

## **“Pedagogically speaking, I’m doing the right things”: Three preservice ESOL teachers’ identity formation**

Bedrettin Yazan\*  
The University of Alabama

Megan Madigan Peercy  
University of Maryland

As previous work on language teacher identity (LTI) has illustrated, teachers’ identity is an integral part of their growth as teachers and influences the ways in which they enact their practices (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Reeves, 2018; Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves & Trent, 2016). The burgeoning literature on LTI has focused on various dimensions of teachers’ identities. One strand of studies focuses on *practicing* language teachers’ identities and has explored their (re)negotiation of identities in their classroom practice as they experience different sociocultural contexts (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018), their construction of identities as responses to national and local discourses (Varghese, 2006), the struggles they experience with multiple identities in the negotiation and ownership of meanings about language teaching (Tsui, 2007), their discursive construction of identities through future-oriented reflection (Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008), and how they negotiate identities through discursive positioning and agency (Ortaçtepe, 2015; Rudolph, Yazan, & Rudolph, 2018; Trent, 2012). Another strand investigates *preservice* language teachers’ identities in regards to the role of their positioning in relation to nativeness in English (Huang, 2014; Park, 2012), their negotiation of meanings in teacher education courses (Abednia, 2012; Peercy, 2012; Yazan, 2017a), the role of practicum experiences in identity formation (Dang, 2013; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Yazan, 2017b) and how they negotiate discourses in the communities of practice (Clarke, 2008; Gu & Benson, 2015; Ilieva, 2010; Martel, 2015).

Although prior work has added to the exploration and theorization of LTI, more research is needed to examine the contribution of teacher education practices to the identity transformation that preservice ESOL teachers experience as they transition from student to teacher. Particularly, it is important to better understand how the practices that preservice teachers enact in the context of their practicum settings shape their identities-in-practice (Kanno & Stuart, 2011).

This article reports on a qualitative research study which examined how the practicum experiences of three preservice English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers contributed to their teacher identity construction in meaningful ways. While previous work in general teacher education has shown that the practicum experiences of novice teachers are essential for their professional growth, and scholars have found a mutually constitutive relationship between practice teaching and

\* Email: [byazan@ua.edu](mailto:byazan@ua.edu)

teacher identity (Bullock, 2013; Bullough, 2005; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Loughran, 2014; Meijer, Oolbekkink, Pillen, & Aardema, 2014; Olsen, 2016), what is lesser known is how this relates to the education of ESOL teachers. ESOL teachers' identity construction stands out as a distinct research area because of the particularities of their subject matter, (English as both content and medium of instruction), and the complexities of their students' cultural and linguistic identity work (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Reeves, 2009). Therefore, our study aims to illuminate the ways practicum experiences influence the contours of preservice ESOL teachers' identity construction during the developmental and transitional period of their professional learning. Specifically, this study adds to previous work on LTI by exploring the following research question: *How do field-based teaching practicum experiences contribute to preservice ESOL teachers' teacher identity construction?*

### **Theoretical framework**

This study draws from Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and Wenger's (1998) framework of communities of practice. These lenses frame individuals as constructing identities as part of their professional learning which involves LPP as "an evolving form of membership" in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Individual learners engage in the activities of the professional community as newcomers, use the resources available, and work out their relations with old timers and other newcomers, and this allows and supports the "delicate process of negotiating viable identities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 175). Thus, through LPP, "identities in practice" that manifest the characteristics of communities of practice develop and concomitantly those communities are reproduced and transformed (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 55).

Moreover, in Wenger's (1998) framework, imagination is an important process through which individuals expand their sense of self by reaching beyond their time and space and generating new images of the world and themselves "that become constitutive of the self" (p. 177). It gives rise to the aspects of identity that transcend engagement. Through imagination, individuals can envision alternative relations, meanings, possibilities, and perspectives, which afford their identities with new dimensions across time and space. Journeying into the past and reaching into the future, imagination holds the opportunity to reconfigure the present and display it "as holding unsuspected possibilities" (p. 178). Wenger argues that through imagination we locate

ourselves in the world and in history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives, ... recognize our own experience as reflecting broader patterns, connections, and configurations, ... see our practices as continuing histories that reach far into the past, and ... conceive of new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures. (p. 178)

However, imagination may become a detached and unproductive process, too. It is likely that imagination relies on stereotypes, which restrict the projections of the world to the assumptions of specific practices, or on the contrary, imagination might turn so distant "from any lived form of membership that it detaches our identity and leaves us in a state of uprootedness" (p. 178). Therefore, individuals' imagination influences their identification as a participant in a community and their ability to negotiate the meanings that are important to them in this community. The identities they imagine for themselves orient their participation and non-participation in the practices of the community.

The ideas that Wenger (1998) captures with his notion of imagination in the context of communities of practice have been explored with the concept of "vision" or "visioning" in teacher education

research (Duffy, 2002; Hammerness, 2003, 2008; Vaughn, & Saul, 2013). “Vision consists of images of what teachers hope could be or might be in their classrooms, their schools, their communities, and in some cases even in society as a whole” (Hammerness, 2003, p. 45). With a more identity-focused approach, Duffy (2002) defines “visioning” as “a teacher’s conscious sense of self, of one’s work, and of one’s mission” (p. 334). In some cases, vision could be a source of motivation, inspiration, and reflection for teachers’ practices, but in some other cases, vision might seem impossible and too distant to accomplish (Hammerness, 2003). In any case, Duffy (2002) argues “visioning is existential in that it focuses on choice, and on a career-long sense of becoming, and it is self-regulatory in that teachers alter their environments and their actions” (p. 334). In our study, we theorize that imagining or visioning allows individuals to move beyond the existing social configuration of meanings and create a dialogic space for individuals’ intentionality, agency, and convictions.

### **Methodology**

We utilized a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 2009) to gain deeper insights into the identity construction of three preservice ESOL teachers – Zoe, Leslie, and Elizabeth (all pseudonyms) – during their early engagement in instructional practice in the context of their teaching practicum. Due to their ability to participate throughout the study, we chose them as focal participants from a larger cohort of six preservice teachers in an intensive MATESOL program (IMP) in a large, research-intensive university located in a metropolitan area in the mid-Atlantic United States. The IMP is a 13-month full-time program granting a Master’s of Education (M.Ed.) in TESOL and eligibility for K-12 state certification to teach English language learners (ELLs). The preservice ESOL teachers in this program have two semester-long practicum placements: one in an elementary setting, and one in a secondary setting. During their practicum they assume fifty percent of their mentor teacher’s teaching load.

### ***Participants***

#### *Zoe*

Zoe did not have any formal teaching experience before she entered the IMP. She tutored athletes at a large research university in the mid-Atlantic US and worked with high-need students such as those with learning disabilities and academic probations in K-12 public schools. She believed that her tutoring experience with those students could transfer to ESOL, especially in terms of students’ need for individual attention.

Regarding her language learning experience, Zoe took French classes in elementary school in Alberta, Canada. She recalled her excitement when learning a new language and making plans to attend a French immersion high school. However, her family moved back to the US before she began sixth grade. She continued taking French classes during her middle and high school years in the US, yet she lost the excitement and learning French became hard and frustrating for Zoe. She “stopped understanding, and became very discouraged with the language” because “the learning seemed more skill and drill and not very contextualized...[she] tried to memorize how to use the language, but [was] never able to understand the rules and apply them correctly” (Zoe, Language Learner Autobiography). By the time she graduated from high school, she lost her speaking fluency in French that she had acquired in Canada.

#### *Elizabeth*

Elizabeth had already entered the profession of English language teaching when she applied for the IMP. After working in public health for three years, she “wasn’t excited to go to work every day” (Elizabeth, Interview 1, 02/01/2013) and she decided to change careers and moved to Costa Rica

where she attended a one-month TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate program. After completing the program, she was hired to teach English to small groups of adults from basic to advanced levels in a language institute in Costa Rica for five months. Then she taught English to seventh graders at a private bilingual high school in Costa Rica because she wanted to work with younger language learners. She remarked that her language teaching at that time was guided by her own Spanish learning experiences and the TEFL program's emphasis on grammar and constant error correction.

Elizabeth recalled that her experiences as a second language learner began when she started taking Spanish classes in the seventh grade and continued throughout her high school years. She highlighted that those classes focused on learning grammar structures and memorizing lists of vocabulary. When she started her major in Spanish at the university, she had to attend 200 level (low intermediate) classes despite six years of Spanish in public school system. She found that frustrating because even then she "was unable to truly follow everything [her] professor and classmates said. Each class was a challenge and a struggle for [her]" (Elizabeth, Language Learner Autobiography).

### *Leslie*

Leslie had the opportunity to teach and volunteer in various school settings. She had lived in Israel for a year after graduating from high school and informally taught English to seventh and eighth graders. She also had prior experience tutoring fifth and sixth grade ELLs in a predominantly Latino community in the US. Additionally, she taught Hebrew to seventh and eighth graders at a local Jewish congregation for six years during and after college. Her decision to become an ESOL teacher was influenced by her grandparents' and aunt's immigration from Hungary to the US, and her stay in Israel after high school. She remarked: "knowing how much learning English changed their lives, it really made me want to be a teacher" (Leslie, Interview 1, 01/28/2013).

As a child, Leslie went to a Hebrew school where she learned simple words to read the prayers in Hebrew because the objective was to learn prayers and religious aspects of Judaism. After a year in Israel, she was motivated to continue learning Hebrew and took classes throughout her college years. Leslie also took Spanish classes from seventh through twelfth grade, culminating with Spanish advanced placement courses. She continued learning Spanish throughout college and went to Argentina for study abroad where she learned about the culture in southern cone countries, and improved her language skills. She called herself as "a perpetual language learner" (Leslie, Interview 1, 01/28/2013), yet she knew that she was tough on herself about her efforts in learning languages.

### **Data collection and analysis**

This paper relies on data gleaned from three sources over a period of eight months: semi-structured individual interviews, classroom observations, and course assignments from four courses in the IMP. The three participants were individually interviewed twice (75 to 90 minutes), once after they started their teaching practicum in January 2013, and once after they graduated from the IMP in July 2013. The first interview focused on their decisions to become an ESOL teacher, prior learning and teaching experiences, and their professional preparation in their teacher education coursework and practicum. The second interview explored their interactions with their students and colleagues, their tasks, roles, and responsibilities in school contexts as well as associated challenges, and other critical incidents in their practicum schools. Between the two interviews, the researchers conducted three observations of each participant's teaching, with each observation lasting 40-50 minutes. The field research notes from those observations allowed for customization of follow-up questions in the second interview. Additionally, to further triangulate the data, the researchers analyzed participants' course assignments (e.g., language learner autobiography, reflection paper, action research paper)

from four courses, namely, *ELL Teaching Methods*, *SLA Theories*, *Intercultural Communication*, and *Action Research*.

We used principles of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) to guide data analysis. We sought relevant patterns in the data by focusing on recurrent elements and their important features (Merriam, 2009). We used the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) of data analysis, beginning with open coding. We scanned, read, and re-read the transcribed interviews and course assignments of our participants. In this phase, our main goal was to identify initial codes. For example, some of those codes were “internship duties,” “establishing rapport in teaching setting” “interaction with mentor,” “interaction with students,” “interaction with supervisor,” “challenges in practicum,” “getting to know students,” “change in beliefs,” “applying theory,” “advocacy for ELLs,” “roles taken,” “roles assigned,” “feeling like a teacher,” “feeling accepted in school,” “devising solutions on the spot,” “seen as a teacher,” and “future aspirations.” The second round of analysis included axial coding in which we identified the relationship between the open codes and clustered them into categories. Focusing on those categories, we generated themes by labeling significant events and phenomena in the data and at the same time comparing them to other emerging categories (Creswell, 2007). Three main themes that emerged as important are classroom authority and ownership of students, legitimacy through work space, and emotional responses as identity negotiation. We then began formulating statements to construct the three preservice ESOL teachers’ “story line[s]” (Creswell, 2007, p. 67) of negotiating teacher identities during the teaching practicum. In the process of constructing these story lines, we considered all their experiences interacting with mentor teacher, university supervisor, ELLs, and parents as part of their identity negotiation. We included the prominent acts of identity negotiation in the participants’ story lines for each one of the themes. These acts indicated the extent to which participants’ commitment to and vision of teaching ELLs were allowed space within the school context and how they negotiated and used this space. We ensured that the participants’ story lines addressed the ways in which field-based teaching practicum experiences contributed to their teacher identity construction.

### Findings

This study revealed that the three preservice teachers’ practicum experiences contributed to their teacher identity formation in three main ways: (a) their mentors’ sharing power and ownership of the class validated their identities as teachers, (b) having a work space legitimized their presence as teachers in the school setting, and (c) their emotional experiences during teaching practicum led them to negotiate and road-test their emerging teacher identities.

#### ***Classroom authority and ownership of students***

All three preservice ESOL teachers asserted that their mentors played a vital role in their learning to work with ELL students, as well as their immersion into the school community. A key factor in the importance of the mentor’s role was related to the extent to which mentors shared authority in and ownership of their classes. For example, Elizabeth’s mentor explicitly conveyed the message to her class that Elizabeth should be recognized as someone who was “in charge” as a teacher. Elizabeth recounted:

...making sure that students saw me as an authority figure, she really helped me in that respect... making sure that students know that I’m in charge here, that ‘your actions do have consequences when you’re not paying attention, if you’re acting out, I’m here to set limits, I’m not just here as an assistant, I’m here as a teacher, and I will enforce things, I guess,

behavioral issues,' I mean *she definitely gave me the kids*. (Elizabeth, Interview 2, 08/11/2013, emphasis added)

Elizabeth remarked that her mentor granted her the status and authority to be able to set the limits and enforce the rules in the classroom. Her mentor overtly legitimated Elizabeth's position as a teacher who could make her own instructional decisions and implement them in her classes. Also, Elizabeth's comment that her mentor "gave [her] the kids" exhibited that she shared her ownership of the class and students with Elizabeth. This located Elizabeth's presence and participation as a teacher in that classroom community and in the broader school culture. Elizabeth was thus regarded by the mentor and presented to students as an actual participant of the practice of teaching, which bolstered her LPP in the community of teaching practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Genuinely "owning" the students corroborated her vision, self-conception, and imagination of herself as a teacher, which facilitated her enactment of a teaching identity (Duffy, 2001; Hammerness, 2003, 2008).

Similarly, in Zoe's high school placement, her mentor introduced her to the class as another teacher in charge, and shared her power and authority with Zoe in front of the students.

When my mentor introduced me to the class [in the high school], 'Ms. Zoe is here and she is now 50% of your grade, she has just as much as power as I do, so be nice to her, make sure you're doing good work, coz while I'm in the front, she may be over here or in the back, so there is two pairs of eyes in here now,' and she gives me that power right away; 'she'll be grading, she'll be watching, she'll be helping' ...I feel like I get to take more ownership of the class. (Zoe, Interview 1, 01/23/2013)

Zoe's remarks illustrate that she received recognition from her mentor teachers, which facilitated her being recognized as a teacher by the students. Her mentors in both settings endorsed and validated her presence in the classroom as an authority figure who was capable of establishing and enforcing rules. Through that introduction, her mentor affirmed Zoe's identity as an ESOL teacher in an actual teaching context. Zoe felt empowered through having her mentors' validation at the outset of her teaching placements. She had the space to negotiate and enact her teacher identity in her teaching practice. Since she had the freedom, power and ownership of the class, she appeared to feel more comfortable making instructional decisions, and experimenting with new teaching ideas when executing her lessons, which in turn supported and reinforced her self-image as an ESOL teacher successfully working with ELLs.

In these two examples, Zoe's and Elizabeth's mentor teachers relinquished their power and position in their classrooms, which facilitated the construction of the preservice teachers' classroom personas so that they did not see themselves in a subordinate position, as less than a "real teacher" due to their lack of classroom experience or institutional positioning as a teacher intern. Thereby, their mentors did not allow the students to see a hierarchical relationship between them and their interns. The preservice teachers were thus also designated as bearers of authority and power in the classroom.

On the other hand, in Leslie's case, the issue of student ownership took on a different face. Ideological differences between Leslie and her mentor teacher surfaced regarding the use of new curriculum and the acknowledgement of ELLs' funds of knowledge. Leslie felt that her mentor completely trusted her in terms of teaching responsibilities in the classroom. She allowed Leslie "to

sub for her” and “take over the classes” and “left the room and let [her] do [her] thing” (Leslie, Interview 1, 01/28/2013), which displayed sharing of authority in the classroom. This trusting attitude made Leslie comfortable in her practice teaching and Leslie saw her mentor as her “biggest advocate.” However, “a big part” of their relationship was shaped by the ideological differences in the selection of curriculum to follow and the way they acknowledge the knowledge ELLs bring into ESOL classes. This conflictual situation was Leslie’s “biggest struggle” in the teaching practicum and hindered her from making autonomous instructional decisions about her students.

Leslie had an ideological divergence from her mentor in the conceptualization of ELLs as learners. As Leslie stated, “Every once in a while [she] would say, ‘the students know nothing, whatever you’re doing is helping them,’” which Leslie stated that she thought was intended to “make me feel better” with regards to her teaching (Leslie, Interview 1, 01/28/2013). However, this comment made Leslie think that her mentor overlooked the wealth of culture and knowledge ELLs bring into their learning environment in the US schools. She explained:

I don’t like that perspective on students because of my beliefs about background knowledge that students bring so much to the table in all aspects of their lives and they have knowledge, whether it’s something that we appreciate, whether the teachers appreciate it, whether they don’t. They come with... lots of values and things, all those good things. (Leslie, Interview 1, 01/28/2013)

The comment of Leslie’s mentor teacher was in conflict with the ESOL teacher identity that Leslie embodied. Interpreting this comment against her instructional values, Leslie negotiated the identity of an ESOL teacher who appreciates the importance of ELLs’ sociocultural values, prior knowledge, and learning experiences in their current learning.

When Leslie faced the discrepancy between her teacher learning in the IMP (especially about the integration of ELLs’ culture in classes) and what was emphasized and supported in the school setting by her mentor, Leslie’s response was part of her teacher identity negotiation. Her disagreement with her mentor stemmed from “conflicting perceptions” of ELLs’ education which Dang (2013) found as developmental component of teacher identity formation (p. 53). The disagreement was because of what Leslie desired to prioritize or what she believed an ESOL teacher should prioritize when working with ELLs. Relying on her learning in the IMP, she valued integrating students’ home cultures and their funds of knowledge in her classes and thought it was possible to do so through the new curriculum. Despite her ideological difference from her mentor, she asserted agency to intentionally direct the contour of her teacher identity (Olsen, 2016; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016) as her ELLs’ advocate and aligned with the meanings and understandings of teaching ESOL that she had discursively constructed (Mantero, 2004; Trent, 2012). She did not have the chance to enact her teacher identity in her teaching practice the way she wanted, but she maintained a consonance between her response and identity at individual level.

### ***Legitimacy through work space***

Zoe, Elizabeth and Leslie stated that they felt more concrete recognition and acknowledgement in the professional community, which impacted their feelings of belonging and membership to that community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), when they had their own designated physical work space in their respective classrooms. Leslie identified work space as an issue in her high school internship, which was mainly because of the stark difference between her two placements. She said: “having a room in elementary school made me feel like a regular staff member of that school. I had

my own space. The [secondary] school I'm at now, I had to ask for a drawer" (Leslie, Interview 1, 01/28/2013). Not having a work station in the high school, she could not imagine herself as a regular member of the school community.

Leslie further elucidated the work space problem in the second interview. Because she was not provided a specified work space in the ESOL office, her students were not able to locate her when they needed to meet with her. Leslie did not "exist" in her students' school navigation "device" and her location could not be found:

It was hard to get work done when you didn't, when I didn't have my own designated space and computer. High school, switching between two classrooms sometimes made things confusing, and hard moving with the kids through the hallways, but it was fine, I didn't have my own computer there, either. But it also made it harder for the kids to find me, like if I'm meeting with some of them over lunch, I was sometimes worried they wouldn't know where I would be (Leslie, Interview 2, 08/22/2013).

Leslie did not have a physical reference point and she needed a particular location in the school which was known to her students and anybody else working with her in the school community so that she could function well in the school context. She needed people to know where she "belonged" in terms of space, which would facilitate her LPP and identity as a teacher in that particular school setting (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Leslie felt this would give her and others "an infrastructure for imagination" of her membership to the ESOL department and to the school community (Wenger, 1998, p. 238).

Zoe had a work space designated for her in both placements, which she believed validated and legitimized her presence in the classroom. She explicated:

Having my own space at [the name of the high school] was really nice, ...It's a power symbol to the students... I think [my mentor] definitely deserves a lot of credit there for giving me that power and that space in that classroom ... it definitely showed the students that I had a spot in that classroom, even when I was new ... I had a strong presence there, ... my name was on the desk (Zoe, Interview 2, 08/10/2013)

In these comments, Zoe underscored that having her own work station in both of her internship placements positively affected the way her students perceived and acknowledged her status and power in the classroom. She "had a strong presence" in the classroom thanks to this status and power, and this helped her status, interactions, and relationships with students.

In Elizabeth's case, having an office space facilitated building collegial relationships with other teachers. In her high school placement, she was given a work space in the planning area just adjacent to her mentor's desk and this gave her access to working with other teachers in the area. She commented:

I didn't have a spot in the classroom. I always had a spot away from the classroom. So it was just a planning area ... the school has instructional rooms where teachers have their own desks. They don't have to stay in their classroom. They can get a desk as well. So my mentor has a desk and she has a table next to her that I'm using... It was good to have my own space, for sure... in terms of working with other teachers it was helpful because I was always able to talk with the other teachers in the room. (Elizabeth, Interview 1, 02/01/2013)

Elizabeth's designated space was away from the classroom where she taught her ELLs. Because she had a space of her own in the planning area where other teachers were located, during her planning time she had the opportunity to exchange ideas with the other teachers along with her mentor teacher, which helped her immerse and situate herself as a member in the professional community. Thereby, Elizabeth was able to establish and maintain her interaction with the other members of the school community, which was a significant part of her own "evolving membership" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Physically, the planning area, and dialogically, her interaction with the other teachers constituted the loci where participants of the community shared their understandings about their joint enterprise as ESOL teachers (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

### ***Emotional responses as identity negotiation***

During their year-long practicum, Zoe, Elizabeth, and Leslie experienced various emotional states and began to learn how to interpret and regulate these states. Their emotional experiences drew their attention to the relationship between their aspirations, commitments, and functioning in the professional community (Benesch, 2017, 2018; Kelchtermans, 2005; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016; Rivera Maulucci, 2013; Yazan & Peercy, 2016). For example, Zoe's emotions were entwined with the ways she handled classroom management issues and developed her own strategies for how to interact with students:

Every day you'll become more confident in your own thing because you don't want to deal with a class that doesn't have rules or a class that doesn't have orderly routines. That is stressful and hard. I would say I definitely observed my mentors implement their own management in different ways. Management isn't all about punishing and enforcing rules; it's setting the boundaries and showing that compassion. I was able to observe that first and then implement my own, so it was almost like mimicking, I would see what they do, see what I liked, see what I wanted to change about what they did, maybe add something new, and then do it when I was teaching my own lessons. ... Instead of yelling at them all the time to be quiet, I'm going to get quiet, and then they'll see that Ms. Zoe isn't talking and she's just standing there, and that spooks them more than me calling kids names. That one I learned quickly. (Zoe, Interview 2, 08/10/2013)

Zoe felt that it would be "stressful and hard" not to have certain classroom routines and rules. This impending negative emotional state led her to closely observe her mentors and develop strategies of classroom management that aligned with her conception of teaching. She framed herself as a caring and compassionate teacher, which factored into her approach to classroom management. She needed to ensure the accordance between her teaching and her aspired and imagined identity as an ESOL teacher which were intertwined with her emotions.

In Elizabeth's case, she felt pressure because of the time constraints not only impacting her lesson preparation but also in-class practice. To balance the demands of the curriculum and students' needs, she had to assert her agency and make strategic decisions. She explained:

I was constantly stressed by just being prepared and ready. There's just not enough time, I feel like, in a day to teach your class and then prepare for the next class, so just time management was always just an issue for me and even within the classroom I was always just feeling a little stressed like, "Oh we got to cover all this stuff." So, that – that was frustrating... then you throw stuff out if you see that you're running out of time. ...you have

to make good decisions for the students and for what needs to get done. So I think it's a complicated choice. (Elizabeth, Interview 2, 08/11/2013)

Relying on her instructional values and priorities as a teacher, Elizabeth felt responsibility to cover the curriculum and to effectively serve her ELLs at the same time. She was stressed and frustrated when her planning and teaching were negatively restricted by what content she was supposed to teach in a given lesson period. Her emotions of stress and frustration reflected her appraisal of the recurrent teaching-related incident that impeded her from enacting her teacher identity (Benesch, 2017, 2018; Zembylas, 2003; Zembylas & Schutz, 2016). They were part of the process of making “a complicated choice” about her teaching and signaled what was important for her as a teacher to address. She was agentive and strategic enough to make decisions to modify the lesson on the spot, cut some content out, and keep what she felt her students needed. In other words, she attended to the source of her negative emotional state through instructional decisions.

When examining the data from Leslie, it was clear that she had happy moments when bonding with her students through “honest conversations” and those moments signaled what she valued in her teaching as an ESOL teacher. She prioritized establishing rapport with her students because she believed that trust was a prerequisite for them to “want to communicate” with her. She remarked:

I think that level of trust and understanding is very important. ... They have to fight to communicate, and they have to want to communicate with you. They have to trust that you're going to receive them well. It's all about that communication, and if they don't trust you enough to speak, it's going to be hard for them to open up in the classroom. ... It was really exciting when they came to me for help during lunchtime. ... And when we had those honest conversations about what they wanted to do, where they wanted to go, things that they thought were funny about American culture. ... I love those conversations, I loved letting them know that we're all there for them. (Leslie, Interview 2, 08/22/2013)

Leslie's happiness and excitement demonstrated what she cared about in her teaching and what kind of ESOL teacher she imagined becoming. In her projected self as an ESOL teacher, one of her major responsibilities was to ensure that her ELLs feel well-received, recognized, valued, and comfortable in and out of her classes in order to “open up.” She was attentive to her students' feelings as an important factor in their willingness to communicate and learn. This was one of her priorities that mattered most for her, and shaped her interactions with ELLs, as well as the direction of her commitments, energy, and efforts.

### **Discussion**

The findings empirically and conceptually add to the ongoing discussion on LTI in two ways. First, our findings demonstrate that language teachers (re)construct their identities at the intersection of social dynamics and individual agency (Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Martel, 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016), which corroborates the complex dimensions of teacher identities explored in earlier research (see Akkerman & Meijer, 2011 for a review). Our findings direct particularly to the social-individual dimension, whereas the other two dimensions in the previous studies are multiplicity-unity and discontinuity-continuity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). The participants' self-identification as ELL teachers drives their actions and engagement in teaching and learning to teach ELLs, but they also need legitimation and validation from other community members in their teaching context. Teacher identity construction is not completely an individual process. On the other hand, it is not solely molded by the expectations, values, and meanings embedded in the context. Second, the findings

shared here illustrate that teacher learning, cognition, and emotions are intertwined within the process of teacher identity formation (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Hargreaves, 1998; Kelchtermans, 2005). Language teachers' professional learning experiences lead them to revisit and revise their cognitions about learning and teaching of language learners. They cognitively and emotionally respond to the situations they encounter in their learning and practice and their cognition and emotions inform their teaching decisions. Understanding their identities entails capitalizing on the intricacies involved in their leaning, cognition, and emotions. The following section further unpacks both arguments about LTI formation that support the instrumentality of teacher identity as a theoretical lens to gain a nuanced picture of language teachers' preparation and growth.

### ***Teacher identity: nexus of individual and social***

Looking at evidence from the data such as Leslie's handling of the ideological conflict with her mentor, we assert that individual and social dynamics are in ongoing interaction (and contestation at times) in language teachers' identity negotiation. LTI formation transpires at the nexus of their self-identification and others' acknowledgement and validation, which teachers negotiate through their engagement in the activities of professional community (Wenger, 1998). In other words, teachers need their identity to be recognized and validated by others (Gee, 2000; Jenkins, 2008), and this need is felt more intensely during teacher education program and in the earlier years of their career (Bullock, 2013; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010; Ulvik & Langorgen, 2012). The winding journey of teacher identity construction involves a complex and multifaceted symbiosis between individual aspirations and ideals, and social interactions with others in professional settings. That is, teachers cannot construct their identities solely based on their individual aspirations and commitment to teaching, because they need to adjust their vision of self (Duffy, 2002; Hammerness, 2003, 2008) according to the demands of their teaching context (Flores, 2006). Whereas social and individual dimensions complement each other in this construction, they also bring about tensions or conflicts between teachers' agency, intentionality, and imagination (Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Martel, 2015), and the affordances and constraints available in the social, institutional, and programmatic contexts (Gu & Benson, 2015; Ilieva, 2010). As Varghese (2006) notes, "structural influences and agentive factors often feed into each other," leading to various forms of (non)participation (p. 222). Preservice teachers refine and refashion their identities as they negotiate those tensions or conflicts (Clarke, 2008; Trent, 2012), particularly at the stage where they transition from being a student to being a teacher. This "limbic stage of becoming" (Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009, p. 931) is ripe for such negotiation because preservice teachers find themselves in an uncertain transitional space which is not entirely theirs (Britzman, 2003; Bullock, 2013). What is more, their preconceptions about language teaching and learning are not always recognized and explored as resources to build on in teacher education practices (Reeves, 2018).

For example, Leslie had to handle a conflict, or "a dissonance," between what she believed she was supposed to practice with respect to the integration of students' cultural backgrounds, and what she was asked to practice in the teaching practicum. More specifically, she was against an essentialized conceptualization of culture in the older curriculum to which her mentor teacher required Leslie to adhere, and this represented an ideological divergence between Leslie and her mentor. Responding to this "inevitable stumbling" as part of her identity negotiation (Wenger, 1998, p. 101), Leslie wanted to assert her agency and incorporate her ELLs' home cultures in her lessons, but she did not want to jeopardize her social legitimacy as a teacher (Danielewicz, 2001; Jenkins, 2008) primarily granted by her mentor. As an emerging ESOL teacher, she was invested in her ELLs' cultural identities (Reeves, 2009). However, because of her dependence on being given access and legitimacy in the internship space by her mentor, she could not enact what she imagined. Leslie's negotiation

still reflected some autonomy in the way she framed teacher identity. Although her need for social legitimacy precluded her from enacting her imagined identity, her negotiation still seemed to converge on her self-identification and she valued the integration of ELLs' home cultures in her instruction.

### ***Teacher identity: learning, emotion and cognition***

The research findings revealed that LTI affords a lens to capture the intricate relationship between the three interlocking dimensions of teachers' professional life, practice, and growth: learning, emotion, and cognition (Benesch, 2017, 2018; Bullock, 2013; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016). When Zoe, Elizabeth, and Leslie engaged in teaching practice and interacted with students and colleagues in the teaching practicum, they had the opportunity to practice various emotional states (Dang, 2013; Golombek, 2015; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Yazan & Peery, 2016). Their emotional responses to instructional or non-instructional incidents in their daily teaching were not only indicative of their cognition but also conducive to their learning about their work and themselves (Bullock, 2013; Zembylas, 2003; Zembylas & Schutz, 2016). Because their "emotions are rooted in their cognitions" (Nias, 1996, p. 294), handling emotional experiences was part of their learning to teach ELLs.

For instance, Zoe's experience negotiating her cognition and emotions with regard to classroom management illustrates the interrelation between teacher learning, cognition, and emotions. Working with ESOL students as an intern, Zoe believed that having no class rules and routines would lead to potential "stressful and hard" situations, which could be source of more negative emotional states in her teaching. She noticed that she needed to create her own classroom management strategies in order to eschew stressful and hard situations. This led her to have keener observation of her mentor teachers for focused teacher learning, and construct her meanings of classroom management in her teacher cognition. However, she did not want to present herself as a teacher who yelled at her students and called them names when managing her classes. Therefore, her self-image or vision (Hammerness, 2003, 2008) as a caring and compassionate ESOL teacher factored into the way she framed her ideal set of classroom management strategies. She had to balance the pressing need to avoid potential negative feelings like stress and her image as a teacher handling classroom management situations by showing that she cared for her students. Zoe's emotions informed her agency assertion, and investment in teacher learning and shaped her cognitions about class rules and interactions with her students (Golombek, 2015). We suggest that using identity as a framework to scrutinize teacher preparation and development (Olsen, 2016) allows teacher educators and researchers to attain deeper insights into complex dynamics of learning, emotion, and cognition.

### **Implications**

Teaching practicum experiences are important for preservice teachers' identity formation. They represent the first step into the profession that comes with opportunities to engage in teaching practice, interact with students, colleagues, and parents, and to apprentice into the community of teaching. However, those experiences are fraught with conflicts and contradictions and as newcomers of the teaching profession, preservice teachers are more prone to sensitivity and vulnerability during their early teaching experiences (Kelchtermans & Deketelaere, 2016). Therefore, preservice teachers need substantive support from teacher educators, university supervisors, and mentor teachers during their teaching practicum. Preservice teachers should know that cognitive and emotional challenges and contradictions are a normal part of their growth as professionals, but they need guidance and support when negotiating and handling those challenges and contradictions.

Mentor teachers are expected to provide support for preservice teachers while they are going through their transformation into a professional and being accepted into the new professional community. However, there is significant variance in how they carry out their roles and no guarantee that mentors facilitate preservice teachers' professional apprenticeship and socialization. Mentor teachers should know that as "old timers" of the professional community, they function as gatekeepers with regard to preservice teachers' social legitimacy which is a crucial part of their identity construction (Wenger, 1998, p. 156). They should afford preservice teachers the dialogic and physical space to assert their agency and to negotiate their investment in and commitment to ELLs' education.

Moreover, teacher education programs (TEPs) should raise preservice teachers' awareness about their identity transformation, and infuse teacher identity formation as their conscious goal across all teacher education activities (Loughran, 2014). Preservice teachers should know what constructing a teacher identity encompasses and be able to intentionally take ownership of their professional growth, which can diminish their potential sensitivity and vulnerability. This ownership also helps preservice teachers to foresee some potential identity shifts as they engage in further teaching practice and negotiate their identities in relation to their professional goals and contextual demands. Thus, TEPs could play a critical role in teacher retention and job satisfaction. Additionally, consciously directing their identity formation, preservice ESOL teachers can better facilitate their ELLs' cultural and linguistic identity negotiation in the classes they teach. When they know their investment in teaching is shaped by their identities, they can better understand how their ELLs' investment in language learning is informed by their identities (Reeves, 2009).

Lastly, TEPs should provide preservice teachers with safe spaces to share, express, and discuss their emotions in relation to their cognitions and teaching practice. In those spaces, preservice teachers should externalize and analyze their emotional experiences and their intricate connection to their cognitions and teaching practice. For example, a teacher educator could regularly meet with all preservice teachers engaged in their teaching practicum to initiate and facilitate their engagement in critical discussions of their experiences in the schools. In such gatherings, preservice teachers could be encouraged to talk about their (positive and negative) emotions borne out of their interactions with and responses to students, colleagues, parents, and curriculum. Preservice teachers should discern the connection between their cognitions and emotions, which builds further "self-knowledge" about their emotions in practice (Zembylas, 2003) and impacts their investment in and commitment to teacher learning and practice. Conceiving negotiation of their emotions as part of their professional growth, they should also learn how to handle their emotional responses in their instructional context and use those responses as windows for further teacher reflection.

### **Conclusion**

This study provided insights into the contributions of field-based practicum experiences to three ESOL preservice teachers' teacher identity formation. Their identities were formed and informed by their agency, intentionality, commitment, and investment as well as others' recognition and contextual factors. Their emerging identities afforded a window into the complexities of preservice ESOL teachers' learning, cognitions, and emotions. Furthermore, the teaching practicum provided a site and space for preservice teachers not only for practicing language teaching, but also for identifying, and enacting various emotions as an essential part of teaching.

Identity as a framework for guiding teacher education leads to some fundamental changes in the ways we view preservice teachers' growth and structure TEPs (Reeves, 2018). The nature of LTI

both resists and “risks being modularized” in dominant language teacher education discourses (Morgan, 2004, p. 177). However, TEPs should overtly infuse and promote teacher identity formation as critical to understanding teacher learning and growth across all language teacher education activities. Teacher identity as a framework does not negate the existing language teacher knowledge base, but it necessitates transcending the traditional practices of teacher preparation (Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016), which have tended to solely focus on introducing teachers to decontextualized knowledge of language acquisition theories, and one-size-fits-all teaching methods and techniques. Explicit focus on identity in language teacher education promote the ways in which teachers construct and claim ownership of their instructional values, priorities and commitment as a teacher (Yazan, 2018). Such a focus also raises preservice teachers' awareness about (a) how their identities serve as a lens and resource when understanding and shaping their practice as well as further learning to teach, and (b) how they will have to continue renegotiating and reconstructing their identities at the nexus of their individual aspirations, investment, and agency and sociocultural and sociopolitical dynamics and demands in their teaching contexts. This helps preservice teachers' transition and transformation from student to teacher which involves cognitive and emotional engagement in the negotiation of who they are and who they aspire to become as teachers.

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