

## **OCCUPYING THE MARGINS: A DISCURSIVE STUDY OF IDENTITY FORMATION IN SRI LANKAN PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN ENGLISH AT THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

A.L.A.A. Draupadee

Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka  
*draupad\_te170018@stu.kln.ac.lk*

Teacher's self-perception of who they are, what they do and how they express their identity navigates the trajectory of numerous critical identity work related to language teacher education. While teacher identity is considered a core concept and a key analytic tool for teacher education research, much of the research on teacher identity has focused on novice and pre-service teachers since they provide a solid base for the earliest transition from being students to teachers (Balban, 2015). Despite numerous research on Language Teacher Identity (LTI) worldwide, few English as a Second Language (ESL) studies in Sri Lanka combine pre-service teachers and LTI to explore various personal and professional subjectivities of novice teachers that collide and cooperate across context and discourse communities. Therefore, this study hopes to explore the factors that contribute to or challenge the formation of LTI of pre-service teachers and the personal, professional and contextual (social, political and educational) aspects that affect their envisioned prospective English Language Teaching (ELT) careers by examining how they express their memories, experiences and tensions that occurred as they are becoming teachers through narrative inquiry. This qualitative narrative research is designed with an emic perspective within the feminist post-structuralist sphere (Barkhuizen, 2013; Benwell, 2012). The narrative data was collected through semi-structured narrative interviews. The sample consisted of six female pre-service teachers of English (PSTE) from a reputed Sri Lankan college of education. The narratives were thematically coded using Saldana's (2013) method of thematic coding. The results suggested encountering exemplary teachers in the early years of one's life, support received from discourse communities, balancing theory, practice and spontaneity, comparing one's own teacher-self with others, and the ability to enact and embody teacher-self through corporeal means, reinforced LTI while traumatic experience as trainee-teachers, lack of free will, and insincere motives behind choosing teaching career, and challenge the formation of LTI. These participants' prospective ELT careers were affected by various personal, professional and contextual aspects like their families' opinions, initial experience and memories as student-teachers, initial interactions in discourse communities, attitudes, lack of privileges offered to teachers, and economic challenges. The findings deconstruct the typical image associated with novice English teachers by elucidating on their power struggle in educational institutions and their shifting and multiple identities in diverse contexts while raising awareness of the tensions that occur during the transition from being students to teachers to provide insights into teacher training, and language education in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** Discourse, LTI, Narratives, Pre-service, Teacher-training