

## Narrative Research Into the Possibilities of Classroom-Generated Stories in English Teacher Education

Una investigación narrativa en torno a las posibilidades de los relatos realizados en clase en la formación del profesorado de inglés

María Cristina Sarasa\*

Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Mar del Plata, Argentina

This paper summarizes a narrative inquiry carried out with forty volunteer undergraduate participants attending the course Overall Communication, in the English Teacher Education Program in the School of Humanities of the *Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata*, Argentina. It addresses their family/academic identities and personal practical knowledge—as articulated in their written narratives about a class activity concerning the telling of “unheroic” lives—produced by these students while exploring heroes in Irish films. Narrative interpretation of these undergraduates’ work yields categories of analysis concerning story protagonists’ origins, moral values, types of knowledge generated, and implications for English teacher education. Finally, the paper discusses some issues its findings raise in this field.

*Key words:* Initial English teacher education, narrative inquiry, pre-service teachers’ identities.

Este artículo resume una indagación narrativa realizada con cuarenta estudiantes voluntarios del curso Comunicación Integral del Profesorado de Inglés en la Facultad de Humanidades de la Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Argentina. Aborda identidades familiares/académicas y el conocimiento práctico personal —manifestados en narrativas escritas sobre una actividad en clase acerca de vidas “no heroicas”— que surgen tras explorar héroes en películas irlandesas. La interpretación narrativa de los relatos arroja categorías de análisis sobre los orígenes de los protagonistas no heroicos, los valores morales emergentes, los tipos de conocimiento generados y sus posibilidades en la formación docente inicial en idioma inglés. Finalmente, el trabajo discurre sobre algunas implicancias de sus resultados en este campo de la formación del profesorado.

*Palabras clave:* formación docente inicial de inglés, identidades de docentes en formación, indagación narrativa.

---

\* E-mail: [mcsarasa@hotmail.com](mailto:mcsarasa@hotmail.com)

How to cite this article (APA, 6<sup>th</sup> ed.): Sarasa, M. C. (2015). Narrative research into the possibilities of classroom-generated stories in English teacher education. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers’ Professional Development*, 17(1), 13-24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/profile.v17n1.43383>.

This article was received on May 08, 2014, and accepted on October 18, 2014.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons license Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Consultation is possible at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

## Introduction

Narrative inquiry on Argentinean English teacher education is relatively new (De Laurentis, Porta, & Sarasa, 2013; Sarasa, 2013). Thus, systematic research is needed to understand the value of carrying out narrative inquiry in this field. This work derives from a ten-year narrative research project on good university teaching by the Education and Cultural Studies Research Group, School of Humanities, *Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata*, Argentina (Álvarez, Porta, & Sarasa 2011; Sarasa, 2012). This paper deals with a narrative inquiry performed during the second semesters of the years 2011, 2012, and 2013 with undergraduates attending the sophomore course Overall Communication in the English Teacher Education Program at the School of Humanities, *Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata*. The paper introduces narrative tales provided by students, inspecting their productions and their reported opinions on these class undertakings. It also endeavours to review some implications these interventions hold for English teacher education. The instances of narrative inquiry occurred after the class had studied heroic representations in three films about Ireland: *Michael Collins* (Jordan, 1996), *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (Loach, 2006), and *The Guard* (McDonagh, 2011). The students were then requested to narrate orally the praiseworthy, so-called “unheroic,” existences of ordinary, unknown people. Subsequently, the undergraduates were asked to write their tales and to assess the class experience. Data examination yielded categories resulting from narrative scrutiny of gathered records. These categories were arrived at by identifying stories’ contents, revealing emerging themes in their English language teaching and learning production and reception milieu (Pavlenko, 2007). They involved the nature of the stories’ protagonists, the principles these lives evinced, their worth to their narrators, and the academic potential these stories facilitated. In

brief, these narratives allowed undergraduates to (re) formulate their educational identities and practices as prospective English instructors. Lastly, this paper dwells on the implications narrative inquiries could have in the field of English teacher education.

## Literature Review

Narrative inquiry in education started with Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990) ground-breaking research. Narrative involves phenomena under investigation *and* the method for examining those. Narrative inquiry is rooted in Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy (Dewey, 1938/1998). It involves three dimensions of experience—sociality, temporality, and place—as articulated through the storied lives people lead (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Narrative inquiry can empower teachers with its potential to transform teaching and learning by creating experiential resources.

Theoretical narrative inquiry within educational research has thrived (Trahar, 2011). Likewise, both empirical narrative inquiry in pre-service education and in-service teacher development have made rapid advances (Murphy, Huber, & Clandinin, 2012). For example, a “pedagogy of life-telling” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002, p. 408) fosters teacher growth through retrieving, listening to, and re-signifying publicly individual stories told in small groups, workshops, or courses, thus legitimizing personal tales in academic settings. These accounts reveal teachers’ “personal practical knowledge,” existing within their “past experience,” their “present mind and body,” and their “future plans and actions,” thus becoming “a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). This knowledge is shaped and articulated in professional knowledge landscapes constituted “by a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things” (Clandinin &

Connelly, 1995, pp. 4-5) located in between theory and practice.

The field of English teacher education has also scrutinized teachers' personal practical knowledge manifested through their stories (Bell, 2002). This special knowledge re-examined through narrative inquiry shifts language teachers' positions in the classroom by allowing them to challenge the knowledge-transmission model, the drawbacks of the "apprenticeship of observation," and grievances against instruction as "long on prescription, short on description" (Lortie, 1975, p. vii). Knowledge created *by* teachers and *for* teachers is crucial to their lifelong professional development and their classroom practices. In other words, true potential for English language teachers' individual *and* social growth lies in pursuing narrative inquiry systematically (Golombek & Johnson, 2004).

This field of English language teaching has thus become empirically concerned with narrative inquiry at diverse educational stages and in wide-ranging instruction locations (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008; Liu & Xu, 2011). These inquiries house the potential to relocate experiences and effects, liberate students and teachers alike, reassess the value of the local with respect to the global, and educate instructors to become culturally and socially open towards their own teaching and their students' existences (Nunan & Choi, 2010). Narrative is not merely considered as a learning tool and as a research methodology but also as part of a democratizing pedagogy (Nelson, 2011). In the same spirit, the role of narrative inquiry in English language teaching and learning has been reinterpreted as *both* research on teaching *and* teacher research and *also* as a process for professional development. This latter is a multifaceted, never-ending, situated, and personal trajectory. To conclude, there is an actual need for activities in English teacher education programs to actually engage in narrative practices that truly foster teacher development (Johnson & Golombek, 2011a, 2011b).

## Research Design

### Context and Participants

The initial English Teacher Education Program, School of Humanities, *Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata*, Argentina, teaches a four-year course of study organized into four areas. The first comprises the four macro skills, generally striving to build near-native speaker proficiency regularly utilizing novels, short stories, essays, and media products. The second includes the linguistic, grammatical, and phonological foundations of English. The cultural area studies the histories and literatures of mainstream English-speaking cultures. Finally, the teacher education area focuses on education, curriculum development, second/foreign language acquisition theory and research, microteaching, and residence experiences.

This paper reports a narrative inquiry undertaken during the second semesters of the years 2011, 2012, and 2013 involving 40 undergraduates—out of a total of 74—who volunteered their written contributions. Seventeen were absent from classes while another 17 did not choose to offer their productions and were not asked to comply. These students all attended the sophomore course called Overall Communication. This subject belongs to the linguistic skills area. It endeavours to raise awareness about the past and present global roles of English (Canagarajah, 2006) by focusing—through analysing print texts and films—on some postcolonial sites where the language is currently used. Likewise, the course attempts to create contents pertinent to prospective English teachers' education (Álvarez, Calvete, & Sarasa, 2012).

In October/November 2011, 2012, and 2013 each cohort spent approximately sixteen class hours dealing with the films *Michael Collins* (Jordan, 1996) and *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (Loach, 2006) in 2011, and with the former and *The Guard* (McDonagh, 2011) in 2012 and 2013, as part of a larger Irish Studies syllabus unit (Sarasa & Calvete, 2011). One important

topic concerned heroic representations in these three motion pictures (Ó Giolláin, 1998).

Once they had dealt with heroes in Irish society and narrated the lives of some brave people of their own choice, the undergraduates were asked to participate spontaneously in a two-hour class where they would retell small, superficially “unheroic” lives. These should involve ordinary individuals whose experiences deserved to be narrated although they were not famous.

### Aims, Methodology, and Data Collection Instruments

The first aim of this inquiry was to conceptualize the forty written narratives on “unheroic” lives, and on the class experience itself, generated willingly by the three student cohorts in 2011-2013. The second was to consider the implications these narrative classroom interventions hold for English language teacher education. To achieve these goals, the methodology used was logically that of narrative inquiry, as defined below:

Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

Thus, narrative inquiry understands experience as a “storied phenomenon” while “narrative research . . . [becomes a methodology for] inquiring storied experiences” (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009, p. 598). Guided by this rationale, and following similar interventions (Clandinin, Steeves, & Chung, 2007), this study envisages the course’s classroom experiences and their emerging accounts as the “reality” produced by participants in their crafted stories (Bruner, 1991).

Narrative processes, undertaken during and after the classes, can be considered as forms of inquiry in themselves (Xu & Connelly, 2009).

After the two-hour-long classes when undergraduates told their “unheroic” tales, all those students who had been present were requested to volunteer emailed written answers to an open-ended survey explaining the “average” life they had narrated, summarizing class events, and assessing the intervention. These stories were labelled “unheroic” in the sense that they were mostly tales about ordinary, run-of-the-mill people who were totally unrecognized, unlike the Irish heroes of the films students watched. Those undergraduates who did not submit their responses were not pressed to email their replies later.

The current paper concentrates solely on the analysis of students’ written answers to the proffered questionnaire. The obtained written narratives were examined intensively to find conceptual through-lines. These running ideas were progressively refined after increasingly complex readings of the data gathered (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). The classification was carried out manually on a table in a WinWord file. Each student (s) was assigned a number from 1 to 40, and identified accordingly (from s1 to s40) in order to give subjects an I.D. other than a pseudonym while respecting their anonymity. Topics were categorized inductively, while students’ responses were preserved in their original form to sustain the character of *narrative* inquiry. This resulting categorization of emerging topics in their production and reception classroom contexts (Pavlenko, 2007) was also matched against relevant theoretical literature as discussed at the end of this paper.

## Results

### The Nature of Story Protagonists

From the total of 40 student respondents (designated with numbers running from s1 to s40),

28 indicated in their writings that they had chosen to narrate family members' existences. Students' relatives comprised two great-grandparents, nine grandparents, 13 parents, two siblings, a great aunt, and an aunt. The remaining 12 narratives included five neighbours and/or acquaintances, and seven historical actors and/or film characters. Generally speaking, these mostly "unheroic" lives acquired epic dimensions in their classroom context of production and reception.

The two great-grandparents' lives encompassed public events in Europe (WWII) and private actions in Argentina. One student's Slovenian great-grandfather "came here on his own to look for a better future for his family," while her great-grandmother "stayed there [through WWII] and had to fight on her own to protect her family until they could be together again" (s6). They had surmounted difficulties and built a family life in the new continent. Another great-grandfather "fought for the Axis. . . . He [saw] the atrocities . . . committed in the name of Nationalism. . . . He deserted the army in 1941 and came to Argentina. . . . He sent for his family and earned his living by building houses" (s16). With their narratives, these great-grandchildren honoured their forebears' memories during the class.

The nine students' grandparents stories displayed, typically, lives devoted to hard work both inside and outside the home. One grandmother—raised in service in a foster home—"never stopped taking care of her sons, both daughters-in-law, and her three grandchildren" (s36). There were, for example, the following tales of abused or abandoned grandparents who broke free from their cycle of suffering: A grandfather "who, notwithstanding all the suffering he has gone through, grew strong enough to forgive his dying father" (s4); a grandmother "whose own mother had no money to support her and sent her to an orphanage" (s12); and an "alcoholic" with an "unfaithful husband" who, when her granddaughter was born, "went through a strict treatment all by

herself, without receiving anyone's help" (s28). One orphaned grandmother was a battered wife who lost two of her seven children to the Argentinean dictatorship's killings (1976-1983) and another two to illness (s7). The great aunt had overcome cancer (s7) while the aunt had donated her kidney to her own brother (s38). In brief, these people had led lives of suffering without complaining and had been rewarded with loving families.

The 13 "lives of the parents" stories also involved the struggles of raising a family (e.g., s2 and s9). Some, especially those in the 2013 cohort, had overcome serious odds. One student respected her parents "because I know all the sacrifices they made for my sisters and me. They left their families and their friends to start from scratch in a city they did not know" (s30). Other parents had been forced to leave home at a relatively early age living from hand to mouth until they became relatively prosperous (s31, s35, and s37). Two mothers prioritized their family life and remained married to older, chauvinistic husbands (s31 and s34). One sister was a young single mother (s3) while s27's elder brother was a ballet dancer who "had to overcome a lot of obstacles" to engage in his "true passion."

As to the five neighbours and/or (family) acquaintances, it is worth mentioning "a couple who has a shelter for dogs" and "show a true love and devotion for these animals, most of which have found new homes thanks to them" (s25). One undergraduate chose a family friend whose late daughter

had adopted three teenagers...One year later she died in a car accident and the children survived. The judge told [the grandmother] that the three siblings should go to the orphanage if she did not take care of them. From the very beginning she decided to become [her grandchildren's] tutor although she was seventy five years old. (s29)

Finally, the seven narratives about historical actors and film characters were due to the fact—exemplified by s21's words—that "I wanted to talk

about someone I knew, my granddad, but then I felt it would be too personal and I didn't want my partners to think I wanted to boast." For example, this same undergraduate chose to talk about Alicia Nash because "when I saw the movie about John Nash's life for the first time, I admired this woman's strength and love for her husband" (s21). Two students (s19 and s20) decided to work together presenting, first, the bride in *Kill Bill*, since she is "a very 'fashionable' kind of antihero." Second, they referred to the Marquis de Sade in *Quills* owing to "his struggle against censorship and those who wanted to 'cure' him by brutal means make him a very likeable character." Finally, they told the story of Vera Drake, in the homonymous film, since her "actions may produce a moral conflict on the viewer, but...she receives no money for this, believing her help to be an act of charity." Another student selected Father Pio from Pieltrecina (Italy), "a common man and a saint" (s11).

In short, these narratives evoked the good qualities and dispositions these existences revealed. Their mood was heroic since they were, in their narrators' eyes, about *little great* people performing *small remarkable* deeds.

### Knowledge Derived From Students' Reconstructed Class Experiences

In broad terms, the classroom stories mirrored the valour that had emerged originally in the analysis of Irish heroes' lives (Ó Giolláin, 1998). This was made explicit by s15: "it is due to their determination and courage that we think of [our families] as heroes." Actually, the words "courage" (s7, s15, s17, s27, and s38), "brave," and "bravery" surface naturally in several written tales (s1, s16, s19, and s20). For example, the group decided "to tell our relatives' stories because...we admire their ability to overcome hardships or to do something brave" (s1). These words are linked to the verb "to encourage," since the tellers were heartened existentially by their relatives' deeds

during the class (s12). This means that, even though the classes alternatively laughed and cried (s6, s12, s19, s20, s25, s26, s27, s31, and s32), all contributors appreciated these stories that "were teachings of courage, endurance and most important of love" (s7). The narratives were valued not only for the resolution portrayed in them but also because of their actual ordinariness and veracity: "What I remember is that most students talked about ordinary people who are not well-known but who have accomplished great things" (s21).

Moral principles emerged not only from protagonists' identities and accomplishments but were actually exemplified by the students' attitudes during classes and the rapport they established. Thus, the atmosphere was "moving" (s1) since the stories "aroused deep-rooted feelings" (s4 and s5). Class participation involved listening "carefully" (s3), sitting and feeling "deeply engaged" (s10), while also remaining "silent and respectful" (s6) in an atmosphere of "trust" (s32). s40 explains that "what called my attention was all of us were listening to one other without moving [i.e., budging]. Nobody cared about the time or his/her cell phone. We were respectful of each other and enjoyed listening to what the rest had to tell." Likewise, s37 confesses that "it was the only class in which every one of us truly wanted to hear what our mates had to say. None of us wanted to leave or do anything else but listening to the stories."

Subsequently, there emerges personal knowledge generated by the class. The learning experience involved experiential (self) knowledge since "for the first time we were able to openly express our most private feelings in an academic environment" (s4). In the same vein, s35 realized that "we are used to only talking about theory but we never talk about our lives." For s30 the tales "were also a good way to know myself. I thought about things that I consider important about me and about other people." One participant asserted emphatically that:

Not only were we learning, we were listening to what each other had to say, and we were anxious to know more and more about the person we had right next to us, and about their relatives' life. It was a class of mixed emotions, we laughed and cried, but I REPEAT...we learnt. (s9)

Probably for the first time in their course of study, undergraduates seemed to have talked about each other's narrative scenarios instead of retelling plots from novels, short stories, or films or reporting what linguists, grammarians, historians, or literary critics, among other experts, have to say about "reality." s10 grasped this experience by claiming that "we were talking about things we cared and only we knew about and wanted the rest to know too." s25 and s26 indicated jointly that "the students [were] the ones bringing information from their own lives... that [were] relevant to everyone at the same time for learning different things." Thus, the cohorts first transferred their newly acquired knowledge about the public Irish lives explored in class and were able to "relate what we had seen in class...about [Irish] heroes and our personal lives" (s11). Second, by retelling their personal narratives, they constructed their own collective story, partly made up of their own shared knowledge and empathy, as expressed in the following quote:

This gave us a kind of family feeling, our families had all gone more or less through the same things, all—or most—of us are immigrant descendants and our stories melted into one, the one of our great-grandparents/grandparents coming to this country looking for a better lifestyle. (s6)

The possibility of inquiring narratively into their loved ones' existences using the target language within a supportive community had both a liberating and a healing influence on tellers' attitudes and the contents of their narratives. One student's report on why she chose her grandmother (an orphan and a battered wife who mourned the loss of four children) is exemplary.

It was the first time I talked about my family's story in front of other people...I realized I had felt comfortable, that I had shared part of my family's story that I had planned not to mention—because I felt ashamed—and I also realized that many other students' unheroic characters, specially grandparents, had gone through tough situations just as my grandmother had. (s5)

In short, it can be stated that the moral values both implicit and explicit in the stories, together with the experiential knowledge constructed, were related to epic insights into common lives. These heroic constructions were constitutive of participants' identities, relating specifically to their sense of individual/family self-esteem and also a deep source of pride.

### Self-Reported Views on the Teaching Implications of the Intervention

In the first place, participants saw their education as encompassing locations of their own choosing beyond the classroom. This was the case in 2011, as narrated below:

This experience helped me to pay attention to other people, to see a huge part of their lives that could not be contained in a classroom. . . . After the class we all [several students] met in the student cafeteria and we kept on talking about our lives. I told them about my own life, my dreams, my plans, and we were all delighted to know more about each other. (s1)

One reflection points to the content vs. form, theory vs. practice, and formal vs. informal learning disputes (Johnson, 2006), splitting some English teacher education programs. It also aims to transcend the purely skill-oriented classroom that still predominates in some of these contexts. s7, s21, s27, and s28 became aware of these issues, sharing the assessment of the class as an instance when:

We did practice our listening and speaking skills. . . . I learned a lot about my narrative and my classmates' narratives, both

in academic and personal ways. The class had a perfect combination: we were all encouraged to talk, most of us wanted to talk, we all wanted to listen and we all wondered what the rest had to say. (s12)

Narratives were also empowering—especially for s3, s4, s31, and s40—because their course of study is highly demanding. Thus, participants came to believe that if their grandparents, parents, and acquaintances had overcome terrible odds they themselves would be able to graduate from college one day. Above all, the intervention stimulated these students to re-imagine more hopefully their future teaching:

I realized how powerful we...can be because we can teach much more than a language...I hope [we] can understand...that every time we step into a class it is not only up to the teacher to make it memorable, it is also up to us. (s18)

Concurrently, some students perceived the social orientation of their upcoming in-service practices. Thus, “I thought about things that I consider important about me and about other people. This could be useful to know what values I would like to teach to my students and how I want to act [before a class]” (s30). Likewise, the educational potential of narrative inquiry was gauged in the following terms:

I think this class is like a training for the future, because being is more than “giving a lesson,” and we should be prepared to work in places where social conditions are not good, or where students have difficult backgrounds that affect their process of learning. (s31)

In brief, the contents and protagonists of students’ “unheroic” tales were truly larger-than-life. The principles they espoused were far-reaching in their human scope. Lastly, the experiences of telling and retelling were not only authentic but also transformative and pedagogically loaded. These undergraduates seem to have created resources for constructing a meaningful professional identity.

## Discussion

Teaching has been memorably likened more to the flight of a butterfly than to the path of a bullet (Jackson, 1968). This concluding section will also “flutter” between reflecting on the specific categories obtained in this study and associated ones in the literature.

The current research strived to overcome several challenges English language teacher education still faces. For example, the profession needs to overcome the dichotomy between theory and practice and to legitimize teachers’ different ways of knowing (Johnson, 2006). As this paper’s results suggest, narrative inquiries such as the present one might contribute empirically towards reconciling these oppositions.

Narrative research like the one carried out in Overall Communication reveals that tales loom large in teacher education by disclosing some of its storied components, that is, the language teacher’s identity, learner-focussed teaching, and membership within a community of practice (Richards, 2010). Even if the study needs scaling up, with more cohorts over longer periods and in more varied contexts, this inquiry suggests how English language teacher education can address the “need to be concerned with helping teachers to examine their own cultural assumptions and inquire into the background of their students” (Smolcic, 2011, p. 15).

It is important to highlight the fact that students’ accounts took on meaning mostly by virtue of their being shared, as the literature on narrative inquiry indicates (Johnson & Golombek, 2011b). Telling and retelling stories allowed all the narrators to relive their past, their present, and, above all, their future, thus fulfilling the transformative aims of true narrative research (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013). The narrated past—that is, the context of the “unheroic” narratives—and the lived, self-assessed present—that



is, studying in the local English Teacher Education Program—were domains of experience that presented hurdles and were even painful. However, telling and retelling past lives that illuminated tellers' present existences offered sustenance not only for reliving the latter but, most importantly, for envisioning existences within a different, optimistic, personal, and professional future. These findings are sustained by current research in the field (Clandinin, Cave, & Cave, 2011).

Finally, these classes allowed for the foundation of locations outside the classroom where stories could be retrieved, told, retold, shared, and re-enacted. Students imagined the professional identity they wanted to attain and the teaching narratives they would like to perform one day.

### Closing Remarks

The present experience started with a syllabus unit that explored heroic representation in non-mainstream English-speaking cultures in Ireland. Next, when asked to tell their own “unheroic tales,” students enjoyed full autonomy in determining the content, length, and protagonists of their tales. In brief, the students did not talk about short stories, novels, essays, films, songs, documentaries, or TV programmes as artefacts external to their lives—as they frequently do in some classes in their English Teacher Education Program. Instead, they reflected with their own stories during an intervention produced and owned by both listeners and tellers.

Long ago, curriculum theory warned about the dangers of the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968) and its null counterpart (Eisner, 1985), while exposing the perversity of symbolic violence (Lakowski, 1988). For their part, narrative inquirers argue that the curriculum is co-created in the spheres of the family and of the, generically speaking, school (Murphy et al., 2012). This means that, since curriculum is

co-built across sites and generations it cannot remain divorced from the identities of all those involved in its conception. Firsthand and existential narratives—generated outside the university and comprising part of the curriculum understood as a life course (Goodson, 2012) as the ones Overall Communication's class participants shared—become legitimized as part of the academic curriculum, generated by all actors at the university.

By concentrating on lives in the classroom, these interventions have tried to redress several liabilities and imbalances. This existential focus allowed the sharing of private, heritage, knowledge that could be recreated as *personal practical knowledge* to integrate, in time, a *professional knowledge landscape* (Clandinin & Connelly 1995), which is meaningful to participants. Likewise, the current inquiry reassigned value to locally generated narrative knowledge away from the practices of linguistic and pedagogical imperialism as established by Phillipson (1992). To this end, students translated their family identities and their heritages. Simultaneously, they realized how empowering their choices were since these allowed them to find new voices and create different off-campus locales for creating knowledge and imagining their future teaching lives. Eventually, the narrative inquiry herein reported re-signified the meaning of new sites and practices that allow for the construction of true knowledge in English teacher education relevant to instructors and learners alike.

### References

- Álvarez, Z., Calvete, M., & Sarasa, M. C. (2012). Integrating critical pedagogy theory and practice: Classroom experiences in Argentinean EIL teacher education. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, 3, 60-70.
- Álvarez, Z., Porta, L., & Sarasa, M. C. (2011). Buenas prácticas docentes en la formación del profesorado: relatos y modelos entramados [Educational practice in teacher

- training: Half-timbered stories and models]. *Profesorado, Revista de Currículum y Formación del Profesorado*, 15(1), 229-240.
- Barkhuizen, G., & Wette, R. (2008). Narrative frames for investigating the experiences of language teachers. *System*, 36(3), 372-387. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.02.002>.
- Bell, J. S. (2002). Narrative inquiry: More than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 207-213. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3588331>.
- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), 1-21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/448619>.
- Canagarajah, S. (2006). The place of world Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition and Communication*, 57(4), 586-619.
- Clandinin, D. J., Cave, M. T., & Cave, A. (2011). Narrative reflective practice in medical education for residents: Composing shifting identities. *Advances in Medical Education and Practice*, 2, 1-7.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Murphy, M. S. (2009). Comments on Coulter and Smith: Relational ontological commitments in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 598-602. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09353940>.
- Clandinin, D. J., Pushor, D., & Orr, A. M. (2007). Navigating sites for narrative inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(1), 21-35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022487106296218>.
- Clandinin, D. J., Steeves, P., & Chung, S. (2007). Creating narrative inquiry spaces in teacher education. In B. Johnston & K. Walls (Eds.), *Voice and vision in language teacher education: Selected papers from the Fourth International Conference on Language Teacher Education* (n.p.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002>.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2007). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- De Laurentis, C., Porta, L., & Sarasa, M. C. (2013). La formación del profesorado de inglés: espacios de indagación narrativa [English teaching training course: A site for narrative inquiry]. *Revista Arena*, 3(1), 1-22
- Dewey, J. (1938/1998). *Experience and education*. Indianapolis, IN: Kappa Delta Pi.
- Eisner, E. W. (1985). *The educational imagination*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2002). Writing as inquiry: Storying the teaching self in writing workshops. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32(4), 403-428. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-873X.t01-1-00239>.
- Golombek, P. R., & Johnson, K. E. (2004). Narrative inquiry as a mediational space: Examining emotional and cognitive dissonance in second-language teachers' development. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 10(3), 307-327.
- Goodson, I. F. (2012). *Developing narrative theory: Life histories and personal representation*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M., & Steeves, P. (2013). Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education: The extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 212-242. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12458885>.
- Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Johnson, K. E. (2006). The sociocultural turn and its challenges for second language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 235-257. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/40264518>.

- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2011a). A sociocultural theoretical perspective on teacher professional development. In K. E. Johnson & P. R. Golombek (Eds.), *Research on second language teacher education: A socio-cultural perspective on professional development* (pp. 1-12). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2011b). The transformative power of narrative in second language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 486-509.
- Jordan, N. (Director). (1996). *Michael Collins* [Motion picture]. Los Angeles, CA: Warner Bros.
- Lakowski, G. (1988). Witches, weather gods, and phlogiston: The demise of the hidden curriculum. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 18(4), 451-463. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1179388>.
- Liu, Y., & Xu, Y. (2011). The trajectory of learning in a teacher community of practice: A narrative inquiry of a language teacher's identity in the workplace. *Research Papers in Education*, 28(2), 176-195. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2011.610899>.
- Loach, K. (Director). (2006). *The wind that shakes the barley* [Motion picture]. London, UK: Pathé.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- McDonagh, J. M. (Director). (2011). *The guard* [Motion picture]. London-Los Angeles: Reprisal Films.
- Murphy, M. S., Huber, J., & Clandinin, D. J. (2012). Narrative inquiry into two worlds of curriculum making. *LEARNING Landscapes*, 5(2), 219-235.
- Nelson, C. D. (2011). Narratives of classroom life: Changing conceptions of knowledge. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 463-485.
- Nunan, D., & Choi, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Language and culture: Reflective narratives and the emergence of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ó Giolláin, D. (1998). Heroic biographies in folklore and popular culture. In G. Doherty & D. Keogh (Eds.), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish State* (pp. 136-146). Dublin, IE: Mercier.
- Pavlenko, A. (2007). Autobiographic narratives as data in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(2), 163-188. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/amm008>.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2010). Competence and performance in language teaching. *RELC Journal*, 41(2), 101-122. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0033688210372953>.
- Sarasa, M. C. (2012). La narrativa biográfica como vehículo para explorar las trazas de la buena enseñanza [Biographic narratives as a tool to explore traces of good teaching]. *Revista de Educación*, 3(4), 167-182.
- Sarasa, M. C. (2013). Narrative inquiry within Argentinean EFLTE: Crafting professional identities and knowledge through students' narratives. In L. Renart & D. Banegas (Eds.), *Roots & routes in language education: Bi-multilingualism, interculturality and identity. Selected papers from the 38<sup>th</sup> FAAPI Conference* (pp. 44-55). Buenos Aires, AR: FAAPI-APIBA.
- Sarasa, M. C., & Calvete, M. (2011). Re-presentations of histories and stories: A look into *Michael Collins* and *The wind that shakes the barley*. In G. Obert & N. L. Alfonso (Eds.), *Actas del Cuarto Simposio de estudios irlandeses en Sudamérica: Percepciones de la Irlanda contemporánea* (n.p.). Santa Rosa, AR: Universidad Nacional de La Pampa.
- Smolcic, E. (2011). Becoming a culturally responsive teacher: Personal transformation and shifting identities during an immersion experience abroad. In K. E. Johnson & P. R. Golombek, (Eds.), *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development* (pp. 15-30). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Trahar, S. (Ed.). (2011). *Learning and teaching narrative inquiry: Travelling in the borderlands*. Amsterdam, NL: John Benjamins Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/sin.14>.
- Xu, S., & Connelly, F. M. (2009). Narrative inquiry for teacher education and development: Focus on English as a foreign language in China. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(2), 219-227. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.10.006>.

### **About the Author**

**María Cristina Sarasa** holds an English as an international language (EIL) degree and an MA in Higher Education from the School of Humanities, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Argentina, where she is a tenured EIL teacher educator in the Department of Modern Languages and a researcher with the Education and Cultural Studies Research Group.