic and have certain behaviors; this actually takes us to conclude that intellectuals might be seen as stereotypes, and not as Giroux defines them. (Marcela, reflection)

It can be inferred from Marcela's words that the prestige of the English teacher is not the same as that of someone who teaches content because seemingly teaching English does not entail as much intellectual effort as teaching theory. In the broader context of society teaching does not pay off compared to other professions (item that was also brought up by Carlos). Marcela also mentions how the instrumental component of teaching has posed a major threat to the profession as it has been reduced to teaching language structures. The study of teachers' ecology of knowledges sets a precedent that teaching goes beyond the surface of structures, instructions, lessons, or testing, and that in fact, it gives room to the co-existence of scientific and other forms of knowledges that play a role in the act of teaching.

In this chapter, I aimed at configuring the need for applying epistemological justice or cognitive justice as Sousa Santos (2009) calls it, to the state of things within the English teaching profession. I hope I have made myself clear in the attempt to contextualize, ground, and empirically support the initial idea of exploring how English teachers experience their relations towards knowledge. I envision an outstanding contribution of this project to the English teaching field, advancing the extant literature in English teachers' professional development, the

connection of teachers' cognition with their emotions and bodies, personal epistemologies, and expanding the comprehension of knowledge further than the Western canon of thought has framed. This project also has an emancipatory spirit in that it is intended to reach a small scale transformation in me as a woman-teacher-educator-researcher, the local South of context in relation to configuring teachers as intellectuals, and in general the ELT community.

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CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

El conocimiento es sólo una de las representaciones de la existencia.[1]
José Vasconcelos

Introduction

In this chapter I intend to develop the main theoretical tenets that support the study of in-service English language teachers' knowledges. Similarly, I want to provide an overview of the principal research developments concerning this topic first at the local level, and then in the mainstream arena. I locate myself in a Decolonial conceptual position.

In the first part of the chapter, readers will find an exploration of when, where, and who has published research or theory in relation to the concept of teachers' knowledges. In the second part, I posit a Decolonial standpoint to ground a critique of the universalizing aim of the concept of teachers' knowledge base. I acknowledge my bias that no knowledge can further advance if arguments are given from the same epistemological ground that one scrutinizes. Then, I will move on reviewing some of the main academic works in the topic of English language teachers' knowledges and some other contributions from Colombian researchers in other areas. Afterwards, I will argue for a Decolonial ELT knowledge by bringing up traditional and critical complex standpoints towards in-service English language teachers' knowledges. At the end, I will draw some concluding remarks.

Profiling Scholarly Work about Teachers' Knowledge.

Profiling has been used to find out research tendencies concerning the study of teachers' knowledge. In this chapter, the term "profiling" is being used as suggested by Porter, Kongthon & Lu (2002). One of the aims of profiling research is to help spotting research trends by means of text-mining (examining numerous abstracts in databases). Some questions that are answered by means of research profiling are: how many articles have been produced in certain area, or who builds up the research community interested in the topic? Nonetheless, profiling is not

[1] Knowledge is just one representation of existence (My translation)

meant to substitute a literature review. Rather it is intended to further it at the macro level by finding out tendencies and relationships beyond the few articles that can be found manually when surfing databases.

To trace research concerning teachers' knowledge, I used the bibliometric analysis provided by the database Scopus in April 2017 using the key words 'teacher's knowledge', 'English teacher's knowledge', 'Knowledge base'. Afterwards, between 2018 and 2020, I continued searching articles that related to the topic to keep updated. To do bibliometric analysis, a time spam between 1963 and 2017 was selected. Based on statistics provided by the database and information it displayed by country, number of publications and source, some conclusions were drawn. For example, in the 60s, the intellectual work concerning teachers' knowledge appears to be emergent with a scarce dissemination of 1or 2 articles in this decade up to the mid-70s. By the end of the 70s and the 80s between 3 and 12 articles were available. The 90s showed that the articles production in the area doubled. From around 14 to 27 articles were published. In the period 2001-2010 articles publication about teachers' knowledge increased fivefold. Finally, between 2011 and 2014 there was a steady rise in articles publication from 203 to 259.

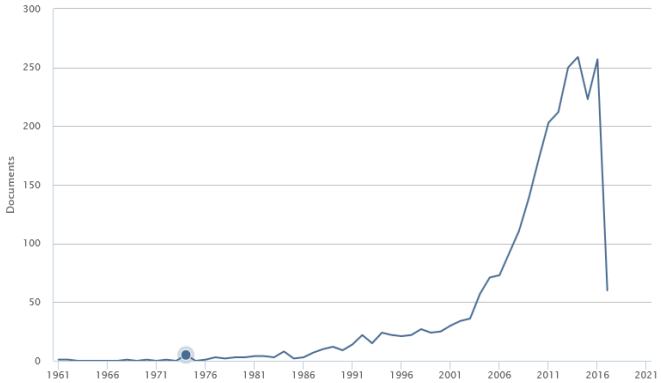

Figure 1. Articles about teacher's knowledge; Source: Scopus, retrieved March 31st, 2017

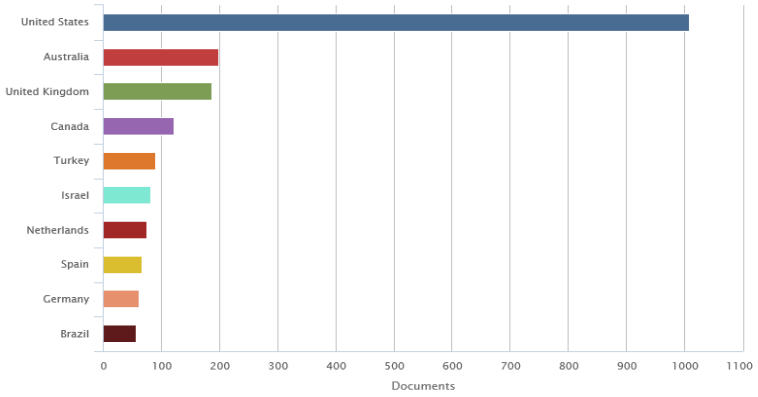

Figure 2. Production of articles about teacher's knowledge Source: Scopus, retrieved March 31st, 2017

As for the geographical location and journals, it can be said that academic production regarding teachers' knowledge has been particularly distributed as follows: The US with more than 1000 articles, Australia and The UK with almost 200 articles, Canada with more than 100 articles, and Turkey, Israel, Netherlands, Spain, Germany, and Brazil with less than 100 publications. If journals are ranked considering the biggest amount of documents on the subject of teachers' knowledge we have: *Journal Of Mathematics Teacher Education* (65), *Journal Of Teacher Education* (45), *Teachers and Teaching Theory and Practice* (40), *International Journal Of Science Education* (39), *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education* (34), *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education* (33), *Educational Studies In Mathematics* (30), *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* (30), *Journal of Science Teacher Education* (28), and *Research in Science Education* (28). Particularly in the English Language Teaching field, the following journals were found to have some articles regarding the topic in this way: *Tesol Quarterly* (11), *Language Awareness* (6) *Elt Journal* (3).

From this research profile, I inferred that the interest towards teachers' knowledge started in the mid-80s and has increased five times after 2001. Most research has been concentrated in Math, Science, Teacher Education, and to a lesser extent in the English Language Teaching field. Moreover, the production has been mostly carried out in Anglo or European countries. This inference will come to support what I will further argue in the next parts of the text.

A Decolonial Perspective towards English Language Teachers' Knowledges

Despite the word *knowledge* is singular in English, I use the more flexible and embracing word 'knowledges' (Sousa Santos, 2007, 2009) along the document. By knowledges, I not only refer to teachers' experiences, theories, beliefs, actions, and skills (Díaz Maggioli, 2012) that teachers are supposed to hold, but I am also considering the realm of the knowledge that has been made invisible or silenced by the Western canon of thought.

In the same way, two ideas should be clarified here –Decoloniality and Decolonial turn- in order to better understand the perspective I am going to introduce. According to Quijano (2007) 'Decoloniality' exposes how European/North American ideas and peoples imposed themselves as cognitive models to be followed by the rest of the world. Particularly, the scheme of knowledge production followed a pattern of "knowledge as a product of a subject/object relation" (p. 172) in which the subject is the European/North American man while other people are objects of study –or the consumers of their knowledge as I have elsewhere pinpointed out (See Castañeda-Londoño, 2018). In this sense, Quijano (2008) unmasks that "only European culture is rational, it can contain 'subjects' –the rest are not rational, they cannot be or harbor 'subjects'. Consequently, other cultures are different in the sense that they are unequal, in fact, inferior by nature. They can only be 'objects' of knowledge or/and of domination practices" (p. 174). Quijano calls for a liberation of knowledge production from "the pitfalls of European rationality/modernity" (p. 177) and the recognition of the "heterogeneity of reality" (p. 177). In that train of thought, I align with this view and advocate for the need to study the ways in which knowledge production can have new perspectives, being one of them the Decolonial thought.

The Decolonial Turn, for Asher (2013), is related to a communal project of critique towards the European Modernity born in Latin America that exposes the colonial effects on the Latin American cultures. Within this movement the actual birth of the modern world system is historically located in the conquest of the Americas. The Decolonial choice aims at digging into the knowledge and

experiences “of those who have been on the borders of colonial modernity” (Asher, 2013, p. 833). Authors such as Bhambra (2014) differentiate the Decolonial thought (from 1492 on) from Postcolonialism (19th-20th centuries) in that the former was begun by Latin American intellectuals in diaspora, while the latter was begun by Middle East and South Asian intellectuals being in the same diasporic condition. These authors use concepts from poststructuralists such as Foucault. Drawing on Alvarado (2015), I locate myself in an epistemological Decolonial ground. I chose this frame because it is an emerging conceptual lens from which to analyze the cumbersome relationships of knowledge as experienced by subjects, like myself, located in geopolitical bodies of the Global South. Thus, I bring up the fact that the academia disseminates knowledge/power relations that are rooted in the couple coloniality-modernity[2]. One result of this convergence is the rejection of knowledges produced in the periphery. I hope the reader does not see the next lines as patronizing, but as a way to reflect on the nature of our ideas in ELT, and the ways in which our voices can be heard in the broader ELT landscape with identity(ies), feelings, and experiences of our own.

Ruíz Solórzano (2016) suggests having a more critical and less foreign epistemic standpoint in the development of the Latin American social sciences. This suggestion comes out of the awareness that current analytical frameworks fall short in accounting for the various social and cultural happenings that have historically occurred, and that are currently occurring. Such foreign epistemic viewpoints consistently intend to globalize and homogenize the world. For Ruiz Solórzano (2016) the fragmentation of knowledge because of its institutionalization, is a fact in the social sciences. This criticism can also fit in the ELT arena. Aligned with that view, I would like to make the case that in our ELT field there has also been what some scholars (E.g. Dussel, 1998; Quijano, 2008) call coloniality of knowledge. Thus, within this view, local teachers’ knowledges have been made to be fragmented, stratified, or tested (González, 2009) to control their production and

[2] The concept of coloniality is used to describe the intellectual, linguistic, and economic effects that colonialism left in the planet Earth. Geographical colonialism already finished but intellectual coloniality still remains.

teachers' self-regulation. Specifically in Colombia, Noguera Ramirez (2005) backed up in Foucault (1976) suggests of pedagogy and pedagogical research as "subdued knowledges" (p. 43) because academia has failed to give them a better status by subtle mechanisms like their dilution in other disciplines (e.g., psychology or sociology), by concealing their history within socioeconomic frames, or by constructing the teachers as intellectuals controlled by knowledges produced in other disciplines.

The local ELT field, as an academic discipline itself, has regulated the legitimation of the concept of "teachers' knowledge base" (Shulman 1987) as a scientific discourse in our field that comes from the cognitive sciences. One difficulty with this perspective is that there is a tendency to unify the concept of knowledge. This problem stems from the European modernity and that is why, the so-called universal character of the Anglo European experiences does not leave room for other forms of knowledge. Therefore, these world views (the ones from the Global North) turn out to be the only valid ones. This conceptualization is prone to be problematized in the Latin American, more specifically, Colombian periphery. For Ruiz Solórzano (2016) the current intellectual framework does not reflect the historical reality, and the "accumulated knowledge" (p. 30) does not make further sense because in the periphery, we are establishing knowledge within frames that are not ours. Consequently, other ways of knowing are not explored, understood, or allowed.

In Asher's (2013) words "coloniality normalizes" (p.834). Therefore, its current hegemonic stance takes away our capability of figuring out other possible ways of seeing the world, constructing, or tracing knowledge. One effect is that in-service EFL teachers may not dare to explore or conceptualize what knowledge entails for them. That is why, Zemelman (2012) cited in Ruiz Solórzano (2016) states that if we are interested in constructing knowledge, we cannot just focus on recounting what has already been produced or framed within dominant discourses with universality biases. Instead, we should frame our thoughts in our various Latin American mindsets as we see reality differently. However these claims, in real life

practices scholars tend to fail to achieve such deeds. In the next section, I will outline some of such cases in the local ELT field.

By now, I would like to bring up Colombian scholar Fandiño (2013), who says that teacher education programs (TEPs) “must not see teaching as a static and prescriptive activity. Instead, they should regard it as a dynamic process characterized by reflection and change” (p. 90). Nonetheless, most scholarly work in the ELT local field appeals to Shulman (1987), Calderhead (1988), Freeman and Johnson (1998), Wallace (1991) -to name just a few scholars- for positioning their own knowledge production. As the Epistemologies of the South (Sousa Santos, 2009) put forward, there is need to spot the different colonial practices (either Portuguese, French, Iberian, British or North American). Hence, it is my intention here to unpack some of such practices of coloniality of knowledge especially those carried out in the local ELT academia.

Consequently, the continuous backup of our local intellectual work in Anglo-American or European authors, in my view, entails a lack of detachment from a North-Colonial-Modern mindset. What this reflection puts forward is that we are in deep need of exploring the knowledge *otherwise* (el saber otro, Alvarado, 2015), the one constructed in this part of the world which involves a completely different ‘episteme’ from those of Europe or North America. For Escobar (2007) the “saber otro” (*knowledge otherwise*) relates to what Walter Mignolo calls “un paradigma otro” (*a different paradigm*) which should not be understood as just another paradigm in Latin America. Escobar (2007) defines it as “another way of thinking that runs counter to the great modernist narratives (Christianity, Liberalism, Marxism)” (p. 180). This paradigm situates its research agenda in “the borders of a system of thought and reaches towards the possibility of non-Eurocentric models of thinking.” (p. 180)

As the Epistemologies of the South (Sousa Santos, 2009) put forward, there is need to spot the different colonial practices (either Portuguese, French, Iberian, British or North American) that have sustained, maintained, and legitimized the invisibility of the *knowledge otherwise*. Therefore, this study is meant to unpack

some of such practices of coloniality of knowledge especially those carried out in the local ELT academia. What I mean is, much scholarly work in ELT follows canonic patterns of thought which oftentimes validate current knowledge production from other places that may not reflect local realities or might not allow local knowledge production flourishes with local concerns and local ways of experiencing relations to knowledge. In this regard, Fals Borda and Mora Osejo (2004) warn us:

> “En nuestro país como en muchos otros es aceptada la validez del conocimiento científico originado en Europa y luego con gran éxito transferido a Norteamérica. Quizás en razón de tal éxito se llega al extremo de considerarlo también, suficientemente adecuado, tanto en su modalidad básica como aplicada, para explicar las realidades en cualquier lugar del mundo, incluidas las de los trópicos húmedos.” (p.7).

> “In our country, like in many others, the validity of the scientific knowledge produced in Europe, successfully transferred to North America, is accepted. Presumably, because of the success [of such transfer], people come to the extreme of also considering [such knowledge], sufficiently appropriate not only in its basic but also in its applied mode to explain the realities in any place of the world, including the humid tropics.” (p. 7) (My own translation from Spanish)

Seen through a Decolonial Turn lens, the concept of knowledge base has had a universalizing aim. What I mean is that most studies have intended to accommodate local teachers’ experience to the concept of a core or a base, something to anchor to. Such an intention clearly clashes with the fluctuating nature of people’s identities and evolution. An evidence of this argument is found in four out of five authors reviewed in the local literature. What is apparent here is that in some Colombian contexts, teachers’ knowledge has been investigated to validate what Shulman (1987, 2005) established. This realization invites to denaturalize this view. Besides, if research is constantly intended to see teachers’

knowledge from a cognitive perspective geopolitically located in the Global North, other geopolitical loci of enunciation would be neglected.

I want to finish this section with a story. Once I heard that eagles were able to renew themselves when they turned 40 so they could live up to 70. Such a renewal was painful as they had to pluck their own feathers, knock their beak off and get rid of their talons. I marveled at the story of the eagle in its capacity to be reborn. While writing this chapter my memory resorted to this story to relate it to the Decolonial epistemology; I actually thought of it as a metaphor that exemplified a Decolonial perspective in our ELT education considering that we teachers, were "eagles" that wanted to renovate by getting rid of our deeply rooted modern and colonial ways. When I intended to document myself "scientifically" to make a good argument, my grounds to believe in the story and use it as a metaphor just vanished. To my surprise, the story of the eagles was just another self-help story of strength as eagles would eventually die if they dared to remove their beaks, feathers, or talons. I was astonished at my naivety. Still, this discovery made me reflect that what counts as knowledge always needs to be revisited, and this is the primary intention of the next lines.

Contemporary EFL Colombian Thought Regarding English Language Teachers' Knowledges.

To give an account of the Colombian scholarly activity concerning a conceptualization of in-service English Language Teachers' knowledges in the Colombian context, I looked for articles in which the topic of teacher knowledge was taken as the main area of interest. I analyzed the titles and abstracts of 11 journals, namely: *Lenguaje* (2004-2017), from Universidad del Valle; *Matices* (2008-2015) and *Profile* (2000-2017) from Universidad Nacional; *Revista Colombiana de Educación* (2008-2017) and Folios (1990-2017) from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional; *How* (1997-2017) from the Colombian Association of English teachers; *Ikala* (1996-2017) from Universidad de Antioquia, *Gist* (2007-2016) from UNICA; *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal* (2003-2017) and *Enunciación*

(2006-2016) from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, and *Paideia* (1992-2016) from Universidad Surcolombiana.

The following review of articles is about but not bound to the in-service ELT field. This expansion is basically because scholars in other branches of education (e.g., initial teacher education, pre-service teachers, teacher education) have mainly dealt with the issue of teachers' knowledge. In fact, the topic has been more explored in initial teacher education than in in-service teaching.

From Normative to Avant-garde Views of In-service English Language Teachers' (IELTs) Knowledges.

In this part of the chapter, I document two trends in the ELT academia related to In-service English teachers' knowledges. The first trend consists of comprehensive literature reviews and research papers by authors whose view regarding teachers' knowledge consider Shulman's (1987) conceptualization of teachers' knowledge base consisting of core areas such as disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of learners or knowledge of educational ends. The second trend is that there are also emergent research studies whose aim is to position knowledge from a different standpoint, for example from a narrative perspective.

For Pineda Baez (2002) in her theory-based article, a definition of the English teacher knowledge base is paramount, especially when it comes to evaluating "if teacher preparation programs are meeting the standards for excellence in education" (p. 9). Thus, it can be inferred that one of the reasons why teacher knowledge is important relates to a frame of external evaluation. Similarly, understanding what knowledge base entails is of interest for bettering the quality of teaching practices, the author says. In the past, she says -presumably before Shulman's model- teacher's knowledge was thought of mere learning of pedagogical and subject matter skills.

Although Pineda Baez (2002) acknowledges that a single response to the quest for teacher knowledge is problematic, the author resorts to Shulman's (1987) model of knowledge base to equate different categories of English teachers'

knowledge to Shulman's model. For example, *content knowledge* would relate to semantics, phonology, syntax, etc. Interestingly, she warns that teachers must be ready to challenge this knowledge and suggests that initial teacher education is just a small part of the continuous preparation teachers should have. Regarding the concept of *general pedagogical knowledge*, the author relates it to teaching strategies, decision-making, and classroom management. *Pedagogical content knowledge* is connected to the examples, demonstrations, and means through which the subject matter (English) is made manageable. This is exemplified by the author in terms of the grammar examples, the designed materials and the reading and writing skills, and TESL/TEFL methods. *Curricular knowledge* would involve knowing the programs of the school scheme. *Knowledge of learners* would relate to being able to adapt teaching methods to different EFL/ESL populations and the knowledge of cognitive process students develop to learn (content reception, storage, retrieval etc.). And finally, the concept of *knowledge of educational goals and philosophical bases* does not go far beyond Shulman's own view of knowing the society expectations of the type of human being that is expected to be educated. Pineda Baez (2002) does highlight that another component must be added to the teacher knowledge base and is precisely the recognition of teachers and teachers-to- be as knowledge producers through research. Even though the author positions in a normative epistemology of IELTs' knowledge, this final remark is of interest to a Decolonial standpoint for ELT education in the sense that research allows finding situated meanings and practices that could not be found otherwise.

Similarly, Cardenas and Suárez (2009) inquired about the origins and components of five pre-service teachers' knowledge base, and the process they had followed to build it. The authors ground their work in four constructs. They are a) teacher education or the process followed to become competent teachers through academic and field work, b) pre-service teaching which the authors define as the period in which teachers-to-be will receive the knowledge they require to teach, c) teaching practicum which is a period during course work in which "theory and practice come together" (p. 116), and d) knowledge base which is defined –

quoting Shulman (2005) - “as the amalgam of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that underline the capacity to teach effectively” and that is comprised of subject knowledge, tenets of inquiry, ability to turn content into understandable ideas for students, knowledge of learners etc. (Shulman, 2005 in Cardenas and Suárez, 2009 p. 116).

Through a phenomenological interview, journals, and a survey, they found that the teachers’ knowledge base resulted first from getting involved with academic contexts (from kindergarten to university), second, reading theoretical constructs in their coursework, third, pre-service teachers’ experience with real life classrooms, fourth, sharing with classmates and lectures, and fifth, partaking with their own learners. For the participants, the knowledge base is composed of language knowledge, knowledge of students, and pedagogic knowledge. The authors concede that the concept of knowledge base by Shulman (1987, 2005) has been the founding element of other studies concerning teachers’ knowledge and their own. The authors extend our understanding of how some local teachers come to build the repertoire of ideas that Shulman calls the knowledge base. However, these categorizations might have shortcomings when accounting for an analysis of how the lived experience of diverse knowledges come to interact in the social practices. In a similar vein, the experience of partaking with learners is not given a stronger value as a source of knowledge for teachers.

An exploration of five teacher educators and five novice teachers ‘awareness of the sources for pedagogical knowledge was carried out by Macias (2013). The author was interested in finding the ways teachers learned about the act of teaching in times in which teachers’ knowledges are tested by means of students’ standardized examinations. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analysis of syllabi and curriculum documents of classes such as didactics, teaching practicum I, II, III, and pedagogy. The author takes the construct pedagogical knowledge from Shulman (1986b and 1987) who conceptualizes it as “teachers’ accumulated knowledge about the act of teaching that serves as the foundation for their classroom behavior and activities” (Shulman 1986b and 1987 in Macias 2013 p. 100). In the literature introduced by the author,

four sources of EFL teachers' knowledge are apparent. They are a) knowledge about teaching developed from the time students were at elementary or high school, b) knowledge gotten from learning to teach at coursework in the bachelor's degree, c) knowledge coming from experience, and d) knowledge taken from a research process.

The author found that for the novice participants the principal source of knowledge was their B.A degree course work. For the teacher educators, the B.A degree as well as the M.A studies were just a couple among many other sources. Novice teachers also asserted to have increased their pedagogical knowledge by observing other teachers despite the scarce opportunities the curriculum provided for those observations. The third source of knowledge considered by both novice and teacher educators is the classroom experience. The fourth source of knowledge found was the teachers' personal epistemologies. The final source of knowledge was research. Through this study, two types of knowledge are validated from previous work by Shulman (1987), namely, knowledge from experience and knowledge from research. Macias (2013) advanced in the discussion of knowledge through the recognition of personal epistemologies and previous learning experiences as other sources of teachers' knowledge. If a comparison is drawn between Macias (2013), Cardenas and Suarez (2009), and Shulman (1987, 2005) one can get to see that the concept of knowledge base would not be a static category. These studies intended to find what the sources for a knowledge base were. The findings showed different results from which I infer that the concept of base may be actually a misconception because what might entail a core or a base for some people is different from what it entails for others.

A revision of literature about knowledge and EFL teachers by Fandiño (2013) shows his main concern is to define what knowledge base is when it comes to effective teaching in the context of EFL Teacher Education Programs (TEPs). The first author cited is Shulman (1987) with his -already mentioned here- five dimensions of knowledge (content, pedagogy, curriculum, context, educational ends). Then, Fandiño (2013) focuses specifically on language teaching and refers to Lafayette (1993) to mention competence and knowledge about language,

culture, second language acquisition, and applied linguistics as the domains of English teachers' knowledge base. Day (1993)'s model is also cited. It concerns teachers' knowledge based on knowledge of teaching practices (preparing the lesson, managing the class), support knowledge (linguistics, sociolinguistics, and other disciplines that inform language teaching and learning), content knowledge (structural aspects of the English language). Freeman and Johnson (1998)'s conceptualization of English teachers' knowledge is also mentioned with six elements: "theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, language proficiency, subject matter knowledge (specialized disciplinary knowledge), pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge (educational, linguistic, policies)" (Fandiño, 2013, p. 86). Other scholars mentioned in Fandiño's review are Tarone & Allright (2005) who extended Freeman and Johnson's (1998) model with knowledge of "second and foreign language learner" (Fandiño, 2013, p.87)

As we have seen, Day (1993), Lafayette (1993), Freeman & Johnson (1998) among others are cited in Fandiño (2013) to carry out his analysis of teachers' knowledge base. These scholars in turn draw inevitably on Shulman's (1987) conceptualization of knowledge base. It could be said that ideas such as general pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, curricular knowledge, knowledge of educational contexts and learners, or knowledge of educational ends, first proposed by Shulman (1987) are tailored for the English teaching profession. If Freeman and Johnson (1998) are traced back, one can notice that although the concept of knowledge base was questioned, it did not advance much further.

Hence, although Fandiño (2013) states that teachers-to-be needed to develop their own voice so that their *knowledge base improves* (my emphasis), the core conceptualizations of what teacher knowledge base is have remained almost the same since the mid-1980s. Still, Fandiño (2013) reflects that the intricate nature of EFL teacher educators and the multiple factors that impact teacher knowledge make it difficult to develop a single way to prepare Colombian EFL teachers' knowledge for the various socio-cultural aspects faced in classrooms.

The author proposes to use systematic inquiry to move from mere reflective practices to help pre-service teachers “generate a voice of their own” (p. 93)

Mendieta Aguilar (2011) researched teachers’ narrative knowledge. The study aim was to find the ways in which teachers’ narrative knowledge about foreign language teaching molded and characterized the curriculum stories that existed in the classroom. Narrative interviews, concept maps, and biodata surveys were used to collect data. Three English teachers, from a private university language department, were the research participants. The author states that the interplay between life experiences, beliefs, teachers’ knowledge, and the curriculum somehow affect language learning. Her findings construct the participants as being learners, teachers, and curriculum makers. Three ways were found in which narratively speaking teachers experienced knowledge. They are directly related to each research participant.

The first category unveiled three standpoints towards knowledge. The first teacher “adopted a student-centered approach to language teaching” (p.97), through which he detached from the fixed curriculum and developed his own understanding of it. This theme shows a teacher concerned with fostering communication and avoiding some textbooks meaningless activities. The second teacher “adopted a goal-oriented approach to language teaching” (p. 98) in which she intended to allow learners interact with thought-provoking activities that ultimately helped them reach the objectives pre-established by the curriculum. Even when having a product-oriented view, the teacher also pinpointed the tensions between a standards and testing-based curriculum given by the institution, and her view that such a curriculum demands a lot in terms of content for a short time spam, which could hinder positive results. The third teacher “adopted a language-oriented approach to language teaching” (p. 99) in which the main emphasis was to develop an appropriate command of the language so learners could be successful at communicating.

These three approaches to knowledge drove the researcher to characterize the first participant as an experiential and interaction-driven language teacher, the second participant as a strategic and goal-oriented language teacher and the third

participant as a fun-driven and language-centered teacher. Mendieta Aguilar (2011) concludes that the three teachers' narrative knowledge emerged as something unique to each one, despite their membership to a particular teacher community. Their distinctive teaching, learning, and experiences had molded their knowledge and beliefs systems. Drawing on Clandinin (1985), the author suggests that personal practical knowledge is the sort of knowledge that is permeated with the experiences that build a person's being. To this inference, she adds:

> "the type of curriculum these three teachers lived and co-constructed with their students, and which they transformed with varying frequency, was all mediated, filtered and informed by their personal practical knowledge and the external factors previously described." (p. 104)

The final salient idea coming from this study is that there is an urgent need to value, comprehend and spread teachers' narrative knowledge because it is a fertile ground of exploration of the teaching practices. From a Decolonial lens applied to teachers' knowledge, Mendieta Aguilar's finding that narrative knowledge emerged as something unique to each teacher helps problematize a normalized view of teachers' knowledge, namely, that there is such a thing as a knowledge base that appears to be the same for all teachers in the world. According to this research, a knowledge base would not comprise a set of general theories but much more contextualized knowledge experiences that have been made invisible because of the universalist character that the concept of knowledge base has come to have.

More recently other local authors have studied issues related to teachers' knowledge from a different vantage point and probably advancing the understanding of teachers' knowledge. Interested in what it is like to experience ELT in rural Colombia, Cruz Arcila (2018) used seven teachers' narratives, field observations and interviews to see enactments of "wisdom of practice[3]" and "personal theories" (p. 67) of rural EFL teachers in different regions of Colombia.

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[3] The concept of "wisdom of practice" was mentioned in Shulman (1987) as one of the sources of teacher's knowledge. At that time, he asserted that "the final source of the knowledge-base is the least codified of all. It is the wisdom of practice itself, the maxims that guide (or provide reflective rationalization for) the practices of able teachers. (p. 11).

Through his interest in digging into teaching practices that were socially pertinent for the teaching and learning in contexts of rural Colombia, the author found at least four instances of personal theories that inform teacher knowledge in ELT, namely, teaching English through prayer, translanguaging, locally suited materials design, and multimodal literacy practices with students cell-phones and teachers' own resources, voices, and ideas. The author wisely suggests that there may be a great number of other teaching practices that possibly constitute what can be considered the enactments of local practices of knowledge.

In a similar vein, Quintero Polo (2019) reports on the study of the trans-formations of general pedagogical knowledge considering tenets of critical pedagogy, research, and context sensitive practices by student-teachers of an ELT major in Bogotá. With a view that pedagogy is informed by critical theory and opposed to traditional ways of approaching teaching and learning, Quintero Polo (2019) analyzes how student-teachers demonstrate they are not "transmitters of ready-made knowledge" (p. 29) by means of diaries, interviews, and analysis of their research projects. The author counters the idea that knowledge should be "an external body of information for people" as this view is prone to conceptualize "the knower as separated from the known" (p, 29).

In that train of thought, he brings up the general categorization of Shulman's teachers' knowledge base to go beyond it and trace a view of knowledge as composed of "theories and practices activated by contextualization and the sharing of individual and collective dimensions" (p.30). Upon analysis of student-teachers research experiences and innovative practices, his findings suggest that student-teachers underwent a process of negotiation of their professional and academic selves with their own students, theory, and what they experienced in real life. Pedagogy proved to be something socially constructed. Student-teachers' qualitative pieces of research went beyond instructional practices of ELT to focusing on knowing and understanding learners a lot better, and most importantly having a view of language as a vehicle for getting something else, rather than seeing language as an end in itself.

Decolonially speaking, the concept of knowledge base might have had a universalizing aim. What I mean is that much research, as reviewed here, is intended to accommodate local teachers' experience to the concept of a core or a base, something to anchor to. Such an intention clearly clashes with the fluctuating nature of people's identities, evolution, and standpoints. An evidence of this argument is found in four out of seven authors reviewed in this part of the document. What is apparent here is that in some Colombian contexts, teachers' knowledge has been investigated to validate what Shulman (1987, 2005) established. This realization invites to denaturalize this view which has started to change in recent years as reported in studies by Mendieta (2011), Cruz Arcila (2018), and Quintero Polo (2019).

Other areas of Colombian Academia Researching Teachers' Knowledges.

Quintero Corzo, Torres Hernández and Cardona Toro (2011) from the Department of Educational Studies at Universidad de Caldas in Manizales Colombia, developed a teaching program and a subsequent contest framed within the premise that teachers' pedagogical knowledge is made observable through writing as it allows to explain scattered teaching experiences. By means of writing, the teaching practices become an intellectual endeavor. Fourteen teachers of rural, urban, marginal, secondary, and university education from different parts of Caldas Colombia participated for two years in workshops, group, and individual tutoring sessions to write about their pedagogical knowledge in a narrative style. The authors pinpoint that each educational setting has its own actors and teachers who committed to write their stories. By writing their knowledge stories, they managed to turn their life experiences into practical wisdom. The teacher life story contest, the authors conclude, helped pave the path to fill a gap in the Colombian academic field: "the written memory of teachers' knowledges" (p.297). This contribution by Quintero Corzo et al., (2011) invite to develop a Colombian school of thought that systematizes the knowledge production of those who work in educational settings, who might not be mainstream actors in the academic field, and whose hidden knowledge could be documented.

Another groundbreaking contribution to the conceptualization of teachers' knowledge at the local level was made by the pedagogical expedition. Martínez Boom (2004b) explains that the Colombian pedagogical expedition's aim was to fight the teachers' isolation by joining teachers with the school, the community, the regional, and the national experiences of teaching. About 3000 teachers participated as explorers visiting Medellín, Barrancabermeja, Bogotá's southwest, Antioquia, The Coffee Axis, and The Caribbean. The expedition was based on the premise that Colombia has an enormous pedagogical potential that has remained invisible. The expedition introduced the concept of 'geopedagogy', which refers to the idea that the place where the acts of teaching and learning take place matter because pedagogy takes certain shapes depending on where it happens. This work resulted in the production of a pedagogical atlas. Using a Foucauldian perspective, the dyad power-knowledge was studied. The teachers were constructed as knowledge holders and producers. At the level of power, the study foregrounds that from a discursive perspective of economics, places are solely thought of cheap labor providers. However, places are one of the major references of resistance towards totalizing destinies of a single universal culture. Then the pedagogical expedition broke with a traditional way of telling the teachers' stories by introducing the notion of place as a seminal component of the conceptualization of pedagogical knowledge.

Martínez Boom (2016) asserts that pedagogy has had a key role in the Colombian history as "movement, debate, and research field" (p.25); therefore, its value cannot be given by what international agencies require. In that sense, this assertion entails that it is important to come back to us in order to re-think our relations to the concept of knowledge base because so far, we have worked with conceptual frames that do not represent a 'geo-pedagogy' or a pedagogy of the place.

Up to here, it was my intention to provide evidence regarding the way knowledge has been studied locally. I found most studies draw on Shulman's model of knowledge base, and very few come with another paradigm. In the

following section, I will make a deeper analysis of the concept of knowledge base to account for its origin and evolution.

The Concept of Knowledge Base in International Academia

What some international publications show regarding the concept of teachers' knowledge base is a heavy reliance on Shulman's perspective towards knowledge. There is also a regular use of data collection methods such as questionnaires and archetypal intentions to measure knowledge through mixed methods research designs with findings that oddly show reduction of teachers' knowledge as they progress in teaching experience and other similar findings. One of such findings is that the more teachers participate in professional learning communities the more they enhance their knowledge base as I shall now report. Other studies pinpoint to the need to include research regarding teachers' emotions when it comes to understanding their knowledge.

One component that appears paramount though not extensively explored is emotion. Zembylas (2007) explored the emotional component of knowledge, that is, "a teacher's knowledge about/from his or her emotional experiences with respect to one's self, others (e.g. students, colleagues) and the wider social, and political context in which teaching, and learning take place" (p. 356). The concept of knowledge has mostly been taken as cognition, and "emotional knowledge" is not understood as a valid part of what Zembylas calls a knowledge ecology. A knowledge ecology refers to a "system of many sources and forms of knowledge in a symbiotic relationship" (p. 356). This perspective considers that emotional knowledge has a personal dimension, a relation with students, a socio-political

component, an influence exerted by the culture of the school, and a cultural impact that the decisions teachers produce regarding the curriculum.

The author introduces the results of four studies. The first study reports on 30 preservice teachers in a science-methods class. They reflected upon how former emotional experiences placed a role in the way they related to and taught science to children. The author explained that former emotions with science were core elements in developing students' future emotional ecology. Similarly, norms and discourses about science also hindered having good relations with the subject matter. The second study consisted of one participant teacher intending to develop emotional self and others' awareness in fifth graders as part of her developing of pedagogical content knowledge. The third study described in depth a science teacher who intended to integrate enquiry in her classroom to overcome standardized forms of teaching science prevailing in her school and the epistemological beliefs that drove such process. The final study concerns a white English teacher in an African American context intending to integrate emotional knowledge in her classroom through teaching social justice. She meant to show the value of care, empathy, and the impact of power relations in the classroom. It was concluded that the emotional dimension of pedagogical content knowledge was paramount. The author established that:

> "to teach well, teachers must be able to connect their emotional understanding with what they know about the subject matter, pedagogy, school discourse, personal stories, and curriculum. The teachers' emotional knowledge had to connect with the subject matter, the students as well as

the teachers' own experiences brought to the classroom; these connections always created an emotional ecology" (p. 363)

The author highlights the importance of developing research tools and plans to understand components of teachers' knowledge such as: emotion, intuition, and tacit knowledge inasmuch as mere cognitive perspectives towards pedagogic content knowledge separate this component from knowledge.

Another concept that has been explored towards the study of knowledge is that of personal epistemologies. Fives and Buehl (2008) carried out a two-stages study with practicing and pre-service teachers' implicit theories and personal epistemologies aiming to know what implicit beliefs these teachers held about their teaching ability. Authors quantitively and qualitatively evaluated beliefs teachers held drawing on the assumption that "effective teachers possess more than vast amounts of content knowledge" (p. 135). For them, there are different theories, processes, and contexts that have an impact on the practice, and particularly the knowledge for teaching relates with other implicit knowledges. The findings suggest that knowledge for teaching could be integrated in five topics, namely "pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of children, content knowledge, management and organization knowledge, and knowledge of self and other" (p.142).

Another component of research that delved into the concepts of teachers' knowledge base is connected to the relationship between length of experience and amount of knowledge gotten. Asl, Asl, and Asl (2014) drew on the concepts of content knowledge understood as "EFL teachers' knowledge of the subject, encompassing their proficiency in English along with their knowledge about the

formal aspects of English" and pedagogical content knowledge taken as "what teachers need to know about what they teach" (p. 1601). The authors studied 115 Iranian teachers' knowledge through multiple choice questionnaires. The notions of pedagogical content knowledge developed by Shulman (1987) and then tailored for the ELT field by Richards (2011) and Freeman (2000) are used in the study to conclude that the longer teachers stay in the teaching profession the more they lose pedagogical and content knowledge.

The enhancement of knowledge through participation in communities of practice has also been a research concern. Mu, Liang, Lu, & Huang (2018) rely on the concept of teacher's pedagogical content knowledge devised by Shulman (1987) as being a marker of teacher's excellence and students' learning. The authors integrate some criticism towards the concept of knowledge base of Shulman; they pinpoint a pitfall in restricting the concept of pedagogical content knowledge to the mere instructional side of teaching. Still, these authors use the concept of pedagogical content knowledge to study the relationship between professional learning communities and their impact on pedagogical content knowledge. By means of an instrument measuring agreement with specific statements such as "I'm knowledgeable in diagnosing student learning problems according to test results" or "I'm knowledgeable in designing teaching activities" (Mu et al., p. 27) the researchers studied 10.202 teachers in Beijing. The authors concluded that through participation in teacher research activities and professional learning communities, the participants' pedagogical content knowledge was heightened.

Another area of interest regarding teacher knowledge base is its connection to the curriculum. Deng (2018) problematized the concept of knowledge base developed by Shulman (1987) in relation to the institutional curriculum. For this author, despite the great influence Shulman's work has had regarding public policy, teachers' examinations, professional development, or international assessment, certain tenets of his theorization have been assumed a-critically. For the author, assuming, as Shulman does, that "a teacher necessarily transforms his/her content knowledge of an academic discipline into pedagogical forms" (p. 156) neglects that the content of each subject is also subjected to the institutional curriculums that in certain countries work as devices that regulate what and how the teacher teaches. One reason why there is such a mismatch is the fact that the construct of pedagogical content knowledge originated in the American system back in the 80s where there was not a national curriculum to follow. Nevertheless, there may be countries where the state curriculum works as a seminal force to follow as it is the case of Singapore, where Deng comes from. Thus, according to Deng (2018):

> "this institutional process of content selection, organization and transformation has not been accounted for by Shulman and associates in their conceptualization of content knowledge for teaching nor by researchers who adhere to their conceptualization" (p. 158)

To a certain extent, Deng implies that the teachers using their pedagogical reasoning do not act alone in the process and knowledge is also bound to what the institutions expects teachers to teach and do. Previous research regarding teachers' knowledge has given a look at the theme with different angles and

perspectives. Results of research sometimes follow clear previous expectations and draw on existing ideas of how knowledge base has been understood in the educational field. Still, the concept should be explored with new lens, so that new and thought-provoking ideas can emerge.

Historizing ELT Disciplinary Knowledge, A Critique of the Concept of Knowledge Base

English teachers' knowledge has been highly regulated epistemologically speaking. Indeed, it is a discipline that does not escape phenomena happening in general education. Postmodern critical thinker Kincheloe (2001) says that the modern view of the world infused all aspects of life and particularly education as knowledge is defined a priori. To a great extent, the concept of teacher knowledge base follows this line of thought; it is an a priori category that intends to prescribe what teachers need to know. It may entail that the act of teaching or what is required for it is generic. Readers might wonder how the concept of teacher knowledge base has come to be what it is now. I will now attempt to historize this matter.

The concept of knowledge base for teaching has a socio-historical root. Donmoyer (1996) gives us some hints at its historical background. He contends that back in 1910, educational psychologist Edward Thorndike promoted psychology as a science that could possibly unveil every human behavior and describe each educational force. In the same spirit, he explains, educational administrator Elwood Cubberly (1909) compared schools to factories and children to products. These two scholars give an account of the strong modern scientific/managerial approach given to educational problem solving and the legitimation given to the scientific method as a source of knowledge about education. (Thorndike, 1910; Cubberly, 1909 cited in Donmoyer 1996). At that time, there was already an emerging interest in finding teachers' knowledge base. For Donmoyer (1996) the Thorndike's effect lasted until the mid-70s. Thus, along

this time spam, there was a heavy dependence on the so-called process-product paradigm whose main interest was to find teachers' behaviors that resulted in pupils' learning results. Donmoyer asserts that the Thorndike tradition was pervasive in influencing how research was theorized in education as its role was to find and corroborate recipes for practice and practice consisted of "systems, techniques, routines, and standard operating procedures" (p. 96)[4]. This concept began to change as an emerging interest in teachers' thoughts started. However, the search for a knowledge base did not finish there.

Similar descriptions are found in Beyer (1987) in his chapter "What Knowledge is of Most Worth in Teacher Education?" He reveals that in the North American tradition there was, at the time of his writing, "a reliance on psychometric analyses, isolated technical competence, linear thinking and instrumental reason" (p. 19). He describes that teacher education there, was seen "in hierarchical, patriarchal, technocratic, and psychologized terms" (p.19). The hegemonic culture in the preparation of teachers fostered "positivism and technical rationality" (p.19). What Beyer (1987) calls "technocratic rationality" (p.20) is a system that is based on:

> "competency-based teacher education, the testing of teachers, apprenticeship-based clinical teacher education, systems management approaches to curriculum development and program evaluation, behaviorist psychologies, and the nature of national accreditation, and state licensing requirements" (p. 20)

To me, it is necessary to denaturalize this normativity because that tradition of *technocratic rationality* has had an immense influence in this part of the world where this vision of teachers' knowledge has also been adopted. Therefore, in what follows I would like to extend this analysis to the socio-political context of educational psychologist Lee Shulman's (1987) times in which he advanced the

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[4] In my view, this sort of behaviorist influence has continued to exert power in subtle ways in ELT. The methods, for example, are in some way *techniques, routines and operating procedures* that delineate teachers' actions that are supposed to end up in learning results.

concept of knowledge base. It is my intention to make a clearer case on how the concept of teacher knowledge base is a product of standardization and an attempt to raise regulations of the profession more than an epistemological positioning towards what it means to teach and to know.

First, let us consider that the mid 1980s was a time of educational reform that intended to professionalize teaching *in the USA*. Shulman (1987) persuasively said that the professionalization of teaching was a way to “elevate teaching to a respected, rewarding, better rewarded occupation” (p.3) He brought up a discourse circulating at that time. It was that teaching merited professional recognition based on the idea that “standards by which the education and performance of teachers must be judged can be raised and [be] more clearly articulated” (p.4) People who wanted the reform –Shulman says- maintained that there was such a thing as a teacher knowledge base defined as “codified, codifiable, aggregation of knowledge, skill, understanding, technology, ethics and dispositions of collective responsibility as well as a means for representing and communicating it” (p.4). Shulman (1987) criticized them for not clarifying what that meant saying:

> “The rhetoric regarding the knowledge base, however, rarely specifies the character of such knowledge. It does not say what teachers should know, do, understand, or profess that will render teaching more than a form of individual labor, let alone be considered among the learned professions” (p.4)

Hence, it is in this context in which Shulman crafted an argument regarding content, character, and sources for a knowledge base of teaching that suggests, according to him “an answer to the question of the intellectual, practical and normative basis for the professionalization of teaching” (p.4). Framed in his locus of enunciation as a cognitive psychologist the work he did was tied to two projects, one of implementing a national board of teacher assessment and one of systematic observation of how novice teachers learned to teach. Within these parameters, Shulman (1987) asserts that:

> "Cognitive psychology research contributes to the development of understanding how the mind works to store, process, and retrieve information. Such general understanding can certainly be a source of knowledge for teachers just as the work of Piaget, Maslow, Erickson or Bloom has been and continues to be" (p. 11).

In this sense, I align with critical pedagogue Kincheloe (2001) when he reflects upon the fact that psychology has been summoned to say what teaching should entail, and basically the act of teaching is not in the hands of the teachers. Instead, the *scientific management* of teaching is left in the hands of outside experts, like Shulman who observed how experienced, and novice teachers learned to teach in order to formulate standards. This results in the teacher saying nothing about his/her teaching, and how to judge its results but being object of study. Contemporary scholar of Shulman, Tom (1987) highlighted an underlying assumption of their epoch by reformers like the Holmes group[5]: "if only more research-derived knowledge were given to teachers, their performance would be dramatically improved" (Holmes group executive board, 1986 cited in Tom 1987, p. 9). However, Tom (1987) argued that "a more useful source of such knowledge than discipline-based study is a teacher's own inquiry into his or her classroom activities and experiences" (p.9). Still, this other approach did not resonate at that time.

Kincheloe (2001) explains that during the Reagan and Bush periods of presidency (1980-1993) "teachers' hands are tied and exercise no control over the curriculum. They leave the system [that is the undergrad school] without having been educated. School was intellectually irrelevant. Standardization turns out to be cognitive anesthesia" (p. 22). Still, even though Shulman (1987) acknowledges that "the great danger occurs… when a general principle is distorted into prescription,

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[5] Schneider and Hood (1994) describe The Holmes group as an American network of university deans which intended to carry out reforms in teacher education through research in the eighties. One of their intentions was to make teaching a profession and one of its reports asks for strict standards to enter and leave teacher preparation programs. At that time, the group was criticized for being elitist and lacking substantial impact in their research.

when maxim becomes mandate" (p. 11) it turned out that his model did become prescription, at least, in what concerns the ELT field.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) attempted to re-conceptualize the construct of knowledge base by transcending the historical and theoretical tenets of the 70s and 80s. They recognize the conditions under which the concept of teacher knowledge base was to be reformed. The authors recall that in the 80s, there was concern regarding the absence of an academic base for language teaching. The same that had been happening in general education. They explain that classroom inquiry was intended to establish efficient teaching actions, appropriate students' results, and classroom exchanges that derived in effective language learning backed up "in teaching skills or modeling effective teaching behaviors" (p. 398). I think there was a regime of truth which established that teachers lacked a knowledge base so that the implementation of standardization had a legitimization in English teaching as well, despite attempts made in the 80s to see teaching and learning as social, interpretive constructions prone to change as those of Clandinin (1986) cited in Freeman and Johnson (1998).

Even though the authors propose a shift from a behavioral to a constructivist view, the concept of knowledge base prevails. In fact, Freeman and Johnson (1998) appointed language teacher education to be responsible of defining what the knowledge base should be in ELT education. In that sense, they say that the judgments teacher educators make regarding knowledge management (e.g. content, pedagogies) reveal teacher educators' conceptualization on how people learn their profession and they can define "what is worth knowing and how it is best learned by those individuals who seek to become part of the profession" (p. 403) still again under the assumption that decisions made by teachers should consider effective outcomes: "teacher educators must examine and assess these choices and decisions against the effectiveness of the outcomes they engender" (p. 403) Consequently, the concept of efficacy remains with the label "teaching effectiveness". These ideas entail that it is the academy the one that defines what knowledge base is; it is the one holding the power to determine it. In short, the

knowledge base continues to mask an intention to police English teaching moving from one discipline to another but keeping the objective of effectiveness and the static concept of base.

In my view, indeed, it is relevant to develop a new relation to knowledge. In that sense, I agree with Freeman and Johnson (1998) when stating that the TESOL area has not keenly intended to outline its ways of knowledge. I would add that most of them are borrowed from cognitive psychology[6]. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) suggest that good teachers do not need to turn into experts of a knowledge base but stand in a position of analysis of their own knowledge and see students as knowers as well. This premise is based on the assumption that:

> "Teachers can only come to know how to teach and how to learn from teaching by being attentive to the classroom interactions… knowledge generation is both the purpose of teaching and the subject of her own research" (p. 47).

In this view, it is teachers and students who, within the classroom, outline what knowledge is. Kincheloe (2001) states that "psychological models of cognition overlook the matter of critical power, of the capacity people have to detach from tacit presuppositions, discursive practices, and power relations" (p. 38). Therefore, he proposes different ways of knowing from a critical pedagogy perspective. Kincheloe (2004) wonders what types of knowledges professional educators should possess in times when teaching is a profession constantly at risk of being deskilled. Teachers may be waving between fads, which without solid foundations, to understand past and present socio-cultural theories and advances, they could not develop an identity of their own. His locus of enunciation is that of a critical complex vision of teachers viewed as knowledge producers targeting the development of more coherent answers to what it implies to know and the moral

[6] This is so from mainstream northern ELT epistemology and in the South, we are still aligned with that view. Thus, the work in the South is even harder to accomplish when it comes to develop an ELT knowledge of our own as we would need to dialogue with both cognitive psychology/mainstream/colonial views on in-service language teachers' knowledge and southern perspectives towards ELT.

duty behind that act. His “meta-epistemological” (p. 51) perspective aims to rethink the challenged concept of a “knowledge base for education” (p.51) Within this view, there is the recognition of different types of knowledges of education “including but not limited to empirical, experiential, normative, critical, ontological, and reflective-synthetic domains.” (p. 51) The author points out that teaching is preeminently an epistemological act. Munby and Russell (1996) cited in Kincheloe (2004, p.52) argue that teaching “depends on, is grounded in, and constitutes knowledge”.

Thus, teachers should develop empirical knowledge that underscores observation as a source of knowledge, but more importantly they should have the awareness that research is situated. Likewise, researchers do have ideologies, disciplinary knowledge, and experiences that restrict their studies. Similarly, the knowledge produced is constructed, fragmented, and does not seek universal validity. For him, “in a critical complex perspective there is not certain knowledge about: what subject matter to teach; the proper way to develop a curriculum; the correct understanding of students, or the right way to teach” (p. 52). Such knowledge is always elusive. Indeed, teachers’ experiential knowledge is believed to be paramount.

A second kind is called by Kincheloe (2004) normative knowledge about education. It relates to “what should be” (p. 55) concerning the moral and ethical conduct of teacher educators and teachers. Normative knowledge aims to have demanding colleges/schools/departments of education and schools of various kinds. This knowledge is not randomly formed but coherent with power relations, social objectives, and cultural/historical settings. Of course, the concern for moral and ethics, Kincheloe explains is grounded, for instance, in his experience with social justice research in which colleagues asked him to offer empirical proof of the validity of those worries. Thus, moral, and ethical assumptions are to be examined and deliberated and exposed in the academic arena.

The third kind of knowledge proposed by Kincheloe (2004) is critical knowledge about education. It revolves around “the political/power-related aspects of teacher education and teaching” (p. 56). This sort of knowledge problematizes how the curriculum –knowledge selection, means to deliver information, ways to

construct understanding, and evaluation- are not apolitical. It is in straight antagonism to positivism that conceives of curriculum as pre-established knowledge to be given to learners. This sort of approach to knowledge unmasks the role of education colleges in power relations derived from governmental intervention in the college life, and the concealed intent to make education respond to ideologies such as neoliberalism and human capital. In a similar vein, there is an interest in unveiling how the categories of gender, class, or ethnic origin develop along the educational processes.

Another type of knowledge proposed by this author is an ontological one. It entails the ways teachers see themselves as teachers and as learners, especially what they feel they require to learn, where they must study it, the way in which this happens, and how these actions characterize their teacher persona. Here there is the underlying assumption that: “if teachers hold power to produce their own knowledges, then they are empowered to reconstruct their own consciousness” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 58).

The final type of knowledge is named experiential knowledge about education. The importance of these sort of knowledges cannot be downplayed. Their epistemology is knowingly different from empirical or academic knowledges but develop relations with other knowledges already mentioned here earlier on. They come out of the unexpected experiences that occur while teaching. Such disruptions in the established order force the practitioner to restructure his/her understanding of the situation. “Critical complex practitioners learn to improvise and develop new ways of dealing with the new circumstances, new modes of action” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 59).

Through this perspective, it can be seen here that a conceptualization of knowledge cannot solely rely on cognitive perspectives such as the ‘knowledge base’. Other realms of the human condition should also be considered, and other definitions and ways of perceiving knowledge should come into play.

A concluding remark

While working on this dissertation, I constantly experienced having stepped in arenas that do not represent a comfort zone in the sense that since my

undergraduate school, I had been infused by colonial thought in ELT, and paths to detach from such a world system are uncertain, unknown, and underexplored. While reviewing literature, I realized that my own knowledge of the Latin American academia, particularly the Colombian one was scarce, and thus I had to commit to investigate my own roots to embrace a decolonial standpoint.

In this review, it was my intention to show different local academic developments, and to see how ELT mainstream authors have become the tenets of what knowledge means in the local ELT profession. I would like to finish quoting Steinberg (2015) as she best summarizes the spirit of this chapter: “TEFL educators must understand the conditions and effects of knowledge production, while engaging in knowledge production themselves” (p. 17) This is specially the case here considering that in order to produce knowledge that represents the local realities, there is need to reflect how knowledge production has historically happened. It is relevant to inquire how English language teachers experience knowledge with a perspective that gives them voice as intellectuals who have been silenced (Apple, 2006). With such inquiry, we could possibly overcome abyssal thinking (Sousa Santos, 2007) that has policed the boundaries of what is considered teachers’ *knowledge* and has decided what the *true* procedures, practices, contents, models, and discourses should be like in English Language Teaching grounding the ELT epistemology in a static framework. It seems to me that teachers’ knowledges have historically been conceptualized from a modern vision of a fixed canon of one single knowledge-base, and there is a myriad of reasons for the need to de-naturalize such a view.

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Chapter Three:

Method, Participants, Procedures of Testimonial Narratives Production

"My education was Western, and years of living under Western thought is hard to undo and unlearn. Maybe no puedo get rid myself of it completely. Mis ganas and disposition only go so far. The resistance to any new kind of re-thinking and reimagining is debilitating if not futile when one tries to (un)learn research and teaching. Research's and teaching's scientific tools, spirit and rituals run deep, and constantly (re)appear like fantasmas in a haunted house. When I least expect it, I search for truths, which once "found" only serve to limit our multiple ways of living and existing. When I least expect it, I become a colonizer and I reinscribe colonialist relations of domination/subordination. When I least expect it, I construct "los otros", when I least expect it, I embody whiteness… When I least expect it, I vivisect not only my mind from my body but my research participants as well. All this happens while attempting to perform criticalist research and teaching!"

Saavedra, 2011, p. 264.

In this chapter, I will start by describing my tensions as a teacher-researcher trying to frame a research design or a path to unravel the ways through which teachers relate to knowledges or the ways in which teachers experience them. I will first develop a critique of the Western tradition of research. Second, I will explain why I tried to deviate from it, especially in the context of English Language Teaching. Third, I will advocate for a decolonization of the method and will reflect about strategies for such an endeavor by describing testimonial narratives as a

provisionally fulfilling qualitative methodology for understanding English teachers' experiences when generating or sharing knowledge.

The Metaphor of the Snake Charmer on My Relationship with Research

I started this section quoting Saavedra (2011) at length to contend that I experienced the same tensions she did when carrying out research that did not necessarily subscribe to the Western paradigms, or that fluctuated between the center and the periphery of knowledge—an attempt to develop border-thinking—(Mignolo, 2013). Saavedra's ideas indeed resembled my thinking outside the box. However, I found a metaphor that illustrates the tensions I have undergone when conceptualizing and writing the chapter of *research methodology* of my dissertation regarding a re-interpretation of the concept of teachers' knowledge.

I think of Western research as having the effect of the snake charmer. For years, partially due to lack of awareness, exposure to other ways of thinking, and epistemological reflexivity, I was charmed by Western methods and research parameters with no questioning at all. For example, I believed that research always had an emancipatory intend, and that we had to be completely objective even if we were conducting research within the field of social sciences. I had never reflected upon how researchers exercise power over the researched by categorizing them and/or describing them in ways that are alien to their own world views.

Luckily, I came across the thought-provoking writings by Smith (2012), Chilisa (2012), and Berkin and Kalmeier (2012). Then, what I thought to be my highly consistent epistemological views, turned out to be epistemological contradictions. Those were, in fact, the fluctuations on my thinking when intending to develop a research agenda that detached, at least to some degree, from Western research parameters that had remained static over centuries or had been considered as ultimate and only valid research paradigm. Now, I want to share with you, reader, how it is that snakes get *charmed*.

Snakes (e.g., *trained* cobras or pythons) are said to be hypnotized to dance and move at the pace of a *pungi* player —the charmer—. Upon doing my own search regarding snake charming, I learned that snakes are unable to listen the way we typically understand the concept of *listening*; what happens is that snakes feel the vibrations of the *pungi* (the music instrument) in their heads. Snakes are kept in a basket, with no light. So, as the player starts the music, a snake can come out, blind by the outer light, and mistakenly might take the *pungi* for another serpent. Then, the snake starts doing some movements that in reality have an intention of protecting it from what has perceived as another predator, while observers see them as dancing movements. Most charmers have a good estimate of what is a safe distance from the snake; even more, some charmers remove the fangs from the snakes to lessen the dangers. Many of these snakes also remain in a state near starvation as the charmers regularly do not feed them properly. Something that I found enlightening here, at first sight, was the fact that the snake is not actually charmed or hypnotized but confused.

What I just narrated is a metaphor of how I related to Western research, and how it related to me. To some degree, the anecdote of snake charming could be equated to that phenomenon of the *captive mind* (Alatas, 2004 in Chilisa, 2012) or to what Fanon (1967) and Thiog'o (1986, a), in Chilisa (2012), call the *colonization of the mind,* which refers to the "uncritical imitation of research paradigms within scientific intellectual activity" (Chilisa, 2012, p.7) that dictate how theoretical structures, research questions, methods, results, and dissemination ought to be.

In my previous research journey, as well as in my most recent conceptualizations of what my PhD dissertation was going to be, I had *danced to the tune* of the Western charming research parameters. Somehow, my mind was (still is) *colonized* similarly to how the snake is charmed or confused; additionally, at some point Western research appeared to me as completely aseptic, unproblematic, and free from colonial interests. It also appeared as invested of certain truths, which supposedly would provide me, as a researcher, with all the

necessary support to conduct proper, ethical, responsible, and context-bound research projects. However, after engaging in some epistemological reflections, I have come to agree with Vasilachis (2009) regarding an important drawback of Western scientific research:

> "Scientific knowledge observes only the reality that it has previously constructed as knowable. It limits itself and restricts the possibility of knowing what is yet to be known because the unknown goes beyond those ways of knowing that already have a status of legitimate … How does the qualitative researcher solve the tension between the supposed "objectivity" that scientific knowledge demands, and his/her own "subjectivity" and those of the participants?" (p. 2)[7]

I realized that I was certainly blind as a *colonized being*. Western research might not have actually *fed* me with what I needed (having a Decolonial interest) while it has kept itself away from me at a certain distance; such, because in general terms research is prone to othering -that is, seeing other cultures or ways of seeing the world as strangers-; in other words, knowledge "creates differences between itself as the norm and sees other knowledge systems as inferior" as it is explained by Spivak in Chilisa (2012, p. 8). Therefore, as I became more aware of my new ignorance, I ended up understanding how certain tenets of Western research fall short in accounting for a problematization regarding local English language teachers' experiences of knowledge. Further discussion of this matter will be found down below in this chapter. Now, I would like to problematize whether the social sciences originated in the West should have a universalizing goal, and how methods relate to scientific colonization.

Why Western Research Might Not Suit My Search for Teachers' Invisibilized Knowledge?

This chapter is focused on discussing the approach, method, and techniques that I used to explore how English teachers experience knowledge. I have placed myself within a Decolonial locus, which implicates that I see myself

[7] My own translation from Spanish.

entitled to select a particular theoretical stance or as Smith (2012) would say a "position from which I write and choose to privilege" (p. 1). Hence, I cannot help but to problematizing the core concepts of research and its varied approaches. I think that when tracing back the origins of research, as it is used in academia, the colonial, imperial agenda could be easily identified.

Since research is a process that for long has been embedded within imperialist and colonialist ideologies, in the next paragraphs I will include a brief overview of them. In general terms, I see imperialism as a series of historical, connected events in which, based on their economic goals, countries from the other side of the oceans discovered, conquered, and abused some other countries. In my view, imperialism was what resulted from Europe's global businesses and the development of the modern state. Colonialism on the other hand, is understood here as the system of thoughts that put imperialism into practical terms. Chilisa (2012) explains that the processes of colonization, i.e. what was experienced by a big number of the planet earth's population as suppression, subjugation, and dispossession by the Enlightened West (France, Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia and the USA), ended up being not only political but also an imposition of the colonizers' ways of knowing and control over the production of knowledge. To that phenomenon she calls *scientific colonialism*. On the one hand, such scientific colonialism resulted in an unchallenged use of the positivist paradigms over the colonized, with the colonized, and for the colonized. On the other hand, researchers, in some cases converted colonized populations into objects of their research, and in other cases into consumers of it, this latter being my case. Smith (2012) explains that a critical assessment of research has mostly focused on empiricism, or on the ways in which the positivist tradition has tried to see the natural phenomena as an equivalent of the social or vice versa. But for Smith (2012), research is more than that. It is, as I understand her, a compilation of judgmental views regarding several aspects such as: cultural orientation; set of values; conceptualizations of time, space and subjectivity, all of them pertaining to different and competing theories of knowledge" (p. 44). In such views, some knowledges would be more valuable than some others, some would

embed others, some would be conflicting, and even some would be coming from *the other.* Smith also points out that, unfortunately, the Western hemisphere does not clearly recognize these deep implications of colonialism.

In the same line of thought, Chilisa (2012) says that “Psychology, anthropology, and history, operate under the positivist goal to generate and discover laws and theories that are generalizable; researchers mapped theories, formulae, and practices that continue to dictate how former colonized societies can be studied and written about” (p. 10). Certainly, Smith (1999) makes a good point when explaining how “research is one of the ways in which the underlying codes of imperialism and colonialism are regulated and realized” (p.8). The author exhaustively demonstrates that such regulation has occurred through scientific models, disciplines, and the entire intellectual production, which has been enacted via the institutionalization of research through research societies, universities, and scholarly networks. She concludes that, in a similar fashion, by locating in the colonies some branches of Europe-based research institutions and universities, the local interests were embedded within the colonial systems.

By comparison with the ELT field, it seems evident that our discipline has also dictated how the formerly (still?) colonized learners should be taught a language through systematic generalizations, standardizations, or theories of how L2 users should be written about and constructed (see a thorough elaboration by Cook 1999, 2002), through research, public policy, and production of materials, among others. In our context, such actions have occurred overseas, yet their products have come to our Global South by means of textbooks, journals, congresses, conferences, lessons from Western mainstream authors to teachers-to-be regarding second language acquisition, as well as through handbooks of second language teaching learning and research, and validation of foreign academic works made by local researchers, just to name a few mechanisms.

Kumaravadivelu’s (2016) article “Can the subaltern act?” explains that “hegemonic forces in our field keep themselves “alive and kicking” through various aspects of English language education: curricular plans, materials design, teaching

methods, standardized tests and teacher preparation, primarily through center-based methods and center-produced materials which assure that the marginality of the majority is managed and maintained" (p. 72). With a clear intention of making English teachers critically reflect, he asks: "how many graduate level methodology books on methods that are used as foundational texts for a core course in TESOL, are actually written by non-native professionals? How many ESL/ELF textbooks manufactured and marketed worldwide by 'mainstream' presses in our field are actually written by non-native professionals? Not many. Why is that?" (p. 72).

To answer his question, we should come back to the discussion brought up at the beginning of this chapter: The Western hemisphere canon of knowledge has a will to hegemonize how research must be carried out, and how its results should apply for most contexts. In Smith's words "Colonies were peripheral satellites which gained access to new knowledge and technologies through recourse to the writings of author in the centre" (p. 64). A case in point is brought up by Kachru (1994) when explaining how the concept of interlanguage has been backed up in research by mainstream ELT. The author explains that data which were collected in the United Kingdom from "international students, guest workers in Europe, has been treated as valid source of data to generalize or support claims of second language acquisition hypotheses" (p. 795). Kumaravadivelu (2016) goes on to say that method is the archetypical zone where hegemonic forces feel compelled to apply the biggest control, because the methods work as driving principles determining other aspects, which in the particular case of ELT, include training, materials, assessment, methodological paths, and so on. In terms of research, methods come to play almost the same role not only in ELT but in research in a more general sense.

In my case, when I read Smith's (2012) seminal questions to reflect towards a research process such as "Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed it and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?" (p. 11), I reflected that more than instrumental, neat, and crystal-clear answers for a

research design that Western research would expect, answers to such questions should be framed in an ethical compromise with my own locus of enunciation as well as my position as a researcher with an emerging Decolonial view regarding the relations of English teachers with knowledge, including any invisible, unexplored versions of themselves. Cleverly, Chilisa (2012) urges us to take responsibly our identities as researchers when stating, “the research you do, will have the power to label, name, condemn, describe or prescribe… You are encouraged to conduct research without perpetuating self-serving Western research paradigms that construct Western ways of knowing as superior to the other’s ways of knowing” (p. 7). She goes on to describe what would be a code ethics for us: “Researcher as a provocateur, and a transformative healer guided by the four Rs: responsibility, respect, reciprocity and rights/regulations of the researched (Chilisa 2012, p. 7).

Having stated this polyphonic background reflection, I will now explain some arguments regarding my partial de-linking from Western research frames; afterwards, I will elucidate the likely methodology that provisionally covers my expectations as to what it means to research knowledge that has been made invisible within a Decolonial perspective.

A Perspective towards Research Methods in the ELT Field

Would it be possible to conduct research and construct knowledge without resorting to modern science methods, particularly in the ELT field? Sousa Santos (2018) asserts that modern science methods (as it is exemplified in the work of Creswell (2012), a frequently used theoretical source in some ELT research) are developed within a logic of *extractivism.* Such *extractivism,* which can be intellectual, cognitive, or physical, is observed particularly in the design and application of data collection instruments such as interviews or surveys where researchers literally extract information and are the only ones summoned to interpret the results of such data-gathering processes, to a great extent exercising power in the research process and over the researched (Chilisa, 2012). When it

comes to analyzing the ethical concerns of research, Cresswell (2012) -a consulted source of research methodology in ELT- stresses that:

> “Data collection should be ethical, and it should respect individuals and sites. Obtaining permission before starting to collect data is not only a part of the informed consent process but is also an ethical practice. Protecting anonymity of individuals by assigning numbers to returned instruments and keeping confidential their identity offers privacy to participants.” (p. 169)

Hence, ethical concerns in educational research applied to ELT contexts should be addressed, by means of obtaining participants' permissions to extract their experiences, ideas, and knowledge, while rigorously keeping anonymous the source of knowledge, that is, the identity of the research participant. The idea above seems to support Chilisa's view that a sort of inner belief underlies the dominant paradigms of research: “Knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore knowledge may be owned by an individual” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 21). Mainstream research advocates might resort to claiming that researchers are informed by “member checks” through which the researcher confirms with the researched the themes he/she found to establish the credibility of the findings and supposedly give voice to the researched. To decolonize the methods of research, more emphasis should be given to the participants’ voice allowing for “polyvocality” which consists of allowing the participants to speak for themselves in a medium designed by themselves as well as to decide whether they want to be visible or not.

How can extractivism in research be avoided? Sousa Santos (2018) proposes breaking with the extractivist logic through cooperation among knowing subjects “rather than through subject/object unilateral cognitive interactions, that is, by means of engaging the researched in other steps of the research process, including the formulation of the problem to investigate as well as making him/her be part of the interpretation process or authoring of the research study” (p.130). Particularly, this aspect called my attention. And one decision I made was

incorporating the participating teachers in the interpretation of their own testimonial narratives. This decision was made in the midst of writing the testimonial narratives, but at that moment I was not very aware of the impact of this decision at the epistemological level.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the narratives related to the implications of conducting qualitative research in ELT. After an extensive literature review of available research on second language acquisition from the Global North, Ellis (2012), draws on Chaudron (1988) to explain that:

> "L2 classroom research has 'an important role' to play in both language teaching and language teacher education. However, the problems of applying research to language teaching remain even when the research is classroom-based. The essential problem is the extent to which the findings derived from the study of one instructional context can be generalized to other instructional contexts… This is not just a problem for descriptive studies of specific classrooms but also for experimental studies that employ inferential statistics in order to claim generizability" (p. 19).

In the passage above, an interest in transferability or generalization of research results is deemed desirable despite the fact that qualitative studies not always seek to produce generalizations. In that sense, there is need to apply what Sousa Santos (2018) calls the "hermeneutics of partiality". Such hermeneutics refers to understanding that science, as any other way of knowing, is partial since it cannot extrapolate what happens in one context based on another. Another black hole in the study of ELT research is related to the role played by non-scientific, vernacular knowledge that may contribute to the teaching-learning process, which is something hardly ever considered.

Another issue to analyze critically is the status that ELT teachers' research enjoys. Ellis's chapter (2012) called *methods for researching the second language classroom* introduces what the author calls "a useful distinction between formal and practitioner research" (p. 20). By the former he means the type of research conducted by researchers relying on emblematic research traditions. The latter

refers to research conducted by teachers in their own research contexts “drawing on the principles of action research” (p.20), and he continues:

> “…it should be noted, however, that both types of research have in common the general features of research —that is, there is a problem or question to be addressed, data is collected and analyzed, and an interpretation of the findings provided” (p.20).

To exemplify the difference between both types of research, he resorts to Long’s Interaction Hypothesis which Ellis himself tested through experimental groups, pre and posttests establishing whether learners’ language acquisition was facilitated through meaning negotiation. He wanted to “fill a gap in theory”, demonstrate cause-effect relationships, and “conduct a study that would lead to publications in academic journals…all leading journals in my field” (Ellis, 2012, p. 23). According to this author, formal L2 classroom research is, among others, characterized by:

> “1. The phenomenon investigated is determined by the researcher.
>
> 2. The research is either theoretically driven (as in experimental research) or conducted with a view to developing theory (as in descriptive research).
> 3. The results of the research are written up in accordance with the requirements of academic articles, and with a view to publishing them in academic journals… a limitation, however, is that it may never reach teachers as they are unlikely to read the journals in which it is published”. (p. 23).

Ellis (2012) describes practitioners’ research -or teacher’s research- as that one conducted by teachers who want to develop connections between research and practice. He goes on to say that “research topics are not derived from theory but from teachers’ desire to experiment with some innovation in the classroom, to seek a solution to some problem... Practitioner research, however, is not likely to be published in academic journals as formal research, which raises the question of its status in the field of L2 classroom research as a whole” (p. 26).

From the paragraphs above, it can be concluded that there is a suggested, if not overt, interest in keeping the distinctions between scientific methods that supposedly enjoy more prestige than those of research conducted by teachers, which appears to be described as not leading to formulate or consolidate theory. Sousa Santos (2018) explains the matter by saying that “scientific knowledge tends to have an exaggerated idea of its own relevance” (p.138), as evidenced in the subtle distinctions made between “formal” and “practitioner” research in the ELT field. It can be also inferred that the kind of research carried out by teachers is not scientific, and teachers hardly access formal research journals. What the author conceals, however, is that research carried out in the Global North does not allow a proper open access to such knowledge for the Global South unless high prices are paid. In addition to it, the fact that the results of research are written in accord with the values of academic articles, shows how the ELT research field does not escape from the patterns of science promoted by Northern epistemologies. Sousa Santos (2018) says that “the epistemologies of the North, favor written knowledge, be it in science, the humanities, or literature” (p. 184), because writing “confers fixity, stability, permanence to knowledge” (p. 184), while making knowledge production different from other social practices. Writing gives science a touch of exclusivity and reinforces its “monumental” character “establishing distance, perennial effect, and remembrance” (p. 184). In a way, I wanted to de-monumentalize such fixed characteristic of knowledge by using dialogue with participating teachers in order to highlight the also contentious nature of knowledge as I will explain in further detail in the next chapter.

Using Testimonies as a Method and Data in the Path Towards Liberating the Captive Mind

Could I dare to say what Fanon (1967, p. 5) radically stated in the introduction of *Black Skin White Masks*: “I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians”? ... Indeed, I cannot completely go against the currents of the

knowledge society[8]. Decolonization deals with "centering the concerns and world views of the colonized others, so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives, voicing the historically silenced, suppressed, or invisible individuals, and analyzing how mainstream texts legitimize positions of superiority (Chilisa, 2012, p. 13, 14); therefore, a research methodology ideally should respond to these ethical, epistemological, and ontological challenges. Consequently, I regard a transformative paradigm to research[9] and a qualitative participatory approach with testimonial data and methodology, as a potential option to delve into teachers' knowledge, rather than, for example, the interpretive models of hermeneutics or phenomenology, or even the poststructuralist perspective that is also highly appealing, for several reasons that I will now proceed to explain.

Adhering to the research views by Chilisa (2012), I did not frame this proposal within an interpretive approach, or traditional hermeneutical or phenomenological methods. Ontological, epistemological, and axiological reasons lie underneath this decision. First, although ontologically speaking the interpretative approach predicates that reality is socially constructed, it is limited to space, time, and context. Second, even though the epistemological views corresponding to the interpretative approach establishes that knowledge is subjective, scholars have not actually voiced populations or individuals historically invisibilized through research studies. Third, although axiology pertaining to the interpretative approach includes some valuable standpoints, and its methods focus mostly on naturally occurring data thus exposing researchers values and biases, it fails to acknowledge the issue of power within the research design of who investigates, who is investigated, and whose voice represents/constructs reality. (See Chilisa, 2012, p. 32-36)

An additional consideration is that the origin of the interpretive tradition in the German thought comes to be problematic within a framework of reference that

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[8] A thorough discussion towards teaching in the knowledge society is developed in Hargreaves (2003).

[9]For Chilisa (2012) a transformative paradigm (as opposed to the interpretive or the positivist) aims at the transformation of peoples through actions. Ontologically speaking reality is product of our social locations and certain locations have advantage over others. In terms of epistemology, knowledge emerges from "collective meaning making" (p. 36) in which both participants and researcher share power and transform each other.

intents to detach, even if partially, from the European epistemology. Decolonization of knowledge, if at all achievable, “would require taking seriously the epistemic perspective, cosmologies, and insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking from subalternized, racial, and ethnic sexual spaces, and bodies” (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 4). Similarly, if I intended to be consistent with the Decolonial standpoint, a post-structuralist perspective to research would conflict with the epistemological challenge of detaching from the research parameters, even partially (as already discussed). I could have had a post-structural research design aiming at tracing how discourses of resistance circulate as effect of power, thus allowing marginal discourses to revive, and accounting for how any competing ways to give meaning to the world are constructed in teachers’ knowledge (Weedon, 1987). Certainly, poststructuralism posits that everybody takes subject positions within discourses, but is that true? Can everybody indeed subject position as to be heard? Can even invisibilized voices subject position in mainstream arenas and be taken as valid interlocutors? I am not sure. The reflection by Beverly (2005) towards Spivak’s (1988) essay “Can the subaltern speak?” makes me doubt when he states: “if the subaltern could speak –that is, speaking in a way that it truly matters, that compels us to listen- then he would not be a subaltern” (p. 350, my translation).

Therefore, in this research process, I wanted to give room to English teachers’ subalternity based on a testimonial research framework. For Beverley (2005), the subaltern is a social location that is not satisfactorily represented in the social sciences or the University, because they are institutionally framed within the dyad power/knowledge that constructs and nurtures subalternity. However, a channel can be built through a testimonial research framework because it is a way to intervene where the subaltern cannot. For Beverley, although the testimony does not necessarily surpass the typical /modern dichotomies of the metropolis/periphery, creole/mestizo, elite/popular, literate/illiterate, it implies a new way to express these oppositions in a collaborative way. The goal to regard the subaltern as being the teller of his/her own situation is best summarized by Gugelberger, & Kearney (1991, p. 4) when asserting that:

> In contrast to conventional writing about the colonial situation, which is produced at the centers of global power and near the apices of class difference, testimonial literature is produced by subaltern peoples on the periphery or the margin of the colonial situation. Thus, the margins of empire are now "writing back" in an overdue attempt to correct the Western canon and its versions of "truth".

I found this above-mentioned idea revealing, because testimonial writing might be a useful tool to “write back” to the systems oppressing the teachers’ speaking. But what is a testimony? What has been said about it? And how can it be used to serve the purpose of decentering Western research? Testimonial narrative, for Marin (1991), has been “a kind of writing from the margins about the, and to, the systems oppressing the speaking” (p. 51). Privileged individuals, says Marin, write literature, autobiography, ethnography, biography, and scripture, but testimony has been theorized to favor those who have not been privileged within the mainstream discourses. For Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona (2012), scholars are gradually using testimony as a methodological approach, as data, and as pedagogy. Its use contests the disciplinary preparation received by researchers of producing impartial knowledge. On the other hand, testimony questions objectivity by situating the individual and the collective in tune with situated bodily, spiritual, cognitive, and communal production of knowledge. These authors contend that testimonies can reach several publics because they can be written, oral, or digital and they should be seen ‘much like a gift’ (p. 6) by the listener; he/she, the listener, unfolds its inner sense since learning about one person gives us insight into the life of many others.

Saavedra (2011) asserts that testimony is a groundbreaking Latin American literary genre which allows that people tell a collective history of domination through one person’s narrative. These stories are frequently told to someone else who provides access to the testimony to more listeners or readers. Yúdice (1991), explains that as a genre, testimonial writing started to gain terrain as of the 70s, when authors such as Freire tried to bring to the public sphere the struggles of popular sectors to gain recognition in canonical texts. However, even though there

was testimonial literature before and after the Latin American boom of writers, this genre was not recognized as literature in mainstream literary circles until the creation of the testimonial literary award of the Cuban Casa de las Américas (House of Americas). More recently, testimonial literature has been taken as a tool in educational settings as pedagogy and as a research methodology. (See for example, Hamzeh & Flores Carmona, 2019).

For Marin (1991), first generation testimonies such as I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala (1983) or Domitila Barrios de Chungara with Moema Viezzer (1977) "Si me permiten hablar... " Testimonio de Domitila, una mujer de las minas de Bolivia (Let Me Speak! Testimonty of Domilita, a Woman of the Bolivian Mines), show inner political intentions of recognition, fore the communal standpoint through the individual's voice, and twist the importance of the first-person singular that is the prominent figure in the Western canon of thought. These are principles that have remained at the core of testimony until now. Elenes (2000), reflects that in the Western tradition "the autobiographical subject has historically been the European man: the subject of the Enlightment" (p. 109). The author wonders whether "the other", the subaltern subject, the colonized, the marginal, can build an autobiographical character in which the "I" relates to the "we". Then, this kind of *speaking from the margins* is situated knowledge that reconstructs multiple identities of the subjects/agents of the testimony and the absent ones.

Some authors (Marin, 1991; Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Beverley, 2005) draw distinctions between testimonial narratives and other forms of biographical and autobiographical research. Delgado Bernal et al., (2012) say that testimony differs from other types of biographical research in that the testimonialista is implicated in a critical reflection of his/her experience inside particular socio-cultural realities. For Beverley (2005) although both testimony and autobiography confirm the authority of personal experience, the testimony sustains that the own experience cannot be separated from the class situation, or the subalternized group that is brought up with it.

Recent treatments of the testimonial genre and methodology are found in the Chicana Latina movement (See Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Burciaga & Tavares, 2006; Benmayor, 2012). Delgado Bernal et al., (2012) list 36 dissertations in the decade of the 90s and around 800 in the 2000s using testimony mostly in the educational field. Also, testimonial data and methodology can be found in Critical Latin Studies of microaggressions and racist nativism (see Pérez Huber, 2011) and in studies of embodied literacies and bilingualism (Saavedra, 2011; Passos DeNicolo & González, 2015). As well, testimonial literature has been used as a pedagogy to learn to rejoin the mind-body-spirit to destabilize settler colonialism and legitimize it as a genuine methodological practice of knowledge production (Hamzeh & Flores Carmona 2019). More recently, Colombian author Carvajal (2017), developed a critical and decolonizing ethnographic study utilizing testimonial data to challenge traditional concepts of homelessness in the USA society. In a similar vein, Brazilian author Ramos (2017), developed her dissertation on how students with a personal background as refugees understand travelling and education in context of forced migration, using testimonial interviews. The objective of these two dissertations in education and language is to de-monumentalize and challenge static ideas of what it means to be homeless and refugee in said contexts, respectively.

The reader might wonder whether the testimony has any ontological or epistemological value whatsoever. Within a postmodern perspective, Yúdice (1991) argues that testimonial writing coincides with the denial of master narratives that validate grand actors and the subjects of traditional history as the state, the West, the academia, and so on. The witness or testimonial writer is the one who matters as he/she portrays his/her experience as an agent of collective memory. Truth is conjured up with the aim of disapproving a present situation of oppression and a pressing need for writing the history again (*writing back* as Gugelberger & Kearney 1991; Smith, 2012, and Chilisa, 2012 have pinpointed).

Still, there are differences between postmodern and testimonial writing in the treatment of “fragmentation and marginality” (p.21). For Yúdice (1991), despite

certain postmodern texts intend to deconstruct “the classics of the Western tradition, their purview remains, unsurprisingly Western. The marginalized elements with their own specificity are not explored outside hegemonic discourses” (p.22). Deconstructionists have not defended nor liberated the marginalized, they have actually considered them as alterity or as “the other”. In short, deconstruction only recovers the other as absent. Yúdice (1991, p. 25), brilliantly concludes from postmodern texts:

> “A person cannot “see” the subject of the counterhegemonic project because they are marginal and such marginalized elements appear in hegemonic postmodern texts only as the horror which excites the writer. With the “other” thus neutralized, becomes undistinguishable from the oppressors”.

In that train of thought, a testimonial narrative is meant to unveil this “other” person that has wrongly been constructed in the Western cannon of thought as non-existent, not able, not interesting, not knowledgeable, and not important. In discussing the epistemological status of testimonies within a historical perspective, Tozzi (2012) assesses the function they have in the constitution of representations about the past. The author contends that in what concerns to historical research, testimonies should not be considered secondhand source of knowledge but tools for the constitution of the historical fact as such. A case in point brought by the author is the Shoah (the holocaust) in which the survivor’s testimonies are not just additional elements of the event but constitutive of the event itself. In that sense, there is an advocacy for its use and a call for the recognition of its value because history has also undergone a sort of scientization, and an interest in objectivity and evidence has pervaded it.

Debate regarding the use of testimonial narratives to verify formal history or to bear witness to reality has also existed. Even though a strand of thought conceptualizes of testimonial narratives to ‘write back to the systems oppressing the speaking’ or to tell a truth that has been made invisible, there are other views

that find tensions between representation and reality. For instance, Gatti (2015) does acknowledge that a fertile ground for the social sciences is to study phenomena and people who rebel, those who do not abide by standard concepts, those who evade or elude the normative standards. However, testimonial narratives wave the tension between facts and their representation. In that regard, Gatti (2015) clarifies that testimonial narratives do not guarantee that there is a factual truth being told; what matters is that such narrative reflects the urgency of narrating what has not been narrated before.

In a similar vein, Gardner (2015) questions the fact that Latin American testimonials are normally said to have been told by typical subalternized characters that exemplify traits of a particular community. Gardner, in fact, makes the case that many of the published works on testimonial narratives written in Latin America are not of people who may typically represent traits of a broader community. But in fact, they are a case in point of exceptional people who managed to be outstanding in their communities for a particular reason, and whose stories reveal an exceptional character and determination. The participants of this study could probably be described as well as exceptional characters. This categorization does not necessarily mean that what they narrate might not have been experienced by other members of local teaching communities, nor that they are not subjected to discourses and practices that construct them as subjects of the Global South.

The Process of Writing Testimonial Narratives

Theoretical considerations summarized in the previous paragraphs, suggest that testimonial narratives could be a valid source of knowledge construction regarding teachers' knowledges despite the debates that they can generate concerning the truth or witness bearing of what they narrate.

Particularly inspiring are the contributions of Benmayor (2012), which are the result of more than ten years conducting research projects with undergraduates. As part of one of her undergraduate courses called "Latina Life Stories", the author has collected around 300 testimonies where her students have

expressed “their own social and cultural truths” (p. 144) and have developed a subsequent interpretation that serve as a theorization of their experiences.

Inspired by Benmayor's (2012) contributions to methodology using testimonial narratives, I developed a path to write and communally interpret the testimonial narratives of six English teachers pursuing M.A degree in Applied Linguistics. This number of participants is related to the number of teachers who were willing to share with the broader public the testimonial narratives they wrote. Two other teachers, despite having written extraordinarily revealing stories, did not accept to participate in the study.

The university which offers the M.A degree is a public university in Bogotá with a strong critical pedagogy component. Four men and two women with at least 5 years of experience teaching different learners comprised the crew. I took from Benmayor (2012) the idea of sharing formerly written testimonial narratives that could guide in the style of writing. Similarly, I followed her idea of read-alouds and communal interpretations. In the Second Language Acquisition class that I guided, I asked participating teachers to reflect upon their experiences of teaching and how such experiences related with their own knowledge (i.e., their professional assets developed and accumulated through their careers such as skills, theoretical contents, insights, etc.) I particularly asked teachers to focus on those experiences that had been challenging and/or memorable.

As part of the content, I introduced the participants to the testimony genre, and some examples from Chicana Latina Life Stories were examined to analyze the potential of this type of writing/speaking. The participating teachers left the sessions with a question that would help them examine their memories, their classes, their past experiences intending to delve into their knowledges. Teachers were encouraged to write or record some preliminary ideas and exchange them with the other participants in following sessions to dialogically help each teacher in the recalling exercise of bringing to the consciousness past episodes. Teachers were asked to decide how they wanted to introduce their testimonies (based on thematic question posed in the first part) regarding specific moments of their

teaching they wanted to bring up. Their testimonial narratives could be written or oral. They took at least 3 weeks to produce their own testimonial narrative. Once the testimonies were ready, participating teachers narrated or read aloud their testimonies to *collectively theorize* (following Benmayor's (2012) words) each story. The collective theorization -which consisted of listening and simultaneously reflecting upon the testimonial narratives- was an occasion to communally interpret each testimonial narrative. Finally, such communal interpretations were recorded and sent to the testimonialista for having time to listen to them again, refine their text, and write their theorizations.

The act of verbally sharing one's own experiences with the other participants (i.e., giving testimony) goes in hand with one of the tenets of the Epistemologies of the South in which knowing with others is favored instead of knowing about others (Sousa Santos, 2018). In a similar vein, there is a re-conceptualization of the concept of listening. Sousa Santos (2018) asserts that "the Western culture privileges writing and speech to the detriment of listening" (p. 175). The idea with listening to the testimonies of others is that a dialogic relationship can be established, and each participant can enrich the testimonies reading-alouds. Therefore, there is a first layer of interpretation and communal co-construction of knowledge by means of 'deep listening' and engagement. Last but not least, there is also an overt attempt to favor the "oralization of written knowledge" (p.186) considering that scientific knowledge does not promote oralization because it is prone to imprecision. However, following Sousa Santos (2018) in the Epistemologies of the South, oralization is favored because it allows for a particular degree of personalization in knowledge construction. The practices engaged in oralization of knowledge invite to the use of vernacular language, dialogic relations, narrative as a substitute of explanation (Sousa Santos, 2018). Instead of testing theories of success, making contributions to societies and foregrounding the importance of experience are desired ends. Indeed, the Freirean concept of dialogue and experience have been foregrounded in the sense that it is through dialogue that knowledge can be co-constructed, especially making relevant the themes that are existentially pertinent for the context.

So far, I have tried to show the epistemological decisions I made in the research design of my dissertation which intended to find out teachers' experiences of knowledge, and I have argued the reasons to do so. I advocated for a decolonization of the method and showed a likely path to do so. Certainly, the paths to decolonizing research and knowledge are uncertain and hard to walk. Nonetheless, it is in this very uncertain path in which we will be able to find ourselves as knowing subjects recognizing the others as knowing subjects as well. Teacher-researchers in the Global South, like myself, are intending to find out ways in which we can build knowledge considering our own peculiar contexts, with authors and perspectives that honor our origins, ideas, lived experiences, historical locations, emotions, and bodies.

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Part 2 Findings: Traces of Knowledge Otherwise in English Teachers' Testimonial Narratives

My colonial self: Data, speak to me!12/10/19

My decolonial self: These are not "data", it is knowledge! 10/11/19

My other self: Teachers…speak to me!

Research participant: "¡Se hace camino al andar!"

(The path is made by walking)

Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 291: "…Dearth experience when being unable to write!"

Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 31: "I write to record what others erase…

re-write the stories others have mis-written about me, about you"

Rorty in Diversi & Moreira, 2009: "Time will tell, but epistemology won't",

Thank you Rorty!

La Facultad (The Faculty)

"La Facultad: Anzaldúa's term for an intuitive form of knowledge that includes but goes beyond logical thought and empirical analysis. It is the capacity to see into the surface of phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant 'sensing', a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning… an acute awareness mediated by the part of the psyche that does not speak, that communicates in images and symbols which are the faces of feelings… it is latent in everyone." (The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader, p. 321) Gloria

Anzaldúa (2009) also wrote, “Teaching and learning are transformative experiences. Self-education requires that we open all of our senses, not just our minds, and allow ourselves to be changed by the books and perspectives of people. It requires that we unleash our passion for social justice rather than using our energy to compete with our colleagues for reputation and publication” (p. 240).

These words inspired me to embark on braiding these teachers’ stories as well as to engage in dialogue with teacher-participants. They, along the process, turned into “testimonialistas”. Little by little we started grasping the different understandings the stories could evoke in the search for English teachers’ experiences of knowledge. At the beginning of this analysis, I had not been able to develop “La Facultad” (The faculty). It took quite a while to cultivate it. There were many days dearth of ideas, only emotions such as despair and anguish came as well as painful backaches. In the meantime, my whole body and emotions responded but not my mind. It answered the call afterwards.

Re-learning to walk research: Two layers of analysis and knowledge production.

As a teacher-educator-researcher wishing to use a Decolonial perspective, I felt as monolithic and paralyzed as a *monument* could be (See Sousa Santos, 2018 for understanding the metaphor of science as a monument). As I said before, I was unable to develop ‘la facultad’ (the faculty) to understand what these stories were revealing; I felt barren. I had not been able to develop an intuition to piece together the analysis chapters. I had been unable to find out a unit of analysis or see “the data” in ways that could lead to theorization from the Global South. I did

not dare to start any analysis until feeling I had something different to say. I first read the testimonies with a grounded theory lens (Charmaz, 2006). However, an inner voice whispered to me that that was not enough. Later, Diversi & Moreira (2009) supported such intuition when stating that “unlike the traditional approach to scholarly analysis of lived experience, with its codes and pattern-seeking tendencies, our stories do the analyzing by representing instantiations of visceral encounters with dehumanizing ideologies.” (p.184) Still, from that first reading with a grounded theory lens some themes emerged as observed in the next diagram of recurring codes found out in the testimonios:

Chart 1. Themes found out by open coding teachers’ testimonios, following Charmaz, (2006).

Following this first coding exercise proved to be useful yet insufficient. Despite finding tendencies in the stories related to seminal life moments, power structures such as neoliberalism, and some hints at an emotional component of teachers’ knowledge, the analysis did not move further. I had some periods of

paralysis for figuring out the organization of each chapter and ideas. I started crawling as when a child is learning to walk. While reading, interpreting, and adapting concepts from the works called *The end of the cognitive empire*, *The coming of age of the Epistemologies of the South* by Sousa Santos (2018), *The Gloria Anzaldúa's Reader* (2009), *On Decoloniality* (2018) by Walsh and Mignolo, the work of Diversi & Moreira (2009) *Betweener Talk* and other seminal works cited in this section, I finally managed to untie a knot to piece together "the data" in such a way that accounted for relations to knowledge as experienced by English teachers not only in terms of the content but also in terms of form.

I do not attempt to fix ways in which decolonizing methodologies should operate. What I have done here is the product of intuition, reading research that has taken an overt decolonial lens (E.g. Hamzeh & Flores Carmona 2019, Carvajal 2017, Ramos, 2017, Saavedra & Salarzar Pérez, 2018) and thinking/feeling of ways in which these chapters could be structured in a way that could de-link, even if partially from a traditional perspective to research. I made a series of decisions that related to my understanding of the Decolonial Turn in terms of the testimonial narratives' analysis brought up here. The concept of de-linking by Mignolo (2000) is useful once again. I aimed to de-link from pre-established methodologies followed in other ELT studies. In tune with Vasilachis (2007), I faced a deep epistemological reflection intending to overcome the difficulties of wishing to approach what was yet to be known about teachers' experiences of knowledge while not having to resort to preconceived methodological strategies available in the ELT field, especially in the ways participants are treated.

The interpretative paradigm of research, for Vasilachis (2007) faces a challenge. On the one hand, the closer the researcher gets to the participant the better his/her comprehension is of the object of study, that is, the researched. However, Vasilachis (2007) acknowledges that the shortening of the distance between researcher and researched does not necessarily imply a change of epistemological perspective due to traditional epistemology continuing to hold its rigid tenet of a predominantly unilateral relationship between the one who researches and the one who is researched. The researched is discursively constructed by the researcher, and his/her life experiences are shaped by what the researcher says. In that train of thought, Vasilachis (2007) explains that:

> "the knowing subject remains the essential actor keeping the necessary distance as to assure the objectivity of his/her knowledge and considering a difference that separates him/her of the known subject and that prevents the researcher from being transformed while in this process." (p. 5) (Personal translation)

Because I wanted to really integrate the researched in the study as equally knowing subjects in the process of interpreting the testimonial narratives, I invited them to participate through dialogues in which they communally interpreted their own testimonial narratives. I also received inspiration in the Chicana/Latina feminist methodology of Pláticas (Talks). Saavedra & Salazar Pérez (2018) explain that pláticas (talks) "center Global South epistemologies" (p. 754). I particularly felt touched by the argument that conocimiento is found in the most mundane of conversations, or the pláticas (talks) we have with relatives, students, and

colleagues because “this conocimiento comes from collective dialogue and inevitably challenges the impersonal and clinical methodologies that saturate even critically conceived research designs” (Saavedra & Salazar Pérez, 2018, p. 754). In a similar vein, reading Alcoff (1991), I came to clearly understand that speaking for others can eventually be “arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate.” (p. 6) This argument is connected to Mignolo’s idea of the geopolitics of the bodies and how we mean where we are. Alcoff (1991) states:

> “where one speaks from, affects the meaning and truth of what one says, and thus one cannot assume an ability to transcend one’s location. In other words, a speaker’s location… (their social location) has an epistemologically significant impact on that speaker’s claims (p. 7).

In this dissertation the section called co-interpretation reveres the participants’ words. The intention was twofold. First, I expected to enrich the interpretation of testimonial narratives while feeling myself transformed by the communal interpretations of the participants as knowing subjects. Second, I wanted to de-link from an ontological perspective that in the process of research I existed alone. In turn, I wanted to understand myself as in connection with other human beings. Chilisa (2012) reminds us that in research “there is an emphasis on an… I/You relationship with its emphasis on the individual… and the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge; knowledge is something that is gained and, therefore knowledge may be owned by an individual.” (p. 21)

I decided then that primarily, each testimonio would be introduced as it was written by participating teachers following an analytical consideration in the

testimonial research of postcolonial youths by Gallagher-Geursten (2012). This author says that introducing each testimonio as such facilitates the readers' meaning making processes, permitting multiple interpretations for whomever reads them. In that train of thought, readers play a role in interpreting the work as well. There are also two layers of analysis so as not to leave the interpretation solely to me as a researcher intending to dismantle the traditional subject-object relation discussed in Vasilachis (2007). Besides, each mini chapter is introduced with an illustration that visually encapsulates the core of each story. Introducing this visual element was a way I visualized to also challenge the immaculate character of PhD research reports.

Co-interpretations: A dialogue between the "testimonialista", his/her classmates (other teachers) and me, the teacher-educator-researcher.

In the next layer of analysis, each testimonio was listened to and simultaneously co-interpreted by Josué, Lorena, Andrés, Alex, Javier, Alejandra, Katherine, Nancy, and myself, who in a dialogic relationship (sustained by the participants' common interests in research, a master's degree coursework of critical style and philosophy, human relations braided in a two-year long program in Applied Linguistics to the teaching of English, the life stories and knowledges that accompanied them) unpacked the inner meanings of testimonios as they were shared along two four-hour class sessions.

Readers will see the dialogues displayed so that they can comprehend the collective meaning making processes for each testimonial narrative in the co-interpretation section, and they can draw their own conclusions. At the end of this

layer of analysis, some general topics as discussed by participants are summarized to guide the readers to recapitulate the themes dealt with in dialogue.

Another reason why dialogues with participants (or co-interpretations) are a core part of the analysis is because I wanted to de-monumentalize the pristine character we concede to writing. Sousa Santos (2018) called for a demonumentalization of written and archival knowledge; the Western canon of knowledge privileges written accounts as writing grants “fixity, stability and permanence to knowledge” (Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 185). When knowledge is ‘oralized’, it allows personalization and uncertainty, and it provides a sense of incompleteness and situatedness. The purpose of introducing readers to the testimonialistas’ dialogues goes in tune with the intention of the Epistemologies of the South of giving orality a central character in knowledge production. As a teacher-educator-researcher I participated in such dialogues with the testimonialistas expressing my own emotions, thoughts, experiences, and ideas.

To respect the testimonialistas’ interventions and lessen the power of my authority I tried as much as I could to intervene just at the end of the talks. This part of the analysis is seminal and like Diversi and Moreira (2009), I also hope that “the stories stand as scholarship that treats the others not as objects/subjects of study but as co-constructors of decolonizing acts” (p. 184) Nepo (2000), quoted in Rendon (2009), asks: “When was the last time that you listened to the story of others? Rendon (2009) goes on to say:

“Nepo (2000) illuminates the power of presence and listening to truly learn

> from others. In listening we can experience a deep presence and recognize how at a very basic, even spiritual level, sharing the stories of our humanity opens us to a deeper connection with others and ultimately with ourselves." (p. 51)

Following Rendon (2009) I wanted to articulate, even if just partially, an inquiry that did not separate the knower from the known. Hence, I intended to apply a participatory epistemology to construct this analysis.

Second layer of analysis: the testimonialistas' and my own reflections.

In the second part of the analysis, I introduce the testimonialista's and my own theoretical stances. Some of the participants draw on post-structuralism, positioning theory, and current trends in ELT such as approaching identity as an analytical category to approach the testimonial narratives analysis. Personally, I adopt some conceptual elements by authors of the Decolonial Turn to read testimonios with a Decolonial perspective. The testimonialista's own theorization is mainly used here in order to develop a richer and more polyphonic comprehension of life experiences as sources of embodied knowledge and once more to acknowledge authority from the participants' voices.

Acknowledging the theoretical reflections made by participants in these co-interpretations is grounded in Vasilachis (2007). She made me reflect that what we call the 'data' is taken from the participants, moved to the researcher's world and from there such viewpoints turn out to be scientific texts. While in the move from the participant to the academic community, the one who contributed is blurred in

the process. The main character is frequently the ‘knower’, the researcher, and the other knowing subjects, that is, the researched are lost, disappearing in the way as the persons who gave rise to the analysis in the first place. Vasilachis (2007) talks about “the principle of essential equality” (p. 8). It refers to the fact that in the interaction, two or more people with equal capacity to know, communicate with one another. Consequently, there is a cooperative construction of knowledge at the level of analyzing what is normally known as “the data”. Considering the aforementioned ideas, participants’ names are also real as most of them agreed not to use pseudonyms.

How Are the Next Chapters Organized?

As I said before, participants constructed their testimonial narratives using their creativity and freedom. Their results could be oral or written. The texts of the testimonial narratives are the product of a one month long ongoing in-class reflection, memory-recall activities, and collegiality among teachers to figure out what to write about and how to do it. To understand ideas, recorded dialogues have been transcribed and very few parts edited to facilitate comprehension; some fillers have been omitted as well as those ideas that deviated from the studied themes.

First, the readers will encounter the testimonial narrative as it was expressed by the participating teacher/testimonialista in a font that shows the text per se. Testimonios or testimonial narratives, as they appear here, are considered by me as knowledge production; that is why they have been shared as originally conceived by the participating teachers/testimonialistas. Afterwards, readers will

find both a dialogue among participating teachers that, as such, is taken as being a collective process of meaning making or knowledge production (Chilisa, 2009) and simultaneously a collective interpretation of the testimonial narratives. In the final part, readers will encounter the testimonialista's and my own simultaneous theorizations of each testimonio. My personal theorizations come from my understanding of testimonios with a Decolonial/ lens. The testimonialista's own theorization comes from his/her own reflective exercise after having heard the recorded dialogues with his/her peers in a more solitary exercise of meaning making. For facilitating comprehension, quoted ideas are in a different font which signals the participants' own words. This process is best summarized in the next diagram:

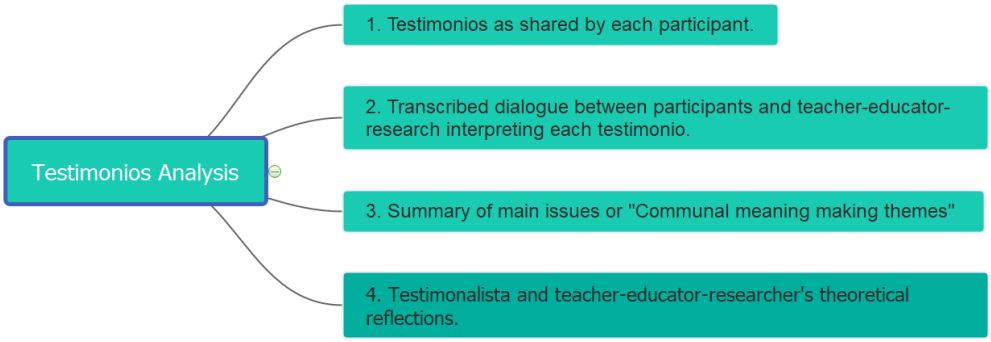


Chart 2. Step-by-step testimonial narratives analysis.

Finally, testimonial narratives sections are signaled by some titles that have been taken verbatim from the testimonialistas' texts. Dialogues to communally interpret the texts are always signposted by participants' key phrases, and theorizations are also marked by participants' own words to give each section an identity.

IMAGINE
F.C.R/2020

Chapter Four

Alex's Testimonial Narrative: "Yellow, green and red: I can't believe we still have to protest this shit"

"I still remember one of my last English classes with my undergraduate students. About a month ago, thousands of students from public universities throughout the country went on strike. Their demands? Or shall I say "ours"? Well, just some essential stuff: more budget to improve the conditions that actual education implies. And there is a viral sign that says: "I can't still believe we still have to protest this shit".

Just capture this. There was a tense and bittersweet atmosphere during the last week when we all could have classes. The students, my teacher colleagues, and the university staff in general, were quite concerned about the immediate future of the academic calendar. The strike seemed to be inevitable, and so, it was.

To be honest, I didn't care so much about the calendar, let alone about progressing in our "syllabus" and the contents of my not-so-dear English textbook. Instead, I really wanted to take advantage of our running time to engage in more pertinent conversations and discussions about the current situation of the public education in our country. "¡Uy profe!, ¿pero por qué a alguien de la universidad Xxx le importa la educación pública?". I guess it was the first time I talked about my academic background with my students; and trust me, even though all my intellectual journey has been through the private path, you'll definitely need to look deeper in order to figure out why a graduate student from Xxx university, and even preppy perhaps, seemed to be so interested and concerned about the strike and the situation of our public education. This is my history:

YELLOW

I will always remember my dad with his not-so-professional voice singing "Pioneros" to me before bedtime. I will always remember the poster of John Lennon hanging on my mom's bedroom door. This is just a glimpse of what my childhood looked like.

I totally think my childhood was as beautiful as fluctuating. I am an only child who was raised by two emerging working-class parents. I grew up in the time when the radio was still more popular than the TV; in fact, we didn't have any until I turned 3 (my dad really wanted to watch the US World Cup in 1994). This made me a kid more interested in reading, listening to my parents' vinyl records, and creating and imagining fantastic stories with the few toys I had at that time.

Life was hard but simpler. And happy, indeed. Growing up in a popular and working-class neighborhood on the West part of our capital city implied that my parents really started from scratch. I can't say life was luxurious, but I can't say I didn't have everything I needed either; food, a lovely apartment, two caring parents, friends, and access to a humble, yet excellent kindergarten. However, given the traits of my parents, I quickly began to realize that living and being part of this country entailed a constant social and political struggle.

I would say that I exist because of politics. Actually, my parents met at the youth basis of a, let's say, red leftist political party. I am perhaps the product of the social movements and political and economic struggles of those who are behind. My childhood was, thus, being a happy and free kid who quickly understood the value of the social advocacy and the political commitment for a better country for <u>every single person.</u>

And growing up like that, implied to realize that "neither the police, nor the soldiers are the good guys" as my mom would assert; or to go to the several demonstrations with my dad against the pseudo

government of Samper[10]. Or even, attending political meetings and asking naïve questions about why in the tribute to Jaime Pardo Leal he was not even present. And perhaps you don't know who he was; perhaps you don't even care. I don't blame you; we all live in a forgetful country that ignores its history.

GREEN

"The jungle is not a place for an English teacher" -said the evil professor as my undergraduate's research proposal was turned down. Aren't the Indigenous languages worth studying even from a B.A. in Modern Languages Teaching at a private XXX university? Apparently not.

My academic journey is also the product of further political and social struggles and advocacy. My school? Perhaps one of the best times of my entire life. I had the opportunity to study at the same school for about 12 years; same friends, same teachers, same liberal and "hippie" notions: no uniform, no grades, no exams, no silly community handbooks whatsoever. I learned -yes! I did learn something in a school like that! - that you do things because of you and not because of a given numerical grade. Autonomy would perfectly describe the main insight I took from school. However, as I started to grow academically -well, and physically, too; you know what I mean-, I could reaffirm that education wasn't a mere school affair.

I can't say getting access to higher education was tough. It is not a mystery that I could choose where and what to study thanks to my parents' socioeconomic background. Don't blame me; blame the entire system. Blame me if I used this access and position to my own benefit and to foster the same social structures. But I guess it would be nonsense given my responsibility, advocacy, passion, and commitment toward public education and contributing, somehow, to improve our social conditions with our weapons of knowledge.

University was a constant tension. Although my closer peers and friends aren't as posh and rich as you may think, I had the chance to meet people with way more opulence: some were brilliant, some were simply there. I admit I oftentimes felt my notions, positions, and struggles didn't find a right place. There wasn't any strike, any political meeting, any graffiti, any demonstration, and even worse, further social and political concerns seemed to be distant among professors and peers. "Yo nunca he ido a una marcha, y esa vaina me da como miedo" used to say a very good friend of mine.

How would you expect to contribute in a system like that? Teaching, no matter our area, implies more. I wasn't concerned about CLIL or the Communicative Approach -so popular at the time-, rather, I wanted to know how to foster access to language education to everyone regardless one's socioeconomic status.

RED[11]

And currently, my pedagogy and notions are the product of everything I have lived. My parents, my friends, my city, my country, my school, my university, and especially the social and political struggles that lie behind. So, the next time that your impressions mismatch with who I really am, remember my own history.

Please, remember I grew up with a constant fear of not seeing one of my parents coming back home at night. And not because of the fear of dying itself -that's the beauty of life-, but because I quickly understood that in our country people are assassinated because of their ideologies. Please, remember I carried out my undergraduate research reading English short stories in peripheral areas of our city. Please remember I did volunteer work and taught how to read and write to South-east Asian immigrants while living in the Windy City. Please remember that the English language is also advocacy. Please remember

[10] Ernesto Samper Pizano was Colombia's president between 1994 and 1998.

[11] In this testimonial narrative, Alex uses three colors to highlight three important moments in his life. The colors yellow and green were the colors of the Patriotic Union (a left-hand party) in the 80s. Red was an emblematic color of the communist party.

that this Xxx or whomever he is, is in fact interested in fighting for our own public education. And please, please remember that I am just the product of those million voices that couldn't be silenced.

Co-interpretation

Javier: "It is not only about the money that we have in our pockets… [It is also about] the genealogies that we have, the values we are given." Alex's dialogue with peers and teacher-educator-researcher.

Listening to Alex reading his testimonio prompted very enriching remarks towards his life as a teacher and human being. Here is the dialogue that occurred among him, his peer and me after having heard his testimony that pinpoints the main issues raised:

Lorena: I have to accept that the first time that I saw you, you said that you were from that university, and the way you spoke, the way you dressed even, is totally different from the opinion that I have about you now. So, it's interesting to see what you think about it because sometimes we say "oh you? Because you are from Xxx university", but we never wonder [approaching the group] what he thinks about it. Yeah? But here I can perfectly perceive what he thinks about the situation. It's interesting to know what is behind Alex.

Nancy: Regarding what Lorena has already said in the line where Alex says "uy profe, pero por qué alguien de la Xxx Universidad le importa la educación pública?" … I see stereotypes! The way we have some imaginaries or incorrect stereotypes about people who are studying. When you were reading, I remembered when I went to Yellow Stone. It was the same thing. I was the only public university girl because the other ones were from Xxx University.

It is very interesting how since the beginning you were talking about the system, the social impact, the social factors that are embedded in this speech. In each one of the colors, the main ideas were basically those: the system, our history, the historical identity based on the system, and how we've grown up.

Javier: First of all, thank you Alex for your commitment. I could really observe you were really writing from the guts. Second thing, I could relate that story to this theory of positionality in which you come to a classroom, but you certainly don't know how a student will define himself. Here you may feel in tune, if I may say so, because of our backgrounds, probably they do match our aspirations. There was one reading we did that I recall, and I relate it: It would be easy for us just to label Alex as a private university student with certain access to higher education. But in terms of research, we do need to ask people we are interviewing. Having said so, it makes me reflect how we are going to display our students, for example, in such an endeavor like in the research we are carrying out. I may say this: "from my background, X is in higher status", "a person is this and that", and that is quite deterministic in a certain way, understand certainly the role of the students. You are Xxx student, but not with the student profile we were told. Those are not discourses that you create but that you are told. Third, it is quite interesting to see how you believe in education and this is something really to admire.

Josué: You just reminded me of some experiences that I had in my workplace. Stereotypes are inevitable. I think we use them all the time. Maybe because we want to have everything under control. A tendency that I have is to ask people what they do because that's the way I can have an idea of who they are. Three times I have asked that question. Three times these men have told me they worked in banks. So, I had this tendency to think like: "this class is going to be very difficult". We started talking. I usually posed controversial topics, and when they started speaking, definitively I realized I had a wrong image of who they were. They were able to describe life, social problems, lacks, etc., in a better way than me. I was surprised. I've learned from this that we can't judge someone just because of the appearance, and it is something that I also did the first time I heard you. I told my girlfriend: "hey, there is a guy that I can't stand, and he is from Xxx university. I have this tendency to reject everything that has to do with class identity, like a higher position than mine. That's something I felt, but through the classes and the talks we've had, I said: "no, this guy is amazing, definitely". I know it must be very hard to come to a place like this one where you see somehow people like me with these discourses, stereotyping of things. I feel it is somehow uncomfortable. Then talking about those realities, I think your case is a very good case of resistance, so you're breaking expectations. Power, as Foucault says, is a dynamic thing, circulating all the time, so it is not always top-down, and then there is a group that imposes something, but it is also bottom-up and yours is that case, maybe. You can have a better socioeconomic condition maybe. There can be a different kind of resistance. Thank you for reading.

Nancy: I would like to try to understand the colors. I could interpret that when you were talking about the three colors… well, I remember my son Martin whose teacher was trying to teach him colors and how our emotions relate to different colors. So, when my son starts saying that he is "red" it is because he is pretty angry. I just tried to relate it to the emotions. In red, I read that you are fighting with ideologies, and there is a kind of emotion about that. The green one is about your academic journey. The green one is the peaceful despite the political and social struggles when you said: "I had the opportunity to study at the same school for 12 years, same friends, same teachers, same hippy notions, no uniform". When Martin tells me "I'm green", so it's like peace. Yellow according to Martin, it means "pretty happy". I could relate it with: "I can't say life was luxurious, but I can't say I didn't have everything I needed either" it was very interesting: color--emotion. It's my interpretation, but I want to hear what's the meaning in this case?

Alex: It's pretty political. Red because of the communist party. My parents are and back in time I was also an active member from this party. Yellow and green were the colors of the Union Patriotica, [Patriotic Union], the party. It is a historical trait. Politics has always been in my life. It's something which has really influenced who I am currently.

Katherine: Alex constructed his identity from there: the relationship he had with his parents and his involvement with the school, because of course: no grades, no uniform, so, he had an idea of what he was going there for. It is not like the students we have right now that if they don't score 5, they just don't do well. But he got a different idea of what education was. We can talk about the construction of his identity from there, from the very beginning of his life, and why he thinks the way he does.

Javier: Something related to what Katherine mentioned is the role of our personal background. It is not just that simple, it is not only about the money that we have in our pockets. It entails a deeper construction of who we really are and the connections that we

have, maybe the genealogies that we have, the values we are given. Somehow, we are not free. My kid is growing up under my own perceptions. If he had been born with a different father, he would be different. It is interesting to see in our discourses the expressions of our parents, our grandparents. Sometimes they are there to resist or normalize discourse. For Alex, it would be easier, I guess, to just accept comfort, develop a different life, but he is quite rooted in his parents' roots, they are the ones who he mentions in the text. They come from a working-class background. He is using his life history for his own.

Lorena: Through these lines we can understand some values from Alex. When he underlines "every single person" that means he is giving certain meaning to the person, the subject. When he said that he could have studied any career, but he chose to study teaching because he was concerned about education as a way of improving every single person's conditions. When he said that he volunteered to teach immigrants… there are like three or four things that show us what his personal values are as caring person recognizing the others. That's good.

Adriana: When you were talking about 'red' I feel it as: identity as belonging because you want to belong to this group. So, you're showing that you belong because such and such. Your testimony is very visual for me. It reminds me of a speech called "wear sunscreen", it's very political. Also selecting this font for the testimony reminds me of the 70s and 80s when people typed. It's very visual. So, Identity is not only belonging, but it is also cognitive and emotional. Identity also has those shades. You are defining who you are. It called my attention when you said, "we all live in a forgetful country". Testimoniar is an act against forgetfulness, and I think our stories as teachers matter. Let's recover our stories because teachers' lives matter. I have a question in this part: "contribute our social conditions with our weapons of knowledge" What are your weapons of knowledge?

Alex: I think we as teachers have one of the most powerful, not that appreciated sometimes, weapon which is knowledge or teaching. It is through education that eventually we are going to change or challenge those who are in power, and who are the ones that drove this country to the way it is. My call here is: it doesn't matter that we are language teachers. We have our weapons in our own fields to contribute and should cast doubt to those inequalities. I've always been aware I was privileged in many ways, but not because of that I'm gonna reproduce that. I want to make a contribution: it's like people should have access no matter what. I think we can contribute to make this country less bad.

"It's good to know what is behind Alex."

Communal Meaning Making Themes

This communal interpretation starts with Lorena acknowledging that she perceives Alex quite differently now that she has gotten to know him better, especially knowing "what is behind Alex" as explained in his own words. Nancy summarizes Lorena's point by using the word "stereotypes," which relates to the "imaginaries" through which we construct the others, sometimes in mistaken ways.

She also finds it interesting how the system and the historical identity are issues raised by this testimony. Based on previous issues mentioned by Lorena and Nancy regarding Alex's persona, Javier reflects upon the issue of positionality. We frequently judge from our position and might end up in deterministic ideas about students or research participants. Javier's intervention reveals one concern of decolonial research: how we are going to characterize the participants of research without, for example, resorting to stereotypical or restricted visions of them that are framed within our own biases of race, class, gender or economic status and their multiple intersections.

Josué goes back to the issue of stereotypes. Human beings are frequently compelled to know who the others are. He exemplifies this point with his own experience of students who he expected to be in a way but were completely different. Josué draws on Foucault to exemplify how power fluctuates within societies and it is not always exercised top-down. For Josué, Alex appears to be a case in point because he rather exercises a resistance towards inequity as exerted by the educational system.

Nancy intends to interpret the meaning behind the colors Alex used to differentiate three moments described in the testimonio as connected to emotions such as anger and happiness as well to key moments of Alex's life such as the ideological struggles and the academic life. To reflect upon these topics Nancy resorts to ideas she has heard from her son Martin, who at school has learned to interpret the meaning of colors. Alex clarifies what he meant with the colors used in his testimony, being all related to signs that connect in one way or another to

politics, particularly to the nearly extinct political party UP [Patriotic Union for the acronym in Spanish] whose members were systematically killed along several years, including Jaime Pardo Leal, ex-magistrate and leader of the UP, whom Alex mentions in the text.

Alex concludes then that politics has always been part of his life. Javier adds new shades of meaning to the understanding of this testimonio when explaining the impact of our backgrounds and the connections we make along life, and how such traits are related to our teaching professions in one way or another. He clarifies that it is not only about the money that we have that determines our meanings but also our networks of relationships. Lorena explains that she could understand Alex's values especially as a caring person who recognizes the other.

I also identified some ideas that helped me understand this testimonio as heard for the first time. Identity as belonging is one of the issues I could notice, considering that Alex's class identity appears to conflict with that of his fellow classmates' identities. Additionally, Alex's testimonial narrative raises the need to know more about our histories as Colombians and our histories as teachers because both are intersected and make up our persona in teaching and knowledge. Finally, Alex connected knowledge and teaching as not so appreciated teachers' assets. The value of education is paramount for him to "change or challenge those in power". Finally, Alex acknowledged that he had indeed been privileged to get an education. However, education should not be a privilege of a few but a right for everyone.

‘Don’t Blame Me, Blame the Entire System.’

How does Alex experience knowledge? Alex’s personal reflections

After having heard this dialogue in a recorded track, Alex went back to analyzing his own story and added other reflections that deem recognition because they help us understand how Alex relates to knowledge. He wrote afterwards:

“As stated by Higgins (2017), language teacher identity also signifies political stances, activism, and moves that may question and challenge certain ideologies within our field. By reexamining my own testimony, I realize that there exists a constant inclination toward the political and social struggles that have shaped my personal life, my academic journey, and my current teaching practices and ideologies. Hence, the construction of my own identity as a language teacher also responds to the political and social struggles of my background. For me, becoming an English language teacher requires social advocacy and political commitment to improve our social conditions from the field of language teaching and learning. Unlike the several discussions that we have had during our seminar course, in which it seems that we, as English teachers, have a higher status and a conceived lack of connection with social realities and issues within our classes, I absolutely believe that our pedagogy is also a political stance and struggle.

I would like to highlight an extremely relevant aspect that emerged from my peers when interpreting my testimony. Oftentimes, our first impressions and superficial traits of identity may mismatch the complexity of who we really are. It was quite interesting to see how my academic background conflicts and mismatches with how the others construct and position myself. For instance, my classmate Nancy pointed out how our own imaginaries may lead us to foster stereotypes. In fact, both Lorena and Josué openly affirmed and stated that I did not cause a good first impression at the very beginning of our Masters’ program because of my academic background, the way I looked, and the way I spoke English. In this regard, Canagarajah (2017) claims that aspects such as our nationality, accent, and even our bodies themselves also permeate the construction that others develop with regard to us as language teachers.

My other classmate Javier provided meaningful insights vis-à-vis the relevance of going beyond deterministic labels and positionalities that others construct upon us. Even though he acknowledged that our academic backgrounds may differ, it is important to

avoid simplistic and reductionist notions when trying to define and position others. I can now relate Javier's point of view to a post-structuralist paradigm that rejects conceptions of order, deconstructs universalities, and comprehends the complex and multiple constructions of our own lives (Baxter, 2008; Hatch, 2000, as cited in Gómez-Vásquez & Guerrero Nieto, 2018)."

Family epistemologies, previous social and political struggles, and resistance

How does Alex experience knowledge? My own personal reflections

From a Decolonial lens, I perceive that Alex's testimonial narrative shows us that knowledge is not a mere cognitive experience. It is also a historical experience that is lived in flesh and blood and affects a human being entirely. When Alex describes himself as being the product of politics, social movements, and former political struggle, which his parents joined, I can conclude that Alex experiences his relations to knowledge particularly in a country like Colombia, historically and politically on the one hand, and in relation to family epistemologies on the other. Sandoval, Moreno, Mojica Lagunas, Montelongo, and Juárez Díaz (2016) teach us that "our families' epistemologies were our first teachers" (p. 22), and there is a need to acknowledge and revitalize such families' epistemologies within the academy particularly because they are hardly ever recognized as comprising our ecologies of knowledge along with other ways of knowing that are frequently more considered in academia.

In Alex's case, there are traces of a component of social consciousness that systematically becomes visible in his ways of speaking, acting, and being a teacher that possibly originates in his family background. Alex's experience of knowledge is intersected by one instance of multiple historical turmoil that our country lived between 1984 and 1992, a period in our history in which thousands of militants from the UP (a left-oriented political party) were either killed or disappeared by state-funded paramilitary groups. It is likely that the contact with ideas of equality, equity, and education for everybody rang the bell in Alex's teaching persona. These knowledges "produced in previous social struggles" (Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 45) arrived in Alex via his parents and were taken by him as a source of reference. Similarly, having lived in flesh and blood the fear of not seeing again one of his

parents because of their ideologies should have had an impact on what it means to know. Knowing is sometimes painful as well.

Sousa Santos (2018) explains that “all social practices produce knowledge” (p. 161), and possibly for Alex participating in demonstrations, conscious-raising talks at university, and “teaching migrants in the Windy City” are traits that bespeak traces of the “knowledge otherwise” (“El saber otro”, Escobar, 2003; Walsh, 2018) in him. Recognizing teaching as a political stance and a social commitment challenges the pervasive idea of teaching to the test as well as the idea that English teaching is or should be an apolitical affair. Alex connects the very fact of existence with politics. He also links social advocacy and politics with a better future without exclusion. By the end of the testimonial narrative, he also relates the English language with advocacy. Knowledge connects to politics and social advocacy. Knowing entails these two.

In the parts called “Red” and “Green”, there are two excerpts that evidence an apparent struggle with disciplinary knowledge because the university, where most disciplinary knowledge comes from the Global North in the manner of theory, is seen in such a monolithic way when Alex wonders how a person expects to contribute to a world system as the current one as teaching, regardless of the field, entails much more than the communicative approach. Alex showed much more concern about enhancing access to language education than to applying methodologies such as CLIL.

When he describes the seminal memory of his research proposal:

“The jungle is not a place for an English teacher” -said the evil professor as my undergraduate’s research proposal was turned down. Aren’t the Indigenous languages worth studying even from a B.A. in Modern Languages Teaching at a private XXX university? Apparently not”, there is an evident tension in the sense that it seems as if the knowledge Alex wanted to bring to the fore within the university had not been problematized at all. There is a subtle criticism of the institution called university and the relations to knowledge circulating there formally and even informally (e.g., among classmates). Talking about the university, Castro-Gomez (2007) argues:

> “The university is seen not only as the place where knowledge that leads to moral and material progress is produced, but as the vigilant nucleus of

> knowledge legitimacy…the university more or less functions as the Foucauldian panoptic, because it is conceived as an institution that establishes the frontiers between useful and useless knowledge, between the *doxa* and the *episteme*, between the legitimate knowledge (that is, the one that is highly regarded as having "scientific validity") and the illegitimate knowledge." (p. 81) (My translation)

In that train of thought, legitimate knowledge in ELT may be dealing with methods but probably not with social advocacy and politics. Alex locates himself within the postmethod era concerns (Kumaravadivelu 1994). He is interested precisely in comprehending not the circumstances under which acquisition of languages occurs or might occur (an interest of Global North epistemologies, see Ellis 2012), but in questioning under what circumstances access to language education is desired. He was not interested in CLIL or the communicative approach but in how access to language rights were granted. Again, Castro-Gómez (2007) helps understand this situation by problematizing one characteristic of disciplines at the university level:

"In practically all university curricula, disciplines have their own canon that defines what authors should be read, (the "authorities" or "the classics"), which themes are pertinent, and what things should be known by a student who chooses to study such discipline. Canons are power mechanisms whose aim is "to fix" knowledges, in certain places, making them easily identifiable and manageable." (p. 84)

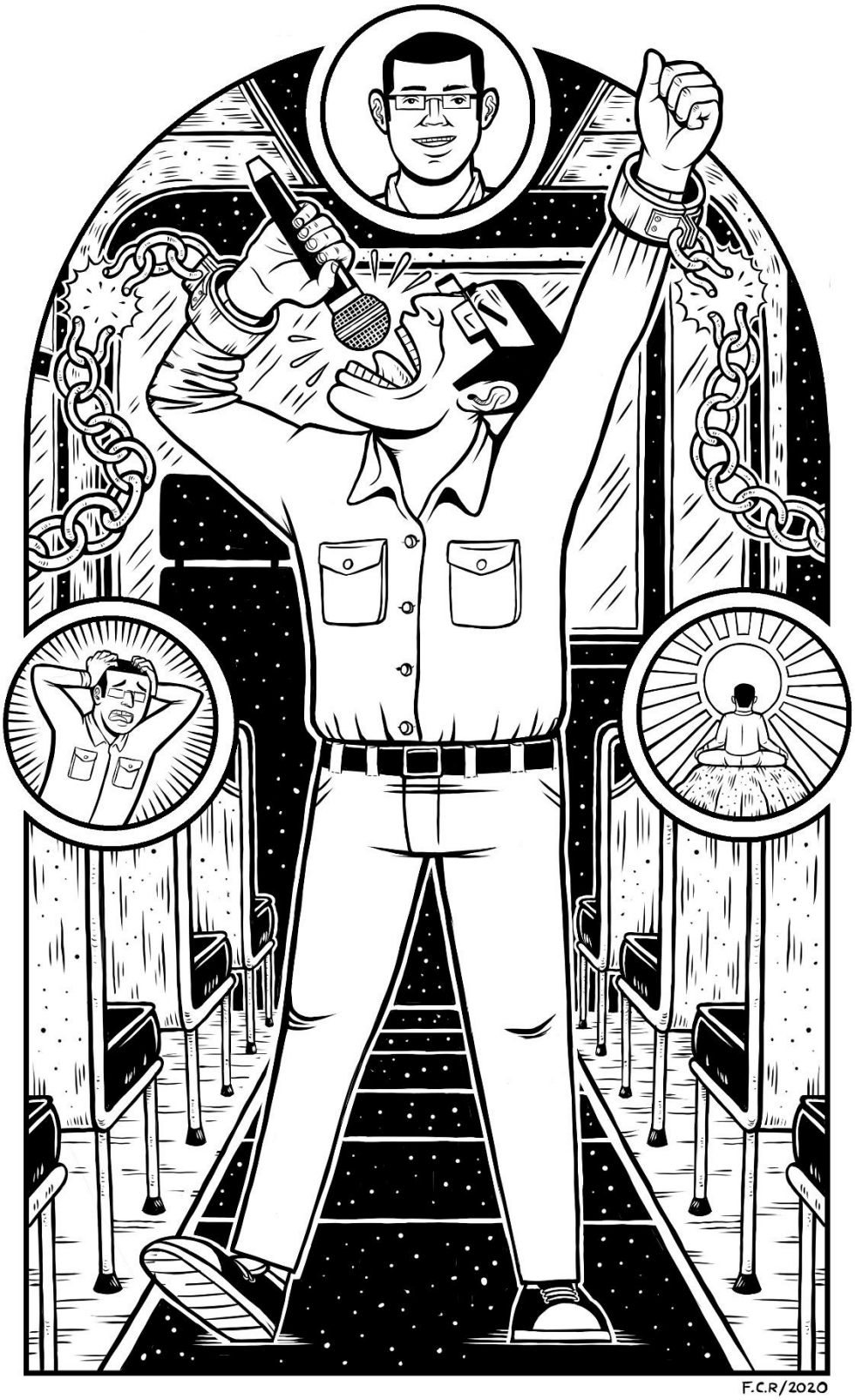
When Alex says that his pedagogy and notions are the product of his lived experiences, he entails that his relation to knowledge is inhabited by experience lived in the flesh, the emotion, and his life trajectory. Finally, Alex's testimonio shows us subtle yet powerful ways in which he managed to resist the coloniality of knowledge and being. Here and there he is questioning a rigid system of knowledge. This is a topic also spotted by his classmate Katherine in the communal interpretation, which I bring up again to contextualize this argument:

Alex wrote: "My academic journey is also the product of further political and social struggles and advocacy. My school? Perhaps one of the best times of my

entire life. I had the opportunity to study at the same school for about 12 years; same friends, same teachers, same liberal and “hippie” notions: no uniform, no grades, no exams, no silly community handbooks whatsoever. I learned -yes! I did learn something in a school like that! - that you do things because of you and not because of a given numerical grade. Autonomy would perfectly describe the main insight I took from school. However, as I started to grow academically -well, and physically, too; you know what I mean-, I could reaffirm that education wasn’t a mere school affair”. Katherine then interpreted: “Alex constructed his identity from there: the relationship he had with his parents and his involvement with the school, because of course: no grades, no uniform, so, he had an idea of what he was going there for. It is not like the students we have right now that if they don’t score 5, they just don’t do well. But he got a different idea of what education was...”

Alex’s school life history deviated from typical colonial structures like grading, normalization, standardization, and fostered in him a perspective of education as autonomy and emancipation which also add up to the way he relates to his construction of what knowing, and knowledge mean to him.

In short, the way Alex experiences knowledge is intersected by family epistemologies or intergenerational knowledge (Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Fuentes, Muñiz, Prada Vivas, 2019), political commitment and struggle, or seminal life events that intended to challenge the world system as a student, militant, or teacher. In the next testimonial narrative, Josué raps on the tensions he faces with his different relations to knowledge while understanding teacher’s knowledge from at least two different perspectives.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Chapter Five

Josué's Testimonial Narrative: My rule of three

"This is kind of an exercise… I stopped doing it. It's one of the things that I like the most. It is writing poetry and of course rapping. I think the last time I rapped was 7 years ago precisely when I was in the movement against Ley 30 [Law 30]. I remember I made a song; I would get on the buses and sing it. People liked the message…it's something I really want to explore afterwards, and what I did is part of my passions. I hope you can enjoy it and tell me if you like it. Excuse me if I don't do it that right…

Josué starts singing:

That morning I prepared my bag.
It was full of certainties and confidence.
when I came back home, I felt I was dragged
by panic, trying to seek for sense.
A 21-year-old guy assuring knowing it all.
A 21-year-old guy eager to cry
when these guys didn't care but kicked a boy on the floor.
No one told him what to do, he just tried.
Students without break time, shouted and mistreated
felt his disappointment and fragility.
He wanted to make them reason thoroughly,
all he got was whisper and laugh about it.

Chorus

When you open that door and see their faces,
a bunch of emotions come to me on the spot.
I see myself as rising from the ashes,
I see myself as doing something more than just using my throat.

Six am, tired of monotony I make up the stratagem.
Employing their discourse, I rescue the root,
I feel like breathing more than oxygen…
rough and tough but there we are, challenging the plot.
Six of them, often times fewer,
tell me how they feel, what they do,
how often they dream and what they remember.
They look at me as the expert,
I show myself just as a dude.
Pressed and overwhelmed by the standards
and the role of clerk rather than of educator.
I visit my texts, my classmates, and professors,
and I convince myself that I am not that braggart.

Chorus

When you open that door and see their faces,
a bunch of emotions come to me on the spot.
I see myself as rising from the ashes,
I see myself as doing more than just using my throat.

Sitting down on my years, I see myself valuing my tears.
Every breath, every risk and every sacrifice
will have been worth it all and I'll be going beyond the advice,
I'll have beaten the anxious, low-esteemed and full of fears:
Changing selves and breaking chains, including mine...

Co-Interpretation

Javier: "He needs this discourse of education as a liberating tool, in order to continue…to cope with frustration." Josué's dialogue with peers and teacher-educator-researcher

The following dialogue took place after participating teachers had just listened to Josué singing his testimonio. After a month of preparation, Josué tells a story of harsh times in teaching and future hopes. Readers will see participating teachers Alex's, Javier's and Lorena's interpretations along with some questions raised by me as I was engaged in listening to Josué's testimonio, as well as his own spoken introspections. This dialogue adds up to the purpose of not having a single interpretation in research but highlighting the importance of engaging participants as interpreters too. At the end of this dialogue, I will summarize the main items pinpointed by the participating teachers.

Josué: Rule of three is a strategy of writers in literature to engage the audience like in 'Three Little Pigs'. In politics, the French revolution had a slogan… three words. It's a strategy to permit engagement. It is complex to think about three things and simple to talk about three things. The three things I talked about were first of all frustration, then happiness, and finally hope. The second one is happiness like what Gandhi said, coherence between what you say, what you think, and what you do. Happiness is different from joy. There's frustration, and hope is the shortest one.

Adriana: What would you like to say guys? Maybe one of the phrases called your attention for something or reminded you about yourselves as teachers.

Alex: For me, the first part it is like a reminder of a past experience. Probably when you were doing teaching practicum. If I'm not wrong at 21 I was also doing my practicum. I could relate it a little bit with me… that university prepares you to teach, gives you the tools how to do it but when you enter in a classroom as a student-teacher reality is totally different, right? Sometimes we assume that because we have an excellent lesson plan the class is going to be excellent but sometimes, we have like shocking experiences... and I think in this first part you are retelling a very shocking experience of violence or physical aggression. And the second one, I think you are mentioning your current teaching position because I also started in a similar language institute, and I know what it feels to be forced with 6 or fewer students with their own plans, and their own things, and also following this rigid model of education, these standards. So, I could totally relate to these two main parts as of my teaching practicum and beginning of my teaching experience… that's how I interpreted it.

Javier: So, as Josué and Alex have pointed out you may identify two key points in the song: the first one is somehow, he feels pressed by the system itself…like when he mentions education as a business, right? when he says "the role of a clerk rather than of educator". When he says: "visit my texts, my classmates" he is recognizing the value of continuing studying as way of liberation. Something that Freire would affirm as well. Probably, somehow, he feels oppressed by education, but he himself believes in the role of change, no? breaking the chains... Well, Josué in this moment is just waiting for the moment to finally break the chains.

Although, he recognizes that even if he is tired of the monotony, he is still doing something within that setting waiting for the moment… In "employing their discourse I recue the roots" he recognizes as well that even though he doesn't feel self-assured there, he feels he is making some changes. He needs this discourse of education as a liberating tool, in order to continue…to… to cope with frustration as you said before. The first one… is really interesting, you know: Contrasting that even though at the beginning he had such a shocking experience, he still believes in the power of education. Not just for himself but for the people under his control… He says that "they look at me as an expert, I show myself as a dude" he is trying to break down that top down model of education.

Lorena: For me it's interesting. In the chorus he shows how he is doing more than just using his throat … that means that he doesn't care about all the situations that are mentioned in the other part of the song, yeah? so… this is a way of showing his reality and he is also showing what he thinks about it and it's like a resistance discourse that he is aware of. He knows that there is a condition, a real situation that he can't deny but he has to deal with it. I wouldn't say he is happy of it, but I would say he would be proud of being a teacher because in the first part is the students themselves, in the second part is the company, one thing or the other can make him feel uncomfortable, he knows. He is aware he has something to do and that is to be a teacher, yeah?

Javier: He recognizes himself as a subject, right? What I have perceived so far in our readings…is the condition of teachers as objects and how we, in certain practices, even make small changes, we can show agency, we can see ourselves as subjects.

Adriana Not as objects.

Javier: Yes, not as object. He is being a subject not just being a clerk but a subject. I am not that familiar with that theory of subjectivity yet but that's what I see.

Adriana: It is a very challenging text and when you explain the philosophy behind it, it opens a door. It's been seven year since you last sang, rapped, you said, what motivated you to come back to this?

Josué: I would say it was not easy to do it… despite it was flowing in the paper. It was not easy because somehow there is an inner feeling, comes from my childhood, I didn't know how to handle certain situations. Then, I kept that for years and years. Every bad situation I stored and stored this feeling. When I entered the classroom, the first classroom was the opportunity like for a critical moment, I was alone in that classroom, there was no homeroom teacher. They were not even teens, they were kids. They were in second grade. They threw papers, telling each other rude words. I literally thought I would have their attention by listening to me: "please listen to me, it's important", they didn't care. They were kicking each other. Five of them started to kick one on the floor. I dragged him and one of the guys kicked my leg. I did my practicum in Palermo, close to my parents' home. I used to smoke. That day I was walking home. That distance I walked, I smoked like five, six cigarettes. It was so shocking for me.

[Approaching Javier] Now that you talk about the subject, I'm subject now in terms of language. Somehow, I can do things, but I am subjected to an epistemology, to a vision of reality. I am subjected still today.

Adriana: "They look at me as the expert, I show myself as a dude" How did you transit from the image of the expert to the image of the dude? In what moment did you become conscious of that change and why you did it?

Josué: It is because of an international exam I took last year…that is IELTS. I saw the job market and with a C1 level in terms of this framework… I would have a good salary, I wanted to get married. I wanted to do many things. So, I knew that If I wanted to make that happen, I would have to look for this opportunity. In XXX institute you have different salary scales. I was put at the very beginning in the highest. My partners said: "Wow you took academic IELTS", "C1", I was… wow, there… in the clouds. It was also a discourse I self-imposed, the expert. I started touching again the ground I realized I am not a braggart. I had an egotistical part because we are complex beings like Bakhtin said replicating… replicating like a ventriloquist.

Adriana: It was not your voice?

Josué: Exactly, it was not my voice. I started detaching from that. That's why I mention you guys and my professor. I came back to my roots.

Talking about physical characteristics of classrooms, where I work there are 6 chairs and one taller for the teacher. I started to challenge that. I started with a different idea. I was the expert; I was sitting down in higher position. Now I don't sit down there. If I don't know a word, I confess it.

Adriana: dismantling the expert's discourse?

Josué: I can't deny I am subjected to this discourse. They hired me because I am an expert. For them, I am close to a native. You see a discourse of native speakerism there and pays more.

Subverting Practices

Communal Meaning Making Themes

The dialogue between Josué, his partners, and myself pinpoint some emerging elements. Josué's rap prompts a relational attitude from his partners towards this testimonial narrative. Some connections to critical pedagogy literature are made. The conversation displays the contradiction of seeing education as business or as a liberatory/emancipatory practice. Second, a feeling of being oppressed by current educational practices is felt as well. Third, the modern divide between theory and practice as experienced by novice teachers when developing their practicum is mentioned. Fourth, teaching appears to have a resistance character as observed in Josué's aims to subvert imposed practices, values, and knowledge as analyzed by Javier and Lorena.

Teachers learn by doing as evidenced when Josué recalls the event of asking learners to pay attention to him but noticed he did not manage to do it. As well, there is an understanding of what it means to be a subject with agency and being subjected to a theory of knowledge as seen in statements like feeling like a subject in terms of language but feeling subjected in terms of epistemology. Similarly, by means of this collective analysis of Josué's testimonio, he acknowledges the tension of what knowing entails for him: seeing himself as a dude, or as an expert, or as a braggart; someone who pretends to be something he is not interested in. He exemplifies this dilemma when explaining his IELTS exam results and leading position because of getting a high score in this high-stakes test.

Likewise, there is a reflection that Josué needed to adjust to the narrative of the expert teacher, to achieve his personal goals in life such as getting married and thriving personally. Knowledge is tied then to economy and, of course, social, and economic capital as well as social mobility.

'I Am Subjected Still Today.'

How does Josué experience knowledge? Josué's personal reflections

After having heard the recorded dialogue with his partners, Josué had the opportunity to come back to his testimonial narrative and add his theorization of the text. In such reflection he explained that:

"My teaching development process has not been neither linear nor mono-faceted. This subject feels how his hope, frustration, and happiness blossom when doing what he does, when I do what I do. It has happened as an interaction of experiences, singular and situated experiences (Bárcena, Larrosa, & Mélich, 2006). Making sense of my feelings in the song, I put into play temporal contexts (past, present, and future) of my professional and personal development. In such contextual tenses, I myself related, relate now, and will relate to others, trying to break molds and other prescriptive roles of my profession. Yet, as I also mentioned within the collective theorization in class, I am subjected to these roles, although I draw on these dominant discourses to intend to revert what they do as Javier also pointed out.

I deem that resisting is worth it all. It is worth it because when *I see myself as rising from the ashes and doing something more than just using my throat,* I link the multiple experiences, drawbacks, dreams, frustration, and happiness I am made of. Contradictory my position as it might seem, I consider I have taken part of "multiple situations, of infinite contexts in which every time [we humans] are (re) constructing our lives" (Bárcena, Larrosa, & Mélich, 2006, p. 250, my translation).

Always exposed to a bunch of feelings, I have opened the doors of many classrooms. Sometimes hopeful, happy, or frustrated, I have risked myself to liberate myself from the heavy educational system expectations, as coined by Javier and Lorena (echoing Freirean ideas). Seeing my students rescuing their roots through language brings about these little victories that lead me to dream on… Beyond roles and statuses, my realities escape from categorization as I make communities of sense everywhere, I go to."

Knowledge experienced through emotions, reflection, and resistance.

How does Josué experience knowledge? My personal reflections.

Emphatically, Josué says his realities escape categorization. If Josué were to be analyzed with a frame of pedagogical content knowledge, content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational aims or even disciplinary knowledge, what he just expressed would be very difficult to categorize. Indeed, it would not fit any expected type of knowledge as analyzed by official ELT frames. However, from a Decolonial lens, I would dare say that Josué's experience of knowledge is first approached through emotion and feelings as observed in

descriptive, physical, and emotional verbs such as: ‘cry’, ‘shout’, ‘whisper’, ‘laugh’, ‘see faces’, ‘breath’, and ‘see oneself’ and adjectives such as: ‘pressed’, and ‘overwhelmed’, as observed in his testimonio, his dialogue with peers, and his own theorization. As well, he experiences knowledge in a rupture with the linearity of time exposed by the modern canon of thought. He explains that there is an interplay of past, present, and future in both his professional and personal spheres.

Josué also experiences knowledge within a sort of tension of what he expects: being a dude, as opposed to what the knowledge society expects from him: an expert, a language seller. Teachers have been constructed in the Western canon as experts and such expertise, at least in the ELT case, is to be demonstrated, enacted, and validated through test taking, economic perks and social mobility for the most outstanding teachers. Josué experiences knowledge in a conflicting tension insofar as not wanting to be constructed as a braggart as the system pushes him to be. The current system of language education as thought of by language institutes constructed him as a language expert, and he abides by it, but Josué is more than that; he wants to be seen as an educator, or as Lorena suggested in the collective interpretation: Josué is completely aware that ‘his role is being a teacher, no matter what’. The tension experienced by Josué relates to the concept of knowledge with market value and knowledge without market value. That is, oftentimes, we teachers value the kind of knowledge that is not usually traced in test-taking practices, rankings, standards, but the kind of experiences that lack validation because they surpass what is of the most worth in the knowledge economy. Therefore, what it feels like to experience school violence, what it feels like to experience deprofessionalization, what is feels like to be a braggart, a dude, or an expert is far less important to what counts as knowledge of teaching currently. The seminal phrase “I see myself as rising from the ashes”, tells us that a constant re-birth is needed to keep on being a teacher. For Josué, life appears as an ongoing knowledge construction process as he “makes communities of sense everywhere” he goes. Josué seems to experience knowledge through emotion, through reflection, and through social practices such as resistance. Resistance that can be observed in the phrase “I draw on these dominant

discourses to intend to revert what they do". This attitude of drawing on dominant discourses to revert them may to some extent challenge Audrey Lorde's (1984) seminal thought that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house", because Josué actually uses the master's tools to dismantle the master's house.

As well, when Josué vividly states seminal phrases in his testimonial narrative, and dialogue such as: "a bunch of emotions come to me on the spot", "sitting down on my years, I see myself valuing my tears", "Five of them started to kick one on the floor. I dragged him and one of the guys kicked my leg" or "I did my practicum in Palermo, close to my parents' home. I used to smoke. That day I was walking home. That distance I walked, I smoked like five, six cigarettes. It was so shocking for me", Josué reminds us that his experience of knowledge is lived in his very flesh. As a teacher-researcher engaged with a Decolonial perspective I align with Diversi & Moreira (2009) when "refusing to erase the flesh from the study of humans" because "humans…experience the world through a very specific physical location: their bodies…bodies are physical, psychological, social, cultural, and political, all at once always." (p. 32) In an attempt to develop further a critique of the coloniality of knowledge developed by Mignolo (2009), I bring to the fore that Josué and his partners, in the following testimonios, are not delocalized, disembodied, and universalized beings.

Finally, Josué also weaves through the academic established knowledge as observed in his own reflections full of quotations and theoretical support as we have been disciplined in academia for so many years. Thus, he can also be perceived as a very disciplined teacher. The colonial mindset has taught us that we are to support our ideas and knowledge in scholars, preferably from the Global North to provide thorough arguments in our academic works.

In the next section, readers will read the testimonial narrative by Andrés in which he emphasizes several tensions of teaching in a neoliberal age, and the consequences it carries particularly for him as a teacher.

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Chapter Six

Andrés' Testimonial Narrative: "The Jail"

"This exercise made me think about our profile as teachers because sometimes we end up doing many things, many tasks. Because we work in a school, maybe it is important to reflect upon how far we can go as teachers, and that is something that we have to talk and think about. Other people get a reputation and won't do the things that we do. The other thing is how we cope with our problems. For example, during the time [I will narrate about] I used to drink a lot and that was something I did maybe to cope with the frustration of the life that I was going through. Sometimes, we just have to be happy, but we've got many problems inside. There are many things we are through.

There was a time in my life in which I decided to stop working as an English teacher for publishing houses which offer courses to learn English. That experience lasted 6 years. It was an easy job, but I was tired of implementing the same activities over and over again. I remember that my colleagues who work in schools used to tease me telling me things like: "When are you going to get a real job?" or "Your job is not challenging at all". I always knew that they were right. However, I do appreciate that job experience because it helped me to get a lot of knowledge and I got to know a lot of people.

My first experience in a school was totally challenging. This place is well-known for making teachers work for long hours under a lot of pressure, since you have to deal with a lot of extra tasks that make you work as a machine. Apart from this, the classroom is really crowded, it has about 50 students, and some of them belong to the inclusion program, which is not bad. The problem is that you are not trained in the school to teach these guys with special education needs. When I applied for the job, I did not know what kind of school it was. I realized it while working there. However, in this school I learnt valuable things for my life.

In that place I analyzed how a group of persons, the owners of the school, made big money from labor exploitation, the parents' pockets, and even the local government. The business started with the government, which did not have the infrastructure to deal with the large number of students who live in this district of the city. So, they allowed private institutions to enroll students who couldn't study in public schools. The government pays the private schools for each student, and they pay really well for each one of them. So, what the owners make, with the help of a few politicians, is to get the majority of students, taking them away from their competitors, other private schools, which can't battle to get those students. Sometimes the numbers are altered, so these schools get more money for students who were not attending classes. The most incredible part of this business is the amount of money that the owners got from the government. For example, in the year 2011, it was $17.000 million pesos, according to an article from the newspaper XXXX.

The only thing the government asks in order to continue with this kind of agreement is good results in the national tests. The time I stayed there, I did not see any great students' level in the different school subjects they attended. However, it is surprising how at the end of the year they got really good results. Many people who know the school well, and decided to leave it after a long time, state that the owners of the school have their people to get this situation fixed.

The people who run the school do not care about the students' economic situation. The use of the school material is mandatory. This institution is located in a low socioeconomic status area. So, sometimes it is a rough situation for parents to get the money in order to buy these books. Apart from

this, the school creates events so that the owners can get more money from the students' parents. There is a food festival and a bingo, which are the most famous in that district. It is a profitable business for the school. I remember that I received about 50 bonuses. I had to give them to each of my students. The cost of the bonus was high, and it only allowed you to participate in the bingo, you did not get any food. The hardest part of it is to make the students' parents buy these bonuses since they do not have enough money for their own houses, so buying these bonuses is out of the question. I didn't feel so well pushing my students to bring me the money of those bonuses knowing the hard time some of them were going through.

Due to the fact these bonuses were difficult to sell, the principal used to organize weekly meetings with the teachers in order to show who the best teachers at selling the bonuses were and who weren't. This is one of the most humiliating school practices against teachers I have ever observed, since the teachers who had sold the least were exposed in front of about 200 teachers. They had to tell the ideas they were going to implement in order to sell more. It was like those teachers were criminals and they were receiving a public judgment because they had done something dishonorable. I was never exposed in front of these people, but I felt frightened the times of the meetings. I think that if I had had the respect I have now for this profession and a better economic situation, I would have stood up against this humiliating practice. I reminisce this time as a very stressful one. I had to come up with ideas in order to get money to pay those bonuses. I implemented a five-a-side championship, which was really successful and a party. I admit I took some of this money for me, not so much, since those pigs, the owners, do not deserve your honesty. That money was spent in beer for my best friend in the school, a female mathematics teacher from Venezuela, and I. Sometimes I took some money for a month, and in the payment day I gave it back. I was never humiliated in those deplorable meetings the principal carried out thanks to those activities I implemented.

One day before the food festival and bingo day, all the teachers had to go to the school along with some students' mothers in order to get everything ready. The tasks varied from peeling potatoes or chopping vegetables, to seasoning meat, chicken, or fish for the festival. I helped peeling potatoes because I know how to do it well and getting some chicken ready for the soups. These tasks are neither embarrassing nor disgusting to me since I have had difficult jobs during my life. However, when I arrived home and I told my oldest sister what I was doing that day in the school, she didn't like at all. She suggested me to look for another occupation. I didn't care what she said to me, because I wouldn't like to change my occupation since I have always felt proud of being a teacher even under the most difficult conditions.

During the night before the festival, I drank a lot with a girl whom I met while I was studying in high school. That time of my life I used to live alone, so drinking was a weekly habit for me. The next day I had a big hangover, but I had gotten used to working like this, so it was not a big deal. During that day, I had to help with the barbecue. My task was to cut into little pieces the large portions of meat the barbecue expert gave us. This was really exhausting since it is one of the products that was sold the most, so you are busy all day long. At the end of the day, I was worn-out, and I had to wake up to work again as a teacher the next day.

I think that the time I spent in "prison", that was the name a friend of mine gave to the school, made me realize how the labor exploitation that is exerted in many schools make teachers get sick, stress out, or even worse, detest their own occupation. Sometimes there are not so many options available. If you really need money to pay your bills, you end up working in places like this. The saddest part is how the ones that are the most affected are the ones who make the owners rich. At

the end of the year, I had a big argument with one of my coordinators because I refused to call the parents' houses in order to ask them to pay the money for the schoolbooks they had to buy for children. I decided to look for another school before they fired me. Now I work in a good school, I have been there for 4 years, it is not the best place, it has some things I do not like; however, I appreciate every day I am there."

Co-Interpretation

Lorena: "I liked the part in which you say that you like teaching, even though some people have told you to quit or change your occupation", Andrés' dialogue with peers and teacher-educator-researcher.

The dialogue that follows pinpoints the main themes raised by participating teachers in Andrés' testimonial narrative read-aloud. These communal interpretations of the testimonio represent some supplies that helped Andrés theorize the testimonial narrative afterwards. As such the dialogue is seen as a way to generate communal knowledge and comprehend –through this testimonial narrative—how he experiences his relations to knowledge.

Javier: I took some notes…I found remarkable how you really… from the guts show your indignation, all this frustration, from your deep part. Then, also you mention education as business, taking into account all these neoliberal practices within school, you know? seeing human beings just as money. If I had more students, I would have more money.

You talk about certain contradictions: for example, you mention that you are a human being with lights and shadows as everyone here is. Also, this contradiction that you mentioned that you were in the bingo stuff doing the barbecue: teachers are asked to be "super persons", everyone can have a bad day but a teacher. We are supposed to be "the super person". I find interesting this contradiction of the display of human identities that is complex, "I am the super person, but not, I am taking some money because I really feel it is not fair what they are doing", somehow it is interesting.

Alex: So, talking about the things that I could relate to your testimonio is, for example, in my very first job I also had that same feeling of challenge. I mean it was good for me to start, but I wouldn't see myself still in that place doing the same tasks. I would like to suggest enriching your testimonio with a theoretical perspective… this problem we may feel which is this de-professionalization. Some current policies, those national bilingualism programs that hire people just because they are native English speakers, and also, that de-professionalizes this field. You can also bring this theory of this article that we read in here about your own socio-economic background in relation to the population of students, so you start being critical about the salaries of language teachers, and how our socio-economic identities converge into the classroom. You can have a meaningful theoretical perspective to give a solid construction of the testimonio.

Lorena: I liked the part in which you say that you like teaching, even though some people have told you to quit or to change your occupation. So that kind of experience also changes the way we behave. For example, you said at the end that you now work at a

different place, and you appreciate the things that are at that school. I have heard different comments about that school, but for me that experience of working there is different taking into account the background that you already had with those bad experiences in the first school. So, maybe it tells that the things we are, can be read from different perspectives taking into account our histories.

Adriana: I agree with you in the sense that even our relatives might not agree with what profession we choose, and so I see two things: I think there is resilience which we develop through practices…resilience to overcome the difficulties, and in the final part of your testimony you make me reflect that the force of circumstances pushes us to explore other knowledges that we have because you said that: "when we work in school we just don't do teaching", like we have to do more. Like what other things are we pushed to do that challenge our knowledge?

Andrés: I had worked in other institutions like 6 years but that was my first school. For me it is like destiny: being a schoolteacher.

Adriana: Your friends told you: "When are you going to have a proper job"? what does it mean? So, the previous jobs were not jobs.

Andrés: They say: "I work in a school but what you do in that institute is nothing". They were right (laughter). If you compared the things you do in an English institute to what you do in a school, it is not as difficult -maybe in terms of knowledge of grammar or teaching- but it is not compared with a school.

Adriana: Like, what knowledge do you need in the school context?

Andrés: It is more about social knowledge…for example, dealing with social problems, their problems. I work with teenagers, all the problems they bring to the school. So, it is more about helping families as well because you get to, to create bonds, which are stronger than what you create in English institutes. Help the students develop as members of a society, as citizens, values, moral… it is something that you have to deal with every day. You are with the same student for the whole year. So, that is the complex part of working at school, that is the type of knowledge that I have developed during my time in the school, not in the institutes.

Sometimes you are not in agreement with the institution, and your intention is to keep on doing what they want you to do or do different things… even to take advantage of the situation. Maybe, you don't like what they do, so you say: "I don't receive good money, so I don't care about these guys". You face the reality. In the thing about the money, I know that I took some money, but I didn't care because they were robbing families that are really poor, and they didn't care. All children were from really poor areas and they didn't care.

Facing de-professionalization and conflict

Communal Meaning Making Themes

Some enlightening themes emerged as Andrés was reading his testimonial narrative. One of such themes is pinpointed by Javier when acknowledging how Andrés "from the guts", expressed emotions such as frustration or anger towards

what he describes as labor exploitation. Similarly, the issue of education taken as business is once more denounced by Javier.

As it is evidenced along the talk, Javier highlights that there was such a pervasive interest in money-making in this institution where Andrés worked that teachers were even asked to sell bonuses, books, and festival attendance to cope with the economic demands of the school. The last issue raised by Javier is the everlasting contradictions teachers might wave through in the profession which entails acting as “superheroes” or “villains” if such is the case.

In a similar vein, Alex pinpoints an emphasis on unraveling the connection between teacher’s deprofessionalization, teachers’ socio-economic status, and identities in relation to the population of students. Teachers’ own critical perception about the salaries they earn when it comes to understanding the English teaching profession is also mentioned. Another issue pinned down by Lorena is the idea that depending on the life trajectories or life histories, we can be read differently, and we read differently as we are what we know from such life experiences. She remarkably highlights Andrés’ stubbornness to keep on being a teacher despite harsh situations and a gradual loss of the teachers’ status as knowledge builder.

‘The Feeling of Not Leaving a Place.’

How does Andrés experience knowledge? Andrés’ personal reflections

Once Andrés listened to the recorded dialogue with his classmates, he came back to his testimonial narrative to add what we call a theorization of it enriched by his own inner reflections, and what he took from his partners’ ideas. In this final theorized text, he explained that:

“Bad treatment against people is something I do not bear… those situations could have been different if had had the same respect I have for my work now. I believe that my narrative is not focused on one person, in this case me, but in the situations we as teachers have to go through sometimes. It is a struggle every day to keep the status our occupation has, and I am not talking about a high status, but a low one. It is a struggle not to lose the scarce value that we have in our society. It is tough to deal with kids who come from home without values or manners, or with parents who blame the teacher when their kids choose to break the rules or their performance in a subject is not the best.

The respect I have for this profession is huge. Throughout all my career I have shown respect, and if I reflect upon it, I think that respect is getting bigger and bigger. In my narrative I showed how people who are close to me advised me not to continue working as a teacher. However, the more I am in a classroom, the more I want to keep on doing what I am doing. There are times in which you do not find the results you expected, a great quantity of energy is spent in classes every day, long hours preparing classes, many days dealing with your students' problems. However, sometimes what you receive is maybe a low score from students when they assess you. Coordinators are too hard when is their turn to decide who can continue working next year, this is the saddest part since they are teachers as well.

I also reflected upon how little you can appreciate an institution if the place does not value your job, or just exert labor exploitation. I admitted I had taken a little money just because the only thing they care about was that. I mention this part because it made me realize that there are situations in which the values you were raised with do not have any meaning, those situations in which the logic and the reality exceed moral values. I do not feel any remorse since the school did not respect teachers.

Dealing with pressure, sadness, or rough times can lead people to get into bad habits. I reminisce that during the time I worked in that place, I used to drink a lot, not only on weekend but any day. It was just what I used to do to feel fine, there was no time to do something different. That school just absorbs your life. There were days in which I finished my daily shift at 5:30 pm and then in no time, I was just coming back. It was that feeling of not leaving a place. The quantity of hours, plus the fact that you had to work even on Saturday gave the perception of living in the school.

We have to work hard and even when the majority of us do it, we never know if at the end of the year we are going to keep our jobs. However, the most paramount for me of all these hard situations are the students, who are not grateful at all, but are the ones who learn from us those important things society expects from them but that are not learnt at home."

Knowledge as 'incarnated and situated'.

How does Andrés experience knowledge? My personal reflections

Andrés' testimonio reveals the connection of one's own experience with that of others. In this case, Andrés reflects that the experience of struggle for legitimacy of the teaching profession is not only experienced by himself but by many other teachers who will probably feel an identity as they read these testimonial

narratives. Particularly, one of the achievements of testimonial writing is precisely this one: telling the story of many through the narrative of one single case as recognized by himself: his story is not just a case, but a reality undergone by many teachers. His ideas are in tune with testimonial writing that highlights the fact that testimonios are "first person narratives of injustice…with an insistence that the subject's experience is representative of a larger class." (Nance, 2006)

Indeed, Andrés experiences knowledge through multiple tensions weaved by socio-economic, emotional, moral, and bodily intersectional episodes that connect to one issue of interest to Decolonial thought, which is dispossession. For Walsh (2018), "knowledge is incarnated and situated… derived from, molded, shaped in and by actors, territories, and marked by the colonial horizon by… [being] classed [as] -Euro-Us centric systems of power, knowledge, being" (p. 28) In such a framework, the way Andrés experiences knowledge is crisscrossed by transnational neoliberal habits of money making rooted in local school practices. Such practices are incorporated in the local arena through mechanisms like leaving education to third parties, sponsored, and validated by the nation-state, to run private schools that work under the market rules of competition and labor exploitation.

This sort of practices, in turn, affects Andrés's subjectivity, his body, and in short, his knowledge making processes in different ways. Kangas & Salmenniemi (2016) remind us that "neoliberalism gestures toward the subordination of social life to the requirements of the marketplace…neoliberalism operates by shaping the conditions of thinking, feeling, and acting." (p. 3) Andrés' testimonial narrative entails that teachers have intricate relations to knowledge that move them, challenge them, make them reflect, adjust their ethical concerns, and sustain their inner motifs. When being asked about the sort of knowledge that was needed to wave these conditions, Andrés resorted to saying "social knowledge" which refers to knowledge of the whys and wherefores of society at the school level. Social knowledge was needed to foresee the needs of learners and their families intending to subvert institutional constraints imposed upon his learners, their families and himself.

Saavedra & Perez (2018) suggest locating ourselves as intersectional beings. For them, “neoliberalism produces systemic and everyday oppressions…” (p. 757) that we think are normal. These imposed subjectivities “divide and impose ways to be because they seem ’natural’, but it is only natural because we’ve been conditioned through neoliberalism that things appear to happen in natural, uncontested ways”. (p. 757) Basic characteristics of Global North neoliberalism such as individualism and privatization are paramount in this testimonio. The description of this sort of charter school that sells its own textbooks and pushes teachers to think of ways to extract money from disadvantaged children, which Andrés literally describes as jail, reveals that. This school is of the kind that “disguise(s) to ensure “equity and excellence.” (Saavedra and Salazar Pérez, 2018, p. 752) Andrés’ touching text points to how “neoliberal equity and excellence models do not challenge the deep root of the systemic colonialism…[but]in fact, exacerbate inequities.” (p. 753)

What does it mean to know in a school in which teachers are asked to push students to buy services they cannot afford or oblige teachers to work as machines? Not precisely machines of thought, reflection, and praxis or change agents as we are taught at the schools of education. In such a context, teachers like Andrés undergo dispossession of their status of knowledge producers or knowledge enhancers. Such a dispossession affects the way others perceive one’s own relation to knowledge as observed in comments by Andrés’s relative of quitting his job and finding another occupation.

Labor exploitation and lack of professional legitimacy are ways of knowledge dispossession as well. As Andrés pinpointed it, teachers start hating what they do either because their work activities deviate from the object of their study or because they end up working as machines with a subjective image of the school as a jail as overtly mentioned by Andrés; despite being worn-out, he had to get back to work, accompanied by a feeling of being absorbed by the school environment with an incessant feeling of not leaving a place. Simultaneously, Andrés was being challenged by his own colleagues when it came to understanding the teaching profession. Being teased with comments like “when are you going to have a proper

job"? entails that teachers value the exercise of knowledge with different degrees of truth value.

Certain relations to knowledge appear to have more load or prestige for teachers compared to others. For example, Andrés' friends judged teaching at schools an activity that demanded much more knowledge than working in language institutes while Andrés' relative deemed teaching a worthless thing to do at all. Nguyen (2019) explains that "in contexts wherein the target language is taught as a foreign language in formal settings, language teachers' struggle for legitimacy is also a multifaceted process" (p. 176), particularly because of the situated nature of their conflicts. While non-native English speakers living in English speaking countries struggle with the recognition of their various identities (be they linguistic, ethnic, racial, gender), teachers in other contexts must face more issues than just native speakerism. The way I see it, the degree of effort to seek legitimacy is causally related to the geopolitical location of teaches' bodies.

Nguyen (2019) asserts that even having such a crucial role, teachers are not really valued in many societies. He concludes that: "their struggles for legitimacy lie in real life issues such as living conditions, a legitimate status in the professional community, and social recognition of their work and identity." (Nguyen, 2019, p. 177) Lack of legitimacy, dispossession, or exploitation are ways in which subjection to a modern epistemology is experienced by some teachers. The ideas expressed in this testimonial narrative interpretation relate to research framed within a critical lens perspective by De Costa, Rawal & Li (2018). They conclude that "unequal power relations impact teachers' emotions at multiple levels, which include the classroom (micro-level), school (meso-level) and society (macro-level)" (p. 93). De Costa et al., (2018) highlight that teachers experience emotional burnout related to the absence of value and respect assigned to the teaching profession.

In the following chapter, readers will get familiar with Alejandra; her testimonial narrative helps us understand intersections of knowledge and body.

F.C.R/2020

Chapter Seven

Alejandra's Testimonial Narrative: "I was not a good teacher."

"I consider myself as a woman under construction; I really enjoy learning with my students every day and being challenged with new ways of understanding and addressing teaching and learning processes. I am a proud mother of a 9-year-old which has been both challenging and incredible…

When I was a little girl, I used to take a bunch of notebooks, pencils, and colors with me to my grandpa's farm; I loved to "teach" my little uncles and aunts (from my grandfather's second marriage) to write and draw. Because of that, my mother says she always knew I would be a teacher someday, and when I decided to start an undergraduate program to become a teacher, she was not surprised at all. Moreover, she was thrilled to hear I wanted to study foreign languages, since she considers English is such an important language, and everybody needs to learn it. The program was demanding and exciting at the same time; we talked about literature, research, linguistics, teaching approaches, English, and French.

I remember class discussions in which we talked about the difference between theory and practice. How different it was to talk about pedagogy and standing in front of a group of students. How challenging it could be to keep discipline in a class. How becoming your students' friend was not such a good idea, and how gratifying teaching could be too. With all of this in mind, I decided to apply for a teaching job at an institute. I can still feel excited and nervous, hoping to get the job and being able to start getting teaching experience. I learnt a lot, and I feel grateful because of that. It was the first time in my life I used English to communicate all the time, and it was challenging for me. The job was "easy". I had between one and six students at a time; I did not have to prepare class or check exams.

After some months, I felt confident about what I had learnt, and I got another job offer, which implied following the same methodology but this time with bigger groups. I accepted the offer firstly, because I wanted to get the experience, and secondly because I needed the money. After all, I had become a mother and I had new and great responsibilities. Accepting this job meant sacrificing partially my studies, since I had to postpone some subjects in order to fulfill the schedule demanded by my new employer. I made a decision thinking about the advantages and disadvantages, and I concluded my son would always be my first priority, no matter what. This decision led me to spend fifteen semesters doing a ten-semester program.

Working there, I realized how education is sold as a product, institutions work as companies (sweatshop factories), and students are customers whose demands are to be supplied and satisfied. This was an eye-opener for me, and it was a little disappointing at the same time. At this point, I became aware of how important it was for me to follow some principles in order to keep my job (even if I disagreed with them), I had to make sure my students bought the books; I had to make sure they "filled" them.

This idea of school as a company relates with Freire's "banking" concept of education, "in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (Freire, 1970). From this point of view, students are not able to be creators and developers of knowledge; they are only receivers. In this kind of education, teachers are in charge of "educating" students, no matter who they are or what they need, but fulfilling institutional policies and goals.

After a while, it became easy, I just went there, did "my job", and received my money. As I had economic stability, I got tattoos, and I changed my hair color constantly. It was -and still is- a way to express my "self". I got each one of my tattoos at a specific moment of my life, they are part of who I am, and I plan to continue getting them. I do not think people should judge or be judged because of physical appearance. I am sure that recognizing the "other" requires understanding that each one of us is different and that is not wrong.

As the institution grew, they had to hire another English teacher; he was kind, outgoing, and smart. We became a good team, but at the same time I started having problems with the new coordinator; she didn't like the way I dressed. She said that I had the right to have tattoos, but I shouldn't show them, and I should be more like him because he was a better teacher than me. I felt worried. I was about to finish my undergraduate [studies], and I was not a "good" teacher. What could I do? How could I become a better teacher? Should I really be like him? I had some sad months. I did not know what to do; how to fill their demands. I had chosen my practicum place, the population who I wanted to work with, and I had a research proposal. It was not the right time to give up.

I remember standing in front of my language center students for the first time. I had prepared my lesson, and I was extremely nervous. It was the first time of my professional life I had to deal with parents; I had blue hair and my tattooed arms uncovered. When the parents-teacher meeting began, I did not show I was scared; I pretended to be confident. I talked to them about my experience, research proposal, and some general information about the course. Nobody said anything about my appearance; they did not seem to care.

Time went by, and I lived a totally different teaching experience. I had freedom, I had a syllabus to follow, but I was free to choose how to address the topics and what activities to develop. I began to feel better. I saw that it was possible to understand education differently. I looked forward to meeting my students every Saturday because I knew I was going to enjoy the class. I built a great rapport with my students, and I learnt a lot from them. It was a great experience. Of course, it wasn't perfect, but whenever I remember it, I am sure that thanks to it I finished my undergraduate studies and continued building the person and teacher I am today.

Co-Interpretation

Andrés: "Having humans as a priority is nice." Alejandra's dialogue with peers and teacher-educator-researcher

The next dialogue happened after Alejandra finished reading her testimonial narrative on becoming a language teacher and mother. Alejandra also had the chance to listen to this recorded dialogue afterwards to prepare her own theorization of it, which readers will see in the following part.

Josué: I think it is a very recurring practice in companies we work at: we are thought to be the image of the company. I remember when I was in my first day of my practicum at XXX school. There was a coordinator, and he told us that day: "You know the logo of XXXX? It's like the shape of a smile. That means you need to smile all the time".

(Communal Laughter)

…And then you need to dress appropriate clothes because you are the image, and students are clients. That was shocking for me because before I had had a practicum in a public school. So, going there, seeing reality through other glances was a shock for me. And now that I am working in a place that also demands this kind of things, ok! Fortunately, we got rid of the tie… that was fantastic! but still the same: They are checking the way we dress. You can't have piercings; I am pierced I can't show that.

(Communal laughter)

Somehow, this creates certain detachment from who you are…You are as a teacher there, you are as Alejandra there. How do you manage to resist that kind of situation? It's not easy. First meeting with parents, arms are covered, don't show the tattoos.

Javier: I feel this is remarkable… your story of resistance: That your body, your hair is your discourse. It's something I have read from Judith Butler who mentions that bodies matter, and body choices are messages that we want to convey. My suggestion would be probably to approach, to take the body as discourse. Your tattoos are life stories, are narratives. Something that Raul Mora would say is that tattoos are literacy as well.

Andrés: She mentioned that her priority was her son. She had like a moment in which she decided that. There are many women who have done the opposite; they continue with the lives they want to have, and their priorities are never their children. That is something that called my attention… so it's nice to see priorities can be tied to humans… there are things which are priorities for some guys but not so relevant, having humans as a priority is nice. Awesome.

Adriana: You displayed this mother identity… very strong in your different shapes of identity. I was shocked that they were comparing you with another teacher because that is very harmful for the professional identity. It creates a lot of insecurity in you or in any person devoted to teaching. So, what I see is like a connection with you that is the resistance to be framed in frameworks that are harsh. There is resilience as well. You overcame it. Sometimes, in what you were reading, people connect your professional status with other identities that you have, and they misplace you, it's like "you've got tattoos you might not be such a good teacher". There is a clash between what you are as a teacher, and what you are a human. They judge your knowledge for what you have in your body. It's a contradiction in terms of knowledge because "if you are knowledgeable, you don't do certain things", a problem at the epistemological level. We categorize people: "because you wear a tie then you are a better professional" as opposed to wearing informal clothes. And that is very Colombian, in Colombia we judge a lot for how people dress: if he wears this way, he is better.

Nancy: Even for religion options we are judged.

Lorena: The first day of class Javier and I had a conversation**.** I asked him: who do you think in the class have children? And then we concluded that you two (Andrés and Alejandra) didn't have because you were all tattooed.

(Communal laughter)

But, surprisingly, for us, both of you have children. So, that is interesting!

Adriana: We are also permeated. We also have our stereotypes. We also judge. Now that we know more about these things, we become more responsible with what we say, right? "If I think this way, I am judging badly", and the same with students: say high achievers and low achievers, that is a cliché. What's behind the low achiever? what is behind the high achiever? So, now we are more cautious about the things we want to express.

Josué: You make me think, at least from my experience with other friends that are mothers like you, they have their children as their priority. First priority as you said, but they end up adapting to the rules. This is a dictatorship. I live it for example. I have so many things I don't like about my job. I feel resisting and persisting at the same time, but I can't drop because I need it. Now I am married, I have a family and can't drop. You are an example of how tensions lead us to take certain actions, to make choices.

Javier: Bonny Norton says how our 'selves', our identities sometimes conflict. Probably getting tattoos is somehow in conflict with your mother identity, how do you keep a balance? Your identity as a tattooed person, if I may say so, has to be sometimes silenced because of the mother identity… no matter what, that is your priority. So, it is interesting if you are going to theorize that, Bonny Norton could be interesting.

Josué: I don't know where I read this idea, but many mothers think that their lives end when they bear a baby, so that's the end, now they have to get time, and maybe what children would like to have is a mother that persists, pursuing dreams, persisting.

Alejandra: If you as a person are frustrated because you couldn't do what you wanted to because you became a mother, you are going to put that load on your child, and I would never do that to him. I want him to feel proud of me. I am looking for a different place [a different school] for him because I don't want him to start looking at people because of the way they look, but for who they are.

"Your body is your discourse."

Communal Meaning Making Themes

Alejandra's testimonial narrative appropriately prompted reflections related to teachers as being constructed as the image of an institution, a body of discourses, a body that engenders stereotypes and conflicting identities, praise, and blame.

Josué reflects upon the fact that a teacher is thought to be the image of the institution where he/she works. Such image includes both attitude and appearance. Indeed, institutions surveil teachers' appearance, and that in turn causes teachers in some cases to become detached from who they are. Josué shares Alejandra's concern for their different selves conflicting with their teaching self. There is tension on their own expectations compared to those of academic communities.

Javier highlights the issue concerning the body as discourse and the importance of seeing tattoos as life stories or narratives. He suggests that

Alejandra draw on theoretical frameworks as those of Judith Butler and Bonny Norton to mean that the body matters, and identities conflict with each other. Javier, on the other hand, highlights how sometimes one identity takes over another. Andrés values Alejandra's decision of making her son her priority as humans have lost the importance of what counts as priorities.

Lorena confesses her own stereotyping of Alejandra and Andrés by not relating them to having children based on the tattoos that cover their teachers' bodies. Nancy extends the reflection of stereotyping even to religious matters. Finally, Alejandra made Josué reflect upon how motherhood makes some women think their lives change drastically when becoming mothers. However, he thinks children could probably look up to mothers who persist on achieving their dreams. Such remarks are clearly backed up by Alejandra when stating that she would like her son to be proud of her because of her achievements.

"Each one of us is different, and that is not wrong."

How does Alejandra experience knowledge? Alejandra's personal reflections

When Alejandra listened to her read-aloud and dialogue with peers, she further explained a few themes that were pinpointed in the dialogue. Here, she mainly explains on the qualities that being a teacher entails drawing on Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire and a theoretical perspective of what it means to be a tattooed woman-mother-teacher:

"In this testimony, I narrate one of the experiences that has shaped who I am as a teacher and as a person. I talk about my teaching beginnings. I contrast university class discussions with real experience, and I reflect on how the decisions I have made in my personal life have had an impact in my professional one. Freire (1998) talks about the qualities we, as teachers build through time and experience; when he talks about humility, he expresses: "humility requires courage, self-confidence, self-respect, and respect for others" (Freire, 1998). According to this, being humble requires ability to understand difference, and to value ourselves for who we are.

When thinking about why it was so annoying for this woman [the coordinator of the language center] to see my tattoos, I found Amanda Hall's article. She claims, "Tattooed women rebel against the normative scripts, and reject the provided supporting roles" (Hall, 2014). I was transgressing her idea of a woman and a teacher, and that made her feel

uncomfortable. I do not blame her. I think, as women, we have been told how we can and should behave to be accepted. However, I enjoy contradicting those ideas of who I am supposed to be just because I am a woman, a mother, and a teacher. I want people to respect me, not because the way I look is pleasant for them, but because I know what I am doing professionally speaking.

Coping with a mind-body divide.

How does Alejandra experience knowledge? My own reflections

When reading Alejandra's testimonial narrative and further theorization of such experience, from a Decolonial perspective, I get to conclude that she draws on different practices of resistance, self-affirmation, and courage towards what has been historically conceptualized about teachers, about women teachers, and particularly about the women-mothers-teachers intersection.

In one of the first paragraphs of her testimonial narrative, Alejandra describes her life as a student-teacher and hints at the theory-practice divide so pervasive of bachelor's degree programs. Such differentiation shows traces of the modern philosophical divides of theory-practice. For Maldonado Torres (2014), knowledge has a performative condition and "practice is not something that follows theory or ideas, but practice is constitutive of ideas themselves." (interview with Maldonado-Torres July 23, 2014)

Later in her testimonial narrative, she also mentions how her body aesthetics conflicts with what is expected from her as a knowing teacher. That conflict entails a mind and body divide as well. Drawing on Diversi & Moreira (2009), we see that "such apparent dichotomies of mind and body, physical and metaphysical, object and subject, theory and method are differentiations of one all-encompassing system: being" (p. 31). In Alejandra's case, the body-mind divide is relevant in her testimonial narrative and further analysis done by Josué when

stating how workplaces insist on making teachers detach their body from their mind by having binary distinctions or conflicting ideas of how mind and body relate to the teachers' humanity. If teachers are thought to be the image of schools and language centers, such image should abide by "capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal eyes and ears" (Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 167) that are reproduced, sadly, even by women.

Indeed, Alejandra's theorization shows her "transgressing ideas of a woman and a teacher". She reflects how women also enact such patriarchal ideas towards other women-teachers and provides a theorization of why those things happen when acknowledging how tattooed women with blue hair might not fit the profile of being knowledgeable. Similarly, she highlights that she wants to be respected for what she knows in terms of professionalism and not based on whether her appearance matches someone else's expectations. Alejandra lets us unveil what Sousa Santos (2018) calls "the knowledges produced in social practices… and previous struggles" (p. 133), be they public or personal. When Alejandra describes that she has gotten tattoos that account for important moments of her life, it is a window to see tattoos as traces of embodied knowledges or following Sousa Santos (2018), as alternative representations of the world.

However, the current knowledge economy and society value certain profiles for teachers, and such profiles include the teachers' bodies. The way some bodies are shown to the world, and particularly to the English teaching world, are criticized. Therefore, the perception of tattooed bodies or dyed hair prompts the reproduction of social inequities that undoubtedly have an impact at the level of

epistemology because it appears that knowledge is of less weight when represented by tattooed bodies. Alejandra's body was felt in a subaltern way considering the perception of the employer who, from a powerful position, reproduces stereotypes that affect Alejandra's perception of one of her multiple selves. Alejandra's experience of knowledge is intersected by conflicting views of how teachers should look as to be called a knowing subject in the workplace. Our *Docta Ignorantia* (Sousa Santos, 2018) regarding how our bodies present themselves in the real world, and particularly in the world of teaching, disregard that our "corporality is exposed to modification" and is an ensemble of affection that is meant to affect others when interacting (Muñoz González, 2007).

The coming testimonial narrative is Lorena's whose emphasis will be mostly emotional. She will approach what teaching disciplined youth implies.

F.C.R/2020

Chapter Eight

Lorena's Testimonial Narrative: "Teachers don't cry"

"The following testimony gives an account of one experience that made me evaluate my role as a teacher. It describes a particular situation I lived with eleven graders. I have been their English teacher for 4 years: when they were in sixth, seventh, tenth, and now in eleventh grade. From my perspective, they have changed their behavior as most teenagers do. I have seen them grow and they have seen me too. Our relationship has also grown framed into the catholic values of the school, the academic goals we must meet together, and the affection that goes beyond teacher-student relation. Most of the teachers complain about their attitudes and academic skills. Even me in some cases. They are characterized in the school for not being so committed with their responsibilities, for not following the rules, and for challenging the guidelines. However, they are also recognized for being creative and animated teens…

As usual, I got into the classroom at eleven forty to teach my thirty eleventh graders. It was a warm busy morning as the term was finishing (that means a lot of work for them and for teachers). When I got into the classroom, they remained standing up, speaking, eating, and bothering. I had to ask them to organize themselves. I set the attendance, told them what we were going to do on that session, and asked them to open their notebooks to write the date and lesson plan, as the school demands. Some of them followed me, some of them did not. I started teaching them alternative ways for using the future tenses. I gave them some examples and explained them how to use them in real situations. While I was speaking some of them were paying attention, and some others were eating, chatting, and even painting their hair with markers. However, I continued speaking pretending everything was okay. Suddenly, one of the students laughed aloud. I walked towards my desk, sat down, and started working on my things. I felt terrible. I felt frustrated. I felt angry. I felt hopeless. I don't know why that day I lost temper. According to my colleagues and students, it is not easy for me to lose it when I am teaching. I remained quiet while they continued in mess. One of them silenced them all. Some of them laughed at her and she insistently called to order. Unexpectedly for me and for them, I started crying. They stayed completely still looking at me while I started speaking. I remember some of the words I said: "Are you serious? I can't believe your attitude. Don't you notice I am here with you? Do I have to start crying so you listen to me? What a lack of respect from you. I think I am always willing to listen to you: if you are sick, if you want to go to the restroom, or even if you don't want to be in my class. I treat you not like students but like human beings, is it difficult for you to do the same? I am too disappointed. You are nothing of what I remember you used to be. I don't care if you then laugh at me and everybody in the school knows I cried because of you. I don't care if you learn perfect English. I do care about you as a human being, as persons who I share a lot of my time even more than with my son. Are you going to treat your future family, colleagues, or employees this way? If so, you will suffer and will become horrible people". Those words are just a brief description of what I entirely said. Surprisingly, they did not make fun of me. They seemed to feel ashamed. One student, one of the most displeasing ones, said she or they were sorry about the situation.

What is interesting for me about this testimony comes later. The class was over, and I went to the school restaurant to have lunch. Some of my colleagues at the table noticed I was crying. They

asked me why. I described what had happened. Some of them said I had made a mistake when crying in front my students. They said words like "you lost the authority", "why don't you complain with the dean", "don't worry they are leaving in a couple of weeks" and they looked at me with a shamed gaze. Immediately I responded to those comments: "Beliefs like those are the ones that shape such students' behaviors. If we as teachers do not allow ourselves to cry in front of our students, we are denying ourselves as beings, as real people. People like them. The day we change that concept of authority, those students' attitudes will change too. Probably my class was boring, and they were not engaged" My colleagues kept having lunch without replying my comment.

Some days later the classes went better. My students seemed to be listening to me, participating in my class more actively, still bothering but respectfully. What was more interesting even, was a talk I had with some students from that class. They said some words like: … "Lately our attitudes towards school and teachers are annoying. We don't care about anything here. We want to leave now. And everybody knows it here, so we are annoying and teachers too. Every class is the same. We don't care nor the teachers. But when you cried, you showed us that we mean something for you; that was shocking. You opened our eyes. That day we realized that we were crossing the line. But the problem is that it is not common to find teachers like you. The majority of them just stand up in front of us and say: "you just have to care about learning. That is why you are here. Be quiet and write." That is maybe the reason why we behave that way. You showed us that you are just the same like us. If you had got mad at us, we would have kept the same attitude. But that time it was different. When you cried, you treated us as humans, not as students who follow instructions."

Something has changed since that day. We are not the same people in that class.

Co-Intepretation

Nancy: "I had a similar situation and my colleagues told me: "if you cry it is like the worst thing." Lorena's dialogue with peers and teacher-educator-researcher

The next dialogue took place once Lorena finished reading her testimonial narrative spiced up with background music brought by her to the read-aloud session. Issues of teachers' power and intended ruptures with the status quo are mentioned.

Javier: There's one thing which is what the school represents not just in terms of the utopic thing, you know? the educational place where every human being gets to flourish but the status quo of the place where people get… or as Michel Foucault says become objects. Somebody could argue that probably students were showing agency, resisting the system itself because, in a certain way, that day you represented power for them, their power against policies. Some situations in which they are, they don't agree. Somehow when you broke this stereotype of the teacher similar to what Andrés said as the teacher as "the

super person" or the-know-it-all, they really saw they were in touch with a person, that is something I found valuable, seriously. I love you!

Lorena: Yes, they are eleventh graders; they are about to leave, and they have had a terrible year, but I think it is because of the school, yeah? Because they are nice people. The way they behave this year it is just because of the way the school behaves. For example, el retiro de once*[eleventh graders trip] is one of the most important things for eleventh graders and the school didn't do it with them. It's because of their behavior. They are in constant… fight.

Javier: Tension.

Lorena: …. Things are not that way. I've known them since they were in sixth grade. I know they are great people. The context in the school has made them behave that way and some teachers don't see it but others think the same as you.

Javier: That's our reality.

Josué: I agree with Javier. I think that maybe oftentimes teachers become the invigilators of processes that students carry out in the classroom, and that is basically what some authors have referred to in the studies of surveillance at schools. In Colombia, for example, Saldarriaga, Alvarez in Spain, Julio Varela who unveil the connotation of school where students or a group of kids are set, controlling their time, and controlling their space and the first entity we can call that way, that makes sure students do what they are supposed to, then what you did certainly broke that rule established at school. It's not something we can generalize, but it is common to see. I have noticed myself performing this kind of things. For example, in exams. This kind of situation they give like a clearer picture of what being there surveilling what they do means. I think that this experience allowed you to see the other side of the coin in which students really care and pay attention to our classes. We just take it personal: "they don't like my class", but it is analyzing non-linguistic behaviors, things that we do that are not… clear to us what helps us.

Alejandra: For me, it was interesting to see when they are little children they are really engaged, and they love to go to school, enjoy school, and they like teachers. As they advance, they don't like it anymore, I don't know when it is that they become resistant, and at the end they just want to leave and not to be there anymore.

Javier: Or probably they are pretending. I took a course on improving teacher-student relationships. They mentioned that relationships between students and teachers tend to be more formal with the years, as they progress. Also, students have an identity in which they need to position themselves in terms of "the cool guy", the one who talks to women, and academic things are not the most important. For example, If I don't care about reding, so they ask each other: "what did you do yesterday?" "I just spent the whole weekend reading a book". They say: "Oh, you are such a boring person" but what if they mention: "I went to a concert, danced reggaeton, and smoked weed" and stuff like that. They would be more interesting and that adds up another layer. Something you could probably understand: How is this image that we want to project to others? sometimes we harm others in the process…which is something that probably can happen. I am not saying that they don't like to learn but it's something.

Alejandra: The most popular ones are those who go to parties and the others are the nerds.

Javier: The ugglies, the unpopular ones.

Nancy: the leader is the one who influences the others to do certain things, they do it even for convenience. It is interesting, how you, Lorena in this part when you say: "I asked them to open their notebooks and write the date and lesson plan, the school demands". Sometimes, as Javier told you, they are… standardized. They must do the same thing, the same routine, even knowing that we are very creative. I worked in a Catholic school; that is why I understand perfectly this kind of attitudes. They are teenagers. Our behavior makes people change. It is not only that we are human beings; it is that we are influenced by those cultural behaviors. When the teachers told you that you had lost the authority…yes, I had a similar situation and my colleagues told me: "if you cry it is like the worst thing" and well, as teachers we are part of those words, that we don't have to show what we are. Do you think teachers should bias something?

Andrés: I think what the colleagues told her is what they want to impose. They are sometimes older than you. They have more experience; they want you to behave like them. Sometimes I have faced this type of situation in which a more experienced teacher tells me: "Don't do this!" or "why did you do that? "why did you say that?" But I continue with the way I am. It's another generation. I got a different way of thinking but obviously they control your behavior as well, because they have been at school for twenty years. They are always paying attention to what you are saying, what you are doing. If you are doing something wrong. It's difficult and I understand Lorena when she said that they said "hey, why did you cry"?

Adriana: I have a question for everybody regarding Lorena's story…What do you think… what knowledge emerged in that situation because it is not the typical disciplinary or pedagogical knowledge?... if any.

Andrés: To perform as a teacher the way you understand it. What you promote, that is your discourse… I could cry.

Josué: Humanizing the teacher, knowledge of the self.

Alejandra: And, of the students, because she thought they were going to make fun of her, and they didn't.

Lorena: I was surprised when a student told me "no profe, pues si te hubieras puesto a gritar y a regañarnos es como: "ay no esta vieja otra vez viene a regañarnos y todo hubiera salido mal, pero no" y tal cual las palabras que escribí: "nos trataste como igual a ti".

Adriana: I agree with you, beliefs such as the ones teachers hold are a defense of what it means to be a human. Being a human surpasses being a teacher. The school system dehumanizes the students a lot. Let's take the case of students who are in public schools: there are certain public schools in which you literally feel like getting into jail. Even the painting of the school looks like a jail and the little children are like walking in automatic mode, it's so scary. So, I imagine these teens in the same system even five years, like the case of primary school, 5 years in the same classroom. I agree with Josué, you as a teacher are invested with institutional power. I think at that moment they were not looking at you as Lorena the human being but Lorena the one who belongs to the apparatus. They didn't think: "this person in front of me is a human being". They saw you like: "this is power", of course they might not figure out that they are objects of power, but at some point, when

they are turning teenagers, they start questioning: "who are you to tell me what to do". The school system is very harsh on people. Well, you said it, Catholic schools even more because they teach you what to believe, how to relate to God. It's like you don't have the right to think on your own and that's like a wound in your inner self. It could have been like an unexpected reaction from you. I don't think it was like: "and now I'm going to cry" as a last resource. It just came naturally because esa fue la gota que rebozo la copa. This act of crying, this act of looking at you as a person triggered in the kids like the humanity, they have deep inside that they can't explore, demonstrate, share because of the standards, because you have to write the date, the plan, everything is like that from the beginning to the end, imagine that routine for eleven years. It is like the video of "another brick in the wall" … you get in the classroom and there it is this tipping point and they stop seeing you as the authority, there is a point in which we are all at the same level, the level of humanity. At the level of humanity, we are the same because we undergo the same problems. We cry, they cry. The very seminal things of life happen to everybody.

Lorena: Ese día cuando hablé con los estudiantes, de hecho, empezaron a hablar así muy abiertamente: "Si esto pasa con fulanita, yo me hubiera burlado, porque ella pertenece a la rosca" y yo le dije: "¿cuál rosca?" Y ella dijo: "a la rosca de las profesoras y las monjas. Y tú no estás en esa rosca". Yo lo relaciono con lo que dices del poder de la organización y ellos se resisten a ello. Ellos se comportan de cierta manera en la clase.

Humanizing the teacher.

Communal Meaning Making Themes

Javier reflected upon the double-edged nature of the school system: control and flourishment. He analyzes how the teacher, who is invested with institutional power, feels challenged by the teens she has cherished for five years. He also analyzes that the school represents the place in which teens are to exercise agency against the power the teacher represents. Lorena herself studies closely her situation adding a new interpretation which relates to the role of the institution in prompting said students' behavior. When suggesting that it is the context which has an impact on students' ways of acting, she acknowledges that students' ways of being at school are also triggered by certain symbolic violence exercised upon students by the school as observed in actions like not taking them on the end-of-the-year school trip.

More specifically, Josué defines the happening as an instance of surveillance that is intersected with an act of courage performed by Lorena. He highlights how Lorena moves from being an invigilator to showing students her deepest feelings, frustrations, and thoughts. Josué himself reflects upon how the experience Lorena shared is an opportunity to see how students care when really touched by teachers' actions and words. Alejandra's response to Lorena's testimonial narrative is indeed a question that many teachers ask themselves regarding students' lack of motivation towards school as they grow older and move up to the high school levels. Javier adds a new interpretation towards Lorena's students related to how other identities intersect students' actions when reacting in class. Some of them want to perform the roles of the 'cool guy' or the womanizer, and academic identities are left aside. The least thing some teens would like is to appear as devoted students.

On the other hand, Nancy raises the practice of standardization that cuts creativity. Both teachers and students are influenced by cultural models about things such as authority and classroom routines that end up changing our ways of being, behaving, and talking. Similarly, Nancy points to having had a similar experience in which she was also advised not to cry in front of her students as she could lose her authority too. As part of the collective interpretation, I reflected that sometimes schools appear to be jails not only in terms of their infrastructure but also in terms of their ways of being. All these items dehumanize school a lot and, in turn, teachers and students are dehumanized as well.

Andrés interpreted that sometimes it is more experienced teachers who want to exercise certain influence upon younger teachers telling them what to do and what not to do. Particularly, he has not ceded as he prefers to perform teaching the way he understands it. Lorena concludes this round of interpretations stating that she quite agreed with what her colleagues had mentioned because possibly students perceived she did not belong to the group of teachers who were highly influenced by the school standards and practices. She appeared not to be in the clique with the nuns who represented a power not indulged by students.

"A Teacher Who Is Challenging Normalized Practices"

How does Lorena experience knowledge? Lorena's own reflections

Lorena's theorization of what happened in her classroom is a powerful tool to be able to understand her from a Decolonial perspective in which "un diálogo de saberes" (a knowledges dialogue) is always required. Lorena points out the need for a true dialogue with students in which both truly want to hear each other. Surprisingly, a true dialogue with students really came when the teacher's voice was not being heard because she was, as Anzaldúa (2009) would say, "speaking in tongues" not intelligible to students, not because she couldn't communicate, but because the message conveyed was intersected by power devices that harmed the students and in turn their relationships with Lorena as a teacher. It is Lorena's humanity and courage that breaks the molds and fosters real conversation. She says:

"My testimony is the result of several years of observing certain school dynamics… From my perspective, school dynamics convey some power practices behind. School practices portray a hidden discourse of school and teachers as discipliners and knowledge holders. Hidden discourses also serve to bigger structures we belong to. School, teachers, and even students have normalized such practices.

Crying in front of my students represents a desire of breaking stereotypes of an authoritarian teacher. It embodies a teacher who is challenging the normalized practices

within the classroom. Through the words I said to my student during the episode, I read a desire of having my students understand that they are a very important piece of their education, that teachers and learners are equal, that they are expected to respect not because I am the authority but just because we both are humans.

Through this testimony, I explored how I listened to my students' voices and how they listened to mine. In addition, this reciprocal dialogue in which we opened the opportunity of talking about what has been silenced in education, shaped our imaginaries on what being a teacher and a learner need to become. Freire (1998) states: "It is through hearing the learners, a task unacceptable to authoritarian educators, that democratic teachers increasingly prepare themselves to be heard by learners. But by listening to and so learning to talk with learners, democratic teachers teach the learners to listen to them as well" (p. 65). My students had the chance of reflecting upon their position in the school, in my classroom, and in the world. I also had the chance of exerting agency. Agency that will allow a fairer vision of education: an education that balances the concepts of knowledge and emotion… I grant my class as a *language* class and not as an instructional set of procedures. My class is an opportunity of acknowledging language as a right, as a means of identity construction".

Bodies of knowledge, bodies of emotions.

How does Lorena experience knowledge? My own reflections

Lorena's relation to knowledge is intersected with feelings, emotions, and a vision of emancipatory education through dialogue and reading the world. Lorena differentiates the hidden discourse of teachers as "discipliners and knowledge holders" from that of the teacher who abandons authoritarian practices and draws on emotion to create a rupture of what is expected from knowledgeable teachers: teaching by the book and abiding by the rules. Lorena relied on her emotions to conceive of experience and therefore knowledge. But this reliance would not have been possible without what the Epistemologies of the South call "deep listening". Sousa Santos (2018) explains that the Western world "privileges writing and speech to the detriment of listening… hearing is the superficial use of one's ear, while listening implies an act of will" (p. 175). Lorena's cry showed how deep

listening was fostered among learners who are oftentimes taught not to listen deeply.

Lorena is a body that cries. Sousa Santos (2018) concurs that “bodies are unequal because they feel and are felt in ways that reproduce social inequalities, and the opportunities to feel and be felt are unequally distributed” (p.169). This idea explains why Lorena’s colleagues did not agree with her sudden outburst of emotion as shown to students. As mentioned by Javier in an earlier collective interpretation, “everybody can have a bad day but a teacher”. Teachers are expected to handle their emotions, have at hand a solution for everything, and are simultaneously compelled to hide any emotional constraint because they could appear weak or powerless in front of learners.

Interestingly, as pointed out in the communal interpretation of this testimonial narrative, a certain knowledge of the self, and of learners, was also cultivated in the whole situation Lorena faced. Here knowledge of learners is not meant as in previous research of teacher’s knowledge as related to learners’ level, methodology to keep them busy, or even knowledge of learners’ developmental behavior for their age. No, here knowledge of the self refers to being able to read the context clues to have a response in flesh and blood to cope with a complex teaching situation.

The experience Lorena faced can also be explained following Gallagher-Geurtsen’s (2012) study of youths’ testimonial narratives in neocolonial classrooms. This author highlights that teens “rage against a curriculum created to normalize students’ actions, knowledge, beliefs, and lives” (p. 7). Gallagher-Geurtsen (2012, p. 7) argues that neocolonial classrooms develop:

> “…a “logo-scientific curriculum (e.g., narrow, objective-driven lessons); universalism (e.g., the same standards and curriculum are appropriate for all groups of people) … Schools must assure that this multimodal system remains intact through observation. Observation or surveillance is among the most potent tools of colonization and, indeed, schooling. Constantly observing students with the expectation that they “do school” appropriately”.

Gallagher-Geurtsen (2012) suggests that students frequently undergo processes of “conversion” in which they “act the part of the “good student” …and conversion can be promoted by school staff with forms of coercion and disapproval when youth stray from the accepted norms and actions that constitute the official “good students.” (p. 8) Actions described by Lorena such as “setting the attendance”, “writing the date and lesson plan… as the school demands” or students’ accounts of their teachers saying that: “the majority of them [the teachers] just stand up in front of us and say: “You just have to care about learning. That is why you are here. Be quiet and write,” show us different levels of coloniality of knowledge and being that destroy a seminal healthy relationship: that of the learner and the teacher. As a matter of fact, teaching is an unquestionably emotional profession in which a big amount of energy is used.

We will now move to exploring Javier’s testimonial narrative that describes his touching experience with Sotelo and engages us in understanding how coming to know is also an encounter with The Other.

F.C.R/2020

Chapter Nine

Javier's Testimonial Narratives: "To Pimp a Butterfly"

"I have these two words that, at first, might seem contradictory, I guess, but life is contradictory, right? The name is "to pimp a butterfly" ….

The day I asked Sotelo to leave the classroom, I stood by my desk reflecting on the convenience of having changed of job. Probably I should have considered all the possible variables before making such a decision. Of course, the name of Xxx school would make my CV more attractive in the future, but in the meantime, my work-life was getting a little dark. Sotelo was the living representation of the challenges I had to face that academic year.

Sotelo was not particularly good at English, nor he ever tried to stand out. In more than one occasion I thought that he attended school just to have breakfast and to have fun with his partners. I remember he did not live with his father, and his mother worked as a laborer. As most of the students from that school, he identified himself as coming from a low-income family, an aspect which inescapably reminded me of my very own life having a similar road but a different path. I remember Sotelo constantly getting into trouble during the school year, because of skipping classes or issues with other teachers.

The strategies which worked in my former job, in this school were not that successful. Songs and videos were easily ignored; having almost 40 students in a single lesson did not make things easier either. Ten-grade teaching was not the problem either as most of my experience was focused on that kind of population. But it was damn hard to convince these children that there was another way of doing things and that education was the answer to many of their problems.

Sotelo would not pay attention to class nor he saw the academy as important. He hung out with a bad crowd and focused more on sports than academic topics. I knew he occasionally consumed drugs, and he was probably a dealer; he was about to be a father; his girlfriend studied at Xxx school as well. Conversely, she was such an exceptional student, I felt sorry for her, for the incoming baby, and in turn I would blame Sotelo for "ruining" those lives.

Whether idealistically or naively, I was thinking on giving the city back something of what I had received. Studying in a public university provided me with such an array of possibilities of growing economically and personally, and for me it seemed natural to share that knowledge with "people in need". For me, it was frustrating to see how despite my efforts to display education as a way to have social mobility, they never bought the idea. Once I justified learning English with the access to the world of knowledge, and I told them about the possibility of knowing the world, and travelling abroad as I had done, but they responded it was because I was rich, and they could hardly abandon Bosa or Soacha*[12]. Deep inside, I knew they were right. When we teach, we give everything, and when the student is not interested in what we share with such passion, he directly attacks the most sacred for us. It is as if we gave a gift that is rejected or thrown away in front of our face.

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[12] Bosa is a district of Bogotá which has some areas with difficult socio-economic conditions. Soacha is a neighboring town with areas that have had harsh socio-economic situations. It is known that during the periods of violence this town received one of the biggest number of families displaced by violence in Colombia. Murders of young men perpetrated by State agents happened in Soacha in very recent years.

As it was expected Sotelo did not make it to the end of the year, and he had to level more or less 9 subjects, that is to say, he had to take three days to "learn" what he had not studied in a single year, a complete nonsense, bullshit if I am allowed to say it. With all the things this guy had in mind, with his coming babe, and if we added the layer of a false leveling… something nor him nor me would buy.

As expected, he did not show up during the leveling sessions, and thus he would not have the minimum required to pass the year. I was somehow relieved for the situation; he really deserved what he got, right? Just minutes before finishing the leveling guide, Sotelo just came with the exercises solved from the leveling guide proposed, but much to my surprise I realized most if not all of the leveling guide was just a mere copy from a previous student who leveled, and that was the straw that broke the camel's back. I definitely would not help this guy under any circumstance no matter his context, no matter his choices, or the choices society made for him. Even if the coordinators acted as devil's advocates, I would not bend, not even an inch. If It was up to me: he would fail the year ipso facto. As it actually happened.

I saw a tear rolling down his cheek. Pleading me to change my mind and allowing him to pass the year, I had never seen a student begging me before. I looked away while he brushed the offending cheek with his hand. It was the face of defeat, defeated by life. Two months later, I was told Sotelo had dropped out school, and he was working to support his new family. In a certain way I felt guilty. In a perfect world everything would be perfect, in a perfect world. In a perfect school, he would have had different choices -and probably someone more attentive to his life not just his way of misspelling words. I guess he and I would have to live with it.

Probably if Sotelo had had the certainty of having access to education, he would have made different decisions. I know his mother struggled so much just to make ends meet, but probably there was not any discussion regarding a college-related future. For Sotelo not having anyone in the family who went to college probably mystified the process greatly, and made it seem as though an unrealistic option.

Sotelo and I were just beings immersed within constant tensions, bigger than us. What I had done was like pimping a butterfly, cutting his wings, just because he was failing, and not letting the caterpillar break the cocoon, maybe it was the other way around I was being pimped by my own students and the educational system itself.

Co-interpretation

Lorena: "So, we have to stop and think: "what if…?" Javier's dialogue with peers and teacher-educator-researcher

Once Javier finished reading his testimony accompanied by soft background music, we all began to converse about the issues that we could communally interpret while listening to this story.

Nancy: In the context where I work, I always feel we are under the educational system parameters. We can't do anything sometimes. We don't know how to help. Could you have helped him in any way? Or definitely he was…

Adriana: Hopeless?

Javier: The thing is somehow I was blaming him because of his life, right? He was with his girlfriend, and she was pregnant. They were totally different. He was into different things. She was the model of what a student should be right? excellent. The only thing she failed was in selecting her partner. Writing this, I reflected that it became something personal. Personal not in the sense that I hated this guy, no, but, because I blamed him because of what was happening in his life.

As I said, his life was like my own life. I didn't grow up with my father, and we took different paths. While he insisted in consuming drugs, I insisted on studying. Somehow, I was expecting from him the same thing I did. Expecting him to be like me. If I had helped him… I never had the chance to really get close to him. I just did the things that teachers usually do: call his parents explaining the situation… that he was failing. I was not really digging into what was really happening beyond.

Katherine: We as teachers expect that. Of course, it is a challenge! … I was paying attention going back to my classroom, ninth grade, they are the same because they don't pay attention to what I say… like I am still struggling with that because they don't care about anything. One day they told me: "do you select those topics or who does it? They are so boring" I told them: "I know they are boring, but I can't do anything" I am just trying to do different things, and when we come to a classroom we expect them to give everything, to give the best and not just for the class, just to have different expectations in life, not just by showing them that they can travel, do different things, not seeing education as something boring, for us that is the most important thing when we come into the classroom. At least when the school year finishes, they feel they could take something, something that we teach them; it is not about the grammar thing, and I consider here something that called my attention was… we share such passion, seriously, because we decided to be teachers not because we were going to become rich or something like that. It's because we feel it, and we just try to make students be better but not just learning English, get such interest in life. Being aware of different aspects, problems of society, waking them up.

Adriana: I feel you must have had such a hard time because I myself have experienced having failing students and sometimes it comes like a contradiction. I sometimes blame myself: "what did I do wrong?", "I didn't do enough". It stays in my mind up to a week after. It's like a struggle inside because we try to have ethical attitudes because we know that what we do will have an impact on those people. You reminded me of an experience I had at Xxx university teaching in the B.A program. I had had a student in third semester, long hair, rock style, easy going, he did what he had to do but he wouldn't excel, he would be average, and then he was in a class with me again in sixth semester, one year and a half afterwards. So I was: "O.K, we are coming back to work together, what are you going to do this semester? Are you going to push yourself to the limit?" because I was foreseeing that he was going to be average. He started having very strange attitudes and I would talk to him like: "what's going on with you?", "are you okay? But he wouldn't say a word, he was a really reserved person. The final weeks he didn't even show up. I was not seeing his process, and the very moment of a class won't happen again. So, he was about to fail, and he said: "Please teacher help me, I can't comply with the class, but I already failed other classes and if I fail this class I will be out of university". I was in this ethical decision and then I said: "I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna help him" of course he was missing some points and I overlooked them. And weeks after I thought: "I shouldn't have done that, he should have failed, it is not my problem, he was the one not doing the stuff he was supposed to do." I asked my colleagues: "do you think I made a bad decision?" I thought:

"I should have made it harder for him" but I didn't do anything. Then, some years later, I met a friend of him and asked her about life and classmates and she told me "do you know what happened with X?... he is a father now" I asked back: "and when was that"? and that student said: by the end of the semester you taught us. I was then relieved. Even some years later, I managed to understand that I had made a good decision because had he failed, he would have been expelled from university, he wouldn't have finished university. At some point I felt I had made a bad decision, but life showed me the opposite, even years later. Sometimes you do things because of intuition. The standardized knowledge tells you to fail the student. There's something else, I call it intuition and it tells you to do right the opposite of what you have been taught so far. I relate it to your story.

Lorena: I really have to say that I enjoyed the way you wrote it. The last paragraph is nice. Second, it makes me think of the power we have as teachers. Who am I to decide that a student with a lot of struggles deserves to fail or not the year? I have had students repeating because of a subject. So, we have to stop and think: "what if…?" Is repeating a year worth it? Will this help him or not? Some institutions expel them. It's really sad. The power of the teacher is so influential. If you had decided something different, he could have finished. His life would have been different. Just like the teacher's student.

Alex: I wanna try to go the other way around. Sometimes we blame ourselves because of the decisions that some people make. Reading your testimony, I think regardless of the harsh or difficult conditions that your student had, many students have difficult situations or us as teachers. Something that I learned from my parents and my education is that you can have certain opportunities, in this case, this guy regardless the problems, he had the opportunity to attend a nice school, had good teachers. So, he, in some way, was privileged to get access to education. I don't blame his condition, but because of those discourses like: "it is because of my family… it is because of my lack of resources… I don't do school…" Sometimes it is out of our range because he made decisions. He was not forced to have kids. He was not forced not to care about school. I work at a public university, and I've learned that students have different realities than those that I have. That's something that I acknowledge. At the very beginning of the semester, I tell them: "If you have problems within this course, but especially if you have problems outside university, please let me know, so we could figure something out on time" What I see from your testimony is that this student because of a given reason, he didn't take responsibility of his own actions. It would be irresponsible just to pass him because sometimes we have to learn lessons. If you took a decision, you didn't do anything. I think he was mature enough to have kids, he was mature enough to understand that: "my actions will have consequences in a period of time, somehow good or bad" and that's something we have to teach: "I cannot give you this extra-point because that would be irresponsible from me and for you", and life has consequences and lessons to be learned. It's not all my responsibility because "look how you behaved and didn't approach the situation earlier."

Lorena: Partially, I agree. We are immersed within constant tensions bigger than us. Maybe we are the result of the context, yeah? So, yes, we make decision, but also the context we live in makes that we participate in decisions. So, that is something we should consider too. It's not that you make a decision, and that is your responsibility. But we are also part of something bigger.

Alex: I think the point is when this student, who didn't work, then expect at the end of the year to be saved. I think the problem would have been not to address the situation before. Because if the student, the principal, the teachers would have pointed out the situation, that this student is failing, is not complying not because he is a slacker that doesn't want to… teachers could do something about it. But the thing is that some people just blame

the situation because of the problems and stuff, and they don't address some other alternatives.

Javier: It goes precisely with the title of the story. I keep telling myself: "people make decisions, and we are the decisions we make". But, somehow, I feel there's something bigger than us. For example, how can I blame a student of failing in an imperfect system because here every day we complain about education. If education is wrong, then who am I to say that a student is good in a bad system? Now, if it is up to me to decide if a student fails the year, I say that I am not anyone who can control a person's year. I don't say that X has to pass, but please don't let that decision up to me. It's worth mentioning that those are the discourses inside me: certain circumstances took him that way. My mother was the perfect role model, but probably for Sotelo it could have been different.

"We are immersed in constant tensions bigger than us".

Communal Meaning Making Themes

This dialogical interpretation of Javier's testimonial narrative highlights numerous ethical dilemmas that teachers are prone to deal with within the teachers' day-to-day life; these dilemmas are hardly documented in texts of methodology and teaching. Nancy reflects upon the constraint that the educational system itself may pose on teachers when stating that we sometimes have tied hands. Javier helps us understand his testimony saying that he somehow connected his own life with that of his student.

One difference was that both had made a decision that led them along different life paths. Javier expected that students "bought" the discourse of education as a liberation tool, something that did not happen. Javier wanted his student to walk a different path that took him away from harsh decisions, expecting the student to act as Javier had done in his own teen age. Katherine appears to share the same struggles, situations, and concerns posed by Javier. She, as Javier, expected students to make the most of their academic life, not just in terms of the subject matter that they teach, but through lessons that are lifetime

educational traits. Teaching becomes a decision that goes beyond even teachers' own economic expectations.

I, myself felt truly identified with Javier's narrative as on several occasions I have faced the same feelings of contradictions and despair which Javier heartbreakingly described. What Lorena takes from this testimony and that opens up discussion with her peers as well is the weight of the teacher's power that is best understood in her assertion regarding whether students should pass or fail a year.

Alex argues that teachers are not to be blamed for learners' poor performance because they act upon their own free will, and frequently learners rely on discourses that take away their own responsibilities in the act of learning. Lorena counterargued that learners and teachers are partially responsible of what happens to them because the context comprises something "bigger than us", and the context plays a key role. Alex reflects that in the case discussed it could have been a good idea to involve other educational agents in order to foresee possible solutions beforehand. Javier concludes the communal meaning-making moment by concluding that despite his knowing that we, to some extent, exercise agency, he has learned that by being immersed in an imperfect educational system, he cannot completely blame the students for their failure.

"I recognize the teaching practice within a frame of a struggle for power." How does Javier experience knowledge? Javier's personal reflections

After having heard the communal meaning-making process of his testimonial narrative, Javier wrote the next theorization from a post-structuralist perspective of the relationship knowledge-power-subject. On the one hand, his

reflection revolves around the multiple nature of the subject called teacher and the continuous tension he/she holds considering the different forces he/she faces: being both in powerful and powerless positions that have an impact on the life experiences of both teachers and learners.

"Multiple nonunitary nature of the subject

I open my testimonio with some opposite yet related words which indicate the complex and conflicted viewpoints of classroom relationships: To pimp a butterfly. Both words metaphorically juxtaposed reminds us that as Norton in Hornberger (2010) asserts a person's identity must always be understood in relational terms: one is either subject of a set of relationships (in a position of power) or subjected to a set of relationships (in a position of reduced power). In this view, we can find for example when I point out:

"Sotelo and I were just beings immersed within constant tensions, bigger than us. What I had done was like pimping a butterfly, cutting his wings, just because he was failing and not letting the caterpillar break the cocoon, maybe it was the other way around I was being pimped by my own students and the educational system itself."

In this excerpt, we can find how although I position myself as a subject who exercises power, I am subjected to policies, stakeholders, and students as well. At the base of Foucault's view in "The Subject and Power" (1982) is the assumption that power is not employed through oppression but rather through the manufacturing of "individuals". Foucault notes the double meaning of "subject", both a self-aware topic of something and something which is controlled, subjected.

Subjectivity as a site of struggle.

So, when I assert "he pimped a student and was pimped by students and educational system", simultaneously, I recognize the teaching practice within a frame of a struggle for power. Javier, the teacher, is aware of fallacies from educational policies, from a critical perspective, heavily reliant on a structural and decontextualized view of the English language (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). In addition, Mendez (2012) acknowledges teachers' discourse of resistance to prescriptive educational reforms focusing on how discourses become spaces for the construction of subjectivities. In consequence, this allowed me to start reflecting upon my role as a teacher. I would point out that although the course-book and the given curriculum work up to a certain extent, it may position teachers as consumers and not curriculum designers who are subjected to teach for measurable and standardized teaching practices and results (Comber, 2015). When I

reject this notion of "levelling in three days what the students did not learn in a whole year" I affirm a resistance discourse to a top-down decision".

Knowledge as incarnated and situated, and ethically compromised.

How does Javier experience knowledge? My personal reflections

Javier will no longer be the same after this touching experience with Sotelo. Now, he thinks twice as to whether students should fail a course when considering what he has called 'the imperfection of the educational system'. The imperfect educational systems to which Javier, Lorena, or Nancy refer to is precisely part of the colonial matrix of power. There are many subjects who have lived under the colonial difference fostered by such matrix. In the testimony Javier narrated, we get to see such colonial difference as incarnated in a student whose life does not have much chance in a system that devalues humans and may not allow teachers to do what they would like to in order to support learners more. When Javier poignantly says: "…although I position myself as a subject who exercises power, I am subjected to policies, stakeholders, and students as well", he locates himself within a framework of a fluctuating power, within the Foucauldian perspective.

A different perspective to this one is developed by Mignolo and Walsh (2018) when saying that the colonial matrix of power "rules the life of the majority of the human species… power is that instance of the colonial matrix in which all of us, human beings, are being ruled and the ruling includes of course the creators and gatekeepers of the rule." (p. 114) Mignolo (2013) reminds us that "the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were based on the suppression of sensibility as well as the geo-historical localization of the body." (p.11) (My translation) The geo-historical localization of a body like Sotelo's led him and other students to challenge Javier

saying that they could hardly abandon Bosa or Soacha and their not being able to consider a career-related future. From a Decolonial perspective, Javier's testimonial narrative guides us to see what Mignolo & Walsh (2018) explained when saying that:

> "theory as knowledge is incarnated and situated… theory as knowledge derives from and is formed, molded, and shaped in and by actors, histories, territories and place that, whether recognized or not, are marked by the colonial horizon of modernity and by the racialized, classed, gendered, heteronormativized, and Euro-US centric systems of power, knowledge, being, civilization, and life that such horizon has constructed and perpetuated." (p. 28)

If our different approaches to knowledge are shaped by actors, territories, and place, as stated by these authors, we can come to explain why in certain peripheral areas of cities like Bogotá, lower social classes find it exceedingly difficult to have access to quality education at a university. In that sense, education as an alternative for social mobility is called into question. When Mignolo (2013, p.17) explains that "knowledge is created and transformed in accordance with particular desires and necessities as well as institutional demands, knowledge is anchored in projects with a historical, economic and political demands", he helps us understand that a mere teacher's discourse related to improving students' lives would not be sufficient as knowledge is also attached to projects with historical, economic, and political demands that put pressure on students to thrive or to abandon their school very quickly and highly unprepared to join in the labor market

of poorly paid jobs and minimal opportunities to have access to the discourses of the university.

Saying that his professional life was "getting dark" is a way to express an epistemological, ontological, and social breakdown (Todd, 2001) in Javier's professional and social being because despite having prior experience teaching tenth grade and intending to convince students that education was the solution to most of their issues, Sotelo deeply challenged such assumptions. What happened to Javier is the reconfiguration of the knowledge of ethicality in the encounter with The Other. Javier self-identified with some of Sotelo's characteristics because in the coming together with The Other, in this case with students, one is faced with feeling identified but also challenged.

Javier suffers deeply the consequences of having learnt a romanticized version of education (Todd, 2001). Javier wanted to reward society for what he had received considering the social mobility he himself had obtained by studying for a degree. He felt in need of sharing such ideas with learners, so that they could also break the chains in repetitive patterns of misery and poverty by following a career-related future. Our romanticized idea of the emancipatory causes of education as a way of social mobility is frequently one of our flagships as teachers. However, the acts of teaching and learning entail an ontological encounter with The Other which sometimes can be harmful, even violent, for the concept of knowledge as "learning to become" represents renouncing ones' own desires to see the world from the perspective of this Other, which is the teacher.

Simultaneously, Javier experienced violence in his own flesh and blood when encountered with this whole situation for his authority was diminished, or at

least called into question in the face of circumstances, as he recalls that: “When we teach, we give everything, and when the student is not interested in what we share with such passion, he directly attacks the most sacred for us”. Javier, though not blind to the educational privilege he had access to, might have overlooked how difficult or even desirable it is for learners to "learn to become". Following Todd (2001), the curriculum frequently dictates what type of people students will become because of schooling, relying on their own interests or the profiles ruled by nation-state governments. On both paths, there are suppositions regarding the meaning of what being educated entails. In mainstream teacher knowledge base research, this curricular mandate is called “knowledge of the aims of education;” however, it entails deeper ideas.

Todd (2001, p. 431) makes us wonder: "What if attempts to realize even the most progressive or open-ended of aims...enact an inevitable violence upon the very subject being educated?” She refers particularly to an ontological violence. Javier is directly confronted with the question: “What is ethically at stake in asking students to learn?" (Todd, 2001, p. 431) considering that "the pedagogical demand for learning also functions as a demand for students to alter themselves, to become different people from what they were prior to the learning encounter." (p. 432). Teaching and learning, therefore, are situations and occasions for establishing ethical relations.

As I said before, there is a quite harmful frustration produced when we are taught the romanticized version of education as emancipation for all, something that is not clearly realistic within the current world system which values competence, rankings, meritocracy, impoverished education, and the like.

According to Todd (2001), there is an underlying belief that "educators teach in the hope that others will learn and change..."but"...'learning to become' depicts the ontological stakes in the processes of learning, both with respect to the benefits of change and the high prices to be paid in terms of the coercive nature of subject formation" (p. 436).

When one learns, one changes. However, such changes do not come without struggle. Todd (2001, p. 433) claims that: "There is something profoundly at risk in coming to know, involving renunciations and sacrifices sometimes too great to bear that once they struggle to know something, they can never be quite the same again", and this struggle continues to be same on and on along the life-long process of learning, that is, of becoming. Seeing Sotelo's final attitudes of copying the levelling guides, triggers Javier's decision of not allowing him to pass the class. Said incident also hastens Javier's own confrontation with the ethical decision that will shake his beliefs and knowledge and will leave an imprint, a bittersweet feeling, that originates the metaphor of the pimped butterfly: after all, in a completely imperfect educational system who is being controlled by whom?

There are two elements of interest in this story. First, Javier's reflections upon Sotelo not having a family that backed up a career-related future and second, Javier's own decision of not allowing him to pass the year and the corresponding consequences that came afterwards, produce that a knowledge of ethicality emerges in these happenings and that the episode as such can be prone to be recalled as a testimonial narrative.

Todd (2001), drawing on Castoridis (1991), makes us reflect upon not the violence *in* education but the violence *of* education. As learning to become, our

being educated means relinquishing our own agendas in the service of sociality through institutions; it also comes with a degree of resistance. Learning to become, to be altered, to turn into something one was not before, is achieved by pedagogy. Todd (2001) reflects upon the need for a relationality that is not based on control or coercion... or a "non-violent relationship" (p. 435) that brings to the fore a space for ethicality even in conditions of undergoing ontological violence, or in the face of the encounters with The Other. The honest testimonial narrative Javier wrote leads to understand that he learned the complications of encountering The Other the hard way; that is, by confronting his own knowledge of canonical, educational, emancipatory aims with the reality brought about when getting together with The Other in the contentious nature of such encounter.

When reflecting upon tensions bigger than him and being trapped in the power relationships of whom was controlling whom, Javier makes us recognize that while teaching and learning, a set of normative duties is at stake. Mostly such duties come from an understanding outside the teaching situation of what good living entails, and how teachers and students must act as to realize the ends of the society they are immersed in. However, normative visions of ethics disregard the unforeseeable character of the teaching/learning encounters and its proneness to failure. Phillips (1998) cited in Todd (2001) tells us that "people can never know beforehand, neither their teachers, exactly what is of personal significance; an individual 'picks out' and transforms the bits (s)he wants, the bits that can be used in the hidden projects of unconscious desire"(Phillips, 1998, in Todd 2001 p. 436).

Todd (2001) suggests that we need to change the emphasis of education as a way to apply normative ethics to education as an occasion for ethics to act

through education, or “as a site of implied, rather than applied ethics” (Todd, 2001, p. 437). For her, even if there is a pedagogy around “learning to become”, education is not harmless or unproblematic, as we would like. Drawing on Levinas (1969), Todd (2001) teaches us that we should understand learning as “a disruption of the I provoked by an “Other” in a moment of sociality” (p. 438) and that this Other is totally different from the I. Therefore, such difference is what causes learning to occur and compels educators to think of the ethical meaning of the teacher-learner relationship.

Because the pedagogical encounter is unpredictable in the reactions, silences, emotions, responses, attitudes, and the like, the acts of teaching and learning are extremely complex. Consequently, the approach to The Other should be thoughtful and hence ethical. For Todd (2001, p. 445):

> “words, information, and teaching are not disembodied within the pedagogical encounter, but are made available through The Other and as such, the encounter speaks to the necessarily social aspect of teaching and learning. It is the potentiality of this relationship to do violence that makes it susceptible to ethicality right from the start”.

Thus, Javier’s testimonial narrative teaches us how knowledge of ethicality comes into play in his teaching persona. It has appeared as a life-long lesson of thinking twice whether flunking a student is worth it in an imperfect educational system. Such an ethical concern has chased us all in our professional lives, at least once. Many of us have wondered whether such decision has been the proper one. This testimonial narrative teaches us that this knowledge *otherwise* (Escobar, 2003) has been decisive in the knowledges summoned for teaching.

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Chapter Ten

How Do English Teachers Experience Knowledge, Anyway? Some Insights from Geo-politically Located Bodies in the Global South, A Case of Six Teachers in Bogotá, Colombia

> "I enjoy work that surprises or intrigues me; that uncovers and jostles assumptions I did not know I had; that has a compelling rhythm, a poetic sensibility, a certain sharpness; that lingers in mind long after the first reading; that stirs me to think -not just abstractly but also, kinesthetically, emotionally, viscerally."
> (Nelson, 2011, p. 463)

Recent Scholarly Work about English Teachers' Knowledge

Research related to English teachers' knowledge has had background angles be them cognitive, sociocultural, critical and, until quite recently, a Decolonial perspective. I will briefly mention some recent advancements in some of these strands of thought to make the case again that research frequently related to English teacher knowledge does not necessarily deviate from modernist perspectives of what knowledge is, and such linkage with a modern view of knowledge in the field of English teaching has moved concepts, practices, or beliefs further, but still within the domain of a modern view of knowledge.

I advocate for the exploration of the knowledge *otherwise* (Escobar, 2003; Walsh & Mignolo, 2018) or "the possibility to craft another space for the production of knowledge" (Escobar, 2003, p. 52) to intervene in the discursive practices of our field and think of ELT education in other ways. I also conceive of knowledge as suggested by Anzaldúa (2000), as "an overarching theory of consciousness… that tries to encompass all the dimensions of life, both inner -mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms- and outer-social, political, lived experiences." (p. 177) In this chapter, I will show how I intended to explore knowledge from a Decolonial/Global South perspective in tune with what Escobar

(2003) proposed: “the need to seriously consider the epistemological strength of local histories.”[13] (p. 61) Certainly, according to Doyle & Carter (2003), storying is a crucial way of human knowing, and particularly teachers’ storied lives tell us of embedded understandings and knowledge gained through the repeated participation in teaching, learning, and personal experience.

Thus, I engaged in unraveling English teachers’ knowledge within an epistemology of wholeness (Rendon, 2009), not asking what English teachers know so they can do their job, but how English language teachers relate to or experience knowledge, be it canonical or non-canonical through their storied lives as examined in testimonial narratives of critical past life events, dialogues around them, and teachers’ own theoretical reflections. Asking what teachers know and how they experience knowledge are completely different questions and therefore lead to different answers. The former is intended to explain teachers’ knowledge in terms of pre-established categories such as pedagogical knowledge or content knowledge. The latter problematizes the study of teachers’ knowledge exclusively from a disciplinary perspective.

I contend that we English teachers need to construct perspectives that recognize the multiplicity of knowledges and experiences that are still within the realm of the absences and in a state of under-exploration (Sousa Santos 2006). There is a need to understand what is yet to be documented and bring it to light so that it can exist. As I just said, I will briefly comment on some recent developments towards the concept of English teachers’ knowledge and afterwards, I will go on synthesizing the results of co-interpreting with the participating teachers, the ways in which they experience knowledge.

Within the cognitive tradition, one of such seminal perspectives towards teachers’ knowledge brought to the ELT field, is that of Shulman (1987) with the five domains of teachers’ knowledge (i.e. content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical-content knowledge, knowledge of learners, and knowledge of the aims of education) and notwithstanding the limitations of this proposal, after thirty-three

[13] My own translation from Spanish.

years this model continues to be referenced within cognitive studies of English teachers' knowledge. A case in point is the work of Borg (2018). He acknowledges the complexity of teachers' knowledge highlighting that in Shulman's model there is an emphasis on the kind of knowledge teachers need to have to make content significant for learners, an area that lacks exploration in ELT, according to him. Borg's work, for example, emphasizes how professional development initiatives turn out to have an impact on teachers' knowledge as regards teaching.

Borg (2018) concludes that higher levels of teachers' knowledge result in better learning and teaching. There is no doubt that the more teachers learn the better prepared they will be; nonetheless, the very concept of teachers' knowledge here continues to be treated within a modern view of what a teacher needs to do so as to teach effectively. A recent critique by Yandell (2017) pinpoints the main drawbacks regarding this view:

> "The central problem with Shulman's model is that focusing on how content (subject knowledge) becomes transformed by the teacher by the magic of pedagogical content knowledge into material that can be assimilated by the learners still leaves his model locked in what is, in effect, a static -objectivist- conception of subject knowledge, as if it were the possession of the teacher, to be handed on, with the right sort of pedagogic framing to the learners" (p. 589) .

Still, Shulman's standpoint is still an object of review (see Kultsum, 2017), and it keeps on being influential in recent studies as that by Konig, Lammerding, Nold, Rohde, Straub, & Tachtsoglou (2016). Particularly, these authors intended to have a scientific understanding of teachers' knowledge drawing on Shulman's categories of pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and content knowledge. Measuring relations between these kinds of knowledge using tests, we can see results which highlighted that pedagogical content knowledge is strongly dependent upon content knowledge, as well as pedagogical content knowledge, backing up findings by Shulman (1987, 2005).

A recent phenomenological study of English teachers' lived experiences by Dávila and Espinoza in Nicaragua (2019) found fifteen types of knowledge in teachers' repertoires such as: "native or native-like English proficiency, academic writing knowledge, didactics knowledge, content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of second language learning and teaching, knowledge of the national educational system, knowledge about professional development" (p. 331), to name but a few. These findings to some extent also back up previous research carried out by authors such as Freeman and Johnson (1998) along with Shulman (1987). Particularly, the sources of knowledge for teachers in these recent pieces of research appeared to come from coursework, teaching practicum, published research, 'vicarious' learning from professors, and co-workers (Dávila and Espinoza 2019, p. 331) and relationships among types of knowledge are mostly found by means of testing practices (see for example Konig et al., 2016).

Despite concluding that knowledge is not static, and that it changes based on teaching environment, teaching experiences, or learners' characteristics (Dávila and Espinoza 2019), at first sight it appears as though the concept of English teachers' knowledge underwent the same condition of "monument" that was used by Sousa Santos, (2018) to reflect upon science as a static, neat, crystal clear practice that lets us be honest, hides a complete mess and mystery to be conceptualized by one, two or even three strands of thought. After having read once more that teachers had such and such types of knowledge, I conclude that there has not been a problematization towards what it means to know in geo-localized teachers' bodies in developing countries, for example (drawing on Mignolo 2011). Following Saavedra & Pérez (2018) and Anzaldúa (2000), I wanted to develop my own 'conocimiento' (knowledge) regarding the way teachers experience their relationships to knowledge, because I agree that there continues to be a great "influence of the Global North on our (forced) inherited epistemology" (Saavedra & Perez, 2018, p. 759), and there is need to trace the influence of such epistemology in every aspect of life that we intend to conceptualize, so that other ways of thinking can evolve based on a heightened awareness of the geopolitics of knowledge.

Authors drawing on sociocultural principles in the ELT field have greatly advanced in problematizing the connections between a social theory of learning, identity, and knowledge (Singh & Richards, 2006; Pennington & Richards, 2016), how teachers' knowledge of learners should inform pedagogy and content knowledge decisions and not the opposite (Van Canh, 2020). Similarly, a socio-cultural approach to teachers' knowledge has shed light on different ways of teachers' knowledge appropriation (see for instance Johnson 2006, Díaz Maggioli, 2012). Even so, the question here is, are cognitive or socio-cultural theories enough to comprehend how teachers relate to knowledge?

Singh (2004) cited in Singh and Richards (2006) state that what counts as progress in teachers' learning has a great connection with how teachers see things based on "their biographies and contexts" (p.166). For Singh and Richards (2006), "knowledge is not transmitted but tentative, not prescriptive but constructive… teachers collectively on a course bring a great deal of accumulated knowledge, skills and awareness, to many of the issues they will explore in a coursework" (p.166). I infer that these scholars do acknowledge that building a theory of pedagogy needs to consider not only 'the what and how of teaching' (p. 160), but who the teachers are. In fact, they claim that teachers should be urged to 'theorize their own experience" revising their beliefs, principles, conceptions, and their various social locations that comprise who they are; however, such a standpoint disregards, for example, the question of the geo-politics of knowledge, the teachers' families' epistemologies, the impact of teachers' professional lives' crises, and so forth in teachers' knowledge construction. This assertion is backed up in the work of Varghese (2017). In understanding the connection between teachers' identity and their knowledge base, Varghese (2017) documented the roles of teachers as language policymakers and advocates, as well as their work settings and personal backgrounds -that is, their social locations of gender, ethnicity, religion- as core elements of teachers' knowledge base. All in all, what counts as knowledge for teaching is still mysterious nuts and bolts if knowledge is not just considered from a mere cognitive perspective of what we bear in our minds so that we can teach effectively.

While Singh and Richards (2006) were discussing the contentious nature of knowledge, Sousa Santos was also conceptualizing that “the comprehension of the world is broader than the Western one” (2006, p. 18). Then, based on my understanding of these issues within a Decolonial perspective, I think that because the ELT field does not escape the phenomenon of understanding its theories and practices within the Western modern tradition of thought[14], it tends to conceptualize our relations to knowledge within the frame of the metonymic reason (Sousa Santos, 2004, 2006). The metonymic reason has an interest in “a totalizing form of order” (Sousa Santos, 2004, p. 158). It takes the parts as if they were the whole. It seems as if there was homogeneity between the whole and the parts. Therefore, within certain cognitive and sociocultural traditions authors might tend to take the concept of knowledge base of English teachers and then their identity(ies) as if they were totalizing explanations for teachers’ relations to knowledge, respectively (See for example, Borg 2018, Freeman, Webre & Epperson 2019, Freeman 2020).

Nias (1989) cited in Singh and Richards (2006) contends that “there is an intricate relation between teacher identity and teacher knowledge. Teacher-learners construct their identity through the unfolding social interaction of a particular situated community, within the specific activities and relationships in context” (p.155) Moving towards the study of who teachers are in order to comprehend teachers’ knowledge more is an enormous step ahead though still insufficient because through socio cultural theory, authors might resort to ideas such as expecting that teachers participate in communities of practice and get the discourse of such communities to feel that they belong and therefore ‘know’(see for example Singh & Richards, 2006, Johnson, 2009). In that train of thought, the ELT field undergoes the very tension of modern epistemology exposed by Sousa Santos (2006) between regulation (order, assimilation) and emancipation (freedom) because teachers are to belong to communities of practice with certain discourses but simultaneously, it is partially

[14] The modern root of how we conceive of knowledge has not yet been overcome because there is still a widespread tendency of seeing knowledge as something that humans have to grasp: knowledge is awaited to be discovered. Also, there continuous to be a tendency to measure how much knowledge one has based on a priori evaluations, standardized testing, generic learning, and standardized curriculums. (Kincheloe, 2001). All of these characteristics are constitutive of modernity and the will to dominate nature and humans in the name of progress.

accepted that teachers need to exercise their agency. However, such agency is almost always dependent upon pre-established discursive frames.

Likewise, despite the fact that life story and trajectory are taken as seminal items that construct teachers' knowledge, as a reader of these scholarly pieces I end up feeling that talking about the life stories of teachers continues to be an abstraction, for what is absent is precisely the very voice of those teachers and much more of English teachers in developing countries. (See for example Pennington & Richards, 2016). The knowing subjects called teachers, who are frequently the object of study in research, may be shaded by the experts' own rhetoric and prominence. I am in accord with Sousa Santos' (2006) perspective that we do not just need to find out new knowledge but new ways of producing knowledge and alternative thinking. Through an arduous path of Global South reflection, I came to understand that testimonial narratives (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga & Flores Carmona, 2012) could be a path to finding stories hardly considered by the Western canon of thought in ELT. Dialogue among participating teachers could also serve the purpose of mutually interpreting the inner sense of such testimonial narratives so that an alternative epistemology of the Global South in ELT can possibly emerge, and we can walk a path of border epistemology (Escobar, 2003).

The testimonial genre of writing which originated in Latin American people's previous social struggles "emphasizes the legitimacy of experiential and lived knowledge" (Cervantes, 2020) and highlights the need to understand individual stories in light of communal interpretation. In the ELT field, Nelson (2011) argued that "experience-based narratives can offer perspectives that are much needed in language education research, especially in an era when epistemological understandings are in flux" (p. 469). One of the advantages of "crafted narratives," as the ones introduced in this dissertation, tells of teaching traits that are not directly observed but that have an effect on the teachers' affect, cognition, and body.

We need research with alternative thinking and such thinking should consider the experiences of knowledge lived by Global South English teachers. Producing new knowledge goes hand in hand with how we pursue such an enterprise (the

method). What I showed in the former sections, and what I am reflecting upon now is precisely the product of dialogue as a way of doing research with participating teachers so that teachers can indeed express their own emotions, experiences, thoughts on what it means to know in geo-politically located bodies of countries in the Global South such as Colombia. Similarly, I was urged by Mato's (2000) assertion that "it is ethically, politically, and epistemologically imperative that researchers find ways to promote the conscious incorporation of social groups that are usually targeted as subjects of study into jointly conceived research agendas" (p. 481). That is, of course, one of the reasons why I included communal interpretations of the testimonial narratives as well as each teacher's own theoretical reflections as part of the analysis of the ways in which teachers experience knowledge.

What Testimonial Narratives Reveal about Teachers' Relations to Knowledge(s)

I have been educated in the Western canon of epistemology; I was groomed to believe that I could not think otherwise. I read The *Discourse on the Method* when I was fourteen and was not given the tools to question: 'I think therefore I am'. I would like to think that I took for granted that *I was*, therefore, *I could think*, and that was fine at the time. Now it is different. It was until very recently that I got acquainted with "I think where I am" (Mignolo, 2000), or "I feel, therefore I can be free". (Lorde, 1984) Rendon (2009) makes us aware that:

> "many of us became afraid of expressing our freedom to articulate a different truth because we feared punishment for going against the prevailing beliefs system, even when we had no role in creating it. The dominant beliefs system is powerful, entrenched, validated, and constantly rewarded by the social structure that created it, so much that even when we begin to see that the agreements in the belief system are flawed and in need of change, we find it very difficult to challenge them." (p. 24)

Definitely, it is very difficult to challenge, what Jordao (2014) calls 'essentialization categories' that can be, for example, concepts such as 'native

speaker', 'foreign language' or in the case of my own research: 'knowledge base for English teaching'. Ruiz (1997) cited in Rendon (2009) acknowledges that even though we did not decide what items comprised such beliefs system, we did *agree* to share it. In the ELT field we have, to some or to a large extent, agreed that teachers' knowledge consists of at least one or some of the perspectives mentioned in the previous section. Agreed-upon arrangements on what constitutes knowledge in ELT are de facto, de jure, or faith agreements. We are very much familiar with the developments of authors such as Richards (1998), Particularly, the concept of teachers' knowledge base has been recognized by Freeman et al. (2020) "as de facto socio-professional agreement" (p. 15). Still, Rendon (2009) tells us that "entrenched agreements, though shared by many, are in need of revision because they do not completely honor our humanity and our freedom to express who we are and what we represent." (p. 25) In the same train of thought, Jordão (2014) claims that:

> "Although imposed by shared cultural, social, and political beliefs, as part of our habitus, these essentialized categories need to be redefined in terms of individual and group agency in order to allow for transformation of our oppressive systems of meaning." (p. 230)

I am convinced that the current world system has proven to be in crisis, and Global South peoples cannot renounce the right to think otherwise, that is, think of ways to dismantle dehumanizing ways that make us believe of education and teaching as solved issues that are only faulty because of our incompetence in accomplishing the standards of the neoliberal knowledge economy. When I asked myself how English teachers experienced knowledge, I was not very aware of the epistemological shift that I was going through. This would be called by Mignolo (2011) "a delinking from a micronarrative" (p. 272). Now, I can say that in Western epistemology an obvious, necessary, and politically correct research question is to ask oneself and the field what is it that teachers must know so that they can carry out their jobs with an epistemological standard. The shift I went through relies precisely on not asking what it is that teachers have in their minds so that they can

teach, but what relations to knowledge teachers are forced to encounter, and how they experience knowledge. This is an interest that stems from wishing to de-link (Mignolo, 2011) from traditional Western epistemology and move the field, epistemologically speaking, towards the Global South where we, teachers, can cope with issues of teaching not only with our minds but with our whole humanity. Rendon (2009) reveals that we have abided by different 'agreements' that though imperfect, we continue to cherish so boldly despite their harsh impact on us as human beings. Some of such agreements are:

1. "The agreement to privilege intellectual/rational knowing.
2. The agreement of separation.
3. The agreement of competition.
4. The agreement of perfection" (Rendon, 2009, p. 26)

The first of such agreements relates to overvaluing what is done with our minds, the intellectual work, the rationality, and objectivity while leaving aside our personal experience, subjectivity, and intuition. The rationale deals with us being able to use our brain in terms of verbal, scientific, or math skills. However, it is also necessary to consider that "our hearts are also sites for intelligence" says Rendon (2009, p. 31). The second agreement, the agreement of separation, refers to how the educational system is organized in separate disciplines or separate status (e.g., teacher-centered, student-centered, content vs students, detachment from learners and from learning, impersonal language, academic language that detaches the subject of knowledge from what is known). One of such effects of separation is how students, teachers, and other humans see themselves separated from what they learn, and teacher-researchers separated from whom they study. The third agreement, called "agreement of competition," refers to how our system of knowledge is premised on Darwin's perspective of survival of the fittest; therefore, constant competition to get everything occurs. This belief that we are constantly competing fosters individualism, solitude, and a sense of superiority towards the others, leaving aside the idea that we do not need anything from them, and, in case we do it, is for the sake of self. The concept of communities is needed

but more in the sense of communities of learnings, that is, processes in which everybody learns from others regardless of their knowledge status, academic qualifications, or published papers.

I came across that the aforementioned agreements are continuously embedded in the way English teachers experience their relations to knowledge. Having communally analyzed teachers' testimonial narratives in this research project, I can provisionally say (provisional as knowledge can be) that teachers who participated in this study, experienced knowledge(s) in several ways. Based on the testimonial narratives, I will talk about two salient themes: being subjected to a modern epistemology and questioning a modern system of knowledge.

First, participating teachers experience knowledge by being subjected to a modern epistemology that continuously leaves an imprint on three aspects of the teachers as human beings: their cognition, emotion, and body. Modern epistemology exercises a certain level of violence in these three spheres. Such violence can be seen, for example, in the struggle for recognition of the profession in institutional or personal contexts. Hence, teachers cope with such symbolic violence by channeling cognitive, emotional, and bodily responses. Second, participating teachers also experience knowledge by questioning such modern system of knowledge as observed through their rebellious (anti-establishment) discursive, cognitive, and bodily practices, and by relying on traces of the knowledge otherwise (Escobar, 2003). Such traces of the knowledge otherwise are seen in families' epistemologies, knowledge of ethicality, knowledge gotten in previous personal and social struggles, or knowledge of the self and of others as explained along the previous chapters.

Experiencing knowledge by being subjected to a modern epistemology: joints of mind, body, and emotion. Moving ahead from the concept of knowledge base.

Within the ELT field, there has been -almost- a fascination with documenting the knowledge needed to teach 'effectively'. That is why much discussion revolves around content knowledge, disciplinary knowledge, methodological knowledge,

etc., and mostly the sources of knowledge are thought to be coursework, authors, communities of practice, degrees, books, articles, and so forth. It is but logical that these issues become of interest in the ELT field because that is what the ELT discipline is primarily concerned with; even so, other sources of knowledge are hardly ever considered. In fact, when describing other types of knowledge authors resort to saying that there *also* exists “a practical knowledge” or “the wisdom of practice” (Shulman, 1984, 2004, Cruz Arcila, 2018), or an “implicit knowledge” of teaching gained in “non-formal ways” (Mendoza & Roux, 2016). Such terms entail that there are other knowledges which are hardly ever fully approached.

When saying that I have been interested in tracing the knowledge otherwise, I mean that there is need to acknowledge that many teachers, like myself, live on the border of different worlds; we learned (and continue to re-learn and unlearn) the prestigious English language, the methodologies, the concepts, the educational patterns from the Global North, but we are geopolitically located bodies in the Global South. This geopolitical location suffers the colonial difference, that is, the dispossession, the marketization of our resources, the effects of war, the displacement, the struggle for opportunities to thrive, and the loss of hope for a better future.

In that panorama, we do not, exclusively, rely on the neat, pristine, and aseptic academic knowledge deposited in our brain in the schools of education. No, we do not. We, teachers in the Global South, are also made of the living conditions that we experience here, and we also cope with teaching and learning drawing on such experiences that when confined to cold, phlegmatic, even unproblematic concepts such as “tacit knowledge” or “experiential knowledge,” lose their very flesh. Along with canonical ways of knowing, other knowledges also appear to back up teachers’ beings; Knowledge of the self and others, knowledge of ethicality, knowledge gotten in previous personal and political struggles also comprise teachers’ personas. Such knowledge(s) come from various sources, other than academia.

When I say that teachers experience knowledge by being subjected to a modern epistemology, I am in accord with Rendon (2009) when stating that we have agreed for example that intellectual reasoning and emotion are extreme opposites. Why should we be concerned about over-privileged concepts such as knowledge base… pure mind connected to objective truth? When teachers are discursively challenging a knowledge system, they are really challenging the agreement of separation, keeping domains of knowledge separate. As well, they are challenging the straitjacket which this normative epistemology has turned into. Cognitive, socio-cultural, or even critical approaches to knowledge in ELT may leave aside the joints of mind, body, and emotion when explaining English teachers' knowledge.

Authors such as White (2018) and Martínez Agudo (2018) have documented the neglect that emotions have undergone in the ELT field. Some reasons for such disregard of the emotional component of teaching as an area of exploration are that first, historically, emotions have been treated as irrational, subjective, or feminine. Second, there has been, as argued above, an overprivileged emphasis on reason. Third, the incipient research around emotions revolved around sociopsychological issues of learning such the affective filter or the affective strategies for language learning. Still, teaching is an essentially emotional endeavor, and it bears a "sociopolitical dimension" (De Costa, Rawal and Li, 2019, p. 93) that should be analyzed under a more critical lens. Fourth, the connection emotion-cognition was only recognized to back up cognition and not as a full explanation of how people experience the world. A pioneering work such as the one by Zembylas (2007) outside the ELT field discusses the two tendencies that the study of emotions has had: awareness of emotions in teaching and understanding of the social construction of emotion in the transactions of teaching and learning. Yet, Zembylas (2005) acknowledges that within the Western culture there is the belief that "emotions threaten the disembodied, detached, and neutral knower" (p. 7). If that neglect happens with emotions, much more happens with the body; a connection between body and knowledge is practically absent in ELT, except for a few mentions such as that of Nelson (2011), who brilliantly

summarized that “the body is both a site of knowledge and an instrument of knowing” (p. 472).

In this study, cognitively speaking, Alex, Josué, and Javier acknowledge that they are subjects of knowledge while simultaneously recognizing that they are subjected to an epistemology. First, Alex realized the privilege of getting access to quality higher education while finding it difficult to have a research project on indigenous languages, for “the jungle is not a place for an English teacher”. The university, where supposedly knowledge is universal, did not provide him with ways to engage in critical perspectives towards what it means to teach language as a right in this country. Who is to be blamed for this? Alex summarizes it in the statement: “Don’t blame me, blame the entire system’. Alex is a geo-politically located body of knowledge that both experienced the privileged access to Western knowledge while being denied researching indigenous epistemologies.

Javier explained that what he had observed in coursework material is that teachers are perceived as objects of epistemology. In his own case, the subjection to modern epistemology came as a contradiction of what it means to flunk a student in an imperfect educational system where we all play our part in the game of commodified education. Josué concluded that he is ‘a subject’ in terms of language knowledge. Yet, he is subjected to the policymaking of the ELT field and its standards. Josué describes feeling “pressed, overwhelmed by the standards, and [in] the role of clerk rather than of educator”, and undergoing emotions such as “frustration, happiness, and hope”. He seems to weave between being revered as an expert while trying to see himself as a dude in front of students. He made evident his constant cognitive, emotional, and bodily struggle of maintaining his status of “expert” that can secure him economic stability without having to resort to turning into “a braggart”, a dehumanizing identity of a language teacher for him.

What does it mean that these six teachers—who told their testimonial narratives—are geo-politically and historically located bodies? The experiential and historical activity of the body may be overlooked when channeling knowledge. It looks as though English teachers only had a ‘theoretical body of knowledge’.

Following the Cartesian separatism, the body of the English teacher has been neglected in his/her experience of knowledge. Oh body! make of me a (wo)man who always questions! Fanon (1952) asked us not to forget. As English teachers, our bodies create a presence in the day to day life of teaching and learning. Teachers' testimonial narratives revealed how their bodies become presence, not just any presence indeed. The body emerges as a companion of mind and emotion or as the owner of an incommensurable amount of experience.

The body comprises a historical presence in the manner of corporeal signs or tattooed arms that tell stories of previous personal struggles as Alejandra narrated. The body displays the vestiges of drinking, smoking, and crying. Indeed, reactions towards what is going on with the mind and emotions regarding the subjection of modern epistemology appear simultaneously in the body: an accompanying tear, an outburst of tiredness, a desperate need to smoke, fast heartbeat, injuries, piercings, or hangovers subtly tell that the body accompanies mind and emotion along the way of approaching and living knowledge. The Epistemologies of the South gives room to the body in a conceptualization of knowledge because it is through our bodies that struggles are experienced.

According to Sousa Santos (2016), "the body suffers, rejoices, and dies" (p. 26). For him, still, very few philosophers in the Western tradition recognize the value of the body as a required mediation of our interpretation of the world and of our communication with it. It looks as though the subject of knowledge is a 'bodyless body' (p. 26). Because Western critical theory has become dull, Sousa Santos (2016) explains, we need to revalue a current of reason that gives room for sorrow, cheer, celebration, and weeping as valuable experiences of knowledge. Knowing comes from having lived experiences. Nonetheless, experiences come through the senses, thus the body. The senses are quintessential as they are the first contact with the outside world. When the Epistemologies of the South mention that knowledge is embodied, it brings to the fore that knowing is a fully corporeal activity (Sousa Santos, 2018). Writing on the board, glancing at students, frowning,

smiling, and words coming out of our mouths are simple yet powerful examples that we are physically present at teaching.

Teachers' testimonial narratives tell of bodies geo-politically located. Alex recalls memories of his lived experiences as many other young teachers that experienced a transition of violence during the 80s and 90s of the former century in Colombia. Such lived experiences impact the way they experience knowledge because many teachers' lives have been invaded by political and social class struggles that comprise the teaching personas they are. Alex told us that teaching meant social commitment and education for everybody, a notion that comes from his family epistemologies. He recognizes that his pedagogy is the product of his life history, as a whole. There seems to be here an inclination towards an "epistemology based on wholeness" (Rendón, 2009), not solely based on pedagogical content knowledge or the like.

Andrés, for instance, showed us how in the Global South, we struggle for our legitimation as knowing subjects. He narrated the cognitive, emotional, and bodily upheaval for appropriate recognition of the teaching profession while undergoing instances of labor exploitation, de-professionalization, dispossession, and depression such as when inquired: "when are you going to get a real job?" when being a suggested to change profession. Meanwhile, Lorena taught us that knowledge of the self, intertwined with opening up to students through emotion and tears, proved to be useful to sustain a view of emancipatory practices. While disrupting the understanding of teachers as discipliners, knowledge holders, and authoritarian agents, a heartfelt need for deep listening evolved in her. (Sousa Santos, 2018). We learned from Alejandra that we are constantly judged at the epistemological level by how our bodies look. However, such looks speak of knowledges gained in previous personal experiences, social struggles, and heartfelt personal epistemologies which recognize that professionalism and knowledge happen despite or accompanied by physical appearance.

Subjection to a modern view of knowledge foregrounds the experience of knowledge as intersected by the struggle for power. Javier's touching testimonial

narrative of “pimping a butterfly” suggests that a strong cognitive and emotional turmoil goes on inside the teachers who are in the midst of a flawed educational system sustained by the colonial difference; teachers’ expectations of viewing education as an emancipatory practice is torn into pieces when facing students as Sotelo who urges incessantly a summon to knowledge of ethicality and the recognition of The Other in the teaching/learning encounter. Javier developed a knowledge of ethicality: a lesson in which learners, in the process of knowledge construction or learning to become, undergo the violence of changing themselves into something else. Such awareness also belongs to geopolitical bodies because knowledge does not have the same truth value when living in peripheral neighborhoods of Bogota. Moral dilemmas that call into question our existing knowledge are experienced by teachers constantly, but they are hardly ever documented in studies of teachers’ knowledge.

Sources of knowledge otherwise as tools to question the modern system of knowledge.

Based on the testimonial narratives or dialogues around them, I came to realize that there are other sources of knowledge through which teachers counter the effects of modern epistemology upon them. One source of teachers’ knowledge is precisely the family epistemologies or the intergenerational knowledge (Sandoval, Moreno, Mojica Lagunas, Montelongo, & Juárez Díaz 2016; Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Fuentes, Muñiz, and Prada Vivas, 2019). Such family epistemologies sometimes have an impact on the way we think of the aims of education, or how we conceive of values such as autonomy, concepts such as emancipation or social mobility, and social practices like education or going on strike to demand economic stability for public education or actually pursuing a career-related future as narrated by Alex and Javier.

I also learned that another source of knowledge comes from those lessons learned in previous personal, social, political, and historical struggles (Sousa Santos, 2018). Such events also permeate our knowledge construction, as observed in Alex’s, Alejandra’s, or Javier’s testimonial narratives. These

knowledges, in line with Sousa Santos (2018), are acquired via life experiences and are what we call vernacular, empirical, or popular knowledges that are directly produced within social practices but that leave an everlasting imprint on us. Frequently these knowledges can be taken as a source of action in the future or as what not to do when encountered with a certain situation. In the case of knowledge of ethicality, it is the encounter with The Other that generates the reconfiguration of such knowledge. Knowledge of ethicality and the recognition of The Other is sometimes superficially taken as “knowledge of the students”; however, really coming to know our students is a very challenging yet necessary task when encountering the acts of learning and teaching, and it goes beyond traits such as students’ English level.

In this study, I aimed at showing that there is a need to advance the concept of teachers’ knowledge, understanding it within a frame of the geopolitics of knowledge. The idea was to develop more embracing standpoints about what it means to know for teaching. My main aim was to decenter the concept of knowledge base by analyzing how teachers experience their relations to knowledge. I have argued that teachers experience knowledge by being subjected to modern epistemology that has an impact on teachers’ bodies, emotions, and cognition. While coping with such subjection teachers not only draw on their canonical knowledge of English teaching, methodology, and pedagogy but also in their family epistemologies, knowledge gotten in previous personal and social struggles as well as in their knowledge of ethicality and of their different selves. The perspective foregrounded here goes in tune with other attempts to move the concept of knowledge ahead of the mere cognitive standpoint (See for example, Kincheloe, 2004, Nelson, 2011, Ord & Nutall, 2016).

Last but not least, thinking of the participating teachers as geopolitically located bodies in the Global South proposes at least two angles of conceptualization. One is that there are multiple ways of being (and not being) in the Global South. Mostly, the Global South entails for many teachers an ongoing struggle for keeping the basic human rights: the right to education, the right to a

decent job, the right to life when protesting, the right to think otherwise. Our rights are constantly under threat because of imposed Neoliberal agendas and practices. The Global South can also be seen as an intellectual, bodily, and emotional site longed for Decolonial spirited researchers who wish to embark on -partially-delinking from Western macro-narratives that limit our multiple ways of knowing.

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Limitations and Further Research

Limitations of the study

Having developed a dissertation using the theoretical tenets of the Decolonial Turn and concepts that come from fields of knowledge such as epistemology, philosophy, and sociology have posed major challenges and therefore, limitations for me as a still novice researcher in at least three areas: concepts, participants and methods, and results.

Because the Decolonial Turn has been primarily conceptualized in philosophical and sociological terms, by experts in those disciplines (Sousa Santos, Grosfoguel, Maldonado Torres to name but a few), it appears as though the Decolonial Turn has no connection whatsoever with a field like English Language Teaching. And sometimes, finding out the right words to come across messages that make sense to broader audiences is mentally and emotionally exhausting. Therefore, not having developed a more acute understanding of different concepts may have hindered more elaborate conceptualizations and deeper analysis in different parts of the dissertation.

Similarly, because of having approached this research using testimonial narratives for the very first time, the potential of this type of writing, speaking, and representing the world might not have been sufficiently exploited in epistemological and ontological terms. In a similar vein, the fact that I did not explore the intersections between the mestizo and the ancestral identities, I could have missed

valuable ideas to understand the ways in which Global South peoples wave between North and peripheral epistemologies.

Implications for Further Research

Research carried out with a Decolonial lens can add up to the discussion around social phenomena such as social class and its connection to race, gender, ethnicity as experienced by geopolitically located bodies of the Global South. Particularly, teachers-to-be and in-service teachers could work on the connection that exits between sociolinguistics and social class. This under-explored topic can shed light on, for me, very thought-provoking questions such as: what is the connection between social class and the reasons why Colombian people study English? or how social class identity, language learning, and coloniality of knowledge and being function as an heterarchy of forces within language education?

The issues of social class within Second Language Acquisition (Block 2007 b) as well as social class within Applied Linguistics (Block, 2015) have been studied with a poststructuralist perspective, particularly analysing interactions of immigrant de-classed educated citizens living in English speaking countries. Block (2007) argued that because of being de-classed citizens, immigrants might experience lack of interest in investing in language learning. From a Decolonial lens, the issue of social class and de-classing experienced by Global South immigrants to metropolitan societies is directly connected not just to issues of power and investment but also to the capitalist structure of the division of labour according to races started in the XVI century. Therefore, studying the intersection of social class and language learning with a Decolonial perspective would provide new arguments

and views towards the relationship between these two items. Some attempts to conceptualize of social class, privilege and learning English have been started by Lopez-Gopar & Sughrua (2014). Still, this is a very thought-provoking area that can be further studied with a Decolonial perspective.

In that train of thought, it would be advisable that the local ELT field could map what is going on with those local language users that are being prepared to cope with the professional and academic world in the English-speaking world, to see whether these new bilingual identities conceal instances of coloniality of knowledge and being and if so, how such intersection happens.

Another issue of interest for studies approaching a Decolonial view could be the reconceptualization of the concept of contend and language integrated learning (CLIL). Either in its hard or soft versions, a reconceptualization of CLIL should consider the teaching of history of subalternized communities of the Global South and ways to cope with such subaltern identities and stories. In that train of thought, materials that foreground the intersection of class, race, gender, and geopolitical location could be developed to centre the interests and concerns of Global South peoples in ELT materials. This area could be a fertile ground to innovate pedagogical and didactic practices.

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Appendix 1

Dear Colleague
I am trying to back up my research question: what's teachers' knowledge? And I need some empirical evidence.

Name
Degrees
Years of experience

Question 1
What knowledge(s) have you gained as a professional? How have you gained it (them)? Do you share your knowledge(s)? if so, how?

Question 2
Do you remember experiences in which your knowledge as a teacher was called into question? How did it happen? How did you react?

Question 3
Do you think English teachers are recognized as intellectuals? Why/Why not?

Consent Form
I hereby authorize Adriana Castañeda Londoño to use this information for research purposes in the PhD in Education ELT Major towards backing up the research proposal.
Name_____ ID_____