EFL Teachers' Professional Identity: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Identidad profesional de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera: un análisis crítico del discurso

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This study uses critical discourse analysis to explore the identities of three university English teachers. The research identifies ideological elements in language teaching and cultural transmission practices, following the post-structuralist literature on their role in shaping personal and professional identities. Findings are presented through extracts from narrative and semi-structured interviews, highlighting the political, cultural, academic, and personal subject positioning in teachers' discourse. Critical discourse analysis elucidated the participants' views on teaching and cultural practices on an ethical level. The conclusions propose a possible revision of their professional identities based on discourse analysis, contributing to a deeper understanding of teachers' responsibilities towards language education. This was done with the construction of an interpretative profile with prescriptive aspects to enhance each participant's teaching practice.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, EFL teachers, Mexico, professional identity

Este estudio utiliza el análisis crítico del discurso para explorar la identidad profesional de tres docentes universitarios de inglés. La investigación identifica elementos ideológicos en las prácticas de enseñanza de lenguas y de transmisión cultural, en la configuración de identidades personales y profesionales. Los hallazgos se presentan a través de extractos de entrevistas narrativas que destacan el posicionamiento político, cultural, académico y personal dentro del discurso de los docentes. El análisis crítico del discurso dilucida las perspectivas de los participantes sobre la enseñanza y las prácticas culturales en un nivel ético. Las conclusiones ofrecen una posible revisión de sus identidades profesionales a partir del análisis del discurso y así contribuyen a una comprensión más profunda de la responsabilidad docente en relación con la educación lingüística.

Palabras clave: análisis crítico del discurso, identidad profesional, maestros de inglés como lengua extranjera, México

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Introduction

Teachers' professional identity is a complex, multidimensional construct that results from societal practices and social and individual interactions within specific contexts, such as education (Gur, 2014). Studying teachers' professional identity in the English as a foreign language (EFL) field has generated considerable research and literature (Beijaard et al., 2004). Within these studies, critical theories have focused on the genealogy of identity derived from power relationships, ideology, and discourse (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2013; Foucault, 1978; Kramsch & Hua, 2016; Norton, 2013; Wodak, 2015). This formative research focuses on ideology in education within the Mexican EFL teaching context, exploring the discourses of three EFL teachers regarding their teaching experiences. As in many other aspects of an individual's life, educational models are built around certain discourses and language that inevitably shape the individual's identity. Thus, it is important to focus on those discourses to better understand the identity formation process.

Using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, this paper explores the narratives (as a form of discourse) of a group of EFL teachers to uncover the underlying ideologies shaping their professional identity (how they go about enacting their roles as teachers). As Fairclough (2013) points out, discourse is a linguistic phenomenon with ideological implications that may be experienced and understood differently by teachers, as evidenced by the way they incorporate such ideological elements into their identity and professional practice (Pavlenko, 2002). Owing to these elements, special focus on how teachers perceive the cultural dimension of language transmission gains relevance as part of their professional identity. In regard to how the use of CDA can relate to this exploration, Rogers et al. (2005) state "that the analysis of sociocultural practice includes an exploration of what is happening in a particular sociocultural framework" (p. 371).

In other words, applying the model in research (Torres-Rocha, 2019) has shown how this in-depth post-structural methodological framework can address the world's social, political, and economic issues in teaching practice. As studied in literature and research (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2013; Foucault, 1978; van Dijk, 2011; Wodak, 2015), through discourse, naturalised and internalised aspects of these ideologies may permeate the cultural dimension of language transmission. However, these can be analysed and challenged by vindicating discursive manifestations of resistance through research.

In sum, in this study, particular importance is given to the teachers' personal and professional experiences and views, as well as those in contrast to their teaching practice. This may prove useful for understanding the reproduction of ideology through discursive practices in the classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Defining Identity

Foucault (1978) studied how identity is shaped by history, ideology, and politics in the form of a relationship between knowledge and power. He argues that part of our endeavours within the academic field is to raise awareness and provide means for the people to speak for themselves. This means that there is an immanent responsibility in how discourse manifests in each of us. Thus, exploring the political dimension of teaching in a multicultural, globalised world may prove helpful for teachers who seek to enrich their understanding of their professional development.

Some examples of resistance to the perilous manifestations of ideology in education have emerged in the form of critical studies, which analyse ideology in the context of power relations and the interests of dominant groups. Examples in the EFL field include gender studies (Wodak, 2015), professionalism as a form of political awareness (Torres-Rocha, 2019), ideology

and identity construction in power relations (Norton, 2013), among many others. Norton (2013) emphasises that a poststructuralist understanding of identity and second language acquisition holds great potential to "educators committed to educational and social change" (p. 71). This transformative potential is particularly evident within avant-garde educational views, where critical theories and the poststructuralist paradigm are gaining relevance and notoriety.

Discursive Practice and Identity

Derrida (1967/1976) introduces the identification of a binary quality of meaning-making, indicating that a person's socially constructed "identity is defined as much by what it is not as by what it is" (p. 44). Simply put, the characteristics of an individual's identity are established on a dialectic of similarity and opposition towards others. In discursive practice, this takes the form of the reproduction of a predominant discourse as a means of constructing one's identity in opposition to others. Batha (2004) says that "this has generated dialogue about identity deficits and the privileging of certain explanations of events, experiences and identities over others" (p. 6). Hence, it is possible to visualise the relationships of power that permeate identity construction.

Kristeva (1986) further argues that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p. 37). This means that the structure of identity and texts shares the same principles. In dialectics, opposition and integration are not contradictory. Aspects of thought in language and actions are both what people manifest and avoid, transforming those involved in language. Complementary to this, the premise suggests that identity relies on a priori constructions to make meaning. The main concern about this arises from the possibility of previously internalised meanings that provide sustenance to unethical practices permeating the construction of seemingly new identities.

To further enhance understanding of the non-fixed facets of identity and its relationship with ethics, Gergen (1985) claims that meanings are "social artefacts and products of historically situated interchange" (pp. 266–269). Therefore, identity relies on socially agreed-upon descriptions and ideas based on a culture's historical context. The notion of socially constructed identities presents us with meaning-making that requires dialogic and dialectic processes among the involved parties.

Post-Structuralism and Studies in EFL Teachers' Professional Identity

Foucault (1978) analyses ideology as transmitting ideas and perceptions manifesting in collective and individual behaviour. For the author, the ideological component in language is localised in discourse as a representation system. Thus, post-structuralism refers to analysing sociological, political, and historical aspects of culture that shape discourse, meaning, and identity. The relationship between discourse and identity in post-structuralism has led to a different understanding of professional identity in the EFL field. Regarding this, Torres-Rocha (2019) states that:

> Nowadays, a globally-minded identity of professional ELT practitioners is necessary due to political, economic, cultural and market factors that have positioned Western epistemologies in ELT rather than those of EFL local communities . . . ELT professionalism has been constructed based on power and knowledge differentials that privilege the inner countries and native speakers and mask the subordination of peripheral countries and non-native speakers. (pp. 156–157)

In other words, emerging studies on EFL teachers' professional identity have focused on the role of discourse and the current educational context, particularly its political and cultural elements. A multidisciplinary review focused on EFL teachers' experiences with a post-structuralist paradigm encompasses the elements needed for these studies.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The research on CDA and teachers' identity can be seen mainly in the literature by Fairclough (2013) and van Dijk (2011), who proposed the sociolinguistic elements that integrate a framework to analyse the structures of ideology and relationships of power in discourse. From a practical viewpoint, Wodak (2015) and van Dijk (2011) have found that implementing the CDA framework allows one to understand identity construction through discourse in different social contexts.

The CDA field has drawn its epistemological basis and criteria from post-structural studies, primarily exemplified in the work of Bourdieu (1991) and Foucault (1978). In addition, a framework for linguistic analysis has been developed, providing a whole corpus of theoretical and practical elements. For Wodak (2015),

> CDA is a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research programme, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods, and agendas. What unites all approaches is a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, and political-economic, social, or cultural change in society. (p. 15)

The understanding of discourse within CDA involves a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the historical background, institutions, and social structures that frame it. This means that "the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them" (Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Through this analysis, it is possible to interpret that discourse follows a cyclical nature of social construction. To synthesise this:

> Discursive practices may have major ideological effects; that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between, for instance, social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258)

In sum, discourse serves as a structuring force, helping to sustain the interests of specific agendas by reproducing the social status quo. However, by exposing the power structure, discourse can simultaneously bring about transformation to the status quo. Thus, as discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Because of this, ethical implications arise for the academic communities to raise awareness of this ideological phenomenon as a means of resistance. This is especially relevant to language/cultural transmission, such as in the EFL field. Within this, CDA has been presented as a relevant instrument to counteract the more perilous manifestations of conservative ideology.

Cots (2006) explores how discourse identity in CDA allows teachers to shape their identities as texts, where they become both authors and subjects. In the classroom, teachers' identities are not static but emerge through discourse, creating opportunities for others to interpret them in multiple ways. Additionally, identity, as constructed through discourse, becomes a visible performance, shaped by actions, interactions, and written reflections. In this process, teachers craft a self-portrait through their engagement with students and educational practices. Finally, teachers shape thought and discourse in others as much as they are shaped by them; this process itself defines the identity of those within the academic community on both sides. This is why it is necessary to address linguistic and cultural exchange, understanding them as parallels.

Method

This research is a qualitative narrative inquiry that employed CDA. Qualitative research emphasises the understanding of people by exploring the "narratives of individuals and groups by interacting with them, observing their behaviour, and considering how the nuances of a context may influence their perspectives and experiences" (Jameel et al., 2018, p. 1). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) indicate that it is "multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2). This interpretation is achieved by interlacing people's perceptions with a variety of

empirical materials. These materials and interpretations may follow "a wide range of unconnected methods" (Kumar, 2013, p. 1). Furthermore, qualitative research explores the human aspects of all observable phenomena. Narrative inquiry was chosen to explore individual discursive practices from EFL teachers as a phenomenon occurring in a bounded context where "narrative inquiry brings storytelling and research together either by using stories as research data or by using storytelling as a tool for data analysis or presentation of findings" (Barkhuizen et al., 2013, p. 4). This is the case in the present inquiry, given that this study encompasses professional identity as revealed in discourse within the teaching context.

Context and Participants

The present study was conducted at a public university in Mexico. The study focused on three EFL university teachers who are native speakers of Spanish and have been teaching English in an undergraduate programme and in other contexts. The primary criterion for selecting participants was their availability and willingness to share personal thoughts and actions related to their professional practice. Thus, convenience sampling was employed for selecting participants owing to the "difficulty of using other samples" (Richards, 2003, p. 250).

As stated in the consent forms signed by the three participants, they were given pseudonyms to protect their identity and grant confidentiality.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews (Richards, 2003). Each participant agreed to be interviewed via videoconference using the Zoom platform, a choice made to respect their time and convenience. The researcher designed a comprehensive guide before he conducted the interviews ensuring that all necessary topics, such as teaching experience in their particular contexts, important aspects for the teachers within and outside the classrooms regarding the use of EFL, cultural aspects, and the use of the target language,

were covered during the "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984). Each interview lasted one and a half hours and was transcribed verbatim. These transcriptions served as the texts for analysis. The data was triangulated through the three levels of the CDA framework. The first dimension, or textual level, consists of the raw discourse presented by the participants. A brief narration of this is displayed through extracts from the interview. The second dimension follows the descriptive level of the production and reception of discourse. A way to understand this in the present inquiry can be observed in the forms of discourse in the participants' teaching practices, as they employ the participants' perceptions and experiences that were narrated. Each participant had a different outlook on the interview topics, which allowed the description of their relation to cultural practices in language production contexts. The third dimension explores the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes. In this inquiry, this dimension took the form of the ideological context. This is, in other words, the level of explanation. In it, the socio-cultural practices that may influence the production of the discourse are displayed. The use of CDA as a framework for this inquiry was made possible by the pluralist nature of qualitative research (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). Table 1 shows the researcher's procedure for the data analysis.

Findings

This research aimed to analyse how the participants' professional identity has been influenced by the cultural and ideological elements identifiable using a CDA framework. This allowed a display of each participant's discourse alongside the categories that emerged from the analysis of the interviews. This was built upon the researcher's interpretation of the data and included in a general overview of their specific professional identity. For each participant, the categories that emerged from analysing their interview transcripts explored their perceptions regarding language teaching and cultural transmission, the ideological implications of the analysed

Table 1. Implementation of the Critical Discourse Analysis Framework in the Collected Research Material

Textual analysis	Data collected from critical/discursive incidents in the form of recordings and transcripts
Discourse practice	Identification and interpretation of the ideological elements' alignment with professional identity in TEFL praxis as narrated by the participant
Sociocultural practice	Analysis and explanation of the ideological phenomena present in the formation of the analysed discourse

discourse, and how these implications manifested in their professional praxis. The criteria align with the textual and processing levels in the CDA framework. The third level of analysis in the framework provides a sociocultural explanation, incorporating elements of power relationships that emerge in line with the analysed data. With all the previous aspects covered, an interpretation of the structuring elements of the participants' professional identity can be outlined.

Arturo

Arturo is a 36-year-old EFL teacher with a BA in English Language and an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. He has been teaching EFL to groups of students whose proficiency ranges from A1 to C1, primarily at university-level, private schools, and language centres, for 11 years. His teaching experience spans national and international contexts, encompassing both online and classroom-based instruction. Arturo has travelled abroad to the United States.

Arturo sees himself as a traditional teacher, so his self-perception as a teacher mostly follows that of a traditional teacher. Through descriptive level analysis in this version of his professional identity, Arturo appears to be focused on repeating the ideological discourse of institutions and sociocultural views on teachers. This is evident in aspects of the discursive nature of practice in EFL teachers, which focuses on the linguistic parameters of language, aligning directly with the structural methods of traditional teaching. At this level, Arturo's self-perceived professional identity is based on teaching efficiently.

I think I am not a stick-to-the-book teacher, but every time I teach a class, I try to focus my attention on the content that I am supposed to teach, whatever it costs. I know other teachers like talking about topics unrelated to what they are supposed to be teaching.

However, as Arturo narrates more aspects of his experience, key components of his practice start to emerge. During the interview, an initial lack of awareness of how Arturo approached the sociocultural dimension in English language teaching classes became apparent. However, through his narration, Arturo unveils a profound understanding of the ideological implications of language transmission, as visualised in the analysed discourse and manifestations of professional practice:

We also know it's impossible to solely use the content or the conversations in the textbook because we know how to engage other people, in this case, my students. However, I must be very careful with the things I say, because I am fully aware that whatever I say may have an impact on my students and give them some model for them to spread to others afterwards.

Arturo focuses on avoiding the repetition of authoritarian and discriminatory views on those involved in education, particularly his students. Arturo shares an anecdote where his students wanted to elicit a negative opinion concerning other teachers' accents when speaking in English:

For instance, when some students ask, "Hey, teacher, what do you think about this other teacher?" I know that this teacher has some issues with pronunciation. Then I realise

they expect me to say something bad about that teacher or to mock his pronunciation. But my answer is something like, "The main thing is to get the message across. Have you ever thought that pronunciation is not the main thing when speaking English as a foreign language? It is just a part of being able to speak a foreign language; it's not the most important aspect." This is something I tell them. "Whether you take on a general conversation or response, think that you can also feel proud. You can take pride in having a Mexican pronunciation. Why not?" And that will be an example for them. Still, I don't want to impose or anything like that. But I do want to emphasise the importance of respectful communication in our diverse learning environment.

Arturo's reaction to the students' intent to mock other teachers' pronunciation shows his concern towards discriminatory practices. The attitude displayed by the students in this situation follows the sociocultural context of discrimination. Despite being affected by this context, as stated through his anecdote, Arturo instils a sense of pride in using English with a Mexican pronunciation. This manifests as a form of resistance to a dominant ideology, opting for a critical take. Through a critical lens, dominant ideologies inject the notion of a correct use of language, whilst language practice varies in accents and pronunciation. A discriminatory attitude towards differences in language use can be seen as a means for perpetuating hegemony. At the same time, Arturo allows students to reflect and develop their pronunciation attributes:

> I try to warn my students in a realistic way, not because I believe it will happen to them, but because it has happened to me. For example, I once shared with them an experience at a restaurant in the USA where someone commented, "Oh, you've got a funny accent," which made me feel bad. I remind them that they should be proud of who they are, regardless of what others say. Everyone has the choice to pronounce words in their own way, and they can decide to do their best. There's nothing wrong with that.

Another example of the elements within Arturo's professional identity and discourse, regarding authority and dominant ideologies, is his relationship to his work institution. Arturo's discourse contemplates institutions with respect and professional values. However, when questioned about professionalism, Arturo defends his approach by stating that he follows the integral rules for teaching, despite not fully adopting imposed ideas. Nevertheless, he disagrees when forced to submit to authoritarian policies that can be used to describe him as unprofessional. Arturo's discourse manifests resistance to professionalism, understood as submission to authority or ideologies. In this context, "professionalism" is not just about following the rules, but also about maintaining one's integrity and resisting oppressive practices.

> Sometimes I have done, and it's a confession, probably. Some things that they require from me, like maybe they ask for my attendance at meetings or teaching some cultural stereotypes, and if I don't do what they say, then I am not professional . . . So I think that affects my professionalism and, well, to be honest, I don't care. But regarding all the activities inside the classroom, I think I have great rapport with my students and teach them to respect diversity . . . I mean, in that sense, I know I am being professional, you know?

Bernardo

Bernardo is 27 years old. He holds a BA in English and was pursuing an MA in Education at the time of the study. He has four years of teaching experience at all educational levels, teaching EFL from A1 to B2 proficiency levels. His students' ages range from 5 to 40. His teaching has been conducted primarily in private schools, and he spent his early years in the United States. On a textual level of analysis, Bernardo manifests a clear vocation for teaching. This vocation appears to be rooted in his experiences as a person, learner, and teacher. Owing to this, his professional identity seems directly related to his personal life, which is the most noticeable

aspect of his views on professionalism. A general care for understanding his students emerges constantly in Bernardo's discourse. However, his particular interest in certain students stems from what he identifies as their attitudes. His experiences abroad have greatly influenced his perceptions as a learner and a person. This manifests constantly in his discourse and serves as a direction for Bernardo's teaching:

> When I was around nine years old, I had the opportunity to live in the US for three years. This immersion in a language-rich environment was instrumental in my language learning journey. It was during this time that I learned and practised English a lot. The potential future benefits of this language, as highlighted by my parents, friends, and acquaintances, served as a powerful motivator for me to continue learning. Everybody told me that knowing English would be a great advantage to get better jobs in Mexico.

However, there are slight inconsistencies between the textual, descriptive and sociocultural levels in Bernardo's discourse. An example of this can be seen in the following extract, which concerns the higher value given to students and colleagues who intend to travel abroad compared to those with other interests within the language.

> For example, a teacher who may have had the opportunity to travel abroad. I think that nowadays it's something common and usual for my students. I think maybe in the places that I have worked, because well, all have been private schools. So, most of the students, um, have those opportunities to interact with the language. But for example, people that, I don't know, maybe they're illiterate. They don't have that kind of experience, and they are not accustomed to that kind of interactions regarding people from other parts of the world.

More so, it is important to point out that Bernardo is aware that only a particular few are able to engage in this form of cultural exchange:

I have had very, very few students that have travelled abroad and not only to the United States, but they have also had the opportunity to visit other countries. So, I think that what has come from that very small population is that they also find my views quite interesting.

Given the position taken from this discursive perspective, Bernardo's interest in students who share his experience and love for travelling could leave or put aside those who have not had the same experience in travelling abroad. In Mexico, given the economic conditions of most of the population, travelling and experiencing culture abroad is extremely difficult. An example of these views is present within the following extract when Bernardo was asked about those unable to travel but who manifest an interest in the language:

> I'd like to mention that a very small portion of my students don't really care about learning from my experience abroad. For example, I have noticed that they are more attracted to the language that they see in social media, movies, cartoons, TV series . . . the language that we work with in the textbook or maybe, in the syllabus. But what I think, well, they have so many views these days. They say that is, um, well, it's enjoyable for them.

It may be interpreted, then, that Bernardo seems to have a slight preference towards students who intend to travel or have travelled. Nevertheless, he tries not to discriminate or leave behind students without that possibility.

When inquired about professionalism, Bernardo's discourse regarding professionalism highlighted discipline as a key aspect. It can be important to point out that when discussing discipline, Bernardo outlines a generalisation with stereotypical displays of oriental cultures and a contrast with Mexican practices:

> What is most important? It definitely is discipline, because, um, in order for you to achieve something, to learn something, you need discipline. You need discipline because you have to concentrate very well on what

you want to achieve in life. We know that discipline is not common here in Mexico or well with us Mexicans, but that is something that, maybe in Chinese culture, Japanese culture, they apply it a lot, in that they have a lot of discipline. That's how they achieve their goals. And that's why they have developed a lot, that's why they continue to create all this technology and to be good professionals.

Bernardo's notion of discipline can be explained through a sociocultural analysis by understanding the stereotypical conceptualisation of different countries portrayed within neocolonialism ideologies. Within this nature of discourse, Bernardo's ideologies are subtly conveyed. However, experience and knowledge of the multitude of cultures within the world might enhance a different approach and perspective in his language teaching practice.

In a nutshell, Bernardo's professional identity reveals an interest in developing and refining his teaching skills. However, he knows that his past experiences have shaped his identity, and he remains open to new experiences and their effects. Within these possibilities, enhancing cultural capital on multicultural diversity through research, an academic basis, and personal experience might prove useful. Ultimately, Bernardo's professional identity remains fresh and has the potential for change and development, which aligns with his own statements. Moreover, CDA has provided an exploration of this identity that allows pointing out the known and unknown elements within it to establish a base profile and subsequent possibilities to enhance professionalism in his own terms.

Carlos

Carlos is a 45-year-old EFL teacher with a BA in English and an MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. His initial professional practice focused on translation. However, in 2012, he became interested in teaching English and at the time of the interview, he had been teaching A1 to B2 proficiency levels of EFL for almost ten years to students in a private high school and a university, which has a profound impact on his identity as an EFL teacher since the kind of students that Carlos teaches in the private high school and the university come from very different socio-economic backgrounds. He had lived in Ireland for two years. Carlos's professional identity remains directly tied to his discursive nature. Moreover, the discursive nature, exemplifications in classroom practice, and general beliefs remained consistent throughout the interview. Furthermore, the CDA of Carlos's narration aligns the textual and descriptive levels in this coherence, while establishing a conflict relation towards Carlos's sociocultural background.

Firstly, Carlos's professional identity has been directly influenced by elements from his personal and professional backgrounds. Carlos has developed a humanitarian and equalitarian approach to his perception of others. This manifested itself during his time as a student, as he noticed the difficulties experienced by those around him. Through these observations, a desire to help and support his peers eventually emerged. Carlos's interest also aligns with this desire for cultural elements within language formation. Carlos manifests a clear interest in cultural capital, understood by Bourdieu (1986) as the combination of elements inherited from a social sphere that carry symbolic value in a culture and provide a form of social status. In this sense, knowledge and education are forms of cultural capital, providing them with a social position within a particular culture. This definition of cultural capital directly aligns with Carlos's, establishing a notion of his cultural capital. In this sense, Carlos developed an interest in culture and language, as well as his intent to provide those around him with tools to enhance their own cultural capital:

> Initially, I was inclined to translation . . . I was really into literature, but I met this teacher. He suggested to me to choose another area, and that was when I became

more aware that many students had difficulties because of the lack of knowledge and cultural capital, and I started noticing that it was because most of these people came from the countryside. So, they didn't have a good educational background . . . or an English language background. I started wondering about it. Right? So, I started thinking that it was a way I could contribute to a cause. So, I became interested in becoming a teacher.

Throughout Carlos's practice, he has been forced to engage and develop a stance towards these ideologies, which are present in his Catholic upbringing and his different working contexts:

> So, in my case, I wish I could say everything I want to in the classroom. Alright, so in my case, I would like to say that, well, I am in a Catholic school. So, you can't always say what you really think. You have to be coherent with what you think without being able to completely give in your opinion. Not being able to express freely with your peers. Like, well, I don't like it that much because for example I am not up for that and I have to teach my students from time to time using biblical passages or something like that, which are not alien to me, which are not that far from me because I, myself come from a hardcore Catholic family.

Nevertheless, Carlos's observational skills allowed him to interpret and distinguish the concerning aspects of these ideologies. Therefore, this contributed to the development of a position in which the knowledge acquired and the understanding of those involved can be used to share this capital without ideological reproduction. For Carlos, it is not about being better than others in any sense; instead, it is about understanding that different people carry different cultural capital that can be shared and enhanced through interaction. When asked about professionalism, he expressed the following:

> I would have to say that there are two stages of being professional or professionalism. On the one hand, uh, the

foundation of being professional is set on the practice of many values. Different values that tell you how to become aware of your limits. A set of values that tells you what you can or cannot do. That's professionalisation, uh, not only regarding the fact that we have to be respectful, conscious of the emotional nature of this, and aware of the different social origins your students come from, so that you don't offend them.

The analysed perspective implies that language, and especially language learning, carries the transmission of this form of cultural knowledge. In the following extract, we can see how Carlos strives to establish a teaching practice that adheres to ethical standards. He is now talking about his students at the private high school. These students' background context seems to be that of a bourgeois, elitist social sphere where his students' future obligations are dictated by their parents without other alternatives chosen by themselves. On the one hand, Carlos aims to use language and culture as a means to humanise these students, developing their interest in the course's topics. On the other hand, he aims to remind them of their roles as humans and the importance of establishing a doubt on elitist views:

> I must admit that most of my students simply go with the flow, maybe because they are teenagers, maybe because they come from wealthy families, but one of the main goals in life for them is to become the CEO of the family business when they are older. So, one of my main objectives, maybe I was a bit out of proportion when I mentioned humanising them, I mean, to some extent, yes. If I can plant the seed that eventually makes them aware of other things than TikTok and the idea of becoming CEO of the family business, then I'll feel like my teaching has given them something.

Complementary to previously displayed traits of Carlos's professional identity, his strategies consistently align with a rationalised form of resistance towards the ideologies. However, Carlos aims not to impose a

general belief by authoritarian measures. In this sense, Carlos adopts a discursive nature with cultural capital sharing as a base. This is supported by the idea that allowing students to develop knowledge will enable them to engage in a critical and more humane form of thinking. Regarding this, the students' responses can vary. However, Carlos's observational skills have allowed him to see the nature of his students' discourse, and he understands and addresses the views presented to him with knowledge:

> So, that is one of my main goals. To produce this output and make them produce it like literature, to remind them that there are more things, like oral and written traditions. To make them see that there is more. I mean it's written in stone. It's more than oral tradition. Regardless of their background or the Christian visions they are surrounded by, I try to make them realise that there are many options in life and that they can and should become responsible for their own future lives. I feel that's one of my main goals in teaching.

Finally, Carlos's professional identity coherently condenses the elements integrated into his time and experience in teaching in two dissimilar contexts. Carlos sees himself developing his already vast cultural interest and knowledge, which he brings to his teaching. This articulation of elements has been integrated into a form of professionalism that aligns directly with his discursive practice. In his teaching practice, this manifests as a clear interest in all his students and an ethical approach to enhancing all forms of knowledge in them.

Conclusions

The findings in this research have served to reevaluate classroom practices, assessing the ideological issues that permeate them, in an attempt for participants to develop inclusive and safe learning environments. The EFL educational context, rich in the elements analysed by CDA, proves an ideal research field. Consequently, this research may contribute to expanding this knowledge

in previous works by focusing on the Mexican context. This exploration of teachers' perspectives on practice, with the lens of a politicised educational context, may add to the understanding of teachers' identities' structure and manifestations. Additionally, this inquiry may serve as a resource for others interested in exploring these issues within their own contexts.

This study was conducted to explore the professional identities of EFL teachers using CDA (Fairclough, 2013). In this regard, identity construction has been revised through the manifestations of ideology in discourses that take positions towards forms of power and ideology (Foucault, 1978). In other words, the study explored the relation between professional identity and the reproduction or resistance towards dominant ideologies. Resistance is understood in this context as the intention to criticise and not propagate ideology. This inquiry will provide new elements to the discussions that integrate the current notions about EFL teachers' professional identities.

Like other studies (Pavlenko, 2002; Tian & Dumlao, 2020), this research project draws on CDA to approach identity in language teaching through a discursive nature. Some aspects from previous studies resonate directly with those present in this inquiry: the relation between identity construction and the struggles in language learning and teaching, the manifestations of ideology through discourse in teaching practice and the relation to professionalism and teaching quality, the power relationships within educational institutions and those involved in the process of language teaching/learning, the subject-positioning of teachers towards these manifestations of discourse, their integration of meaning, and the professional identity of EFL teachers.

Regarding this, teachers' perceptions on cultural transmission were analysed and understood on multiple levels. This is due to the ideological implications present both internally and externally within the analysed discourse. The implications of this ideological aspect in the teachers' practice were introduced, ultimately

disclosing a revision of the teachers' professional identity and sociocultural background.

Additionally, this study provided information on the subject's positioning towards forms of resistance and the reproduction of ideology. Finally, the third level, corresponding to the sociocultural background, is aligned with the external conditions that manifest as explanations towards the ideological elements present in the discourse. In this sense, the emergence of power relationships in constructing and manifesting the teachers' professional identity is manifested. This was largely demonstrated in the teachers' backgrounds, the Mexican cultural relationship to the English language, the teachers' institutional conditions, and the students' discourse and ideology.

These power relations manifest in various forms within this research, including identification and interest in students, the relevance of economic and cultural capital, and religious conditions, among others. Moreover, the subject-positioning taken by each teacher differed in every case, reinstating the importance of this qualitative narrative research paradigm. Furthermore, the particularities that emerged from each participant's discourse provided data on a subjective level regarding their political, cultural, personal, and academic positioning. This allows for further enhancement of the concept of professional identity as non-hegemonic and heterogeneous.

CDA can serve as a platform for understanding and exploring professional identities in the language learning field. This is due to the possibilities that a multidisciplinary and flexible framework, such as CDA, can provide to understand the known and unknown elements within teachers' practice and their relation to sociocultural structures. Nevertheless, further research is necessary to discover and analyse these elements within different subjects in various contexts, with this research contributing to the EFL field within a particular context.

Limitations

It must be asserted that the extension of this form of research proves too ambitious to be developed in large numbers of participants efficiently and rigorously without having enough time. Richer data could have been collected had the researcher been granted permission to observe teachers' classes.

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