

**THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE ON THE
CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDENTITIES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAUCA**

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UNIVERSITY OF CAUCA**

**A RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE BACHELOR IN MODERN
LANGUAGES ENGLISH-FRENCH**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at exploring the unconscious processes that take part in time and space, and that have a strong influence on the way the society itself moves into a new era of change and prosperity, analyzing a niche that can be the generator of the whole movement. The study answers a fundamental Research Question: what role does English as an Additional Language (EAL) play on the construction of the identities of college students of the University of Cauca? For this purpose, we used a qualitative anthropological ethnography based on students' thoughts and ideas about the influence of English in their lives. Moreover, this study helps us to understand if the teacher with whom the student learn the language can cause certain effects and how it affects the participants' identity. Furthermore, it allows us to identify how the changed identity is evidenced in students' personality. Besides, we may say that this study opens a gate for new researchers to explore ways to see what college students from the University of Cauca do with their intellectual capital. As it is well known, each community has its particularities. So that, the findings from this study expand the comprehension of a community that is not always considered for this sort of studies. Then, this study guides us to understand in a better way the changes of identity when a new language is learned.

Keywords: Identity, Ethnography, English as an Additional Language.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo explorar los procesos inconscientes que toman parte en el tiempo y el espacio, y que tienen una gran influencia en la forma en que la sociedad se mueve hacia una nueva era de cambio y prosperidad, analizando un nicho que puede ser el generador de todo el movimiento. El estudio responde una pregunta de investigación fundamental: ¿qué papel juega el inglés como lengua adicional (ILA) en la construcción de las identidades de los estudiantes de la Universidad del Cauca? Para este propósito, utilizamos una etnografía antropológica cualitativa basada en los pensamientos e ideas de los estudiantes sobre la influencia del inglés en sus vidas. Por otra parte, este estudio nos ayuda a entender si el profesor con quien el estudiante aprende el idioma puede causar ciertos efectos y la repercusión en la identidad de los participantes. Además, nos permite identificar cómo esta se evidencia de forma inconsciente. Adicionalmente, podemos decir que este estudio abre una puerta a nuevas investigaciones para explorar formas de ver qué hacen los estudiantes de la Universidad del Cauca con su conocimiento. Como es bien sabido, cada comunidad tiene sus particularidades. Entonces, los hallazgos de este estudio amplían la comprensión de una comunidad que no siempre se considera para este tipo de estudios. Este nos guía a comprender de una mejor manera los cambios de identidad cuando se aprende una nueva lengua.

Palabras clave: Identidad, etnografía, Inglés como lengua adicional.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette recherche a visé à explorer les processus inconscients qui participent au temps et à l'espace et qu'ont une grande influence sur la manière dans laquelle la société évolue vers une nouvelle ère de changement et de prospérité, en analysant un niche générateur de tout le mouvement. L'étude a répondu à une question de recherche fondamentale: Quel est le rôle joué par l'anglais comme une langue supplémentaire (ACLS) dans la construction identitaire des étudiants de l'Université du Cauca? À cette fin, nous avons utilisé une ethnographie anthropologique qualitative basée sur les pensées et les idées des étudiants concernant à l'influence de l'anglais dans leurs vies. D'autre part, cette étude nous avons aidé à comprendre si le professeur a-t-il une influence sur l'identité des participants. En outre, cela nous avons permis d'identifier comment cela est prouvé inconsciemment.

Par ailleurs, nous pouvons dire que cette étude ouvre la voie à des nouvelles recherches pour explorer les moyens de voir ce que les étudiants de l'Université du Cauca font avec leurs connaissances; puis que chaque communauté a ses particularités. Finalement, les résultats de cette étude ont élargi la compréhension d'une communauté qui n'est pas toujours prise en compte pour ce type des études en nous aidant à mieux comprendre l'identité lorsqu'une nouvelle langue est apprise.

Mots-clés: Identité, Ethnographie, Anglais comme langue supplémentaire.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: METHOD	3
2.1 Research Method	3
2.2 Elements of the Study	5
2.2.1 Qualitative Hypotheses.	5
2.2.2 Variables.	5
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK	7
3.1 Theoretical Framework	7
3.1.1 Colombia and its English Policies.	7
3.1.2 Identity.	8
3.1.3 Construction of Identity.	11
3.1.4 Academic Field	12
3.1.5 Technology and Language.	13
3.2 Community and Participants	15
3.2.1 Community of the study.	15
3.2.2 Participants.	15
3.3 Contextual Framework	18
3.3.1 The University of Cauca	18
CHAPTER 4: THE NARRATIVES	21
4.1 English influences on the perception of the academic and professional life	22
4.1.1 Introducción	22
4.1.2 Laura	25
4.1.3 Sarah	30
4.1.4 Carlos	35
4.1.5 Conclusion	41
4.2 English learning experiences does influence the construction of the identity	42

4.2.1 Introduction	42
4.2.2 Simon	45
4.2.3 Jacob	50
4.2.4 Matthew	54
4.2.5 Conclusion	59
4.3 English, mediated by the use of technological resources on the identity construction of System Engineering students of the University of Cauca	61
4.3.1 Introducción	61
4.3.2 Sebastian	63
4.3.3 Lucy	68
4.3.4 Christian	77
4.3.5 Conclusion	82
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	83
APPENDICES	85
REFERENCES	87

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

“Research on second language identity explore the ways in which learning a new language changes the learner as a person. This is in contrast to approaches that emphasize the acquisition and accumulation of language knowledge and skills a person who knows something of a second language is a different person to the one who previously knew nothing of it. Knowing a second language influence both the learner’s sense of self and the possibilities for self-representation through language use.”

Barkhuizen, Bodycott, & Brown (2013)

What are the elements that make up the culture of a territory, region, or country and which one of them are threatened, displaced, or enriched by the presence of an additional language? Why do people assume the premise that the learning of English does not come alone? If true, what constituent does the learning of English bring with it? Furthermore, how many college students of the city of Popayan learned English because of the decision and/or influence of their parents or relatives?

It may be true that a person who knows English has certain advantages at work or school over those who do not know this language, but it is also true that we do not know if English contributes to shape, in many ways, an elite characterized by the status the language has in itself. Then, it is of particular interest to determine how much college students of the city of Popayan distance themselves from other college students of this city and region, given the fact that they know an additional language as it is English. This research study does not pretend to compare how much college students of

the city of Popayan resemble Americans or British college students. On the contrary, it seeks to determine how much these college students have distanced their identities from other peers' identities.

In this regard, the theory about the teaching and learning of foreign languages is abundant and almost every single day, a new method or approach is published or divulged. But little has been said about the effect the learning of English as an additional language has on the construction of identities of young people. Advanced studies within the framework of foreign/second languages have to move beyond traditional methods of seeing language education as a matter of method to get into the fundamentals of what individuals do with the language they learn and how languages affect the way they are as individuals as well as members of a community.

CHAPTER 2. METHOD

In this chapter, the reader will find the paradigm and method in which this study is based on. As validity is a key element for the importance of a study, the reader will find a detailed comment of the hypothesis as well as the variables that will be central to the study.

2.1. Research Method

This is a Qualitative Anthropological Ethnography by means of which students' thoughts and ideas about the influence of English on the construction of identity are examined. The data collected are bound to the context in which college students play their identity roles. In other words, the data collected throughout ethnography is based on what the students live rather than on the students' fixed responses to fixed language tests. Worth to say that we conducted the interviews in Spanish in order for the participants to have better chances to express themselves feel more comfortable when expressing their ideas. Figure 1 summarizes the main aspects of this ethnographic study and how they interact in order to successfully allow the researchers to accomplish their goals.

The main object of this research is the community as it is seen in the previous design. It can be observed in the inner and outer spheres the interconnection among the

stages, the steps, and the research object. There is no a particular order to follow because of the constant feedback that can exist in an ethnographic research.



Figure 1: Research Design

2.2. Elements of the Study

2.2.1. Qualitative Hypotheses.

- Undergraduate students of the University of Cauca assign a high value to the English language within the local context and when exercising their academic assignments, interacting with their peers, and relating to other members of the community.
- The meaning undergraduate students of the University of Cauca assign to the English language as a vehicle of communication and thought is understood as a medium through which they achieve their professional, social, and personal goals.
- Undergraduate students of the University of Cauca invest their intellectual capital that comes from their English language learning to position themselves in higher ranks of their professional fields and the communities they interact with.
- English as an Additional Language has permeated in important ways the interactions and everyday life of undergraduate students of the University of Cauca.

2.2.2. Variables.

Because of the nature of the paradigm in which this study stands, the only variable we controlled was the major of participants. That is, our participants were

chosen from only three different undergraduate programs: Medicine, Business Administration, and Systems Engineering.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand this study, we present in this chapter a review of some concepts of identity, the construction of identity, academic education, and professional identity; we also provide some information of the context where this study was developed.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

To carry out this project, it was necessary to take into account the concept of identity and studies on identity construction that allowed us to understand the way identity is affected when a new language is learned and the intercultural interactions that such learning allows.

3.1.1. Colombia and its English Policies.

In a country like Colombia that is overcoming an intern conflict that has affected the society for the past 60 years, it is important to understand what and how it is possible to redirect the efforts in order to create a change that leads the country to a better future. Two years ago, Colombia signed a peace treaty that allows the government and the society itself to greater focus on aspects that are relevant and crucial for the growth of the country. The last governments, due in part to the immeasurable efforts made to end the war, had neglected essential aspects of the wellbeing of their people, like education.

However, the war is over and fortunately, the national administration, for the first time in years, will grant a larger budget for educational purposes than for defense affairs (2016) ('El Espectador', para. 8). This indicates a general commitment to empower one of the most important sources for better life quality and equity as "People with limited skills and competencies are excluded from good jobs and have fewer prospects for economic prosperity" (2013) ('Quality of life indicators', para. 5.)

In the same line of thought, according to a study conducted by ('EF EPI', et al.), Colombian people, in general, has a low level of English which seems to be negative, unveiling that English is a key component in economic competitiveness at both the individual and national levels, and emphasizing that the better the English level, the better the income and eventually the better life quality.

3.1.2. Identity.

Identity is not static as Shakouri has mentioned: "During interaction and participation, the person involved attempts to stabilize his or her identity with the current context." (as cited in Tanzeela, 2014, p. 3). It means that identity changes through life experiences. It is also stated by Lobatón (2011) that "identity is constructed and co-constructed by one-self and others bearing in mind the way social dynamics are developed and what the different roles individuals assign or are assigned according to specific situations are." (p.4). According to this, individuals have more than one constructed identity and this is why language learners face different experiences during

their learning process that leads them to have a change of identity. As Day and Manyak argue, “identities are not freely determined but influenced by the learners’ participation in social practices, and classrooms are the active sites where learners construct and reconstruct their identities.” (as cited in Tanzeela, 20014, p. 4)

It has also been stated that identity is the set of characteristics that define the person or the society. These characteristics are usually hereditary or innate. However, human beings could possess qualities that can be adopted from the influence exerted by the surrounding environments, so identity can be changed or reconstructed. Therefore, there are different types of identity such as religious, cultural, social, personal, gender, and even national. All of those make part of our beings and the way we behave and live within a given cultural community. Despite these types of identity, some people discuss two forms of identity: individual and collective identity. The first, individual or personal identity, as mentioned by Samovar, “consists of those characteristics that set one apart from others in his or her in-group, those things that make unique, and how one sees oneself.” (p. 10). That means that we have desires, habits, likes, etc. that distinguish us from others. On the contrary, collective identity refers to the shared definition of a group that derives from its members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarities. It refers to the characteristics that make reference to a determine community.

However, it is strongly believed that identity is transformed or constructed through acquired experiences. We find interesting the fact that learning a new language helps to construct, transform, or both, the identity of a person due to different factors. We can grasp elements from the language because learning a new language is not only

about gaining vocabulary and new words or expressions, but also realizing the way people use those words in context and the way those expressions of the language go in accordance with the customs (identity) of a community.

In sum, identity refers to the concept of self, which is the knowledge of who we are, combined with self-awareness, that help us to develop a cognitive representation of the self (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010). Like CH Amble, we construct our identity from internal and external factors that form who we are, how we see ourselves, and what we become (Ch Amble, March 2016, p. 7). A different perspective can be added to the previous dualism, as claimed by Hall (1996) and Woodward (1997). Identity can be conceptualized in two fundamentally different ways: essentially and non-essentially. The essentialist view perceives identity as something connected to a person's self and considers it to be singular and rather stable. The non-essentialist view brings in the perspective of change, i.e. identity is unfinished, fluid, fragmented, multiple, constantly changing and transforming, and constructed across times, places, positions, practices, and discourses (as cited in Tiina Virkkula and Tarja Nikula, 2010). In this regard, we can notice what M. Leary and J. Tagney (2012) state:

Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past-what used to be true of one, the present-what is true of one now, or the future-the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. (p. 69)

3.1.3. Construction of Identity.

Identity is constructed from different factors such as changing contexts and the influence of languages, as it is the case of English as a Foreign Language in college contexts. The fact that we can learn foreign languages not only changes our perception of a culture but also helps the society to achieve international goals that lead to globalization scenarios and intercultural communication processes (Su Kim, 2010). That is why it has been widely supported that learning and using a new language or a new language variety involves identity reconstruction (Norton 2013). In this sense, people argue that when an individual uses two or more languages, s/he becomes a new person as s/he uses the language to communicate. Moreover, Erikson's (1979) notion of identity construction reflects not only a culminating summary of past life but also an ongoing construction created as the basis of future meaningful adult life. In the same line, Howarth (2002) found that when "exploring how representations are manipulated in the re-evaluation of the group, we can see how identity construction must build on and develop representations of relevant social groups." (p.159).

Again, identity can be understood as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how the person understands possibilities for the future." (Candlin, 2000, p27). Then, there may be different kinds of identity, for example, the professional identity that is an important focus in this study. Neary (2014) claims that "professional identity is the

concept which describes how we perceive ourselves within our occupational context and how we communicate this to others”. Accordingly, professional identity has relevance in this research because students need to be identified and connected to their professional life. They are expected to be aware of what they will be in the future and what English is for. Moreover, they have to be aware of the role the English language will play in their professional careers. Supporting that, Ibarra & Schein (1978) argued that Professional identity is “the relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences in terms of which people define themselves in a professional role.” (as cited in Deneen M. Hatmaker).

3.1.4. Academic Field

English has a huge influence on elementary, middle, high school, and college students, thanks in part to the opportunities it gives them to access to international education, cultures, cutting-edge technologies. According to Sadeghi, Moshtaghi, Mleki & Haghdooost (2013), English as a Second or Foreign Language has gained much attention during the past decades, in almost every country. For instance, in 2004, the National Ministry of Education launched the now-familiar National Bilingualism Program, which was designed to run from 2004 to 2019, aiming at having “citizens who are capable of communicating in English, in order to be able to insert the country within processes of universal communication, within the global economy and cultural openness, through [the adopting of] internationally comparable standards” (as cited in

British Council [BC], 2015. p. 14). Besides, Olanipekun, Garuba, & Mohammed (2014) maintain that “Proficiency in English language is essential not only for academic success alone but to perform in life as various individuals. The knowledge is important both for educational, economical and national development of a country”. That helps us to support the idea of the relevance of learning English nowadays and how it influences our goals.

There are many ways to classify the English language and its fields. One of this is associated with the emphasis put on the contents or goal. For example, one can find English for Specific Purposes (ESP), that it is divided into English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for Social Sciences (ESS) (see Hutchinson, 1987). According to this author, medical studies is a branch of English for Academic Purposes or a branch of EST, and students in all medical fields should learn EST as part of their academic study (as cited in Sadeghi et al., 2013).

3.1.5. Technology and Language.

As the world has been moving towards a modern technological era, several changes have been made to practically all the fields of knowledge, not only changing the manner of how things are done but also becoming a complement to achieve the highest standards. The role of technology in the current society has moved from innovative, to essential. If we do the mental exercise of traveling back in time, only 13 years ago, we

will probably notice that the coolest thing every one of us did on our phones was to set the ringtone to surprise our friends when we received a phone call. It is not been such a long way in the history of the world but it has been for technological advance.

Technology is so important these days that the most advanced and affluent societies in the world are intrinsically related to technology. As Edwin Layton claims on his comment on the interaction of technology and society, “the most important ways that technology influences society is that it opens up possibilities which had not been there before, which society may or may not exploit” (Layton, 1970, p29). However, the relation is not one-way and it is not only about how a society can use technology as a tool to succeed in the current model. It is a close two-way relation where one affects directly the other. “I see no difficulty in the assumption that technology and society mutually influence each other.” (Layton, 1970, p30).

It is clear that technology development and English proficiency are key elements for the success of healthy economic models in societies as well as advanced technological developments, elements that could be merged through education. According to David Bish, director of academic management for EF (Granja, 2016, para. 5), technology and English are a highly recommended combination to reach greater targets at both individual and collective levels. However, this combination would have a direct effect in the individual’s identity.

3.2. Community and Participants

3.2.1. Community of the study.

The community under study consists of college students from undergraduate programs of the University of Cauca. Because this study portraits case studies of undergraduate students who have English as an Additional Language in their lives, it is centered on a large population that is stratified by different classes and other variables. Besides, the University of Cauca is a national autonomous institution that belongs to the Ministry of Education, and it holds a special administration, legal identity, academic autonomy, financial and administrative independence. It was created on April 24, 1827 through enacted decree by the president of the republic Francisco de Paula Santander. It was installed on November 11, 1827, and its nationalization was ratified through the law 65 of 1964.

3.2.2. Participants.

The participants of the study were a group of nine college students from three undergraduate programs, namely Systems Engineering, Business Administration, and Medicine, from the University of Cauca. Their ages range from 18 to 25 years old.

The principal researchers of the study visited the participants in their common places on campus in order to get to know them and determine if they were interested in participating in the study. In general terms, the participants were presented with the main

aspects of the project during those encounters. Those who were interested in the study were asked to complete a form with their contact information. Since some of the participants were acquaintances of some investigators, it was easy to find those participants who were interested in participating in the study. Of course they were informed about the research project and the role they were going to play in the study. Thus, it was expected that some students were going to volunteer to participate in the research project.

With respect to the most relevant characteristics of the participants by major, the students majoring in Medicine are individuals who will contribute to solve the health problems of the community. Then, since the beginning of their studies, they show commitment to their studies, career, and community; positive attitudes towards research; a high-competitive profile, and an international vision to learn from other worlds and exercise their profession based on cutting-edge technologies. Besides, medical students who are in the last years of their studies as well as professionals from this Program of the University of Cauca get the highest scores in standardized tests, such as the ECAES. They present their research findings in national and international lectures generally obtaining recognition and awards. Thanks to their GPA, medical students can easily access universities to pursue specializations and graduate studies.

Concerning the Business Administration students, they are individuals capable of leading and working with groups, with high achievement needs, high levels of initiative, and a great sense of responsibility. They are recognized as people who desire to interact for collective purposes. Moreover, they are committed to their career so they excel in

National Tests. The graduates of this program are focused on the productive organization and distribution of goods and services as basic elements of economic and social development. As entrepreneurs, these students have outstanding capacities as leaders, managers, promoters, advisors, and executives. They can easily coordinate and execute plans, programs, and projects of finance and marketing. As social beings, they have a wide sensitivity concerning to human aspects that enables them to create jobs by promoting, organizing, and coordinating new companies. In addition, some of them are proficient in English and thanks to that, they have better academic and business opportunities abroad.

Regarding the systems engineering students, these are youngsters with leadership characteristics like innovation, autonomous and critical thinking, strong capacity of adaptation and teamwork. Their role in society is to be active actors of change who analyze, design, and develop computational systems that contribute to solve daily as well as complex problems that emerge with the evolution of society. Their open-mindedness allows them to collaborate with other disciplines, thus reinforcing the human relationships and contributing to a huge spectrum of solutions in the organizational field as well as research areas.

3.3. Contextual Framework

3.3.1. The University of Cauca

The university of Cauca, loyal to its motto '*Posteris Lymen Moritvrus Edat*' (He who shall die, leave his light to posterity), has a historical, vital, and permanent engagement with the construction of an equitable and fair society in the formation of an integral, ethical, and charitable human being. The main objectives of this institution are the following: First, to foster the construction and development of a fair society thus propitiating the improvement of the life quality of people. Second, to contribute to the integral education of students with the purpose of training citizens able to positively interact with the society following democratic and ethical principles based on human rights. Third, to develop plans, programs, and projects of professional training at undergraduate and graduate levels with high standards of demand and academic quality that effectively contribute to the sociocultural, scientific, and technological development of the region and the country. Fourth, to promote coordinating strategies as well as interagency support with the aim of articulating the university to the processes of ownership in science and technology, productive, social, and cultural development in the regional, national and international domains. Fifth, to foster strategies of academic articulation and qualification at formal, non-formal, and informal educational levels to contribute with the compliance of the goals, purposes, and intentions of the law 115 from 1994. Sixth, to propitiate, foster, and strengthen the research groups and the interaction with academic peers aiming at producing and validating specific knowledge

on science, technology, humanities, art and culture, in a way that effectively contribute to the solution of problems in the context and to improve the life conditions. Seventh, to develop pedagogical projects headed to the creation and reinforcement of an environmental culture for the preservation of the surroundings, as well as the cultural and historical heritage in the region.

Regarding the principles that guide this institution, the official information states that the University of Cauca is guided by the following:

- Coexistence and tolerance, necessary for the achievement of the national peace.
- Honesty and responsibility, within the ideological plurality and respect to the individual and social rights.
- The integral assessment of the human being, getting over any form of discrimination or inequity.
- Freedom and autonomy, essential principles to instruct people capable of deciding with freedom and responsibility.
- Democracy and participation, in the framework of a social state that warrants the individual and social full development.

The University of Cauca, aware of the commitment acquired with the country and the region in the processes of improvement and quality in the education in terms of training in values as well as work-oriented education and productivity, development of thinking, generation, and ownership of science and technology, establishes its main institutional purposes:

- To reaffirm the leadership and projection of the university in the regional, national and international context.
- To develop plans, projects, and programs in training, research, and interaction with the community with academic relevance and quality for the excellence and continuous improvement.
- To breed the institutional conditions for the adoption, adequacy, and development of programs in science and technology aiming at raising the competitiveness levels on its educational processes.
- To consolidate the democratic participation mechanisms in the framework of the principles enshrined by the constitution and the law 30 from 1992.
- To lead sociocultural, scientific, and technological development processes through the compliance of its duties in training, research, and community service, processes heading to improve the life condition of the people in the region.

CHAPTER 4. THE NARRATIVES

In the following pages, we will be presenting the life experiences of nine participants of the programs of Medicine, Business Administration, and Systems Engineering of the University of Cauca. These experiences tell, explain, and summarize the influence of English as an additional language on the construction of their identities. Every single narrative has a different objective; nonetheless, each one was related with a different and unique approach, revolving around aspects that are closely related to each academic program.

Narratives from the Medical program focused on how the English language affects the perspectives of the participants of their academic and professional life. Business Administration narratives focused on the influence of English learning experiences on the construction of the participants' identities from an early age (their life stories are told throughout a timeline). Analyzing the Systems Engineering program show a deep relationship between English and the use of technological resources. These narratives present and explain how the identity construction of three Systems Engineering students has been influenced because of the presence of English in their lives and during their career development.

Finally, in the following lines, the reader will find nine revealing stories told by the students themselves and written by students of the Modern Languages program of the University of Cauca.

4.1. English influences on the perception of the academic and professional life

4.1.1. Introduction

How does learning a foreign language change people's identity? Language, as part of the culture, has a big connection with identity. Since people are born, they have been in need of communication, starting with the mother tongue, which can identify a person with a particular culture. As people get older, this necessity increases because global development creates bigger expectations in life. That is why people must get and share knowledge in many different languages. In this regard, Hernandez (2004) argues that "every time someone learns a new language they begin to associate this language with a set of new experiences that are partially disconnected from those earlier in life." Let's remember that someone who knows a foreign language has certain advantages at work or school over those who don't. Then, it was of our particular interest in determining how some medical students have changed their identities from learning English as a foreign/second/additional language.

The medicine program belongs to the School of Health Sciences of the University of Cauca and it was given a high quality accreditation by the Ministry of Education since February 2004. The program was established under the N° 203 agreement issued by Boar of Directors of the University. This medical career has two hundred eighty-two credits distributed in thirteen semesters. They are divided in five components: basic science training, humanistic education, research training, social

training, and clinical training. Moreover, this school has been recognized in the world by considerable number of students awarded thanks to their investigations and discoveries on topics such as microbiology, epidemiology, oncology, and parasitology, among others.

On the other hand, the mission and vision of the program states that students majoring in medicine are individuals who will apply their knowledge and skills by promoting health, preventing diseases, taking care, rehabilitating, and solving medical problems of the community. They are also required to show abilities for reading, writing and communicating, as well as their competence in a foreign language (preferably English), and basic knowledge in informatics. Furthermore, students show positive attitudes towards research because they learn from investigations during their career how to get the capacity to investigate priority global health issues and be able to design, develop, and evaluate research projects from the clinical, epidemiologic, management, and social points of view. They also have a high national and international competitive profile.

Regarding our participants, they are between 20 and 24 years old. Thanks to their parents' support, they have been abroad in places like the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, and some European countries, getting important experiences. For one of them, the objective of its trips was only to participate in some conferences; for the others, it was just for fun or vacations. During these experiences abroad, they made use of English as their main additional language. They also think that some aspects of their identities could change by adopting an important value: respect for rules, people, nature and time.

Likewise, these participants maintain a daily contact with the English language by reading the main topic of interest for them which is medical studies. On the other hand, Chinnery (2006) states “technologies, mobile or otherwise, can be instrumental in language learning. They are very powerful tools for the transmission and distribution of linguistic information (input) or, in other words, aids to communication rather than a means of instruction” (as cited in Cambridge papers, 2016, p. 5). That is why, they use the blended learning approach to be updated with new information related to their career; this approach, according to Cambridge Papers (2016) refers to:

Two different learning environments, face-to-face (synchronous) and online (asynchronous); and they refer to combining those two learning environments in a complementary way to deliver a programme of study so that learners can be supported both within the classroom environment and outside of it. (p. 2)

Two semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The participants had the opportunity to make retrospective accounts of their past experiences, and recount or express what they felt and lived after learning a second language. These interviews were accomplished in different meeting points that made the sessions more comfortable and they were divided in two parts. The first one was based on the participants’ stories about their experiences while they were learning English, and how they felt this language could affect or change their identities or personalities. The second one was based on personal and familiar questions, which addressed topics like childhood memories, treasured objects, among others. They allowed us to look into the roots and the main

characteristics of their identities, and comprehend why these kinds of changes occurred because of the language.

Lastly, it could be stated that language can help individuals to develop different ways of thinking, processing, and transmitting ideas while a connection with the world is created. So, at the end of the study, it will be shown, based on the stories of the participants of medicine program, how English as an Additional Language (EAL) has influenced their identities.

4.1.2. Laura

Integrity and discipline: my tools for success.

A slim, short, brunette girl, with long and curly hair, wearing glasses and a medical school uniform arrived to our meeting place. She kindly said hello with a smile on her lips although she looked a little shy. We introduced ourselves and moved to the house of one of the interviewers. We barely looked at each other or said anything as we walked to the place of the interview. Then, we went to the interviewer's apartment; she took us to the living room and Laura kept behind us waiting for indications to begin the interview.

Once ready to begin the interview, Laura, showing herself as a modest girl, started to tell us about her experience with the English language and her academic achievements that led her to travel to the United States, and increased her desire to improve her English, an additional language for her. When she was answering our

questions, some body language was noticed, like the movement of her hands to emphasize some key words of her speech, and the foot tic to which she unconsciously showed us a tense and stressful atmosphere in the room, reflecting a low confidence that there was among attendants.

During the interview, she confessed that studying English wasn't her own decision but her mother's desire. Over the years, Laura was conscious of the importance of it, as she said: "something inside me would tell me that I had to learn English because it was necessary for my life, although I didn't know what my profession was going to be, even if, from the bottom of my heart, I knew that I wanted to visit the USA". However, the realization of a travel to the United States was not related to what she had wanted since childhood, to go to Disney World, where her favorite stories were created. Through these, she learned these values: reading habit, training memory when memorizing each one of the stories written in the book, and most importantly, to confront life without shyness or fear. However, the dream of traveling to this place was not only hers but also her mother's, a person whom she has admired since she was a little child. Her feelings are reflected in the brightness of her eyes and the tone of her warm voice, full of love when she said these words: "she is basically an example for me, she doesn't have a professional degree but she has what I'd like to be as a person: her integrity to properly conduct herself in the community". Not only the values taught by her mom but also her humbleness and discipline made Laura a persevering person who is now able to achieve her goals and to lead a group as can be seen in her actual group at the university. Since Laura joined this group, she got important academic and

professional goals in a national and international scale being a speaker in some congresses in Mexico, Cuba, the United States, and some cities in Colombia.

As the interview proceeded, Laura looked more comfortable. With a gentle smile and relaxed posture, she was trying to understand every question for giving us complete and more personal answers. She then started to tell us about some important facts from her childhood. She said that she lived an extraordinary experience with a friend of hers. Laura's friend gave her a present as a secret pal gift: it was small chocolate with a letter that said that she could not give Laura anything else, that was all what she had. In that moment, we noticed how her eyes reflected the way she was having a flashback and we could feel how her memories took her over. Ever since, she understood that small gifts have great value. Thus, she learned to be grateful to every single person who is part of her academic and personal life. She also learned to enjoy every moment of her life.

Nevertheless, a huge impact event made her emotions and feeling decline, causing a shock on her life by which she became aware of her discipline was not a synonym of perfection and she was not always right as she imagined. That was we glimpsed hearing these words: "back then, I believed I was right, I thought always being like... everything I did was perfect". Then, she took a colder, more rigid and tenser posture while she was talking about the EVENT as she said: "the incident that impacted the most in my life was something that we suffered at home with an error made by my father to my mom. It turned me into a resentful person, it was so difficult to assimilate, but as time went by, that EVENT taught me this: human beings have the right to make mistakes and learn from them, to not to judge and even more, to have no resentment nor

negative thoughts to others because it does not help us to move forward”. From then on, her role in her family as a person responsible for her parents changed for her: “I became a close friend to my mom, I was a support to confront not only this situation but also her disease, a uterus cancer that made her decline physically and emotionally, it was really hard to heal. I needed to show strength, to pretend to be fine and do not cry, turning into a strong person, the pillar and fundament for her”.

Also, Laura, who is the elder among her cousins, suddenly became an example for them to follow. It is similar to what she hopes to be for her goddaughter, who helps her to improve as a person. This baby has given the most recent moments of happiness and to further strengthen friendship between Laura and her best friend, a girl who has provided unconditional support to overcome barriers in Laura’s life. Furthermore, for Laura, happiness is the result of sharing important facts in family and friends. Some of them are Christmas’ dining, academic goals, birthdays, and the celebration of 15 years old.

Each word reflects the value of her effort to make possible all her goals and dreams, those that can be seen through her discipline, integrity, and tolerance, especially when she says this: “all what can be obtained is gain, the formation as a person does not depend on the resources or the place where we grow but on the people who surround us and on how much effort had to improve opportunities”.

“Sometimes, people don’t need to be the smartest but the most dedicates.” Those words were frequently mentioned by Laura every time she focused in her academic life, showing us coherence in her successful course completion, although she always knew that her mom, that woman who has been Laura’s biggest inspiration, wanted to give her

a broader sense of life, that was why Laura's mom took the decision to involve her daughter with classes in an English language institute of the city. I was there, not by choice, that didn't mean I was to give it up, I tried with tenacity and dedication, and I got it." As noticed, those years taught her that she was going to make come true every single goal, and the next step was to get the admission to college. We could see emotion and happiness in her eyes and big smile when she said: "I was so happy that even after being admitted I kept the pencil and the eraser I used on the day of the admission exam, and I even remember the number 21 where I was placed on the list, because it has been very present in my life."

That was her big step to college life. She knew that nothing could block her to set goals in her academic and professional life. Laura told us that "it does not matter how you get there, the point is to get there because you have the opportunity to learn and get your target." Target that is reflected in her research team where she applied all that discipline and integrity, achieving different national and international recognitions with the help of their medical coach, medical doctor that had been very important to obtain the participation in some conferences in the USA, such as attending conferences at Harvard University and participating as speakers in the 2018 World Congress of Immunology in Texas, USA.

She told us that English helped her to comprehend and obtain new knowledge about her area of work. As she said, this language is a tool that allows her to meet and keep contact with different cultures. At the same time, it is absolutely crucial in her professional life because it opens doors to her abroad, where, as she puts it, education and research are more advanced. According to her, "at this moment, no matter where I

am going out, I will find many more people who speak English, for me the entrance door is English now". Laura has a close relation with this language, reading, and researching about some academic aspects that can increase her professional development as a future medical scientist she wants to be. On the other hand, she practices the language with the help of music, movies, and series, because she wants to be able to handle her knowledge in the best way in her professional field and make contributions to the community with customs, experiences, and habits acquired.

4.1.3. Sarah

A messy discipline.

A Saturday afternoon we got to the funniest interview we would have. Sara welcomed us in a very cozy way, making us feel good vibes from the very beginning. There were four high-range bicycles at the entry of her house, hanging just like trophies, which called our attention. The first thing that came to our mind was that she had an athletic family.

Sara led us to her room, a large and light place which has a study area with a board full of dates and notes, and a big desk with books and photocopies on. To start the interview, without any problem, Sara sat in her bed, like a kid crossing his legs (in a “mushroom” way). Then, she suggested us to imitate the same action that she did while pointing at her bed. Although we were a little shy, this gesture made an easy-going and

relaxed atmosphere. Finally, we got comfortable with each one and we seated on a different side of the bed.

Sara, uncombed hair, without makeup, and barefoot, was wearing caramel pants and a black blouse which led us notice her toned arms. It was another clue that made us realize about the importance of sports in her life. Between laughs that showed the bright blue of her brackets, the interview began. From the first moment, we noticed that although Sara seems to be an extroverted and happy woman, she doesn't like to talk about her intimacies; she always tried to avoid this kind of questions by laughing or changing the topic.

As the interview continued, Sara described herself as a relaxed and sports lover. We figured out that thanks to this passion, she is not attached to any material things, as Sara expressed in the following statement: "athletes are so uncomplicated; for example, everything that isn't useful for me, I give or throw it away."

After asking her about the kind of objects that have marked her life, Sara found out that she had few transcendental objects most of which are related to sports, like her childhood skates with some medals that support the way in which she defines herself at this sport: "I was super good". Furthermore, Sara usually plays the guitar for relaxing herself; she conserves the costumes that she used during her dance performances, and a basketball she is still playing. Sara also keeps the first semester enrollment-payment receipt of the career that she wanted to study. Lastly, her grandmother's watch, which is part of the few jewelries she uses, it is the only object from a person that she retains as a result of gratitude for her grandmother and identification that its external appearance represents: simplicity and elegance.

In the middle of the interview, always drawing a smile on her face, Sara started to move her head with her long dark hair from the right side to the left, while telling us about her Chemistry and Biology unfinished studies, those she took for a year in a city of the northeast of the country. Sara said that this “adventure” changed her way of being, it taught her to get mature and to be aware of the responsibilities that being independent requires. As Sara states “I was so relaxed when I didn’t get admission to the university; but everything changed when I had to live by myself; there, I realized I was really spoiled”.

Sara also moved her physiotherapy studies forward when she returned to her hometown, always hoping to begin studies in what she thinks she is destined to: medicine. Sara delayed to begin her studies in medicine because she wanted to do it in a public university, arguing that the quality of the study prevails there.

In 2015, Sara got admission in the medicine program in the most important public university of her hometown. We could denote how her eyes began to shine when she said, with a tone of pride, that it was really hard to get in. Later, Sara indirectly laid aside her passions, sports or outings with friends, because her needs were only to study every day during each semester to get a high GPA. Sara said that, in spite of this, she enjoys having contact with people and sharing with them what she knows. She maintains that “life is too short; you have to learn how to love people. I know what it means because I am in constant contact with death.” Next, between a loud laugh Sara said that what makes her happy the most about her career is when she finishes her academic semester because it is a synonym of calm. Sara is also aware of the importance of

sacrificing certain things for the sake of obtaining a high professional level, as it is the case of her special cousins and her uncle, who works in the Miami Children's Hospital.

When Sara responded some questions, her answers let us profile her as a strong and daring woman focused on her family welfare. Thus, Sara describes her mom as a gentle woman who always wants to help the others, her dad as a righteous man who credits his profession as lawyer and her sister as a woman with a strong personality and an unconditional capacity for friendship. The admiration for her family is revealed when she gestured her face more serious and the laughs stopped for a while.

Since she was a child and thanks to her family, Sara learnt some crucial values such as patience, solidarity, tolerance, responsibility, justice, and perseverance. Those values will help her to be a better person and a committed professional. Even so, she knows that if she wants to become a medical doctor, she needs a relevant tool: English, because she is aware of the advantages of speaking this language. She emphasizes: “English keeps me updated with new information”. Moreover, Sara said that her partners have gotten difficulties because they do not know this language. She affirms “English has given to me more opportunities in my study than those people who do not know it.” These are the reasons why Sara takes advantage from it. Everything began from early childhood, when her parents enrolled her in a private institute where she studied English. Ever since, she has tried to improve and keep up her English level by watching movies and series, by listening to music, and by visiting a friend’s hostel to talk with foreign people who stay there. Sara is an open-minded person who loves sharing moments with people from other cultures to learn about them and to get information about places where she would like to go with her family one day.

Despite keeping a close relation with foreign cultures, Sara does not feel a huge influence on her way of life with this contact but, she said that her perspective about a place where she would develop as medical doctor changed when she learnt English, as she argues “English opens your mind and the panorama to, not only stay in Colombia or in Latin America, but also to go abroad.” Her thoughts are also shared by her family because they often celebrate their rituals making travels or tours. For example, some of those transcendental facts are: the 50th birthday celebration of her mother, Sara’s sister wedding, Sara’s high school graduation, Christmas time, among others.

Their yearly outdoor activities are backpacking and hiking. They do backpacking trips not for economy; they do it just for being in contact with people, their culture, and for keeping their trip longer as she said “we always think about going out and hugging people”. The other activity that is part of the identity of Sara’s family is to go biking (this reaffirmed our initial assumption) to some places of the countryside in their hometown when they have some free time. This sport has given them the opportunity to be in contact with the nature, to turn them into relaxed people, to keep themselves away from their luxuries, to stay in any hostel, and to eat any kind of food.

In respect to international trips, English is the tool that brought the opportunity to Sara to change her role in her family. She moved from being “the noisy girl at home” to lead them in different contexts; for instance, at airports where she has to be in charge of the situation to guide them without any objection and to establish connection with people. As she said, she is the person responsible for making relationships with others.

Lastly, the university and her career have given her some opportunities to experiment some rituals with ethnic cultures through health brigades in the region where

she lives: for example, a guambiana wedding and a purification act when eating the coca's leave. All these events have helped Sara to be interested in other cultures, keep contact with other people, understand different worlds, and enjoy the process of planning trips, rituals, and even academic and professional events. Although Sara is a woman who does not like to talk about her personal things, she has let us see her passion for sports, her family, and her profession. Those passions are strengthened with English because Sara is sure that this language will be the main tool and quality (as she defined it) to help her perform in any place in the world, no matter if she is alone or with her family.

4.1.4. Carlos

A cozy humble man.

Carlos arrived to our meeting place and the first thing that called our attention was his height, because he is a very tall man; he is 20 years old and his age is reflected in his tender face. After a short introduction about the interview, we entered into confidence due to his permanent smile and his candidness, although he is a little shy. Carlos has pretty big eyelashes and eyes that frame his coy and evasive look. Apparently, Carlos is an introverted man.

Carlos was willing to help us and began the interview in a calm way and like if he were frozen, talking about the importance of English during his medical career. He talked about some personal changes because of the learning of English language, but, mainly pointed out about the academic and professional changes. When he is talking

about this, it can be noted a feeling of security in him, maybe because he was sure about his proficiency in English. This fact was remarked with his answer to the question: “Do you feel confident when speaking English?” which was: “Sure thing”. From that moment, we were sure about the confidence that English gave to him, making all his shyness disappears when he is using it.

“Everything began as an obligation” said Carlos about his way to learn English; he told us amid coquettish smiles like someone who remembers some childhood events, that he learned how to take advantage from the fact of knowing English while his classmates didn’t. “I was never a devoted student; but in English, I was one of the best. I took it as an advantage to get free time because I didn’t need to study, and I didn’t like to do homework” From that moment, he discovered all the advantages that this language could offer to him; English would change his way of being (to be more relaxed and confident); also, it would facilitate everything at any moment or place in the world.

One of these moments happened at the age of 14, when in an international airport Carlos had to be the voice of his parents because they didn’t speak English, although it was a stressful moment. A feeling of satisfaction could be observed in the shine of his eyes when he was talking about this. He told us that when he can protect and take control of his family (especially of his mother), he feels himself like an important and helpful man, and sometimes, it could be done thanks to English.

When Carlos was talking about his family, it could be observed pure pride and admiration in his face. He said that his family is amazing and described them as people

that give so much importance to their academic and professional future, always thinking about being accepted in more advanced societies. That is why Carlos' dad (also a medical doctor) inscribed him in English courses since he was seven. Nonetheless, Carlos only liked the second school in which he was inscribed because it had native English teachers and from what was said by Carlos, he admires and feels affinity with the British English culture. Throughout these English courses and her sister experiences abroad, Carlos learned that languages have to be respected: "You have to learn how to speak English very well, English and British cultures are strict even with the language" and that one of the best ways in which people can improve their level of English is by traveling.

On the other hand, according to his stories and from the socio-economic survey he responded, It could be concluded that Carlos is part of a family with economic amenities; but, humble, grateful, and solidary because their life has not always been easy. His mother grew up in a small town of the department of Cauca, defined by Carlos as "A complex and very poor zone"; now she is an important public prosecutor. In the same way, his father grew up in popular neighborhood of this city, and then he began to be trained as a medical doctor in the capital of department of Valle with many economic difficulties. These life stories taught Carlos and his siblings to value from a teddy bear (A panda given by his father when he was born) to their life quality, and the luxuries that they can have now: "My parents told me about their neediness and I realized that my life has been so much better than theirs; for example, I haven't ever been hungry or without a shelter. That made me feel regret and taught me to value the things I have now;

although I know all these economic amenities make people weak and lazy, I try to reduce the expenses in my house as much as I can, because I don't work". While saying this, Carlos changed his voice, the initial smiles are gone; and then he began to look down and cover his mouth like trying to stop the words. Maybe he is not comfortable with this topic, or maybe we are touching sensitive fibers. These words made us realize that the humbleness reflected in Carlos' eyes was real. He is a modest man who gives value to everything in life; he knows that easy life doesn't exist, and that nothing compares to the satisfaction of knowing that everything people have comes from struggles and efforts. Even if Carlos has everything, he doesn't believe people can be defined by their titles or the place in which they live. "People are the way they are; they aren't defined by the social class they belong to, their job, or anything", he insisted.

Carlos feels everything he has isn't the fruit of his efforts; it is the reason why he is grateful to his career which has given him the opportunity to serve and help others. Nowadays, he is trying harder to help himself to leave behind his lazy epoch during the high school. He also said he took this virtue from the American culture in every travel he made. "I try to take the proactivity from the foreign cultures I have been in contact with; their advances exist because of that."

But this isn't the only change that Carlos had ever made in his life; Carlos decided to reduce his circle of friends during his adolescence, because he felt he was surrounded by wealthy people but with anything more to give: "I had wealthy friends, and I realized that they didn't have any value except for their parents' wealth. That is horrible". After that, Carlos also began to be aware of time and discipline during this

epoch. He said that after school, his character and identity changed because he felt maturity had knocked on his door.

This kind of changes lead Carlos to find happiness in simple moments like getting together with his family during trips or even during a Sunday afternoon to drink a cup of coffee and pray, or participating in his hometown religious celebrations every year, or like enjoying some sports like soccer. Carlos is fan of America de Cali, a recognized local soccer team (he told laughing that once he wanted to be a goalkeeper because of his height but that it wasn't possible), and cycling (while talking about this, he remembered the opportunity to presence the "Tour de France" because of his trips to France). He also enjoys and values the nature and rural areas like his home. He appreciates lots of things thanks to the values taught by his parents, the negative experiences with his old friends, his short stays abroad, and of course the English language; things that maybe he didn't value in the past.

The interview continues in a more relaxed way. Carlos settle himself down a couple of times because his legs are too long to keep them static for a long time; and after talking about his changes during adolescence, Carlos remembered another difficult times that brought changes to his life and his family; he told us that the hard-obtained success of his parents also brought problems and dangers during his childhood: "our house was always surrounded by threats because of my mom's work; I had to go to the school with bodyguards." It was another reason that confirmed the wish of his parents to make him and his siblings learn English, because they saw in English language a way to scape to the insecurity of their native country, he pointed out: "abroad exists a calm

environment. I pitifully think that It's almost impossible that there you can end stolen or injured." His parents had convinced their children that with English, the academic and professional opportunities are easier to obtain anywhere in the world (even in Colombia). It is for that reason that Carlos is happy about the way he can manage English: "I feel so good with English anywhere in the world. It got things easier for me. That is why it is so important."

His parents had enormous wishes to make their children reach their goals that they extended this opportunity to a closer relative who was adopted by this family (a cousin of Carlos). Carlos constantly let us denote the love that he feels for his cousin, because he made him participant of almost all the recounted stories during the interview and the constant use of the phrase "my cousin is like a brother for me". Carlos said that with English and the experiences with this language, he has been able to influence his cousin to learn it. Carlos was also proud of the fact that English gave him the opportunity to teach his cousin to change his character, his way of being, his life expectations and the way of seeing the world, just like their parents did with him.

After all this stories Carlos concluded that English is more than a simple language for him; it has changed his identity, his way of seeing the world; it has provided him with desires to move along and to be useful inside the society. Carlos doesn't talk too much about his future because he values the present and what comes with it. Nonetheless, he knows that he is made for big things and with hard work, his English knowledge, and the confidence it provides to him, he will succeed anywhere. Carlos will continue living humble, full of desires for earning his own wealth, and for reaching too many goals, just

like his parents did. Of course, he wants to be the inspiration for anyone he knows with his unforgettable sight

4.1.5. Conclusion

English as an Additional Language plays an important role in the identity constructions of the participants, particularly in relation to the vision they have got for their academic and professional goals in both the national and international arena. Moreover, they say to be aware of the changes and opportunities they have had thanks to the use of this language in comparison to their college classmates who are not bilingual.

Similarly, thanks the Colombian ideal by which is considered that English has a very strong relationship with better education opportunities and better incomes in the working market, it can be claimed that the participants' parents made the decision of involving them in private language institutes since a very young age, generating in them the habit of acquiring and maintaining an additional language. Consequently, this language has given them more tools to understand a lot of information of current medical studies as well as another vision of the world.

From the socioeconomic surveys responded by the participants, it can be stated that they are part of the middle-high class because of their parents' income. Then, we can also found out that the participants feel the responsibility to maintain the status or increase it for their parent's striving. An example of this is the opportunities to travel to different countries that has been a plus given to them at a very young stage of their lives.

Thanks to those experiences, they have been able to reflect about their society, the economic level they hold, the social development they look forward to achieve in a near future. They expect to generate changes in their communities with their knowledge and actions.

As English has expanded their views of the world, it has also generated changes in the personality of these people. The fact that they have been in contact with cultures they were not used to, they have developed the tolerance to accept other costumes and the resilience to demonstrate they can fight for their dreams, no matter how much effort it takes. They have gained the fearless to encourage new challenges to get to know themselves as individuals in a society that wants to build up in new age.

4.2. English learning experiences does influence the construction of the identity

4.2.1. Introduction

Identity changes through life experiences as it is mentioned by Shakouri: “during interaction and participation, the person involved attempts to stabilize his or her identity with the current context.” (as cited by Anbreen, 2014, p. 4). Identity is the set of features; attributes that characterize either a person or a society. These characteristics are usually hereditary or innate. Thus, there are qualities in human beings that can be adopted from the influence exerted by the surrounding environments which make identity to change and be constructed. Conforming to this, individuals can construct and

reconstruct their identities when learning a language, as it is mentioned by Day and Manyak: “Identities are not freely determined but are influenced by the learners’ participation in social practices and classrooms are the active sites where learners construct and reconstruct their identities” (as cited by Anbreen, 2014, p. 6). For instance, when learning English, learners face different experiences during their learning process that can make their identity change.

Taking into account what was mentioned before, this research focuses on the influence of English learning experiences on the identity construction of a group of Business Administration students of the University of Cauca. This study is a qualitative research and the instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire administered to three Business Administration students. The research study was divided into two sections, in the first part; the participants had to talk about their experiences with English learning and the way this additional language has influenced the construction of their identities in their daily lives. In the second part, the participants had to reflect upon their own self (recognition of their person) and their roles within the discourse communities they participate. Lastly, their stories are told through narratives, in which they mention all their experiences with English and how these language learning experiences have influenced the construction of their identities.

Now, in relation to Business Administration students of the University of Cauca, they are individuals capable of leading and working with groups, with big achievement needs, great levels of initiative, and a great sense of responsibility and commitment. They are well known as people who desire to interact for collective purposes. Moreover,

they are committed to their career; for example, they excel in CIPHE Test (Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education). Students who graduate from this program are focused on the productive organization and distribution of goods and services as basic elements of economic and social development. As entrepreneurs, these students have outstanding abilities as leaders, managers, promoters, advisors, and executives. They can easily coordinate and execute plans, programs, and projects of marketing and finance. As social beings, they have a wide sensitivity in human aspects that enables them to create jobs by promoting, organizing, and coordinating new companies. In addition, some of them are proficient in English and thanks to that, they have better academic and business opportunities abroad.

Regarding our participants, they are a group of three Business Administration students who are always in constant contact with English by different means; for example, mobile apps, PC programs, and websites. The three of them have already traveled abroad, to places such as Mexico, the United States of America, and Brazil. The purpose of their trips were work and intercultural exchanges, making active use of the language as a source of communication. Lastly, in their everyday lives, they have had the opportunity to interact in English for work and social purposes.

4.2.2. Simon

“In today’s world, everyone should know English.”

Simon was the first gift to Isaac and Rebecca’s family. He came to their home to mark the beginning of a new season in their lives. What they could not imagine was that, as Simon had brought joy to their home, he had also brought new challenges. Since he was little, Simon had some health issues, not very serious but something to take care of. Nevertheless, about time, things got better, and everything seemed to go back into normality.

No longer after, a new special gift came home, Caleb. Therefore, Simon was moved to a second place but still loved and appreciated. He got bigger, became an independent boy, and was able to make decisions by himself, mainly because he knew that his little brother had come with the same health problems as he had. But that is not what really matters about this fascinating story; the real meaningful parts and intriguing matters will be to come.

A few years ago, Colombia was a country where learning English was a privilege. Only few people were benefited in gaining power, not built by amassing big amounts of money but by getting knowledge, by learning English. This power was about to blossom in little Simon, a common simple child who, since his very early age, was able to comprehend that the world went beyond what his eyes could perceive. As someone who can predict the future, he had the feeling that this potential would encourage him to know the world.

In addition, Simon's story revolved around English. It began at the age of 11 when he had contact with this foreign language for the very first time. Not always did he think about the need of learning a second language until he had the opportunity to share some time with his relatives who lived abroad. Like very few Colombians today, Simon has had the privilege of having relatives abroad whom he can constantly be in touch with. From the many visits of his aunt and cousins to his house, he knew that he could learn to speak English as his cousin Luke had done.

In his childhood and adolescence, as many Colombian students, Simon did not have a good English learning experience at elementary and secondary school. Simon declares with a laugh in his face "we just learned the verb be." This situation at schools in Colombia seems to be a common thread nowadays. Simon mentions that teachers who teach English in elementary and secondary schools do not always know how to speak the language; therefore, they cannot be a motivator and encourager for their students. On the contrary, students see English as something that is not going to be useful for them in their lives. In his own words, "English teachers should be both motivators and counsellor."

At the age of 11, Simon found the motivating factor he was looking for, for a long time. It was his English teacher in a language center. This teacher showed him English from another perspective to the point that his ideas and thoughts about English teachers in general changed. He began to see English as a new incredible way to be discovered and walked through without limits. He found English as a road full of adventures and new experiences that will change his life forever. Ever since until he was

18 years old, it was a season of transformation and knowledge and his vision of the world changed.

Moreover, Simon turned into a young adult and it was the moment in which he had to start college. It was a completely different world and it allowed him to grow. At this point of his life, it had already blossomed in him, almost in its entirety, the power that would encourage him to know the world; it was the power of knowledge, it was the power of knowing English. At college, Simon faced several challenges: academic, personal, family, etc. Nevertheless, what has always characterized him, his independent and strong spirit, allowed him to overcome all those challenges.

Finishing college, Simon moved to a foreign country, Brazil, in order to finish his studies in business administration. It was a decision that surprised his parents, for they found out about that at the moment he was going away. Simon was determined to take this new challenge and left his home country. What was waiting for him? He did not know. He was going to know new cultures, to learn other ways of seeing the world, and to live some other things.

In Brazil, thanks to his charisma and autonomy, Simon successfully finished his studies and met people from all over the world. It was an experience that marked his life for he shared his culture, learned from others, and had the opportunity to use the English language very often. It was not difficult for him because he spoke English and it made easier communication and interaction with persons who did not speak Spanish. This experience made Simon even more autonomous in his personal and academic areas. His character was fortified, and he learned that, though not everybody has the same ideas about the world, everyone can appreciate our differences and that is what really matters.

By reading Simon's story, it could seem like it has been unfavorable, but it is not; on the contrary, it is possible to see that it has been more positive than anyone could think. Seeing his story and how has everything been flowing in his life, it is possible to realize that his path has been a continuous growth until today. Thanks to the English language, he has met a lot of people and cultures. He has learned to make them close and intimate; he has found friendship, professional development, and even love. He said "in my exchange I practiced a lot of English; it was also because I dated a girl who was from Slovakia and obviously we only communicated in English."

As mentioned before, while Simon was out of his country, he could find love, a curious and complex moment because his girlfriend thought that the only thing he was looking for was sex and no more, but what he really wanted was a quiet and lovely relationship. Therefore, he had to work on it, on changing the erroneous ideas that his girlfriend had about his feelings. This also turned into something interesting and funny for it was the first time that he was facing a situation in which he had to express his feelings in English. He found out that the English language structure worked in a different way, so it could cause misunderstandings at the moment of speaking as well, but finally, the use of English language went okay.

Returning to his country, he got a lot of experiences and learnings that remain in Simon's mind and heart not only in relation to his professional and academic realms but also to his life in general. Simon remembers everything he has gone through in his life so far; he notices that unknowingly, the English language has significantly influenced most of his life, something that is part of himself, something he carries with him everywhere.

Today, Simon is still that independent man, something that has always characterized him. He has learned how to face new challenges in life. He has realized that English should turn into a platform that connects him with absolutely all the cultures. Simon believes that English is a universal language that has encouraged him to acquire new skills, and grow as a human being. He thinks that it is incredible to hear today that there are people who think that it is not necessary to learn English. Pretty sure, he expressed that nowadays, it is essential to learn it, everybody should be concerned about it, English is not the purpose, it is the tool that allows people to realize that, although we all are not equal, as he states “English does give us an advantage over others. It gives us status.” However, he strongly believes that we must be able to control ourselves and not feel as superior beings.

Additionally, Simon has been a guy of few friends, but he has had a big aptitude to influence others. Today, he is known as a leader, counselor, and mentor. Maybe it can be because of his independent spirit and his own decision-making process. Simon has been always pursuing and getting into new things mainly in regard to his career, Business Administration. Nevertheless, he is a person who follows protocols, deep-rooted customs of his culture, such as family meetings, religious events, local festivals, etc.; customs that have been linked to him since his early age. Besides, he is also a simple and very charismatic person. Simon is from those people who are charmed with collecting objects or small details, not matter how big or small, for they mark moments that are worthy of being remembered; perhaps moments of happiness, pride, probably sadness, but anyway, moments that could mark his life somehow.

Finally, Simon's life has been surrounded by English and all kinds of experiences that someone could have from knowing this additional language. These experiences have helped him to grow and reach much more goals in regard to his professional, academic, and personal life as it has been showed through his story. Despite there have been many things that Simon has achieved, there are even many more still missing, but he is sure that the way to achieve the greatest of all his dreams, is definitely through English.

4.2.3. Jacob

“English changed my whole life.”

Time came and we saw him. In that morning, his steps were hurried, he yawned and squinted against the sun, his eyes looked puffy. Greetings came up, however our first interaction was not long, and then he scribbled his name on the line while some words strolled throughout the place. There were a couple of laughs and surprisingly the words came up without being stopped. His name was Jacob; he was dashing, decisive, entertaining, harmonious, self-assured, etc. Summer 2018 was approaching, Jacob was 21 years old and thanks to him, inside those walls, there were more than four people, there was a life story waiting to be told by its owner.

It was 1996, Lauren and Jean were waiting for their second baby. Maybe, they did not imagine that Jacob would offer much joy to them; without doubt, his first cry filled them of hope, there was one more reason to be happy. The little Jacob grew up and he became a child who loved to interact with the world; for him, days had no ending. His

parents and Jim, his older brother, tried to attend him in all his adventures; their shoulders could slump in some sunsets, but their love went beyond that, the most important thing was to enjoy each and every moment with his funny Jacob.

When little Jacob grew up, he started his academic life. English language came to Jacob's life when he was still very little. In kindergarten, he learned basic things such as colors, numbers, etc. It was not the greatest thing. Unfortunately, over the years, in primary and secondary school, things were not different. He argues that "the students did not want to learn English and teachers did not motivate them". He compared public and private schools, he figured out that those educational systems have some differences; he underlined it by saying "everything depended on the school, the context". In some private schools, some teachers were more dynamic, they used better strategies. However, in some public schools, some teachers were not interested in their job; they did not use striking teaching strategies; as a result, students were not motivated of learning. Hence, teaching was the victim of a backward educational system.

In addition, teachers only gave students large verbs lists to memorize and they focused on grammar, which was not connected at all with daily life. Then, meaningful learning was in the last place. Up there, Jacob was never interested in learning English. Nevertheless, finishing high school marked a turning point in his life when he saw his brother speaking in English and he was doing many projects; thanks to it, Jacob started to like it. Then, Jacob began to set goals with the new language and he started to study English in an institute where he had different educational experiences; in there, teachers used good methodologies they taught through games, dynamics and textbooks.

Today, Jacob thinks that teachers play a significant role when someone is going to learn a foreign language. He affirms “teacher’s methodologies are fundamental to encourage students”. If teachers have a good background thanks to English, it is easier for them to motivate their students, even students who are not interested in learning at all. However, teachers are not the only responsible for having a successful process; Jacob is aware that students have a lot to do, as he said: “It is not enough with two hours in the classroom. The challenge is to be disciplined and committed to learning. Also, it is important to practice it and being in contact with the foreign language”.

According to Jacob, in this teaching-learning process, two routes are found. On the one hand, we can find very committed teachers who use motivating methodologies; nevertheless, we could have students who do not want to learn. On the other hand, there can be motivated students who could have no committed teachers. Therefore, an optimal environment would be where both, teachers and students have an active role in the teaching-learning process.

Additionally, an important fact is that Jacob could travel abroad thanks to the English language and through the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) where he applied to participate in the International Camp Counselor Program (ICCP). In his trip, he had a language shock the first days, since as he said: “It is not the same to listen to non-native English speakers speaking in English than listen to native speakers of English speaking in English. English native speakers tend to use many contractions and they speak really fast”. Jacob mentioned that his English level was very low at that time. Today he appreciates those three months in Colorado. He says: “I learned everything I did not learn at school”.

As a matter of fact, being totally immersed in that environment where he had to speak English most of the time helped him a lot, due to he improved his understanding from 50% to 90% in a short period of time. Something very significant that happened to him in Colorado was that at the beginning of his sojourn, he was seen as a shy person; his low English level was the main reason; since he had not enough vocabulary. When he spoke in Spanish, it was a completely different person. Nevertheless, when his English level was improving, he could project his personality just as it was. Jacob had a great experience, an enviable trip for all cultures he could have contact with; undoubtedly, it made him to reaffirm the idea that everything can be accomplished; there are no limits if there is a desire to achieve a goal. He sees English as a means that will enable countless things.

About his personal life, Jacob says “English allows you to develop a fundamental skill, such communicative skills. It gives you the ability to access other cultures and also, it gives you global opportunities in the professional field.” In addition, Jacob comments “English can eliminate all kinds of barriers between countries. Mental barriers, which do not exist in reality”. During his trip, he shared with people from more than 15 countries and he also shared a room with 4 people, they were from 4 different religions, people whom he shared incredible moments with. Today, Jacob knows that English is about learning a language and also, it is about knowing its culture for everything is linked. Moreover, he is aware of the fact that learning English is a continuous process; that is why he seeks to practice it. Jacob practices English with around 19 people at work where its use is completely normal and he feels comfortable, but when he uses it in his classroom, where only two or three people speak it, he feels

strange, due to his classmates tend to see him as someone who is arrogant; then, he prefers to avoid it.

Finally, an important fact about Jacob is that he defines himself as an organized person, someone who likes to set goals. He usually spends time to verify if he is accomplishing them. Therefore, Learning English was a goal, he figured out that English allowed him to access to a greater number of opportunities and he began to set new goals. Actually, Jacob's confidence is bigger thanks to the new language. That is why he is looking for an internship abroad. He wants to obtain a dual degree and later he expects to have a lot of international opportunities for his professional life. He takes advantage of any opportunity to encourage his friends and family to learn this language. He shows them the experiences he has lived and all of that thanks to English.

4.2.4. Matthew

“Everything around me happens in English.”

He came and as if we had already met him; he said hello and kindly offered us something to drink. Affection easily came and despite we were anxious for conducting the interview, it suddenly disappeared and we felt as if we were with a friend. His name is Matthew, and he is always polite and smiling. As he spoke, we felt confident and he was not shy talking about what he has lived. Matthew certainly loves English; it has been a determining factor in his life, his academic and social environment. This language has marked important areas in his life. Contrary to what English is for many people who think it is just a requirement, a chance to get better jobs or academic

opportunities, English is part of his daily life and everything around him happens in English. Matthew thinks English is something that flows through his veins; it does not only contribute to his professional training but to his personal life as well.

Matthew was born in a beautiful and quiet town called Bolivar, a place a bit away from Popayan city. Undoubtedly, Ellie and Jeremy (his parents) got the greatest blessing of their lives. By life circumstances, when Matthew was one, he and his family had to leave their hometown to settle down in a new place, a popular neighborhood in Popayan City. Although the living conditions in this place were not very good and life turned hard because of difficulties people faced, this new family got easily used to it and Matthew grew up surrounded by happiness. In there, every neighbor was cheerful and friendly so on special dates they all gather in order to talk to have fun and share special moments together. Matthew met many friends and as a child, he only cared about playing and having fun with them.

Nevertheless, at the age of eight, Matthew and his family moved for a second time; although it was only to another neighborhood, things changed completely. To him, it was to start over. A new school and new friends were waiting for him. It was a new place where people had better living conditions; therefore, they were cocky and it seemed like they did not know each other. Apparently, people just took care of themselves and lived busy on it. Despite Matthew missed all the joy of his old neighbors he got used to that environment.

Some years later Matthew got into secondary school. More friends and more experiences came to his life and he just tried to live and enjoy time. It was in there, when he started to like English. He always succeeded in English and Math, two subjects he

liked the most. However, he gave much more attention to English; thus, he wanted to learn more and more about it. Unfortunately, methodologies used at school did not allow him to make enough progress, they were not appropriate; besides, classes tended to be boring and monotonous. Therefore, Matthew did not expect to learn a lot at school, and he really wanted to learn English so he asked Ellie and Jeremy (his parents) for an opportunity to study it in a language Center but sadly, they could not afford it. He knew that this would not stop him; English would make part of his life somehow. Meanwhile, Matthew tried to learn by himself complementing what he gained in class in order to know some more.

Fortunately, when Matthew was in his last school year, a new teacher came. He was trained in English teaching and as he had some experience living abroad, he knew a lot about the language. Unfortunately, his teacher stayed at school was not for long. Nevertheless, Matthew considered him as the best teacher ever, a committed person who taught meaningful things about English. As Matthew was a boy who liked challenge himself, he was sure that what he had learned from his teacher would serve as a foundation to start a self-learning process, so it became a personal challenge.

As time went by, Matthew turned into a young person and he had to start his bachelor's degree. He had thought about studying English; however, he had already started the self-learning process and he knew that he could learn it on his way. Then, taking into account his old school English teacher advice, Matthew wanted to study International Business Management; nevertheless, it was only possible to get it in a private college. Hence, Matthew had to make a decision, since his parents gave him the chance to study only in a public college. Finally, he decided to study Business

Administration at the University of Cauca. However, his aim was always to start a Master's degree in International Business.

At college, Matthew started a new and very different experience in his life. He was the youngest of his classmates and as some of them already had some responsibilities, Matthew did not spend much time with them. Matthew did not care about it, what he mattered was to finish college, so he focused on it, for it was an important step to get his Master's degree.

While he studied at college, he continued with his self-learning process; series, audios, and readings were part of it. In addition, dedication and perseverance were key to move forward and carry out the challenge. Mathew's effort made him succeed in his English learning process until he could manage it easily, although in the context in which he lived, it was difficult to find people whom he could practice the language with.

Nevertheless, college gave Matthew the best chance of his life, as a Business Administration student, he had the opportunity to work as a volunteer in Mexico. It was the perfect place to practice English. Undoubtedly, this experience allowed him to improve and learn much more about the language. Additionally, in Mexico Matthew used simultaneously his mother tongue Spanish and his additional language English to easily socialize and live pleasant experiences. Besides, that time in Mexico made Matthew's personality change in different ways; for example, before his trip, he preferred to keep away from his family but after it, he chose to stay close. In Mexico, he went through some situations that made him reflect and learn to value and share more time with his beloved people.

According to what he had lived in Mexico, knowing English let him realized that he could discover a whole world through the language. Moreover, English was the bridge to move himself beyond his profession and live different experiences, for example, becoming a teacher in a private institution. According to his experiences, he learned to teach from the needs of his students, so he always tried to motivate them, setting aside the boring routine which are the traditional teaching methods. Matthew liked pulling apart his classes according to his students pace of learning for he knew students differed in their personal abilities. The most important thing was motivating his students. He avoided falling into the simple methodologies, which he was a victim of. Matthew took into account that teachers have a leading role in their students learning process, so he took the role he was allowed to play with commitment and responsibility.

Certainly, English became part of Matthew's being. For him, knowing English, dreams or life goals can be easier to achieve. English opened every door along his way so that he could exceed limits. There is no doubt that Matthew got connected with new things through English. Today, Matthew finds easier to understand cultural differences and take a judgment or opinion through English. As he said: "I won't deprive myself the opportunity to share and acquire new experiences, information and knowledge coming from another person who has a very different vision from mine about the world". Undoubtedly, since he learned English, his identity and his way of seeing the world has changed.

Besides, Matthew found sad that when he applied for a job, he was always asked for a certificate; in order to show that he really knew English; this is why, he had to start English classes at a language Center. Although he has the evidence now to prove he

knows English, Matthew thinks that it does not set him in a higher position in comparison with those who do not. Nevertheless, he has a tool that makes him more competent than others and it will allow him to continue growing both, personally and professionally. Today as a business administrator, Matthew is focused on his entrepreneurship work, which has taken him a little away from English. Nevertheless, as all the information he uses, it is most of the time in English, he always tries to have some contact with it.

Anyway, Matthew has internalized the language in such a way that he affirms “I could perfectly say: erase my chip or my brain in Spanish and leave me only with English”. He considers English as his second mother tongue. It is fascinating to find someone for whom English has become an opportunity to live another life.

4.2.5. Conclusion

Based on the data gathered, it can be said that English can greatly influence people identities for it is linked to a new specific culture; it is a means to grow as human beings; and it makes people’s mind to expand. Learning English made Simon, Jacob, and Matthew to look at a better position in front of those who do not speak the language. English becomes a powerful tool, overcomes limits, and gives much more possibilities. Through English, it is possible to be into a real new world.

As an important fact, this study found that the social context and the teacher’s role are fundamental during the lifespan of the participants and thus, the construction of their identities. Colombia social context does not permit people to improve a lot in terms

of knowing other languages and the educational system is belated; so, English is not a strong part of the culture. That is why, the participants faced a challenge in their English learning process; to them, it was not easy to find committed teachers who encouraged them to learn the language. Moreover, the participants' own learning experiences helped them to shape their own strategies to learn and prioritize motivation as a clue factor at the moment of teaching since two of them have had the opportunity to teach English as a foreign language in some private institutions of elementary education, while the other one only uses his knowledge to motivate people to learn English.

In addition, the administration field is in continuous development, so the participants of our study are aware that they permanently need to keep in touch with the English language. They think that it is practically impossible to succeed in life without knowing English since it could become one of the most important tools to take advantage of, and something that could come to be part of their everyday life.

Finally, the data showed how English learning experiences play a key role on the identity construction. For example, the participants' life projects have been changed somehow. They think, feel and speak differently. In this sense, they attest that English has become the means which has helped them to pursue bigger goals than they have never thought about before. What is more, as the participants started learning English, they got connected with new things, which transformed their way of thinking as well as the way they were. They have had new opportunities to interact with the world and expand personal and professional life expectations.

4.3. English, mediated by the use of technological resources on the identity construction of System Engineering students of the University of Cauca

4.3.1. Introduction

What is the role of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the academic life of an undergraduate student of systems engineering? Can this language go beyond and permeate the individual's identity? What are their perceptions of the role this language play in their own identities? These are some questions that have been in our minds for a long time and that will be progressively revealed to us all through the individual's own account following the parameters of a semi-structured interview.

Understanding the role of a systems engineer in a country like Colombia is key to comprehend the importance of this section in terms of the intimacy and the individuality in the construction of the identity of three undergraduate students of this program. Phrases like: Hello Engineer! Can be heard in Colombian streets among people that have not even started university studies. It reveals the great status that represents being an engineer in a country in the process of development like Colombia. Hence the students of engineering are empowered by the same society as they represent the brilliant future of a nation that desperately tries to reach better standards of life quality and that understands the use of technology as a path to reach those levels. Nevertheless, the study *A comparison between the profile of the systems engineer graduate and the profile required by technology-based companies in Colombia (2016)* reveals that the students of systems engineering programs in the country present weaknesses in certain skills in relation to the standards required by the technological companies in the country. This

reality enhances the importance of knowing English by the students of system engineering programs as it may represent an important difference between failure or success in a competitive labor market.

We explored the individual stories of three systems engineering students revealed by their own words, stepping away from academic formalisms and pursuing *the quality of lifelikeness that we expect of a good story*. We sought to understand, from their point of view, the intrinsic relation that they have unconsciously built between three elements, that due to the nature of their academic background, constitute the base of their lives: technology, English, and identity. These participants were chosen because the three of them held special requirements related to the self-acknowledgement of knowing English as a foreign language. Notwithstanding they share many academic and personal aspects in common as students of an engineering program, we were able to identify how different they can get to be and how these differences appear as a result of their conception of life as a whole, but even more importantly, it is demonstrated how, despite these very marked differences, English became the converging point in which they unconsciously but collectively rely to achieve accomplishments that have direct impact in what they perceive as happiness and fulfilment, both, in the professional and personal life.

The narrative was a key factor and the object of our analysis as it is a resource lately exploited by researchers around the world in studies regarding language learning and language teaching for its nature of offering genuine insightful information of the process of acquisition of the language and how it is affected by a huge spectrum of factors that at the end affect the own subjects' lives. As Barkuizen, Benson & Chik's

(2014) work on narrative inquiry in language learning and learning research state, “Narrative inquiry can help us to understand how language teachers and learners organize their experiences and identities and represent themselves and to others”. (p.5.)

Although the three participants take part in the same study, we analyzed each separately as stories with their own identities, according to the hue of the story. At the end we report our understanding of the phenomena presented in the cases and give our conclusions.

4.3.2. Sebastian

In the pursuit of distinction

Occupying a unique place in society is an unconscious process that occurs in every individual’s mind and is mostly mediated by the role he or she wants to play within it. For Sebastian, it represents his own way to walk through life: “a qualified system engineer must know English”. Going deeper into Sebastian’s mind means digging into a complex and organized processor that understands, in his particular vision, that there exists an indivisible relationship between two influential components, engineering and English: the key mechanisms to properly achieve set goals.

Understanding a path to reach excellence.

Going back in time and recalling some memories from the past, Sebastian is able to remember those days in which he was in sixth grade; evoking them with nostalgia, aware that, at that moment, was about to acquire something that in the future would play an important role in his field of studies. English would eventually become a very

important aspect in his life, despite he ignored it in that moment. At some point and encouraged by his parents, he had the opportunity to learn a little bit more about English. He began to pave the way for his future studies since he was little. Both experiences, at school and at 'El Colegio Mayor', marked his very first encounters with the language. Much water has flown under the bridge since then, and at the present time, here, placed in college as a systems engineering student, he has realized about the influence of English on his career. There have been many experiences that have had a direct impact on his identity while learning English and studying systems engineering and that remained hidden to his conscious mind so far.

In his field of study, he and his classmates must use English all the time, sometimes reading an academic text or programing, which is a common assignment for systems engineering students. English is the basis for many things. While studying and making use of English in his career, he has realized that the most relevant information comes up after researching in this language. English has taken his life at such a level that while programming he makes use of the language unconsciously and this is exactly why Sebastian believes that the easiest and best way to learn and improve his language would be to be immersed in the culture where English is spoken. According to his experience, there is no better way to improve than facing problems that in actual situations would be very similar to the many issues he daily faces in his virtual world. The nature of his field of study has stuck with him at such extent that he thinks about the language in terms of a problem-solving way of life. Sebastian strongly believes that in the precise time that a person lives the culture and faces problems in that culture, the resulting experience will directly make a huge impact in the level of English. Sebastian is so submerged in his

field of study and lives it and feels it with such assurance that he, as a whole, has begun to think in terms of logic and efficiency; in this line, the word that best describes his use of the English language is mechanical. He states that unconsciously he recalls the knowledge that has acquired and learned during his life to use it as a powerful tool from which he takes advantage in his academic life that at the end of the day is his personal life.

Sebastian is a well-organized person. He understands the importance of English for his professional development; however, he has well established priorities and improving his language level is not currently one of them. As he recognizes, his career is his only and most important priority. Despite his current essential focus is not English, he clearly recognizes it as a key component to achieve greater goals and for that matter he has planned to “devote” six months of “his life time” to improve it during an exchange program in the U.S.

Notwithstanding that it has been an important tool during his career, he does not feel any kind of pride over his classmates. On the contrary, he feels pleased being able to understand things they do not notably help them with those matters. Even though he thinks he does not have a great level of proficiency in the language, he feels content knowing that maybe, he could access some information that others may not. There is not such a world in which technology and English are not connected: this is a rule for him. The impact of English in his life has been so big that has directly boosted his confidence and career aspirations: “English has benefited me in a way that I am positioned in a different place”.

Knowing this language has allowed him to develop his projects in the systems field in an effective way given the fact that he is up to date with the latest information and technological trends around the world. There is no way in which he separates English from engineering. He states, without hesitation, that they are the perfect match and he knows it well as technology has always been rooted in the deepest part of himself. Sebastian feels that being able to know and use English and technology is completely satisfying because that way he can achieve what he claims as an immutable rule: “a qualified systems engineer must know English”.

His vision of success is closely related to be the best at everything he does. Without English, it would be impossible for him to do such a thing in the systems engineering field. According to him, this occurs because even in a country like Colombia, where the main language is Spanish, a good systems engineer must know English. It is like an intrinsic existing rule. But, how can he claim this, just being a sixth semester student? Well, this is when the influence of his big brothers appears.

The memories he has from his older brother are quite particular; he remembers seeing him, sitting in front of a computer, one of those huge and old ones that were so noisy, doing fabulous things. He also remembers his big brother telling him and his parents, when the appropriate time came, how important was English in the technological field. Then, encouraged by his parents and influenced at the same time by Sebastian’s brother suggestions, he ended up at El Colegio Mayor. Sebastian expresses that his older brother is now a successful engineer who works for a company in Bogotá and even though he is still in Colombia, he is always telling Sebastian how everything related to his profession and job is closely related to English.

Sebastian recognizes that he would be a liar if he said he loves English; in his words “it is just ok”. If you ask him, he would prefer having everything in his mother tongue. However, he is clear that to achieve the goals he has in his field, English is the link. Sebastian knows English because he knows about technology; he keeps telling himself that he is a systems engineering student. If he were not, he wouldn’t know English and consequently he would not know what he would do for living. His devotion to his career is illustrated by this quote: “I don’t even imagine a world without technology”. At this point Sebastian takes a deep breath and his eyes get lost for a few seconds into the sky. We realized at that point how important was technology in Sebastian’s mental construction of happiness; more importantly, how English had become, the most important cornerstone that marks the difference between reaching a world of complacency or the one he is following, a world of excellence. His eyes come back to us and he continues to express how big his dreams and goals are; but mainly, how they’re closely mediated by the boost in his confidence acquired with the experiences he has lived because of the knowledge he has of English as an additional language.

At the end, we feel how Sebastian’s words go in the direction that Norton had already taken almost two decades ago while writing one of the most referenced works related to identity construction and language learning: “I take the position that identity references desire –the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation and the desire for security and safety.” (p. 8).

4.3.3. Lucy

The light at the end of the tunnel

When trying to find certain clue that evidences a marked relationship between English and systems engineering, we have to face that in some cases, particular and unique experiences that our participants have had to live in order to get to the place where they actually are, differ in large scale. Some of the participants have lived, like common people say, an ‘easy life’, but there is always a different story behind any person. Then, we are about to tell you about that different story we have found.

Lucy’s life has not been easy. Since she was little, her sweet soul and lack of love and attention begun to cry from the very inside of her body, the affection of her parents was all she wished, but it was something she would never have, and all of sudden a dark shallow would appear without warning, loneliness would be that big giant she would have to face.

Our first concern was knowing about her life; for that reason, we began with the following question: What have you learned during your life? Lucy was kind of confused, but what she really revealed was the fact of not knowing what to answer. She took a lot of time to answer this not difficult, but unexpected question; she did not know it, or at least she had not even taken a short time of her life for asking herself this question. From the very beginning, she showed a fragile and almost extinguish sense for enjoying life. As time passed, and the interview took place, her doubts and uncertainty were bigger, finally her answer emerged from her mouth and the answer arrived with the common saying, “to learn from the mistakes.” That was all she said.

What have you learned from others? was the following questions we were interesting in knowing. The same shadow appeared; indecision, a “mmmmmm”, “I forgot my words”, were the proof of her obstinate answers.

Age play an important role when trying to understand people’s lives; our living experiences determines how much we have learned from others, from the environment and even from ourselves. In the case of Lucy in her 23 years old, she seems not to know it very clearly. When exploring about it, when asking about what she had learned from life, the first phrase that she mentioned is “I do not know.” People view vary from the way in which we face and experience every situation here on Earth.

In life, human beings have to suffer different stages of change. For Lucy it was her beginning; her story reveals the real essence of her identity construction, and it starts here. Coming back in time, she remembered all the situations she has had to pass through life for being in the place where she actually is. Lucy is a systems engineering student at the University of Cauca and in her past, there is a lot room to be explored. She remembers her past with a kind of resignation, accepting it with the most positive attitude. She grew up in a small town called El Tambo, and despite she had both mother and father, ever since she can remember, they were always busy for her; she remember being around 15 years old and arriving home after school, getting her lunch warmed alone, doing homework alone, and waiting for them to arrive. All of these situations marked Lucy’s life, and this is how it makes her different from the others. On weekends she could finally share some short periods of time with them, but that was not enough. How our perspective of life could dramatically change because of these external factors that could represent our beginning, change our present, and route our future?

She did not talk so much about her parents. Talking about this has crushed her weak perspective about what to face a challenge is; she expressed her preference for animals instead of people; she has lived not so good experiences with humans. For that reason, choosing between human or animal company, she would select without hesitation a pet. Pets have been an unconditional company in her lonely instants; they have left an imprint on her. Since she started to experience loneliness in her life, she tried to find a way in which she could feel a support, and animals were that support. At this point there are not many aspects in her life that bring her happiness as she thinks it is a big concept and she could not be able to describe it. Now, while living alone, she can say that the word that better explains happiness in her life is tranquility. Taking her time to reflect about what she has learned throughout her existence on earth, she can say that not making the same mistakes has been one of them; this has marked her experience as a human being.

Back in 2012 she started to study systems engineering at the University of Cauca. It had a huge impact in her life as there were many misconceptions that she had about being a college student. She thought at that time that reading and re-doing the exercises would be enough, but she was far from reality. She failed a couple of subjects and then failed them again and again until she had to temporarily withdraw from college. At that point she was in crisis and was not mature enough to face such a responsibility. She reflected the insecurities that her parents had placed on her when she was just a little girl. She hated pressure and she had a lot over her. She had pressure from her parents, relatives, and even friends. Questions like: hey, how are you doing at college? killed her from the inside, being aware that her situation was not the best. The pressure and the

situation took her to a time to know herself, a time to rest and continuing at her own pace. She started doing completely different things like organizing parties and events. That period was the key to take a deep breath and understand how things needed to be done.

When she re-started her studies she could finally approve the subjects that had been so difficult for her and her grade point average at college increased significantly. Even though, it did not mean happiness for her but tranquility as she had already expressed. She thinks it has something to do with the fact that it was not the program she really wanted to study. She always expressed her preference for studying hostelry and tourism. Her family, on the other hand, wanted her to study medicine, and her parents wanted her to study, no matter what. And here is when it starts the beginning of her future as a systems engineer.

When she was in high school, her school had an emphasis on systems and due to a breakup, she started a one-year degree in systems for trying to forget her affective life; so for that emphasis at school, she did some friends in the field, and she decided to study systems engineering. She is not a believer, but she thinks it was the universe that helped her to be accepted into that program. Now, she is here, everything is going better in her life, but even though, she does not feel happiness, it causes just satisfaction on her.

After re-starting her professional career, she was aware that there is a key factor to go further in her field. She recognizes that if one wants to be a lousy engineer, he has to remain indifferent to English. She has never been a dreamer, but she is aware that her studies will give her the possibility of moving to other countries, since her occupation is not well paid in her country and moving abroad would facilitate her pursuit towards new

avenues. English is that key that eventually would open each opportunity she could probably have in other countries of the world, but particularly in the English speaking countries. Looking for new and extraordinary opportunities would not be possible without English. It has turned into the most powerful weapon for the developing of her future as a systems engineer. Digging into the influence and the role it has played during her career, she can assure that it has been really significant, overall, when she analyzes all the benefits she could get; related with his personal interests, if she focused in learning more about this language. Meanwhile, the use of the English language she makes is specifically focused in her career. Every day she has to make use of it. When programing, all the software and programs are in this language. Despite programing is a repetitive process and all the commands are the same, she has to learn by heart the meaning of each words that is in English so she can make a good job and do not mess while programing.

She expresses that she does not have a great level of English; however, she tends to greet in some occasions to her classmates in this language. Her approach to the language is not important for her, despite she is aware of the relevance of the English language in life; she is not interested in learning more about it. When entertaining media comes to her mind, she prefers to listen to music or watch movies in her mother tongue. Her use of the English language is totally oriented to her academic process; she does not even show an interest for knowing or learning more about the English culture. Nevertheless, she expressed that she is not happy with her current level of English. It has not allowed her to express in a more effective way her ideas, to work with more precision in her career, and to make use of certain tools like online translators for

solving everyday problems. Currently, she is not making any effort to improve her proficiency in English; but she is planning to take an intensive English program in a near future so she can improve her English. Thinking as a future systems engineer, her vision of the English language is a world full of possibilities, oriented specially to her career. When you do not take by granted the English language, it will give you a lot of opportunities for visiting new places and do not stay in the same position. it is necessary to move on and look for new chances in an unexplored field that would eventually give you bigger rewards. English, in short, would be an advantage for those who decide to learn this language.

Over time, English has turned out to be, in Lucy's life, an exclusive door that opens towards a world full of possibilities that eventually will let her "dream" as she describes, in a better future. Lucy expresses how English has taken a big control overall in her field. It will eventually give her more opportunities over learning another language, and her field requires that every systems engineering student should know English. Books, readings, lectures, presentations, programing, etc. are required in many cases by the professor to be done in this language.

Naturally, the use of technological solutions has played an important role during her studies at college. In this sense, it would facilitate the improvement of her English. Although she also recognizes that it is not that necessary, it would probably turn into useful tools that provide certain help to learn and study English. From her point of view, English is more than surfing on internet and translating all the time. For her, English must be used in a more natural and practical way, she even recalls her mother tongue Spanish as a reference to learn another language: "even since we are just little children,

we speak Spanish, then, we learn how to write it, and finally we learn the grammatical rules, the way we learn English should be that way”. It shows how her concerns goes beyond learning English in a utilitarian way. It is a matter of going deeper into the language trying to understand all the incredible facts that comprise a language when someone is in the process of learning it. Yet, interaction is how she better describes the best way to do it.

She starts to reveal the significant importance of English for a systems engineering student, how it plays a meaningful role, and how it becomes part of her daily routine: “the best books that professors recommend us are in English,” “not only while programming we need English but there are other subjects that require the use of English.” “For our own benefit, it is better to get all the study materials in English; this is a good practice.” These quotes show how English and systems engineering cannot be separated; they have influenced in many ways how Lucy eventually will visualize herself as a systems engineer. They would affect people surrounding her. In this matter, when she thinks about her future children, without thinking twice, she recognizes that she would teach them English from an early age so they can take advantage of the infinite possibilities of mastering it, however in a better and dynamic way. For her, the possibility of learning a new language opens people’s minds to new cultures, and it enriches their personal experiences throughout life. Furthermore, English will give people an advantage when facing a job selection process.

Lucy, as a future systems engineer, expresses how her perspectives and goals in life have dramatically changed since she started to be aware of the importance of learning English in her career. In her words, “when I see myself five years ago, when I

started my studies without knowing English, I did not have any idea about all I could reach, not only travelling abroad but also, getting a job. Now, I am aware of how knowing another language can give people new opportunities in all senses.” For her, English, has turned into a valuable opportunity not just because it gives more possibilities for being successful in life, but also, because it changes people’s minds and expands the vision for living, experiencing and embarking towards new adventures.

Now, when she is about to finish her career, many factors have influenced the way in which she can see the world; her perspectives have dramatically changed as time went on. Going back in time when she started her career and reflecting about her beginnings in the academic life, she was not aware of the importance of English, but now, she thinks about travelling abroad, and that is something that she had never thought about before. Learning English has allowed her to open her mind up in pursuing new opportunities as a future professional in the systems field. It is not only because her career demands it, but also because now she is aware of how learning the English language has expanded her view about other cultures and how it would increase her knowledge about the world.

The use of technological resources has had an impact when trying to make effective the communication with people. Lucy reveals during her interview the importance of the use of smartphones since it could make a difference while trying to communicate with others. She explains how she has started to apply the language in some different contexts, at college and talking with some friends while using social networks, despite her self-awareness of not having a good proficiency in the language, she makes use of common language such as greetings.

The context in which we grow up can also play an important role while developing our personal skills. According to Lucy, there is a big difference between those who were born in a city and those who were born in a town. She even compares herself and positions her apart from those she calls “city boys.” Well, she was born in a town, so, that is the principal reason why she thinks that this factor has also determined and influenced her character and her way of living and getting through a completely new context.

“Boys from the city have much more experience.” It was just the beginning of a phrase that would reveal a relevant factor in Lucy’s life: “city boys relate in a more effective way with the languages, mainly with English; the majority of them speak the language.” Despite her first encounter with the English language was at college, she has realized how this language has taken control in the city of Popayan. Now, it is common to see how people are worried about learning English. Her group of friends who were born in the city make use of English. Of course, this peer pressure has helped her to use the language in some other contexts, not only during classes. City kids could have more opportunities and enthusiasm for learning languages since they are more open minded. It gives them an advantage over those who were born in a town.

To learn English in a milieu where it requires to be learned will give people a different place: “it gives status.” In Lucy’s words, it can influence the way people feel about themselves. Satisfaction and self-pride, would probably be those feelings she talks about. At a work and personal level, it clearly gives an advantage in many aspects, especially in the systems field as she revealed. There is an inseparable relationship between systems engineering and English: “definitely, my career can give more status.”

However, she clarifies that it is necessary to maintain an interaction with people who speak the language: “It would be useless if I could speak English and there was nobody around me who speaks the language as well.”

To conclude, it would be essential to say that Lucy’s life has dramatically changed since she started her career. Her destiny has been transformed by the impact of it, more precisely because of both systems engineering and English. The environment in which she moves makes her different from the rest of the people. She is a singular human being inside a world full of diversity and differences. She has been shaped by each experience; they have made her different and unique. Her present and her future have been influenced because of their experiences in life.

4.3.4. Christian

English, the path to see the outside world, to love the own world

Precise, smart and efficient, would be the words to describe Christian. His view of the world would fascinate those who have a chat with him. His attachment and conservation spirit towards the culture where he belongs, make him an invaluable human being.

Christian is a system engineering student of the University of Cauca. His first encounter with the English language was when he was at school, at that time, he had the opportunity to start learning it and during that time lapse he could travel to some foreign countries where he was forced to put into practice his level of proficiency in the language. Christian faced some challenges while being abroad, as he expresses, “only

when you talk to a native English speaker, you realize your real proficiency level in the language’’, he was not really confident about his fluency in the language or whether or not others would comprehend what he wanted to express. The impact of that interaction with the language in an English-speaking country did not have an impact on his vision of the world or his vision of life itself, not at least in a conscious way, for Christian, it was just an opportunity to realize how the lack of proper opportunities in our Latin countries have forced hundreds of thousands of Latin American people to seek for new chances in a foreign and completely different place ‘‘Miami is a Latin people place’’.

The words that describe his feelings while affronting all the challenges when using the English language while his stay abroad would be, powerless, satisfaction and self-assured. The first situation when he describes feeling powerless was when he was surrounded by no Spanish language speakers making him the only one who was able to understand the occurring situations in that moment, so far so good but incredibly he did not feel the confidence to express himself in the English language going from a power sensation to a powerless feeling. The second situation where he felt satisfaction was during a meeting with some foreigners that helped him realized how good his listening skill was as he was able to understand almost everything without major efforts. The situation that made him feel self-assurance occurred while thinking about his life and how knowing a language like English allowed him to travel and cross cultural, political and social borders. Having something called English on his mind allowed him to see the outside world, giving him the chance to talk and understand people with completely different ways to act, feel and think; in fact, he was able to appreciate in a better way

how rich, pure and beautiful our culture is, not only talking about what we see in the cities but referring to our indigenous communities, their multiplicity of languages and traditions that have been hidden by the globalized world that every day surround us in more immersive ways. Christian remembers the American culture with respect but states that English allowed him to appreciate, value and love our reality and our richness in terms of culture, language and customs.

“My career is generally based on the use of that language.” When Christian uses the word ‘that’, he refers to the English language. When talking, he constantly expresses how this language has influenced his studies. It has let him dream, change, and see the world in a completely different way. His perspectives have changed while time has passed by, and he is aware of how English cannot be separated from the system engineering field. He expresses that English will give him advantages and possibilities, particularly at work. Christian mentions that the “American culture has permeated the Colombian context” and he seems to be certain about it.

The following question would be the path for Christian to express, throughout words, and to reveal a meaningful feeling he had. What kind of behaviors do you think you have adapted from the American culture? It is necessary to clarify the connection that Christian has had with the English language since it influenced in a particular form the way he now behaves. His answer was clear: “individuality”. During his stay in the United States of America, he experienced how this reality works: “the fact of travelling into that culture made me realized how identified I felt with that. I brought something from there, maybe the fact of isolating myself.” English was that line that gave him the

opportunity to experience and get immersed in an influential culture. It is necessary to go back and analyze the moments before and after his trip. For Christian, his visit to this country divided him into two beings. His way of thinking and his level of consciousness about some characteristics from himself. The first part is about his blindness about the influence that a culture could exert in a person's life; how a culture could shape it. And the second one is directly pointed to the awareness of itself.

Talking about the academic field, particularly in the systems engineering program, and the importance of the English language in this context, he says this: "I think that in engineering in general, English is a fundamental axis; every document, research, and paper that surrounds engineering is touched by English." English is described by him as "the universal language," although he thinks it is debatable. Without hesitation, English has played a significant role in Christian's life. His goals could be affected without the knowledge of this crucial language. In his words, "if one truly wants to succeed in systems engineering, at least in software development, he or she needs to know English and to develop the programs for people who speak English because it is the people who they will interact with." For him, the market has to be taken into account since "the software industry was developed in the United States." There exists a clear evidence of how technology, the systems engineering field, English, and working market are linked with each other in Christian's mind. The idea about what he has conceived as being successful has dramatically changed his future, his way of living, and his understanding of the key role and relevance of English in the current society.

The use of technological solutions has also played an important role in Christian's life, not only in the second language acquisition but also in the way this will eventually allow him to communicate and interact with others. "Software development is no longer done in person. I can develop programs online with people from different countries around the world." It shows how technology has taken place in our society and how it works in Christian's life; it is an essential part that has to be positioned in a special place. "The real companies that have enough capital to generate a certain capacity for employments are in the United States or in England." English has become a tool as he describes it, that will ultimately give him the access to a better future.

The advantage that he has over his classmates is evident since he is aware how English has helped him throughout his studies at college in the systems field. Without English, it would be more difficult to access some kind of information such as books, papers, magazines, and so on, that are required to be read in the majority of the cases, in English. The fact of knowing and using the English language in his particular context has given him the opportunity to position himself in a different place in comparison with those who do not speak the language. That place could be described as the line towards a brilliant prospect in the labor market. "Since I started classes at college I have not had the vocation or felt the need to improve my English level for the fact that I have been learning more programming languages." English is described by Christian as a tool used for a specific purpose; the use of English is completely arranged to his studies. Christian thoughtfully believes that English and system engineering were born to be together.

4.3.5. Conclusion

As revealed throughout the experiences of the three systems engineering students, we can conclude that English played a significant role in the life experiences of the participants. Their stories narrate their first encounters with the English language and how it marks a before and an after in their identity construction. The words of the participants reveal how the perception of their academic and personal possibilities changed, influenced by an academic field that is closely connected with English speaking countries that lead the technological developments. English became an empowering entity in their lives which gave them confidence that boosted their self-esteem and allowed each one of them to succeed in their academic life and to live personal experiences that gave them new perspectives towards the future and destroyed mental barriers that were created by a monolingual society.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

The narratives presented here evidence that students have experienced external factors during their English learning process and those experiences have influenced their identity. Nowadays, many researches investigate the level students get after a language learning process or a test, but what about the effects of learning and using the language in their own beings?

When it comes to the perspective of the programs of Medicine, Business Administration and Systems Engineering, English as an additional language has widely influenced the participants' identity construction; although it has not been in the same way and from the same students' perspective. Each one of them has somehow experienced a change since they know English and they see English as an opportunity to have a better life. Therefore, it can be said that English does play an important role on their lives, for they know that English will give them a boost to achieve their aspirations, goals, and purposes. Today, after knowing English, their life projects have been changed and they are guided by the fact of having better opportunities thanks to English language.

In addition to this, it is not a secret that the advent of digital devices and the quick and easy access of information have enabled youths (and people in general) to easily access information about languages and especially how to learn or improve them.

Some youngsters consciously study the languages and some others simply add new languages to their cultural capital.

This study is a significant contribution to the languages field in Colombia for it provides knowledge about an intrinsic relation between some fundamental elements in contemporary society, namely English and identity. In times when fresh winds arrive to a country like Colombia, it is important to understand the phenomena that emerge from the new situation of the country. We all need to seriously contribute to the modernization of language education and the individuals who know the language are the best source to start a new paradigm.

Finally, it is necessary to clarify the significant role that English has played during the past years, not only because of its influence on people's histories, but also in a social, academic, and professional field, and that is clearly revealed throughout the life stories of students from different programs of the University of Cauca.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Guideline Questions (*questions to have always in mind*)

1. What role do English and the formation on this Language play in the construction of one's self and identity?
2. Does the participant need/use the first identity to reflect (deliberate) about the second identity?

Specific Questions

1. Do you use English in your daily life? In which ways? In which context? What is the purpose?
2. What contact do you have with the culture, which the language belongs to?
3. Which elements from that culture have you adopted to your daily life?
4. Have you given up any of your own costumes (practices) to adopt the new culture that you belong to?
5. What do you do to keep and improve your English level?
6. Have you travelled to an English speaking country? How much did your life change or transform with those experiences?
7. From the identity that you have gained with English, how do you think that you have influenced other people who are close to you and their worldview perspectives?

8. How much has your perspective about other cultures changed after learning English?
9. If you already have children or you think that you are going to, are you going to teach them English while they grow up? Which culture will be the first one in their education process?
10. When you get into the working world after completing your career, you will arrive with a professional background and knowledge of English. How do you think your professional life will be like knowing that you know English? How will interactions with members of that community be like? What will their roles be in that community?
11. How did you learn English? What was the most positive/negative thing that happened during that process? What was the easiest/hardest part?
12. How do you think the people close to you see/hear you when you speak English? What do you project when you speak English?
13. How do you evaluate the achievement of the goals that you had or could have had in relation to the English language?
14. What could have led you to change some things of your life or personality when you learned English?
15. What could have led you to change some things of your life or personality when you learned English?

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