

“From novice to experienced”: identity narratives of teachers and the role of schools as communities of practice in teacher education for bilingual/multilingual contexts

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Abstract:

This article aims to analyze the identity construction of teachers working in bilingual schools. It seeks to reflect on the role of schools in the teacher education process in bilingual-multilingual contexts, highlighting the importance of collaborative practices between schools and universities. The theoretical framework is based on the sociocultural perspective of teacher education (Johnson, 2006; Vygotsky, 1984) and the theory of communities of practice (Lave; Wenger, 1991), as well as the post-structuralist conception of identity (Gee, 2001). The methodology adopted is qualitative-interpretivist, based on narrative research and aligned with the socio-historical perspective, using the Theory of Appraisal (Martin; White, 2005) to analyze narratives of teachers engaged in a bilingual education training course. The results indicate that the teachers' narratives highlight an identity transformation as they

participate in bilingual schools, with an emphasis on the transition from novices to experienced teachers. The analysis of the narratives reveals that affinity identities are forged through collaborative practices and the challenges faced by teachers, who perceive their journey as a continuous and meaningful learning process. We conclude that schools play a central role in teacher education in bilingual contexts, as they allow for the construction of professional identities, essential for both initial and ongoing bilingual teacher education, and suggest that universities should expand their participation in this collaborative process.

Key-words: Teacher education; bilingual education; communities of practice.

Resumo:

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a construção identitária de professores atuantes em escolas bilíngues. Busca também refletir sobre o papel das escolas no processo formativo de professores em contextos bi/multilíngues, destacando a importância das práticas colaborativas entre escolas e universidades. O referencial teórico é baseado na perspectiva sociocultural de formação de professores (Johnson, 2006; Vygotsky, 1984) e na teoria das comunidades de prática (Lave; Wenger, 1991), além da concepção pós-estruturalista de identidade (Gee, 2001). A metodologia adotada é qualitativa-interpretativa, com base na pesquisa narrativa e alinhada à perspectiva sócio-histórica, utilizando a Teoria da Avaliatividade (Martin; White, 2005) para analisar as narrativas de docentes engajados em um curso de formação em Educação Bilíngue. Os resultados indicam que as narrativas dos professores evidenciam uma transformação identitária ao participarem das escolas bilíngues, com destaque para o processo de transição de novatos para docentes experientes. A análise das narrativas revela que as identidades de afinidade são forjadas nas práticas colaborativas e nos desafios vivenciados pelos professores, que percebem sua jornada como um processo de aprendizagem contínua e significativa. Concluímos que as escolas têm papel central na formação docente em contextos bilíngues, pois possibilitam a construção de identidades profissionais, essenciais para a formação inicial e continuada de professores bilíngues, e sugerimos que as universidades devem ampliar sua participação nesse processo colaborativo.

Palavras-chave: Formação de professores; educação bilíngue; comunidade de prática.

Signum: Estudos da Linguagem, Londrina, v.28, i.1, p.118-135, april. 2025

Received on: 09/03/2025

Accepted on: 16/08/2025

“From novice to experienced”: identity narratives of teachers and the role of schools as communities of practice in teacher education for bilingual/multilingual contexts¹

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INTRODUCTION

Bilingual education in Basic Education, particularly in Early Childhood Education and the early years of Elementary School, has been predominantly carried out by the private sector, and only recently has its implementation begun in public schools (El Kadri; Passoni; Megale, 2024). Despite this progress, research focused on teacher education for this context remains incipient, as such training has thus far been largely the responsibility of bilingual institutions themselves—whether schools or institutes—relying on teachers’ practical experience, individually pursued continuing education, or professional development programs offered by the institutions’ networks (El Kadri, 2023; El Kadri; Saviolli; Moura, 2022).

University involvement in this process has been rare or non-existent, with few exceptions in the form of isolated university extension initiatives, which are now beginning to emerge in response to the approval of the National Curriculum Guidelines for Plurilingual Education (Opinion 02/2020), as recent studies indicate (El Kadri, 2023, 2024). This gap in teacher education has been repeatedly highlighted by various studies over the years (El Kadri, 2023, 2024; Faria; Sabota, 2019; Megale, 2020; Moura, 2009; Pretrini Junior *et al.*, 2022; Salgado, 2009), underscoring the urgency of rethinking teacher education programs and their curricula to address the specificities of teaching in bilingual contexts.

Indeed, research in the field has pointed to (1) the difficulties and challenges experienced by teachers, and (2) training initiatives carried out within schools. Such studies highlight the potential and the pivotal role that bilingual schools have played in preparing teachers for this context. In the absence—until recently—of specific teacher education programs focused on bilingual pedagogy, several studies have pointed to continuing education initiatives developed within schools to create critical and collaborative spaces that directly impact local realities (Bersan, 2020; Caldas, 2022; Clemesha, 2019; Dutra, 2015; Meaney, 2009; Santana, 2025; Santos, 2021; Wolffowitz-Sánchez, 2009). Within our research group, we have been committed to rethinking teacher education by involving universities, whether through continuing education programs (Saviolli; El Kadri, 2023), collaborative initiatives with in-service teachers (El Kadri, 2024; El Kadri; Santana; Megale, 2026; Santana, 2025), or through the reconfiguration of undergraduate teacher education programs (Rombaldi, 2024).

In this article, however, we focus specifically on the role of schools in this teacher education process, to direct our attention toward collaborative practices between universities and schools, while emphasizing the central role that school institutions play in teacher development.

¹ Reviewed by: Isabela Kroth Pertusatti.

Guided by the sociocultural perspective on teacher education (Johnson, 2009), our objective is to use teachers' identity narratives to demonstrate and reflect upon the role of the school in shaping teacher identity in bi/multilingual contexts. These narratives reveal processes of identity transformation through participation in a school-based community of practice—namely, bilingual schools.

To this end, we draw on the sociocultural perspective (Johnson, 2006; Vygotsky, 1984), emphasizing the concept of learning through the framework of communities of practice (Lave; Wenger, 1991), and the post-structuralist perspective on identity (Gee, 2001), to analyze narratives of teachers engaged in the extension course “Teacher Education in Bilingual Education” (El Kadri, 2024). The research adopts a qualitative-interpretative approach (Cohen; Manion; Morrison, 2000; Lüdke; André, 1986) within a socio-historical perspective (Freitas, 2002), aligned with narrative inquiry (Connelly; Clandinin, 2006; Paiva, 2008). The analyses are guided by the framework of Appraisal Theory (Martin; White, 2005). The data presented here constitute an expanded excerpt from the doctoral dissertation of El Kadri (2024).

Accordingly, we begin by discussing teacher education from a sociocultural perspective, focusing on identity transformation within communities of practice. We then present the study's methodology and data analysis, concluding by discussing the implications of acknowledging the school's role in the professional development of teachers in bilingual/multilingual contexts.

TEACHER EDUCATION FROM SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has had a profound impact on research in applied linguistics, particularly in the areas of language teaching and learning (Ferreira, 2010). Grounded in historical-dialectical materialism, Vygotsky (1984) formulated his psychological theories to investigate developmental processes, seeking to understand them as embedded within dynamic socio-historical and cultural contexts.

In critiquing behaviorist approaches, Vygotsky (1984) problematized learning processes based on stimulus-response mechanisms and instead conceptualized the role of mediating tools—such as language, culture, and social interaction—in the formation of subjects. He introduced the concept of instruction through the metaphor of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which he defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 57).

Thus, sociocultural theory seeks to understand developmental processes by considering the social practices in which individuals collectively participate, and how these practices are internalized and appropriated by them. In this view, learning is not “a direct appropriation of knowledge and skills from the world to the individual, but a progressive process in which both the individual and the activity are transformed” (Johnson, 2006, p. 237–238).

Furthermore, researchers within the cultural-historical tradition conceive of learning through an epistemological lens that establishes a relationship between learning and the transformation of professional identities (El Kadri, 2018). Pimenta (1997) asserts that professional identities are constructed based on the social meanings attributed to the profession and the appropriation of established practices, as well as through the creation of new ones. This process encompasses a wide range of experiences, beliefs, values, and knowledge, ultimately giving meaning to one's teaching practice.

The formation of professional identities is an ongoing process involving the “interpretation

and reinterpretation of experiences" (Kerby, 1992, as cited in Beijaard; Meijer; Verloop, 2004, p. 121). This implies a dialogical relationship between "subject(s) and context" and may involve "knowledge and attitudes that are prescribed" (Beijaard; Meijer; Verloop, 2004, p. 122), as well as the emergence of "sub-identities" shaped by different contexts and relationships.

Golombek and Klager (2015) report that when reflecting on their teaching experiences through narratives, teachers "play" with various aspects that comprise their profession, such as theory and their practical experience as educators, which enables them to transform their identity and practices. Furthermore, the authors highlight experience as a fundamental component of this identity change, as it allows teachers to draw upon it to navigate the contradictions inherent in their practice. They emphasize the necessity of a community of practice that intellectually and emotionally supports teachers, thereby mitigating identity conflicts among these professionals.

In this context, Liu and Xu (2011) note that the ongoing transition between identities is often conflictive, especially given the divergence between the teacher's current identity and the desired one, which can lead to teacher apathy and, consequently, their exclusion from the community of practice.

For the present study, we aim to understand teacher learning within communities of practice where acculturation occurs through immersion in new contexts, and how the local culture, more experienced peers, and the appropriation of tools transform teachers' identities in bilingual education settings—along with the feelings, values, and beliefs mobilized during and about these experiences.

The conceptualization of Communities of Practice (CoP) assists us in this matter by advocating the view that learning is a situated and collaborative practice, as well as a space for transformation and knowledge exchange. In this sense, learning assumes an integral character that is inseparable from social practice (Lave; Wenger, 1991). According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015), communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do better through regular interaction. Therefore, a CoP cannot be defined simply as a team or just a group of people, nor as a learning technique or pedagogical strategy. A CoP is a way of understanding learning—how participants learn through situated and collaborative practices (Lave; Wenger, 1991).

Building on the concept of the Zone of Development, Lave and Wenger (1991) understand this as a space of social transformation, where the gap between individual everyday actions and social activity (that is, situated and interactive with peers) can be collectively mediated and transformed to solve dilemmas and contradictions (Engeström, 1987, as cited in Lave; Wenger, 1991). Thus, Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight this transformation process as going beyond mere internalization, recognizing the problematic and conflictive nature of social practices. In a CoP, participants engage in negotiations, exchanges, and collaborative learning. These participants, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), include novice learners positioned at the periphery and more experienced peers located at the core of the community. According to the authors, CoP.

"concerns the process by which novices become part of a community of practice. A person's learning intentions are engaged, and the meaning of learning is shaped through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice" (Lave; Wenger, 1991, p. 29).

The intentions and motivations of participants regarding learning—both novices and experienced members—are the bond that ensures the creation and maintenance of a Community of Practice (CoP). Thus, learning is both the purpose and the outcome of the collaborative work within a CoP. However, mere membership in a CoP does not guarantee learning. According to Wenger (1998), mutual engagement among participants is necessary to create and share knowledge about the shared concerns of that CoP.

Imbernón, Shigunov Neto e Silva (2020), drawing on Wenger (1998) and Silva (2004),

describe the “tripod of communities of practice,” which consists of: I) knowledge—referring to the sharing of knowledge about a specific topic that engages participants and enables the creation of a CoP; II) community/members—the individuals who form a bond around this knowledge; and III) practice—in which members share experiences and knowledge about a common area. The active engagement of all community members around objects of knowledge renders participation legitimate. Consequently, the novices’ sense of belonging is gradually constructed as they collaboratively engage in activities with more experienced peers.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 111), “moving toward full participation in practice involves not only a greater time commitment [...], but more significantly, a growing sense of identity as a full participant.” Furthermore, the authors assert that changes in participants’ cultural identity are an inevitable part of becoming a full participant in a CoP. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 53) explain the process of identity transformation within communities of practice. The authors conceive learning holistically—not merely related to the development of new skills but also concerning social communities. From this perspective, identity transformation occurs as one becomes “a full participant, a member, a new kind of person.” Moreover, they consider this relationship symbiotic—people are defined by these relations but also define them.

In the context of teacher education, CoPs assume a prominent role, since both initial and continuing training are enriched by the mutual learning enabled through engagement between novice and experienced teachers. Regarding CoPs in this context, Imbernón, Shigunov Neto e Silva (2020, p. 170) emphasize that a CoP

“functions as a group of teachers who exchange, reflect, and learn from one another by using narratives about their practices as raw material. Thus, we consider that CoPs can contribute to the creation and sharing of teacher knowledge, especially because part of this knowledge is constructed through practice, constituting tacit knowledge that is not formalized.”

Silva and Oliveira (2018, p. 492), drawing on Wenger (1998), argue that “identity is seen as a way of talking about who we are, who we are not, or how we change throughout the transformations we experience and negotiate within communities of practice.” This does not imply denying individuality but rather recognizing that we are a reflection of our participation in the CoP to which we belong (Wenger, 1998).

Thus, within the sociocultural perspective (Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1984) and the concept of communities of practice (Lave; Wenger, 1991), we conceive school settings as inherently formative spaces, given that teachers are inserted into contexts where they interact with peers and negotiate their professional identities. Accordingly, this study seeks to demonstrate the role of educational institutions, through teachers’ narratives, in the identity construction of “bilingual teachers.”

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this research is qualitative, grounded in the interpretivist tradition, specifically narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly; Clandinin, 2006), with a socio-historical orientation. The focus on narratives aligns with the socio-historical perspective as a context for learning and knowledge production. Thus, narrative inquiry coheres with and dialogues with this orientation, as narrative investigation was chosen due to its focus on studying experience as understood narratively (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly; Clandinin, 2006).

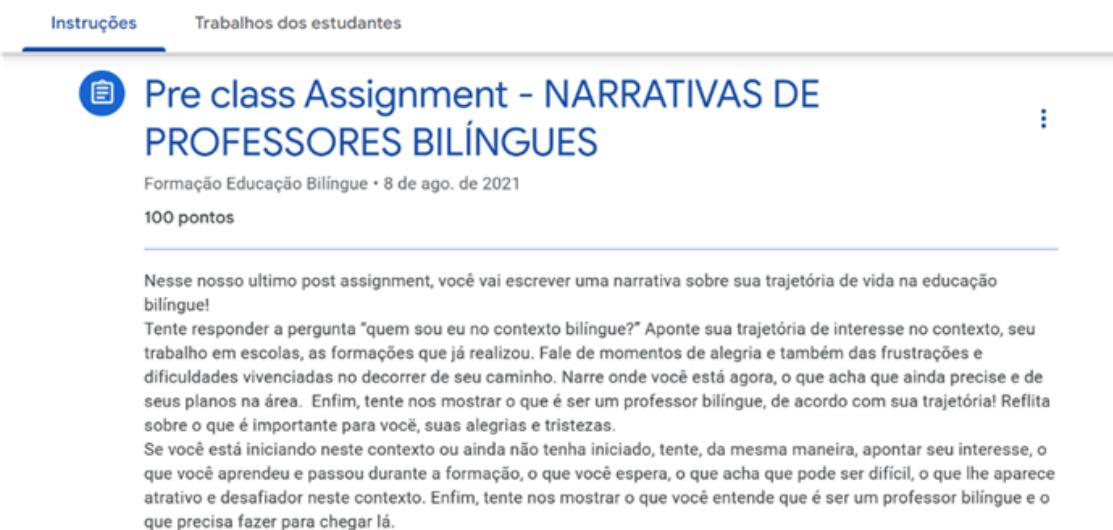
Narrative inquiry is a theoretical-methodological orientation under which a fertile

investigative approach has been developed in the field of education (Oliveira; Silva-Forsberg, 2020). Oliveira and Silva-Forsberg (2020, p. 6) point out that “this is a contemporary trend which, over the past thirty years, has developed its own theorization and epistemological status, establishing itself as an autonomous scientific method recognized within the academic community.”

According to Connally and Clandinin (2006), pioneers of narrative inquiry, people shape their daily lives through stories about who they and others are and how they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Narrative research seeks to understand “the meanings ascribed to experience” (Oliveira; Silva-Forsberg, 2020, p. 6). Clandinin and Connally (2000, p. 20) define narrative inquiry as “a way of understanding experience” through a collaborative process between researcher and participant. Narrative inquiry—the study of experience as story—is therefore, above all, a way of thinking about experience. As a methodology, narrative inquiry implies a particular view of the phenomenon; that is, it adopts a specific perspective on experience as the phenomenon under study (Connally; Clandinin, 2006, p. 479).

Data collection in this research was conducted through narratives of teachers working in bilingual contexts who participated in the extension course “Training in Bilingual Education” (El Kadri; Saviolli; Molinari, 2022), which consisted of 120 hours and was delivered and made available via Google Classroom. This dataset constitutes an excerpt from the doctoral thesis of the second author of this article (El Kadri, 2024). The training included synchronous activities (via Zoom platform) and asynchronous activities (via Google Classroom). Sessions were held every Thursday from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., starting on February 25, 2021, and ending on August 12 of the same year. The data collection instrument for this research was one of the post-class assignments in narrative format from the aforementioned course, with the following instruction:

Figure 1 – Post-class assignment activity (El Kadri, 2024).



The screenshot shows a Google Classroom assignment titled "Pre class Assignment - NARRATIVAS DE PROFESSORES BILÍNGUES". The assignment is part of a course titled "Formação Educação Bilingue" and was created on "8 de ago. de 2021". It is worth "100 pontos". The instructions ask participants to write a narrative about their life trajectory in bilingual education, mentioning their interests, experiences, and challenges. It also encourages them to reflect on what is important to them, their joys, and their sorrows. The assignment is due on "8 de ago. de 2021".

The research participants are teachers who work or aspire to work in bilingual education, undergraduate students from various fields, and a diverse group of interested individuals who enrolled in the extension course offered through the Fundação de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento da UEL (FAUEL). At the first synchronous meeting of the course, held on February 25, 2021, via Google Forms, we presented the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), which outlined the objectives of the course and the use of data for research purposes. Of the 85 students enrolled in the course, 65 participants signed the consent form agreeing to the use of their data in this research, and they constitute the participants of this study, whose profile is described below:

The participants are teachers, coordinators, and managers from schools and institutions across the country who completed the training in question. More specifically, the participants come from 14 Brazilian states, with the highest representation from Paraná (45.72%), São Paulo (31.3%), Pernambuco (5.4%), Rio Grande do Sul (4.2%), Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro (3.6% each). The states of Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Amazonas, Piauí, Santa Catarina, Minas Gerais, Pará, Minas Gerais, and Goiás together total 6.18%.

The data analysis was conducted based on the assumptions of narrative research (Connelly; Clandinin, 2006), adopting an emic and inductive perspective with a socio-historical orientation (Freitas, 2002). The analytical treatment of the narratives was carried out according to the principles of Textual Discourse Analysis (Análise Textual Discursiva – ATD). Oliveira and Silva-Forsberg (2020), in their review of studies on narrative research, point out that the use of paradigmatic analysis has been the predominant approach in conducting qualitative narrative research. According to these authors, this occurs because the data obtained are analyzed through the search for patterns and similarities to group and categorize them, which is typically associated with analysis modes via ATD. The ATD analytical procedure consists of unitization, categorization, and self-organization or the elaboration of metatexts (Moraes; Galiazzi, 2006, 2011). In ATD, analysis should be developed through a spiral process, with these three distinct stages occurring at different moments to pursue a richer analysis. The categories were then grouped according to the identity aspects of teacher professionalization outlined for this study: 1) training, 2) trajectory, 3) relationship with language, 4) teaching practice, and 5) self-attributed identities. In this article, we specifically address one of these categories concerning teacher in bi/multilingual contexts: the transition from novice to experienced teacher.

To support our analyses in this phase of detailed examination, following data description, we rely on Appraisal Theory (Martin; White, 2005) as a theoretical-analytical framework that enables a detailed marking, through language, of the valuation of teachers' representations. This theory encompasses evaluation and provides linguistic resources for analyzing how subjects, based on a range of options within the linguistic system, position themselves in discourse when expressing opinions, feelings, and making comments about their perceptions of the world (Martin; White, 2005). The analytical proposal of Appraisal Theory is important in this study because it allowed us to examine teachers' evaluations in a detailed and in-depth manner, a key aspect for Textual Discourse Analysis (ATD), thus directly contributing to the interpretation of identities. Oliveira, Cavalcanti, and Silva (2015) highlight that Appraisal Theory plays a significant theoretical-methodological role in the analysis of textual production practices, both oral and written, since it accounts for the relationships among language users in communicative events involving opinion or negotiation by proposing systems and subsystems of linguistic analysis. Language users have at their disposal in the linguistic system lexical-grammatical and semantic-discursive resources that allow them not only to make evaluations but also to express them in varying degrees of intensity, according to their worldviews (beliefs, values) and communicative intentions (Martin; White, 2005).

Vian Jr. (2009, p. 107) discusses the appraisal system in the Portuguese language. The author conceives it as "the relationship between language and context and the possibilities of evaluations that can be made by users in the contexts in which they interact." Thus, the appraisal system consists of linguistic categories employed by the user in relation to what they express. The author explains the categories of **attitude, engagement², and graduation**. In terms of attitude, the categories of **affect, judgment, and appreciation** allow text producers to express emotions, make character evaluations, and attribute value to people or objects. Engagement, in turn, refers to the level of involvement of the text producer with the interlocutors and the content being evaluated, influencing how the evaluation is communicated. Graduation allows variation in the intensity of

² In specialized literature, the term is translated as engagement or commitment.

the evaluation, enabling authors to amplify or reduce the degree of expressed evaluation.

Here, **bold** is used to highlight the semiotic resources that evidence appraisal. *Italics* are employed when the analysis requires drawing attention to a specific aspect beyond appraisal. Subsequently, we categorize the three subsystems that comprise the approach, namely: attitude, engagement, and graduation, using different colors in the excerpts from the narratives. The attitude subsystem is marked with three colors representing the three semantic regions corresponding respectively to affect, judgment, and appreciation. Thus, (*Attitude – appreciation*) is marked in **red**, (*Attitude – judgment*) is highlighted in **green**, and (*Attitude – affect*) is emphasized in **blue**. Engagement is marked in **purple**, and graduation in **orange**. Next, we interpret the results in light of the concept of community of practice and teacher identities.

“FROM APPRENTICE TO TEACHER”: NARRATIVES OF TEACHERS’ IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION

The teachers’ narratives are also strongly marked by a discourse of learning and identity transformation enabled by schools. In the majority of the narratives, there is a clear path that highlights the beginning of the profession in a learner’s position, often as an intern or assistant teacher, followed by career progression advancing to the role of lead teacher.

From this perspective, all the excerpts below emphasize and demonstrate this trajectory, which begins in one position and advances to another, often accompanied by the completion of a Pedagogy degree during this period.

My **best experience** (*Attitude – appreciation*) was at xxxx³, where I worked as an intern for one year. There, I **learned** (*Attitude – appreciation*) a **great deal** (*gradation*) about the elitism involved in accessing this type of education, about how democratic administration makes a difference in educational practice, and also about a democratic management system based on council elections. All of this **contributed to shaping in me an identity as a bilingual teacher** (*Attitude – appreciation*), which becomes increasingly clear as I currently work at another school. (Isabela)⁴

I began at the school where I currently work five years ago as an intern in the “SMART” program. I am now graduated in Pedagogy and work as a primary school teacher (1st and 2nd grades) in this bilingual program. (Juliana).

I started as a Teacher Assistant, and during the first months, I felt **very** (*gradation*) **anxious** (*Attitude – affect*), as if I couldn’t express myself well in English. I constantly perceived a **judgmental gaze** (*Attitude – affect*) regarding my pronunciation and vocabulary from my colleagues. I worked hard and practiced the language extensively, being promoted to lead teacher, or Head Teacher, within one year. Using play-based learning, with a methodology similar to Montessori and full immersion in English, I began to believe in a fun, dynamic, and natural way to teach ESL to children. (Barbara).

My journey began very **unpretentiously** (*Attitude – appreciation*). After losing my scholarship in engineering, a friend asked me if I would like to work at the school where she was already employed, changing diapers, as they were in great need of someone, and that way I could help pay for my college. After a few months of working, the coordinator asked if I would like to stay longer hours and placed me in a non-regular classroom so I could learn more. Months passed, and the coordinator then decided that **I was skilled** (*Attitude – judgment*) and should have the chance to act as a monitor in a regular

³ We chose to omit the names of the educational institutions mentioned due to ethical considerations.

⁴ In the TCLE, some participants chose to keep their real names in the research, while others chose fictitious names at the researcher’s discretion.

classroom, which certainly required me to start studying pedagogy. And so it all began, **seizing opportunity after opportunity** (Attitude – appreciation), working eight hours a day and attending two colleges at the same time — a **tremendous** (gradation) **madness** (Attitude – appreciation) — which resulted in multiple enrichments, both professional and personal. (Leticia).

As a **coincidence** (I would say **providence**) (Attitude – appreciation), fifteen days after enrolling in the pedagogy course, an opportunity arose to work as an assistant at a reference bilingual school. Thus began my journey in bilingualism, as a **chance occurrence** (Attitude – appreciation). I **fell in love** (Attitude – affect) with the school's Canadian methodology and with the fact that the children were able to communicate so well in a second language that was previously unknown to them. And so I continue, to this day, in this highly valued segment of education. (Lívia).

After a few years in this project, I felt it was time to explore other aspects of bilingual education, even though I did not yet have the necessary training, as at the time I held only a degree in Marine Biology. I joined as an assistant at an English immersion school and became certain that working in early childhood education was **my “vocation”** (Attitude – appreciation). Only then did I enroll in the pedagogy program, and soon after, I was promoted to head teacher. (Mariana).

As always, life shows us different paths, and after 10 years working with children's theater, I **realized** that I could **“handle”** (Attitude – affect) a classroom with children. In 2013, I began this wonderful process. I **learned** (Attitude – appreciation) **a lot** (gradation) from Teacher Helo, who had already been at the school for three years; and in the following year, I was promoted to Kindergarten Teacher. I **loved** (Attitude – affect) the little ones and the way they developed rapidly in the second language. (Mayara).

I changed my life, my city, my routine—everything changed—and amid so many transitions, I secured an internship position at an immersion bilingual school. Within a few weeks, I **was enchanted** (Attitude – affect) by the possibilities and **found myself humbled** (Attitude – affect) when students who had never spoken English, after just a month at the school, were already understanding everything and attempting some phrases and words. It was a **whole new world** (Attitude – appreciation) that opened up. I spent five years at that school, between intern and classroom assistant, always involved with early childhood education and continuously *enchanted* by the children's potential. In 2019, I became a teacher. It was a **significant** (gradation) **challenge** (Attitude – appreciation), as I did not have a strong background in bilingualism—I had learned a little from the school where I worked, but not the theories or the cultural discussions tied to bi/multilingualism. (Thays).

I entered bilingual education in 2010, working at an international bilingual school, in [xxx], which had just arrived in my city, [xxxx]. I worked as a general services assistant, often with the responsibility of caring for the students while using English to communicate, which **sparked my interest** (Attitude – affect). I then began a distance education degree in Pedagogy. The following year, I left that school after receiving a better salary offer and moved to a small school in a residential neighborhood, with only eight students per class, where I initially worked as a classroom assistant and, the following year, became responsible for a group as the lead teacher. I stayed at [XXX] for three years. During one of those years, I did a six-month internship at a regular school teaching early elementary grades. In 2013, [XXX] school went bankrupt, and I had to look for another internship for 2014—the year I would complete my distance Pedagogy degree. After interviewing at a few schools, I chose [XXX School]. I joined [XXX] as an intern in the bilingual program, Smart, and the following year, after finishing my Pedagogy degree, I had the opportunity to take on a preschool group (Infantil I and II), where I remain to this day—taking courses every year, researching, and always striving to update and deepen my understanding of theories and methodologies aligned with the school's philosophy, such as Reggio Emilia, constructivism, the BNCC, and bilingualism in early childhood. (Ana Carolina)

When I returned to Brazil, I began working at an elite bilingual school in my city (xxxx). I joined the school as a teaching assistant for Kindergarten (Pré II) in the morning and for Tiny Tots in the afternoon. That was when I began my journey in bilingual education. I **learned a lot** (*Attitude – appreciation*) from the teachers who taught in English, each of them being consistent with the developmental stage of their students. Since the beginning, I had the desire to become a teacher, but I worked as an assistant for two years first—time that was *very necessary* for observing, adapting, and better understanding this **new** (*Attitude – appreciation*) **context** I was entering. (Camila)

These excerpts from the narratives, in addition to highlighting the participants' trajectories—which appear to be marked by their entry into the profession within bi/multilingual contexts—also demonstrate the value placed on teachers during these learning moments. Many of them reported meaningful learning experiences throughout this process, emphasizing the importance of learning from other educators and engaging in classroom practices before being positioned as lead teachers. This issue raises important reflections regarding teacher education.

It is through participation and engagement within the school environment that identification with the bilingual teaching profession seems to be forged. In other words, schools appear to function as *communities of practice* (Lave; Wenger, 1991). According to social theories of learning, learning is understood as an identity transformation, which means that individuals learn by creating identities through new forms of knowledge and participation (Lave, 1996). From this perspective, “learning involves becoming a different person” (Lave; Wenger, 1991, p. 53), through changes in social status or position. Thus, the key feature of a community of practice is *legitimate peripheral participation*, which refers to the process through which newcomers learn the practices of a community and gradually become full participants and members of that practice—a progression that is evident in these teachers’ professional trajectories.

Indeed, according to Gee (2001), individuals become “a certain kind of person” through active participation and engagement in the social practices, roles, and contexts that shape their identity within those contexts. This implies that identities are constructed through people’s actions and interactions within specific social and cultural environments. In this regard, the narratives shared by the teachers reveal a process through which the peripheral participant (Lave; Wenger, 1991) becomes a full member (Lave; Wenger, 1991) of the community.

The excerpts presented here illustrate how teachers evaluate their own professional trajectories. The following table outlines the subsystems of *Attitude* in relation to the trajectory from intern to lead teacher:

Table 13 - Attitude subsystems related to the trajectory from intern to head teacher

Teacher	(<i>Attitude – appreciation</i>)	(<i>Attitude – judgment</i>)	(<i>Attitude – affect</i>)
Isabela	melhor experiência (<i>Attitude – apreciação</i>); aprendi (<i>Attitude - apreciação</i>) muito (<i>gradação</i>); agregou em mim uma identidade de professora bilíngue (<i>Attitude - apreciação</i>).	—	—
Juliana	—	—	—
Barbara	—	—	very (<i>Graduation</i>) anxious (<i>Attitude – affect</i>); felt (<i>Attitude – affect</i>) a judgmental gaze .

Letícia	unassuming (Attitude – appreciation); gaining one opportunity after another (Attitude – appreciation).	I am skilled (Attitude – judgment).	—
Lívia	Like a coincidence (I'd say providence) (Attitude – appreciation); chance (Attitude – appreciation).	—	I fell in love (Attitude – affect).
Mariana	My “vocation” (Attitude – appreciation).	—	—
Mayara	I learned (Attitude – appreciation) a lot (gradation).	—	I realized I could “handle it” (Attitude – affect); I loved (Attitude – affect).
Thays	New world (Attitude – appreciation); Great (gradation) challenge (Attitude – appreciation).	—	I was enchanted (Attitude – affect); I hit rock bottom (Attitude – affect).
Ana Carolina	—	—	Awakened my interest (Attitude – affect).
Camila	Learned a lot (Attitude – appreciation); New context (Attitude – appreciation).	—	—

Source: El Kadri, (2024).

It is noted that the evaluative stance expressed by the teachers in their narratives regarding their experienced trajectories is strongly constructed through the subsystems of *attitude – appreciation* and *attitude – affect*. The appreciation subsystem is responsible for "our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior, and evaluation of things" (Martin; White, 2005, p. 35), that is, it pertains to feelings and judgments that the individual makes about the world around them (Martin; White, 2005).

In this context, the appreciation attitudes exhibited by the teachers are predominantly positive. The teachers evaluate their professional trajectory as the experience of a *new world*, a *new context*, a *best experience*, as well as opportunities to "learn a lot (twice)" (Mayara, Camila) and to develop an identity as a bilingual teacher (Isabela). For some, the trajectory is even characterized as a *vocation* (Mariana) and *providence* (Lívia), also highlighting the possibility of gaining "one opportunity after another" (Letícia). The trajectory is further valued as being unpretentious and marked by *chance*, as previously discussed in earlier sections.

The narratives concerning the trajectory from intern to lead teacher are also evaluated by the teachers through the attitude subsystem—affect. As established, affect "concerns the positive and negative register of feelings: do we feel happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored?" (Martin; White, 2005, p. 42). Affects are significant because it is through emotional disclosures that a reaction of adherence or rejection toward identities is proposed, thereby exponentially presenting acceptance, rejection, or devaluation of something.

In the excerpts presented, the emotions related to the teachers' trajectories are linguistically expressed in the discourse. They evaluate this trajectory with emotions from the insecurity group (very anxious, felt judgmental looks) and from the happiness group (*I fell in love*, *I realized I could “manage,” I loved it, I was enchanted, I hit rock bottom, and it sparked my interest*). These evaluations, through affect, are significant because this subsystem is present in utterances where the evaluations are directed and directly impact the evaluator; that is, the evaluations are explicitly

subjective (Silva, 2015).

The subsystems of appreciation and affect in the teachers' evaluations demonstrate the acceptance and recognition of this identity forged within school communities, characterizing what Gee (2001) calls affinity identities, one of the four perspectives on what it means to be recognized as a "certain kind of person" (Gee, 2001). Affinity identity is characterized by a set of distinctive practices that are neither institutional in nature nor dependent on the discourse and dialogue of others, but rather created through an "affinity group." This means that the source of power for forging this identity is participation in or sharing within a community of practice that enables one to become a full member (movement from intern to lead teacher). This is because the focus of this type of identity lies in the distinctive social practices that create and sustain group affiliations, which share loyalty, access, participation, modes of acting, and interacting in specific practices that provide each group member with the necessary experiences. Thus, this process is shared among members, involves the recognition of the community and its power, and therefore resides in participation and engagement in social practices. Only in this way can affinity identities—which need to be both attributed and accepted—manifest themselves.

Indeed, identities are processes of social recognition by a given community (Woodward, 2011), and the transition from novice to experienced teacher marks this recognition. Thus, while on one hand there is the process of accepting and/or rejecting identities and personal investment in certain identities, on the other hand, these identities can be constrained or enabled by institutions. This transition from novice to experienced also expresses institutional identity (Gee, 2001), which is attributed and recognized as something earned by the individual but acknowledged through institutional authorization, demonstrating that the person "has/is/knows" what is necessary for that context and thereby "authorities grant the position of education teacher and authorize the person in terms of having the rights and responsibilities that accompany that position" (Gee, 2001, p. 102).

This conception is important for teacher education because:

Becoming a teacher means developing a professional identity. (...) It is shaped in social practices, in interaction with people, and through language. It is then through this interaction that people become aware of who they are in the self-representation game and, thus, construct their social identity (Rajagopalan, 1998). (...) From a socio-cultural-historical perspective, identities are constructed and revealed in teachers' trajectories (El Kadri, 2014, p. 97, our translation; Lave, 1996).

Moreover, this learning within the work context is an intrinsic part of these teachers' identities. It has the potential to contribute to teacher education curricula regarding the importance of linking participation in teaching contexts from the beginning of undergraduate studies to the theoretical-practical issues discussed in teacher training programs. This discussion aligns with the points made by Pretini Jr *et al.* (2022) concerning the importance of mandatory internship spaces in the initial training of these teachers, as they provide opportunities for lived experiences and experimentation. It also corresponds with the concept of activity identity (Golombok; Clacker, 2015), which understands experience as a fundamental component of identity construction.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we aimed to analyze the identity construction of teachers working in bilingual schools during their processes of transformation from novice to experienced teachers. Furthermore, we focused on the role of schools in this process of formation and identity transformation, seeking to highlight collaborative practices between universities and schools and to underscore the central role of educational institutions in the professional development of teachers. Through teachers' identity narratives, we

demonstrated how schools have enabled experiences and practices that foster identity transformation and consequent professional identification. Our analyses reveal the journey from novice to experienced teacher, strongly marked by a discourse of learning and identity transformation made possible by schools, characterized by the beginning of the profession in a learner's position. These narratives demonstrate the acceptance and recognition of this identity forged within school communities, characterized as affinity identities (Gee, 2001) that allow for self-identification with the profession.

This recognition of the role of schools, although widely evidenced by sociocultural research on teacher learning, remains underexplored in the context of bilingual schools. Such recognition has the potential to contribute to the construction of alternative discourses regarding the role of schools in collaboration with teaching initiatives aimed at the initial and continuing education of bilingual teachers. Considering that teachers, in their narratives, highlight the process of identity transformation through participation in school communities of practice, it is also incumbent upon us, as university professors and researchers, to increasingly align the experiences and practices provided by schools and to collaborate with formative processes that address teachers' needs. This should occur through the interpretation and re-signification of theories and practices, in light of the theoretical-practical knowledge co-constructed with teachers (El Kadri; Santana; Megale, 2025; Santana, 2025). In sum, we advocate that teacher education in bilingual contexts be guided by theoretical lenses that enable the re-signification of concepts, ideologies, and practices, dialoguing with lived experiences and fostering the dialogicity afforded by communities and practices, always theoretically informed.

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