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# “English Made Me Feel Proud of Myself”: Student-Teachers’ Evolving Identities within an English-Medium Teacher Education Degree



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This case study aims to track longitudinally how the imagined identities as English users of two student-teachers evolve during the English-Medium Primary Teacher Education Bachelor’s Degree (EMI-TED) offered by one public university in Catalonia (Spain). The study draws on the identity approach to second language acquisition and Communities of Practice (CoP) perspective on learning. Adopting a qualitative and interpretive approach, the combination of thematic analysis and narrative analysis of individual interviews and linguistic autobiographies shows how the participants’ imagined identities expand and evolve towards fuller participation in real English-medium CoPs as they reposition themselves in relation to English. The analysis also reveals the effect that their investments in learning English have on their identities while they gain more legitimacy as English users due to the process of ‘internationalization at home’, i.e. studying the EMI degree at the home university. The findings indicate that the EMI-TED constitutes a particularly empowering context for those students without any prior experience of participating in real English-medium CoPs. Its international dimension not only affords such students numerous opportunities for language learning and use within their local realities but also allows them to envisage a new range of identities, without negatively affecting their local selves.

**KEYWORDS:**

imagined identities, investment, communities of practice (CoP), empowerment, English-Medium Instruction (EMI)

Este estudio de caso pretende hacer un seguimiento longitudinal de cómo evolucionan las identidades imaginadas como usuarios de inglés de dos estudiantes de magisterio durante el Grado de Educación Primaria en inglés (EMI-TED) ofrecido por una universidad pública de Cataluña (España). El estudio se basa en el enfoque identitario de la adquisición de segundas lenguas y en la perspectiva de las Comunidades de Práctica (CoP) sobre el aprendizaje. Adoptando un enfoque cualitativo e interpretativo, la combinación del análisis temático y el análisis narrativo de las entrevistas individuales y las autobiografías lingüísticas muestra cómo las identidades imaginadas de los participantes se expanden y evolucionan hacia una participación más plena en las CoP reales en inglés a medida que se repositionan en relación con el inglés. El análisis también revela el efecto que sus inversiones en el aprendizaje del inglés tienen en sus identidades mientras ganan legitimidad como usuarios del inglés debido al proceso de “internacionalización en casa”, es decir, cursando el grado de EMI en la universidad de origen. Los resultados indican que el EMI-TED constituye un contexto especialmente empoderador para aquellos estudiantes que no tienen ninguna experiencia previa de participación en verdaderas CoP de habla inglesa. Su dimensión internacional no sólo ofrece a estos estudiantes numerosas oportunidades de aprendizaje y uso de la lengua dentro de sus realidades locales, sino que también les permite imaginar una nueva gama de identidades, sin que ello afecte negativamente a su yo local.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:**

identidades imaginadas, inversión, comunidades de práctica (CoP), empoderamiento, docencia en inglés (EMI)

## Introduction

In today's globalized world, English is an international language that helps connect people from different sociocultural backgrounds. Travel, intercultural experiences, the exchange of information and values, increased mobility and a worldwide global consciousness affect individuals' everyday lives. Such realities seem to be important factors when it comes to understanding a person's possible reasons for learning English (Norton Pierce, 1995; Ryan, 2006). Globalization processes are contributing to important changes, just as they are shaping countries' cultures, practices, beliefs and behaviors. Last but not least, they are also shaping individuals' identities.

Within this reality and drawing on Norton Pierce's (1995) identity approach to second language (L2) learning, this paper builds on a previous study (Torras-Vila & Evnitskaya, 2017) which analyzed sociolinguistic factors that led a group of English learners and future student-teachers to choose an English-Medium Teacher-Education Bachelor's Degree (henceforth EMI-TED) offered by the first time by one public university in Catalonia, Spain. The present study aims to examine two interrelated phenomena: (a) the role of identity in these learners' interest in English and its learning, and (b) the ways in which the process of mastering this language affects their evolving identities as English users. More specifically, it tracks the evolution of two student-teachers' identities as English users during their participation in the EMI-TED.

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## Theoretical Framework

### Identity Approach to Second Language Learning

Drawing on poststructuralist theories of language, identity, learning and positioning, Norton and her colleagues (e.g., Norton, 2000; Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton Pierce, 1995) developed “a comprehensive theory of social identity” (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 12) which in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) became known as the identity approach to L2 learning.

Norton's approach follows poststructuralist theories of language and identity (e.g., Bhabha, 1994; Cummins, 1996; Hall, 1996; Weedon, 1987) in viewing identity as changing, shifting and non-static, an approach shared and inspired by Pierre Bourdieu. In fact, of particular importance are Bourdieu's (1991) notions of *legitimate speaker* and *cultural capital*, which view language learning processes and learner identities as closely related to each other. Aiming to connect individual and social variables in L2 learning, Norton proposes the term *investment* (Norton Pierce, 1995) instead of *motivation* (Gardner, 1985), a notion traditionally used in SLA research. As Norton and Williams argue,

Learners invest in the target language at particular times and in particular settings, because they believe that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources which will increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. (Norton & Williams, 2012, p. 317)

For Norton (2000, p. 7), *symbolic resources* refer to language, education and friendship, while among *material resources* she lists capital goods, real estate and money. There is therefore an integral relationship between learners' investments in an additional language and their identity: “as the value of their cultural capital increases, so learners' sense of themselves and their desires for the future are reassessed” (Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 122). Yet, language learning also brings constant changes into individuals' identities, thereby making them *evolve*. In fact, learners' sense of selves and their relation to the larger social world are negotiated every time they speak (Norton & McKinney, 2011).

As for poststructuralist theories of learning, the notion of *Community of Practice* (CoP, Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) is also highly relevant for Norton's social identity theory since it views learning as always ‘situated’ and emerging through the engagement – of both the *newcomers* and the *old-timers* – within a given CoP. Hence, one's identity is shaped within and by communities of practice, where individuals interact, live and build their self-concept. Lave and Wenger's approach to learning integrates several interdependent components which help understand social participation as a process of learning and knowing: negotiation of meaning, practice, community and identity.

As newcomers, language learners become new members of communities of practice and their learning process is understood as a relational activity of engagement with the social practices of these communities (Norton & McKinney, 2011). Yet, *engagement* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is not the only way in which individuals can belong to a community, as *affiliations* can extend beyond local interactions (Norton & McKinney, 2011). Imagination becomes, then, another powerful source to create a CoP. Drawing on Wenger’s (1998) idea of imagination, Norton develops the notion of *imagined communities*, which strongly guides and affects learners’ current learning, while affording individuals an ‘imagined identity’.

Research on language learning and identity also draws on the notion of *discourse positioning* (Davies & Harré, 1990) which refers to how people conceive themselves and others: positioning helps to ‘locate’ individuals within the social world, at the same time affording them ways to look at the world. This notion helps explain how language learners position themselves and others within an imagined community, thereby adopting certain identities (Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Kinginger, 2004; Murphey et al., 2005). As Block (2007, p. 19) argues, “language learners often adopt imagined subject positions in imagined communities of speakers of the language they are learning”.

## English as a Lingua Franca: Globalization and Internationalization

Moving beyond language learning theories, issues of a socio-political nature, which are highly relevant for understanding how individuals learn languages, need to be addressed. To take the most obvious example, English has become “an international language, a lingua franca, a global language, and a world language” (Caine, 2008, p. 4), which is used by native and non-native speakers to interact and exchange information and which is no longer linked exclusively to the countries that use it as their first language (Holliday, 2005).

*Globalization* processes have been looked at from a constructive point of view. Being part of an international CoP in which English is used as a commodity, lingua franca or global language (hereafter ‘English-medium CoP’) might also enhance individuals’ desires to delve into ‘local’ worlds. Globalization processes support the need to interact with other communities and eventually lead to the emergence of a sense of “global or cosmopolitan citizenship” (Bourn, 2011, p. 563). This can also be referred to as *international posture* (Yashima, 2009, p. 145): “a tendency to relate oneself to the international community rather than any specific L2 group”. Yet, the notion of *bicultural identity* (Arnett, 2002, p. 777) warns against the severe impact that globalization can have on learners’ identities, which end up being divided into two parts, one which is “rooted in their local culture” and the other which “stems from an awareness of their relation to the global culture”. This happens due to a *lack of congruence*

(Bourdieu, 1991) which may develop when individuals move away from their culture, and their own reality or *habitus* (idem) and a new reality or field misalign.

In line with such arguments, Block (2002, 2007) suggests the notion of *critical experiences*, that is, “periods of time of [an individual’s] [...] prolonged contact with an L2 and a new and different cultural setting” (Block, 2002, p. 4) due to moving across borders. Such experiences can easily and understandably challenge and ‘destabilize’ one’s sense of self, as there are always substantial identity-related changes during such experiences which create a sense of before and after (Block, 2002). Such might be the case of university students who study abroad for periods of time since these critical experiences are likely to cause intercultural and value collisions (Jackson, 2008).

To avoid the potential negative effects of study abroad on students’ identity, there is a growing tendency to view *internationalization* that takes place at home universities as a promising alternative. Internationalization has been defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2003, p. 2). One aspect of this globalization process, namely *internationalization at home* (IaH, Nilsson, 2003), is being adopted nowadays by many European universities, since it is “a way to embrace all ideas about and measures to be taken to give all students an international dimension during their time at the university” (Nilsson, 2003, p. 31). Among the measures to promote this international dimension is offering students the possibility to take courses partially or wholly or even entire degrees in English (Moore et al., 2013), as occurs in the case under scrutiny. Research shows that the effect of such internationalization at a home university can be the same as or greater than that afforded by traditional study and travel abroad programs on students’ development of competencies (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

## Method

### Participants

Framed within a larger longitudinal multiple case study (Torras-Vila, 2016), this paper examines data from two female student-teachers enrolled in the EMI-TED in a public university located in Catalonia, Spain (for a full description of the program see Escobar Urmeneta, 2018b), with a particular focus on the evolution of their identities as English users during their university studies. The participants were selected following the principles of ‘purposive sampling’ (McQueen & Knussen, 2002) on the criterion of being good informants, in other words, because they provided particularly complex, meaningful and relevant answers in interviews and showed themselves well able to express themselves broadly and freely about the issues under investigation. Further information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1***Information about the Participants*

Participant	Age	Gender	Certification in English?	Planning to do a minor?	Stays abroad before the EMI-TED
Sara	18	female	FCE (First Certificate English, Cambridge)	DC1: Music DC3: English	Living: ■ Summer (London, UK) ■ Summer (Sheffield, UK) Studying English: ■ Summer (Boston, USA) ■ Summer (San Francisco, USA)
Mercè	19	female	No	DC1 and DC3: English	No

Note: DC1: Data Collection 1; DC3: Data Collection 3 (for more detail see next section).

Once the participants agreed to collaborate, they were informed of the main purposes of the study as well as the possible ethical issues involved. They then gave their informed consent via e-mail.

### Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data analyzed here come from a larger data corpus which was collected over the span of three years via questionnaires, individual and focus group interviews and written linguistic autobiographies at three different times, one round per year, referred to as Data Collection 1 (DC1, May 2013), Data Collection 2 (DC2, April 2014) and

Data Collection 3 (DC3, June 2015), respectively (see Table 2). The corpus comprised a total of 40,000 words (see Table 3).

The participants were selected through an initial self-completion semi-structured questionnaire (Q0) aimed to get general background information about the participants and their perception of their use of English. At the end of the students' first academic year in the program (DC1), an open-ended questionnaire was administered which served to elicit information about their relationship with English (e.g., their use of English in daily life, their previous study abroad experiences), their possible interest in this language, and their motives for having chosen the EMI-TED.

**Table 2***Data Collection Procedures*

Data collection time and instruments	DC1	DC2	DC3
Data collection time	May 2013	April 2014	June 2015
Open-ended questionnaire	x		
45–60-min. video-recorded interviews	x	x	
Written linguistic autobiographies			x

**Table 3***Textual Data (in words)*

Data corpus	Sara	Mercè
<b>Textual data:</b>		
Questionnaire 1 (Q1)	602	252
Written linguistic autobiographies (LA)	543	1,201
<b>Conversational data:</b>		
Interview 1 (I1)	7,125	14,387
Interview 2 (I2)	12,337	14,387
<b>TOTAL textual data:</b>	<b>2,598</b>	
<b>TOTAL conversational data:</b>	<b>37,397</b>	

The issues raised in this questionnaire, as well as the key theoretical notions and themes presented in the literature review, served as a basis for the follow-up individual interviews (I1 and I2, see Appendix 1), which were collected at DC1 and DC2, respectively. These interviews were used for a more in-depth data collection due to their common use in research on identity and language learning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2011). More specifically, they aimed to delve deeper into the following topics: the role of English in the participants’ life, their interest to learn English and the extent to which such interest was related to their possibilities of identity expansion.

In DC3, however, a decision was made to collect data using individual linguistic autobiographies (See Appendix 2), following Pavlenko’s (2007) claim that “L2 learning stories... are unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in L2 learning and socialization” (p. 165). The participants were asked to report on their experiences as English users, both inside and outside the university, during their studies in the EMI-TED, thereby aiming at eliciting information about whether and how their relationship with English changed throughout their studies. At no point they were explicitly told about any concepts that framed the present study.

Because the intention was to build as much rapport as possible between researchers and participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), all data collection was conducted in the participants’ L1 (Catalan) to help them feel at ease, to allow them to express themselves freely and to avoid any negative impact on the content of narratives (Rintell, 1990) due to possible limitations in the participants’ command of the L2 (English). Following each data collection, oral interviews were transcribed verbatim. Finally, all collected oral and written data were anonymized.

For the purpose of this study, a sub-corpus of individual interviews (I2) administered at DC2 and written linguistic autobiographies (LA) collected at DC3 was analyzed. This sub-corpus comprised textual and conversational data totaling 17,629 words.

## Analytical Approach

This double case study aims to track longitudinally how the imagined identities of two student-teachers as English users evolved over the period of three years, a research objective that emerged as such from a process of recursive analysis of the data in order to achieve in-depth understanding and saturation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). That is, empirical data was approached from a qualitative and interpretive perspective (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; McQueen & Knussen, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Falling within the constructivist paradigm, this line of research inquiry employs the quality criteria of trustworthiness (criteria of credibility, transferability, and dependability) and authenticity, which aim to parallel those conventionally used, i.e., internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity

(Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A longitudinal approach was also adopted to see how the participants’ engagement with CoPs *through English*, that is, *English-medium* CoPs, affected their identity expansion and the ways in which they positioned themselves within imagined communities.

Analysis of the data was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, it proceeded along Miles and Huberman’s (1994) three analytical steps, namely data reduction, appropriate and clear data display and drawing conclusions. The procedure for searching for patterns in the data and drawing conclusions consisted of three operations: a) coding, b) memoing and c) developing propositions (Punch, 2005). First, *coding* the protocols involved searching for regularities, assigning labels to meaningful pieces of data and grouping the initial codes describing each single phenomenon into higher level categories. Color-coding of individual items and full sentences was used to identify topics that belonged to similar phenomena, thus allowing topics to emerge. Second, through *memoing*, ideas and relationships found in the protocols during their coding were annotated. This helped create new patterns and better understand the links between the themes, topics and categories that emerged from the data. Finally, *developing propositions* consisted of integrating the preliminary findings “into a meaningful and coherent picture of the data” (Punch, 2005, p. 202). Data-generated categories were applied to organize all the data and its interpretation to the extent that it could help achieve the objective stated for the present study.

In the second analytical phase, the longitudinal data were examined thoroughly using thematic analysis of qualitative data (Guest et al., 2012) combined with narrative analysis (Druckman, 2005). Through data coding and categorization, thematic analysis allowed for the identification of themes which were related to the participants’ changing identities and the ways in which their perceptions towards themselves shifted over time and space. Following Pavlenko (2007) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), special attention was paid to those words and verbal tenses which could help further understand the participants’ positioning in the past, present and future, which was also interpreted through the prism of ‘discourse positioning’ (Davies & Harré, 1990). Narrative analysis allowed further interpretation of emerged themes through the identification of salient themes, subthemes and narrative strands in the different types of data used in this study. As a result, some codes and categories allowed for the emergence of short narratives that provided further meaningful insights into the participants’ evolving identities.

The next section depicts how the two student-teachers’ identities evolved over their participation in different English-medium CoPs, with a particular focus on their identity-related changes during the EMI-TED. The results are illustrated with data extracts which reveal the participants’ re-positioning in relation to English over time and their attempts to gain legitimacy in an imagined global community of English users.

## Results

A preliminary analysis of the data suggested that the participants' increasing engagements with English-medium CoPs gradually expanded their possible range of identities: the student-teachers seemed to see how both their *real* and *imagined* identities progressively evolved. The more they engaged with these communities, the more they became aware of the existence of a global community of English users, which might offer them opportunities for identity expansion.

Both participants noted certain changes in the way they perceived things, their attitudes towards the target language and their future identity possibilities. For instance, before starting the EMI-TED, Sara had already experienced important identity-related changes within *real* (as opposed to 'imagined') English-medium CoPs due to her previous experience of studying English in the USA and living in the UK (see **Table 1** above). Whereas the other participant, Mercè, due to the lack of any experience in such CoPs, mainly perceived future identity possibilities through her imagination. During their studies in the EMI-TED, these dissimilar experiences for each participant progressively crystallized into two (somewhat) convergent trajectories, which will be presented below in more detail.

### Trajectory 1: Sara

Sara, who had had previous extensive experience in English-medium CoPs, showed awareness of certain changes she underwent during her stays abroad before enrolling in the EMI degree. She acknowledged that the experiences outside her local culture which she had engaged with were highly rewarding and she recognized the need to master English in such contexts. Her sense of self shifted over the course of her engagements with English-speaking communities since her local cultural identity opened up to a more hybrid and undefined identity, which might fit better the worldwide community in which English serves as a lingua franca. In Extract 1 she also refers to her intention to invest more in such experiences in order to keep expanding her identity possibilities.

#### Extract 1<sup>1</sup>

*Per mi l'anglès no havia tingut mai un significat espacialment profund fins la primer vegada que vaig viatjar a l'estranger en un programa d'immersió lingüística. [...] En el primer moment en que li vaig trobar utilitat, aquesta llengua va esdevenir una nova eina de comunicació per a mi. (Sara, LA)*

[To me English had never had an especially deep meaning until the first time I went abroad with an English immersion program. [...] The first moment I found it useful, this language became a new communication tool for me. (Sara, LA)]

**“A preliminary analysis of the data suggested that the participants' increasing engagements with English-medium CoPs gradually expanded their possible range of identities: the student-teachers seemed to see how both their real and imagined identities progressively evolved.”**

After her first stays abroad in summer camps as a teenager, Sara always wanted to go abroad again to study English. This reflects the relationship between her visualization of an imagined identity and her future investments in English.

According to Jackson (2008), learners' increasing contact with English in international settings can eventually lead them to gain a sense of affiliation with “a constantly evolving imagined community of world citizens” (p. 39), of which English itself is a symbol. Therefore, learners might want to deepen their investment in this language. In the case of Sara, such early awakened interest in English had major consequences for her further investments in learning it, to the extent that in her LA she mentions the EMI-TED as one of these long-term consequences.

When asked about whether she thought English had changed her, Sara compared it with something as different as basketball to express what English had brought to her life, as seen in Extract 2.

#### Extract 2

*Totes les experiències que he viscut gràcies a l'anglès, pues suposo que m'han anat fent créixer [...], com si una persona jo què sé, pues fa bàsquet, potser el bàsquet en sí no l'afecta com a persona, però és una persona que gràcies al bàsquet pues se'n va a fer campus de bàsquet i és entrenador de bàsquet a nens, i... té un grup d'amics perquè jugaven junts a bàsquet quan eren petits, pues tot això... li crea com un conjunt d'experiències que no són el bàsquet en sí, però que no hauria aconseguit si no fos pel bàsquet. (Sara, I2)*

[All these experiences I’ve lived thanks to English, well I guess they made me grow [...], as if someone, I don’t know, plays basketball, basketball might not affect them at a personal level, but that person might be someone who, thanks to basketball [...] they might go to a basketball campus or they’re basketball coaches for children, and... they have a group of friends because they used to play basketball together when they were young, it’s about that... it sort of gives them a series of experiences that, they are not basketball itself, but they would not have lived those experiences without this sport. (Sara, I2)]

Extract 2 hence reveals her awareness of the relationship between the *real* English-medium CoPs which she engaged with and the identity shifts she experienced as a consequence. Apparently, such experiences transcended the language itself, reaching her sense of self and altering her own perceptions of identity possibilities.

In I2, when further discussing her perceptions towards English after her experiences, Sara refers not only to her passion for travelling, she also mentions what stays abroad have given to her. She uses the word ‘bridges’ to refer to the doors that English opens up due to its status as an international language. Through this language, Sara envisions the range of possible identities she can acquire, identities which may expand and transcend her own culture, providing her with opportunities to grow as a person by engaging with CoPs that are very different from the ones her ‘local culture’ affords her. Sara’s envisioning is in line with Wenger’s (1998, p. 156) claims:

*[...] A community of practice is a field of possible trajectories and thus the proposal of an identity. [...] It is a field of possible past and of possible futures, which are all there for participants, not only to witness, hear about, and contemplate, but to engage with. They can interact with old-timers, who offer living examples of possible trajectories.*

During her school years, there was a clear lack of an imagined community in her contacts with English, as she seemed to envision no possibilities for (even peripheral) participation (Wenger, 1998). Although imagination is a powerful source for community building and might have been the reason why Sara (and her parents) decided to directly invest in her stays abroad to learn English, it was her *real* participation in English-medium CoPs that had a powerful impact on her sense of self.

Besides the opportunities for identity expansion, Sara also mentions challenges she faced in her early interactions through English. When attempting to engage with a community of international English users, she felt like a non-native or illegitimate English speaker. However, she has gradually acquired an identity that positions her as a legitimate member of such a community (Holliday, 2005), as she expresses in Extracts 3 and 4.

### Extract 3

*Perquè ara ho veig més com una oportunitat i abans em feia més vergonya. Ara ho entenc més com bueno perquè he perdut una mica la vergonya [...] Un cop va haver-hi el pare de la família aquella un dia que li vaig dir no sé què de l’accentem va dir, “Perquè no ho penses al revés i penses que tu saps parlar una altra llengua i nosaltres no sabem parlar la teva?” Diu, “Tècnicament estàs en superioritat”, diu, “nosaltres parlemanglès i tu parles anglès, castellà i català”. (Sara, I2)*

[...] Because now I see it as an opportunity and I used to feel very embarrassed some time ago. Now it’s more like well I’m not that embarrassed anymore [...] Once I told the father of that family something about the accent and he said “Why don’t you look at it the other way round and think that you can speak another language and we can’t speak yours?” He said, “Technically you are superior”, he said, “We can speak English and you can speak English, Spanish and Catalan”. (Sara, I2)]

### Extract 4

*Si en un programa et trobaves un americà que parlava molt bé l’anglès, dius “baaa li toca!”, però a la que et trobaves amb el francès de tornó amb un anglès que flipes... deies “merda!”, perquè ara si ell pot perquè jo no? (Sara, I2)*

[If you met an American who spoke English very well, you were like “well, obviously!”, but the moment you met a typical French person with an amazing English... you were like “shit!”, cause it was like if he can do it, why can’t I? (Sara, I2)]

As Extracts 3 and 4 illustrate, Sara clearly distinguishes between how she felt when interacting with native English speakers, moments in which she was empowered to feel like a ‘multicompetent speaker’ (Cook, 1992), and when interacting with other international English users, situations in which she sometimes struggled to prove herself that she was a legitimate member of an international community.

As far as her participation within the EMI-TED is concerned, in her LA, Sara states that her relationship with English over the course of the university degree has changed very little because of the broad identity expansion she experienced before entering university. This means that her previous engagements with *real* English-medium CoPs had given her multiple opportunities to become aware of the importance of English and develop a strong imagined identity in which English played a central role. As noted earlier, her decision to study the EMI-TED was, thus, merely one of the consequences of this realization.

Despite this, Extract 5 shows that there have been two significant changes in her identity thanks to the EMI-TED: her language competence in English improved significantly and, more importantly, she gained legitimacy as an English user.

**Extract 5**

*A aquestes altures he guanyat en habilitat però també en confiança. Em sento molt més còmode mantentint una conversa en llengua anglesa, i no crec que tingués aquesta mateixa confiança als inicis de la carrera...* (Sara, LA)

[At this point I've gained skills, but also self-confidence. I feel more comfortable engaging in a conversation through English, and I don't think I had such confidence at the beginning of the degree... (Sara, LA)]

Therefore, Sara has gained what she was expecting from the university degree. Although she had already envisioned such an imagined identity, she was actively searching for opportunities to prove herself that she could engage with the imagined global community of international speakers of English.

Finally, Sara clearly appreciates certain university practices specific to the EMI-TED (e.g., using English in the classroom to communicate, doing oral presentations, engaging in debates and other learning practices that required using English) as highly meaningful since they surpass the language itself and focus on building content-related knowledge through English. She conceives the use of English in her studies as a commodity (Heller, 2003) and as a very positive aspect of the program, thereby acknowledging its objectivity to bring IaH to local students. The diverse international practices which she mentions as a way to acquire knowledge indicate that such internationalization may have been, in one way or another, successful and have had a positive effect on her (language and identity) development.

**Trajectory 2: Mercè**

**M**ercè, who had had no experience in *real* English-medium CoPs before entering university, starts her LA (Extract 6) in a way that shows how different her experience in the EMI-TED was compared to that of Sara's.

**Extract 6**

*Des que vaig començar la carrera fins a diad'avui podria afirmar que la meva concepció de l'anglès o la seva importància ha canviat radicalment.* (Mercè, LA)

[Since I started the degree until today I could state that my perception of English and its importance have radically changed. (Mercè, LA)]

As English has progressively entered her life over the course of her studies, there are changes she is well aware of, as she notes in Extracts 7 and 8.

**Extract 7**

*Ara mateix jo crec que la meva autoestima és més alta, perquè em sento més competent i això també em fa sentir satisfeta a nivell personal, i... també més oberta, jo crec que (l'anglès) m'ha fet obrir una miqueta les... les...sí, el meu camp de... de mira i... això, sobretot perquè la llengua també implica cultura i implica coses, no? sí, considero que sóc més oberta i sobre tot això a nivell personal la satisfacció és molt més gran...* (Mercè, I2)

[Right now I believe that my self-esteem is higher, because I feel more competent and that also makes me feel satisfied at a personal level, and... also more open-minded, I believe that (English) made me open [...], my perspective... mostly because the language also implies culture and other things, right? [...] Yes, I consider that I am more open-minded and, above all, at a personal level, the satisfaction is much greater. (Mercè, I2)]

**Extract 8**

*Ara tinc la sensació que tota la meua vida, tot el que faig a nivell acadèmic o laboral, està relacionat amb l'anglès. [...] crec que m'està obrint moltes portes i m'està donant moltes oportunitats. I m'alegro d'haver triat cap aquí.* (Mercè, I2)

[Now I have the feeling that all my life, everything I do academically and job-related, is connected to English [...] But well, I believe that it's opening many doors and it's giving me many opportunities. I am glad I chose this option, really. (Mercè, I2)]

Mercè became aware of the possibilities of identity expansion only during her second year at the university. However, her data reveal that her engagement with English prior to the EMI-TED, although quite limited, mainly occurred through globalization, through travelling or interacting with English materials (e.g., Beatles songs) which seemed to help her envision a wider community.

Mercè's decision to choose the EMI-TED over the Catalan-medium TED was due to practical reasons: "I saw English as an opportunity to find a job more easily" (LA), "I didn't think of anything at a personal level" (I2) (for a more detailed analysis see Escobar Urmeneta, 2018a; Torras-Vila & Evnitskaya, 2017). However, she seems to have also viewed English as something 'enriching', which suggests that, due to those practices, she might have already envisioned a (global) imagined community in which she wanted to participate. Nonetheless, it was her participation in the EMI-TED that significantly altered her attitudes towards English: "the satisfaction to see that, only by being in touch



with the language you can learn so much” (I2). After two years in the EMI-TED, she envisions a wider community in which she wants to feel legitimate by acquiring the necessary cultural and social capital.

Thanks to engaging in the EMI university practices, Mercè started to distinguish between her local culture and a global culture, while her identity as an English user shifted from a peripheral position in an imagined community (envisioned through activities such as listening to English songs) towards that of a newcomer who is eager to fully participate. Now, Mercè sees even challenges as opportunities to gain legitimacy and expand identity, for example, when she has to talk to fluent English users.

In her LA, Mercè describes how her relationship with English has finally become meaningful thanks to studying the EMI-TED and repeatedly acknowledges its role in affording her multiple opportunities to discover a new world of the international community of English users that she seeks to belong to. For this reason, while envisioning her imagined identity in this CoP, she even decides to start investing in real English-medium CoPs: she applies for a CEFR C1 certificate of English (Extract 9) and does a stay abroad in the UK (Extract 10).

#### Extract 9

*El meu nivell millorava a un ritme molt superior al que m’havia imaginat i en un any, tenia un nivell molt més alt que abans de començar la carrera. I podria dir que aquí hi va haver el primer canvi en la meva relació amb l’anglès. [...] L’anglès em feia sentir orgullosa de mi mateixa i m’havia pujat l’autoestima a nivell d’estudis. M’agradava parlar en anglès i escriure i veure com me’n sortia tan bé sense haver sigut plenament conscient del procés d’aprenentatge tan ràpid que havia tingut. [...] Per això vaig decidir apuntar-me a una acadèmia per treure’m el Certificate of Advanced English per la universitat de Cambridge tot i no tenir el First Certificate. (Mercè, LA)*

[My level was improving at a much higher rate than I could ever have imagined, and in a year, my level was much higher than before I started the degree. And I could say that here’s when a first big change towards my relationship with English happened. [...] English made me feel proud of myself and my self-esteem at an academic level became much higher. I liked speaking English and writing, and seeing that I was managing so well without having been completely aware of such a fast learning process I had gone through. [...] That’s why I decided to enrol in a language school in order to obtain the Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English, even though I didn’t have the First Certificate. (Mercè, LA)]

#### Extract 10

*Vaig sol·licitar una beca Erasmus per marxar durant el tercer curs del grau durant un semestre i vaig triar Belfast [...] aquí hi va haver un altre canvi en la meva concepció de l’anglès, ara no només com un requisit que em permetria trobar feina o una cosa de què sentir-me orgullosa, sinó també l’eina que em permetria comunicar-me amb tothom durant aquells mesos que passés fora. (Mercè, LA)*

[I applied for an Erasmus scholarship to go abroad in my third year for a semester and I chose Belfast [...] Here it’s when there was another change in my conception towards English, not only was it a requirement that would allow me to find a job or something to be proud of, but it was also the tool that allowed me to communicate with everyone during those months that I would spend abroad. (Mercè, LA)]

While in Sara’s case English had become important years ago, for Mercè the EMI-TED meant an opportunity to incorporate English into her identity. Unlike Sara, Mercè had never experienced any stays abroad nor did she have any English certificates. Thus, as stated above, it was while studying the university degree that she developed a much more positive perception of herself as an English user: she seems to have fully acknowledged her imagined identity and is finally happy about what it can bring to her life.

Mercè also recognizes how her stay abroad in the UK and the positive experiences she had there thanks to English clearly contributed to her identity expansion, even to the point that she realized she felt like learning other foreign languages. And she actually started learning Dutch, encouraged by the new friends she had met during her stay abroad.

Over the course of her participation in the EMI-TED, not only does she earn legitimacy as an English user within her imagined international community, but she also gains new imagined identities as a multicompetent speaker. In this respect, the EMI degree has provided Mercè with a truly international perspective: internationalization seems to go beyond English itself, to the extent that this student becomes aware of further cultural and linguistic realities (Knight, 2003). In this sense, it can be argued that the EMI-TED strongly draws on the new ‘English as a lingua franca’ pedagogies, which take into consideration the expanding number of bilingual users of English, just as it produces successful bilinguals who possess multicultural insights and knowledge as educational models (Holliday, 2005).

When describing her experiences of interacting with other international English users during her stay abroad and even though acknowledging the language difficulties she often had, Mercè’s impressions strongly resemble those of Sara’s, the reason being that the EMI-TED provided Mercè with the opportunities that Sara had already had before the university. In other words, the university degree afforded Mercè knowledge and experiences that compensate for the

lack of contact with English-medium international contexts before starting the degree. Similarly, thanks to studying through English, she is able to envision an imagined global community she finally wants to make hers and in whose practices she feels eager to invest, such as travelling and discovering the world.

The mere instrumental reasons that had initially led Mercè to choose the EMI degree seem to have evolved into something much more sophisticated and complex. In Extract 11, when discussing her experiences through English during her university studies, Mercè implies that her understanding of the role of English in the world has also notably evolved.

### Extract 11

*Han passat només tres anys des que vaig decidir començar la carrera en anglès i va ser per una raó molt senzilla, que era obrir-me portes en el mercat laboral, però si ara hagués de tornar a prendre aquesta decisió, prendria definitivament la mateixa però per moltíssimes raons més. (Mercè, LA)*

[It is just over three years since I decided to start the degree through English and it was because of very simple reasons, the doors that it opened for my professional future, but if I had to make such decision now, I would definitely make the same decision but because of many more reasons. (Mercè, LA)]

Thus, it can be argued that, even more than in the case of Sara, the EMI-TED has succeeded in creating an international dimension which afforded Mercè multiple occasions to reposition herself in relation to the world and to the real English-medium CoPs she wants to participate in.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The present study aimed to examine two interrelated phenomena: (a) the role that identity plays in interest towards English and its learning of two student-teachers and English learners enrolled in the EMI-TED, and (b) the ways in which the process of mastering this language affects their evolving identities as English users.

The data analysis has revealed that before engaging with the EMI-TED, one of the participants, Sara had already had multiple opportunities to participate in real English-medium CoPs, and therefore to reposition herself, to face identity-related struggles, and to lose and gain legitimacy in these CoPs. Over the course of her realengagements, and particularly in those situations which implied crossing cultural borders, interacting with internationals and claiming equal membership in a global community of English users, she progressively engaged with the identity-related processes that come hand in hand with globalization. Thus, on the one

hand, her identity powerfully evolved into a more hybrid and flexible one, a *global identity* (Arnett, 2002; Ryan, 2006). On the other hand, such critical experiences proved very enriching since they afforded her new identity options that she seemed eager to further explore. This was precisely what had brought her to invest in the EMI-TED.

It should be noted, though, that the imagined global community she wanted to be part of might have first been envisioned by Sara's parents. She was very young when her family started to invest in opportunities for her to learn English such as, e.g., extracurricular English lessons or English summer camps abroad. We call these occasions 'opportunities' because all those real English-medium CoPs where Sara participated occurred due to the value her parents attributed to learning this language. This is what Bourdieu (1991, p. 48) refers to as the "transmission of cultural capital [...] previously invested by the family". Sara's case can therefore be considered an example of *family influence* on the development of the L2 learners' identity, one of the key issues identified in this study. Through the engagement with an imagined global community of world citizens who are fluent users of English, Sara was given the chance to expand her identity and become a legitimate member of this CoP.

The other participant, Mercè, by contrast, had had little exposure to real English-medium CoPs before the EMI-TED, and the critical experiences she had been through had been painful and negative because of her limited command of English. Although she might have already visualized a global community in which becoming proficient in English could empower her with the cultural, social and symbolic capital (e.g., values, knowledge, opportunities, recognition) or legitimacy, she had not yet developed a positive imagined identity that would lead her to invest in learning this language. This may explain Mercè's reiterations about having chosen this particular university degree exclusively due to professional reasons, that is, to the social benefits that she assumed come hand in hand with the mastery of English.

It was, however, the university degree that helped Mercè finally envision an imagined identity for the first time in her life and this required her to master the language. Yet, the international dimension that the EMI-TED brought not only provided numerous opportunities for language learning within her local realities but also allowed her to envisage a new range of identities. She became aware of the need to invest in real English-medium CoPs by, for example, obtaining English certificates or studying abroad, since student mobility has become a regular practice within higher education institutions (Soria & Troisi, 2014). All these practices contributed to her gradually gaining legitimacy as an English user of an international community as she started feeling "a sense of community with people whom [she had] not yet met" (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241). At some point Mercè's experiences of internationalization within the EMI-TED and the English-medium CoPs she envisioned led her to even go beyond this language itself when she decided to start learning another foreign language, as English became the link to other languages and cultures during her study-abroad experience.

This is directly related to other two key issues in L2 learners’ identity changes: *gaining legitimacy within a CoP and learners’ investments in the target language*. According to Kanno and Norton (2003, p. 248), identities “must be understood not only in terms of our investment in the real world but also in terms of our investment in possible worlds”. The two student-teachers participated to some extent in their imagined global English-medium CoP of world citizens, whether peripherally or fully, as it reached their local lives through globalization processes. This study and its findings thus show that such processes help L2 learners to envision themselves as part of the members of this CoP who travel, live abroad and interact with individuals from all over the world thanks to the use of English as a lingua franca (Blommaert, 2003). The interest in becoming a member of this CoP is what led the participants in this study to invest in language learning and the search for opportunities and contexts which could strengthen their sense of belonging. Hence, their imagined identities as future English users were built and evolved as they evaluated and positioned themselves in relation to this global CoP, its linguistic resources and, consequently, its symbolic, social and cultural capital, which they wished to acquire.

Furthermore, the participants’ aspiration to become legitimate English users does not seem to have distanced them from their local culture and languages, as neither of them provided any evidence of being in the process of loosening or lessening the intensity of the social and cultural ties that shaped their local identity. Their awareness of an international CoP in which English serves as a lingua franca seems to have expanded their identities without negatively affecting their local selves. It is, in other words, an integrative repositioning that widens the possibilities for identity change and for gaining access to communities beyond their own.

Over time both participants underwent dynamic *identity shifts* from English learners to English users (Pavlenko, 2003), although to differing degrees. Having been in a predominantly peripheral position within this CoP when she started the university, Mercè is the one who actually experienced major identity changes and gained more legitimacy over the course of her studies. Sara, on the other hand, saw the degree as just another opportunity to solidify her identity as an English user and move towards fuller participation within the imagined CoP which she engaged with long before enrolling in the EMI-TED. It is thus a question of the participants’ initial degree of membership in an envisioned CoP.

In this sense, the EMI-TED seems to become a *real* English-medium CoP by offering English teaching practices based on the notion of English as a language for wider communication which is no longer linked to specific cultures or countries (Holliday, 2005). The EMI-TED creates spaces in which student-teachers can use English, in their own words, in a ‘meaningful way’, since it is considered a highly useful commodity (Heller, 2003), for both communicating and acquiring content-related knowledge. Their progressive engagement with this CoP during their studies seems to

**“Their awareness of an international CoP in which English serves as a lingua franca seems to have expanded their identities without negatively affecting their local selves. It is, in other words, an integrative repositioning that widens the possibilities for identity change and for gaining access to communities beyond their own.”**

have powerfully contributed to their evolving identities, allowing them to move away from the native speaker/non-native speaker dichotomy (Canagarajah, 1999; Djuraeva & Catedral, 2020), still predominant in the field of SLA and instead move towards becoming English users, towards a member position of higher legitimacy and ‘full participation’ (Wenger, 1998). We can argue that English learners enrolled in the EMI-TED have managed to find the balance they needed to acquire a global identity which was compatible with their local identity.

Learning opportunities afforded by the IaH dimension of the EMI-TED seem to prove highly positive in promoting notable significant identity changes in learners by providing them with a wide range of international practices associated with the target language similar to those they might experience at the international level (e.g., by travelling, living abroad or interacting with foreigners) but which they can access without leaving their home university. Once such initial identity changes occur, students seem to eagerly invest in additional languages and increasingly engage with diverse *real* English-medium CoPs available to them. The EMI-TED can be seen thus as a particularly empowering context for students without any prior experience of participating in *real* English-medium CoPs or for those who belong to social backgrounds which cannot afford them such opportunities. ■

## Notes

- 1 Original wording and spelling in Catalan have been preserved in all data extracts even if they contained language inaccuracies. Translation to English is provided below each extract.

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## APPENDIX 1. Individual Interview 2 (I2)\*

\*Original in Catalan. Translation to English.

The interview was guided by the following topics:

- Your decision to study Primary Education degree in the EMI-TED program
- The role of English in your life
- Your relationship with English
- Your interest to learn English
- Real English-medium CoPs (language school, study abroad, etc.)
- English and your personal and professional future
- Pedagogical implications

## APPENDIX 4. Linguistic Autobiography\*

\*Original in Catalan. Translation to English.

*Write an autobiographical text that reflects your development and your experience as an English user throughout the EMI-TED degree. You can use these questions as guidelines:*

- How has your relationship with English evolved? What role has English started to play during your studies? And other languages? Has this role changed both in your studies and in your personal life?
- Has your degree of confidence increased during your studies? Do you feel / have you already felt like an English learner? Do you feel / have you already felt like someone who can just use English to do things? Do you feel less or more comfortable than when you just started your studies?
- If you think any of these feelings have changed, what do you think is the reason?
- Have these changes, or lack of changes, affected your life or any personal decisions in some way? How do you think things would have been different if you had chosen to do a different degree? Or if you had chosen to do the TED program in Catalan?