

## 13 Initial Teacher Education for Autonomy

### Using Possible Selves Theory to Help Student Teachers Construct Their Professional Identity

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#### Introduction

Autonomy has become one of the central goals of education almost worldwide. Its relevance in education derives mostly from advances and insights into human psychology, educational, political, and moral philosophy. It is also argued that the knowledge society creates a need for self-initiated and self-managed learning as individuals will be forced to constantly learn new knowledge and skills. Morgan (1996) argued that teachers must accept the ideal of autonomy as implicit in the ideal of education, as all educated individuals must have the overall coherence in their identity. The development of autonomy implies “the development of a kind of person whose thought and action in important areas of his life are to be explained by reference to his own choices, decisions, reflections, deliberations –in short, his own activity of mind” (Dearden, 1972, p. 70).

Self-determination theory regards autonomy as a key to understanding the quality of human behavioural regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory is concerned with unravelling the nature and consequences of autonomy, explaining how autonomy develops, and how it can be fostered or hampered by certain biological and social conditions.

At a language teaching level, several arguments have been suggested to advocate pedagogy for autonomy. These include the active involvement of the learner in classroom activities, increased motivation, and greater responsibility for learning. Jiménez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira (2007, 2017) advocate pedagogy for autonomy in order to enhance more democratic teaching and learning practices within a vision of (language) education as a space for enacting (inter)personal empowerment and promoting social transformation.

The practice of modern language teaching in schools is generally speaking far from this ideal as pedagogy for autonomy is still rare in most classrooms. There are several reasons for this gap between theory

and practice, but in this paper I will stress the role of teacher education (TE). TE has a crucial role to play in the promotion of autonomy by emphasizing its centrality and supporting it through powerful TE strategies. Improving educational outcomes and realizing the goal of autonomy in education is a true challenge.

The paper examines the role of possible-selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and case pedagogy to facilitate the construction of professional identity in one of the modules in the MA for initial teacher education (ITE) at the University of Granada (UGR). The goal of this course is to encourage student teachers to sort out their teacher-self by developing a pedagogical stance that is not at odds with current language teaching theory and research. Another goal of the course is the development of teacher and learner autonomy in modern language education.

### **Teacher Education for Autonomy**

Encouraging greater levels of autonomy in language education entails a new conception of pedagogy, placing new demands on TE. TE must take into account that learning to teach is a complex enterprise that involves several inherent challenges. First, it entails understanding teaching in different ways from those observed during our experience as students. The ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975) usually leads to the idea that teaching is easy and that ‘anyone can teach’. As a consequence of the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ phenomenon, TE faces the daunting task of countering preconceptions and unexamined assumptions such as the belief that teaching depends mainly on personality factors, on concern for individual learners, and on teaching paradigms, with little appreciation of the role of subject matter, social context, or pedagogical knowledge (Paine, 1990). If these preconceptions are not addressed, prospective teachers will almost certainly retain these beliefs (Richardson & Placier, 2001).

A second challenge is the problem of enactment. This problem often results in complaints that TE programmes are too theoretical because they do not provide student teachers with the tools and practices that would allow them to put into action the ideas studied. According to Kennedy (1999), learning to teach requires learning to think and to act like a teacher. To enhance practice in TE curricula, a shift from a focus on teachers’ knowledge and beliefs to a greater focus on what teachers do is required. I am not implying that knowledge and beliefs do not matter. They do. However, the main goal of TE is to prepare teachers to act. To do so teachers need to understand the multi-dimensional nature of the classroom and learn to cope with the problem of complexity arising from the ever-changing nature of teaching and learning in classrooms.

To this end, TE needs to stress agency, critical thinking, and challenge student teachers so as to pave the way for enactment and change (Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2015; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015). In addition, pedagogy for autonomy poses the extra challenge of having to implement a mode of teaching that student teachers in most cases have not experienced. This adds an extra challenge to teacher education. Reading about pedagogy for autonomy or memorizing autonomy-related principles do little to prepare the teacher for the complexities of teaching for learner autonomy. The challenge for TE is to mesh the disciplined theorizing that contributes to the enlargement of understanding with practical experiences of teaching that require judgement (Biesta, 2015).

TE needs to find ways to show pedagogy for autonomy in action and help student teachers forge a vision of language education that they feel confident enough to enact. A focus on the development of practical wisdom for teaching is required but a separation of theory and practice can generate a false dichotomy (Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2015). However, this is how MA programme for initial teacher education is structured in Spain. Any attempt to bridge the gap would require significant attention not just to the knowledge demands of teaching but to the actual tasks and activities involved in the promotion of autonomy while simultaneously maximizing language learning opportunities. As a complex activity, teaching demands that teachers do several things simultaneously. Teaching needs to draw on several types of knowledge, social contexts, school culture, curriculum and methodology. It further requires the integration of knowledge of teaching, that is, what they know, to create engaging modern language learning tasks. The best way of training the mind to rational decision-making and the will to actually implement decisions is by involving student teachers in the real making and implementation of decisions through experimentation.

### **Teacher Professional Identity and Possible-Selves Theory**

Possible-selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) refers to the 'selves' individuals believe they might become in the future that are crucial in goal setting and motivation. It is accepted as a useful framework explored by some teacher educators to actively involve student teachers in the construction of their own possible teacher self (Freese, 2006; Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuam, 2010; Hamman, Wang, & Burley, 2013; Jiménez Raya, 2016). Possible-selves theory explains how future-oriented thought can provide identity-relevant information and motivation to pursue personally relevant goals. In the context of novice teachers' identity construction, more specifically possible-selves theory provides a useful framework for working towards the construction of future-oriented thought and the study of its contribution to language

teacher identity development. Furthermore, this framework allows for the analysis of the contextual, self-regulatory, and motivational contribution of student teachers' thoughts and teaching behaviours intended to achieve identity-relevant teacher goals. This challenge involves facilitating student teachers' construction of their professional identity, giving them the possibility of having an active role in the process. However, the articulation of a possible self does not guarantee the production of the necessary and sustained effort and behaviour change. For that to happen, possible selves have to be linked with specific strategies (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). As suggested by Markus (2006, p. xiv), our futures may lie in our "shared willingness to experiment with possible selves and possible worlds, and to redesign ourselves and our worlds". Like identity, possible selves as mental representations of the self sometime in the future are not permanent. Therefore, our possible selves can change fairly easy whilst the individual acquires new knowledge and experience. The application of possible-selves theory to teacher identity gives us the possibility of capturing the relationship between identity, agency, and emotion. Possible-selves theory has discursive qualities in that new teachers will certainly articulate what they hope, expect or fear.

Student teachers often find it difficult to visualize themselves as teachers, so it can be argued that they experience difficulty in, even resist, developing their professional identity for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons for resistance is confidence in their knowing what a good teacher is and what they will be like when they start teaching. Another reason is the security they have that when they actually start teaching they can pick up a textbook to follow and reproduce the teaching they experienced as learners. Another reason is attributable to the tenacious persistence of beliefs that spring from prior learning experiences. Still another important reason is related to the uncertainty that new methodological proposals pose for them. Research has confirmed that many student teachers do not feel confident in their ability to implement pedagogy for autonomy in their teaching (Manzano Vázquez, 2017). For these reasons among others, teacher educators have to "engage in dialogue with student teachers about each of our ideological processes of becoming" (Britzman, 1994, p. 72) in order to give them the chance to explore the kind of teacher they would like to become. Davies (2000) frames agency in terms of authority as "a sense of oneself as one who can go beyond the given meaning in any one discourse and forge something new, through a combination of previously unrelated discourses...through imagining not what *is*, but what *might be*" (p. 67). In a similar vein, Jiménez Raya et al. (2007, 2017) understand pedagogy for autonomy as a space of possibility. This means that TE can become a "space for imagining and enacting change" (Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2018, p. 99). So teaching is regarded as a space of possibility where 'bridges' between what is (reality) and what should

be (ideal) are created. In language TE, case pedagogy can be a strategy for the fulfilment of this goal, that is, an interspace where student teachers imagine alternative practices.

The literature on teacher identity agrees that identity can be become agentic and details how this agency is shaped by reflection (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Case pedagogy can play a critical role in expanding and deepening pre-service language teachers' knowledge of teaching, prompting them to frame problems, analyze contexts, and identify the benefits and drawbacks of various alternatives.

## **Future Teacher Selves: A Study of Student Teachers' Narrative Accounts**

### *Context and Methodology*

For this project, I used purposive sampling by selecting a group of five students from the academic years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 enrolled on the initial teacher education MA at UGR. The students do not usually have any prior teaching experience. These student teachers were enrolled on the compulsory module taught by the author “Aprendizaje y enseñanza - Itinerario Inglés” (Teaching and learning English as a foreign language). The module takes place before the practicum. It is organized around classes of two hours and a half, which are held three times per week over a total of ten weeks/72 hours. The topics covered are the following: (a) current methodological approaches to the teaching of English; (b) the teaching of the language skills, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; (c) evaluation and assessment; (d) curriculum design and planning units of work; and (e) pedagogy for autonomy. I consider autonomy as the most important one because it is the methodological standpoint that permeates and informs the entire module. To this end, I use the framework for teacher and learner autonomy by Jiménez Raya et al. (2007, 2017). The framework is presented first and the rest of the topics are introduced when we discuss the principles, for instance, Task-based learning is introduced when we discuss the “Action-orientedness” principle. The principles underlying the module are based on a constructivist view of TE which draws upon pedagogical inquiry, pedagogy of experience (Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2015, 2018), critical reflection (Smyth, 1989), and the notion of autonomy. It combines the explanation of theory, reflective tasks, the analysis of practice mainly through the use of cases, the enactment of ideas through case construction, a learning portfolio, and a variety of practical exercises/tasks. The aim is to help the student teachers develop practical wisdom, articulate their possible teacher selves, recast their personal beliefs, apply theoretical knowledge to practice, inquire into

their own experience and, finally, construct meaning independently. This process should enable them to develop a *vision of teaching* (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005), and finally enact this vision during the practicum.

The data collection instruments have not been specifically designed for research purposes. They are part of the module requirements. The first one is an introductory questionnaire with questions about the student's background, their reasons for wanting to become teachers of English, their views of language teaching, the problems they think that affect the teaching of English in Spain, and the kind of teachers they would like to be. The second one is an "ideal English Lesson Plan", a course task that student teachers have to do for the first class. There are no instructions or suggestions for the elaboration of this lesson plan. This together with the initial questionnaire help me and them form a clear idea of their initial views of modern language teaching and of their visions of the teacher. The course portfolio is another instrument used for this study. They are required to create the portfolio during the module to elaborate their own learning plan at the beginning of the module, to reflect on the ELT methodology issues we discuss, to reflect on their own learning to teach process, to express their various concerns, to include sample work, and to elaborate their possible teacher selves as the conclusion to the portfolio. I call the conclusion to their portfolio "My exciting vision of language education", an expression borrowed from Kincheloe (2003). This is where they are expected to describe the methodological approach they would like to follow, that is, their future teacher selves. Finally, for case construction they design and report on a small-scale intervention during the practicum. This has to be directly related with their "exciting vision". Its development has to be negotiated with their school tutor. Sometimes tutors following a traditional teacher-centred approach impose serious restrictions on what they can do. When this is the case student teachers are encouraged to accommodate to the demands of the tutor but to explore the 'space of possibility'. This manoeuvring strategy works effectively in most cases as can be checked when the student teachers' cases are presented below. The final task in the case of Álvaro, Pedro and Javier is the writing of an opinion essay. The reason for the coincidence is that their tutors asked them to focus on writing skills for an opinion essay because university entrance exams usually ask students to write one.

Sociocultural theory has been used as a guide to collect data and to carry out the pertinent analyses. I draw on Wertsch, del Río, and Álvarez (1995), who argue that the tools used by people to mediate understandings may constrain as well as empower. To this end, I examined the sociocultural tools teachers employ to make sense of language teaching, as well as the activity networks in which they are situated. I also

examined how these tools both generate and are reshaped by images and issues of pedagogy for autonomy. Thus, looking at the tools, images, and issues that people construct and exploit in social activity and interaction, allows us to study how the mind extends beyond the skin (Wertsch et al., 1995).

For the analysis and interpretation of the visions formulated in the portfolios I will take into consideration the vision of language teaching reflected in the entry questionnaire and the one informing their “future teacher self”. To this end I will use Tudor’s (2000) visions of the classroom as: (a) a controlled learning environment, (b) the communicative classroom, and (c) the classroom as a school of autonomy. I will also add to this three visions another paradigm for those cases in which they have opted for an eclectic approach. To check progress towards learner and teacher autonomy I will use the principles for autonomy suggested by Jiménez Raya et al. (2007, 2017) for the analysis of their ideal language lesson plans, their future teacher self, and their final cases. The proposal is articulated in ten language teaching principles that allow for the enactment of pedagogy for autonomy in the language classroom. These are:

- Responsibility, choice, and flexible control
- Learning to learn and Self-regulation
- Integration and explicitness
- Autonomy support
- Engagement & Intrinsic motivation
- Learner differentiation
- Action-orientedness
- Conversational interaction
- Reflective inquiry
- Formative assessment, assessment for learning, and assessment for autonomy

### *Results and Discussion*

In the following I am going to present in a table format the results of the study with my analysis and interpretation. To preserve anonymity I have used pseudonyms for participants.

Table 13.1 contains the students’ answers to the question: “What kind of teacher would you like to be? In general, answers are brief and typically include reference to the desire to be the “best teacher ever” and other emotional or affective aspects. At first sight they may give the impression that they somehow show a learner-oriented perspective view of teaching, but except for Sofía, the other students initially had a very teacher-centred view of teaching and the activities they developed were highly controlled and grammar-based.

None of the students explicitly mentions her/his stance regarding critical and controversial modern language teaching issues. This can be attributed to the lack of knowledge about language teaching methodology. Their views are typically vague, naïve, and ‘unprofessional’. What is more, they cannot be used as a guide for future action.

The analysis of their ‘ideal lesson plans’ (Table 13.2), which were discussed with them so as to better understand the underlying rationale, shows that these initial formulations are in most cases translated into traditional grammar-based and teacher-centred language teaching proposals even in those cases where they say their lesson is communicative. The only exception is the lesson plan developed by Sofía. The activities developed by Sofía meet the basic requirements of communicative activities.

Table 13.1 Initial Ideal Selves (Initial Questionnaire)

<i>Students</i>	<i>Kind of teacher they would like to be</i>
Álvaro	“Even if it sounds utopic, I would like to be the best teacher ever. I want to make my students learn while they enjoy the task. But I also would like to make them love the English language and to make them see it as a useful tool for their future in all possible senses (professional, personal, cultural...). Ideally, it would be also great if my students see me as a model and a trustworthy person to whom they can resort if they need it. In this respect, not only do I want to help them learn English but also instil some good values into them”.
Ana	“I want to be a motivated, dynamic and creative teacher”.
Sofía	“The kind that inspires, certainly. The kind that awakens curiosity, amazement, motivation, ambition. The efficient kind. The close-to-her-students kind, the supportive kind, the funny kind”.
Javier	“I think I connect very well with youngsters. I would like to be a role model for them and teach them as many values as I can. Moreover, I want to create in them a right attitude so they can get ahead in their studies, specifically in English subject. I would like to find the perfect balance of what I would have to teach them (mandatory content and preparation for real life)”.
Pedro	“I want to be professional, innovative, close to my students and able to make them enjoy the language. I want to demonstrate how necessary, useful and entertaining English is. There are many doors that would open more easily if you know this language, not only professional or academic, but also for leisure and discovering this world. Of course, I am aware that once I begin to teach I will have to adapt and transform myself and my way of understanding my work, but I think that it is essential to have, at least, an idea of what you want to be or what you do not want to be”.



In Table 13.3 I present a summary of the students “exciting visions of modern language education”, collected from portfolios at a later stage of the module. Students are encouraged to work on this from the beginning but the final version is done once the module is over. The average extension of these narrative accounts is three pages but in some cases it is considerably longer.

The obvious conclusion after comparing their future teacher selves at the beginning and at the end of the module is that they have made remarkable progress and accepted the learner autonomy paradigm. They all managed to define a workable possible self. In fact, most of them write in their portfolios that these are new possible selves they have constructed as they learnt about the methodological alternatives for L2 teaching. “...This has been possible thanks to a process of discovery that I have undergone within this master’s course and particularly

Table 13.2 Ideal Language Lessons (Summary)

<i>Students</i>	<i>Topics/goals/activities</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
Álvaro	Lesson plan: ‘Festivals’ Goal: To develop the language skills in an integrated fashion Activities: Warming-up activity and brainstorming on topic Speaking activity in pairs Jigsaw reading Follow-up task: ‘Invent a new festival’. First oral discussion and then describe in writing. Finally, present it to the class. Integration activity: In groups of three, students write questions to ask their parents, grandparents and younger people. They conduct the interviews and present the results orally to the class.	Although there is an attempt to plan a communicative lesson, this is basically a teacher-centred lesson, focussed on forms rather than on meaning. It does incorporate some timid attempts to encourage some learner initiative, though.
Ana	Lesson plan: ‘The good old days’ Goals: (Five goals taken from official ELT curriculum) Activities: Brainstorming on habits in the past Reading comprehension Speaking activity (in pairs) Vocabulary exercises (matching words and definitions & circle the odd one out) Motivation activity: Students write down all the vocabulary they remember from the previous day individually, then in pairs and then in groups.	Although there is an attempt to incorporate a communicative perspective, most activities are fairly traditional, reflecting a view of the classroom as a controlled learning environment. Objectives were directly taken from the official curriculum for secondary education. These are long-term general goals. Therefore Ana is not really guided by the objectives in other important decisions, namely, the planning and/or selection of activities. Concerning autonomy, no principles of pedagogy for autonomy are used to actively promote it.

<i>Students</i>	<i>Topics/goals/activities</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
Sofia	<p>Lesson plan: 'Riding the metro'            Goal: To develop oral skills by getting students to practice functional language in a real communicative situation            Activities: Students watch a YouTube video and discuss what the lesson might be about.            Vocabulary activity            Pair work activity: giving directions using an underground map            Telling the rest of the class how to get from one location to another</p>	<p>This is a communicative lesson plan. Activities meet the basic criteria of communicative activities. However, one of the basic problems is that there is not much input in the lesson. This, from my perspective, may be an obstacle for the successful completion of the activities suggested. Regarding pedagogy for autonomy, I do not see any real focus on any of the principles. The teacher holds all the responsibility.</p>
Javier	<p>Lesson plan: 'Good evening, Europe'            Goals: Know the vocabulary about music, show, television...            Use Past Simple            Use the numerals            Watch three music performances and know about a TV programme            Read and translate comprehensively some selected Eurovision's songs            Activities:            Approach to teaching the four skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Read the review and pay attention to the adjectives and make a list with the new vocabulary. Read and translate the lyrics of a song</li> <li>• Speaking: Write a dialogue and perform it in front of the class.</li> </ul>	<p>The lesson plan is focussed on grammar and vocabulary, reflecting a view of the language as a system of rules. There is no evident attempt to foster autonomy.</p>
Pedro	<p>Lesson plan: 'Getting away from it all'            Goals: Working on vocabulary related to travel, means of transport, directions, and idioms related to travelling.            Review present and past tenses.            Working on reading, listening and writing skills            Activities: Video for students to watch &amp; multiple choice questions            Debate            Vocabulary exercises            A quiz with images to check understanding of idioms and phrasal verb.            Reading comprehension &amp; multiple choice questions            Vocabulary gap-filling exercise            Grammar gap-filling exercise            Grammar exercise (Rewriting sentences to a different verb tense)            Organize a school trip</p>	<p>This lesson plan apparently reflects a communicative vision of the classroom. However, its main focus is the teaching of grammatical structures (review of past and present tenses) and vocabulary. It is a teacher-centred lesson plan. The plan incorporates listening and reading comprehension activities but the activities suggested are typically 'True or False' and multiple choice comprehension questions.            There is one speaking activity but its duration is about three minutes.            The final activity looks like a task-based activity: 'Organize a school trip' (Duration 20 minutes). However, the students are just required to fill in a worksheet.</p>

in this module which has contributed very valuable insights about the teaching and learning of English” (Álvaro). They were systematically encouraged to reflect upon their beliefs and contrast them with the new information, which led to their change. The mixture of intuitive and

*Table 13.3* Exciting Visions (Summary)

<i>Students</i>	<i>Overall conceptions of language teaching/learning</i>	<i>ELT principles mentioned (focus on autonomy)</i>
Álvaro	Teaching as a highly complex activity Language as a skill Goal of ELT: To make students communicatively competent Preferred ELT approach: TBLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active learning</li> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Learner-centredness</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Positive classroom atmosphere</li> <li>• Learning to learn &amp; self-regulation</li> <li>• Learner differentiation</li> <li>• Engagement &amp; intrinsic motivation</li> </ul>
Ana	Teaching as the development of lifelong learners Preferred ELT approach: TBLT & Project work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximizing learning opportunities</li> <li>• Promoting learner autonomy</li> <li>• Skills integration</li> <li>• Responsibility, choice and flexible control</li> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Creation of an acquisition-rich classroom</li> <li>• Learning to learn &amp; self-regulation</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> </ul>
Sofía	Education as a human experience Teacher’s role: not to teach but to create opportunities for learning to take place Teacher qualities: closeness to students, empathy, eagerness to learn, innovation Pedagogic concerns: learner motivation, autonomy, participation, authenticity, creativity, freedom, thinking and problem-solving abilities; focus on meaning, provision of real-life communicative situations Preferred ELT approach: TBLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Responsibility, choice, and flexible control</li> <li>• Engagement and intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> <li>• Autonomy support</li> <li>• Learner differentiation</li> </ul>

Students	Overall conceptions of language teaching/learning	ELT principles mentioned (focus on autonomy)
Javier	<p>Classroom learning as natural as possible</p> <p>Language used in its full complexity</p> <p>Pedagogic concerns: learner motivation, creation of realistic environments and rich learning experiences that promote lifelong learning and intercultural communicative competence</p> <p>Preferred ELT approach: TBLT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and rule-based competence, taking into consideration learners' internal syllabus.</li> <li>• Integrated skills</li> <li>• Creation of opportunities for input, output and interaction</li> <li>• Process approach to writing</li> <li>• Reading: intensive and extensive</li> <li>• Focus on meaning, and focus on form</li> <li>• Learning to learn and self-regulation</li> <li>• Responsibility, choice, and flexible control</li> <li>• Engagement and intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Integration and explicitness</li> <li>• Conversational interaction</li> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Autonomy support</li> <li>• Formative assessment</li> <li>• Learner differentiation</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> </ul>
Pedro	<p>The classroom as a place for students to thrive, learn, make discoveries about the world, themselves and others</p> <p>Pedagogic concerns/challenges: innovation, agency in creating positive learning atmospheres, learner motivation and engagement, learner-centredness, developing one's professional identity</p> <p>Preferred ELT approach: TBLT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement &amp; intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Learning to learn &amp; self-regulation</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> <li>• Learner differentiation</li> <li>• Autonomy support</li> <li>• Conversational interaction</li> </ul>

reflective practice has assisted pre-service teachers in making decisions confidently rather than reverting to some long held belief. Emphasis on the development of their own possible teacher selves required the opportunity to challenge opinions, to question, and think about methodological options to position themselves. The reflection on key aspects of ELT, on others' approaches to teaching, on action, and for action (Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008) helped them create their future teacher selves. In fact, reflection, if practised systematically, will continue to shape their identity throughout their career. Prospective reflection offered them a unique opportunity to engage in active meaningful decision-making, problem definition, exploration, and evaluation, particularly the kind that allows teachers to envision the future and to imagine themselves in that future. The creation of opportunities to critically reflect on the deeper implications helps create a more solid foundation for the times in which spontaneous decision-making is required.

The exciting visions represent goals or aspirations for the future, that is, hoped-for and feared possible selves that orient their vision to the future self. By focussing on the construction of their future teacher self they had to envision themselves as teachers and think about pedagogical content knowledge. In addition, the presentation of a range of methodological approaches through cases has enabled them to form detailed images of their possible selves-as-teachers. In fact, all portfolios contain elaborate explanations of what the students would do as professional teachers in specific classroom situations. However, future teacher selves are also regarded as a challenge towards which they will have to struggle as in the case of Sofía, for instance: "I believe that education is exciting only if we perceive it as a human experience.... Being able to relate to the students, to be seen as approachable, empathetic, eager to learn are qualities that make a great teacher". In this sense, the notion of the "space of possibility" has played a crucial role in convincing them that it is worth trying even if in small steps in order to gain greater confidence and expertise. Despite constraints the five students mention that they feel highly motivated to put their future self into practice.

I have been constructing this web of ideas that I am sure will help me in the future as a teacher ... I cannot wait to put into practice my notion of education to see what happens, to face problems that are to come, reflecting, analysing, changing and growing.

(Javier)

The five student teachers whose coursework was analyzed in this study are an accurate representation of the students taking the MA. Most students at least during the programme felt seduced by autonomy as an educational ideal and Task-based language teaching is the approach

subscribed by most of them. They often mention that their coming to this conclusion is based on the knowledge they have acquired during the course about the application and benefits of TBLT. In this sense, Ana writes in her portfolio:

It was during this course that I heard for the first time about task-based learning. [...] It seems more effective to learn a language in a natural way, as we learn our first language. Therefore, I will definitely use task-based learning with my future students...

The cases designed by the students, summarized in Table 13.4, account for their intention to articulate TBLT with the promotion of learner autonomy.

Table 13.4 Cases (Summary)

<i>Students/cases</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Underlying autonomy principles</i>
Álvaro “Writing an opinion essay - A case for the implementation of pedagogy for autonomy with Bachillerato students in Spain”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve writing skills</li> <li>• Develop alternative strategies</li> <li>• Foster lifelong learning and autonomy</li> </ul>	Task-based <i>Final task:</i> Writing an opinion essay: ‘In your opinion, should homework be eliminated from schools or is it a useful, essential tool for learning?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility, choice and flexible control</li> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Engagement &amp; intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Autonomy support</li> <li>• Formative assessment</li> </ul>
Ana “A guide for exchange students”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce autonomy, creativity, choice and self-confidence</li> <li>• Develop awareness of their willingness to communicate</li> <li>• Develop the language skills</li> <li>• Develop self-evaluation</li> </ul>	Task-based <i>Final task:</i> Podcast – Guide for exchange students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility</li> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Differentiation</li> </ul>

(Continued)

<i>Students/cases</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Approach</i>	<i>Underlying autonomy principles</i>
Sofía “A book of short stories”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster motivation, autonomy and reflection</li> <li>• Develop writing skills</li> </ul>	Task-based <i>Final task:</i> A short story Final product: Short stories book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility, choice and flexible control</li> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Engagement &amp; Intrinsic motivation</li> </ul>
Javier “Time to change the world: The Guide”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve writing skills</li> <li>• Foster critical thinking and active participation</li> </ul>	Task-based <i>Final task:</i> Writing an opinion essay [no topic specified]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> <li>• Action-orientedness</li> <li>• Engagement &amp; intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Autonomy support</li> <li>• Formative assessment</li> </ul>
Pedro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce the listening and speaking skills</li> </ul>	Mixture of controlled and communicative activities <i>Final task:</i> Writing an opinion essay: ‘Taking into account the use and purpose of Original Soundtracks, does the original soundtrack of AIVA make any sense?’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to learn</li> <li>• Reflective inquiry</li> </ul>

Exercising professional autonomy and agency entails the ability to act critically because teaching is always fencing with paradoxes and dilemmas. Agency is necessary for professionals to make choices, take stances, reshape professional identity, regarding their teaching practice (Billet, 2011). The underlying assumption of possible selves theory is that teachers, by explicitly thinking about their future teacher selves, would then

be in a better position to enact them. The first conclusion after the analysis of both the participants' exciting visions (future teacher selves) and their cases is that the formulation of their future teacher selves did facilitate the implementation of pedagogy for autonomy: "...I have been able to know myself better: I have been able to measure the space that exists between where I am currently and where I want to be as a language teacher... This is not just empty rhetoric" (Álvaro).

Four out of the five students participating in this study did successfully manage to implement their exciting visions during the practicum despite all constraints. Pedro tried but his case shows that he is still struggling with the actual implementation of his future teacher self. He is aware of his difficulty because he writes in his exciting vision: "I currently feel more comfortable with communicative language teaching". However, I am optimistic in the case of Pedro too, because possible selves tend to adopt a critical function when they are used to make comparisons against the current self. The latter is judged and evaluated depending on how big the discrepancy between them is. This is how pursued selves become behavioural standards when used as a framework for the interpretation of the situation of the self in the present. This is the reason I am confident that Pedro will eventually gain expertise towards his view of the classroom: "The classroom should be a place where students can thrive, a place for learning, for discovering new aspects about the world, about ourselves and about others".

Moreover, if the possible self is a detailed image or description combined with images of the individual implementing concrete strategies to achieve it, its effectiveness in provoking a change in our attitude and behaviour will be much higher. If the strategy is well defined, and we feel confident in the fact that we can follow it, the achievement becomes more tangible.

## **Conclusion**

Autonomy is an intrinsically valuable education goal. The challenge is to educate and support teachers in their efforts to implement it in the classroom. TE programmes, therefore, bear a large share of the responsibility for supporting student teachers carefully and thoughtfully in the process of learning to teach through powerful TE practices. TE aiming at the promotion of autonomy may want to consider ways to support explicitly identity construction through possible-selves theory by encouraging student teachers to actively think and take a stance regarding the kind of teachers they want to be, encouraging them to systematically think about crucial issues of language teaching methodology and to implement their "possible teacher self". Insights gained from experimentation help them make moral decisions based on their experience. This also fosters teacher autonomy, agency, and responsibility for the kind



of teacher they want to be, articulating their choices and rationales for teaching. Working on the exploration of possible teacher selves is central to the professionalization of novice teachers and for education systems. Interrogating as much as possible the foundations of how we position ourselves as educators can help us develop richer, more consistent, and more professionally satisfying pedagogies. Initial TE is about the agentic development of self-views that involve a future. To “improve our teacher education practices we need to change our way of being teacher educators” (Feldman, 2003, p. 27).

Future research could focus on the transition from student to teacher to explore the real impact of initial TE, analyzing whether teaching continues to be permeated by the possible self, exploring also changes and the reasons for those changes.

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