(Re)Construcción de la Identidad a través del Aprendizaje de un Segundo Idioma

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Resumen: La identidad es un tema que ha ganado popularidad en la educación multicultural y la enseñanza de idiomas por los cambios que el estudiantado puede enfrentar cuando aprende un segundo idioma. El objetivo del presente artículo es identificar a través de una búsqueda bibliográfica las diferentes maneras en que un segundo idioma moldea la identidad del estudiantado y ofrecer consejos para que el profesorado enfrente estos cambios. Los artículos analizados son estudios empíricos que recolectan datos por medio de entrevistas, observaciones y narrativas escritas. Los resultados demuestran que, en diferentes contextos, el estudiantado sufre cambios de identidad similares. Por ejemplo, independientemente del contexto, si la comunidad de práctica acepta y valida al estudiantado se podrá practicar y mejorar el idioma. Por el contrario, si el estudiantado es rechazado, no se beneficiará de la relación con personas nativo hablantes. También, el estudiantado puede rechazar o adoptar una nueva identidad y esta última puede beneficiarle, dependiendo de su actitud hacia ese nuevo rol. Finalmente, se demuestra que la identidad impacta en el qué y el cómo aprende el estudiantado. Debido a ese impacto, la investigación es esencial para ofrecer al estudiantado las mejores herramientas y así enfrentar la (re)construcción de la identidad.

Palabras clave: Identidad y lengua extranjera.

(Re)Construction of Identity through Second Language Learning

Abstract: Identity is a growing topic in multicultural education and language teaching due to the important changes that learners may undergo when learning a second language. The aim of this article is to identify through a bibliographical search the different ways a second language molds learners' identities, and to provide tips for teachers to deal with these changes. The analyzed papers are empirical studies in which researchers collected their data through interviews, observations, and written narratives. The results show that, in different contexts, varied types of learners may have similar changes of identity. For instance, regardless of the context, if students are accepted and validated by their community of practice, they will have the opportunity to practice and improve the language. On the contrary, if they are rejected, they will not benefit from the interaction with native speakers. Also, learners can either reject or adopt a new identity and it might benefit them, depending on their attitude towards their new role. Finally, studies show that identity will impact what and how learners learn. Due to this impact, this topic needs to be further researched to provide students with the best tools to undergo identity (re)construction.

Keywords: Identity and foreign languages.

Introduction

When learning a language, learners are exposed to different cultures and different ways of thinking that might reshape their own identity. The (re)construction of identity is a common phenomenon among second language learners since identity is not static and it constantly changes. Even though the identity topic is fundamental in and outside of the classroom, teachers are not trained in dealing with the changes that a learner might undergo. Sadly, the lack of training and knowledge about the topic can interfere with students' learning and their personal development. As John Rouse (1988) presents in his article titled "Language Learning and Identity," "learning to use a language is learning to become a person" (p. 22). By socializing with people and identifying them as the "other," people recognize and (re)construct their own identity. This topic is central to education and society in general because language learning "is an important social

practice through which a society constructs and reproduces its dominant beliefs, values, and social relations" (Wan, 2004, p. 44). Therefore, identity in second language learning is a global theme that involves each and one of us, and current educators need to be informed about it to promote a healthy educational atmosphere.

Before presenting six examples of empirical studies which explain some of the changes that learners' identity may undergo, there are some important constructs, such as identity, investment, imagined communities and communities of practice, that need to be defined to understand the content. Human beings have spent a great deal of their time trying to find answers to questions about life such as identity. This path has led many researchers to describe this construct as manageable and changeable, depending on the surroundings of the person who is involved (Block, 1997, p. 864). More specifically, it can easily be shaped by the exposure to other languages and cultures (Ruiz-Cecilia, 2012). Bonny Norton (as cited by Norton and McKinney, 2011) defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 73). In other words, learners' identity is created from within the person and that is why language is so influential. Following this idea, learners come to realize that language can be used as a tool to identify who they are, to find a job, to make friends or even to create a new identity different from the one they own in their mother tongue. A new identity that might offer them the freedom and confidence that they lack in their first language. These situations, although unconsciously, are motivating factors for individuals to start learning a new language. Learners create a "socially and historically constructed relationship […] to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (Norton as cited by Norton and McKinney, 2011, p. 75). This relationship between learners and the target language is defined as investment. The degree of investment in a second language depends on the gains perceived by the learner. The more gains the learners perceive the higher the amount of investment in learning the language. While investing in the language, individuals build imagined communities to whom they feel identified with even if they are not palpable (Norton and McKinney, 2011, p. 76). These imagined communities influence learner's perception of the world and their sense of belonging until they meet their communities of practice, a tangible community they get to experience in person. Theory on this topic has mainly be guided by a poststructuralist point of view. This perspective argues that "identity undergoes continual construction and has a multifaceted nature, and one cannot easily define one facet of identity (like sexuality) in isolation from the others (like race or class)" (King, 2008, pp. 232-3). Every person's identity is composed by different intersectionalities that come together and these cannot be separated from one another. Therefore, as language teachers, it is fundamental to keep in mind that different aspects of students' identities experience change when learning a language.

Objective and Research Questions

The aim of this article is to identify through a bibliographical search the different ways a second language molds learners' identities by answering the following research questions: (1) how are naturalistic and classroom contexts different?; (2) to what extend does studying abroad affect identity in a greater proportion?; and (3) are personality traits such as self-esteem and socialization related to language identity changes?

Methods

To answer the aforementioned research questions, the present article is developed through an exploratory design. According to Kothari (2004), "the main purpose of such studies is that of formulating a problem for more precise investigation […] The major

emphasis in such studies is on the discovery of ideas and insights" (pp. 35-6). My intention is to highlight the importance of the identity (re)construction topic by putting together an article that shows different empirical studies for the readers' knowledge. The present article may be used as a starting point for future quantitative and qualitative research on the topic. By discussing and conducting research related to this area, teachers will feel more prepared to provide learners with tools to deal with their own (re)construction. Plus, learners will also learn about the topic and realize that they are not alone in their quest.

This article contains six empirical research papers that are grouped for a more effective analysis. The research papers were selected from the library's database at West Virginia University through a bibliographic search in 2016. They are grouped into four main subheadings under the results section, containing each group two empirical studies depending on the topic of research. The subheadings are titled as followed: 1) identity and the study abroad programs; 2) identity and migration; 3) identity and naturalistic contexts; and 4) identity and the classroom setting. In order to effectively discuss the studies, each one of them is briefly summarized. Then, a short paragraph under each subtopic points out to the main ideas of the two studies. Finally, under the discussion section, the three research questions previously mentioned are answered using the empirical studies as examples to offer appropriate pedagogical implications.

Results

It is well known that learners' identities change when studying abroad, but their identity does not only get shaped under this circumstance. It may also be transformed by interacting with native speakers or a proficient learner (the teacher or a classmate) or by being introduced to new cultures in the language classroom. Also, it is important to note that a second language may impact people who, for different reasons, migrate to other countries. In other words, people's identity might undergo transformation by studying abroad, interacting in or outside the language classroom, or moving to a different country. In all these cases, people are influenced by the target language and this influence is most likely to happen without learners noticing. People's identity gets (re)shaped at different times during a life time and rarely does one notice those changes at the moment when they develop. Nonetheless, once people start reflecting about their experiences with the second language, they realize the influence it had over their identity. Because a reflection about identity is such a personal endeavor, "narrative inquiry is the best way of representing and understanding experiences that are difficult to observe directly and are best understood from the perspective of those who experience them" (Sato, 2014, p. 32). For this reason, most of the studies that are presented below use interviews, observations, and written narratives to collect the data. Although the participants' group number tends to be low, the studies achieve to present a clear insight of the identity changes that learners may undergo. These changes are some examples for language teachers to take into consideration to acknowledge how to intervene with their own students.

Identity and the study abroad programs

Study abroad programs are influential to this line of research since it was discovered that learner's identity is very likely to change when living in another country. To cite an example, in the article titled "The Effects of Study Abroad on Second Language Identities and Language Learning," written by Tomoka Sato (2014), research was conducted with three undergraduate students (from non-English related majors) who participated in two different study-abroad programs. The researcher's aim was to investigate the impact that a three-week study abroad program has on students' second language identity and if this impact lasts long after the students return to their home country. Sato used a

narrative approach to conduct the research; and the data was collected through semi-structured interviews which asked participants to describe their experiences abroad. The results of this study show how the participants were well received by their communities of practice. Their experience abroad provided them with benefits such as self-confidence, personal growth, increased curiosity about cultures, autonomy, and maturity. Students yearned for learning after meeting people they could interact with in their second language; and they understood the importance of grammar and pragmatics to keep communication flowing with their new peers. Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration that the students only stayed abroad for three weeks. This short stay might result in learners being treated as tourists, and this situation may be one of the reasons why they had such a positive experience. Clearly, these results cannot be generalized to all learners who travel abroad, but they can be compared to other experiences due to the great gains obtained by the participants.

Another study related to this subtopic of identity was conducted by Phil Benson, Gary Barkhuizen, Peter Bodycott and Jill Brown (2012) and it is titled "Study Abroad and the Development of Second Language Identities." The researchers' main purpose was to examine second language identity in depth and its major dimensions in study abroad participants. Similar to the Sato's (2014) study mentioned above, the researchers used a narrative approach to analyze the data. To collect the data, the learners were asked to participate in pre-departure and re-entry interviews, and they were also asked to keep on-site diaries about their experience. The results show that students gained proficiency in their second language through problem-solving situations, meeting new friends and having to speak in different contexts outside the classroom. Also, their pragmatic competence improved; and the learners were able to express themselves well, using their second language, which led to native speakers wanting to interact with them. They were well received in their communities of practice and this integration allowed them to benefit linguistically and personally from their study abroad experience.

From these two examples, it can be deducted that when learners are welcomed by their communities of practice, they experience multiple language gains. When using the second language for interacting with others, learners improve their proficiency, and this process helps them (re)construct their identity positively. For instance, they start understanding the other culture from within, which may lead to changes in the learner's own identity as well. As exemplified in the studies mentioned above, learners meet new people easily, and constant interaction with native speakers provide them with a better pragmatic competence and mastery of the language. Nonetheless, a change of identity may also be present in learners who migrate for a longer period of time and face a new culture in which their community of practice may impose a new role or may not be as welcoming as in a study abroad program experience.

Identity and immigration

The first study that deals with migration is written by Eva Lam (2004), and it is titled "Second Language Socialization in a Bilingual Chat Room: Global and Local Considerations." This article explores how new forms of social networking have emerged on the Internet. It examines the social and discursive practices that are developed in a chat room and the learners' construction of identity in that environment. The researcher developed a case study of two young Chinese migrants. The researcher used participant observations, in-depth interviews, and textual documentation from the chat room. Lam also paid close attention to the role of code-switching in the construction of a collective ethnic identity. The two young Chinese migrants faced problems socializing at the school they attended to because of their lack of proficiency in the second language. At first, the students were not able to socialize with their peers and they could not integrate into their community of practice. As a solution to their social issues at school, the learners started using a chat room, which allowed them to practice through code-switching and to interact

with other young Chinese learners who shared their own culture. Their participation in the chat room helped them realize that it was fine to make mistakes. They started feeling more comfortable with the negotiation of meaning and the development of a new second language identity. At the end of the research, the learners had accomplished to speak the language and cope with their new environment.

Another study related to migration was conducted by Awad el Karim Ibrahim (1999) and titled "Becoming Black: Rap and Hip-hop, Race, Gender, Identity, and the Politics of ESL Learning." The researcher worked with 16 refugees and migrants from Africa who studied at a Canadian school. All of the participants were trilingual, speaking English, French and a mother tongue. The data was collected through individual interviews, two focus-group interviews divided by gender, and extensive ethnographic observations. The study shows that in Canada, the learners faced a social imaginary where they were Blacks; therefore, they felt as if they had to behave as such, using expressions such as whassup, whadap, whassup my Nigger, and using specific types of clothes. These students accessed Black cultural identities and Black linguistic practices through Black popular culture; for example, rap music videos, television programs, and films. In this case, English is not a second language because learners already know how to speak it, but the results show that they created a black style English (BSE) used as their second language. For example, students would avoid the auxiliary to be and the negative concord when talking. In other words, they invested in the features of language that they felt identified with. Nonetheless, it is difficult to separate the features of language that they identified with from the ones imposed by the community of practice. Basically, learners behaved like what was expected from them by the community of practice. Another important factor noticed by the researcher is that rap linguistic features were prominent in male's narratives more than in female's narratives. It is important to notice the role of gender in the process of identification as well. Males are expected to fit in the role assigned, which might be related to masculine traits of the Black popular culture, leaving females out of the expectations. Plus, this study shows how identity influences what ESL students learn and how they learn it since the social, political and cultural environments surrounding linguistics cannot be separated from the students' learning experiences, especially at a different country from the one they were born in.

These two examples clearly show how students invest in the language that is imposed or that they feel identified with, and in what they consider will bring them greater gains. These learners' communities of practice imposed a type of identity they felt they had to fulfil. One the one hand, the two Chinese migrants were expected to do great in school, but the learners invested in a code-switching English when they realized they were facing difficulties. On the other hand, the African students invested in a black style English because it would allow them to fulfill the role imposed by the community of practice and finally gain acceptance. This imposition is inevitable since language also carries historical power. Through history, language has been used to silence full communities and make them invisible. Nevertheless, their second language identities helped students feel part of their new community of practice while being migrants and helped them cope with the fact that they had moved to a new country. Along with migration and study abroad programs are the naturalistic contexts. These naturalistic contexts are important because learners are not only exposed to classroom settings. Let's keep in mind that most of the changes on identity may happen while being outside of the language class since learners must find the appropriate strategies to communicate on their own.

Identity and naturalistic contexts

The examples provided under the subtopic of naturalistic contexts refer to studies that were conducted outside of the language classroom. Along this line of research, in an article titled "'Them and Us': Constructions of Identity in the Life History of a Trilingual White South African," Liz Johanson (2009) explored the life of George, a trilingual person

from South Africa, and his sense of identity. The data was collected through a life history methodology and the use of unstructured open-ended interviews. George speaks Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. The researcher noticed a powerful position/identity awarded to him by his whiteness. Due to the apartheid binaries, George would be expected to socialize with white people like himself. Contrary to this belief, he also socializes with black people who are his friends, but who show him a respect molded by an ethnic power relationship, behaving only in certain ways around him. Their friendship is influenced by his whiteness since his ethnic group allows him some power that his black friends lack. To add to his varied identity, when George speaks isiXhosa, he creates a hybrid space where he is no longer only a white man, but he also communicates with the black people and somehow inserts himself in this new space. This language allows him to interact and get close to black people and separate himself from the white ethnic group, creating a third type of identity.

Secondly, in the line of naturalistic contexts, Brian King's (2008) study titled "'Being Gay Guy, that is the Advantage:' Queer Korean Language Learning and Identity Construction" addresses the queer community in second language acquisition (SLA). The purpose of the study was to examine SLA in naturalistic contexts and to work against heteronormativity in SLA. The researcher conducted an ethnomethodological analysis of the interviews directed to three Korean men who self-identify as gay. The results show that the participants have the perception that due to family relationships and traditionalism, it is more difficult in Korea to be gay than in some western countries. Hence, the participants invested in an imagined "Western" gay community, where they felt more comfortable self-identifying themselves as gay; therefore, English became their gateway. These men are invested in the language thanks to the identity it provides them with. Also, most of them felt comfortable in their communities of practice among other gay men. However, some participants did not feel comfortable with heterosexual white men and face certain rejection from that side of their community of practice. When learners are rejected by the community of practice, the gains are not as quantifiable since they do not get the chance to practice the target language. This might be one of the reasons why some learners tend to group themselves with people who share their mother tongue, avoiding the rejection of the community of practice. Yet, these men belong to the gay "western" imagined community and this group granted them with a safe space to practice and (re)construct their identity.

When it comes to naturalistic contexts, learners need legitimacy and access by the native speakers to practice and improve the language. In classroom contexts, it is different because they have the guidance of the teacher and other students who have similar interests. With the two examples presented above, investment can clearly be identified as present in naturalistic contexts as well. Learners know that they will be accepted by the community of practice if they invest in the language learning. Although one person might invest greatly in language learning, as mentioned before, the degree of acceptability will define the improvement and the (re)construction of the identity experienced by the learners. On the one hand, George was highly accepted by the black and white communities and he did not face any problems in switching from one language to another, swapping in between identities as well. On the other hand, some Korean gay men did not feel comfortable outside the gay community of practice which reduced their possibilities of improving the second language and solidifying their new identity. Finally, the last section is the formal classroom setting, which is fundamental because even if learners do not travel abroad, just by being exposed to a second language and the teacher's and other students' perceptions, their identity might undergo (re)construction.

Identity and the classroom setting

Different socialization is happening all at once in the language classroom. People with different backgrounds are united through one thread: the second language. This

socialization and the learning of new topics and cultures might help a new identity to emerge. One study related to identity and the classroom setting is that of Steven Talmy (2008) titled "The Productions of the ESL Student at Tradewinds High: Contingency, Multidirectionality, and Identity in L2 Socialization." The purpose of the study was to call for a more dynamic model of language socialization (LS). The researcher worked with 15 classrooms, eight of them English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, for two years and a half. The data was collected through observations and interviews with 10 teachers and 37 students. In this study, two issues related to identity are at hand. First, the local ESL students did not have an identifiable identity since the placement policy was based on length of enrollment rather than expertise. Students started to withdraw participation and created an oppositional ESL student identity, which affected the classroom setting. Second, the teachers' identity was related to their role of leaders in the classroom by assigning 'schoolwork' and keeping a sober environment. The students showed lack of investment and resistance since they did not self-identify with the ESL identity imposed by the school. The results showed how the teachers had to change their rules in order to work with the students. For instance, the teachers stop relying so much on the book because students would not bring it to class, and they also assigned easier tasks when students could not complete the work. This situation only proved a declined of the students' grades. Consequently, they started to earn the label of low-achieving students and remained in the ESL classroom.

The last study also relates to identity and the classroom setting. This study was conducted by Anne Pomerantz (2008) and it is titled "'Tú Necesitas Preguntar en Español:' Negotiating Good Language Learner Identity in a Spanish Classroom." The purpose of the study was to examine how good language learner (GLL) identity is constructed and negotiated in a foreign language classroom. The study had the participation of Spanish advanced learners in an ethnographic discourse-analytic study over a 15-week semester. The data was taken from a previous study conducted by the researcher in 2001. The researcher noticed how in choosing between English and Spanish in the language class, learners appropriated or resisted the GLL identity. The results showed that GLL identity was display in students who used lexical and morphological knowledge and code-switching. Also, through the observations, GLLs could be identified because they had clearly read the classroom assignments and presented a mastery on the topic by using appropriate vocabulary and grammar. For students, the classroom becomes a third space that exists between their L1 community and their imagined L2 context, which becomes a community of practice when studying abroad.

It is interesting how these two studies show two different perspectives of what a second language learner is in the classroom. On the one hand, there are students who are imposed an identity and who do not feel identified with their ESL learner label. Therefore, they decide to fight against it by not completing their homework or not bringing the necessary materials to class. On the other hand, there are students who self-identify with the good language learner identity. They are responsible and are invested in the language class. It seems that imposition of identity leads to issues in the classroom and even maybe outside of it since learners are not allowed space and time to (re)discover their own identity in their second language. Let's not forget that identity comes from within the person and imposition is not the best way of encouraging it.

Discussion

The (re)construction of identity is a broad topic since it may happen in different spheres and contexts such as the classroom, naturalistic contexts, and experiences outside of the learners' own country. One of the main points that stand out is the idea of a social imaginary imposed over migrant people by those in the welcoming country. People might

expect migrant people to behave, act and/or talk a certain way and due to this pressure, they can adopt identities imposed by the community of practice. This imposition does not allow migrant people to experiment with their identity. This experimentation might happen in their first, second or even third language such as in the case of George (Johanson, 2009); but with migration, the core (re)construction of identity is the fact that people are moving to a new country with a different culture, and they need to (re)invent themselves for adaptation. Imposing stereotypes on people will not benefit them nor the community of practice. The main problem is that this imposition is not only seen outside of the language classroom but also inside of it. Students might get an identity imposed by other students, the teacher or even the school's staff, and the learning process will not be as successful as if they are validated by who they really are. Regardless of the context where this imposition happens, it is fundamental to notice that a person can either adapt to the new identity, like the African students in Canada (Ibrahim, 1999), or reject it, like the ESL students from Talmy's (2008) study. If learners adapt, they will not be honest to themselves; and if they reject it, there might be behavioral issues in the classroom. So, either or, the imposition of an identity is a situation that, as language teachers, should be avoided, at least, in the language classroom. One cannot fully control how much the community outside of the school influences the students; but in the language class, it is primordial to talk about respect, stereotypes and migrating movements around the world for students to be more open minded. Therefore, to answer the first research question, we might infer that naturalistic settings and the classroom settings are different in the sense that teachers may have certain control over what goes on in the classroom contrary to naturalistic settings where learners are on their own. Another important idea is that identity will influence what students learn and how they learn it. If learners self-identify with the target language, they will invest on it and their improvement will be greater than if they resist the language. This self-identification might happen inside the classroom or in a naturalistic context such as in the case of the three self-identified gay men from Korea (King, 2008). When investment happens, it will benefit the learner greatly. In this case, the language teacher has the responsibility of accompanying the learners, providing personal support and language material to help them improve. Finally, it is vital to notice that issues in terms of socialization might happen both in naturalistic contexts and the classroom (or school) as well. For example, the two students from China encountered issues at adapting to their new school and the foreign country. They both had difficulties at communicating with their classmates and meeting new people until they found a new strategy for improving their second language. Therefore, it can be deducted that people must be genuinely accepted by the native community of practice to experience a successful learning and a positive adapting process.

Following the previous arguments, it has been proved that learners experience greater benefits when acceptance happens. Through acceptance, not only do learners improve their second language skills but they also (re)construct their identity and create a community of new friends and people who speak the target language. When learners are fully accepted and validated by their community of practice, they find themselves incorporated into the new cultural exchanges among this community. Learners' imagined community becomes a welcoming community of practice, which motivates them to invest in the second language due to the real gains that they perceive. A situation that might trigger the learners' investment in the language is the study abroad experience because students encounter a real and tangible use for the language. Learners realize how useful the language is in real life situations and they yearn to take part of the context around them. As cited before, both studies, Sato (2014) and Benson *et al.* (2012), under the subheading of study abroad present positive experiences and language gains for the students. Students experienced improvement in their language skills, such as a better proficiency level and pragmatic competence, and also, in their personal growth, such as autonomy and maturity. As a whole, the study abroad experience has proved to enhance learning and as a collateral result, positive changes in the learners' identity might

happen. Thus, to answer the second research question, it could be established that studying abroad affects identity in a greater proportion than studying in the classroom setting. Nonetheless, it is important to take into consideration the variables that both studies present when jumping into conclusions. The results from these two studies should not be generalized to all study abroad experiences. For instance, both studies analyze short study abroad stays, being the longest one 13 weeks. The fact that there exists study abroad programs that last 9 months, or even more, is an important variable that cannot be ignored. It is undeniable that study abroad programs bring students greater gains at different levels, but not all students learning a second language have the privilege to study abroad. This is why language teachers should be prepared to offer students with meaningful experiences inside the classroom to enhance their learning. For example, teachers could bring authentic material to class and promote real life situations in which students use the target language. These situations might not be as authentic as if they were studying abroad, but at least the students will relate the language that they are learning to a useful purpose. Sometimes, languages are taught out of context and learners do not invest in them due to the lack of usefulness in real life situations. Also, teachers could offer learners with opportunities to practice the target language with native speakers through the use of the new technologies such as Skype, e-mail, and other interactive tools. Learners are good at using technologies and if teachers connect the target language to the students' interests, significant benefits will be experienced by the whole class.

As a final remark, and to answer the third research question, it is important to mention students' personality traits and their relationship to language identity changes. Personality traits might influence identity changes, but it is more likely that these happen regardless of the learners' personalities. It is a popular belief that for outgoing learners it is easier to meet people and practice the language. Also, confident students might not be afraid of making mistakes while insecure students might choose to be silent to avoid mistakes. These statements might be true to some extent, but the empirical studies presented in this article show how, regardless of their personality traits, learners met new people. Although the studies do not mention personality traits explicitly, some information might be deducted from their results. On the one hand, learners who studied abroad made friends easily and improved their language unrelatedly to their personalities. On the other hand, the two immigrant Chinese people from Lam's (2004) study used the chatroom to connect with people. In this case, the chatroom is an alternative for shy people who prefer to double check their second language utterances before communicating with others. All language classes are composed by unique and different learners. For this reason, teachers are responsible for creating an environment of respect among students. When respect is present in a classroom, learners feel comfortable participating and learning from one another. To promote a safe environment, it is necessary to help students understand that mistakes are acceptable. Students tend to be so afraid of making mistakes that they do not speak in the second language. Mistakes should be seen as small stones that make us trip, but which help us improve. Last but not least, teachers should avoid imposing identities/labels to students. The negative effects of this imposition are clearly manifested in Ibrahim's (1999) and Talmy's (2008) studies. Students might reject the labels imposed, and this rejection will bring behavioral issues that will affect the class as a whole. These impositions might also bring problems at the learner's personal level such as with their autonomy and confidence; and as a result, they might separate themselves from the second language itself. In a utopian language class, all learners would adopt the good learner identity present in Pomerantz's (2008) study; unfortunately, just because a student does not use lexical and/or morphological knowledge can teachers assign a negative student identity. As professionals, language teachers must never forget that students are complex individuals undergoing physiological and psychological changes. Regardless of their personality traits, learners have the right to take part in the classroom setting and be

accepted for who they are. We do not always know about the different situations that learners might be experiencing at home or with their peers; and for this reason, they deserve the benefit of the doubt and our full support. Now that the research questions have been answered, I would like to dedicate some space for the pedagogical implications on the topic.

For this article, the pedagogical implications are fundamental since, as mentioned before, this topic is not dealt with in the teachers' training. Students will undergo changes in their identities and teachers should have an idea about how to address these changes. Teachers should know that "when individuals move across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in new sociocultural environments, they find that their sense of identity is destabilized and that they enter a period of struggle to reach a balance" (Block, 1997, p. 864). This period of struggle might be present in people who migrate to other countries, refugees, and even in learners studying abroad or in the language classroom. Teachers need to be patient and attentive with any possible changes present in students, but they can also use the language to address these changes beforehand. Two of the main pedagogical strategies mentioned in the text are: first, to create an environment of respect and second, to use authentic material and real-life activities. In order to create an environment of respect, teachers can talk about stereotypes, migration, cultures, values, among other important topics that are present in the globalized world today. The class is a place where students do not only learn about grammar and pronunciation but also about the real world around them. It is important to create conversations with students. Regardless of their age, they have so much to share with each other and with the teachers; and once adults offer them the opportunity to share, they do not waste it. Hand in hand with these conversations, teachers can use authentic material and real-life situations to situate students as society's important participants. Adults tend to ignore children and young adults because they might think that they are still too young to share their input, but this should not be the case. If we want learners to (re)construct their identity successfully, we must provide them with the necessary tools and, more importantly, trust them. For change to be meaningful, we must not impose learners any behavior or attitude because they must create it themselves. According to Leung, Harris, and Rampton "ESL students cannot be simplistically portrayed in terms of fixed categories of ethnicity and language" (as cited in Norton, 1997, p. 418). Individuals are different, unique and more complex than just some fixed categories. Learners should be allowed autonomy inside and outside the language classroom for great things to happen.

The purpose of this article was to identify different situations, that a second language learner might experience, resulting in the modification or adaptation of their identity. The studies presented expose the study abroad programs and the beneficial gains that learners might face. The other side of the coin is the rejection of the community of practice or the imposition of an identity that can be either adopted or rejected by the learner, most of the times, presenting behavioral issues with its rejection. Also, other situations might be the naturalistic contexts in which speakers of a second language might create an identity with which they feel comfortable and benefit from; or an migration situation in which learners can either adapt to their new environment or isolate themselves for a while until they feel comfortable. These are some of the situations that learners, or speakers of a second language, might undergo; but the contexts are too varied to identify all the possible scenarios in this article. This article serves as a guide for teachers and researchers to understand some of the changes that learners' identity might endure and some of the pedagogical implications that these situations will bring. For this reason, further research needs to be conducted. More scenarios must be presented for teachers and learners to be aware of the situations they might face when teaching and learning a second language. Other important variables that need to be added and highlighted to this branch of research is gender, sexuality and race. Identity

might affect male and female students differently, such as in the Ibrahim's (1999) study, or students whose sexualities are considered to stand outside of the hegemonic binary, such as in the King's (2008) study. Also, power relations might be present depending on the learners' race such as in Johanson (2009) and Ibrahim (1999) studies. Gender, sexuality and race are topics that must be included in the ESL research agenda. By doing so, a great variety of students, who may now feel rejected by the field, will be included. Finally, some quantitative research needs to be conducted. Even though narratives are interesting and allow the researcher to get closer to the participants, a different way of researching in which quantitative data is introduced will allow the field to grow greatly. After completing the present article, some topics for further research came to mind, such as, identity and re-entry culture shock, identity and monolingual versus bilingual individuals, and identity and personality traits. Not only does further research need to be pursued to prepare students for what they might face but also to train teachers. The changes of identity due to learning a second language must be included in the teachers' training to address these situations properly. Teachers everywhere accomplish a great job in accompanying students through different learning phases, but the proper tools and training will help them achieve better results.

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