

**The Influence of Motivation on the Teaching Performance and Identity Construction
of an EFL Student Teacher**

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Abstract

This research project explores the influence of motivation on the teaching performance and identity construction of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student teacher. Using autoethnography as the chosen methodology, the study focuses on one private university in Medellín, Colombia, and the Colombo Americano Downtown Center as the primary contextual settings. The sole participant in this research is the researcher herself. Three key findings emerged from the study: Firstly, the participant's motivation was evident in her choice of English as a career and her willingness to persist despite occasional lack of complete motivation, driven by familial expectations. Secondly, levels of anxiety and confidence varied based on three main factors. Lastly, two types of influences on motivation were identified: immediate and distant. In conclusion, in light of the self-development theory, motivation was found to be a dynamic element influenced by rewards, punishment, ego-following (Niemic & Ryan, 2009), and job opportunities related to the chosen career path.

Keywords: Motivation, Teacher Identity, Identity Construction, Teaching performance.

Degree Requirement

This autoethnography research project is submitted as a requirement to graduate from the Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages Teaching – English (Licenciatura en Lenguas Extranjeras con Énfasis en Inglés) at the School of Humanities and Education, Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, in Medellín, Colombia.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Language student teachers build their teaching identity across the different learning courses they take and in the practicum intervention. Teacher identity is shaped by personal and professional factors, which work together with motivation. Also, if we narrow down to the field, we could find “teaching performance” as an element that build teacher identity.

Motivation and teaching performance have an important bearing on the identity construction of pre-service student teachers. When I started to learn about the theories of identity, I felt the need to look into the interplay between teachers’ motivation, performance, and identity construction. Motivation plays an important role in teaching and in learning to teach, so I felt moved to enquire about the role that motivation has played in my own teaching performance and identity construction as an EFL student teacher.

There are different types of motivation. Moreover, an individual’s level of motivation is not always the same, but changes over time. But what triggered my decision to research my own motivation is that I noticed that most of the papers I read on motivation focused on students, so it seemed as though teachers’ motivation was being left behind.

At this point I was starting my practicum interventions and I started to face the ups and downs of the teaching process. Before and after doing the classroom interventions, I was assaulted by questions: “Am I doing this wrong?”, “Do I really want to be a teacher?”, “What if I am not well prepared?”, “Why did I decide on this career if I’m not looking to be a teacher?”

I shared these feelings with my classmates and they felt the same as me. What I was living when doing the interventions was not happening just to me. This realization gave me the final push to decide to investigate how my own motivation influenced my teaching performance and my identity construction.

1.2 Research Antecedents

Teaching performance and high motivation are always a part of the equation of the day-to-day of a teacher; teaching is a hard and time-consuming job whereon is possible to

notice a fluctuation on motivation levels. The same as identity, motivation works based on different factors such as goals, expectations, ideas and relationships; the outcomes that teachers obtain from those factors will set their levels of motivation.

According to Laming and Horne (2013), reasons for choosing to be a teacher are divided into altruistic and pragmatic. Altruistic reasons include a general desire to ‘give something back’ to the community” whereas pragmatic reasons include the need to find a job combined with a belief that teaching would be an acceptable and accessible choice” (pp. 6-7). The decision to be a teacher involve matters of both vocation and social acceptance; these elements work as an influence for choosing teaching over other careers.

Experiences before and after teaching help teachers to stay in teaching and to define how motivated they will be about it. “Considering that motivation factors can transform and evolve during the process to become a teacher, to handle strategies that might increase motivation when it gets low can be relevant” (Campos, 2020, p. 7-8). As mentioned before, setting clear goals for what motivates them to be teachers and contrasting social expectations with their own preconceptions about teaching can help language teachers to strengthen their identity (Campos, 2020).

Exploring working possibilities, understanding the relationships present during the teacher performance, and recognizing their perception about the world and how they want to change it (or contribute to its betterment) work as an input for language teachers to build their identity and increase their motivation. For KÖpsén, the vocational identity of a teacher is shaped and re shaped by the different social interactions (relationships) across their teaching performance. “This relationship affects how vocational teachers understand their work tasks and performance as teachers” (2014, p.8). Teachers’ motivation could be a sum of different elements inside the teaching performance. For example, Akkerman, (2010) shares the case of a teacher who puts her expectations in a class, yet the students do not respond as she expected. “She experiences this as a failure and may eventually attribute students’ lack of motivation to internal and stable personal characteristics of herself” (p.4).

Salisbury-Glennon (1999) refers to self-perception after obtain some specific classroom results knowledge “However, this knowledge may not necessarily be well adapted to teaching, since this knowledge was compiled primarily from the perspective of the student

not the teacher” (p. 742). Among the preconceptions that influence the teaching performance lies the incompatibility between the theory and the ideas of the teacher. Focusing on what a teacher wants to achieve, Zhai, (2018) “developed achievement goal theories independently, both of which suggest that student teachers’ motivation depends on the goals of learning in the curriculum and on what they want to achieve” (p.3).

To sum up, the focus of this literature review was on two important aspects of teaching performance: motivation and identity construction. I highlighted how these factors influence one another; they shape the ideas teachers acquire during their formal training and re-shape the preconceptions they had before it started.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

Mosquera and Losada (2021) understand teacher identity as “a process that begins when individuals formally enroll in language teacher education programs and begin to receive methodological and pedagogical influences to become teachers” (p. 7). On the other hand, Fearon (1999) mentions that identity is seen as “a social category, a group of people designated by a label (or labels) that is commonly used either by the people designated, others, or both” (p. 10). But, as cited on Posada, 2022. p,248. Identity construction refers to the process by which individuals establish their own understanding of their personal identity. A crucial aspect of this process is identification, which involves how much individuals internalize a specific identity or a portion of it as part of their self-concept.

For Semma et al. (2016) “when performance is conceptualized with the attention to both the quality of actions and the quality of achievements, it may be typified as sustainable results” (p. 8). According to Duze (2012) (as cited in Azeem and Omar, 2019) Teacher performance refers to the actions and behaviors exhibited by a teacher within the context of a teaching and learning environment. It encompasses the way in which teachers effectively execute their assigned tasks and responsibilities. (p. 4).

After analyzing these previous studies, I find a gap regarding the focus that has been placed to the term motivation, but from the perspective of the teacher. What happens with the teaching performance and identity construction when the element of motivation changes, or when the motivation to choose English teaching goes out of the standard (or common)

ideas about choosing English teaching as a professional career? These issues remain largely unresolved, and lead to the following research question:

1.4 Research Question

What is the influence of motivation on the teaching performance and identity construction of an EFL student teacher?

1.5 Research Objectives

1.5.1 General

To analyze the influence of motivation on the teaching performance and identity construction of an EFL student teacher.

1.5.2 Specific

- To describe the motivation of an EFL student teacher before choosing English as a profession.
- To outline the teaching performance of an EFL student teacher in connection to her planning (before class/teaching intervention process) and self-reflection (after class/teaching intervention process).
- To elucidate the effects of motivation on the teaching performance and identity construction of an EFL student teacher.

2. Method

2.1 Research Methodology

Taking into account how directly affected I am as a researcher by the research problem and how much I desired to find a path to solve the research question, auto ethnography seemed the correct choice. According to Adams et al. (2017), autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experience (“auto”) to describe and interpret (“graphy”) cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices (“ethno”).

2.2 Context

This research was conducted in two main contexts: Universidad Católica Luis Amigó and the English institute Centro Colombo Americano, downtown site. It is essential to highlight these two contexts because both of them influenced the starting point of this research as having teacher identity as the main element. Centro Colombo Americano (downtown site) was the place where the data were collected; Universidad Católica Luis Amigó is the institution where I completed my bachelor’s degree in English teaching.

To guide the narrative process, I wrote down some guiding questions in order to not lose the focus of the narrative. The guiding questions had elements that made me recall the first encounters with the language and establish the connection between the interest in the language and choosing English teaching as a career path.

Moving on to the lesson plans, the three of them were divided into two sections: the first one is called “before planning”, which is composed of three questions to set expectations, comments, and feelings before planning. The second part was the actual planning. The journals were also composed of another set of three guiding questions related to class goals, objectives and division of the class planned and already taught.

Finally, the checklist had eight prompts with a “Yes/No” column related to the body language evidenced during the self-recordings, the use of visual aids, class progress and a comment section next to each prompt so I could justify the “yes or no” option. The checklist was used to analyze a set of three self-recordings of the classes I planned and used to gather the data for this research.

2.3 Sample

At the time of the study, I, the participant in this research, was a university student who was studying a bachelor's degree in foreign language education. When collecting the data, I was in the 8th semester of the program.

The personalistic nature of both the problem and the methodology opened up the possibility to share with my own voice the experiences that built my path towards achieving a better understanding of the research problem as the analysis evolved. As Méndez (2014) claims, “another advantage of writing autoethnographically is that it allows the researcher to write first person accounts which enable his or her voice to be heard, and thus provide him or her with a transition from being an outsider to an insider in the research”

Given the content of the research, it was important to keep the focus on those elements from my own experience that are relevant to the problem. I could have easily lost that focus had I integrated other participants. So, because of how personal the research is, the methodology helped me to not lose that focus.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

I decided to use four different methods: one narrative, three lesson plans, three journals and three checklists from self-recording of classes planned and mentioned in the journals to gather the data necessary for answering the research question: What is the influence of motivation on the teaching performance and identity construction of an EFL student teacher?

Following Savin-Baden and Major (2013) I followed six steps to analyze the data previously collected, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.**Steps for Data Analysis**

The strategy chosen to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study was peer scrutiny. How would this step be completed taking into account I am a single researcher? One of my classmates in the research group was also doing the research by himself, so we decided to share our process, and make questions and suggestions about each other's research. Also, a classmate from a different group offered her help to work on this researcher's triangulation; as a result, two fellow researchers helped me to achieve some degree of triangulation. Figure 2 below shows the category structure for this research.

Figure 2. Category Structure

1. Motivation
 - a. Before choosing English teaching
 - b. After choosing English teaching
2. Teaching performance
 - a. Before class
 - b. During class
 - c. After class
3. Identity construction.
 - a. Influences
 - b. Expectations for the future

3. Results

The problem addressed in this paper revolves around teacher identity and the crucial role it plays in the field of education. The paper acknowledges the significance of personal and professional factors in shaping a teacher's identity, along with the pivotal influence of motivation. The focus is on understanding the relationship between motivation, teaching performance, and the construction of a teacher's identity. While there is plenty of research on student motivation, the attention given to teachers' motivation seems relatively limited. The author's personal experience during her practicum interventions further emphasizes the challenges and self-doubt faced by aspiring teachers, prompting the need to explore the connection between motivation, teaching performance, and teacher identity construction.

3.1. A Sense of Acquired Responsibilities

The participant had an interest in the language that came from childhood programs and good grades at high school, but choosing English teaching was supported by family decisions and expectations. On this matter, she commented:

In order to follow my family expectations to study at the university and be the first person to start and finish a degree in the family, I decided that at least I could choose a program that was related with one my biggest interests: English." - Narrative.

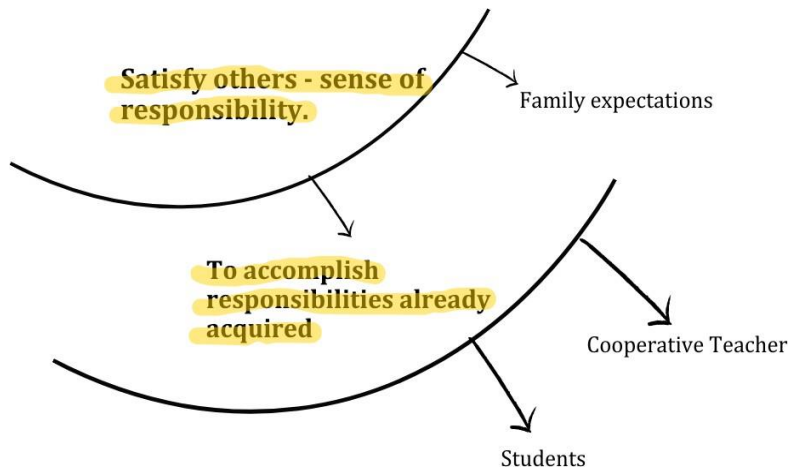
The participant also mentioned how the responsibility to be in the career was influenced by the CT, influence shown during the planning process:

Anxious because even if it is a complete planning, I should wait for the CT to give it a look and see if maybe he has something to add or change. – Lesson plan 1 of 3.

The students that conformed the different classrooms in which the participant gave classes were also part of the influential element in these responsibilities already acquired as shown in the following quote:

I really expect not to forget something important right in the middle of the class because I will be the teacher giving the information for the two complete hours. – Checklist 2 of 3.

Figure 3.
Hierarchy of Responsibilities found during Data Analysis



3.2. Guiding Elements on Participant's Teaching Performance

The absence of planning was one of the causes for the participant's anxiety when teaching English, but the use of visual aids projects gave her a more confident posture when teaching. In addition, the participants sense of responsibility with the Cooperating teacher and with her students also influenced her immediate motivation to teach and, thereby, her teaching performance. Figure 3 above shows the hierarchy of responsibilities that influenced the participant's motivation and teaching performance. Below there are some excerpts that evidence this point.

- "I feel a little bit anxious because the CT and I haven't decided yet which one will explain which activity." (Lesson Plan 3)
- "The slides help her to put some emphasis while explaining some pronunciation, action that shows appropriation of the topic." (Checklist 1),
- "Anxiety 100% because I will be doing the active part of the teaching all the two hours, I think the teacher (CT) will be there for me if I need something, but still, I feel that is too much pressure, hope I can really handle it." (Lesson plan 2)
- "In this class they were used just to show examples, but it helped her to make emphasis." (Checklist 3)

3.3 Motivational Influences on Teacher Identity

Two kinds of motivational influences were found: immediate and distant. Immediate motivational aspects had to do with the CT's feedback and the students' response during the classroom intervention, which influenced the participant's teaching and planning. Distant motivational factors include past experiences and future aspirations, such as the participant's interest for the language and the potential job opportunities related to the use of English, which do not lie exclusively within the field of language teaching. Here are some excerpts collected from the data:

- “I only plan to try again something the CT did and is the phrase ‘I think that...’. I want to apply it back because it is a great way for teaching them new vocabulary. (When I use it), they start to exchange ideas and guess about different topics.” (Lesson Plan 1)
- “The teacher gained confidence when interacting with students and also with the CT's interventions.” (Checklist 2)
- “(I chose English teaching) because it will help me then with my dance and a better life in terms of opportunities; also, I can connect the language with dancing job opportunities” (Narrative).

4. Discussion

Motivation can be seen in participants' reality as the desire to choose English as a career and the willingness to keep up the career even when not feeling completely motivated to conclude it. Family, with its values and expectations, shapes an individual's understanding of commitment and dedication. Additionally, engagement in the practicum intervention, allows the participant to develop a broader perspective on its responsibilities and collective goals.

Moreover, the data is showing how student teachers' levels of confidence may vary with the results of the planning process, class intervention supported by different materials such as visual aids, and students' participation in class activities, being the lower levels the easiest to notice because of the feeling of lack of preparation after planning. Classroom environment, student feedback, and individual connections with students play a crucial role in shaping how teachers perceive themselves and their effectiveness as educators.

Concerning motivation, two kinds of influences were found: immediate and distant. According to Niemiec & Ryan (2009) in their explanation of self-development theory (SDT) there are four types of motivation (autonomy regulation). The data is showing us that the starting point of the participant's motivation was related to an "external regulation", as her decisions were motivated by the desire to avoid punishment or obtain a reward, in her case, avoid family's disappointment and meet their expectations. This was a distant motivation set in the original decision to start the English teaching degree. However, once set in the practicum, the data showed that the participant's actions, including her teaching performance, was moved by a form of "identified regulation" as the participant's interactions within students and CT defined her level of ego involvement in relation to the interactions and the expected outcomes once the class is planned and shared with the students and CT.

Concerning the participant's desire to use career knowledge for external activities not related to teaching, Laming and Horne (2013) have said: "Pragmatic reasons included the need to find a job combined with a belief that teaching would be an acceptable and accessible choice" (p.7). Finally, paying attention to what has been mentioned what influences the identity construction can be seen as: a non-static motivation that will evolve from a feeling of reward and punishment from family expectations side but related to what the participant

expects according to job opportunities not directly connected with being a teacher to a more related ego behavior because of the results of students and CT's interactions with the participant.

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