

Stories to Wake Up: Women Narratives Reconstructing Themselves as Sociohistorical Subjects

Historias para Despertar: Narrativas de Mujeres que se Reconstruyen como Sujetos Sociohistóricos

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Abstract

This article reports on a research conducted at a private university in Colombia, as part of an English language course in which the topics of study addressed the culture and history of Colombia and Boyacá through art. Narratives from three female students were analyzed, from a decolonial perspective, to observe their processes of reconstruction as sociohistorical subjects considering their experiences in the contexts where they study, live in, and come from. The data for this research was gathered inside and outside the classroom through learners' diaries and dialogical interviews held with the researcher. Narratives served the purpose of making visible elements of those processes and allowed to explore three of them: (1) The construction of particular relationships in and with the world; (2) a perception of unity of past, present, and future; and (3) a sense of their personal and spiritual growth in time. Nevertheless, the narrative of each participant had unique features and values. The results showed that each female had specific anecdotes constructing their experiences, relationships, and plans in their world. One conclusion of the study refers to how the relevance of family, context, childhood memories, and life expectations offer meaningful and memorable topics of discussion within English language lessons for undergraduate learners.

Keywords: English language course, decolonial studies, narratives, reasoning, sociohistorical subjects

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Resumen

Este artículo reporta una investigación que se desarrolló en una universidad privada en Colombia como parte de un curso de inglés en el que los temas de trabajo se dirigieron hacia la cultura y la historia de Colombia y Boyacá en diferentes expresiones artísticas. Las narrativas de tres mujeres fueron analizadas, desde una perspectiva decolonial, para observar sus procesos de reconstrucción como sujetos sociohistóricos teniendo en cuenta sus experiencias en los contextos en donde ellas estudian, viven y provienen. Los datos de esta investigación se recogieron dentro y fuera del salón de clase por medio de diarios escritos por los estudiantes y entrevistas dialógicas sostenidas con el investigador. Las narrativas visibilizaron algunos elementos de esos procesos y permitieron explorar tres de ellos: 1) Relaciones particulares en y con el mundo; 2) una percepción de unidad de pasado, presente y futuro; y 3) una idea de crecimiento personal y espiritual en el tiempo. Sin embargo, las narrativas de cada uno de los participantes tienen características y valores particulares. Los resultados mostraron, de manera general, que cada mujer tiene anécdotas que construyen sus experiencias, relaciones y planes en su mundo. Una conclusión de este estudio señala cómo la relevancia de la familia, el contexto, los recuerdos de infancia y las expectativas de vida ofrecen temas de discusión significativos y memorables dentro de las clases de inglés de estudiantes de pregrado.

Palabras claves: curso de inglés, estudios decoloniales, narrativas, razonamiento, sujetos sociohistóricos

Introduction

This paper details a research process conducted with the participation of three female students from a private university in Boyacá, Colombia. The main objective was to explore what women narratives revealed about their reconstruction as sociohistorical subjects. The main elements observed were related to their relationships in and with the world, the reconstruction of their experiences in time, and their ideas about their personal and spiritual growth. Although the information that they provided connected to these elements, each narrative was singular and had unique elements to them. Thus, one of the outcomes was not a categorization of elements in the construction of a sociohistorical subject but an outline of the participants' voices.

Rather than a generalizing theory, the information analyzed during the research process was connected to a theoretical discussion. This allowed presenting the participants individually and portraying their unique voices, experiences, and perspectives. The initial contact between the teacher-researcher and the participants occurred in an English language class. The initial intention was to locate the research process beyond classroom borders and get a closer understanding of the participants. When offering reflecting opportunities inside and outside the actual space of the English language class and by establishing dialogs with students beyond the authority system in the relationship between a teacher and learners, the borders of the English lessons are transgressed. Then, the information was gathered, inside

and outside the classroom, through a diary that they wrote, and dialogical interviews held with the researcher. That information allowed the researcher to organize and study their ideas as part of a narrative.

In this study, narratives are understood both (1) as the way a person portrays experience in the world in connection with cultural representations, social constructions, and historical heritages; as well as (2) a body of ideas containing meanings and providing a channel to power manifestations. The use of narratives has generally been associated with what diverse social groups and contexts express. Narrative explorations have consistently focused on critical race methodologies, particularly conditions such as IVF (In Vitro Fertilization), motherhood experiences (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004), identity construction of LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual) groups, and even violent extremism, which is believed to transmit a determined narrative. Thus, approaching a personal narrative represents the possibility to defy hegemonies, i.e., the “success of the dominant class in presenting their definitions of reality and truth” (Chisholm, 2015, p. 1).

Not only a way to display the self and identities (Guerrero, 2011), a narrative refers to power discourses that take the form of language. Human beings live immersed in a narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988). The ambivalence of the term locates narratives both in the individual action and in social interaction. From a sociohistorical stand, a narrative can also represent the synergy of “past, present and imagined worlds” (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 19). Having Latin America as the big context of the research process conducted, past, present, and imagined worlds cannot be thought of without including colonialism and the demands for proposals and critiques of the existing social orders from a contextualized standpoint or, as Santos (2009) proposes it, thoughts and actions from our South.

The process aimed to be an alternative approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) practices; understanding that the learners to the language classroom own a past, have expectations about their future, and are not there to reproduce grammar rules or statements only. What they have to say is important and could be the point of departure to discuss perceptions of history and society. English language teaching and learning is the opportunity to approach history under a decolonial and critical perspective, from which learners could recognize themselves as part of a complex socio-historical process.

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Approaching the narratives of three university female students, led to singular and alternative visions from our South. The interest in these visions was a part of the phenomenological stand and the decolonial character of this research. The narrators of this study produced written texts in the form of diaries, based on class discussions about history and art in Tunja. The dialogical interviews took place outside the language classroom. Product of their statements in their diaries and the transcription of the interviews, a narrative text appeared and was used to connect the threads between theory and the information

gathered. The analysis then allowed to observe three lines under which the narration of the participants could be understood concerning their construction as sociohistorical subjects.

Narrators constructed themselves in relationships in and with the world, in line with what Freire (2005) stated. Engagement in relationships in and with the world is a sign of liberation and connection to history. *In* and *with* the world means not only a location or a point of view in the established relationships but the construction of empathy and the union to a world. In this continuum, the other line that arose was related to the construction of past, present, and future as unity. For the narrators of this research, their past and present experiences occur all at the same time in their narrations when they reconstruct and justify ideas or a position about their plans and projects.

Narrators have a sense of their personal and spiritual growth in time. Their family history and their past experiences led them to see their process as a sign of progress, considering that they are studying an undergraduate program at a university and that they hold a lot of expectations about their future. Although these lines of understanding appeared as a frame to approach the narrators' experience in terms of their reconstructions as sociohistorical subjects, each one of the participants had unique experiences, anecdotes, ideas, and expectations that emerged in their narrations.

Rooted in an English language course, the research process concluded that exploring personal narratives opens the possibility to unveil sociohistorical conditions and ways of transgressing time and experiences by women who pursue a life project supported by their family and beloved ones. The research process challenged the pre-conceived views of the researcher. A more detailed and careful view of each narrator gave evidence that each held relevant and meaningful experiences, showing singularity and uniqueness. The researcher focused on particular elements that future research could expand with more details by giving more focus on sociohistorical positioning.

Methodological Approach

The narrators in the research process had fictional names. Mariana, Lucy, and Diana were part of an English language course at a private university located in Tunja, Boyacá. The initial approach to the course aimed for a historic overview and reconstruction of Tunja, based on art and architecture. For four months, the students of this course explored art representations from the precolonial, the Conquest, the Colony, and contemporary periods. Thus, elements such as Muisca's petroglyphs, religious art, and paintings from modern artists were the basis to discuss the vision of the inhabitants of the territory and its transformations throughout history.

This discussion led to personal connections made by the students in which their past and experiences connected to Muisca's culture and heritage. Product of these reflections, the students wrote a diary where their thoughts and ideas were registered. Then, a second moment of the process took the dialogue out of the classroom. More precisely, the study followed the concept proposed by Chisholm (2015), in which *reasoning* is an alternative to creating participatory spaces for students. *Reasoning*, being a dialogical engagement, represents a self-discovery process. Reasoning around a topic allows the students to connect in an empathetic and intense dialogue around familiar issues, which are explored and re-evaluated to gain understanding.

Three female students of the course volunteered to expand on the ideas in their diaries, exploring meaningful experiences from their childhood, families, birth places, professional studies, and projects. These three female students were narrators reconstructing and making sense of the past, present, and future (Yin, 2011). Product of a dialogue held with the researcher, audio recordings were transcribed, following the cleanup approach suggested by Gee and Green (1998). The interest for the analysis of the transcripts was first in identifying anecdotes. Anecdotes, as defined by van Manen (1989), are social products that reveal the character of a person and his or her time. An anecdote could be a sentence, a statement, or a group of sentences supporting a position assumed by the narrator. The identification of anecdotes connected to metaphors.

A metaphor is essentially constitutive in nature. It relates to the meaningful substance being represented in the knowledge obtained by experience and the literal signification (Gill, 1991). Metaphors, embodied in narratives, are part of the way things are conceived. Then, not only textual but sociohistorical performative factors are represented and open in the narrative texts by Diana, Mariana, and Lucy, the three participants of the study. Metaphorical references turned the information of the narratives into a body of ideas reflecting experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and projects that could be related to a process of construction of their sociohistorical subjectivity.

Each transcription of the three narrators contained several anecdotes and metaphors that allowed to observe a face of their reconstruction process as sociohistorical subjects, as it is detailed in the findings below. The life experiences of the narrators were at the center of the exploration and systematization process (Yin, 2011). According to Yin (2011), qualitative research explores the meaning of people's lives. A narrative embodies conscious and non-conscious processes and constitutes the bridge between words, experiences, and meaning. Narrating permits individuals to explore themselves and paint an image of the world for the reader.

Following the theory, the researcher analyzed the narratives from different standpoints: textually, conversationally, culturally, politically/historically, and in terms of performance

(Riessman, 2005). Each one of those methods corresponds to a particular value assignation to certain aspects present within the narrative. The analysis process conceived narratives as performance and aimed to go beyond the spoken word. The word was the means to relate to anecdotes and metaphors in the narrative. Following the ideas of Richardson (1994), and in line with decolonial perspectives, for this research process, I as a researcher understood that my role was as a writer and storyteller that sought for meaning and understanding that may contribute to coping with the circumstances of the participants and myself. As a researcher, I see myself not as a scientist only trying to discover the laws that govern behavior. Writing is not only a dynamic and creative process but also a method of discovery and analysis. The writing process means to me creating reality: “no textual staging is ever innocent” (Richardson, 1994, p. 518).

Data Analysis and Findings

Approaching the narrative analysis demanded of me to frame and assume a perspective of core elements. One of the first aspects that I considered was that a narrative analysis comprises a family of approaches in social and human sciences, all of them aiming to unveil the diverse, complex, and multidimensional texts found in storied forms (Riessman, 2005). Diversity appears as a determining factor to start conceptualizing and organizing the way to approach and represent a personal narrative. Thus, each one of the narrators’ anecdotes represented a personal and unique way of representing their experience, not subjected to comparisons among them.

The self-discovery process of reasoning for the narrators was activated based on a previous experience in the classroom setting. The approximation to the narrators started from a pedagogical implementation in which the class experienced different learning possibilities. The students were involved in spaces where they had the possibility to explore art in Boyacá and Colombia as presented in different socio-historical moments: Pre-colonial, Colony, Conquest, and contemporary. Each workshop of the pedagogical implementation was divided into different moments. When they studied the Pre-colonial period, they were presented with images of Muisca’s petroglyphs to state and connect to previous possible aesthetic experiences. After connecting the topic to personal aspects, the students explored information about the specific art representation and its meaning to the community.

The students made evident the connections or disconnections to that type of art, the symbolism from their own set of values, and observed a particular narrative of the world through art. Considering the comments and the discussions with the students in the class sessions, the researcher presented a general invitation to participate in a dialogical interview to explore their life experiences related to society and history from a more human and personal perspective in which they could feel more comfortable and engage in a reasoning

process. Three female students accepted voluntarily the invitation to participate in those dialogs to construct that reasoning process.

Reasoning is a self-discovery process occurring simultaneously while narrating and it installs as a dialogical engagement between narrator and listener (Chisholm, 2015). The dialogical subjects connect empathetically while exploring familiar issues. In the study, those familiar issues were the product of the English language lessons of the course in which the main theme was history and society as reflected in art and culture in Tunja. The three narrators projected and connected the narratives to a broader level, including their experience with family, traditions, and places, involving their reconstruction as sociohistorical subjects, in and with the world.

Lucy, Diana, and Mariana had particular and individual ways to reconstruct themselves as sociohistorical subjects. To prioritize, organize, and code the information found in the transcripts, each particular conception of the world narrated by them was divided into narrative threads. Those narrative threads corresponded to different thematic groupings unveiling each narrator's sociohistorical subjectivity. Internally, the content of each thread was understood as an anecdote. As stated by van Manen (1989), an anecdote connects the social experience and transforms it into a social product containing the revelation of the deep and true characteristics of the subject and his or her time. The anecdotes were contrasted with the narrative thread to determine symmetry and validity. Next in this document, each narrator will appear along a discussion of the elements found in the data analysis process.

Diana

Volunteering is not a meaningless decision. Diana decided to participate in the process without showing any doubt. She used part of her time to participate in a dialogue with the researcher. The level of attachment to family is relevant in her case and it constituted the biggest connection to the story of her people and the experience of society:

Eso es lo que más recuerdo con mi abuelo. Porque él era una persona muy humilde, muy consentidora conmigo, con sus nietos. (Diana, Narrative 2018)

[That is what I remember the most with my grandfather. He was a very humble person, pretty loving with me, with his grandchildren.]

A memory is an immediate contact with the past. For Diana, that memory is linked to her family and in particular to her grandfather. Diana presents love and the connection to a generation that made life better, tattooed in her memory. The grandfather constitutes the model of a good human being by portraying an invaluable characteristic: Being humble.

This is a positive characteristic. Demonstrating affection to her and the children in the family is a determining factor to connect personality and a way to live with acts and facts.

The image of her grandfather is a piece of art that changes the configuration of places and communities. Diana embellishes the countryside because of him:

Del pueblo no es que me guste mayor cosa, porque es como un pueblito fantasma. Uno va y no se ve nada por ahí... Del campo sí; por mi abuelo, por las personas que conocemos. (Diana, Narrative 2018)

[Not many things I like about the town because it is like a ghost town. Anyone can walk by and see nothing around... I like things about the countryside, because of my grandfather, because of the people we know there.]

The reconstruction of Diana as a sociohistorical subject involves her grandfather and how his image configured the experience of places and society at a particular point in time. She understands herself as a human with a past (Riessman, 2005). The narrative here is praxis, a form of social action. A form of reconstructing the pillars of one's life with the people who have witnessed the evolution of the narrator. Diana reconstructs the history of the world initiating with her roots and experiencing memory as the act of recreating and transgressing temporality to bring her grandfather back to her and her feelings and attitudes towards life. Demonstrating affection for her and the children in the family is a key factor to connect her grandfather's personality to a way of living:

Él, por ejemplo, a mi papá le daba muchos consejos sobre sus hijos. Él no era nada tacaño, ni con sus hijos ni con sus nietos. Él se fue muy joven. Era enfermo y sufría mucho; pero él era feliz, así le doliera todo. (Diana, Narrative 2018)

[My grandfather, for example, advised my father about his children. He was not selfish, neither with his children nor with his grandchildren. He left us when he was young. He was ill and suffered a lot; but he was happy, though all his body ached.]

Diana, portraying an image of the love that her grandfather shared with her, talks about him with a similar love, connecting to her values, feelings, the past, and to the events that marked her with a particular and special sign. She remembers that there is not a human living in complete isolation. There is a past; a millenary road constructs who individuals are and the time each is living in.

She reconstructs her history and her life by the hands of the people she loved and the ones who loved her. She connects generations and highlights an oral tradition between father and son, in which, no matter the age, the father continues to provide advice and care about the coming times and generations. She reconstructs her grandfather as a brave and wise man, showing his best face in the worst moments.

When she was narrating this episode, I could spot how she remembered it peacefully and with a positive attitude. Just like her grandfather, bravely, she was able to connect it to painful memories, like her grandfather's illness, with a positive attitude. She was remembering

the best. No matter the pain, there was always a smile, and there was always a reason to be happy. These humanistic lessons stayed in her mind; during the process of narrating, she reconstructed herself as a sociohistorical subject with a past and a reason to assume things with a positive attitude and to value the best that society can offer: Love and support.

Y compartíamos muchas cosas con él. Cosa que no se ve ahorita. Él se fue en el 2010. Y se fue literalmente joven. Y pues fue muy duro para nosotros. Él tenía 52. Le llegaron todas las enfermedades al tiempo y eso lo fue matando poco a poco, pero a pesar de todas sus enfermedades él era muy buena gente. (Diana, Narrative 2018)

[And we shared a lot of things with him. That is something you cannot see now. He passed away in 2010. He was young, literally. That was very hard for us. He was 52 years old. He suffered from several illnesses at the same time and that started to kill him slowly, but despite his illnesses, he was a very good person.]

Diana responds to the principles of our performative analysis. She locates herself as a subject at a point in time, making sense, reconstructing, and acting. Her words and the metaphor of society and history underneath are artful and meaningful (Riessman, 2005). Her narration related to a ‘self’ with a past, “doing rather than telling alone” (p. 5).

Yo creo que nos deberíamos arriesgar. Uno no sabe qué pensar. Que si con la izquierda si va a mejorar el país o va a empeorar como se dice. Que va a ser otra Venezuela. Yo creo que nos deberíamos arriesgar a ver qué pasa. De pronto se mejora mucho el país y no vamos a seguir en las mismas. Porque digamos con Duque sería estar ahí otra vez y empeorar y que haya más guerra y todo. Por ejemplo, acá nosotros no podemos como hablar mucho sobre el tema. Y por eso acá la gente votó más que todo por Duque. Porque ellos no han vivido la guerra, no la han sentido. Pero Duque va a quitar lo de las firmas del acuerdo y eso es terrible para las personas que de verdad fueron víctimas, que de verdad vivieron todo eso. Yo creo que acá es muy difícil. Yo creo que, en Colombia, los altos mandos están acostumbrados a la corrupción a no ser tan honestos y mucha gente va por Duque, odian la izquierda. (Diana Narrative, 2018)

[I think you should try. One does not know what to think. If the left-wing is going to improve the country or if it is going to turn Colombia into another Venezuela. I think you should take that risk, to see what happens. Maybe everything gets a lot better, and we are not going to stay in the same situation. Because, for instance, Duque would imply to be there again and get worse, to have more war and everything else. For example, here we cannot talk much about that topic. That is why most people here voted for Duque. Because they have not suffered war, they have not felt it. But Duque is going to remove the peace agreements and that is terrible for the people who are the true victims, the ones who lived all of that. I think here it is pretty difficult. I believe that, in Colombia, the high powers are used to corruption, they are not used to be honest, and a lot of people support Duque; they hate the left-wing.]

This projection of what at the time was the future presidential elections portrays how locating in the past implies evaluating the historical and social conditions that configure

human communities. Diana makes an overview of a political landscape in which political forces are part of a big narrative. But it is in Diana's narrative where her critical perception and experience reconstruct herself with a positioning and an ideology to which she is faithful.

This positioning is the one that allows Diana to connect to her future in a determined way:

Yo me proyecto como una profesional y cualquier trabajo que haga, ser muy honesta. Ahorita se están viendo muchas cosas de los ingenieros civiles. Digamos yo miro noticias y me siento como mal cuando dicen que los ingenieros civiles o ingeniería civil [sic]. Tratar de ser mejor persona primero que todo. (Diana, Narrative 2018)

[I see myself as a professional and, in any job that I could do, being very honest. Now one can see a lot of things about civil engineers. When I watch the news, I feel bad when they mention civil engineers or the civil engineering career [sic]. First and foremost, I am going to try to be a good person.]

Lucy

Communication is essential to narrative research since it represents a space for a dialogical encounter. The encounter with Lucy was funny, interesting, and revealing. She attended the interview with a positive attitude and what she narrated was the way her mother and childhood were two pillars in her reconstruction of society and the past. Her mother and sister represent the metaphor of childhood and love:

Era divertido, era un encuentro muy tierno con ella. Como no teníamos la posibilidad de que ella nos pagara un show de títeres y la cuestión... que ella se pusiera en el trabajo de crear ese tipo de distracción para las dos, era muy significativo para ambas. (Lucy, Narrative 2018)

[It was fun, it was a very tender encounter with her. As we did not have the possibility of paying for a puppets' show and stuff... to have my mother working to create that type of entertainment for both of us; that was very meaningful for my sister and me.]

Lucy reconstructs her childhood as a metaphor for her past and connects to her mother and her sister in the feeling of joy. Here, motherhood is reconstructed as the act of a brave woman supporting her children and providing them with happiness and love despite a particular financial situation. The family constitutes the resistance to the forces acting in society over the people.

No matter the financial situation, motherhood is reconstructed as a subversive act to state that leisure is a human right. A toy made with old socks and the act of performing for these two little girls represented motherly love and joy, no matter the available resources.

Her reconstruction has to do with her society as well, as evident in the following narrative anecdote:

Ejemplos drásticos los D1, los Justo y Bueno, los Ara que ahora monopolizaron todas las ciudades. Pues entonces digamos todos esos pequeños negocios ya no van a surgir como antes, digamos que uno solo tenía la tiendita del vecino y uno iba allá y compraba todo, pues ahora no, ahora hay esos D1, que en cada barrio hay dos, entonces ya uno va allá. Y hasta uno comete el error de no apoyar su propia industria. (Lucy, Narrative 2018)

[Drastic examples are D1, Justo y Bueno, and Ara stores, now monopolizing every city. Then, all of those small stores are not going to take off like they used to do, for example, before you only had the small neighbor's store where you could go and buy everything. That does not happen now, now we have those D1 stores, two in every neighborhood, then you go to those places. And even one makes the mistake of not supporting own industry.]

Lucy moves beyond her past and previously existing financial conditions to evaluate the role that a person should have in terms of consuming and supporting local businesses. It is in this way that her reconstruction permeates society and culture and how she presents a sensible perspective of her community. She continues narrating and presenting the general perception of this particular issue:

Yo por lo general compro en donde la vecina porque me fía, porque tengo la cuenta abierta. No, pues sí se trata de pedir a la tiendita de arriba pero sí hay cosas que se compran en el D1, hay que ser justos, y en el Justo y Bueno. Es que empieza desde uno. Ya uno no apoya sus cosas. Hay que crear conciencia entre nosotros mismos. Si no nos apoyamos entre nosotros no vamos a surgir, el país no va a surgir. Crear conciencia en la gente que apoye su propia industria. Igual esos D1 son legales, entonces no se pueden cerrar ¡No se pueden quitar los desgraciados! No hay una competencia perfecta, así la tienda te ofrezca un arroz bueno cultivado acá, cultivado acá, un D1 te ofrece arroz sintético que es mucho más barato. (Lucy, Narrative 2018)

[Generally, I buy in the neighbor's small store because she sells on credit, I have my account open there. We try to buy things from the small stores up there, but we also buy things in the D1 store, we must be fair, and in the Justo y Bueno store. Everything starts with oneself. One does not support local business. We must raise awareness among ourselves. If we do not support ourselves, we are not going to progress, our country is not going to progress. We need to raise people's awareness to support own industry. Anyway, those D1 are legal, so we cannot close them. They cannot be removed. There is no perfect competition, even though the small store offers good quality rice, grown here, the D1 store offers synthetic rice that is a lot cheaper.]

Lucy critically reconstructs herself as a social subject and evaluates the market dynamics, not only providing a concept but establishing the possible ways to improve the situation. Next, the voice of Mariana is going to illustrate her experiences and perceptions regarding her society and history. This final narrative concludes the interventions of the narrators throughout the entire document, concluding the transversal narrative analysis.

Mariana

Mariana reconstructed society as a complex field where economic forces determine the destiny of people and the way they conceive the world. Economic power was the metaphor she used to reproduce the society she perceives. In her case, mining and the politics of economy permeate a society in which practices and mindsets reproduce a system that has governed the territories of Boyacá historically:

Digamos el primo de mi papá, él es accionista en esta empresa. Produce miles de miles de millones al año. Es muchísima plata. Toda es de esmeraldas. Él es de los que llega en helicóptero. Que la mujer, ella va a pagar la nómina, ella llega con bultos de plata. Digamos, ellos llegan a la casa y ponen anillos de seguridad. Digamos, entran todos los de seguridad, con fusiles. A él a veces le mandan de aquí casi medio batallón. (Mariana, Narrative 2018)

[For instance, my father's cousin is investing in this business. It produces thousands and thousands of millions per year. That is a lot of money. Everything is about emeralds. He is one of the people who get here in a helicopter. His wife, when she is going to pay the salaries, she comes with huge packages of money. For example, they get home and place security rings. The security guards get in with guns. They sometimes send almost half a contingent for him.]

The construction of the experiences in the family is permeated by the economic configuration inside the society. She observes and reconstructs a society in which wealth reaches incredible levels, which are not easy to understand. In conjunction with that perception of society, she goes back to her past, to her father and her grandfather, and reconstructs the history of the territory, once the land for indigenous communities:

Mis tíos y mi papá sacaron unas ollas de esas de barro como las que hacen en Ráquira. Y tenía una tapa, como una taza. Y la que tenía la tapa tenía todas esas figuras. Tenía soles, tenía triángulos, tenía todas esas cosas. Varias veces han intentado escarbar para ver si encuentran algo más. Sacar entierros. Han encontrado esas hachas en piedra. También como esos collares. Pero mi papá le pasó eso a un ingeniero. Y pues él se llevó eso y no volvió. (Mariana, Narrative 2018)

[My uncles and my father discovered some clay pottery like the ones from Ráquira. It had a cover, like a pot. The one that had that cover had some images. It had sun shapes, triangles, it had all of that stuff. Several times they have tried to dig to see if they find something else. To pull out some entombments. They have found stone axes. Necklaces as well. But my father gave that to an engineer. He took those things away and never came back.]

Her relatives, serving as empirical archeologists, discovered ancestral pottery of indigenous communities inhabiting the territory they live in. Mariana reconstructs her remote history connecting first to the experience of her father; then, the remaining testimonies of the indigenous communities that populated the place, which is now the stage for the exploitation of emeralds. Mariana connects her history through her grandmother:

Mi abuela es toda chiquita, toda negrita y arrugada y los hermanos son así como ella. Ella es de las que camina, camina y camina. Ella camina descalza. Por todos los potreros. Como si nada, a la hora que sea. Los hermanos eran igual. Entonces yo digo que ellos tienen como algo de indígenas. (Mariana, Narrative 2018)

[My grandmother is tiny, all black and wrinkled and her brothers are just like her. She is one of the people who walk, walk, and walk. She walks barefoot. Across all the fields. Like nothing, at any time. Her brothers were the same. Then, I say they have something indigenous.]

Mariana reconstructs her sociohistorical subjectivity by reconstructing the social, political, and economic forces enacted in her town. Politics and economy work in the same line to decide on future configurations and maintain the same system that has historically dominated societies:

Pero siguen quedando los otros. Terrible. Por lo menos en Farfacá, la gente es muy uribista. Para el cierre de campaña llevaron a Peter Manjarrés. Cuando abrieron campaña fue Duque y Uribe. Fueron los dos. Papá Uribe. Sea quien sea, no pueden ganar. Ellos tienen muchísimo poder. Por Duque iba el primo de mi papá y por lo menos este señor, tiene muchísima plata y así sea hasta para el Consejo puede ser... Se mueve bastante plata. (Mariana, Narrative 2018)

[But the ones elected are the others. Terrible. For instance, in Farfacá, people are very Uribista. To close the campaign, they brought Peter Manjarrés. When they started the campaign, Duque and Uribe went there. They both went. Father Uribe. Whoever it is, they cannot win. They have a lot of power. My father's cousin was supporting Duque. My father's cousin has a lot of money, it can even be for the council... a lot of money is transacted.]

The narratives by Diana, Mariana, and Lucy revealed their reconstruction as socio-historical subjects. Human beings with a past and in contact with the people who have been around, as agents of time and memory. In the coming section, I state the final remarks and the conclusions that emerged from the research process.

Conclusions

Bearing in mind that the reasoning process was an initial spark that maintained and transformed the three narrators, diversity took place as well. Diversity appeared embodied in the narratives of Mariana, Diana, and Lucy. The narratives, represented in storied ways of knowing and performing (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997), revealed how they reconstructed themselves as sociohistorical subjects, in contact with their past and their family, and transgressing past, present, and future. Meaningful and memorable personal experiences can also be part of English language lessons and planning. Interest in society, culture, and history told from the South is a window for research within the English Language Teaching (ELT) community.

The narrative thread established in the three narrators' anecdotes and metaphors was the sense of belonging to a home, the union to people, and connection to a place, time, and particular social groups. Time transforms as well, depending on the conditions set by society and the people closest to one's life. Future research can explore the complex forces taking place in society and the construction of historical narratives that have affected the way people perceive the world. The narrators in this study are in and with the world, revealing they are sociohistorical subjects. The journey reported in this article does not finish with the last page of the document. In a long and personal way of emancipation, this is a meaningful step to continue on the same path and learn from the people who are next to me as a teacher, a learner, and a human being.

The study presented the narratives of three university female students, reconstructing their experiences, memories and building up the scenery of their history and society. The English language class became a meaningful space to explore the history of the territory and that process acquired personal relevance for the learners. Narrating constituted the path to transgress time and space and recreate the sensations and the footprint left by life experiences. Additional explorations could include how to involve personal experiences and emotional bounds to family and homeland in English language teaching and learning.

These life stories are the narration of common individuals immersed in a complex world of politics, history, economy, religion, and culture. The three narrators owned their history and made evident that every single decision-making process involves a dialogue with the world. Assuming and portraying a perspective is an adding process to a myriad of factors grouped into colorful narrative threads: history and society.

Locating in time, enacting the past into the present, and constructing a model of society is an initial step for the sociohistorical subject to walk the path of emancipation. This research effort started with a particular perspective held by the researcher; however, the ever-changing process of research transformed the researcher. Thanks to a polyphonic choir, I, as a learner and researcher, approached and explored how we, as individuals, are all united and interwoven by the territory where we live in and the ancestors whose life deserves to be told.

The three narrators gave evidence of how personal narratives relate to historical events and social constructions. This study presented specific aspects intervening in their reconstruction as sociohistorical subjects. This was a personal and partial exploration that would vary if there were different participants. Future studies can explore how institutional and structural narratives, such as gender narratives, are related to the narratives of members of a particular social group. The main limitation of this study is that it constitutes a personal and individual exploration of a broad topic that involves a great number of aspects. To conclude, I would like to thank the reader for being a part

of this journey, although a first step, we are now moving into different territories with new perceptions.

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