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Learner Identity

a sociocultural approach to how people recognize and construct themselves as learners

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To my mother

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1. **Exploring learner identity**

The present work is an exploration of learner identity. The aim is to establish learner identity as a particular functional identity type that deserves specific attention in educational contexts. Furthermore, the intention is to offer an analytical model for its constitution, construction[1] and analysis. The basic questions that are being addressed are what it is, how it is constructed and why and when. Following these general aims and intentions the objectives of the work are:

1) To explore and elaborate on a theoretical formulation and model for learner identity construction, based on relevant research and theories on identity and learning, and

2) To empirically explore the potentials of the theoretical formulation of a model for learner identity construction and identify the needs for adjustments and further development of the theoretical conceptualization.

The interest for learner identity originates from an interest in the individuals' subjective experience of being learners. The same way people can recognize themselves as, for example, professionals or members of a particular ethnic or gender group, they should also be able to recognize themselves as learners. At present time this recognition of oneself as a learner is practically neglected or unheard-of, both among professional, policy makers and the learning individuals. While the construction of other identity types, such as gender and ethnic identity, is attended to and included in the educational agendas of many western societies, the construction of learner identity is not identified as an issue. This is probably mainly due to the fact that the concept of learner identity is still fairly unknown and conceptually underdeveloped. Yet, there are indications that this concept is needed and that it could facilitate the achievement of some of the societal future

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[1] The construction of an identity is at all times conceptualized as embedded in a social context and therefore always implying an explicit or implicit co-constructive process involving a subject and an "other", even if "co"-construction is not explicitly mentioned.

goals and challenges. For example, a communication from the Commission of the European Communities[2] dictates that lifelong learning is the key to a number of challenges, such as social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, competitiveness and employability in present and future modern societies. Hence, there are considerable expectations on the goals that can be reached with the launch and implementation of an educational system that fosters lifelong learning. Assuming that the supposition is at least in part correct, we should not underestimate the needs for change that most societies and their educational systems a re faced with, if we want to shape societies of lifelong learners. The areas of challenge that are targeted are not only delimited to public and professional spheres of life, but also to the personal. The implication of this broad vision of learning means that learning is not only confined to the schooling age and not only to formal settings such as schools and universities, but that learning should go on across the life span and occur in many different contexts (Fischer, 2000).

The suggestion is that in the envisioned society of lifelong learning people need to have a solid recognition of themselves as learners and include their learner identity in their general understanding of themselves. At present time, none of the identities types that are included in the educational and political agendas can directly support this particular goal. Therefore, it is proposed that the promotion of people's learner identity could fulfil this particular function and should be included in the societal plans and agendas for development. A society of lifelong learning requires individuals' with well-developed learner identities. Most citizens in modern societies need to manage the expectations to participate in the collective ambitions of promoting and proving the ability to engage in the pursuit of lifelong learning. The means to foster and accomplish this ambition are many and diverse. It depends on the development of the educational systems' flexibility to meet the needs of a diverse population of students at all stages of life. It is also important to improve and disseminate the use of technology-enhanced learning. Ultimately, it is essential that citizens recognize themselves as learners across

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[2] "Adult learning: It is never too late to learn". Commission of the European Communities COM (2006) 614 final. Brussels, 23.10.2006.

different contexts and phases of their lives. One important element for achieving this is to make learner identity part of the identity map and of the individuals' conceptualizations of themselves. This is, however, not an easy task. Because the concept of learner identity is still rather unexplored, the points of direct reference are scarce. As will be presented later on, although there are tentative attempts to define and explain it, none of these reach the level of concretization that could enable a theoretical and analytical treatment of its construction. This concretization is not only necessary for research purposes, but also for the sake of practical implementation in actual educational contexts with teachers and students and even between parents and their children.

For the conceptualization of learner identity the notion of *identity* has served as the starting point. As it will be presented later on, there are numerable definitions of what an identity is, and many of them have guided this exploration. Briefly, a particularly clear, concrete and useful definition is offered by Bernstein who sees identity as "… resources for constructing belonging, recognition of self and others, and context management (what I am, where, with whom and when)." (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999, p. 272)[3]. This definition is in line with the general sociocultural framework of this work, and shares similarities with a selection of other relevant definitions that are applied. It falls outside of the scope of this work to introduce the wide range of approaches to identity construction. Instead the focus will be on some socioculturally oriented theories, and among these, those that contribute to answering the research questions. According to Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez (1995) "The goal of a sociocultural approach is to explicate the relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional and historical situations in which this action occurs, on the other." (p. 11) In other words, the basic concern of a sociocultural approach to a social phenomenon is how to regard the individual in relation to and within one or a set of contexts.

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[3] The perspective on identity is Basil Bernstein's. The article referred to is an interview where Bernstein responds to Joseph Solomon's questions.

The underlying issue is how to avoid the separation of the individual and the social and to identify how one can be understood in light of and in relation to the other. More specifically the present work is concerned with the individual's experiences of becoming and being a learner, through the parallel process of being recognized by others and having a subjective sense of recognition as some kind of learner in different learning situations. As Illeris (2007) points out, this issue could be and has been approached by the use of a number of different concepts, such as 'the self', 'personality' or Bordieu's 'habitus'. However, just as for Illeris, the theoretical preference of the present work is 'identity' because it is perceived as "…the most holistic concept that expressly ranges over both the individual and the social level. … Identity is always an individual biographical identity, an experience of coherent individuality and a coherent life course, at the same time as being a social, societal identity, an experience of a certain position in the social community". (p. 138)

In the introduction to a special issue on self and identity of the Journal of Personality Disorder, psychiatrist John Livesley (2006) calls attention to the conceptual complications, observing that "Considerable confusion exists about the definition of such constructs as person, personality, self, identity, and ego and the relationships among them. Many of these terms are used interchangeably and meanings drift with usage." (p. 541) This confusion is also described in a responding article to several identity researchers by Phoenix and Rattansi (2005) where they point out that to many of them "… the concept of 'self' and 'identity' are often conflated, and, indeed, some identity researchers deliberately speak of 'self-identity' (p. 210).

The choice to approach the question of the individual's sense of recognition as a learner through the concept of learner identity is, hence, a conscious decision, and a great deal of effort has been dedicated to not contributing to this conceptual confusion. The underlying assumption is that the concept of identity is most consistent with a sociocultural approach and best serves a conceptual exploration that aims at an understanding of the individual as a learner in a dynamic interaction with the social contexts.

As abovementioned, learner identity is presently rather overshadowed by other more conceptually developed and analyzed identity types which are mainly based on social categories such as gender or ethnic belonging. As the ideas unfold it will become clear that one of the claims here is that learner identity is a necessary prerequisite for the construction of other identities since all identity construction in one way or another requires learning. However, the conceptualizations of most other identity types are considerably more elaborated and in order to know how learner identity interacts and enables other identity types we need to know more about it and have a more detailed conceptualization of its constitution, construction and function.

As will be argued later on, learner identity is understood as both a conceptual cultural tool and a phenomenological individual experience and both of these functions are highly interwoven. In fact, the claim is that learner identity, just as any identity concept, is a psychological tool in a true Vygotskian sense, in that it is a social artificial formation, or a symbolic artifact, which mediates action on a interpsychological level and enables the transformation of inner psychological processes (Kozulin, 1998; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). In the case of identity construction, these processes are viewed as those which concern the construction of meanings about oneself as someone in relation to and within a sociocultural context. More specifically, learner identity is the tool that enables the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner. This cultural tool is a necessary prerequisite for enabling the individual's organization of one or more experiences and a set of emotional and cognitive processes into a learner identity. The concept of learner identity is suggested to have the potential to transform how learning and education can be conceptualized and organized as well as change the individual's experience of participation in educational contexts.

As this particular tool is still too unknown and undeveloped it can difficultly fulfil its function as a symbolic cultural artifact, and therefore its use as well as the individuals' ability to use it is limited. In effect, these days the use of "identity" of any type as a cultural tool for the formation and transformation of

oneself as well as the surrounding context can be viewed as a basic competence for the individuals in modern societies. This idea can be inferred from Bruner's (1987a) description of Darwin's influence on Vygotsky's thoughts about how the use of man-made tools and cultural criteria, not only change human evolution but also influence the process of 'natural' selection, where those who are best able to use the tools are most favoured. Vygotsky himself states that, "By being included in the process of behaviour, the psychological tool alters the entire flow and structure of mental functions. It does this by determining the structure of a new instrumental act just as a technical tool alters the process of a natural adaptation by determining the form of labour operations." (Vygotsky, 1981, p.137 in Wertsch, 1991, pp.32-33)

Hence, if we accept that artifacts can be symbolic, and as a consequence accept that the concept of identity in general and learner identity in particular is such a symbolic artifact that serves the function of changing the flow and structure of mental functions, then, the use of this cultural tool is a competence in itself that needs to be taught and learned. The issue is fundamental for the development of modern educational systems and concerns any identity type. The point of attention of the present work is, however, learner identity in specific, although its conceptualization draws on the theoretical formulation of other identity types.

The work has been informed and influenced by input from a wide range of theories and research on the construction, nature and function of identities. The field of approaches to identity as a phenomenon is vast, diverse, often scattered and seldom very concrete. Theories support, repeat and at times contradict each other. There is a rich theoretical fountain to be reached into for responses and inspiration and the abundance of basic works, theories and empirical studies concerned with identity makes it impossible to consider all the potentially relevant influences. As the work is positioned within a sociocultural and socioconstructivist frame of reference, there is a limitation in what to reach for in this fountain. However, as the presentation of the theoretical framework will display later on, this delimitation still leaves the field too wide and broad. As a general guideline, the work's overall intention has directed the search for and

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choice of responses. More specifically, the focus has been on an exploration that can respond to the questions above with a sufficient level of concretization to lay the ground for further elaboration of the specific details. It needs to be acknowledged that it is impossible to consider all the potential approaches that a panoramic view on identity theory and research offers.

Ideally there would not only be justifications of the choices made to include an approach or an idea, but also argumentations for the choices of exclusion. Approaches which are congruent and consistent with the theoretical basis of the work and which help to answer the research questions have been easy choices. However, perspectives that might not immediately fall within the sociocultural framework, but which are neighbouring or complementary perspectives (e.g. symbolic interactionism) and support the goal of reaching a higher level of concretization and understanding of learner identity, have also been a source of influence. The process has been one of patching together and combining complementary ideas and building on them to come closer to the objective of offering a theoretical description of what learner identity is, how it is constructed in different types of contexts and how it might be possible to track and analyze its construction in the actions and trajectories of learning individuals. The work leading up to the present text has been a cumulative process, with continuous evolution, changes and reformulations. As such, what is presented here cannot be viewed as an end product that covers all aspects of learner identity. Instead the idea has been to explore the nature and the potentials of the concept in theory and practice and contribute to a shared process of theory and knowledge construction with others who are interested in this specific identity type.

1.2. **The sociocultural framework – possibilities and problems**

One problem with the sociocultural and socioconstructivist approaches to identity is that though they maintain and explain the social dimension of identity by offering a clear conceptualization of identity as situated, changing and fluid, they often fail to explain the individual dimension and how this analytical view is compatible with the fact that people often experience their identities as more or less consistent across time and contexts. It should be remembered that the origin

of the word *identity* is to be found in the Latin *idem*, which means 'the same', implying a person's experience of being the same across time and situations (Illeris, 2007). Hence, there is a discrepancy between the analytical approach to identity and the individual experiential aspect. The assumption here is that this discrepancy can and should be handled on a theoretical and analytical level, and the attempt of the present work is to propose a theoretical model that bridges this discrepancy in the conceptualization of learner identity. This is mainly done by the use and re-conceptualization of the works and theories about identity that are at hand at present.

As a concept and phenomenon 'identity' attracts considerable attention in the world of theory and investigation. This is not the least the case within the realm of educational research. A quick look in any search engine on the Internet, will give the impression that research and theory development concerned with the relation between identity and learning are flourishing. Hoffman gives a graphic description of the situation in the statement that "Identity has become the bread and butter of our educational diet." (in Sfard & Prusac, 2005, p.14) Similarly Lave and Wenger (1991) claim that "…learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: They are aspects of the same phenomenon." (p.115) A comparable view is expressed by Hodkinson, Ford, Hawthorn & Hodkinson, (2007) who claim that 'the processes and products of learning are deeply intertwined, and neither can be understood without considering the positions, dispositions, and identities of [the] learner". (p. 14) Gee (2000) suggests identity as 'an analytical lens' for research in education, whereas Sfard and Prusak (2005) propose it might be 'an analytical tool' for investigating learning.

In agreement with theses authors, this study is based on the assumption that the theoretical concept of identity provides us with a valuable analytical entry to an important aspect of the educational contexts concerned with the learning individual and her interaction with and experience of this context.

A project of exploring identity as a concept and phenomenon is at best a risky venture and at worst presumptuous. Considering the amount of approaches and

theories that address the issue it becomes evident that it is impossible to cover all the potential angles to understanding this phenomenon. Identity research seems to be an area where disciplines and approaches come together and complement each other but also where perspectives fall in each other's theoretical blind zones. They are either deliberately or involuntarily neglected or at times implicitly present but not mentioned. At times perspectives sound very similar, at others they seem complementary and at yet other times they are contradictory. This might be the result of intertextuality and friction inherent to interdisciplinary and theoretical advances. It can also be a consequence of the abundance of studies and theories about identity, with no evident consensus regarding some basic matters such as definitions, operationalizations and analytical approaches. In short, the state of this research field makes it difficult to keep track of all the activity and it is easy to miss approaches that are similar to yours. This exploration has aspired to find all available works on learner identity, but unfortunately there is no guarantee that it has succeeded in achieving this. Yet another complicating factor is that there are in fact not so many works that focus on a conceptual and operational explanation of learner identity. As the present work identifies it as a key identity, it is suggested here that there is a need for basic research about this identity type, which can establish its essential features and functions. As mentioned, the hope is that this work can make a contribution in this direction.

1.3. **Learner identity – a necessary educational tool**

The basic conviction underlying this work is that educational contexts need to pay attention to, be aware of and understand the learners' recognition of themselves and each other as learners. In other words, the aspiration is to bring attention to and give some insight in to the construction of learner identity in educational contexts.

From a sociocultural point of view learner identity is constantly constructed throughout life and through experiences of learning. These experiences occur in informal as well as formal situations. The educational systems are, hence, influential arenas for learner identity construction, and the experiences and

learning outcomes of the students are affected by the learner identity that they develop. As mentioned, presently, most western societies are more preoccupied with social identities such as gender, ethnic and religious identities. One clear example of this tendency is found on the website of Centre for Learner Identity Studies, at Edgehill University. The centre, whose work is both research and practice based, offers a model of its approach to learner identity where the focus is on the lives of the individuals and what these can tell about improving education. Their model includes six bases for learner identity construction (gender, generation, place, social class, ethnicity, spirituality or religion). The model is presented here as a clear illustration of a common approach to learner identity in the educational context.

From our point of view, this model and similar approaches are erroneous and misleading for two main reasons. They limit the perspective to identities based on social categories and neglect many other identity types such as identities based on roles, personality traits, communitarian belonging, practices, and activities. Furthermore, there seems to be a confusion of terminology. Edgehill uses the term as an umbrella term that covers all the different identities that individuals construct and carry across the lifespan. Rather than attending to learner identity the Edgehill model is in fact addressing the *learner's* multiple social *identities*.
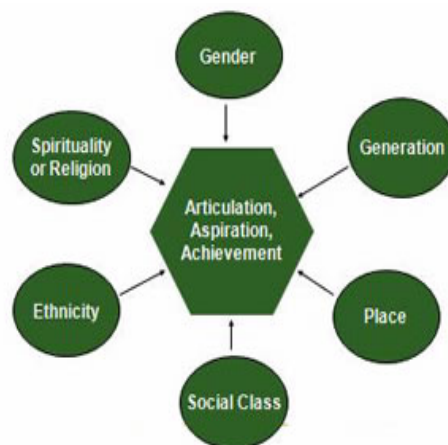
Figure extracted from http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clis/index.htm.

The present work is based on the assumption that learner identity is an identity type in its own right. It is primarily an activity-based identity, (the activity of learning) though it also can be viewed as a role identity (the role of being the learner/student/adept, etc.). As such it interacts with social category identities, and as we argue later, probably plays a decisive role in their construction, but should not be used as a head category for them.

Educational systems need to support the development of the full spectrum of the students' (or learners') identities, but some of these should be more in the foreground and given more attention than others. The proposal is that learner identity is the logical main identity of the educational context. Therefore we should know more about it and support teachers' abilities to address it so that they in turn can support the students' development of favourable learner identities.

In order to reach a sufficient level of concretization, we need to address the issue from multiple angles. We need to understand learner identity conceptually, that is to say, define the theoretical constituents of the concept. Furthermore, we should understand the phenomenological purpose and function of learner identity, in the sense that we need to explore how learner identity can be constructed, experienced, enacted, used and ultimately lived by the individual in a social context. It is also required that the analytical possibilities of researching the construction of learner identity are explored. The complexity and the level of abstraction of the issue necessitate a considerable level of caution with the risks and temptations of simplifying explanations.

The process of defining and understanding what learner identity is, what it consists of and how it is constructed, reveals that many of the elements that are involved and constitute its building blocks have caught the attention of educational researchers and are already the object of many studies, either independently or in relation to identity construction (see for instance Dirkx, 2001; Kort, Reilly & Picard, 2001; Nummenmaa, 2007; Nummenmaa & Nummenmaa, 2008; Rebollo, 2006; Roth, 2007; Roth *et al.*, 2004; Wosnitza & Volet, 2005).

Presently, questions of activity, recognition, motives, emotions, sense-making and identity processes are, in general, an important aspect of educational theory and research. This raises the question of whether it is justifiable and necessary to postulate the relevance of learner identity in educational contexts and also to indulge in the formulation of a model of this identity type.

The main response to this question is that a closer look at learner identity enables an analytical approach to understanding the intersection between intra- and interpsychological processes that affect an individual's participation in learning activities, the process of making sense of this participation, and ultimately, influence the experience of meaningful learning. Furthermore, an analysis of learner identity allows an understanding of the interrelation between different psychological processes and reactions. While many studies make undeniably valuable contributions to the field of educational research, they often fail to offer a holistic explanatory vision or approach that identifies the mutually interdependent connection between the multiple psychological processes (i.e. motives, emotions, sense-making and identity construction, etc.) and learning. Consequently, the argument is that the concept of learner identity and a theoretical model of its constitution and construction could make it an analytical tool for a holistic view on the inter- and intrapsychological processes that influence on the individual's participation and experience of learning contexts.

1.4. The structure of the text

The present text is organized in two main parts consisting of the theoretical and empirical explorations of learner identity. These are followed by the closing chapter, which offers some conclusion and a general discussion of the work as a whole.

Part one, which constitutes the theoretical exploration of learner identity and follows next, consists of two main chapters. The first chapter presents the general connection between learning, education and identity, and describes where learner identity can be integrated into the conceptual connection between these factors. This exploration focuses mainly on sociocultural approaches to human

development and identity, and specific aspects of these that are relevant to understanding learner identity. The exposé of these approaches is at all times made with learner identity in mind. In order to support an understanding of their relevance, the theoretical exploration intertwines the ideas about the conceptualization of learner identity with the presentation of the theoretical framework. The main objective of part one is to describe the theoretical foundation of the later presented conceptualization of learner identity. The description of this conceptualization closes part one.

Part two offers a presentation of the empirical exploration of some aspects of learner identity and its conceptualization. The main objective of part two is to present some significant aspects of the empirical exploration and the implications of the findings for how learner identity and its construction is conceptualized. This section begins with chapter four, which describes the methodological procedures and choices of the empirical exploration. The following chapter, chapter five, contains the presentation of the results. Part two, and the text as a whole, is concluded with chapter six which gives a presentation of the general conclusions regarding the necessary adjustments and elaborations in the conceptualization of learner identity as a result of the empirical study. This final chapter also includes a brief discussion concerning further explorations of and research on learner identity.

PART 1

THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

2. Identity construction and learning

2.1. **Identity, learning and education – Where does learner identity fit in?**
Identity as a theoretical concept and a phenomenological occurrence in connection to the education of young and adult citizens has become an important topic of interest for different disciplines, (see for instance Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani & Martin, 2006; Gee, 2000; Locke Davidson, 1996; Osguthorpe, 2006; Sfard and Prusak, 2005; Wenger, 1998; Wortham, 2006). The connection between learning and identity are explored in diverse contexts and with regard to different types of identity. As previously mentioned, there are voices (such as the abovementioned Hoffman, Sfard and Prusac, Gee, Lave & Wenger), which go as far as not only connecting them, but also making learning and identity interdependent. But, if learning implies identity construction, then, how can educational contexts be provided with a concrete approach that explains the intricate connection between knowledge and identity construction?

The answer to this question can be sought in the role and value of learning as a basic activity of construction. At any occasion the appropriation of new knowledge has a potential influence on the individual's perception of herself as a person and participant in a certain given context. Jarvis (2009) explains this basic function of learning through an eclectic approach in his definition thereof:
"Human learning is the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person. (p. 25)

Hence, formal and informal educational contexts are fundamental arenas for, not only construction of knowledge, but also the construction of the individual as an experiencing and experienced person. The basis of this construction is the

experience of the different aspects of a social situation, which through cognitive and emotional processes becomes a part of the individual's personal biography. Though there is no mention of identity in this definition, Jarvis is here clearly signalling a connection between learning and the formation of a kind of subjective experience of being someone across time and space through what he calls a biography.

Jarvis's notion bares similarities with Illeris' (2007) who says that, "From the point of learning, identity development can be understood as the individually specific essence of total learning, i.e. as the coherent development of meaning, functionality, sensitivity and sociality." (p.138) Wenger (1998) who is specifically interested in the connection between learning and identity makes a very similar claim but with a different formulation, stating, "Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information but a process of becoming." (p. 215) According to his notion, identity is a negotiated experience in and across social communities where learning occurs. The connection between learning and identity can also be detected in Osterlund and Carlile's (2003) interpretation of situated learning, where they emphasize the dual function of learning with the claim that "We do not solely learn facts about the world; we develop an ability to act in the world in socially recognizable ways" (p. 10). These ways define how the individual is perceived by others, as well as how the individual sees herself. Subsequently, the process implies a mutual recognition that results in an identity that in turn promotes a sense of belonging. In order to reach a satisfactory level of belonging the individual needs to learn and appropriate the adequate sociocultural practices of a community.

In an analytical overview of Wenger's thoughts, Osterlund and Carlile (*ibid.*) explain that his use of the concept of identity is a means to differentiate the subject from the world while evading the dichotomization of the two. This is done through the combination of the concept of practice, which focuses on the world (or the communities) and the notion of identity, which focuses on the person's negotiation of participation in multiple communities. Their analysis is

that Wenger's intention is to identify identity as the fundamental basis of a theory of learning and knowing (*ibid.*). They recognize Wenger's thoughts as an important theory of learning that highlights the person, rather than the community, although possibly overemphasizing the concept of identity.

The present work acknowledges the close relationship between learning and the formation of the individual as well as the articulation of who the individual is by herself as well as by others. Furthermore, the assumption is that the best way to approach this relationship is through the concept of identity. From this perspective, the problem with Wenger's influential contribution is not so much his overemphasis on the notion of identity as the theoretical gap in his conceptualization of the connection between learning and identity. It seems that he jumps directly from learning to the construction of community and context specific identity, which is constructed as a person gradually constructs the knowledge that is required in order to be part of a specific community of practice or a social context. So, learning a particular set of context adequate practices enables the successful construction of an identity that is appropriate for that specific context. These context specific identities are, as indicated, focused on a sense of recognition as part of a social context. Through learning carpentry or medical knowledge a person can identify herself as a carpenter or a doctor. Or, through learning mathematics, she can recognize herself as part of the community of mathematicians, etc. The question is how the individual's recognition of herself as a particular kind of learner in a particular context influences on the process of becoming part of a social context or a community.

The suggestion is that there is a need to address the activity as well as the social context. In terms of communities of practice, there is a need to focus on the practices as well as on the communities that are created around them. For example, the carpenter's recognition of herself as a carpenter is not just the result and indication of a sense of belonging to the community of carpenters, but also based on the actual activity of carpentry. Participation requires "doing", which is equally important for the construction of identities. Therefore, the proposal is that

what people do to belong in a specific context is in itself the basis of identity construction.

If the activity of learning is a prerequisite for identity construction, shouldn't there be an intermediate identity that mediates the learning process? If there is one, as suggested by this work, then, it would have to be called *learner identity*, that is to say, the way in which the individual recognizes herself as a learner should be a mediator of the learning process which paves the way into a certain community, be it a group of professionals, a chemistry class, a football team or the very process of being socialized into a citizen in society.

2.2. **It takes learning to become a learner**

While the interplay between the social identities, the learning situation, the academic subjects taught and other aspects of the educational situation intrigues many researchers, this intermediate step between learning and identity does not attract as much attention. This is possibly due to the fact that learner identity as a concept is still rather unknown. Anyone would adhere to their gender identity or ethnic identity, but few have heard of the notion of learner identity, much less considered whether they have one or not. Whatever the reason, the process of becoming and changing as a learner is either neglected or not ascribed much significance.

Sinha (1999) highlights this point in reference to theories of learning in general, pointing out the common assumption that the learning situation makes the individual a learner. This means that individuals become learners through a constructive process, just as they become teachers, doctors, Catholics, parents or whatever they might recognize themselves as, through participation in a set of activities that facilitates this process. Furthermore, Sinha (*ibid.*) highlights the situated nature of this process of becoming a learner. As such, his thoughts are a much-needed focalization of the subjective perspective and experience of the learning individual as a learner in relation to the teacher, and also to the co-learners. Moreover, Sinha's recognition of becoming and being a learner as a constructive process per se is here identified as a key element in any

conceptualization of human development. He never extends the argumentation to the issue of the identity of the learner as a learner, although what he is describing is here perceived as the construction of the individual's learner identity.

Despite the previously mentioned lack of interest in learner identity as a notion and a phenomenon there are some valuable works available (Ahlgren & Tett, 2010; Avis, 1996; Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon & Tennant, 2003; Gorard & Rees, 2002; Hughes & Lewis, 2003; Joyes, 2008; Osguthorpe, 2006; Reeves, 2008; Rubin, 2007; Solomon, 2003; Wallace, 2009), which either conceptually pick up where Sinha leaves the question by focusing on the concept of learner identity, or which use the concept as a complementary element in their conceptualization of individuals' learning accomplishments and histories. One common trait of almost all these works is the absence of clear definitions of what learner identity is and what it consists in. Although it is often possible to assume the intended meaning of the concept by way of deduction, the authors rarely offer an explicit definition or explanation. This is a substantial limitation since the relative novelty of the concept requires that its definition is made explicit in the hope that the research community can reach a reasonable level of consensus in order to be able to bring it to the field of educational practice and policy.

For instance, Chappell *et al.* (2003) make a tentative exploration of how learner identity can be changed by pedagogic strategies in connection to the formation of lifelong learners, but they do not offer any concrete definition or explanation of this identity, which they wish to change. Hughes and Lewis (2003) make an important contribution to the conceptualization of learner identity where they, similar to Sinha, establish its dynamic, changing and context dependent nature and further make the link between the individual experience of the learner and the analysis of the learning environment, but without explaining it any further or in any detail.

As usual, there is an exception to the rule and in this case there is an interesting conceptualization of learner identity used by some researchers on adult and lifelong learning (e.g. Harrison, 1993; Gorard & Rees, 2002). It is the most

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explicit and exhaustive definition of the concept, which has been found in the process of this work and is made by S.W. Weil in an article from 1986 titled "Non-Traditional Learners Within Traditional Higher Education Institutions: Discovery and Disappointment"(in Gorard & Rees, 2002).

Weil is ascribed the development of two constructs, namely 'learning contexts' which incorporates formal and informal structures operating in a learning environment. (Harris, 1993, p.13) The other construct is 'learner identity', which refers to "…the ways in which adults come to understand the conditions under which they experience learning as 'facilitating' or 'inhibiting', 'constructive' or 'destructive'. Learner identity suggests the emergence or affirmation of values and beliefs about 'learning', 'schooling' and 'knowledge'. The construct incorporates personal, social, sociological, experiential and intellectual dimensions of learning, as integrated over time." (Weil, 1986, p. 223 in Gorard & Rees, 2002, pp. 24-25)

Gorard and Rees (*ibid.*) emphasize that according to this notion, no matter how personal learner identity might be, it is the outcome of individuals' social experiences, which are influenced by history and place. They direct attention to the undeniable influence of the structure and organization of the formal educational contexts on the formation of the learner identity, but also point to the important role of experiences from informal learning, not the least for adult learners. Similar to the underlying assumption of this work, in their research about learning histories and trajectories, these authors identify the notion of learner identity as a key concept for the conceptualization and understanding of lifelong learning.

While their identification of learner identity as a conceptual tool is in agreement with the present work, there is disagreement with regard to a view that can be described as somewhat deterministic. Their conclusions indicate that the individual's trajectory as a learner is to a large extent defined early in life as a result of variables such as gender, family context and early schooling. As the elaboration of the concept of identity in general and learner identity in specific

will reveal later on, the basic assumption here is that while all experiences can have a potential impact on an identity, the key issue is how they are processed and made sense of. An identity is nothing if not the meanings about oneself, which constitute the sense of recognition as someone in one way or another. The suggestion here is that the construction of these meanings requires a constructive activity in itself, which can rewrite, reinterpret and ultimately re-construct them. The elaboration of this point will, however, have to wait. Before this point is reached there is some more to be said about the available works on learner identity and a sociocultural approach to identity construction. It should, however, be mentioned that despite some disagreements with Gorard and Rees, as later chapters on the empirical results of this study will reveal, their research and conclusions have been useful.

Returning to learner identity as treated by others; Weil's above-quoted definition offers valuable clues to what this identity consists in. However, it is also understandable why it can be used to formulate so-called deterministic or static views on how it is constructed and changed. Basically, it lacks an indication that the dynamic features of an identity are acknowledged in the conceptualization of how the individual moves from learning context to learning context and with this movement and the experiences from it develops a view on or values about learning, schooling and knowledge. To begin with, though values and beliefs can change over time, they are generally supposed to be resistant to situational adjustment and change. Assuming that these values can be part of the meanings that an individual constructs about herself as a learner, the question is what becomes of these values when faced with a situation that challenges them. What does it take to re-construct a value or a belief? This is where we are faced with a conceptual problem. It is difficult to uphold a conceptualization of identity as dynamic and situated when it is defined as consisting of values. Meanings on the other hand, which can carry values and beliefs, can be constructed and re-constructed again and again. Therefore, through the involvement of values and Weil's definition loses sight of the changing and dynamic potentials of the experiential dimension of learner identity.

The second problem with Weil's definition, which is in part a continuation of the first problem, is that it refers to the beliefs and values that the individual has about phenomenon outside of herself; learning, schooling and knowledge. The assumption and a basic argument of the present work is that the strength of identity as a concept is that it encompasses the individual as well as the social in interaction. Weil's definition is mainly focused on the social. The individual is present in that she holds the values and beliefs about certain things. This could in other words be described as how the individual identifies learning, schooling and knowledge. The question, then, is how she identifies herself in relation to these factors. How does she recognize herself as a learner in relation to how she identifies for instance learning, and what does this recognition imply when she is faced with a new learning context or situation?

Despite the questions that Weil's definition give rise to, her thoughts on how the previous experiences of learning influence the encounter with a new kind of context are an important contribution. Moreover, though it is hard to know with certainty, she might be the first one to have introduced the concept of learner identity to begin with. If this is the case, 22 years on, it is time it became a solid part of the identity map of the educational contexts.

Moving on to other contributions, one that probably shows most conceptual proximity with parts of this work is made by Osguthorpe (2006), who includes learner identity in his general conceptualization of the relation between learning and identity construction. According to him there are at least five different kinds of identity that are influenced by learning, namely *professional*, *personal*, *talent*, *character*, and *learner* identity. According to Osguthorpe, learner identity is affected by every new learning experience and he claims that all the other identities revolve around this one, since it is a kind of base identity through which other identities are constructed. A change and development in any of the other identities depends on the condition of the learner identity. Osguthorpe's definition of learner identity focuses on the general long-term perception that one has of oneself as someone who easily can learn whatever necessary or as someone who has to overcome problems in order to learn. In other words, his

definition is concerned with some level of subjective perceived disposition to learn.

Though in total agreement with Osguthorpe's suggestion that learner identity is the basis of all other types of identity development, it is here suggested that his notion also lacks the necessary consideration of its dynamic nature. His conceptualization of learner identity does not pay sufficient attention to the situatedness of its construction and the contextual differentiation that defines the subjective perception of the conditions that enable or hinder learning. In connection to the situated aspects of learner identity construction, there is also the question of how different types of contexts can correspond more or less to the learner identity that the individual has been constructing across these contexts. The experiences from different contexts can, hence, either be very much in tune with each other or contradict each other. Nevertheless, individuals can manage to construct a sense of recognition of themselves as learners, which is resistant to situated challenges and manage to uphold this learner identity across diverse contexts. From the viewpoint of the present work, this is another key issue, which is not adequately addressed by Osguthorpe's conceptualization.

The suggestion here is that a conceptual understanding of learner identity has to take its spatial and temporal situatedness as well as cross-contextual continuity into account. There is undeniably a long-term or long timescale dimension in every identity, which upholds and supports the individual's sense of coherence and continuity across time and contexts, but this dimension needs to be envisioned parallel to and in relation to the situated features of identity construction. Handling this duality between the situated and the continuous dimension is here identified as a key question in the conceptualization of learner identity, and will be presented in detail later on in chapter three, which is dedicated to the proposal of a conceptual model of learner identity construction.

All of the abovementioned intents to understand learner identity make interesting contributions to a conception of what it is and to envision its construction. However, it is also evident that the concept needs further elaboration in order to

make it more useful for analytical purposes as well as for the individuals who are constructing their learner identity in different types of educational contexts. The suggestion is that learner identity could be a cultural tool for the mediation of the processes through which individuals understand their personal experiences of learning. By understanding how these experiences influence on their recognition of themselves as learners they can understand how they approach new learning experiences. However, in order to fulfil this function, the tool needs to be made known and people need to understand it and learn to manage it as a tool. If learner identity is to become a matter of course for educational policy-making and practice and become part of people's individual tool kit, more research is required based on more solid conceptualizations and with higher levels of concretization. To begin with, we need a theoretical understanding of its composition, function and its development, which permits the analysis of its construction and enables its practical application as a conceptual artifact, or in Foucault's terms, (explained in chapter three) as a 'technology of the self'.

The emphasis on the learning situation, the recognition of oneself as a learner in some way, and the dynamic interaction between the inner (the sense of recognition) and the outer (the social context of the recognition) is deeply rooted in a sociocultural orientation to human development and the view that the individual's emotional and cognitive processes always are embedded in social structures at multiple levels. In order to explain how learner identity is conceptualized here, it is required to have a closer look at the sociocultral approach to identity in general.

2.3. **The sociocultural approach to identity**

The sociocultural perspectives on learning devote special attention to the concept of identity (Osterlund & Carlile, 2003). However this statement is more valid for the more contemporary thinkers and researchers, or the so-called post-vygotskians. As commonly known, the foundation of most contemporary theoretical and empirical works with a sociocultural perspective is Vygotsky's thoughts on human development as essentially social.

When considering a theory of human consciousness one important driving force for Vygotsky was how to avoid the fragmented explanations caused by the division of explanatory models, schools and principles. His aim was to find a theory that considered the objective as well as the subjective aspects of consciousness (Wertsch, 1985). Exploring different kinds of identity formation leaves us with a challenge quite similar to that faced by Vygotsky. The challenge of any theory of identity development and formation is the consideration of the individual on the one hand, and the social influence on the other hand. It is easy to forget the other dimension while focusing on and exploring one. The implications of Vygotsky's thoughts on the social nature of human development and its culturally embedded processes, make the sociocultural perspective particularly suitable for the purposes of the present work. It offers a way to bridge the conceptual gap between the individual and the surrounding social context. Possibly for this very reason the perspective has had far-reaching implications for many within the field of educational practice and research (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), as well as those interested in understanding and conceptualizing identity.

Though socioculturally oriented approaches share many similarities with regard to their basic assumptions about identity, there are also obvious differences in the specificities of their conceptualizations. In general these differences can be described as 1) those who highlight the rhetoric, discursive and narrative nature of identities (for instance Bruner, 1996; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Gee, 2000, 2005; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Ricoeur, 1984; Sfard & Prusak, 2005), 2) those who define identity construction as deeply embedded in activity and as part of social practices and communities (for instance Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998; Lemke, 1997; Roth, 2007; Wenger, 1998; Wortham, 2004, 2006), and 3) yet others who accentuate recognition as essential to identity construction (for instance Bernstein & Solomon, 1999; Gee, 2000; Taylor, 1994).

Needless to say, this is a rough and sketchy description of perspectives that, despite common factors, have considerable differences in between them. Moreover, there are important subgroups within each of these, which have

contributed with particular details for the conceptualization of identity. For instance, the approaches that are grouped together because of their emphasis on the discursive features of identity are far from always comparable or complementary and are at times even contradictory depending on the specific point of attention. These perspectives can, for example, diverge in their view on the discursive character, where some view identity construction occurring in situated talk in everyday life (Georgakoupolou, 2006), while others focus on the particular kind of discursive construction that can be labelled as narrative construction (Bruner, 1996). Yet others focus on the construction of identities as influenced by macro-discursive patterns. One example of this is Gee's (1996) differentiation between discourse as language use and Discourse, with a capital D, referring to the use of language together with other social behaviours in order to enact identities and activities.

Hence, it should be noted that this description is a simplified map of the conceptual landscape of identity studies. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the perspectives are not mutually exclusive although their focuses might be different. It falls outside the scope of this work to give a detailed account of each of these perspectives. The intention is instead to point out some general dominating tendencies, which have informed the present understanding of learner identity. From the viewpoint of the present work, all these perspectives are valid and useful but they contribute with different aspects in the conceptualization of learner identity. So, they are all used but differentiated with regard to their specific function in the conceptualization. As will be explained further on, the idea is that we should differentiate between what (learner) identity consists of or what it is constructed of, and how it is constructed. Following this idea, this work also assumes that there should be a differentiation between activity (for instance discourse) as the *mode of construction* and activity (for instance learning) as the *site or social context of construction*. More specifically, the conceptualization of learner identity is based on the assumption that identities are constructed through *participation in a social context*, which is defined by an *activity*, which results in *a more or less elaborate and processed experience of being someone*, which can

be used to re-construct *meanings* about the *recognition* of oneself as someone through some kind of *discursive or non-discursive activity*.

While the experience of an identity is highly individual, its construction requires the social context, and the recognition of one is not complete until there is someone else there to confirm or question it. Consequently, it is next to impossible for an individual to construct an identity on her own.

2.4. **It takes two to construct an identity**

One shared feature of most socioculturally oriented approaches to identity is the emphasis on its two-dimensional nature as part individual and part social. The extent to which the individual and social are emphasized differs between the perspectives, and the operationalization of the distinction between the two dimensions and their point of overlap seems to be an ongoing theoretical and empirical challenge. Nevertheless, regardless of other differences, this two-dimensional conceptualization of identity seems to be a common denominator of most socioculturally oriented approaches to identity construction. In Vygotskian terms, this specific feature could be expressed as the connection between the interpsychological and intrapsychological processes of identity construction. This implies that though an identity most certainly is experienced as a personal resource, the origin of its constituents, its value, its mediating functions and its construction are all socioculturally defined. It takes at least two in a context to construct an identity, but no matter how social and relational it is, its construction and use always requires the subjective experience of an individual.

Tracing back, the attention of the early sociocultural theoreticians was not so much on identity. Instead they focused on the development of mind and personality through culturally defined activity and practice. When Vygotsky formulated his groundbreaking theory of the general law of cultural development, which acknowledged the relational dimension of mental development, he did not include the development of identities. Yet, if we accept that identity development is one aspect of human development, then it should also obey by Vygotsky's general law of cultural development.

Identity development is, hence, dependant on relations and should be envisioned as including some kind of a process of transition from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological. This is a challenge, since most psychological identity research has tended to view identity as an individual property and a problem with individual origins (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Research and disciplines that have explored the social dimensions of the individual identity formation have in general concentrated on the influence of discourse and power relations on social identities, such as gender, ethnic and sexual identity (Martin Alcoff & Mendieta, 2003).

In general, explorative and analytical approaches to identity that consider the social and the individual aspects simultaneously and both the internal and external dimension of identity are scarce. This is in no way surprising since the study of the transition from 'inter'- to 'intra'- process in identity construction poses an intricate complication. This problem is inherently sociocultural in its formulation and has been the basis of many socioculturally oriented theories of what identity is and how it develops. The issue at heart is, specifically, how to add the social and relational aspect to the individual and subjective features.

There are a number of influential perspectives, which emphasize the two-dimensional nature of an identity and try to capture the social dimension (e.g. Bernstein, 1999; Gee, 2000; Lemke, 2000, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Martin, 2007; Wenger, 1998; Wortham, 2006). As previously mentioned, the extension to which the individual and social are emphasized differs between the perspectives. There are also different ways to identify the social and what it consists in. For example, Penuel & Wertsch (1995) argue that the sociocultural view can complement Erikson's identity theory with a mainly individual perspective. They suggest that, "… identity be conceived as a form of action that is first and foremost rhetorical, concerned with persuading others (and oneself) about who one is and what one values to meet different purposes. (…) It is always addressed to someone, who is situated culturally and historically and who

has a particular meaning for individuals." (p. 91) As the authors point out, these purposes are ultimately about the realization of meaningful action. (*ibid.*)

This conceptualization puts considerable emphasis on culturally situated rhetorical action directed towards others. It can be compared to the definition offered by Gee (2000) who drawing on Taylor's thoughts defines identity as "being recognized as a certain kind of person, in a given context". (p. 99) The implications of these definitions are essentially that without the social context, identity cannot be. Some kind of an '*other'* in a social framework is required in order for identity to emerge, exist and have a purpose. The accentuation of the relation to the *other* is also present in Benwell and Stokoe's (2006), who drawing on Hegel's thoughts define identity as "… a response to the activities of others …" (p. 35). These authors make the often-made observation that Hegel is in fact the basis of many other and later identity theorists, who highlight relationships, interaction, activity, discourse, and recognition as essential constituents of an identity. Later influential voices with a Hegelian basis and significant impact on sociocultural approaches to identity are Mead (1934), who explained the relatedness of the 'I' and the 'other' and Taylor (1989), who has highlighted the fundamental role of recognition in the process of social identity construction.

The importance of a recognizing 'other' can also be found in another influential thinker, namely Michail Bakhtin. Just as Leontiev is a primary source of inspiration for many socioculturally (or sociohistorically) oriented approaches, so can Bakhtin be identified as a major influence on many identity researchers from a range of different disciplines and with different focuses (e.g. Erdinast-Vulcan, 2008; Georgakapoulou, 2006; Gimelli-Sulashvili, 2007; Gustafson, Hodgson & Tickner, 2004; Lacasa, Del Castillo & Garcia-Varela, 2005; Tate, 2007). The Bakhtin expert Michael Holquist (2002) states that, "'Being' for Bakhtin, then is, not just an event, but an event that is shared. Being is simultaneity; it is always co-being." (p. 25) This point supports the importance of the 'other' from another angle and with a different formulation. The essence of the argument is, however, the accentuation of the social dimension of any experience.

In Bakhtininan terms, people are addressed in the shared event. This is, here, interpreted as people being recognized by each other in activities. Being addressed can be viewed as basic recognition of a person's presence in the activity. Simple actions such as being looked at, spoken to or listened to can be concrete signs of being addressed, as well as being recognized. The subtle but nevertheless conceptual difference between being addressed and recognized is that the latter is here assumed to indicate the identity constructing aspect of the interaction between two or more people. When someone is recognized, the recognition is aimed at the identification and valuation of that person as someone, e.g. a teacher, a good student, a bad host, a loyal friend, etc. This recognition is not arbitrary and capricious but is conditioned by the intricate interplay between the social context, the activity that people are involved in and not the least by the discursive and non-discursive actions through which the recognized person participates in the activity. As explained in the next section, these actions are always directed towards a goal and driven by some more or less explicit motive, of which one can be the achievement of some sort of recognition.

How people are recognized is also influenced by factors beyond the immediate context. When somebody's way to participate or act is recognized in a certain way, it is usually done so according to socioculturally defined interpretative systems, which indicate how a kind of person engaged in some kind of actions in a given context should be recognized (Taylor, 1994 in Gee, 2000). Similarly, individuals use sociocultural patterns to obtain a certain type of recognition. These patterns have, for example, been extensively researched and theorized in gender identity studies. Gee (*ibid.*) considers these patterns part of Discourses, which dictate how people should act and interact in order to be recognized in a particular way.

In this line, it is assumed that one driving force for participation and interaction with others is to obtain context adequate recognition as someone, and that this process of recognizing and being recognized is framed by both micro and macro contextual elements. Through the recognition of others, people develop a sense

of recognition as someone, which is here understood as the very core of an identity. In other words, recognition on an interpersonal level generates a sense of recognition on the intrapersonal level. This standpoint can also be traced in Mead's thoughts on how self-perception develops through a person's objectification of herself, which allows her to see herself the way others do (Mead, 1934; Holland *et al*. 1998). So, the recognition of others conditions the nature of the subjective sense of recognition. A similar view is found in Taylor's (1991) claim that identities are "…formed in dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition of us." (p. 45) Gee (2000) stretches the emphasis on recognition to the level where identity is basically equivalent to recognition. "Being recognized as a certain "kind of person", in a given context, is what I mean here by "identity". (p. 99)

Despite his interest in macro-level Discourses, Gee (*ibid*.) also addresses micro-level processes of recognition and raises the question of how these work in moment-by-moment interaction. However, it should be noted that the emphasis on recognition is mostly present in theories and conceptualizations that are concerned with social identities. This is possibly why processes of recognition are often dealt with on a societal and political level and are mainly concerned with the political recognition of certain social groups, e.g. ethnic and religious minorities or gays and lesbians. Despite this, for the purposes of the present work and with the general intention of contributing to the operationalization of the concept and its analysis on different timescales, 'recognition' is perceived as the most accurate and precise option.

The perspectives of the abovementioned authors all indicate that the enactment of processes of recognition is an important aspect of identity construction. They all point to recognition as an intrinsically social and dialogic act. While the individual's *sense of recognition* might be difficult to access directly, it is possible to analyze these processes on an interpersonal level. This notion is also inspired by the thoughts presented in the following section, which establish this 'outer' activity as an indicator of 'inner' processes. Consequently, it is suggested that this notion best captures actions that are, either partially or

entirely, aimed at addressing people for the purpose of recognizing who they are in relation to oneself in a given context and vice versa.

2.5. **The activity and the motives – where the social and the individual meet**

Besides the advantages of recognition as a key element in the operationalization of identity construction, it is also suggested to add to the conceptual understanding of how learning and identity are connected. Earlier this connection was explained as learning being an important foundation for the construction of identities. But why should learning involve any identity construction at all? How can the emergence of identities through learning be understood?

The suggestion is that the answer is partly related to the social and psychological importance of being recognized and having a sense of recognition as someone in a social context. Learning implies the achievement of goals in connection to concrete learning objectives and the potential achievement of proximate and distant life goals and needs. If learning is the basis of identity construction, and if identities require a sense of recognition as someone, then being recognized as someone in the learning context should be an equally important goal. In order to understand the function of this goal it has to be conceptualized as part of the social context. However, being addressed or recognized is rarely, if ever, the only goal. With regard to the learning situation in specific, the main goal is to learn something, but as argued, this goal is accompanied by the need to be recognized. Therefore, it is necessary to conceptualize the social context in terms of people engaging in an activity in order to achieve one or more goals of different nature, which are more or less explicit and meeting different needs. In order to refine this conceptualization we turn to Leontiev's theory of activity.

Consequently, social context (or the event) is understood as framed by an activity that the individual experiences through either real or imagined participation. Bakhtin's term for this context where people seek to be and are addressed is the

temporally and spatially defined situation (Holquist, 2002)[4]. Informed by this view, the activity is conceptualized as consisting of both a temporal and spatial dimension. In other words an activity is always experienced in a certain time and place, in relation to other activities in the overall trajectory of an individual. The temporal and spatial features of the activity as well as the role of recognition within the activity will be elaborated on shortly, but let us first have a closer look at the activity and how and why it is important in a conceptualization of learner identity.

The focalization of the activity with regard to identity construction can also be found in Holland *et al.* (1998). According to these authors "…identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice." (*ibid.,* p. 5) Leontiev's legacy can be detected in this conceptualization as well, and is also present in perspectives on identity in practice that are informed by later versions of activity theory, united under the CHAT umbrella (Williams *et al*., 2007). These approaches focus on the object-oriented activity as the site of construction in which the individual is positioned and positions herself in a division of labour. This idea originates from Vygotsky's notion of practice as double edged, in the sense that the social always eventually becomes individual, and therefore the individual always becomes what he does (*ibid.*).

This view is in line with Lemke's (1995) radical suggestion that an attempt to distinguish between the social and the individual is an exercise in futility, since "the inner" and "the outer" are a unity (p. 90). According to Lemke the analysis of intrapsychological processes needs to be accompanied by the analysis of the socially and culturally conditioned systems of activity where the individual is acting. Consequently, the individual and the social features of identity should be viewed and analyzed together. In Lemke's view the way to access 'the inner' is

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[4] It should be noted that this presentation of Bakhtin's thoughts on the dialogic nature of being leaves out significant aspects of his philosophical ideas on the dialogic nature of human existence, which are indeed relevant and valuable for the present work. However, a more detailed elaboration of these ideas would imply emphasizing some key aspects of identity construction more than others when the intention is to elaborate on an overall conceptualization of learner identity.

through indirect evidence provided by 'the outer'. If the individual becomes what she does, then an analysis of what she does should give an insight into the inner.

Based on the currents in sociocultural approaches to identity development the external factors are to be found in the social relations, the activities and actions, and the discourse that takes place in these. These are factors that are emphasized to different extents and in different ways depending on the theoretical inclination and perspective of the user. In the conceptualization of learner identity it will become clear that an attempt is made to capture the mainly individual elements on the one hand, and the mainly social elements, on the other hand, through a differentiation between what can be called the building blocks of learner identity, the sight of the construction and in connection to that, the mode of construction. Hence, the analysis of learner identity requires an analysis of that which surrounds, conditions and drives its development, but also of the things people do in the construction of learner identity, or as in the case of discursive activity, the thing they say. Next, the focus will be on the relation between what people do and say when they participate in activities and the construction of learner identity or any identity.

If Vygotsky identified the relational nature of human development, Leontiev could be said to have added the importance of the framework of the relation. Human development occurs through relationships in an object-oriented activity. In simple terms, development requires participation in activities. He states that: "The personality, like the individual, is a product of the integration of the processes that realize the life relationships of the subject. There exists, however, a fundamental difference of this special formation, which we call personality. It is determined by the nature of the very relationships that form it: the social relations specific for man into which he enters in his objective activity." (1978, p. 109)

Leontiev describes personality as the combination of the inborn and the influence of the external surrounding (*ibid.*). Though he did not explicitly explore the notion of identity or its development, his definition of personality and how it is

conditioned and developed is valuable for a conceptualization of identity[5]. Besides providing us with an analytical framework for understanding identity construction, this conceptualization also supports the idea that identity, as a phenomenon, is the junction where the outer and the inner meet in an object oriented activity. It is developed and constructed through the social context and governed by the conditions of the activity but is experienced by the individual.

An important aspect of the activity, which influences and conditions the identity construction, is the relation between the very object of the activity and the individual motives that are at stake in it. From an identity construction point of view, the objective goal of the activity and the individual's motives for participation are highly useful notions in the conceptualization of why identities are constructed. They enable and support the exploration of the answer to questions concerning why and when recognition takes place, and what the purpose of a specific identity is. So, how does the conditions of the activity interact with the construction of an identity?

This question is partly related to why and partly to how identities are constructed. If we assume that individuals are considered and consider themselves as belonging to a context to different extent depending on how they are recognized in them (Wenger, 1998), then, the sense of recognition is a fundamental prerequisite for successful participation. This would imply that this sense of belonging and recognition could constitute a more or less explicit and conscious motive for participation. People want and need to belong and want to be recognized as belonging to a given social context and this is a strong motive for participation. The activity could have the construction of this sense of belonging and recognition as a more or less explicit goal, but explicit or not, participation in an activity can at all times be an occasion for the construction of multiple

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[5] Following earlier arguments, the claim here is that it is more adequate to talk of identity than personality within a sociocultural frame of reference. Considering how charged the notion of personality is by traditional psychological perspectives and their view on it as inherently individual, it might even be perceived as an error on Leontiev's part to speak of personality. However, the explosion of interest in identity as a concept and phenomenon is subsequent to Leontiev's time, which could explain why he, in line with his contemporaries, focused on personality.

identities. However, the nature of the recognition is not always positive or what the individual seeks and needs. As Wortham's (2006) analysis of classroom activity and discourse reveals, the process of recognition and identity construction can be highly unintentional but none the less effective. Wortham's (*ibid*.) examples show, for example, how black American youngsters in a class are disfavoured by constantly being addressed according to certain sociocultural models of categorical identification, based on their skin colour. Similarly, Solomon (2003) points to the excluding features of mathematics teaching, which result in many students', mainly female ones, sense of not belonging or not being able to belong to the community of mathematicians. Solomon makes an interesting observation when she questions Wenger's linear conceptualization of the level of participation as corresponding to the level of identification with a certain community. She finds that the women that recognize themselves as excluded from this community, in fact, do not have a peripheral participation pattern but are highly successful students.

These studies make manifest the exceptionally complex nature of identity construction, which to a large extent can be explained by the fact that it encompasses social processes on so many different levels, from individual to community to macro and sociocultural. What occurs in a particular activity and the recognition that takes place or does not do so, can be affected by both the individual's own experiences and trajectory through different contexts as well as sociocultural patterns, or in Gee's terms, Discourses, which interfere in the interaction. Just because a person wants to be recognized, it does not mean that they will. Nor will they always be recognized the way they want to, because, as Solomon (*ibid.*) points out, there are no simple linear and causal patterns in human interaction. What goes on between two or more people is always framed by the immediate activity as well as a larger sociocultural context. The two studies mentioned above are examples that highlight the influence of Discursive patterns on the occurrences in an activity.

Gee (1996) talks of Discourses as a kind of 'identity kits' which dictate ways of acting and being in the world and which are provided by the cultural and

historical context. In his view, Discourses are ideological and closely related to the power relations and the hierarchical organization of society. More specifically, he defines a Discourse as "…a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artefacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network." (Gee, 1996, p. 131) Social relations and individual acts are, hence, always under the influence of social and cultural expectations and requirements in relation to which the individual needs to position her self (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

This again proves that identity construction happens both on a short timescale in an immediate context as well as on a long timescale across contexts on different levels, which influence each other and interact through the individual's movements between them. These movements are conceptualized as both real and imagined, meaning that an individual can be influenced by contexts where she has not actually participated, but of which she has an imagined experience based on other people's stories of these experiences or other resources such as films and books.

So far, it has been established that seeking recognition can be an individual need in itself and that people can have more or less explicit goals about being recognized as someone in one way or another when they participate. It was also noted that the interaction, which involves processes of recognition is determined by both individual, micro and macro factors. Subsequently, the analytical question is where the junction between these multiple levels can be identified in the activity. Where should the analysis directs its attention in order to understand why people want and need recognition and why they are recognized in one way or another within an activity as well as across different activities?

It is assumed that the best entry point for responding to this question is found in Leontiev's (1978) conceptualization of the object and the motives that drive the activity. The proposal is that the simultaneous existence of multiple motives on different levels can be a profitable way to access some aspects of the point where

the social and the individual overlap in the construction of identities. When the activity is directed towards a specific object, it is driven by a motive, just as the individual's participation is driven by lower level more immediate goals as well as high-level more distant goals. The question is, then, what the activity is supposed to achieve and how this coincides with what the individual wants to achieve. Moreover, we need to know what kind of emotional reactions the higher or lower level of compatibility between the two gives rise to in the individual.

As mentioned, this identification of the motive and the goals as significant elements of the activity and as the point of overlap between the internal and the external, is informed by Leontiev's theory of activity. According to him the sense of the activity lies within its object (*ibid.*), which provides the activity with a direction (Kaptelinin, 2005). An object drives the activity but the motives drive the individuals. Kaptelinin (*ibid.*) sheds further light on Leontiev's notion of the motive and explains that his use of the concept of object primarily was intended as the true motive of the activity, and directs attention to a shortcoming in the theory, which concerns Leontiev's omission of the occurrence of multiple motives within one and the same activity. According to Kaptelinin this was not considered by Leontiev, who defined the problem as one activity - one object – one motive, and from there the goals and conditions.

Kaptelinin (*ibid.*) underscores that until the activity has an object it cannot have a direction, nor can it start. "The object is different from any of the effective motives and is cooperatively defined by the whole set of motives that the subjects strive to attain in their activity." (*ibid.*, p. 16) That is to say, the individual action can have a motive that when joined with other motives form the object. Consequently, the formulation of the object is in itself highly dynamic since it is the result of a constructive process where motives meet and potentially clash before resulting in an object that gives the activity some direction and put it in motion. As a result, even though an activity might have an objectively formulated object, it is never static but subject to the social processes in the activity, just as any motive that the individual might have for participation in an activity can and even may have to be modified and adjusted in accordance with the social

processes involved in the activity. For the conceptualization of learner identity this dynamic feature of the motives is identified as a key element. The suggestion is that it can facilitate an understanding of why and how identities are constructed, maintained and adjusted in and across activities. Ultimately, the dynamic relations between the individual's motives for participation and the possibilities to have these fulfilled or not, must exercise an important influence on the sense of recognition and belonging. As such, the motives and their change over time can enable an insight into the individual's actions in her pursuit for recognition.

While Leontiev's theory of activity offers a conceptualization of activities in general, the theory of interactivity (Coll, Colomina, Onrubia & Rochera, 1992; Colomina, Onrubia & Rochera, 2001) provides us with a vision of the learning activity in particular. More specifically, this theoretical model offers a general formulation of the object of the educational contexts and the specific types of activities that are oriented towards learning. The dynamic view on the object of the activity can also be detected here. According to this theory the activity in learning contexts will at all times embody two major parallel processes; one of constructing knowledge and one of constructing the activity itself. This could be interpreted as an indication of the object of the activity being subject to construction through the process of the construction of the activity itself. The suggestion that the learning activity embodies two major parallel processes also indicates the potential presence of at least two simultaneous objects; the knowledge construction and the activity construction. These two processes should logically be influenced by the complex interaction between the objectively formulated goals as well as the individual motives of the participants.

This interconnectedness of motives is also present in Bakhtin's conceptualization of shared being, although he talks of 'telos' instead of goals and 'intentions' instead of motives. From a Bakhtinian perspective the subject never is "…consciousness in itself, for it is always stratified by the other. Nor does "intention" signify a direct correlation between inner plan and outer act directed toward a specific telos: for all deeds are connected to the deeds of others, so their

meanings can never be grasped in themselves or form the point of view of a supra-situational end." (Holquist, 2002. p. 155)

If consciousness is stratified by the other, then, the inner is part of the outer and vice versa. (This idea would support Lemke's claim that the outer and the inner cannot be separated.) The individual's motives will be influenced by the object as well as the motives of the other co-participants and potential recognizers, with the end purpose of being recognized or addressed. In a concrete activity the process could involve a negotiation of the answers to questions such as what are we supposed to do, what do we want to do, and how are we supposed to do it. In terms of the theory of interactivity this would be part of the process of constructing the activity. Each response requires a negotiation on a collective level between individuals and an intrapsychological negotiation where the subjective motive is evaluated according to the affordances of the activity and its conditions.

If identity is about convincing others about who one is and what one values in order to meet certain purposes, as earlier stated in the quotation by Penuel and Wertsch[6] (1995), then it is indeed about managing successful negotiations regarding one's multiple motives in the activity, both with others and with oneself. In this context of multiple and simultaneous motives, the process of achieving a sense of recognition and belonging is not only a dynamic process but also potentially conflictive. For example, how does it affect an individual when her motives of obtaining practical work related knowledge is not met by the theoretical focus and organization of a course? In short, the suggestion is that inquiries into how individual and collective motives interact and how this interaction influences on the individual's different motives over time and across different learning experiences can explain some aspects of how learner identity is constructed.

Questions about motives are not just interesting from an identity construction point of view, but are in fact a recurring theme in educational research. However,

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[6] The quote can be found on p. 15.

the problem with studies that address motives and motivation in isolation is that they easily lose sight of the two dimensions of human development as part social and part individual. While it is interesting to know how a student formulates her motivation in relation to learning, in this type of research, the individual's motives are often times approached as something static and a mainly individual property. It can nevertheless be valuable to consider findings of this type of studies when assuming a situated approach to learning and identity construction. For instance Houle (in Harrison, 1993) identified three categories of adult learners: the goal oriented, who want to achieve something, the learning oriented, who want to learn for the sake of learning, and the activity oriented, who are the students that engage in formal adult learning for social reasons. While these categories can be understood in terms of Discursive sociocultural patterns, it would be a conceptual error to assume that the individual's motive for participation in a learning activity remain untouched and unaffected once she is faced with the particular characteristics of a given learning activity. Furthermore, not only do we need to assume the occurrence of multiple motives as a result of individual diversity but also that each individual could possibly have multiple motives that are of different value and importance (e.g. wanting to grow and show off one's own competency and capacity and also wanting to be liked by the others). While it is possible that individuals can adhere to one motive more than others, it is also possible that they can both be goal and activity oriented and have social reasons for learning, all depending on the time and place of a given activity and the position of this activity on their overall life trajectory.

Following this line of argument about the significance of motives for the construction of a sense of recognition as a learner, or anyone else for that matter, there is yet another proposal that further emphasizes the connection between motives and identity construction. The suggestion is that obtaining recognition and achieving a sense of recognition could be one of the multiple motives that are at stake in an activity. Consequently, the construction of one or more particular identities could be the explicit or implicit goal of an activity.

This idea is informed by Bakhtin's thoughts on the importance of being addressed. While Leontiev directs our attention towards the construction of the object driven activity and the motives that drive the actions of the individual in relation to the motive (Leontiev, 1978), Bakhtin's vision calls attention to the dynamic nature of the subject and his intentions, as well as the dialogic relation between the different actions – one's own and others' – in an activity. The search for recognition as a basic motive can be detected in Bakhtin's thoughts in his emphasis on the relation between the perceived and the perceiver. The very fact of being perceived is something that drives and motivates the individual. Holquist (*ibid*.) expresses this aspect of Bakhtin's philosophy in the following statement: "My 'I' must have contours that are specific enough to provide a meaningful addressee: for if existence is shared, it will manifest itself as the condition of being addressed." (p.27)

This notion conveys the truly dialogic nature of identity construction. Participation in an activity implies interpsychological processes (existence is shared). These processes involve some kind of interaction wherein recognition is sought and given (the condition of being addressed). However, in order to obtain the recognition the individual needs to make herself "*recognizable*" (have contours that provide a meaningful addressee). In other words, she needs to engage in the participation in a way that enables processes of recognition. In order to be recognized, she has to learn what she does not know. In this mutual process of doing what needs to be done, striving for recognition and receiving it an identity is being constructed within the framework of the activity. The individual might not have the construction of an identity as a goal, but she will bring her basic need of recognition into the activity, and this will interact with her other motives, the motives of others and the specific object of the activity. The identities that are constructed can be accidental or intentional. For example, students of medicine are supposed to construct an identity as doctors but in the course of their studies they can also construct identities as leaders, teachers or rebels. The acknowledgement of recognition as a basic motive could enable more conscious and systematic management of the processes of identity construction. The construction of identities could become an explicit goal for the object-

oriented activity. If learning and identity construction are so closely interconnected, then this idea should be crucial for any kind of educational context.

In this line, it is suggested that the two parallel process of construction (activity and knowledge) in the theory of interactivity could be completed by a third process; *the construction of identities*. This could be yet another way to elaborate on the well established but poorly described connection between learning and identity construction. The construction of the joint activity frames the construction of knowledge, through which processes of recognition are enabled and a basis for identity construction is laid. However, as the line of argument will unravel, the claim here is that not only do people need to be recognized for what they learn, but they also need to be recognized as learners. Beside any community and context specific identities (e.g. doctor, nurse, teacher, football player, student, etc.) educational contexts need to address and foster the construction of their students' learner identity.

This argument is neither new nor particularly controversial. It is rather in line with a sociocultural view on learning. However, it does have certain limitations. It might contribute to an understanding of how learning gives identity, but it does not quite explain what identity construction adds to learning and participation in learning activities. Nor does it explain why it could be beneficial to consider the students' learner identity in educational contexts. If learning and identity construction are strongly related and if, as mentioned above, one gives the other, then what does identity do for learning? More importantly, what does learner identity do for the individual's learning?

2.6. **Identity as the sense maker of experience**

To begin with, let us look at what identity does in an activity in general. Penuel and Wertsch (1995) argue that, "Identity is about realizing and transforming one's purposes, using signs to accomplish meaningful action." Let us rephrase this, following the thoughts outlined above. Identity is, then, about fulfilling one's motives, through the use of symbolic and material artifacts in order to

realize actions in the activity so that it makes sense and is meaningful. The sense-making relies heavily on how the motives and the ultimate formulation of the object agree with and are attuned to each other (Lenotiev, 1978). So, in order to make sense of the activity the motives need to be met and rendered possible through the actions directed towards the object of the activity. Roth (2007) adds an important element to this complicated equation when he establishes the relation between identity, motives and emotions. According to him the first is constructed from the two latter and the available emotional charge in action. By bringing emotions into the equation the experiential aspects of the activity are brought into light. Participation in an activity implies an individual and subjective experience of the activity. The experience is grounded in the activity and may be more or less defined by the activity, but its occurrence requires an experiencing subject. As such, the experience of the activity is the intrapsychological process of representing the activity as a whole.

Informed by Roth, Kaptelinin and their theoretical foundation Leontiev, the argument is that the possibility to fulfil the needs that emanate from the individual's motives is the primary definer of emotional reactions, which will influence the overall sense of recognition as a learner. This would imply that the extent to which an individual can have her motives met and fulfilled in the activity and its direction towards the object, influences on and elicits different emotions and feelings and corresponding actions. In other words, the relation between the individual's motives and the activity plays a crucial part in how the activity is experienced.

It makes sense to assume that the more the activity corresponds to the individual's immediate and long-term motives, the more likely is the elicitation of positive feelings and the more positive will the experience of the activity be. However, we are still left with the questions of why and how identity construction occurs. Pursuing recognition and a sense of belonging in the activity can be a motive in itself, but why? The suggestion is that the primary function of an identity is to make sense of the activity and ascribe the experience meaning.

It might seem like an exercise in analytical absurdity to question why it is important to make sense of an activity or to make one's participation meaningful when common sense would say that people generally feel better and more comfortable in contexts where they feel welcome and recognized and where their participation makes sense to them. But the question is what differentiates a meaningful experience from one where the process of sense-making failed partially or completely. More specifically, how is meaningful learning different from one that does not make sense to the individual?

Coll (1988) identifies the individual's subjective experience of the learning situation as essential to a constructivist view on meaningful learning. According to him, meaningful learning is about the construction of meanings and making sense of these meanings. Learning is meaningful when the acquired information is ascribed meaning. Coll refers to Ausubel and her collaborators (Ausubel, Novak & Hanesian, 1983, in *ibid*.) who distinguish between two conditions for attribution of meaning. First, in order for learning to be meaningful, the individual needs to make a certain level of logical sense of what she has learned, in the sense that she needs to understand the internal structure and coherence of that which is learned. For instance, learning the periodic table of the elements by memorization is different from learning it through understanding the organization of the table and the relation between the elements. Second, besides making logical sense, the learned subject also needs to make psychological sense, which implies that the pupil is able to relate the new knowledge to the larger system of previously constructed knowledge. It will be easier to make sense of the periodic table of the elements if it connects with knowledge of the atomic constitution of things. Hence, previous knowledge is of highest relevance when new knowledge is constructed.

Coll (*ibid*.) also draws attention to other aspects of the educational experience that are relevant for the students' achieved level of learning, such as their perception of the school and the teacher, the parents and the confidence in their ability and knowledge in a given area, their motivation, interests, feelings, expectations on the situation of learning and its end purpose. So, new educational

experiences do not only depend on previous knowledge, but also on previous learning experiences as a whole. Sinha (1999) makes a similar point in connection to how individuals become learners. As stated earlier he argues that an individual learns to become a learner and that "… to position herself and be positioned as learner in the complementary structure of roles (teacher and learner), is something that requires prior experience of, and introduction into, such learning situations" (p. 41).

These experiences are identified as *mediators* of the final results of the learning process, indicating that the previous experiences mediate the construction of meanings of the learned subject, as well as meanings about the educational experience as a whole in a new context (Coll, 1988). Hence, the meaningfulness of an educational experience depends on the combination of the situation, its surrounding and the individual that is experiencing the situation. Therefore, meaningful learning can be described as being constructed in the junction where past and present experiences can meet, correspond or clash.

Coll's description of the connection between different learning experiences can be connected to the idea of individual trajectories of identification, which are the individual's experiences as she moves across different spatially and temporally defined contexts (Lemke, 2000). Through a movement across contexts and her participation and interaction in them, the individual constructs a trajectory through which she understands new contexts in light of past, present and future contexts. The idea of a trajectory implies a basic continuity that connects different experiences to each other, and the creation of a sense of coherence. The experience in the present makes sense in light of past experiences, just as past experiences can become more or less meaningful in light of those in the present or even potential experiences in the future.

While the present work is in agreement with Coll's conception of how isolated experiences are interconnected and even interdependent in the construction of meaningful learning, an elaboration of the idea is suggested. If meanings are constructed about the learned content as well as about the learning experience in

itself, how does this happen and what happens to these meanings in the movement across different experiences? The suggestion is that, there is a missing link here, which concerns the mediating artifact. One experience cannot in itself mediate another experience. The meanings that are constructed in and about the experience, however, could. The question is what kind of meanings could have the potential to do so?

Wenger (1998) gives an indication: "Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities." (p. 145) The way experiences support and obstruct each other is through the congruence and difference between the meanings about these experiences. With regard to learner identity the meanings are about the subjective experience of oneself as a learner. Each new learning situation is a new Bakhtinian site of struggle (Bakhtin 1986) where meanings from earlier subjective experiences of learning are challenged, confirmed, reinterpreted and essentially re-constructed and yet some traces remain and move from context to context. Consequently, learner identity construction implies the re-evaluation, re-formulation and ultimately the ongoing re-construction of meanings about oneself as a learner from experiences that constitute the raw material of these meanings. These activities may or may not be directed towards learning objectives, but it is more likely that learner identity construction draws on activities where there was an experience of learning.

However, experiences of learning activities do not necessarily entail the construction of learner identity. One basic assumption underlying the here presented conceptualization of learner identity is that the construction of an identity requires two main prerequisites: a constructive activity, which has identity construction as the main or secondary objective, and a conceptual cultural tool, or in Vygotskian terms, a symbolic artifact that mediates the processing of the experience and the meanings that occurred in the activity. The suggestion is that the meanings that are constructed in an activity can potentially be used for the construction of any identity. However, some experiences tend to generate meanings of one kind more than others. These tendencies mainly depend on Discursive patterns, which define when and where certain kinds of meanings

should be constructed and how. For instance, gender identity can be constructed through a number of different activities, to a large part based on socioculturally and sociohistorically established patterns, which define how women should act and be in a situation compared to a man in order to be recognized as women. Similarly, the differences between how girls and boys approach mathematics, as signalled by Solomon (2003), mentioned above, is due to the Discursive patterns that direct and define the construction of meanings about how the individual should recognize herself and which identity she should prioritize. Consequently, these Discursive patterns are a support as well as a restriction in the individual's construction of meanings about herself. On the one hand, they facilitate the process of meaning construction by providing the individual with indications on how to understand her experience and herself in it. On the other hand, they can constitute a limitation that prevents her from freely constructing whichever meanings she wants or needs.

However, these Discursive patterns cannot make a meaning become part of an identity by default. Meanings become part of a specific identity mainly through conscious and deliberate action in object-oriented activity directed towards identity construction. While there may be many different meanings that are constructed through the experience of an activity, they will not constitute an identity if they are not processed with the purpose and objective to construct a specific kind of activity. For instance, the simple activity of driving a car could result in various meanings that may or may not be processed to construct a number of diverse identities such as gender identity, the identity as a parent, a particular kind of person (temperamental, nervous, calm, etc.), a big/small town citizen, socio-economic identity (wealthy/poor), etc. As a consequence, the extent to which the meanings are re-elaborated in a new experience depends on whether the experience supports or challenges a particular identity that is made relevant in the new experience. The level of relevance is decided by the extent to which one experience connects with another experience through certain similarity or difference. But until these meanings are consciously put into the framework of an identity, they are not part of one. Instead they are situated reformulations and re-elaborations of meanings about the individual's experience of participation,

recognition and belonging in an activity. Once these meanings become part of a specific system of meanings, i.e. an identity, they can fulfil their mediating function. This is where the concept of identity serves as a conceptual or symbolic artifact. In simple terms, identity as an artifact provides these meanings with a new meaning by connecting them to other meanings, which define the individual's recognition of herself.

This notion can be associated to Foucault's (1988) technologies of the self, understood as methods, exercises or even knowledge that allow the individual to reflect upon, construct and form himself. Foucault's historical account of these technologies describes them primarily as certain types of actions on a behavioural level. However, following Vygotsky's differentiation between physical and symbolic artifacts as mediators of goal directed action (Wertsch, 1998), the technologies of the self that mediate the individual's processes of reflection over herself, could be physical, such as a special time and place for reflection, the use of personal journals, conversations, etc., as well as symbolic, such as concepts (i.e. specific identity concepts) that help organize and direct these reflections. A similar view can be found in the approach of situated cognition, where identities are constructed artifacts of various types and with multiple uses, which can serve as tools for thinking and acting (Wilson & Madsen Myers, 2000). In other words, specific notions, such as an identity, that support the mediation of the individual's reflection and formulation of meanings about herself are a type of symbolic or conceptual artifacts.

As any socially constructed tool an identity is essentially dynamic and changing. Furthermore, it might even be difficult to separate its function and use from its construction, since it is applied as it is constructed in a social context. This somewhat curious quality of an identity, as both the constructed and the constructer, implies that its description in static terms will at best be incomplete and at worst highly inaccurate.

2.7. **Identity construction across time and space**

Earlier, it was indicated that though the meanings are reformulated with each new experience, somehow some of them are resistant to change and stick from experience to experience. With regard to learning and the construction of meanings about the subject matter, Illeris (2009) explains that at times learning can be prevented due to the development of a certain pre-understanding[7] within certain thematic areas, which are activated in certain new situations where they are challenged, resulting in rejection or distortion of the influence of the new context. This way the challenging elements in the new situation are forced to agree with this pre-understanding, which thereby is defended. According to Illeris (*ibid*.) this is ultimately a defence of the individual's identity. Consequently, unconscious defence processes can prevent new learning and identity re-construction. Roberts (2007) makes a similar observation about the relation between learning and identity, stating that the situatedness of identity in practices might result in a generalization of practices across learning contexts, so that the same practical procedures are applied to different contexts. If practices can be generalized, then, so could semantic tools and the meanings that constitute an identity.

Because learning and identity are so closely related, the question of which one prevents the development of the other is similar to the question of whether the chicken or the egg came first. However, if we assume that identity is a conceptual mediating tool and that its use requires competence in itself, as mentioned in the introduction, then, the more capable the individual is in her use of this tool, the more it should enable learning. As competence is gained in practice (Wenger, 1998) then experiences from many and diverse activities, should facilitate the development of this competence. In other words, the more an individual has had to reformulate and re-elaborate the meanings about herself as someone in different situations, the easier it should be to resist the automatic activation of previous meanings, or pre-understandings.

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[7] Illeris refers to Thomas Leithäuser (1976) and his concept of everyday consciousness.

Though this explanation makes sense, it does not quite describe how the meanings that resist change are constructed. Since identities are not constructed through a simple accumulative process, where meanings are added to each other in consecutive layers, but instead in a non-linear way where experiences that are mutually relevant can be years apart, some other explanation is required.

The issue brings us back to a contradiction inherent to the sociocultural view on identity: How can an identity change from context to context and time to time but the individual be perceived and perceive herself as more or less the same? Pasupathi, Mansour and Brubaker (2007) address this issue in their account of personal identity and its shifts and changes across the life span, stating that "…the continuing development of individuals across adulthood means that people must continue to negotiate a sense of continuity in the midst of change."(p. 86) If this contradiction is part of the phenomenological experience of identity, how can the contradiction be resolved on a conceptual and analytical level?

Although many approaches view identity as highly contextual, Osterlund and Carlile (2003) argue that one problem of most identity theories is that the spatial dimension is often neglected. According to these authors this is particularly true in the case of theories that focus on the narrative or autobiographical construction of identities across periods of time. While the timeline is considered, the spatial dimension of the context is somehow omitted. The complication, then, is the consideration of the specific context and space of identity construction as well as its change processes across time. Yet another complication is the abovementioned question of how individuals' can experience coherence across time and contexts, even though the analytical perspective views it as dynamic and shifting.

The suggestion here is that, one important clue to understanding how an identity can be both changing and consistent over time is, just as signalled by Osterlund and Carlile, to consider the context both in terms of space and time. That is to say, the consideration of the context where the identity is being constructed, re-constructed and enacted should include the contemplation of the physical, social

and emotional space as well as its temporal dimensions. Consequently, identity construction should always be conceptualized as occurring on two timescales and two corresponding spaces; the immediate and the distant, or as denominated by others that will be presented later, on a short and a long timescale. With the change of timescale there is a change of the defined space, and the two are always relative to each other.

Wenger (1998) emphasizes that any conceptualization of identity needs to consider its temporality. He conceives identity construction as a trajectory of participation in different communities. Furthermore, he makes an observation about learning, which also is relevant for identity construction, when he says: "Learning events and forms of participation are thus defined by the current engagement they afford, as well as by their location on a trajectory."(p. 155) Just as learning, identity construction should be defined "by the current engagement" as well as by "its location on a trajectory". Another way to express this would be that identity construction occurs within activities as well as across activities, or on short timescale as well as on a long timescale. This implies that meanings are not just moved from context to context, but that they can also be re-constructed in between contexts and across context. Consequently, there is a re-formulation and re-construction of meanings within activities as well as across activities. The first is done on the short, or rather shorter, timescale and the latter on the long, or the longer, timescale.

Lemke (2001) makes a general observation about the sociocultural approach to the long timescale dimension, while also introducing the timescale differentiation between the long and the short. He states that "Sociocultural approaches to learning and development are not just about social interaction. They are more significantly about the role of longer time-scale constancies and how they constrain, afford, and intrude into moment-to-moment activity." (p. 19) He further claims that identities that are constructed on different timescales are not the same and should therefore be treated as different and distinguished through the use of different notions that signal the timescale differentiation (2003). Wortham (2004) defines the timescale of an event as anything from seconds, to

minutes to hours. Hence, an activity can be identified at any timescale, for instance a whole educational life, a school year, a semester, a lesson or even part of a lesson, and any one moment can be related to experiences across a longer timescale.

This timescale differentiation is essential to an understanding of why identities can be dynamic and changing on the one hand and consistent and continuous, on the other hand. The implications of Lemke's argument are that each identity should be conceptualized as consisting of two modalities with two different functions. One being the long timescale cross-contextual identity and the other, the short timescale situated identity. They interact in experiences where the long timescale mediates the short timescale meanings about the recognition of oneself, but the re-construction that occurs in a specific context is the situated identity. However, the meanings from an experience can become part of the system of meanings on the longer timescale, if a conscious effort is made, otherwise they will in all likelihood remain isolated meanings that are exceptions in the trajectory and not connected to other experiences.

Wortham (*ibid.*) whose main interest is the development of social identities explains the dualism between the change and the consistency of identities through the differentiation between "positioning" and Holland and Lave's (2001, in *ibid.*) concept of "thickening". Positioning is "an event of identification, in which a recognizable category of identity gets explicitly or implicitly applied to an individual in an event that takes place across seconds, minutes or hours." (*ibid.* p.166) Thickening, on the other hand, is when an individual repeatedly is identified in a certain way across different contexts and timescales (*ibid.*). While positioning is context-specific, thickening moves across contexts and draws on more or less established socio-cultural patterns of recognition of oneself and others[8]. Positioning can occur in surprising ways depending on the context, but sooner or later a process of thickening occurs (*ibid.*). Some meanings come to dominate the recognition of the individual by herself and others. The question is

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[8] Wortham explains these notions in terms of how others recognize the individual, but since all identity construction implies a co-constructive process, how others position the individual influences the individual and vice versa.

how, when and why the experience of a surprising positioning has an influence on the "thickened" identity. What kind of experiences bring about a rupture in a trajectory, in the sense that there is a before-and-after sense of recognition, implying that the context-specific meanings on the shorter timescale change the cross-contextual long timescale meanings about oneself and how is this done?

Benwell and Stokoe (2006) also identify the problem of the dynamic versus continuous nature of identity, offering a succinct summary of the problem and their solution when they "…propose that discursive approaches may reconcile some of the most entrenched dualisms characterizing identity research. They are, for example able to explicate the processes by which people orient to consistency in their accounts of themselves and other people (underpinning the view of identity as 'fixed'), whilst simultaneously showing that identity is contingent on the local conditions of the interactional context. Similarly, identity may be a matter of being 'subject' to, or taking up positions within discourse, but also an active process of discursive 'work' in relation to other speakers."(pp. 17-18).

The application of this very idea can be found in different approaches that identify identities as narrative constructions. For the purposes of the present work, one particularly interesting contribution in this respect is Georgakopoulou (2006) who distinguishes between small identities that are locally constructed through narrative interaction and their relation to large trans-situational stories of social identities developed across the life span. In her conceptualization, Georgakopoulou combines two central elements of a sociocultural approach to identity, namely the context and the narrative. She makes an elegant proposal with a distinction between construction in the local context, where "talk-in-interaction" is conceived as narrative (Georgakopoulou, 2005) and construction across the life span. Her approach shares similarities with Lemke's conceptualization of the in-the-moment identity and the identity-across-the-life span.

The suggestion here is that the addition of narrative activity to the equation explains how the cross-contextual meanings are constructed, not through an

accumulative process but through a meaning constructing activity in its own right. Through the narrative activity connections are made in a circular manner where experiences are ascribed meaning in relation to each other. The meanings are, as previously mentioned, constructed through complex circular patterns, rather than linear chronological order. The question of time is not one of chronological order, but of the psychological order of experiences through which sense is made. What came before in the chronological order of life experiences might come after in the narrative construction. Moreover, the order of the experiences is not just one of temporal organization, but also one of structuring the experiences in relation to each other so that, for instance, one becomes the background against which the others are understood. But, as indicated, this activity needs to be oriented towards its own identity constructing activity. Using the symbolic artifact of identity, experiences are given additional and new meanings through a process of reliving and re-constructing them whereby the meanings are re-constructed to form part of a system of meanings that constitute an identity. The generalization or overlap of meanings across contexts can, furthermore, be explained by the fact that the larger sociocultural context always is present and impinging on the occurrences in the micro-context and guiding the sense-making, and consequently the identity construction.

In summary, the suggestion, so far, is that a conceptualization of learner identity should include the space, as defined by the activity where the learning occurs and meanings are constructed about the recognition of oneself as some kind of learner, and the temporal dimension which defines whether the meanings are constructed in-the-moment or on a longer timescale. The latter is suggested to occur through narrative activity that is aimed at identity construction

2.8. **Discourse as activity – the narrative construction of identity**

The narrative construction of identity has been treated, amongst others, philosophically by Paul Ricoeur, Sociologically by Anthony Giddens and psychologically by Jerome Bruner. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) observe that the definition of narrative approaches to identity construction is complicated by the diversity of disciplines and theories that have applied it. They further claim that

"…it is increasingly argued, it is in narrative tellings that we construct identities: selves are made coherent and meaningful through the narrative or 'biographical' work that they do." (*ibid*., p. 42) A famous and frequently applied approach is Ricoeur's philosophical conceptualization of narrative identity, which he defines as "…the sort of identity to which a human being has access thanks to the mediation of the narrative function." (1991, p. 73) Another widely used approach to narrative is offered by Bruner (1996) and his cultural psychologist view with which he emphasises the obligations of schools to participate in identity construction, claiming that, "It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one's culture." (p. 42)

Similar to Ricoeur (1991), who considers identity the outcome of the narration, some theoreticians go as far as stating that identities are not constructed through narratives, but that the narratives *are* in fact identities (Alsup, 2006). So, for example, Sfard and Prusac (2005) "…equate identities with stories about persons" and stress their position further when they make explicit that "We did not say that identities were finding their expression in stories – we said they were stories." (p. 14I) This notion can be compared to McAdams (2005) who conceptualizes identities as stories. "If you could see identity, (…) it would look like a story", he claims. (p. 121). While both Ricoeur's and Bruner's perspectives are frequently used in theoretical conceptualizations of the relation between narratives and identity, McAdams' more concrete and accessible methodological approach to the life story interview, seems to make him a common methodological reference. According to him, the stories that the individual tells about herself exist within her on a conscious as well as unconscious level, and their aspects come to surface and are made explicit, or are discovered as she formulates it, through, for example, an interview where the stories are constructed. He explains that as a story, identity is "an internalized and evolving life narrative" (*ibid*., p. 122). As such, the stories that are shared with others are a kind of reflection of "an inner sense of narrative identity", (*ibid*., p.129). Although McAdams' notion of an identity also focuses on its story-like features, he offers a characterization of these stories that enables a clearer understanding of how the identities and stories are related, as well as how the construction of the

story supports the construction of the identity. He describes the narrative as having a beginning, middle and an end. With the narrative the past, the perceived present and the expected future are organized and reconstructed. The conception is, then, related to the dual nature of identity as dynamic and diverging on the one hand, and continuous and coherent on the other hand.

While there are some detectable differences between these approaches, mainly due to the discipline and theoretical origin that frames the authors' thoughts, they all share the firm conviction that identities and narratives are strongly connected. As such the present work follows in the footsteps of these and many other works. However, there is a modest intent here to differentiate between identity as the *product* of narratives and narrative activity as a *mode of construction* of these products.

As mentioned earlier Benwell and Stokoe (2006) suggest that discursive approaches to identity offer a solution to the problem of how identities can be changing and continuous at the same time. Bruner (1996) calls this quality of the narrative *the historical extensibility of narratives*. Though the conditions of life change, he claims, we manage to maintain coherence and continuity across the life span and sense of our selves as more or less the same person. "We seem to be geniuses at the 'continued story'… We impose coherence on the past, turn it into history." (*ibid.*, p. 144) The past becomes history through the construction and re-construction of meanings of the past experiences. Continuity is maintained through a process of connecting these meanings from different experiences to each other and at times ascribing the same meaning to different experiences.

In this line, Pasupathi, Mansour and Brubaker (2007) make a similar observation in their claim that narrative strategies resolve the question of how people can sustain a sense of continuity through the shifts of personal identity. They use McAdams notion of a life story and describe cross-contextual features of identity, stating that it "…is an internal story-like mental representation that individuals carry with them from situation to situation."(p. 86) They also point to other approaches that indicate that these representations are constructed around

significant events or repeated themes and issues in life. These authors identify the production of life-stories as the space and means of identity construction. They claim that "Theoretically, the life story itself grows through the addition of new episodes and themes, as well as the reinterpretation of old events; people may also change their life stories by dropping events and themes." (*ibid.*, p. 87).

So, the basic constitutive element of the life story is the experience of an event, or, consistent with the theoretical outline of this work, the experience of an activity. The role of experiences as a fundamental element of identity construction is also clearly formulated by essayist and author James Baldwin (1998) in a frequently used quote from the book "No name in the streets" where he states that "An identity would seem to be arrived at by the way in which the person faces and uses his experience." This notion is in line with Herman's (2009) statement that one of the features of a narrative is to structure and make sense of experience. Following this line of argument, the basic argument of the present work is that the way narratives make sense of experience is by enabling a process of meaning construction and re-construction through which the individual situates herself in the experience and in relation to the experience and recognizes herself in one way or another. She constructs an identity.

2.8.1. A dialogic view on narratives

What the abovementioned authors share between them and with others is how they establish a close connection between identity and narratives. How this connection is conceptualized, however, offers as much diversity as the available approaches to identity construction. Wortham (2001) offers one way to manage the diversity of approaches and identifies an important distinction between dialogic and monologic approaches to self-accounts. For instance, he identifies McAdams' approach as mainly monologic, in that it is more focused on self-interpretation than on interactional positioning. The life story of McAdams, he claims, is best understood as a "monologic event" (*ibid.*, p.145). For the differentiation, Wortham (*ibid.*) establishes a difference between the self that occurs *within the narrated event* and the self that occurs *within the storytelling event*. The first is more aligned with a psychological view on accounts of self and

the latter with a social constructionist approach. According to this approach, "…the self emerges not primarily from self-reflection, but instead from participation in verbal practices that position narrators in various ways. According to the social constructionists, the self is not "narrated" into being. It is instead "positioned" into being in interactional events (…)."(*ibid.*, p. 146)

To clarify, the difference between the story telling event and the narrated event is that the first refers to the interactional context within which utterances are made, whereas the latter is the event that is described by the utterance (*ibid.*) Informed by Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic self, Wortham (*ibid.*) establishes that "…one develops a coherent self by constantly positioning oneself with respect to others over time." (p. 147)

Wortham's differentiation between the storytelling event and the narrated event is useful to conceptualize identity construction through different kinds of discourse in different types of events or activities. As previously mentioned, the argument is that narrative activity is a particular kind of activity that can aim at the construction of a specific identity. Identity, then, as a cultural conceptual tool, configures the meanings that are being constructed so that they fit in with a certain identity. The basic raw material is the subjective experiences of the so-called narrated event, i.e. that which was lived or experienced and the meanings that were constructed in them. However, this is at all times a representation of the experience and the meanings that were constructed in a certain activity, rather than the actual meanings. These representation are then used to re-author and re-construct new meanings through interactional positioning and activity.

Informed by Crapanzano (2001, in *ibid.*), Wortham explains that the reciprocal positioning in everyday life is given order by the imposition of desired characterizations on the other and the self. In simple terms, the individual recognizes herself and the other the way she wants to, but based on and according to cultural patterns and typifactions. This notion could be related to the earlier mentioned concept of thickening, where people are repeatedly recognized in a certain way. It can also be connected to the notion of *performativity*, which Judith

Butler defines "…as the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains…" (1993, p. 2) Butler holds that all speech acts or discourses are performative, meaning that an utterance or talk never is simply a statement of facts, but an action with effects. Whenever something is named it is being influenced to change and transforms itself. The reproduction of the phenomenon through discourse is in part related to the abovementioned dual nature of identity of being both the constructed and the constructor.

Butler's thoughts are mainly influenced by Derrida and Foucault, but the ideas are, despite differences, highly attuned to a Vygotskian understanding of symbolic artifacts and their function. Her philosophy mainly concerns the construction of gender identity and has strong political allusions, which are highly evident in her contributions to the formulation of queer theory. Nevertheless, her ideas effectively counterbalance psychologically oriented explanations, which focus on the individual's inner with little or no consideration of the context. Similar to Gee's ideas about Discursive patterns Butler's thoughts are reminders of the influence of sociocultural processes in individual and interactional processes. Moreover, Butler's ideas contribute to understanding why some meanings tend to be repeated regardless of contextual diversity. In summary the concepts of Discourse, performativity and cultural typification all bring to light and explain the nature and the effects of the cultural origins of identity as a symbolic tool.

Without being explicit, Bakhtin's thought about the event being shared at all times is highly present in all these notions. The individual cannot construct meanings about herself without the other as a point of reference for positioning. The other can be present as a person or as a representational voice. However, as Wortham (2001) points out, the construction of the self, (or the meanings about one self), is not merely dialogic since there is a struggle between the "centripetal" forces, which are resisting change and imposing a monologic self, and the "centrifugal" forces, which support the production of utterances and positioning

through other socioculturally available voices. In other words, these Bakhtinian notions indicate that while the individual is trying to maintain her own position through the application of meanings from other experiences, resisting their change and adjustment, she is also permitted or potentially even forced to re-construct these meanings according to the conditions of the new event, or the lived experience of the activity. Yet again, we are back to the question of why some meanings remain the same while others change, and why identity construction is both an individual and a social process.

Wortham (*ibid.*) offers yet another distinction, which can be related to this two-faced nature of identity, as it manifests itself in the narrative. While the interactional positioning is essential to the construction of self, individuals also re-produce representations about themselves in narratives. In agreement with Wortham, these representations are not conceived as a reflection of "underlying psychological reality" (*ibid.*, p.149), since this would emphasize a monologic view. Instead, the proposal is that these representations consist of meanings that have been constructed across different experiences and have repeatedly been enacted in different contexts, giving them more centripetal features. These meanings are simply easier to bring to surface and use in the process of establishing a sense of recognition and belonging in a context. The problem is that, while the individual might perceive these meanings as her own, they might just as well be an indication of the performativity or the cultural features of the tool that are conditioning and configuring the meanings.

Regardless of how these meanings are constructed and the extent to which they are socioculturally impinged, it is assumed that meanings that survive movement along a trajectory should be qualitatively different from those that are situated and constructed within a activity, or as in the case of learner identity, in an activity that is oriented towards or results in learning. For the conceptualization of this qualitative difference we once again turn to Bakhtin.

2.8.2. Cross-contextual meanings and Bakhtin's chronotope

Following the line of argument so far, the concept of identity can be said to encompass a set of dynamic and dialogic processes that enable an individual's movement and participation in different contexts that constitute her life. In Bakhtinian terms, identity covers what one is in relation to others, in different given moments of the events that constitute the individual's being and participation in life. Holquist (2002) gives a vivid description of Bakhtin's vision of this participation when he says: "But one thing is clear: so long as a human being is, he or she has no choice but to act. As a human being, I have "no alibi" in existence for merely occupying a location in it. On the contrary, I am in a situation, the unique place in the ongoing event of existence that is mine. And since existence is an event, my place in it is best understood not only as a space, but also as a time, as an activity, an act, a deed." (p. 152)

Bahktin's conceptualization involves an intricate relation between the time and the space that constitute the event and the action in it. The distinctive Bakhtinian notion of "chronotope" is in all its complexity and abstractness a helpful tool for the analysis of this connection. In the present work this notion contributes as an entry point to unravelling and understanding the mechanisms of learner identity construction in and across experiences of learning contexts.

Bakhtin defines the chronotope as the intrinsic connectedness of time and space, (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 2002) and defines time as the fundamental principle of the chronotope, stating that, "the chronotope is the place where the knots of a narrative are tied and untied." (Holquist 2002, p. 109). According to Holquist (*ibid*.) the chronotope is "… ineluctably tied to *someone who is in a situation.*" (p. 151) Yet another crucial element of the chronotope is the judgement of or the value assigned to the specific time and place. Holquist argues that, "It (*the chronotope*)[9] is a useful term not only because it brings together time, space and value but because it insists on their simultaneity and inseparability." (*ibid*., p. 155)

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[9] Author's addition

Though Bakhtin does not mention the concept of identity, the phenomena that are described and addressed can all be translated into identity construction on an analytical as well as phenomenological level. Identity construction takes place when someone is and acts in a situation or in an event in a particular time and space, with a shared sense of being and as someone with contours that can be addressed. Bakhtin's approach to understanding the individual in the world can hence be recognized in several of the earlier mentioned approaches to identity.

Bakhtin's philosophy and ideas are not merely a general source of inspiration for the conceptualization of learner identity. His concept of the chronotope, in specific, is conceived as particularly valuable for the conceptualization of the features of meanings that operate on a long timescale and are repeatedly re-constructed across different contexts. The underlying assumption is that meanings that maintain continuity and congruence in an identity should exhibit features that are qualitatively different from meanings that are either highly situated or short-lived. As indicated before, one part of the explanation to why this occurs is to be found in the socioculturally established patterns, which dictate and influence how people should recognize themselves and others. However, following the basic feature of identity as both social and individual, it is suggested that it should also be possible to identify individual patterns in the construction of meanings about oneself.

Inspired by Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, the meanings that repeatedly mediate new experiences and become more or less solidified in a system of meanings that constitute an identity on the long timescale, are envisioned as exhibiting some chronotopic features, in that they unify time, space and value and at the same transcend situated time, space and value. (As explained further down, this description refers to a feature that is manifested when experiences are relived through narrative treatment and not to the actual situation when the experience is taking place.) These are meanings about the recognition of oneself as someone, which despite being rooted in a situated experience at one time and in one place, become points of reference, or the background against which other experiences are understood. In these meanings the contextual setting of the experience is

made a background that frames the subjective meanings, rather than an objective situation or an activity which the individual experiences. In other words, the situation and the subjective experience of it have been integrated into a general meaning.

This kind of meanings that transcend temporal and spatial boundaries can be detected, for example, when people talk of physical spaces as subjective psychological spaces. One ordinary example is when people talk about what their childhood home was like. The home consisted of a physical space and the childhood refers to a specific period in their biography. However, the narrative description of 'the childhood home' is often the construction of meanings about the highly subjective experience of a subjectively experienced psychological place and the positioning and recognition of oneself in it. The temporal and spatial dimensions melt into each other and are mainly detectable through implicit indicators. The focus is not on what happened but what the occurrences meant to the individual.

Turning our attention to learning experiences in particular, there might for example be meanings that are based on experiences from 'primary school'. These could be about one particular incident or activity during the years in primary school, in which case primary school would be the objective setting of one particular subjective experience. However, when 'primary school' is turned into a psychological space with a subjectively experienced temporal and spatial dimension, then these meanings about primary school exhibit chronotopic features. The temporal, spatial and evaluative dimensions are entangled and the meanings are based on a condensed representation of potentially many different experiences, where it might be difficult to tell what actually occurred, when and where. Furthermore, the temporal and spatial dimensions of the objective context can be ascribed subjective meaning. For instance, six years might be an eternity or a passing moment, and the school as a physical space might be a psychological space where one was happy or miserable.

While it is not only possible but also likely that these meanings can be constructed through discursive action within the activity, the best analytical way to access them is through some kind of discursive or, more specifically, narrative activity. Furthermore, it is suggested that the chronotopic features are not inherent to the meanings as such, but are instead the result of a narrative activity directed towards the construction of a particular identity type. After all, the chronotope is first and foremost a feature of a textual production. Therefore, meanings can acquire chronotopic features in the narrative treatment of experiences. The assumption is, nevertheless, that meanings with these specific features are more likely to become long-term constituents of an identity and therefore resist situated re-construction more than others.

Although the intention of this work is not to engage in an analysis of chronotopic details in the construction of learner identity, this notion provides the conceptualization with a perspective that enables the distinction between different types of meanings in relation to the long timescale and the short timescale construction of an identity at a theoretical level.

At this point, the line of argument has arrived to the question of what occurs in the narrative activity in which these meanings can be constructed.

2.8.3. Re-constructing meanings in narrative activity

In the conceptualization of learner identity, the narrative activity is identified as the main type of discursive activity for the construction of the cross-activity meanings, or the cross-activity learner identity. This activity is conceived as a particular type of activity that can be oriented towards the specific goal of identity construction. Narrative activity is, as any activity, conceived as a spatially and temporally defined context where the construction occurs. It is also characterized by the specific mode of construction, which is discursive activity that revolves around the construction of stories. When the object of this activity is identity construction the main focus of the stories is the individual in relation to one or more aspects of her life, understood in terms of subjective experiences.

As previously mentioned, narratives are often conceived as the main mode of identity construction. These conceptualizations often focus on narrative construction in activities that are exclusively narrative, that is to say the object of the activity is the construction of narratives about the self. However, as indicated earlier, stories can also occur in activities that are oriented towards other goals, (e.g. group work at school or the work place, fishing, driving, having coffee with someone, etc.). The proposal here is that a differentiation should be made between different types of discursive activities depending on where and when they occur. For example, as mentioned earlier, one way to understand the narratives that occur within the event or the activity is to conceive them in terms of "small stories" or "narrative-in-interaction", as suggested by Georgakopoulou (2006).

Pasupathi, Mansour and Brubaker (2007) make a similar point in their life story approach to the development of personal identity, where they maintain that narratives about experiences can occur within an event, in direct relation to it or long after it has occurred. However, as their point of attention is the life story, they seem to identify the life story as the main type of narrative activity for identity construction. More specifically, they are interested in how events, (what we would call experiences of an activity) are connected to the self in stories and how these connections become part of a life story where self-conceptions are formed.

Despite some basic differences in the approaches to how identities are constructed, these authors offer some interesting ideas that support an analytical view on the narrative construction of the cross-activity learner identity. More concretely, they enable the identification of an important analytical element in the narrative construction of meanings, which is the 'connection'. Pasupathi *et al.* (*ibid.*) draw on Habermas and Bluck (2000, in *ibid.*) and talk of 'relations' that the individual establishes between herself and different events in her life. In their words "a self-event connection is the relationship between a given experience and one's sense of self constructed within a particular narrative." (*ibid.,* p. 87)

From their point of view the life story approach needs to be further developed in its understanding of the qualitative difference between ways in which people relate experiences to different aspects of their self. In simple terms, while most of the life story research focuses on what is told and connected, these authors are interested in how connections are made and why an experience might become part of a life story. Their results are summed up in a taxonomy of self-event relations, which includes, for instance, life-stories with no connection, and self-event relations that maintain stability or acknowledge change.[10] Their attempt to formulate a systematic description of how the narrative processing of experiences influences on the personal identity is an interesting contribution because of its intention to capture and describe the junction where the construction of the narrative and the construction of the identity meet. However, their conceptualization raises a crucial question about what actually occurs in these connections. Why do people make connections between experiences and themselves?

Pasupathi *et al.* claim that one purpose of these connections is to obtain global coherence (Habermas & Bluck, 2000 in *ibid*.). This is perceived as an important feature of an integrated and coherent life story, and there are four main types of global coherence: temporal, cultural, causal and thematic (Habermas & Bluck 2000 in Coleman, 2005). One way to understand the need for coherence is that people make connections of different types in order to make sense of the stories about their lives but also in order to make these stories recognizable for the receivers of the story. The story forces the individual to organize the subjective experience so that others can understand it. In other words, global coherence could be understood as responding to the general motive of making sense of the stories that one constructs about oneself. However, as indicated by Pasupathi *et al.*, connections between the event and the self are not always made, even though they might be needed. Furthermore, experiences of events might be left out from the life story, even though they might have been important at the time of their occurrence. Pasupathi *et al.* (*ibid*.) underline the importance of connection-

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[10] For a more detailed description of the taxonomy, please see Pasupathi, Mansour and Brubaker, (2007).

making in narratives and hypothesize that an experience is more likely to be included in a life story if there has been some other kind of narrative activity where the experience was connected to the self (*ibid.*).

Although the life story approach is not applied in the present work, the explanations offered by Pasupathi *et al.* are in agreement with the assumptions about learner identity construction through narrative activity. The connections between the experiences and the self are fundamental for the construction of the cross-activity learner identity. It is also reasonable that experiences that have been connected to the self earlier through a narrative activity are more likely to occur in new narratives (life story or other), and that connections are made to obtain and maintain a sense of coherence. However, none of these affirmations manage to explain why connections are made between the self and the experiences.

The proposal here is that the missing link in the conceptualization offered by Pasupathi *et al.* (*ibid.*) is what we might call 'the product' of the narrative activity. The main outcome of the narrative activity, which aims at the identity construction, is neither the story nor the connections that are made in the story. Through narrative activity meanings about experiences are constructed and the connections that are made are the best analytically identifiable indicators of the construction of these meanings. When a connection is made a meaning is constructed. When a connection between the self and an experience is made a particularly important type of meaning is constructed. This is suggested to be the explanation to why experiences that have been connected to the self earlier, are more likely to occur in a new narrative activity. These meanings have been constructed previously and have maybe been re-produced and reconstructed on several occasions before appearing in a new narrative activity. This explanation is, however, more fitting for a life story approach, which in general has a more monologic view on the narrative construction. From a dialogic point of view, experiences can be ascribed importance and be part of connections even though the meanings about them are non-existent or rudimentary. This is due to the interaction between the narrator and the explicit or implicit 'other'.

Irrespective of the view on the construction as mainly monologic or dialogic, their proposal recognizes that there is an accumulative process as well as a re-interpretative one, where old meanings are reproduced or reconstructed and experiences are given new meanings or even dropped in light of newer experiences. The value of the narrative activity as a meaning constructing activity lies in its potential to enable an assembly of the previously constructed meanings and allow the individual to relive the experiences on which these were based, in order to reconstruct the meanings. The reconstruction can involve a repetition of the old meanings but from a dialogic point of view, there should always be some kind of change, no matter how small, because of changes in the narrative activity as a context. For example, the real or imagined 'other' might change and this would have implications on the course of the activity and the construction that takes place in it. Furthermore, meanings are likely to change depending on how the global coherence of the narrative is developed. In the narrative activity meanings about different experiences need to make sense in relation to each other. More importantly, the meanings need to make sense to the individual in her recognition of herself.

In light of these ideas, the emphasis on the connection, as suggested by Pasupati *et al.* is highly valuable for the conceptualization of learner identity. The connection self-event gives a sense of self. The definition of the sense of self, which is their focus of attention, would require and deserve a thorough exploration of its own. Here, its significance is translated to the notion of learner identity, and as such the self-event connection is understood as a configuration of the "I" that has experiences from learning activities and the experience, which results in a formulation about what these experiences mean to the "me" as a learner.

To further elaborate on these authors' ideas, the focus on the connection between 'self' and 'event' seems somewhat limited and simplified. The suggestion is that there is a transitional step between the self – event connection, which consists of the connection between different events, or as we put it, between different experiences. Their notion would imply that the sense of self is somehow just

there as a kind of constructive epicentre through which each new experience has to pass in order to obtain a meaning for the self. This idea raises the question of how differences between the experiences that are related to the self are resolved in order to maintain coherence. If two experiences are connected to the self in two completely different ways (for example, one implying change and the other implying stability) how is the conflict resolved?

These questions are based on the previously explained assumption that meanings from different experiences mediate the process of sense-making in other experiences. If meanings from previous experiences mediate the meaning construction in a new activity, then the mediation of the 'old' meanings should also be reflected in the narrative treatment of the subjective experiences of different activities.

The assumption is that meanings about oneself are constructed not only through connections between the self and specific isolated experiences but also between different experiences. The connection between two or more experiences can then also be connected to the self and give a generalized meaning about oneself as someone, but even if there is no connection to the self, there is still a construction of meanings about these experiences. To give a simplified example, a student might talk about her experiences of a graduate program and compare two different courses. In one she is doing well because she has a very good teacher and in the other she is barely coping with the workload because the teacher is boring and difficult to understand. This comparison is already a connection in which she is constructing a meaning about herself as a learner in each of the courses. From there she might make a connection to herself as a learner and construct a meaning where she states that her achievements always depend on the teacher that she has. This statement would imply an implicit connection to a number of different experiences which are not treated in the narrative activity but which are assigned the same meaning as the experiences of the two courses.

As previously argued, the basic function of the narrative construction is to connect and reconstruct meanings about experiences, rather than connecting

experiences as such. While the narrative structure and the need for some minimum level of coherence is an underlying force that drives the connection-making, the suggestion here is that the process is facilitated by the addition of a symbolic artifact, e.g. learner identity, which can support the connection-making and thereby mediate the meaning construction and ultimately the process of making sense of the subjective experiences.

Inspired by the thoughts on global coherence it is suggested that coherence in stories about experiences of learning involves two intertwined narrative processes. One is focused on reliving and re-constructing specific experiences and making sense of them through the reconstruction of meanings, and the other is focused on bringing the narrative representation of the different experiences into a coherent story. The first process is focused on the subjective sense-making of the experience and the construction of meanings about oneself. The other is focused on a more objective sense-making of the story of the experience. Together these two processes enable the narrative construction of meanings about oneself as a learner. Although both these processes are conceived as equally important for the construction of the cross-activity learner identity, the analytical approach to each process is significantly different, and the focus of the present work is on the process of subjective sense-making through narrative activity.

If experiences are understood in relation to each other, as stated before, then, coherence depends on the relation that the individual establishes between the meanings that she has constructed about herself in different experiences. Through the narrative process these meanings are tried in relation to each other as well as in relation to new meanings and the self. Reliving the experiences and reconstructing meanings consists in part in establishing new connections and in part in the re-evaluation of old ones. The narrative reconstruction of one experience can only be understood in relation to the narrative reconstruction of other experiences and the totality of all these narrative reconstructions. This implies that each experience has its own story, which is framed by all the different stories as a narrative whole.

In order to make the connections between the experiences and reconstruct the meanings, different aspects of the activity or the event are considered. For instance, in the example above the student focused on the teacher in order to establish a connection between the meanings about the two courses. These aspects are what later on are defined as the building blocks of the identity, that is to say, the raw material that is provided by the particular features of the object oriented activity where the experience occurred. However, as Pasupathi *et al.* (*ibid*.) observe there might be narratives where no connections are made between meanings, or where these connections do not lead to any generalized meanings that are connected to the "me". The theoretical assumption is that the way the experiences are told and connected through the use of the narrative strategy could give an insight into how the making of the connections works, whether there might be any patterns and why some meanings are easier to connect than others.

Through the use of narrative strategies different experiences of learning activities are connected to and contrasted with each other. Some are highlighted others are disguised, hidden, overshadowed or even left out. The connections are not made in a void but rather within the framework of the discursive activity oriented towards identity construction and with the use of the conceptual tool, i.e. (learner) identity. That is to say, the story is constructed according to a specific goal and is configured by this goal and the conceptual tool.

This notion is in line with Bruner's (2001) emphasis on the question of why a narrative needs to be told. According to him the narrative needs to be able to respond to this question in itself. However, if the narrative activity has a specific goal such as identity construction there is at least an implicit reason to why a particular story is told, which is related to the goal. Furthermore, different types of narrative activities can have different types of motives. For instance, the construction of stories in an interview where there is an explicit 'other' present, who guides the narrative activity is not the same as keeping a journal on life events. Similarly, the narratives that are constructed about oneself as a learner in an application letter to a university are not the same as the construction of learner identity in conversations with peers or with parents. This notion is directly

reflected in Leontiev's identification of the object of the activity as that which directs and starts the activity, as stated by Kaptelinin (2005), (previously in chapter 2). As stated before, the difference between different kinds of narrative activities is also connected to the difference between monologic and dialogic features of the narrative activity.

The argumentation has so far mainly focused on the process of construction and its product, i.e. the meanings about the recognition of oneself as someone. It has repeatedly been indicated that the raw material of this construction is the individual's experience of participation in an activity. As with any type of construction, the product does not only depend on the constructive process but also on the material that is used in the construction. The question, then, is how the experiences provide the meanings with content.

2.9. **Subjective experiences – from marks to meanings**

To specifically talk of 'subjective experiences' might be considered a tautological construction since experience cannot occur without some kind of experiencing agent. However, experiences can be shared and people can make use of other people's experiences to construct meanings about life and even themselves. Nevertheless, these shared experiences can never replace the value of a subjective first hand experience of an event in life, i.e. the subjective experience of an activity. One rather extreme way to express the fundamental importance of the subjective experience for identity construction is that until there is one there is no actual need to construct meanings. The necessity to understand and make sense arises from the experience. The question, then, is what occurs in the subjective experience that makes it the primary origin of the raw material of which meanings are constructed.

The suggestion is that the subjective experience always leaves marks in the individual, which can be processed into meanings. The main function of the notion of the mark in this conceptualization is to enable a potential differentiation between different types of raw materials of meaning construction. To clarify, the narrative re-construction of a subjective experience can consist of both marks and

their meanings, and the intent here is to find a theoretical approach that potentially can differentiate between different types of subjective experiences based on indications of the depth and distinctiveness of their marks. However, it is important to note that the actual differentiation of a mark, i.e. unprocessed primary/direct experience, from its meaning in a narrative treatment is assumed to be impossible.

The mark is defined as basic unprocessed global impressions that are left from being in an activity. As such the marks are understood as a first rudimentary undefined experience, which confirms that the individual has been a subject in an activity. The mark is understood as a highly individual property. It occurs within the individual and cannot be shared in explicit and concrete terms. The meanings about the mark can be shared, but the mark as such is essentially a subjective entity.

The definition of the mark is inspired by the French psychologist Henri Wallon (1984) who in his conceptualization of a child's cognitive development described an experience as "… no more than a succession of situations to which the subject reacts. His representation of this experience is the image of these global wholes, while specific features and details are merely the circumstances surrounding an act that have no distinct individuality of their own. Thus, in so called syncretic representation, the qualities of things are at every point fused with each other, whatever their differences and regardless of whether their associations are essential or accidental." (p. not available) [11]

As such, the mark signifies a mainly emotional representation of the experience where the features of the activity and the occurrences in it have melted together and are disorganized or randomly organized and unidentified. The mark is an acknowledgement of having been part of an activity but without an attached organizing meaning that makes sense of the participation. Consider, for instance

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[11] Wallon's text is accessed through an online source (see References) where the online format does not include any page indications. The inconvenience caused by the absence of direct indication of the location of the quotes is acknowledged. However, as Wallon's thoughts leave room for interpretations, direct quotes are used generously in order to make the associative connections explicit.

being in a conversation with someone where the other person suddenly has an unexpected reaction and simply stands up and walks away in rage. The first reaction in such a situation would most probably be a feeling of not knowing what happened. Things are undistinguishable and there is mainly a global sensation of surprise and discomfort. This feeling of knowing that something happened but not knowing exactly what is understood as the basic essence of the mark. In most situations the question of what happened is answered so automatically that people do not become aware of the mark. The marks that are recognized are those who linger on with or without being understood, i.e. with or without a meaning attached to them.

The differentiation between marks that have a meaning and those that do not can be traced in Jarvis' (2009) description of experiences as intuitive and senseless until they have been processed. According to him "All of our experiences of our life-world begin with bodily sensations which occur at the intersection of the person and the life-world. These sensations originally have no meaning for us as this is the beginning of the learning process. Experience begins with disjuncture (the gap between our biography and our perception of our experience) or a sense of not-knowing, but in the first instance experience is a matter of the body receiving sensations, e.g. sound, sight, smell and so on, which appear to have no meaning. Thereafter, we transform these sensations into the language of our brains and minds and learn to make them meaningful to ourselves – this is the first stage in human learning." (p. 25)

Similar to the conceptualization of the mark, Jarvis' identifies the sense of not-knowing in the primary sensory experience. As he explains it, these experiences occur throughout an individual's life. They are initially nothing but a sensation of a difference between previous experiences and the perception of the new experience. However, as individuals learn to recognize the surrounding world many of the sensory experiences lose their value. People become more concerned with meanings and words that they do not understand or do not know and secondary experiences occur (*ibid*.).

A similar notion was formulated in 1947 by Wallon whose idea reads that "… on the one hand, there is direct, personal experience; and on the other, there is language and with it, the social and historical traditions communicated through language. Initially, there is no agreement between these two types of experience, and thus attempts to discover points of agreement may seem to us contradictory or peculiar." (Wallon, 1984, p. not available)

This quote conveys Wallon's conception of development as occurring in a social context and is as such compatible with a sociocultural approach. Language brings meaning to the direct experience. In Jarvis' (2009) formulation secondary experiences are mediated trough speech, written word and visual mediation. Even Jarvis' 'disjuncture' is detectable in Wallon's conceptualization, where the experience with language and the direct experience might seem incompatible or impossible to connect. The experience might just not make sense and there is no way to put it into words in order to make sense of it. An ordinary example of this is when people have difficulties describing how they feel in a particular situation. However, Wallon's ideas add another curious dimension to an understanding of how the direct experiences or marks are provided with meanings through language. From a child's point of view using the language is an experience in itself. Drawing on this idea the sense that is made when meanings are constructed can be conceived of as an experience in its own right. With the meanings the initial intuitive experience changes and the change is an experience in itself. This particular aspect is relevant to the re-construction of experiences through narrative processing, where the experience can be relived and actually re-experienced through the narrative re-construction. But before the line of argument reaches the narrative treatment, there remains some more exploration of the mark.

The assumption is that independent of the language mediated meaning construction, marks in themselves can be more or less deep and more or less distinctive. The depth is envisioned as referring to the emotional impact and the distinctiveness refers to the extent to which one mark stands out from other marks. For example, the marks that an ordinary day at work leaves are most

probably neither very deep nor distinct, whereas if something extraordinary happens the marks that are left of that particular day will be different, depending on what happened. For a bank worker a robbery would, for example, most probably leave both very deep and distinctive marks. This day would in all likelihood be remembered for a long time whereas most of the other days would melt into each other in the memory. In everyday talk people can refer to experiences that have marked them deeply, implying that the experience has had a significant impact on their lives and who they are. This colloquial expression reflects the theoretical assumption that some marks might be more memorable and influential than others. However, some experiences can leave deep marks without being very distinct, because of the constant repetition. Working at the bank every day for 25 years without any bank robbery or any other extraordinary can deepen marks and solidify the meanings that were once constructed through a process of constant re-construction. But because these marks, despite their depth, lack distinctiveness, they will most probably not be conceived of as being as significant as those that make an experience distinguish itself from other. Nevertheless, this too can change through a re-constructive process. For instance, when people talk about their upbringing and how it used to be has influenced them, they are mostly describing the repetitive experiences where small marks were more or less carved in slowly but consistently.

Hence, the idea is that all experiences leave marks although not all marks are as important because they lack depth and distinctiveness, and that all marks can be processed into meanings whereby the marks change. Repeated processes of re-construction can even considerably change the qualities of a mark, making it more or less deep and more or less distinctive. This idea underlies one of the basic purposes of psychotherapy, which is to enable processing of early marks of experiences whereby their potentially negative influence on the individual's life can be reduced. The construction of meanings makes sense of the mark, but because meanings change and with them the mark, so can the sense that is made. This point is relevant for the differentiation of different kinds of experiences such as peak experiences, which will be treated later.

Although Jarvis' description of primary and secondary experiences is more readily accessible, Wallon's suggestive conceptualization offers more clues to an elaboration of the essence of the marks. Similar to Bakhtin who places the individual in a situation where the event occurs, Wallon views experience as occurring in the practical situation, which here is understood as related to Leontiev's subject in the object oriented activity. His observation of the processes that occur once the experience has occurred are highly insightful for the formulation of the meaningless mark: "When personal experience becomes separated from practical situations, two types of thought emerge that seem to be in competition, though both stem from the same causes. One is a kind of perceptual realism that retains only those aspects or features of a given thing that make particularly vivid or striking impressions on the senses, a pure phenomenalism which reduces reality to an infinite mutability of diverse forms or objects. The other is a kind of confused image, in which the part played by impressions derived directly from things and the part originating in the subject— that is, in his affectivity as well as his personal activity—remain undifferentiated: the practical merges with the perceptual." (Wallon, 1984, p. not available)

To begin with, the description of the experience as separate from the practical situation is a way to explain the here presented idea that the occurrences in an activity are the raw material for later construction of either meanings about that particular experience or meanings across activities, whereby different experiences are connected. Moreover, Wallon observes the two types of cognitive processes occur, one where the remainings of the experience are basically strong sensory impressions, and the other where the individual as subject and the occurrences in the activity are more or less indistinguishable. The suggestion is that this second process characterizes the marks that form the basis of identity construction. This process involves a kind of overlap between the individual and the social, where there is a confused and undefined sensation of having been part of something significant but without knowing what. These experiences are intuitively meaningful but practically meaningless. They make an impact but the significance of their influence is to be found in a constructive process where meanings are attached to the mark, whereby it gains form, structure and the

individual can separate herself from the activity, its features and the occurrences in order to reconnect to these in a meaningful way. The re-construction of these occurrences and the connections between the self and the features of the activity are conceived as an essential part of identity construction.

Previously it was argued that meaning mediate the construction of other meanings about an experience and one's recognition in it. This explanation is adequate as long as there is at least one mediating meaning to use and build on. But what if there are no meanings whatsoever that can mediate the construction of meanings out of a mark? Theoretically, there has to be a kind of 'original meanings', which always are the first of their kind before the chain of reconstructed meanings is started. How are these original meanings constructed? There are two potential solutions to this problem and their explanation requires a detour around the issue of the narrative activity before returning to it.

One possible explanation to how an experience can gain meaning without any other mediating meaning is that connections can occur not only between the meanings about the experience, but also between the marks. However, the primary feature of the experience should be reflected in the connection, meaning that it is a kind of primary connection. Two things are connected, but it might not be clear to the individual why or how. Connections of this type can be the basis of a first rudimentary meaning. This idea can again be traced to the cognitive development of the child in Wallon's (1984) conceptualization where the basic unit of thought is the connection between two entities. In Wallon's own words:
"… thought exists only through the structures it imposes on things. Initially these structures are very elementary. At the origin of thought we can note the existence only of paired elements. The elementary unit of thought is this binary structure, not the terms that constitute it. Duality precedes unity.(…) At the sensorimotor level, the step beyond the pair is the configuration; at the intellectual level, it is the sequence—that is, an ordered succession of either objects or events. In both cases the elementary structure is integrated into an order that enables it to pass to a new operational level. In concrete situations, the elementary reaction is

integrated by means of this configuration forming capacity that represents the dynamic union of space and time, as yet not dissociated."(p. not available)

Consequently, the primary meaning can be understood as a basic connection between two marks where one experience in the present is connected to another experience in the near or distant past through an initial structuring of the objects or events, as Wallon expresses it. At this level of processing the experiences are still not separated from the activity. In other words, the mark is still a feature of the occurrence in the activity. This, for example, is the case with the strong and sudden appearance of memories, commonly denominated 'flashbacks'. Space and time are not dissociated and therefore the flashback implies that the individual situates herself in the activity. However, through this binary connection, processing on a new operational level, where the experiences are structured and organized, is facilitated and meaning construction enabled.

An everyday example of this type of elementary connection and primary meanings is the sense of déjà vu, where some aspect of the situation in the present seems familiar but is not identified. It is really a sensation of a memory rather than actual memory. If and when the familiar aspect is identified the connection is immediately made to the other experience, whereby the experience becomes secondary and with that the connection as well. The meanings that are constructed through direct primary connections between experiences are envisioned as a kind of pseudo-meanings. They might fulfil the function of making temporary sense but unless there is a constructive activity that processes this pseudo-meaning it is not likely to be able to mediate the construction of other meanings. However, the suggestion is that these primary connections can be crucial drivers in the process towards actual meaning construction. They instigate it and keep it going.

An illustrative and well-known literary example of this type of meaning construction, which also includes the successive narrative activity for the construction of 'real' meanings is present in Marcel Proust's epic story, 'Remembrance of things past', and the famous initiation of the stories of the past.

The memories that are unravelled in the story are triggered by the scent of a Madeleine cookie. The sensory experience takes the narrator back and past experiences are experienced as if they were happening in the present (as if the experiences were not separated from their situations). Proust's story focuses on the past and the cookie is really just a narrative trick to get the story going. However, the example clearly illustrates how one primary experience can be connected to another one, whereby the meaning construction is induced. In the case of Proust, it is also, quite fittingly a narrative activity that frames the chain of connections between experiences, where one leads to another.

Another possible explanation is probably the most practical. It is also essentially sociocultural in its formulation as it is based on Vygotsky's famous general genetic law of cultural development, which dictates that all higher mental functions first appear on the interpsychological level and thereafter on intrapsychological level (Wertsch, 1985). Following this general law, primary experiences that do not make sense can be given meaning through interaction. In plain words, in absence of her own meanings the individual can share the meanings of somebody else. As this law states that the interpsychological eventually becomes intrapsychological, it means that in order to experience the subjective sense of self the individual would have to construct her own meanings. This idea is also present in Wallon's conceptualization of the language as the carrier of cultural and historical meanings through which the child understands her direct experiences. Another connecting notion is the previously mentioned Discursive patterns, which can be seen as a kind of shared meanings which is provided by the sociocultural context.

These types of borrowed meanings have a particularly interesting feature in that they extend the subjective experience into the future. What does not make sense now, might potentially make sense tomorrow or next year. This type of meaning construction is commonly used consciously when people who are more experienced in something share their experiences and meanings in an attempt to support the meaning construction of others. With regard to identity construction in specific, different kinds of mentor programs amongst professionals are

intended to create a system of shared meanings where the adept can use the experienced mentor's meanings as a meaning mediator until she constructs her own or maybe reconstructs the mentor's meanings as her own.

Both potential solutions to the problem of the original meaning imply that these will at some point require some form of discursive processing. For example, the mentor that shares meanings is probably using a kind of narrative activity where experiences are relived and meanings reconstructed, where by they are shared with the adept. So, at this point we go back to the construction of meaning, mediated by the narrative activity. In the previous section the life story approach was touched. However, as the field of research about narratives is as vast and diverse as the field of identity research, a closer look at how the construction of meanings depends on the narrative activity as well as the marks and meanings that are re-constructed. Earlier, it was established that narrative activity enables the processing of experiences whereby meanings are constructed. At this point, let us have a closer look at the features of the narrative activity and how these can be connected to different types of experiences in terms of the marks and the meanings that are re-constructed.

2.10 **Features of the narratives and the experiences**

Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou (2008) describe three main fields of narrative research; event centred, experience centred and co-constructed narratives. These authors explain that both the event and experience centred approaches assume that the event and the experience, respectively, are individual internal representations of phenomena, which are given external expression through narratives. What distinguishes them is that event based research perceives these representations as fairly constant, whereas experience-based research emphasize the dynamic and changing nature of these representations across time and contexts, so that one person can produce very different stories from the same subjective experience.

The third field, which is concerned with the co-constructive narratives in for instance conversations or interviews, assumes a Bakhtinian dialogic perspective,

much similar to Wortham's (2001) perspective described earlier. This field is more interested in the social patterns, and narratives are often seen as dialogically constructed stories rather than as expressions of internal states.

As the line of discussion has demonstrated so far, the present work is inclined to assume a mixture of the experience centred and co-constructive narrative approaches. The supposition is that while it is difficult to know to what extent representation of experiences change, it is safe to assume that when they are ascribed meaning through the application of a mediating tool, they also change their form. Consequently, in identity construction experiences are conceived as dynamic and changing to the extent that they are processed and given meaning through some kind of discursive activity with mediating tools. Moreover, because the narrative activity is perceived as a dialogic process, and because conceptual tools can be different, i.e. different identity concepts, the same experience can be ascribed different meanings, (for instance, as in the case of the above given example of the act of driving a car, which can be used to construct multiple identities). If the representation of an experience is not already dynamic before narrative treatment, it acquires dynamic features after such a process in which it is relived, connected to other experiences and ascribed meaning in a number of potential ways.

So far, the emphasis has mainly been on meaning constructing qualities of the narrative construction. However, as it was indicated in the previous section, narrative activity involves two process that are interlocked, namely one that constructs meanings and one that constructs stories. It was also mentioned that the focus here is on the first, which would involve some kind of narrative analysis. Therefore, the focus on the narrative structure is limited to indicators that could support the identification of a story about a subjective experience of learning.

A story is comprised of five basic elements, which are the agent, the action, the goal, the setting and the instrument, with the addition of trouble (Burke, 1945 in Bruner, 1987b). Trouble is an addition rather than a basic constituent because it

can establish a relation between two or more of the other elements, when there is a mismatch between them (Bruner, 1987b). According to Bruner (*ibid*.) the trouble drives the story. A recurrent example of a mismatch that causes trouble in a story is a person who cannot attain some kind of a goal, because the setting is not adequate and the instruments not available.

The description of the basic constituents of the story could be applied to any story. The narrative activities that are treated here represent a particular kind of stories, which fall under the category of autobiographies or self-told stories. These stories are different from others in that the main agent of the story and the person telling the story are the same (*ibid*.). Furthermore, an autobiographical narrative is based on the particular events that have occurred, are occurring or will occur in the life of a real person. These stories are, hence, a kind of narrative representations of real life and as such the story in which the narrator positions herself is a narrative reality. Bruner (1996) describes the features of this narrative reality. He identifies "nine universals of narrative realities". The focus here will be on the elements that are identified as important for the identification of stories that unfold the narrative representation of learning experiences.

The first necessary universal element concerns the question of time. Bruner observes that narrative time does not necessarily correspond to chronological time but to the relevance of the actions that take place within its limits. Consider, for example, the previously presented fictive case of the narrative representation of the years in primary school, which in the narrative might appear as an instant or as an eternity. Ricouer's (1984) philosophical approach to narratives displays a similar notion where "…time becomes human time to the extent it is organized after the manner of narrative; narrative in turn is meaningful to the extent it portrays the features of temporal existence." (p. 3) The representation of the temporal dimension of an experience is an integral part of its narrative reconstruction and a strong indicator of the subjective origins of the experience. At the same time, the temporal orientation in the narrative construction conveys that the experience is also embedded in the objective world.

In the narrative reconstruction of experiences the aspect of time is also a basic connector, in that it reflects the relation between experiences in the individual's biography. An experience takes place before another but after or parallel to some other experience. The temporal dimension enables the reconstruction of the individual trajectory.

Bruner (*ibid*.) also identifies the dialogic interconnectedness of the parts of a story and their function in the story as a whole. Narratives are hermeneutically composed and require a corresponding interpretation. This notion can be connected to the idea that experiences can only be understood in relation to each other and that the stories about different experiences need to be considered as a whole. This idea is in line with Bakhtinian literary analysis, which assumes that "It is only by putting the order of the plot against a background of a (hypothetical) story that the figural, textually imposed aspect of the former becomes apparent." (Holquist, 2002, p. 113) This Bakhtinian notion is strongly connected to one of the many and complicated features of the chronotope in literary analysis. Without entering into the complexities, it is here a reminder that while each story about a particular subjective experience is an important entity in the narrative construction of learner identity, its value and function can only be understood in light of its relation to other stories. For example, an experience cannot be important on its own. The importance is relative to the experiences that preceded it or came after. Consequently, an experience can be said to be ascribed some kind of initial meaning just by becoming part of a story, in which it is placed in relation to other experiences, not necessarily according to a chronological ontogenic order, but rather according to the dialogically constructed narrative order.

Bruner (*ibid*.) reproduces the centrality of trouble in stories in his universals of narrative reality. His claim is that a story worth telling usually is based on some kind of trouble. In his view a typical feature of autobiographies in western societies is the accentuation of turning points, which he identifies as a way for people to free themselves from their history in their self-consciousness (Bruner, 2001). In these terms, the turning point could be understood as the experience

where some kind of friction or conflict was lived, which is ascribed a particularly important meaning in the narrative process and which defines the construction of the meanings about the experiences that came before and after it.

This particular aspect of the narrative is rather problematic in two respects. To begin with, it implies that an experience where nothing especial occurred might not be worth talking about and that a story without dramatic twist and turns is not interesting. From an identity construction point of view any experience can be worth telling, since identities are constructed through the meanings that are constructed about oneself and the experiences, and strictly speaking, even an experience where nothing emotionally extraordinary occurs can be given dramatic meanings. Nevertheless, based on Bruner's idea (*ibid.*) the assumption is that the presence of some kind of trouble, conflict or friction in the narrative representation of an experience is an additional way to distinguish between different types of experiences. The idea is also relevant in connection to the view on narrative activity as a site where conflicts and unresolved issues can be handled through the representation in the narrative form (Francis, 2003; McAdams, 1993). In simple terms, this would imply that what appeared to be a conflict at the beginning of the story, is no longer so at the end of the story.

The potential resolution of the problem brings attention to the second problem, which is related to the dialogic nature of the narrative activity. If a problem can be resolved in the narrative, then, it should also be possible to create a problem in the narrative. In fact, subjective experiences can consciously or subconsciously be dramatized in the narrative representation in order to make the story more interesting for the explicit or implicit 'other'. It is also possible that an experience, which is fairly unproblematic on its own, obtains problematic features in relation to other experiences, thereby creating trouble in the story. In other words, the representation of an experience can render itself more or less suitable to become a narrative knot that needs to be resolved, but this knot can also be constructed in the narrative treatment.

From a dialogic point of view, it is also required that we consider the narrative activity in terms of the context where the stories are constructed. Experiences can be remembered and represented as more or less exciting, surprising and out of the ordinary, depending on the context. The experiences that an alcoholic talks about in an AA meeting might not cause much commotion because it is shared by many others, whereas in the context of a dinner with friends, the same experience can be experienced as much more emotionally charged, because the interlocutors are not as initiated into the reality of an alcoholic.

It should be noted that these two problematic aspects of the centrality of trouble are strongly related to the interconnectedness of meaning construction and story construction in the narrative activity. Experiences give stories and stories give meanings to the experiences whereby the experience is changed. While 'the trouble' might be an essential element of the story, not all stories about experiences can be expected to represent the experience with trouble. However, as indicated above, an assembly of many different stories about different experiences can create conflicts through the representation of the experiences in relation to each other. The sense of coherence is challenged and the trouble appears as an inconsistency or a threat to the sense of consistency and coherence in the meanings through the construction of the story. When this occurs, it is because two or more experiences have been related, juxtaposed or connected in some other way. As it was argued earlier, the connection indicates meaning construction. Consequently, the appearance of some kind of trouble could also be understood as one driver of not only the story but also the meaning construction.

The treatment of the trouble and its resolution has so far focused on their narrative representation. However, the resolution of a conflict or a problem can also be an innate feature of the experience itself. On the subjective trajectory of each individual some experiences will stand out more than others, because they cause a greater gap to previous experiences. These are the experiences where meanings from previous experiences were not functional mediators and the individual experienced an explicit challenge in trying to cope with the new situation. One common example of this type of experiences is the occurrence of a

crisis of some sort such as the loss of a loved one, a professional failure, migration, etc. These experiences can also be of a positive nature such as finding a job after a long time of unemployment, unexpected praise or recognition, meeting someone and falling in love, etc. One way to conceptualize these experiences is in terms of 'key experiences' or 'peak experiences'.

Maslow (1968) has described peak experiences in terms of transcendental almost spiritual and primarily positive experiences where the individual gains some kind of new insight about herself. These experiences are in their essence mainly experiential as opposed to behavioural, and idiosyncratic rather than normative (Privette, 2001). The accounts of peak experiences, mainly within humanistic psychology, prove that they refer to a highly particular type of events that cause significant turns in the life and self-perception of the individual.

Evidently, these definitions considerably raise the bar for which experiences that can be identified as peak experiences. However, if we focus on the core of Maslow's conception of peak experiences it becomes clear that they are distinguished by a strong emotional and affective reaction or experience. Because of their experiential character they focus on the individual dimension rather than on the social, implying that the event in which they occur might not seem particularly extraordinary from an objective point of view, but the combination of that particular event with one specific individual results in some sort of strong emotional reaction in the individual. It might even be difficult to describe the occurred in a structured and comprehensible way. Accounts like these can be detected among persons who feel that they have been saved through a religious or spiritual experience, where they met god or had a spiritual insight or vision. The influence of peak experiences, understood as extreme high impact experiences, can undeniably play an important part in the construction of identities. The newborn religious, for example, find a religious identity. However, if we follow this strict definition it is not likely that we find many or even any peak experiences in most life stories, and even less in narrative constructions of learner identity.

However, with McAdams' (1993) approach to experiences with especial impact and their reconstruction in life stories, it should be possible to identify considerably more experiences that fall under this category. In his conceptualization the impact of the experience can only be understood and lived subjectively, meaning that what might seem like insignificant from the outside, can hold a crucial position in the individual's memories of her life. McAdams' (*ibid.*) denomination for these experiences, which represent climaxes in the life story, is 'nuclear episodes'. These are memories of selected and reconstructed events "…in particular times and places, which have assumed especially prominent positions in our understanding of who we were and, indeed, who we are." (*ibid.*, p. 296)

With regard to educational experiences in specific, Yair (2009) uses the neighbouring concepts of 'key experiences, which are experiences that are particularly meaningful and result in 'turning points'. He defines turning points as "…a change in trajectory, pointing to a break in the sequence which leads form the past to the future." (*ibid.*, p. 353) Compared to 'peak experiences', 'turning points' are less dramatic and extreme. Moreover, Yair's understanding of the turning point exhibits more dialogic features, where the experience of a turning point occurs in interaction with the context. An important aspect of his thesis is that educational turning points can be deliberately induced through adjustments in the activity and the interaction. Yair (*ibid.*) also emphasizes that educational turning points can be both positive and negative and the wide prevalence of negative turning points should not be underestimated.

Yair's (*ibid.*) approach is undeniably interesting for the present work. Firstly, he is interested in educational contexts in specific, and secondly he offers an interaction focused sociocultural view on how turning points occur in interaction. And finally, he offers a fairly concrete definition of turning points and a conceptualization thereof that lowers the bar on the level on how emotionally charged and how impacting the experience has to be in order to distinguish itself among other experiences. Basically a clear sense of 'before and after' would do.

Irrespective of the choice of term to describe these high impact experiences and differences in conceptual and analytical approach, these notions indicate that there is an interconnected process between the qualitative features of the subjective experience and its narrative reconstruction. Experiences can be given meanings that make them stand out, but the emotional processes that were involved in the experiences can also generate stories where some experiences are perceived as more important than others.

With this observation in mind, the experiences that leave marks are assumed to be particularly emotionally charged and have a clear subjective dimension, in the sense that the individual clearly identifies herself as the person who experienced, lived and felt something. In contrast to peak experiences, however, experiences that leave strong marks are not envisioned as very integrative (Privette, 2001), but rather fragmented. This means that the experience in itself does not necessarily provide the individual with a meaning about the experience or about what it means. When an experience is identified as a peak or key experience, this implies that some kind of meaning construction has already taken place, which assigns a particular meaning to that specific experience in relation to other experiences. Maslow (1968) describes how a peak experience brings new light to the individual's understanding of the world and herself. In the framework of our conceptualization this implies that new meanings are constructed through a series of different and new connections between experiences. Although the present text is not the place to enter into a polemic elaboration of the Maslowian view on peak experiences, the basic question that his notion raises is how an experience could bring meaning to other experiences just by being experienced. The claim here is that any experience will at all times require some kind of discursive mediating activity or a technology of the self that enables meaning construction. Otherwise the experience remains a heavily emotionally charged experience, which is remembered and even felt but makes no real sense.

Consequently, the marks that an experience leaves require discursive processes in order to make sense and become part of the meanings about oneself, i.e. in order to be integrated into the (learner) identity. This is where the use of narrative

strategies becomes relevant as means to restore a sense of coherence. Until these strategies are used, the marks that are left do not have any or limited meaning because they do not constitute a part of a system of meanings. If the emotional charge of the experience is as overwhelming as it is believed to be in peak experiences, it is even possible to imagine the mark as having features of sensory experience, as described earlier in Jarvis' (2009) terms. This idea can be traced in the identification of memories as often consisting of images and sensory impressions rather than of cognitive structures. So, the narrative treatment of the memory is a way to define and organize the experience (Francis, 2003).

Informed by these ideas, the marks are conceptualized as forming part of a tacit and organic structure of potentially enacted but not necessarily formulated meanings that are influencing on how the individual recognizes and positions herself in different situations. The idea of an organic structure refers to the rough, random and unconscious processing and organization of experiences as a result of simply having lived them, but not having processed them consciously through some kind of technology of the self such as a narrative activity. The narrative strategy enables the organization and structuring of the experiences and their marks in relation to each other. The idea can be connected to the symbolic interactionist view that events, emotions and situations that people have lived are relived and created in a "real way" when they are given a symbolic representation (Francis, 2003).

The organization and reconstruction is here envisioned in terms of specific connections that are made between experiences and the individual as a self. As the presentation will explain later, the suggestion is that the particular identity constructing organization implies three main types of connections: 1) between meanings about oneself as something and the specific activity or type of activity (e.g. I'm good at this.), 2) between different meanings of this type (e.g. I did well last time so I shouldn't do too bad this time.), and 3) between generalized meanings and the self (e.g. I've always been good at this.).

In summary, narrative strategies are identified as necessary for the construction of identities in general, and in our particular case, for the construction of learner identity. But, as it has been repeatedly pointed out, they can only partially explain the process of identity construction since what occurs in the activity also results in identity construction, namely the in-activity learner identity. Regardless of the modality of construction, experiences of being or not being recognized as a learner and the nature of this recognition are based on subjective experiences of learning, either in the moment or in the reconstruction of past and future experiences through narrative strategies.

In light of the above made presentation of the main theoretical influences and their contributions to the conceptualization of identities in general, we now move on to a more detailed description of learner identity.

3. Conceptualizing learner identity construction

3.1. **Learner identity – the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner**

Let us simply begin by offering a first rudimentary definition of learner identity, (LI)[12]. Consequent to the line of argument and the described function of identity and available definitions of identity, which have informed this work, LI is understood as *the individual's sense of recognition as a learner based on the constantly re-constructed meanings about herself as a learner with a higher or lower level of disposition and capacity to learn in different kinds of contexts and situations.*

We assume that there is always a potential sense of recognition as a learner in the way that any individual that has at one time or another experienced having learned something, could also use this experience for the construction of meanings about herself as a learner. The basic requirement for the actual construction of an LI is that the individual has had one or more experiences of learning and is provided with the means or, in Foucault's (1988) words, the "technologies" to do so, i.e. the conceptual artifacts and the right kind of object-oriented activities. The proposal is that there are four main kinds of activities that can support LI construction: 1) those which are explicitly directed towards learning, whether or not the individual experiences learning or not in them, 2) activities which result in an experience of learning, even though they were not directed towards learning, that is to say the learning occurred as a secondary effect of the activity, 3) situated or local discursive activities that process the experiences from a type 1 or 2 activity, and 4) discursive activities which are specifically directed towards LI construction.

Type 1 activities are any kind of activities that occur within the framework of formal educational settings or activities in informal settings that are specifically aimed at learning, for instance learning how to use a computer program, how to cook a certain dish, how to ride a bike with a parent, speak a language through

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[12] As the text will solely focus on learner identity from now on, the abbreviation LI will be used.

conversations with friends, etc. Type 2 activities are those where one kind of experience results in a learning experience. Often different life experiences are ascribed this quality. The saying that, "You live and you learn.", refers to this particular type of activities. Therefore these can be any kind of activities, in which the individual experiences some kind of learning. These experiences are particularly interesting from a LI construction point of view, since the learning that takes place in them might not be experienced in the actual moment of learning, but is something that is ascribed to this meaning in retrospective.

Type 1 and 2 activities are not oriented towards identity construction per se, but experiences of participation in them are the source of the constructive raw material. However, as it was argued in the previous chapter, each time the individual is faced with a new situation, emotional marks and/or meanings from previous experiences become activated. If there are more or less elaborate meanings from previous experiences, their activation will mean that the individual is trying to understand and make sense of the new situation in connection to the old ones. In other words, the old meanings will potentially mediate the construction of new meanings, whereby they old meanings are more or less reconstructed into new ones. To clarify, the new meaning can be the old one with some or no adjustments or involve a radical change in the entire system of meanings, which could for instance happen with some kind of high impact experiences. Hence, meanings mediate and are reconstructed at the same time, i.e. identity is both the mediator and the product of the construction.

This process of (re-)construction[13] involves an explicit and implicit interaction between the individual and the conditions of the site of the new experience, (the activity), where meanings are evaluated, tried and (re-)constructed. This (re-) construction is enacted in the individual's mental (and physical) positioning in the activity, her actions, her level of active participation, her discourse, etc. In the end, the motive of these actions is to gain a sense of recognition as a learner of some kind in the activity. While any action can be an enactment of the meanings

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[13] (Re-)construction with brackets is used from here on to indicate that each new construction can result in different levels of change in the meaning, but regardless of how much the meaning changes it is always a new construction, even if it nothing changes in the meaning.

about oneself as a learner, there are acts that have the individual's recognition of herself as a learner as the main or secondary purpose. These actions that are mainly aimed at obtaining or maintaining a sense of recognition as someone are simply called acts of recognition. As the topic here is the sense of recognition as a learner, the focus will be on the acts of recognition that revolve around the individual as a learner. However, it should be noted that these acts can be oriented towards any identity in any context, but not all acts of recognition will be as relevant or adequate in the context. Their relevance is mainly defined by the object of the activity and contextual Discursive patterns. More concretely, in a learning activity, acts of recognition that recognize the individual's gender belonging should not be as relevant, unless contextual Discursive patterns dictate that girls should be one type of learners and boys another type. In the case of LI, the acts of recognition that are focused on the individual as a learner are mainly prioritized in type 1 activities, where the activity is explicitly directed towards learning. In the other types of activities they can occur, but might not have the same level of relevance or priority.

Acts of recognition can either be directed towards the individual or the individual can direct an act of direction towards someone else. Because recognition, positive or negative, always implies co-recognition and is a reciprocal process, the recognition of someone else is a potential source of recognition of oneself. Acts of recognition can consist of explicit positive or negative feedback, raising a hand to respond to a question as well as being given the word to speak, reacting to others comments, either verbally or through implicit communication (e.g. facial expressions), or simply asking for explicit feedback. Ultimately, participation is in itself an act of recognition, because, in order for participation to make sense, the individual needs to have that participation recognized. In summary, any act that, in one way or another, can generate a sense of recognition as a learner is an act of recognition. One way to describe the acts theoretically is that they are interpsychological processes of meaning construction, which can transfer into the intrapsychological sense of recognition. They are conceived as the analytical window to the meanings that an individual constructs about herself as a learner while she is in the activity. In this line, the reconstruction of meanings about

oneself as a learner within a type 1 or 2 activity is defined as the construction of the short timescale *in-activity LI construction*. This construction is made through both discursive and non-discursive resources and occurs through interaction and participation in the learning activity.

Type 3 activities are discursive activities that occur in temporal and potentially also spatial proximity to the learning activity. In other words they can occur while the learning activity is going on or in close relation to it and they can do so in a more or less organized way. These activities can consist of conversations with peers on a lunch break about experiences of a class, an exam, a teacher, a subject matter, etc., or conversations with parents about how a class is going, or evaluative talks with teachers, or any other kind of conversation that might not have LI construction as the main focus, but where the discursive activity is focused on the construction of meanings about the learning experience and oneself as a learner in that experience. These can be understood as a kind of small local stories, or narratives-in-interaction (Georgakopoulou, 2006).

As indicated, the type 3 discursive activities may or may not have the construction of a sense of recognition as a learner as the primary object. The most explicit manifestation of whether the discourse is aimed at the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner or not, is probably the presence of any acts of recognition. Just as in the case of type 1 and 2 activities, these activities are sites where acts of recognition can be enacted. Feedback can be sought and be given. A person can for instance ask her peers whether something she said in class made sense or not to the others, or whether they are experiencing the same kind of problems with a certain exercise. In short, any discursive act that is focused on the construction of a sense of recognition and belonging as a learner would indicate that meanings about oneself as a learner are being (re-)constructed.

This (re-)construction of meanings about oneself as a learner in close connection to participation in a specific activity, be it outside of its spatial/temporal setting or within the same setting but in a parallel activity, (for instance when students' conversation becomes off-task in the context of a small group work), is defined

as the construction of *on-activity LI*, in the sense that the negotiation is focused on a specific ongoing activity. To concretize the differentiation between the in-activity and the on-activity LI construction, imagine that in the case of the first the individual is within the context of the learning activity, whereas in the latter she is looking at it and herself in it from outside.

Finally, type 4 activities are discursive activities that are specifically aimed at LI-construction. These consist of the application of narrative strategies in the re-organization, reliving and re-processing of subjective experiences of activities where learning occurred, or where it was supposed to occur even though it did not. In contrast to type 3 activities the focus of attention is no longer just one specific activity but the experiences of all or any activities. This construction always takes place outside of a specific learning activity. The change of activity space is defined by the change of the object of the activity, which is the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner in specific. Type 4 activities are, hence, narrative activities where experiences are relived, meanings from these experiences are processed, connected and disconnected, the sense of coherence and consistency is challenged and tried and generalized meanings about oneself as a learner are (re-)constructed. Because this construction uses material from many different real or imagined subjective experiences of learning in activities it is defined as the long timescale *cross-activity LI construction*.

In summary, LI construction is conceptualized as taking place in three different modalities; *in-activity*, *on-activity* and *cross-activity*. While they all aim at the construction of the overall LI and are all needed for a full LI construction to take place, they are different with regard to their mode and site of construction, their time scale coverage, and ultimately their function. In general, the on- and in-activity construction are more focused on the participation in the activity, whereas the cross-activity is the mediating tool than can make sense of the participation. Furthermore, the treatment and processing of previous meanings is made differently in each modality. The in- and on-activity construction is mainly concerned with their (re-)construction in relation to the new experience, whereas the cross-activity construction involves the re-organization of these meanings

through connections in order to establish new generalized cross-contextual meanings about oneself. While the in-activity and the on-activity construction can be both spontaneous and planned, the cross-activity LI requires the framework of a narrative activity that is aimed at its construction. All these modalities are dialogically related and interdependent. What happens in one will have an effect on the construction in the other modalities. However, as it was argued earlier, not all the meanings that come from in- and on-activity construction are necessarily included in the cross-activity LI, although they all have the potential to do so. The question of how this selection is made is one of the concerns of the present work.

One potential advantage of this conceptualization in three modalities is that it sheds further light on and explains the previously mentioned dual nature of identities as both dynamic and changing. Formulated in this way, this is no longer a contradiction, nor a problem since it makes perfect sense that it is both, but to a different extent and with different functions depending on the mode and the site of construction. In other words, the modality of the construction defines how much change is needed.

Following this line of argument, this particular feature of identity as more dynamic on the one hand and more resistant to change on the other hand should not be ascribed to the identity as such, but rather its construction and function, which is taking place on a continuum with two extreme ends, where one is *change and (re-)construction* and the other is *maintenance and resistance*. Hence, it is not the LI as such that is both dynamic and fluid. Instead, its function in different modalities defines whether its construction should promote a change of the meanings that constitute the sense of recognition or maintain these meanings as intact as possible.

In the end, because learner identity, just as any other identity, is characterized by its dialogic nature, the construction will always aim at enabling movement, but as previously described, movement can be resisted and inhibited.

	Cross-Activity	On-Activity	In-Activity
Temporal perspective	Long timescale	Short timescale	Short timescale
Site of construction	Narrative activity	Discursive/Narrative Interaction	Interaction in learning activity
Phenomenological modality	Representational	Representational	Experiential
Mode of construction	Narrative strategy	Discourse in interaction	Action in activity (discursive and non-discursive)
Constructive action	Connect marks and meanings from different experiences, (re-)construct them and formulate generalized meanings about oneself as a learner	(Re-)construct context specific meanings, confirm or discard this (re-)construction	Primary experience of the activity, enact connection to marks and previous generalized meanings about oneself as a learner
Interpsychological function	Mediate sense-making in and across activities	Support and evaluate the meaningfulness of the activity	Enable and support meaningful participation
Intrapsychological function	Support sense of coherence and continuity	Support the sense of recognition as a learner in the activity	Regulate and supports the sense of recognition as a learner in the activity

Table 1. Overview of the three modalities and their role in the complete LI construction.

It might be easy to assign this to the individual's resistance, but from a sociocultural point of view, the explanations are more likely to be that the individual does not know how to enable change due to a lack of competency to do so, or that the (re-)construction is complicated because the previous meanings of the individual are too incompatible with the new experience to enable even an attempt at change.

Moreover, because the (re-)construction is situated and is defined by the activity, regardless of type, the complicating factor can be that the activity does not facilitate the (re-)construction of meanings because it is too rigid in its structure. In case of the cross-activity LI, its possibility to change depends on both the narrative activity where it is constructed and the characteristics of the activities where it has mediated the individual's experiences of herself as a learner. As signalled in the previous chapter, the more diverse these have been, the more likely is it that the cross-activity LI manifests signs of diversity, variation and fluidity in the narrative construction, and the more likely is it to be able to mediate different kinds of experiences.

Ideally, a complete analysis of an individual's LI construction should consider her trajectory through all four kinds of activity, and all three modalities, at least during a period of time in order to be able to establish how the four sites interact with each other. The present work took the modest approach to study the construction of LI in type 4 activities, that is to say, in activities that use narrative strategy with the aim of constructing a cross-activity LI. However, as the presentation of the results will reveal, the design of the interview as a narrative activity involved a type 3 activity (focus on a specific activity) with on-activity LI construction, within the cross-activity construction.

So, engagement in activities and the use of discursive means are *how* the LI is constructed. The next question is out of what the LI is constructed. In other words, which are the building blocks of the LI and the meanings that constitute it? In the following we shall take a closer look at the elements that are involved in the suggested analytical approach.

3.2. The building blocks of the learner identity

As mentioned in the theoretical section about identity, the diversity of theories about what identities are and how they are constructed is rich, vast and highly diverse. However, for the purpose of outlining an analytical model of the LI, none of these offer the sufficient level of concretization. Therefore, we have

engaged in a process of identifying the necessary pieces with the end purpose of putting together a comprehensive model of LI, involving its constituent elements, its modes and situations of construction, and finally its purpose and function for the individual. These aspects correspond to the questions of what LI is constructed of, how it is constructed and why it is constructed.

The question of how has been theoretically outlined as occurring through participation in the object-oriented *activity*. Furthermore, following the previous accounts of identity, and as indicated in the definition of LI, the *sense of recognition* as a learner is the core constituent element of the LI. In addition to this, two more key elements in the construction of the LI have been identified. One is the shared and individual *motives* and *objectives* in and across learning activities, and the other, the *emotional primary or secondary experiences* that the individual has had of learning activities.

All these elements occur to varying degrees and with different emphasis, either in isolation or in connection to other factors in different identity studies. Their identification is, hence, no novelty in any way. Instead, the suggestion here is that they be treated as integral parts of identities in general and LI in particular. The consideration of these building blocks in connection to each other and within the framework of identity construction enables a more holistic view on the social and individual processes in learning activities. Also, it enables an operationalization of the dualistic character of identity as part social and part individual. Some elements are mainly individual, such as emotions and the sense of recognition, whereas the activity is the social framework. Motives and objectives on the other hand can be viewed as both belonging to the social and the individual.

It is questionable whether the sense of recognition can be viewed as mainly individual, even though the sense as such is an individual property, if it at all times requires a parallel process of recognition by oneself and by others. The question is innate to a sociocultural approach to human development and cannot be resolved here. However, from the individual's perspective some things are identified as individual properties while others are more ascribed to the external

world. Consequently most people would claim that their emotions are theirs although they are elicited in a social context. Similarly, it is probable that when most people enter into a new learning context they perceive it as constituting of a set of given elements such as a teacher, a subject matter to learn, a physical setting, the peers and the organization of the teaching and learning activity.

In summary, LI construction, or the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner, consist of a representation of the *motives* for learning in and across activities, on how successfully these are fulfilled and which *feelings and emotions* that are elicited in the process of fulfilling them, on a representation of the *characteristics of the activity* where the experience occurred, and on the sense of *recognition as a learner* as a result of the combination of the three other elements. However, as indicated before, there is also an interpsychological dimension of the sense of recognition, which consists of the acts of recognition. While all the other elements that are used in the construction of LI are assumed to be the same in all modalities, this particular element is conceptualized as being different. While the cross-activity LI consists of the sense of recognition, the acts of recognition are part of the in-activity LI. On-activity construction, on the other hand, is conceptualized as potentially involving a mixture of both acts and a sense of recognition.
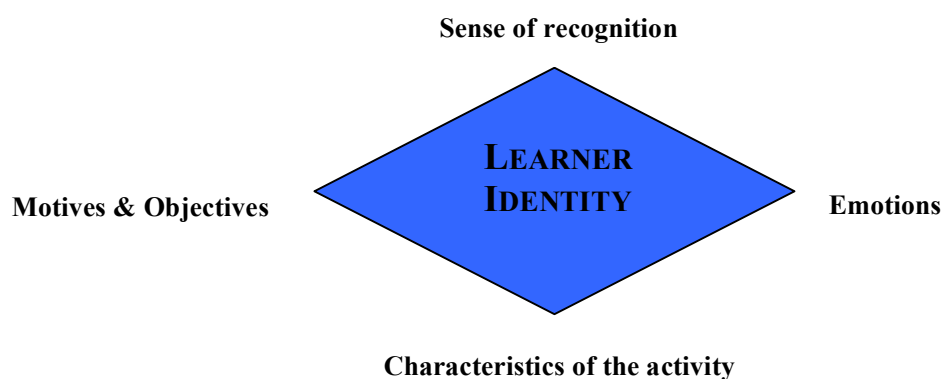
Figure 1. Model of the elements in the conceptualization of the cross-activity LI construction.

3.3. From acts of recognition to a sense of recognition

Educational situations are full of manifest and hidden acts of recognition. As a reminder, acts of recognition are defined as any explicit or implicit actions on the individual's behalf to seek and receive recognition or provide recognition to others. The identification of these acts is the identification of the social dimension of an identity. Instead of analyzing individual properties such as attitudes, feelings and thoughts, the acts of recognition are the social and explicit reflections of the inner, enacted in action.

When an individual engages in a group discussion in the classroom, or when she raises her hand to pose or response to a question, acts of recognition are taking place. Writing and sending an application letter to a university is a kind of act of recognition, which results in a sense of recognition when the applicant is either accepted or rejected. In an online learning situation, these acts are for example the explicit reference to or feed back to others, the explicit intention of participating in multiple spaces (forums, chats), asking if other people agree with one's point of view, etc. These acts are distinguished from other goal-oriented actions in an activity in that their main objective is, as indicated in the denomination, to contribute to and generate a kind of socially distributed sense of recognition and to achieve some kind of sense of recognition of oneself as a learner.

In the ideal scenario the distribution of the acts of recognition are symmetric and mutual. However, the power relations in a social context often define certain patterns for how these acts should be directed. These patterns can be described as governed by Gee's earlier mentioned notion of Discourses. In a classroom situation the teacher often has a preferential status as provider of recognition. This can and often results in the students' acts of recognition being directed towards the teacher more than towards others.

Because there are many different identity types at stake in the educational situation, the same act of recognition can be relevant to multiple identity types. The process of co-recognition can fail if an act of recognition that is intended for

recognition of meanings about oneself as a learner instead results in the construction of other identities. A somewhat gruesome anecdotal example of this is the teacher of a nurse-training program who in a positive tone said to two men in the class that she was surprised by their responses in an exam. "It made me think men can actually be empathetic." While the exam result should be the constructer of the learner and nurse identity, the teacher's act of recognition contributed to the gender identity construction.

Acts of recognition are not necessarily always of a positive nature or intended to supply the individual with positive recognition. Yet, conveying criticism and correction in the least constructive and desirable manner is still an act of recognition. The recognition always integrates the value ascribed in a temporally and spatially defined context. (Remember the unity and simultaneity of time, space and value in Bakhtin's chronotope, earlier.)[14] The question is whether the recognition that the individual receives coincides with the recognition that she seeks, and whether this recognition favours the process of making sense of the participation, or obstructs it. Equally, what might seem like a complete lack of recognition is also an act of recognition. The lack of physical, visual and verbal acknowledgement of someone's presence is most definitely an act of recognition, but with obstructive consequences for the construction of meanings about the subject matter as well as oneself.

Each time the individual enters a new learning situation, the previous meanings about herself as a learner are used to mediate the new process of making sense of the participation and the construction of new meanings about herself as a learner. In order to maintain the sense of coherence, the individual will take part in acts of recognition that confirm the global sense of recognition as a learner, as reflected in the cross-activity LI, rather than challenge it. A motivated person is assumed to get engaged in acts of recognition that reinforce previous experiences of being a good learner, whereas the unmotivated person is more likely to do the opposite. The maintenance of this sense of coherence and acknowledgement of the cross-activity LI can be classified as a higher-level goal or motive that mediates and

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[14] Presented on p.49.

drives the actions that constitute the acts of recognition in the activity, with the goal of contributing to this maintenance. Because the preservation of the cross-activity LI works across situations and experiences, it will influence on the development of the in-activity LI. However, it is crucial to remember that the in-activity LI is where the cross-activity LI meets and is confronted with the situation. Therefore, the acts of recognition that define the in- and on-activity LI seek to confirm the cross-activity sense of recognition as a learner in the given situation, with the purpose of maintaining coherence and at the same time facilitating the attribution of meaning to the learning activity.

As such, the sense of recognition could be described as a comprehensive system of representations and memories of previous experiences of the local and situated acts of recognition. It is assumed that although the individual might have been on the receiving end of an act of recognition in an activity, it will not necessarily mean that it results in a sense of recognition. More concretely, a student might achieve good notes in a course, but not consider her learning sufficient or corresponding to the note. The question is which experiences of acts of recognition in the end result in a sense of recognition. The suggestion here is that the answer needs to be sought in the quality of the experiences of learning activities that emerge and play a role in the narrative construction of the cross-activity LI. The experiences that have left strong marks that surface through the narrative strategy are assumed to be more likely to influence on the general sense of recognition of oneself as a learner. These marks are also assumed to surface more easily in a situation that some how reminds the individual of the initial experience of the mark (the experience of a kind of déjà vu).

One important aspect in the identification of the degree to which an activity challenges or confirms the previous sense of recognition of oneself as a learner and leaves a mark, is believed to be found in the characteristics of the learning activity. This is the main framework of the LI construction, which also differentiates it from other identity types.

So, how can this specific type of activity be conceptualized?

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3.4. **The site of LI construction - characteristics of the learning activity**

LI is defined by the specific situation and the diverse aspects of the learning activity with particular characteristics, in terms of, for example, tasks, objectives, learned subjects or abilities, etc. For a more detailed conceptualization of the context of the learning activity we turn to the theory of interactivity (Coll *et al.*, 1992; Colomina *et al.*, 2001).

This theory takes the interactive triangle, consisting of teacher, student and the learned content as the starting point. This is the basis of the methodological model, developed by Coll and collaborators, which permits the analysis of interpsychological processes and the mechanisms of educational influence in a temporally and spatially defined learning activity. According to this theory, the dynamics of the context are defined by a number of specific features, which are 1) the relation between the teacher and the student, 2) the interaction and behaviour of the participants around the subject matter or content of the learning activity, 3) the temporal dimension throughout the learning activity, 4) the discourse in the learning activity, 5) the extended context beyond the immediate learning activity, and finally 6) the rules and norms which determine and condition the structure of participation with regard to its two aspects: the structure of the social participation and the structure of the academic task (Colomina *et al.*, 2001).

From an analytical point of view, this definition of the context enables a conceptualization of the activity on which LI construction is based. Informed by this model, the cornerstones of the interactive triangle are identified as the main definers of a learning activity. The assumption is that the meanings that are constructed about oneself as a learner will revolve around these elements and how the features of the activity condition their interaction. The hypothesis is that not all features are equally important for the construction of the LI and that the recognition of oneself as a learner will depend more on some of these features than on others. However, the prioritization of some features over others is in itself a part of the meanings that are constructed.

As a result, based on the previous experiences of learning activities and based on the marks that they have left, some features will dominate the construction of meanings over others. For instance, the relation to the teacher might be more important for one person whereas the relation to the peers is more significant for someone else. Since the construction of meanings about oneself is anything but simple and because identities are essentially dynamic, it is highly likely that the importance of features might change from situation-to-situation, and time-to-time. This would imply that, for example, the subject matter plays a major role in the meanings that are constructed, unless the teacher is of some specific preferred type or the tasks are structured in some particular way. In order to understand how the prioritization of these features change in the constructed meanings about oneself as a learner, we need to relate this specific building block to the others. By connecting the activity and its features to the emotions, the motives and/or the sense of recognition, it would be possible to understand why some features are more important than others and why the level of importance might change.

The analysis of the significant and prioritized characteristics of the activity is assumed to give valuable clues to the analysis of why the meanings about oneself as a learner can or cannot move from situation to situation. The assumption is that the more similar different activities are, the easier is the transfer of meanings from situation to situation. Correspondingly, the more the characteristics of an activity differ from other and previous experiences, the more difficult is the application and (re-)construction of old meanings in the new context. Unless the cross-activity LI construction has incorporated meanings from a variety of different kinds of experiences, the new situation will challenge these meanings to a higher degree than a situation that has familiar characteristics although it is new, and the process of (re-)constructing the meanings will become more demanding.

This kind of challenge can be caused by shifts from one type of school to another, for instance from private to public, or from a school with a particular pedagogic program to a school that follows the regular school curriculum. Presently there is

a new element that is being incorporated into many educational institutions and their activities, namely technology-based learning, which involves considerable change in some of the characteristics of our educational contexts. The use of computers for educational purposes is growing, and increasingly more educational activities are carried out in online contexts. Online platforms are used to construct online learning communities. Entire university programs are offered online. Discussions are conducted in online forums. These days you can even learn to play instruments through courses that are offered by online streaming. In short, with the increased use of technology and web-based learning activities, the characteristics of the learning activities have changed and with them the norms and ways of social interaction and participation (Vuorela & Nummenmaa, 2004a).

Besides the fact that technology or web-based learning contexts differ from the traditional face-to-face context in their general characteristics, there is also the issue of using technology as a tool for interaction, collaboration, communication and learning. Hron and Friedrich (2003) highlight the features of the web-based communication, which differentiate it from the face-to-face context. Amongst different factors they emphasize the strain of these contexts on the learner. The students need to simultaneously handle the technological tool, the subject matter and the communication with others, which is challenging in itself. This is because text-based communication lacks many of the usual social cues of comprehension, recognition or reactions in general. In other words, not only are the conditions for the construction of LI different in these contexts, but the features of the building blocks that are used in the construction of meanings are also different. Quite simply, the actions in these contexts are different than actions in the face-to-face situation.

Vuorela and Nummenmaa (2004b) draw attention to the innovative character of most web-based learning contexts, which to a higher degree require that the students exercise more autonomy and control over the process of learning and that they can collaborate and manage information. Faced with situations that require interaction with or through computers, the student might experience a

sense of anxiety because of insecurity, unfamiliarity or discomfort due to general negative attitudes towards technology and computers (*ibid.*). Virtual learning contexts can hence elicit emotions regardless of the content or other aspects of the learning context. Not to forget, any other aspects of the context will also be the source of positive as well as negative emotions and subsequently influence the processes of recognition as a learner. Carusi (2006) mentions the importance of trust under the specific conditions of text-based communication. According to her, the meanings that are conveyed through the text are related to questions of presence and identity. So, virtual learning contexts are a new kind of situations with new and partially unfamiliar conditions for the construction of knowledge, the activity, and learner identity.

In conclusion, informed by the theory of interactivity and the addition of web-based learning activities, the characteristics of the activity are defined in terms of the following elements:

1) the subject matter (or in terms of the theory of interactivity, the content) of the learning (what is learned)

2) the physical and technological conditions of the activity (face to face, virtual – the techno-pedagogic design, synchronous/asynchronous)

3) the social structure and nature of the learning activity (the structure of interaction - who teaches, who participates, how many, how does participation take place – in what order, by which means and acts, for what purpose)

4) the communication structure, pattern and content (the form of interaction and the discourse - what is the content/theme of the communication, what is the density of the communication – how often does participation take place and for how long, who communicates with whom)

5) the nature of the learning (theoretical-practical, declarative-procedural, etc.)

6) the nature of the tasks involved in the learning (individual, collaborative, discussion/debate, problem solving)

7) the level of detail in task structure and instructions (the rules and norms - clear path, from beginning to end with task and role division or more open and flexible with general instructions)

8) the importance of the activity for the over all evaluation

9)) the temporal and spatial definers of the learning (the extension of the learning activity as defined by semesters, school years, courses, credits, educational programs, a summer, a family outing, etc.)

10) the extended context of the learning (socio-institutional context – school, faculty, family, work place, etc.)

As previously stated, a learning activity distinguishes itself from other activities in that it either has learning as the objective or that it results in learning as a secondary effect. In the first case, the learning objective defines the characteristics of the activity. In the second case, the activity is defined by whatever objective it might have. However, even when the individual has an experience of learning in an activity that is not primarily aimed at learning, these characteristics should be identifiable.

Based on this initial conceptualization of LI, an empirical study was realized in order to explore whether this understanding could serve to identify the construction of LI, its features and its constituent parts. As a reminder it is once again mentioned that the focus of attention in the empirical exploration was the construction of the cross-activity LI through the use of narrative strategies in a narrative activity.

PART 2

EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION

4. Empirical study

4.1. The methodological challenge of identity studies

The formulation of the theoretical conceptualization has, as is evident in part 1, relied on invaluable theoretical contributions from many different researchers and intellectuals, of which some are frequently used references and constitute a kind of implicit nexus amongst different identity studies, and others who are less known and spread. As mentioned earlier, it is in no way possible for a work of this dimension to consider all the available works that might be and are relevant. There is an abundance of theoretical approaches to and conceptualizations of identity in general and the field could even be said to suffer from too much diversity and too little conceptual hegemony.

Where this problem becomes particularly obvious is in the presentation of the methodological procedures in the empirical studies. Most often the presentation of the empirical part of different works on identity is the least developed aspect of the work. While the results often are described in detail, the presentation of the analytical process is often brief and seldom clear. As most research is discourse based either through the collection of discourse in interaction or through interviews, it is safe to assume that some kind of discourse analysis has been applied with some kind of coding system and analytical procedure. If they are interview based, it has in all likelihood been designed to give best possible access to the study object. These procedures and decisions are, however, rarely accessible information in the presentation of the studies. This is a feature of the field of identity studies that complicates cumulative intentions.

Moreover, as the presentations of the methodological and analytical choices are scarce and limited, it is often difficult to make an evaluation of the connection between the theoretical approach and these choices. One potential explanation to this is that the field of identity studies is not only spread across many different disciplines but also highly interdisciplinary and eclectic. This means that many studies, much like the present work, are involved in a process of theoretical pick-

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and-mix from a rich and diverse smorgasbord of approaches and ideas. Because the mix can be constituted of any number of more or less similar or different approaches, each study has its own particular point of entry. Even though the entry point might be very similar to some other study it is rarely, if ever, exactly the same. This is not a trivial problem and should not be neglected. However, it is beyond the framework of this work on LI to address these issues directly. The awareness of the problem has, nevertheless, guided the work process in two ways.

The first is an attempt to, as far as possible, use available theoretical approaches to identity in the formulation of the LI and make the motives and the rational behind the abovementioned process of pick-and-mix as explicit as possible in the presentation of the theoretical exploration. The second is the intention of making the analytical procedure as transparent as possible.

With this last intention in mind, next follows a description of the empirical exploration and the methodological and analytical choices and procedures.

4.2. **The questions of the exploration**

"The scientific mind does not so much provide the right answers as ask the right questions." (Lévi-Strauss, 1969, p.7) This pregnant quote is from the introduction (or the overture as it is labelled in the book) of *The Raw and the Cooked* by anthropologist and philosopher Claude Lévi-Strauss. It is part of a general declaration of intentions and potentially an anticipation of potential critiques, where he explains that he does not expect the knowledge presented in the book to be valid truth for an undefined future, since "…in science there are no final truths" (*ibid.*, p. 7), and therefore the quality of the scientific mind is to pose the right questions.[15]

Lévi-Strauss makes an important point about the importance of careful consideration of the questions of an inquiry and raises the bar considerably. His

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[15] Although even Lévi-Strauss hints that there is a satisfaction in shedding some light on complicated issues and problems.

statement also raises the question of what the qualities of a good question are. However, if knowledge about social phenomena and realities can be fluid and changing over time, then shouldn't the same rule apply to the questions, in the sense that what might seem a good question at one point in time seems redundant or meagre at another point in time? Shouldn't the dialogic nature of all socially constructed phenomena also apply to the relation between questions and answers?

The point of raising these questions here is not to answer them but to signal that the issue of the questions of the exploration of the LI has not been an easy task and has in fact been a dynamic process of going back and forth. Each posed question and any potential response to these questions has had an influence on the original question, leading the exploration in another direction, where either a new question arose that led the work further, or where the exploration was faced with a dead end and had to go back. Some aspects of this process have been deliberate and planned but there have also been many random steps where new questions arose during the course of work while reading an article, during conversation and discussions, data collection as well as their analysis and interpretation. As much as the requirements of methodological rigour decree that a study follows a predefined plan, the nature of an exploratory work is to let the process guide the inquiry as much as the study plan. Ideally the presentation of the work would include a fairly detailed account of the process leading up to the content of this text. This, however, is not possible here and the sincere explanation to this is that at times pieces that could fit into the puzzle of LI occurred in the least expected ways and were so evident that they seemed to have been calculated with from the beginning. Consequently, the presentation of the questions that have guided and directed the study is a general overview of the overall questions which have remained the same throughout the study, although their detailed formulations with regard to the different aspects of the model of LI have changed.

The theoretical exploration was guided by the basic questions (what, how and why) about identity and what the responses that were found could say about a conceptual model of LI. Then, in light of the theoretical exploration the empirical

study set out to explore how the model could be used to analyze the features and the nature of the cross-activity LI of some individuals. One example of how the course of the work changed the original questions is that initially the work was more interested in the relation between the in-activity and the cross-activity LI, but the responses to the questions that concerned this relation raised new questions about each modality and led the work in the direction that is presented here.

The basic questions of what LI is, how it is constructed and why, moved along from the theoretical exploration to the empirical exploration. However, the empirical study also had a potential answer to how the cross-activity LI is constructed and needed to consider and try this theoretical proposal. Consequently, the aim of the empirical study was threefold: 1) to make an empirical approach to the question of what, how and why of LI, 2) to try out the proposed conceptualization as an analytical tool and 3) to enrich this theoretical conceptualization through the empirical exploration, which meant a return to the basic questions of what, why and how but in a new light. Accordingly, the empirical exploration had two overall purposes. One was an inquiry into LI as a phenomenological phenomenon and the second was to probe the analytical approach to it.

With regard to LI as a phenomenological phenomenon the basic overall questions were:

1- What can narratives about subjective experience of learning tell us about the construction of the cross-activity LI?
2- Is it possible to identify tendencies and special features in the cross-activity LI based on the individual's trajectory across different learning activities, through her own narratives about subjective experiences of learning?
3- Following question 2, is it possible to identify and differentiate a cross-activity LI which is more likely to promote learning and participation in new learning activities from one that is more likely to obstructs and inhibit participation and learning through narratives about subjective

experiences of learning, through the individuals' narratives about their subjective experiences of learning?

Here is yet another example of how the questions went through small but significant changes. For example, question 1 was initially formulated as: "How do individuals construct a cross-activity LI over time and contexts?" Because the theoretical exploration had established the role of the narrative as a constructive mode, the question had to be changed in the empirical exploration, so that it included the narrative. However, as it turns out even this formulation is, if not totally erroneous, slightly confused. How the empirical exploration was embarked on, and the reason why it should have been differently formulated is part of the response to the question and will be presented in chapter six.

Moving on to the questions concerning the analytical approach and the proposed conceptualizations, the were formulated as follows:

4- Is the model of LI as it is conceptualized here a useable and useful tool for the analysis of the cross-activity LI?

5- How does the model need to be modified and completed in order to improve its analytical qualities as well as its potential use as an educational tool?

As the formulation of these questions imply, it was obvious beforehand that the response to the question 4 would inevitably have to be both yes and no, and that the responses to question 5 would bring the conceptualization back to the theoretical elaboration of new suggestions. As such, a low level of specificity characterized these questions, which is also an accurate reflection of how the exploration was approached. The intention never was to try and evaluate the details of the model, but to probe its general usability. This approach could be scrutinized. However, more detailed questions would have decreased the level of openness to data and the possibilities to generate new ideas for a development of the model.

The following sections will present the analytical decisions and procedures. One of the first and most important decisions concerned the unit of analysis.

4.3. **The experience as the unit of analysis**

As our approach is based on a socioculturally oriented foundation, the theoretical spirit of Vygotsky is highly present. Beside his concrete contributions to the conceptualization of cognitive development in a social context, his thoughts on an analytical approach are in themselves highly relevant. Vygotsky argued that analytical approaches should be wary of reductionist and atomistic approaches (Vygotsky, 1987). His famous example concerned the chemical analysis of water through its decomposition into oxygen and hydrogen. He argued that this analytical approach would lose sight of the characteristics that define water as such, since neither oxygen nor hydrogen alone have any of the qualities of the special combination that constitutes water. His solution was to analyze by units instead of by elements. The unit is a part of the whole and an analytical object that has the all the basic features of the whole. In Wertsch's terms (1985) the unit has to be "… a microcosm of the complex interfunctional processes that characterize actual psychological activity" (p. 185).

Vygotsky's conceptualization of the analytical unit is relevant to this project in two primary ways. First and foremost, it indicates that any attempt to understand the complex emotional, cognitive and social processes that are involved in learner identity construction separately is bound to lead us in a number of potentially interesting directions, but fail to contribute to our overall understanding of how an individual's learner identity is constructed within and across different learning contexts. So, though it is important to understand how emotions influence in the learning process, or how cognitive processes and social interaction are intertwined, the focus of attention is to find a basic unit of analysis that enables the comprehension of how all these elements interact in an educational setting and eventually constitute the part of meanings and a basis for LI construction.

Secondly, and in relation to the choice of the unit of analysis, Vygotsky's warning gives an indication of how the unit should be formulated. If we are

looking for a unit of analysis that embodies both social and individual processes and "characterizes actual psychological activity", then what is the most suitable unit of analysis? Following the line of argument above, the response is that the best-suited unit for the analysis of learner identity *is the subjective experience of a learning activity or learning situation.*

The one essential prerequisite for learner identity construction is the experience of a real or imagined participation in a learning activity or a learning situation. As mentioned, a learning activity or situation is defined as and differentiated from other kinds of activities and situations in that it is objectively directed towards a learning goal, that is to say that the purpose or the motive of the activity is some kind of learning or that it has a subjective orientation towards learning. The latter aspect means that though the objective goal of the activity can be something else, for instance enjoying a meal with a friend, earning your living or spending some quality time with your parents, the individual can define the situation as one that can potentially lead to learning. Some other basic features of a learning activity are that it is essentially social and always involves the explicit or implicit presence of someone else, "an other", and that there always is a learning object or content, meaning something that can be learned, or a learning outcome, that is to say, something that is learned. Now, in order for this situation to be able to constitute the basis for learner identity construction for the individuals in it, it is also required that there are either some acts of recognition taking place or that there is a subjective sense of recognition within an individual.

In summary, the unit of analysis for understanding an individual's LI construction is the individual's representation of a subjective experience of a real or imagined learning activity or situation that distinguishes itself from other activities and situations in that it is either aimed at learning or results in learning. In light of the level of complexity and the multiplicity of the elements that are present and active in the construction of the LI, it becomes evident that its analysis cannot be limited to one of these elements but needs to consider them all simultaneously. The subjective experience of the activity is the unit that best captures and encompasses all these elements and decides which should be given

the principal role in the analysis from the individual's point of view. Things are picked and mixed according to a subjective logic that enables making sense of participation in a given learning context. So, while the teacher might be of great importance for one individual, for another the most important element in the meaning about oneself as a learner might be the content that is being learned or the social aspects of the learning situation. Similarly, while some individuals might be highly adaptable to the shifts from context to context and even within a context others may prefer a high level of familiarity whenever they are faced with a new situation.

The individual's subjective experience as the unit of analysis enables the combination of and a holistic view on the features of the activity as the setting of the experience and the individual's emotional and cognitive reactions towards these, through an analysis of the construction of meanings about herself as a learner. If LI as a concept combines the social and the individual, the unit of analysis has to take account of and reflect this combination.

4.4. **General methodological approach – balancing the interest in data and the interest in the model**

With the abovementioned questions in mind and the unit of analysis established, the second phase of the exploration was embarked. Considering the explorative nature of the work and the sociocultural framework, the design of the study was based on a purely qualitative approach which suited an exploratory study that aimed at inquiry from the inside, with a holistic view and an inductive process where the data guide the inquiry (Evered & Reis Louis, 1981). In retrospective, the reading process, the theoretical exploration and search for passable ways to access an understanding of LI can in itself be seen as a process of collecting theoretical data which influenced the course of the study and the formulation of the questions, as described above. The process of the theoretical exploration was indeed an inquiry from the inside. Even though the theoretical orientation of the work was defined by a sociocultural approach, at the outset, the exploration was open to any approach to identity construction that could contribute with adequate and relevant pieces for the conceptualization of the LI. Each explanatory model

was initially evaluated and treated on its own in order to evaluate its potential to contribute with an explanatory piece to the puzzle. If a potentially relevant contribution was identified, the next step was to evaluate its connection to other potential pieces and try the general compatibility with a sociocultural approach. As the work progressed and different pieces were identified and put together, the field of exploration was increasingly more delimited. The delimitation was guided by the intention to maintain theoretical consistency and secure as high a level of concretization as possible.

Once the exploration had reached the empirical phase, the openness to data and an exclusively "from the inside" perspective was more complicated. After all, data collection was designed and carried out with a theoretical model in mind. Not only was the model there to guide the process, but there was also an interest in trying the analytical potential and shortcomings of the model. This would automatically imply an explicit limitation in the level of openness to data. While this undeniably is a methodological case of wanting to eat the cookie and keep it too and a practical challenge in the concrete situation of data collection and analysis, it is a justifiable approach. Despite an intense theoretically oriented phase, the work was based on the acknowledgement of the need for empirical data, which can be related to ethnographic approaches (Baszanger & Dodier, 2004). Additionally, there was not only openness to but also curiosity about the elements that emerged from this data even if they were not anticipated in the model, and finally the awareness of the background and the circumstances in which facts occur (*ibid.*).

To clarify, the empirical study cannot be defined as an in *situ* fieldwork, which is common within ethnographic tradition (*ibid.*), in the sense that the data collection did not consist in direct observation of the narrative event. Nor did the analysis focus on the connection between the data and a general sociocultural setting, which could then be described based on the data. However, in order to maintain the openness to data while considering the theoretical model, the ethnographic approach offered a valuable guideline. The theoretical model of LI constituted a guide in the process of data collection, but was also a steering and even

controlling framework according to which data was codified a priori. However, because the purpose of the study was to explore the relevance and adequacy of the model and to a certain extent even the basic ideas and questions about LI, the study had to be open to anything that could not be covered by the model and which had not been considered beforehand. In fact, the assumption and part of the excitement of the empirical study was to see where these omitted parts would occur and what they would consist of. Moreover, as highlighted by Baszanger and Dodier (*ibid.*), even strict ethnographic studies always involve interpretations that are influenced by the interpreter's tradition and background. There is always some kind of theoretical framework and some form of supporting symbolic artifacts which constitute an interpretative filter that brings some elements to the foreground and excludes others. In the case of the here presented study, this filter is brought into light and presented with all its elements.

In light of the questions of the inquiry, the theoretical exploration, particularly the narrative approaches to identity, and the general methodological approach, an interview-based study was identified as best suited for the purposes of the work.

4.5. **Interviews as sites for narrative construction**

Before describing the design of the interviews, a comment should be made about the somewhat idiosyncratic character of this work, which has had certain implications for this design.

Even though the conceptualization of the cross-activity LI assumes that its construction is based on the use of narrative resources for the processing of subjective experiences of learning activities, the study never was intended to conduct a narrative analysis. Instead the idea and the intention was to use these resources as means to understand how individuals treat these experiences in a formulation of meanings about how they recognize themselves as learners. For this reason the interviews were designed to elicit memories and representations of particularly emotionally charged learning experiences, in the sense that they had been experiences of success or satisfaction or failure and dissatisfaction, and which had had a particular influence on how the interviewees recognized and

(re-)constructed themselves as learners. This was based on the assumption in the model that the unprocessed marks that are left from learning experiences are stronger and more salient because the emotional reactions had been stronger in these experiences. Therefore, contrary to many that study the narrative construction of identities, the interviews would not be based on autobiographical methods (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Studies that apply these methods aim at eliciting comprehensive narrative accounts, such as life stories or autobiographical narratives of a person's life (*ibid.*). McAdams (1993), who was mentioned earlier, is an influential voice within this tradition.

Benwell and Stokoe (2006) give a short but precise description of his method, as consisting of an interview where people are first asked to talk about key events in their lives. Including peak, low and turning point events and important memories from the different ontological phases throughout life. After this, they are asked questions about significant persons in their lives, which are followed by a focus on accounts of problematic issues and unresolved conflicts in life. This is followed by questions that concentrate on the persons' political and religious values and orientations, and finally the interviewees are asked to talk about a defining or central theme in their lives.

The interviews in this study can be compared to McAdams' in the sense that there was a structure where the question started in the present, then moved backwards in time and focused on specific experiences that had been particularly positive or negative, and from there moved on to the future and was closed with general questions about the individual as a learner. However, within this general structure, the follow up questions were completely guided by the interviewees' responses and the focus of the interviews could be very different. There could even be shifts in the order of the pre-established questions depending on how the interviewees elaborated their stories. As such the interviews can be described as semi-structured.

Benwell and Stokoe (*ibid.*) report that some experts in the field have argued that semi-structured interviews are less than optimal for the production of good

narrative data, since there is a structure that determines and influences on what participants talk about and tell, instead of allowing the individual full freedom to organize their narrative the way they want to. As a result the stories that they produce can be treated as irrelevant or diversions if they do not follow the thought and applied structure (*ibid.*) It is hard to dispute this argument and in fact there were occasions during the interviews where the interviewee set off on a narrative exploration of issues that from the interviewers' perspectives were conceived as unrelated to the construction of the LI or where the interviewers simply experienced difficulties in following the interviewee's narrative logic. This could for instance be the case when some interviewees talked about particular experiences without any direct or indirect connection to what this meant for their recognition of themselves as learners, and where the interviewers also failed to identify the relevance of the account for the interviewees' cross-activity LI.

As the overall design of the study aimed at openness to data for the purpose of developing the model, in these cases the interviewers made an effort to follow the interviewees in their stories and their attention. This is evident in the general outline of the interviews. Although all interviews were conducted following the same interview guide, they are still very different because different stories have elicited different kinds of follow up questions. However, during the analysis it also became evident that at times the interviewers had failed in their openness, and in some cases this failure was of significance for the elaboration of the stories about the subjective experiences of the interviewees and the construction of the cross-activity LI. On the other hand, as the presentation of the results will show, the openness to data was restored in the interpretation of the data and the identification of these failures led to developments in the conceptualization of the theoretical model.

4.6. **The design of the study - interviews and participants**

The empirical study was designed to match the questions about the cross-activity LI as a phenomenological individual experience and the proposed model as an analytical tool for understanding its construction. In this line, two interviews were

carried out with 15 students of a Master program of educational psychology at the university of Barcelona.

The purpose of the first interview was to collect data about the participants' subjective experiences of learning activities in order to explore their cross-activity LI construction. The second interview was a follow-up interview, which took place approximately a month after the first interview and revolved around the participants' experience of the first interview, what they remembered of it, what if any reflections that were made after the first interview and how the first interview had influenced on their perception of the experiences that were talked about and their recognition of themselves as learners.[16]

The first interview took 45 to 90 minutes, although most of them lasted approximately 80 minutes. The second interview lasted, in general, around an hour, although there were a couple of cases where the first interview had generated so many reflection that the interview became as long as the first one.

They all took place at the department of educational psychology of the university of Barcelona, which was familiar to all the interviewees. All interviews were recorded with digital recorders. Following standard procedure, the interviewees were promised full confidentiality and anonymity in the treatment and presentation of their interviews.

In the analysis of data the focus has been on the first interview. The second interview has been used as a complement to enrich the results. This is due to the simple fact that methodologically the second interview was less than optimal in its structure and purpose. To begin with, the plan was to follow up with a short second interview in case something was left unclear because the interviewers failed to capture some detail or for simple practical reasons such as poor recording quality. All interviewees were told at the end of the first interview that it was possible that they were contacted again for complementary details.

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[16] For a detailed account of the interview structure, see the interview guides of the first and the second interview in appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

However, after the first round of interviews were done, in a series of conversations about the intuitive impressions of the results, some new ideas started to develop. This is yet another concrete example of the above-described influence of openness to data and the going back and forth between the model and the data. The ideas concerned what came to be the focus of the interview later on, that is to say, the participants' reflections over the interview as reflective tool as such. These new thoughts were of a highly intuitive character and not fully developed at the time, but in order not to lose momentum a second interview round was organized and carried out. Data from this second interview are mainly used to enrich the stories of the experiences that were told in the first interview. However, this second round directly led to the further development of the intuitive ideas and a proposal to how the model can be developed to include the interview, not only as an occasion for eliciting stories about learning experiences for the analysis of the cross-activity LI construction, but also as a deliberate narrative activity that interacts with the conceptual tool in the construction of this identity. These ideas will be accounted for in the next chapter about the results and in the presentation of the adjustments in the model in chapter six.

With regard to the first interview, which is the main source of the data body, several of McAdams' points of interest were covered in it, although not in the same way or order. The focus on influential positive and negative learning experiences is similar to McAdams' interest in peak, low and key experiences. Furthermore, following the identification of the importance of the *other*, there was also an interest in significant other persons, although this point was deepened to the point that the interviewee highlighted the point.[17] There were on the other hand no direct and explicit questions about ideological stances, or about central themes with regard to the learning trajectories of the interviewees, although these issues can be detected more or less clearly in several of the interviews.

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[17] In some interviews this aspect was explored more due to the personal interest of one of the interviewees. The issues concerning different interviewers will be accounted for further down.

Yet another difference between McAdams' life story approach, as accounted for by Benwell and Stokoe (2006), and the approach of this study is the initial instruction that defines the motive of the narrative activity. While the interviewees in his approach are asked to think about their lives as chapters in a book with a title and an outline (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 141), the interviewees in this study were explained that the purpose of the study was to explore their experiences of learning both within formal and informal learning contexts. This means that the interest in LI was not introduced until later in the interview. This aspect is potentially questionable, and in fact it has been the object of considerable discussion and contemplation in the work process. The main question concerned how interviewees could use the interview and the narrative strategy to (re-)construct their LI if they were not aware of this objective to begin with. The underlying argument to why the concept was not introduced early on in the interview has to do with the previously discussed relative novelty and unfamiliarity of the concept and the fact that most people do not have a subjective understanding of the concept or a relation to it. It was argued that the introduction of an unknown concept that is not (although it could be) a part of the conceptual toolbox of the interviewees could confuse them more than help in the narrative process. These considerations have, however, been a part of the development and adjustments of the model, which will be presented in chapter six.

In summary, then, the design of the interview in this study can be described as less structured but more focused than the biographical method. As the analysis has focused on the first round of interviewers, the description here will focus on the structure of this interview. More concretely, the attention was directed towards twelve items[18] that were explored with a series of open questions and follow up questions depending on what was told by the interviewee. As mentioned, the questions were focused on positive and negative experiences from formal and informal learning contexts and activities, with particular focus on the ones that the interviewee identified as exceptionally influential on how they recognize themselves as learners. In each case there were follow up questions,

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[18] See Appendix 1.

based on the theoretical model of LI, in order to explore the features of each contexts and how the individual perceived and recognized her/himself in these situations. The questions were as much as possible aimed at concrete real or imagined experiences, although there were also questions which asked for generalizations, such as for instance what the interviewee usually first notices or focuses on when faced with a new situation where learning is expected or desired. The general pattern was that the questions were more focused on concrete and specific experiences to begin with, and as the interview proceeded, the general questions were introduced. Towards the end of the interview the questions left the specific and became more general, focusing on the interviewee as a learner in general. She/he was asked to describe her/himself as a learner, to value her/his capacity and disposition to learn and also look into the future and imagine how this general sense of recognition might change and why.

The final questions of all interviews concerned the LI in specific. The concept was introduced but it was left open for the interviewee to conceptualize it as she/he pleased, after which a direct question was made whether she/he would say that she/had a LI and regardless of a positive or negative response to the question she/he was asked to motivate it. The very final question of the interview guide concerned an explicit reflection about the interview and whether the interviewee had thought about the topics of the interview before the interview occasion and if so when and why. Because the second interviewer came in at this point, the questions could go back to specific issues that were covered much earlier in the interview.

4.7. **The participants – learners who want to become experts in learning**
The 15 interviewees were all students of the Master program in educational psychology at the University of Barcelona. Between the first and second round of interviews one of the students dropped out of the program and was not able to participate in the second round.

Five of the interviewees were native Catalans. Nine of them originated from different South American countries. One of these had previously immigrated to

Spain. The other eight were in Barcelona specifically for the sake of the Master program. One interviewee was from a western European country, also in Barcelona to do the Master program. All interviewees had a background in either psychology or pedagogy.

For the selection of the interviewees the two teachers of the mandatory course *Cultura, desarrollo y aprendizaje en Psicología de la Educación*[19]of the Master program were approached. Based on the notion of co-recognition and the idea that how the individual recognizes herself as a learner depends on the co-recognition of others, the teachers were asked to identify 15 students in three categories: five that they identified as students who were successfully following the course, five that they identified as students who had problems following the course and finally five students who they could not clearly identify as belonging to either of the previous two categories.

Each and every decision along the way might have secondary unexpected influences on the study, but in a qualitative study the choice of participants is potentially the most determining factor. Depending on who participates data might go in one or another direction. When exploring LI, the choice of students in an advanced university program in educational psychology can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. It could be a positive factor because the participants could be expected to be more interested in the topic and more willing to participate in a reflexive activity about their own learning experiences.

In general, then, the participants had backgrounds through which they had acquired some conceptual and theoretical tools for general reflections about educational experiences. In the case of the psychologists, it is also possible that they had been in some kind of therapy as part of their training and had some experiences in taking part in this type of discursive activities. These factors could be beneficial for an empirical study. However, since there are almost always two sides to everything, these very elements could also be a disadvantage. For instance, there was a risk that they tried to respond according to socially desirable

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[19] Culture, development and learning in educational psychology.

patterns, expectations and theoretical models instead of talking freely about their experiences. In simple terms, the problem goes with the territory and as researchers we need to be aware of its existence.

However, there is also a theoretical aspect to this issue which is a concern of many narrative identity theories, and regards the interest in the connections between the local stories that people tell about themselves and wider cultural stories, so called master narratives (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), or in terms of Gee's conceptualization mentioned earlier, Discourses. This interdependent relation has been conceptualized in a number of ways. Besides Schiffrin (1996), (who Benwell and Stokoe also refer to), two influential voices in this tradition which particularly focus on the power relations between the two levels, are Gee (1996) and Focault (1994)[20], whose thoughts are the origin of the so-called Foucauldian approaches to discourse, narrative and identity construction (see for instance Brown, 2007; Butler, 1997; Tamboukou, 2008). One way to approach the problem could, hence, be to interpret it following these approaches and simply expect the conscious and, even more so, the unconscious adjustment of the narrative content to theoretical perspectives which constitute a kind of normative guideline for how the local story about oneself as a learner should be formulated. The analysis of these tendencies was not planned to be included in the study, although some brief reflections will be made on the topic in the presentation of the results.

From a dialogical point of view the interviewers have to be perceived as subjects in the interview situation and therefore a brief introduction of them is also in order. The interviewers were four doctoral and master' students, (beside myself, three other female students[21]), all at the same institution for educational psychology as the interviewees and all with backgrounds in psychology, with an

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[20] The issue is a recurrent theme in Foucault's philosophy and in many of his publications. The reference here is but an example.

[21] It should be noted that two of the interviewers were native Spanish speakers, whereas the other two, myself included, have acquired Spanish skills much later in life as a foreign language. This aspect will not be analyzed, but is mentioned as it is assumed to have at least a small influence on the flow of the narrative construction, the interaction and the co-construction.

age range of 29 to 37. There were always two interviewers present at each interview occasion in order to secure that no aspects of the interviewees' stories were lost. The procedure was that the interview was mainly conducted by one, and once she considered that she had covered all the items in the interview guide she handed over to the other person, to ask for clarifications or cover any potentially forgotten issues.

The fact that the interviewers either were or had been advanced students of the same master program as the interviewees was yet another factor to be taken into account in the consideration of potential advantages and risks in the interview situation. On the one hand, it could be easier to establish a first mutual connection and understanding. On the other hand, the interviewers' subjective experiences of the master program could intervene in their perception of the stories that the interviewees' told of their subjective experiences of the Master' program in general and the mandatory course in specific. The key to managing the disadvantages was to maintain awareness of the potential risks both in the interview situation and in the subsequent interpretation of the data. As will be described later, this particular feature of the interviews and the decisions that it prompted was an undeniable influence in the study. Nevertheless, it also resulted in valuable contributions to the development of the conceptualization of the LI, which was achieved through openness to the data and the theoretical exploration which guided the interpretation and enabled explanatory perspectives on the results. With regard to the potential benefits, the fact that there was at least a partially shared frame of reference between the interviewees and the interviewers was explicitly considered and it was decided that the design of the interview should try to use this advantage. Therefore all the interviews started off with questions about the subjective experience of the mandatory course. It was also made explicit that this was the starting point because it was an experience that was known to both the interviewee and the interviewers.

Although it was more beneficial than complicating to have two interviewers conduct the interviews, this has evidently also influenced in the data. The semi-structured and indeed highly dynamic nature of the interviews, gave plenty of

space for the interviewers to co-construct with the interviewees, and in this sense the interviews were to a large extent dialogic occasions with two persons constructing together. However, since the interviewers were as much a subject in the interview as the interviewees, this means that the individual interests of the interviewers have at times tainted the data to the extent that it is relevant to question the level of influence on the narrative construction. This point has been important in the elaboration of the ideas about the narrative activity as a tool for conscious and deliberate cross-activity LI-construction.

4.8. **Data analysis – finding the story about the experience**

Once the interviews were done they were transcribed and analyzed with the software Transana[22], which is developed for the analysis of digital audiovisual data. The analytical procedures with this tool require a detailed description and some comments about the tool as such, which will be made further down. Here, the general focus will be on the analytical procedure.

Let us first recapitulate some key aspects of the theoretical exploration which were essential in the elaboration of the analytical procedure. As discussed in part 1, the individual's subjective experience of the learning experience is identified as the basic source of LI-construction. Without a real or imagined personal experience of learning there can difficultly be any LI-construction, since there would not be any raw material for this construction. Nor would the individual need a LI, and therefore no driving motive for its construction. Based on this assumption, the subjective learning experience was defined as unit of analysis. However, since the actual experience either has taken place or will take place in the future as the individual imagines it, what the analysis is dealing with is the representation of the experience, its marks and any meanings that were constructed in it. Furthermore, as it was established earlier, these representations do not exist as fix and ready entities, but are rather the products of situated (re-) construction with a particular motive. In the case of the interviews of this study this motive consisted in the (re-)construction of meanings about oneself as a

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[22] The analysis used Transana version 2.41- Mac.
For more information about Transana visit: http://www.transana.org/

learner induced by or through the narrative treatment of the subjective real or imagined experiences of learning.

As the mode of this construction is narrative, the analysis needed to identify stories about these experiences, rather than the experiences in themselves. Considering the previously discussed nature of the interview and its intention to explore the interviewee's different experiences and how they came together in a cross-activity LI, the data could not be treated as one coherent learner life story. Instead there was going to be many more or less developed specific stories about particular real or imagined experiences of learning. To indicate this particular feature of the stories, they were called *micro-stories* about personal experiences of learning activities or situations. In the interview, any statement that referred to some aspect of the learning situation, as defined by the model, (i.e. the characteristics of the activity, the motives and emotions, and the sense of recognition or acts of recognition in the activity) was identified as a statement that could potentially be part of a micro-story about a personal experience of a learning activity, which in turn could potentially constitute the raw material for cross-activity LI construction. The question was how to establish the criteria for when a set of statements could be identified as a complete micro-story about a learning experience. Furthermore, since the cross-activity LI construction was conceptualized as occurring in the connection between different experiences, the analysis needed to be able to identify these connections.

Consequently, it was established that the analysis would focus on the identification of a set of statements about the interviewee's subjective experiences of learning activities. These sets of statements could form complete micro-stories about such an experience or be incomplete, in the sense that they did not fulfil all the criteria of a micro-story. Furthermore, these complete or incomplete micro-stories could contain single statements or sets of statements that established a connection between two or more micro-stories. In summary, the purpose of the analysis was to identify complete or incomplete micro-stories about the personal experiences of learning activities or situations, and connections between these micro-stories.

As mentioned above, the aim was not to conduct a narrative analysis of the micro-stories, but the narrative criteria were needed to indicate that through the narrative activity the individual produced representations of her experiences of learning activities. Hence, in order to identify the micro-stories a set of criteria were required that could combine narrative indicators with indicators of the experience of a learning activity. In other words, we needed to be able to identify the learning activity and the micro-story about the experience of this activity together. Consequently, a minimum set of criteria, which included this combination were established. It was established that in order for a set of statements to be identified as a complete micro-story they needed to make reference to all these criteria. If not, they would still be included in the analysis, but could not be regarded as complete narrative treatments of the experience of a learning activity. To clarify, the intention was to distinguish the micro-stories about experiences of learning activities from micro-stories from any other potential experiences.

The criteria that identify the experience as one of a learning activity relied on the model of the LI, whereas the criteria for the narrative treatment were informed by theories on narratives. Bakhtin's chronotope and the idea that an experience (or an event, in Bakhtin's words) begins with someone in a spatially and temporally defined situation, as well as the general emphasis on the question of the temporal and spatial situatedness of identity, gave the first criteria. The micro-story had to refer to the spatial and temporal framework of the experience. Moreover, the micro-story needed to clearly indicate that the experience was framed by an activity that either had a learning objective or resulted in learning. In accordance with the ideas about the importance of the *other* the individual needed to refer to someone else other than herself.

These criteria are in agreement with the basic constituents of a story, which are a "…representation of one or more events involving one or more human or human-like agents" (Herman, 2009, p. 16). However, in order for the micro-story to be one that could be related to the construction of a cross-activity LI, it also needed to indicate that the interviewee either referred to an experience of one or more

acts of recognition (as a learner) in the situation, or that she referred to a sense of recognition at the time of the experience or posterior to the experience. This last point means that the interviewee's sense of recognition as a learner could have been or could be established or (re-)constructed after the actual activity took place. It could even very likely be established during the interview.

As the interview is defined as a dialogic activity of co-construction, any statements made by the interviewer were included in these micro-stories.

In summary the analysis focused on statements and sets of statements that could be identified as:

- Complete micro-stories about the interviewee's personal learning experiences, where all the required criteria were referred to and which were (re-)constructed (jointly by interviewee and interviewer) during the interviews;
- Incomplete micro-stories, meaning independent statements and sets of statements with meanings about the interviewee's personal learning experiences where not all the necessary criteria for a complete micro-story were not referred to and which were (re-)constructed (jointly by interviewee and interviewer) during the interviews; and
- Connecting statements between different aspects and elements of the interviewee's personal learning experiences or between them and the interviewee as a learner, which could be part of a complete or incomplete micro-story or which were independent and which were (re-)constructed (jointly by interviewee and interviewer) during the interview.

Before moving on it should be noted that to characterize a statement as independent is problematic. Statements always occur as part of the whole which is constituted of all the complete and incomplete micro-stories. The statements that were identified as independent were those where there was no clear reference to a specific or generic type of activity. However, the spatial/temporal situation could be conceived as implicitly present as a result of a generalization where the meanings that are (re-)constructed are truly cross-activity and refer to the individual in any context at any time. As a consequence, the meaning could be

conceived as independent in the narrative (re-)construction, because it is not immediately identifiable as part of a complete or incomplete micro-story, but it is still very much part of a system of meanings about oneself as a learner.

Having established these criteria, there was a need for yet another distinction. Even though the intention of the interviews was to elicit stories about specific experiences of learning, in most interviews the interviewees frequently grouped experiences according to either the temporal/spatial setting of the experience or the type of activity. They could for instance talk about their experiences of primary school or everything they ever did with their family or tell about their learning experiences of particular activities such as travelling. Consequently, there were two ways to represent experiences. One way to represent experiences was as singular events with a well-defined spatial/temporal framing and specific location on the interviewee's trajectory, indicating when and where the experience took place. The micro-stories about these experiences were simply identifies as *type A micro-stories*. The other was to represent the experiences as groups or types of experiences with a floating spatial/temporal frame, in the sense that the when and where of the experience were not always as easy to identify. In the analysis these were labelled *type B micro-stories*.

The statements that constituted a complete micro-story about a singular experience or a group of experiences could be consecutive or spread across the interview. This means that the interviewee could tell about a learning experience anywhere in the interview, but in the analytical process statements that referred to one and the same experience, or to one and the same groups or types of experiences, were gathered together in order to form a complete narrative of the representation of the experience. This is an important aspect that adds to the co-constructive character of the narrative. The co-construction is, hence, taking place in two steps. One is the co-construction between the interviewee and the interviewers during the interview, and the second is the restructuring of the narratives in the succeeding analysis. It could be argued that this last co-constructive level is missing the important element of mutual influence since the investigator has the control of the construction and decides what goes where. As

an argument it is completely valid. Then again, this is one of the idiosyncrasies of any analytical work. The analyzer most often has the last word and is privileged with the possibility to decide over and define the data. Having said that, the addition of yet another analytical step where the analytical construction can be discussed and contrasted with the viewpoint of the interviewee is not rejected. Even though this step was not explicitly part of the analytical design in this exploration, it is not excluded in future plans. For example, one way to approach such an analytical step would be to include the presentation of the restructured narratives in the follow-up interview in order to have the interviewees' perspective on her/his micro-stories.

Criteria / Micro-Story	Type of activity	Spatial/temporal Dimension	Agents	Learning	LI-construction indication
Type A	Specific learning activities	Defined socio-institutional context. Defined time span.	The individual and at least one explicit or implicit other	Explicit learning content, objective or outcome.	Either sense of recognition or acts of recognition.
Type B	Groups or types of learning activities	Extended or generic socio-institutional context. Extended time span.	The individual and at least one explicit or implicit other	Explicit learning content, objective or outcome.	Either sense of recognition or acts of recognition.

Table 2. Summary of the combined narrative criteria and LI criteria for the identification of complete type A and B micro-stories about subjective experiences of learning activities.

In this study, the micro-stories were a construct of the analysis, while the narrative (re-)construction occurred during the interview. Because a micro-story could be formed throughout the interview, it had to be treated as a whole, meaning that anything that was said about any experience at any point in the interview had to be understood in light of what had been said before and what was said after. For instance, a connection between two experiences could be made in the very beginning of the interview, before anything had been told about any of the experiences. This aspect of the analysis is in agreement with Bruner's

identification of narratives as hermeneutically composed, which was mentioned earlier, and which means that the interpretation has to be accordingly. Moreover, this point underlines yet another one of Bruner's nine universals, namely the issue of narrative time following its own logic which does not necessarily correspond to chronological time. In this sense, the analytical processing can be defined as involving a de-construction of the temporal dimension of the narrative for a (re-)construction of the representation of the experience. More concretely, in order to understand the experience as a basis for the construction of the cross-activity LI, the experience needs to be (re-)constructed once through the narrative activity and then outside of this activity in a reflexive analytical activity. [23]

After the identification of the complete and the incomplete micro-stories, the second main part of the analysis was to identify the connections that occurred in the interview. Following the proposed model for LI-construction, the analysis needed to identify connections between the experiences and/or the different aspects of these experiences and the individual as a learner, as well as connections between the individual as a learner and the individual as a person in general. As in the case of the criteria for the micro-stories, the analysis needed to consider two types of elements in the connections, one being the representation of the elements of the experience and the second the narrative about the representation. The latter point was resolved by defining that one type of connections were those between complete and incomplete micro-stories. These connections were, hence, narrative connections. The other two types concerned the elements of the experience that qualified them as potential parts of the raw material for LI construction. In summary, three potential types of connection were established. They could either occur simultaneously or alone in the set of statements, and were simply formulated as type 1, 2 and 3 connections. Next follows a closer look at each of these connection types.

- Type 1 connections: *statements that connect two or more complete and incomplete micro-stories and independent sets of statements, through one or more aspects of the interviewee's personal learning experiences.*

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[23] It is assumed that this activity could be done by the individual herself, just as well as by the analyzer. As a reflexive activity it could be categorized as a technology of the self.

In these connections the individual generally establishes a comparative and evaluative relation and establishes similarities, differences, preferences, oppositions, contrasts etc between the two. These connections could consist of a connection of two subjective experiences through either one of the elements of the LI, i.e. the emotions, the motives or the objectives or the acts or sense of recognition in the experience, or any specific feature of the activity as such. For example, two experiences could be connected through the content, the teacher, the type of tasks, etc. or the motive that drove the individual's participation in them, or the emotions she experiences in them. An example of a statement that was a type 1 connection would be: "I really liked both these courses because the teachers were so open and friendly." In this statement the teacher is the connecter between the two courses. Another example could be: "I need more feedback in the formal situation than in an informal learning context, so that I know that I' m learning what I'm expected to learn." Here, the connector is the undefined content of the learning, which connects learning in and outside of the formal educational context.

Their close association to either specific or generic activities characterizes type 1 connections. Furthermore, these connections are in essence a feature of the narrative (re-)construction in that they obtain narrative coherence between the different micro-stories. However, as the narrative (re-)construction of experiences enables the (re-)construction of meanings about oneself, these are also connections that regulate and enable change and maintain coherence and stability in the sense of recognition of oneself as a learner. As narrative connectors they reflect the potential of narrative time in that they enable the connection of experiences that might be distant in the trajectory of the individual. They can connect micro-stories of experiences in the past with those in the present and the future.

- Type 2 connections: *statements that connect one or more aspects of the interviewee's personal learning experiences and the interviewee as a learner, in terms of the elements of the model.*

These connections are identified as part of the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner in connection to specific or groups/types of activities. They are established through the connection that the individual makes between herself as a learner and some aspect of the activity and her participation in it. The connections are, then, meanings that the individual constructs about herself as a learner by connecting different elements of the model in relation to an experience. These connections can occur as part of a complete and incomplete micro-story or be generalized to the level that they are applicable to the individual in any learning situation at any time (see footnote 21). When they occur as part of type A or B micro-story, they are conceived as part of the individual's (re-)construction of meanings about herself as a learner based one specific experience or a groups of experiences of a type of activities. If the connection is not related to a spatially (specific or generic) and temporally (delimited or extended) situated experience, then they reflect a generalized cross-activity meaning, where the basis of the raw material, i.e. the experience, is not identifiable. However, type 2 connections can spring from identifiable experience but also be generalized across activities.

A statement that would be identified as a type 2 connection could for instance be "I have learned so much from my father." The connection is then between the individual as a learner and the father and a significant *other*. Although there is no explicit reference to the spatially and temporally defined activity, the father is an agent in the socioinstitutional context of the family and hence the statement would be defined as part of a complete or incomplete micro-story about learning in the family. Another example could be: "I did like the topic of the course but the readings were just too complicated and too abstract and made me feel stupid." The meaning (re-)construction is here made by a connection between the individual as a learner and the negative feelings caused by the reading material of the course. Another example could be "I really wanted to learn to ride a bike because I wanted to be able to go along with my friends on the excursions." Here the connection is between the individual and the specific motive of the activity.

- Type 3 connections: *statements that connect the interviewee in general and the interviewee as a learner, in terms of the elements of the model.*[24]

Statements that establish a relation between a (re-)constructed meaning about the individual as a general self or person and a (re-)constructed meaning about the individual as a learner in specific are identified as type 3 connections. These statements are conceived as generalized cross-activity meanings about oneself as a person which mediate the sense-making of oneself as a learner in the (re-)construction of subjective learning experiences. These connections can also occur both as part of complete and incomplete micro-stories of both types or as more or less independent. An example would be "I'm a very organized person, so I can't learn if there's chaos around me." Here a generalized cross-activity meaning about the self as a person is (re-)constructed and related to the self as a learner. Another fairly evident example of this type of connection would be "I'm the kind of person who want to keep learning all the time."

In summary, connections can establish relations between complete and incomplete micro-stories, between the aspects of specific singular or groups and type of experiences and the individual, and between the individual in general and the individual as a learner in specific. Furthermore, connections are a results of the narrative (re-)construction of the subjective experiences, their marks and the meanings that at some point were (re-)constructed. Finally, the analytical identification of the connection always requires the identification of the elements of the model of LI; i.e. the motives and goals, the emotions, the characteristics of the activity and either a reference to a sense of recognition as a learner or a reference to an act of recognition that is represented in the narrative (re-)construction of the subjective experience.

The analysis was embarked with these criteria for the identification of micro-stories and connections. Based on these criteria and the proposed model of LI-construction, a set of keywords were established and entered into Transana,

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[24] The analytical protocols containing definitions of micro-stories, their criteria and connections as well as the analytical procedures are available in appendix 3.

through which the analysis was carried out. However, this process was not a simple case of deciding and executing, but involved a process of going and back forth as well. In this process Transana as a tool was an important influence, and therefore before moving on with presentation of the keywords and the analytical process, a closer look at Transana is required.

4.9. **Transana – an analytical and a psychological tool**

Just as with any tool, the affordances of Transana are on the one hand of benefit for the analysis and on the other hand a restriction that influence the analysis and the process of thought. As such, Transana is most certainly a psychological tool that shapes and transforms both the analytical material and the analytical processes.

4.9.1. **Transcriptions**

Transana's main advantage, to begin with, is its facilitation of the transcription process. Beside the practical aspects of enabling fast forwarding and rewinding with simple short commands and deciding the pace of the audio reproduction, Transana facilitates the incorporation of time codes in the transcription. Whenever a time code is inserted in the transcription the beginning and the ending of a potential audio clip is decided, which means that it is always possible to easily locate the transcription in the audio file. This function was an important feature of Transana in the decision to use this particular tool for the analysis,[25] since it would facilitate the reconstruction of micro-stories through the reorganization of statements referring to one experience to form a complete or incomplete micro-story. In this study the time codes were used generously and inserted with each turn in the conversation, so that whenever the word went from the interviewer to the interviewer or vice versa, this was marked with time codes. Also, if there were long segments where the interviewee talked uninterrupted, time codes were inserted when some kind of shift in the content of the statements was detected in order to facilitate the subsequent construction of audio clips, (explained below) for the construction of the micro-stories.

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[25] Another practical reason was that the applied software needed to be compatible with Windows as well as Macintosh.

A set of rules[26] was established to further facilitate the transcription process as well as the subsequent analysis. This can be viewed as a first analytical measure, since decisions were being made during the course of the transcription about what to include and not. The general guideline was to focus on the elements of the model or any other aspects of the experience and the setting where it occurred. Rhetorical fillers that often are a feature of the spoken language, such as "well", "like", "you know", "I mean", etc., were often left out. The result of the transcription rules were extensive transcriptions with complete and structured statements that did not have any or many of the features of the spoken language. The transcription style is kept in the interview extracts that are included in the presentation of the results in chapter five, although minor adjustment may have been made in order to facilitate the comprehension of the statements that are drawn out of context.

The transcription rules can be understood in terms of denaturalized transcription styles, in which idiosyncratic elements of the spoken language, such as pauses and involuntary vocalizations, are removed and "…accuracy concerns the substance of the interview, that is, the meanings and perceptions created and shared during a conversation." (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005, p.1276) This type of denaturalized transcription is applied in some ethnographic approaches, grounded theory and in critical discourse analysis, although exact methodological guidelines for how the transcription should be carried out are scarce (*ibid.*).

As the focus of this was the content of the meanings that were (re-)constructed and the building blocks that were used to construct these, a denaturalized transcriptions style was decided on. A guideline with rules for the transcriptions was developed and applied. An exception to the denaturalized telegraphic style was established. Any time the interviewee made any kind of reference to her/himself as a learner and formulated a sense of recognition, it was transcribed literally. However, the denaturalized style is clearly detectable here as well, in the sense that there are no references to nonverbal expressions or anything that is not

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[26] For a detailed account of these rules, please see appendix 4.

an outspoken word. The rationale behind this exception was that these statements were expected to constitute constructions of meanings that were specifically about the individual as a learner. In other words, the expectation was that the sense of recognition was primarily embedded in these sentences.

As Transana permits the simultaneous access to the transcription and the audio file, the analysis of the text could at all times be completed with the original audio recording. Hence, nothing was lost. However, because the procedure implies a type of pre-analysis it is indeed open to criticism. What happens to the openness that the analysis strives for, when data are "cleaned" beforehand and elements that might be relevant are omitted or neglected because they are not recognized in the model? One could also argue that there should reasonably be a qualitative difference between a meaning about oneself as a learner that is expressed with a clear voice, without any doubts and verbal turns, and a meaning that takes time to construct, with many pauses, insecure laughter and many incomplete sentences that eventually come together in a complete formulation.

The question is not only relevant but also justified. The issue was resolved with two measures. The first was to always include more rather than less in the transcription. Also, if a segment of the interview was decided to be omitted completely because it was considered off-topic, the transcription had to include a description of the topic of the segment and time code it, in order to make the segment easily identifiable for a second check. The second measure was the frequent application of a process of going back and forth between the transcription and the audio file, whenever doubts arose. The process of interpretation has relied as much on the recordings as on the transcriptions. With these measures, it is assumed that some of the risks of reduced openness to data have been handled.

All the interviews of the first round were transcribed. As data from the second round of interviews were going to be used as complementary, the analysis of this data has been done directly on the audio recordings. Once the transcriptions of the first round of interviews were ready, the analysis proceeded in Transana.

4.9.2. **Keywords**

Following the structure of the software a database was created in Transana with two series; one for all the audio files of the first round of interviews and one for all the audio files of the second round. The interviews were then added to the corresponding series, as an episode. Consequently, each episode corresponded to the complete audio recording of an interview, and the transcription of each interview was added to the episode.

Next began the complicated part of the use of Transana. The question was how to make Transana work for the analysis, more than the analysis being adapted too what Transana could and could not do.

Transana is perfect for approaches such as grounded theory where the openness to data is not an aspect to consider but a basic requirement and feature. Keywords can easily be created either independently or in relation to interview clips. The procedure is that a keyword group is created, and within that keyword group any number of keywords can be created and added. Say for instance that the purpose was to identify all references to emotions in the experiences, then a keyword group labelled "Emotions" would be created and each time a word that referred to emotions appeared a new keyword could be added to this keyword group.

This particular feature of Transana was not quite fitting for the analytical purposes of this study. The intention was to identify a set of pre-established elements and codify them rather than to draw the elements from the data. However, this feature did contribute to and facilitated the openness to data and as it will be described later, the conceptualization of type 2 connections was enriched.

As a rule, however, the keywords guided the analysis and therefore the previously mentioned set of predefined keyword groups and corresponding keywords were inserted into Transana. The initial trial rounds were carried out through a rather intricate system of keywords, which complicated the analysis of the main elements of the model. For example, a number of different keywords

were inserted for the keyword group emotions. Because of the high level of detail in the system of keywords, the proposed basic elements of the LI were obscured and their actual relevance for meaning construction were difficult to identify.

As a result, the keyword system was considerably simplified to only include the necessary elements according to the proposed model.[27] As part of this simplification, the analysis generously applied the keyword 'other' to indicate that something was said about the element that was not covered by the pre-established keywords. Behind the keyword 'other' hides a miscellaneous collection of items that need further analysis which would serve for the refinement and elaboration of the model and add to the insight into the aspects of the motives, emotions and the definition of the characteristics of the activity.

No doubt, the disadvantage of this simplification was that some of the richness of the data was lost. For example, in the case of type 1 connections (between complete and incomplete micro-stories), the initial system enabled the distinction between many different kinds of connections between different micro-stories. In the simplified version the identification of the nature of the connection was narrowed down to a differentiation of connections based on the established similarities or differences between subjective experiences.

Similar simplifications were made for all the analyzed elements. Another and more detailed example is presented in table 3 which describes the analysis of the emotional aspect of the (re-)construction of the subjective experience. As shown, references to emotions and feelings were codified in terms of 'content' for any kind of positive expressions, 'discontent' for any kind of negative expressions, and 'other' for anything that could not be identified as any of the other two.[28]

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[27] For a detailed account of the full list of keywords, please see appendix 5.
[28] Again, for a detailed account of the analyzed elements of the model, their corresponding keywords and their definitions, please see appendix 5.

Emotions related to the activity/situation of the experience	**Emotions**
	Keywords and their definitions:
	Content: Expressions of some degree of positive emotions, such as being satisfied, pleased, at ease, comfortable, happy, etc.
	Discontent: Expressions of some degree of negative emotions, such as being unsatisfied, uncomfortable, insecure, irritated, etc.
	Other: Expressions of a feeling that is difficultly identified as content or discontent, either to a higher or lower degree, for instance being afraid, being anxious or nervous, or indifferent/neutral.
Object of emotions related to the activity/situation of the experience	**Object of Emotions**
	Keywords and their definitions:
	Social structure: Reference to emotions in relation to the social and relational aspects, organization, rules and norms etc. of the activity where the experience took place or can take place.
	Activity structure: Reference to emotions in relation to the organization of the tasks, the content, goal formulation, distribution of responsibilities, etc.
	Object/Content: Reference to emotions in relation to the objector content of the learning, that is to say what is learned or supposed to be learned.
	Other: Reference to emotions in relation to any other aspect of the activity where the experience took place or can take place.

Table 3. Example of analyzed elements and their corresponding keywords in Transana and their definitions.

Evidently, these three keywords cannot cover the rich and diverse range of emotions that are experienced and expressed by people. However, with the general intentions of the study in mind, the aim was not to explore the particularities of each element in the model, but rather to establish the relevance of each identified element for the analysis of the cross-activity LI. For this

purpose, this rather radical simplification was not only beneficial but also necessary.

Although the decision to simplify made perfect sense once it was executed, the necessities that led to an adjustment of the idea originated from the restrictions of the analytical software rather than the conceptual analytical tools and intentions. The influence of the mediating artifact in the construction of meanings made itself reminded when Transana was put to use.

4.9.3. **Collections and clips**

To recapitulate, the unit of analysis was the representation of the individual's experience, which was (re-)constructed in sets of statements that could form complete or incomplete micro-stories of type A or B. Accordingly, the elements of the model had to be identified within these statements and the keywords be assigned to clips where these statements occurred. Therefore, before using the keywords each interview transcript had to be organised so that the sets of statements that referred to an experience, or a group or type of experiences were grouped together. As explained above, this is how the micro-stories were constructed.

In terms of Transana, this procedure consisted in the abovementioned creation of *clips*. These are segments of transcription that correspond to a segment in the audio recording, with a time code that marks the beginning and the end of a set of consequent statements in a segment in the audio file. In our analysis a clip could include anything from one single phrase to long conversation-like fragments between the interviewer and the interviewee, to segments with a set of consecutive statements that formed a complete micro-story.[29]

Consequently, clips of sets of statements that referred to an experience or a group of experiences were created. Statements that were not codifiable with the pre-established keywords were analyzed to establish if they were relevant for the

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[29] For an example of clips and the assignment of keywords, please see an example of the collection reports provided by Transana in appendix 6.

analysis, in the sense that they referred to some aspect of a learning experience or some other aspect of the interviewee's recognition of her/himself as a learner. This analysis led to the addition of a kind of type 2 connection in which the interviewee established a connection between her/himself as a learner and the larger macro-context, meaning the extended sociocultural context of one or more learning experiences. As a result of this analysis, we could also establish the keywords for any statements that referred to the interview as an activity that supported the process of thinking about oneself as a learner.

All clips were named according to the spatial/temporal or socio-institutional context of the experience, and the order of their appearance in the interview (i.e. the family1, 2, etc., first grade1, 2, 3, etc., music class1, 2, 3, etc.). If this aspect of the experience was not identifiable, because it was not mentioned in the statements, then, the name of the clip was based on the keyword that was treated in the statements. Next, these clips had to be organized in groups of complete and incomplete micro-stories.

Transana permits the creation of collections of clips. This function was used to create collections of all the clips containing statements about either particular experiences, or groups or types of experiences. Each interview had three head collections to which the clips could be assigned. These were MSA (micro-story type A), MSB (micro-story type B) and SOS (sets of statement that are incomplete micro-stories). The process of assigning clips was also one of going back and forth, identifying all the necessary elements in the clips, establishing whether all the necessary criteria for a MSA or MSB were fulfilled and finally defining in which head collection the sub-collection of clips belonged.

Once all the clips were created and organized, the analysis proceeded to the previously described process of keyword assignment.

In summary, Transana has facilitated many of the analytical steps along the way, but its organizational benefits and limitation also impose a form on the analysis. For instance, it is only possible to use a keyword once in each clip, which

complicates the analysis of long segments where one element can occur in different moments of the elaboration of the statement and in connection to different elements. Ideally, the coding should have reflected the order and frequency of an element of the model. Had the analysis been more focused on rhetorical and linguistic configuration of the narrative construction, this aspect of the software would have been a considerable disadvantage. Furthermore, the visual reports that Transana offers, as useful as they are, tend to become very difficult to overview when they include many different keywords. This was yet another reasons why the need for analytical detail was questioned and the decision to "clean" the keyword list was made.

4.10 **The practical steps in the analysis – who did what and how?**

Each interview was transcribed once by one of the four interviewers. Next, two interviewers analyzed each interview individually. The 'analyzers' were not necessarily those who had conducted interview. The analysis of each interviewer was subsequently contrasted in two steps. The first step was to contrast the creation of the clips and the second to contrast the keywords that were assigned to each clip. In case of disagreements, each analyzer gave an explanation or an argument for the choice made, and usually both analyzers could agree easily. In a few cases (all in all five) a third party, one of the other two analyzers, was brought in to settle the issue. However, it was not a question of one analyzer giving in to the other two, but a process of discussing back and forth in order to reach a shared understanding of the issue or to identify weaknesses in the model, in the formulations of the rules or the definitions in order to formulate and develop the operational decisions. Throughout the process an analytical tool was being developed, refined and used. As in the case of any applied tool it was easier to use for some and more difficult for others, depending on previous experience and general background. In the case of one of the analyzers (not myself), her extensive experience in using analytical tools and translating reality into codes and categories facilitated the use of this analytical tool, whereas in other cases this was an occasion for competence development and learning.

More often than not, initial disagreements were an effect of misunderstandings that easily could be sorted out. Because the analytical process was just as much a process of development and exploration of the tool, no specific inter-judge reliability calculations were made. However, it can safely be established that though the analytical tool can undeniably be improved, it was both usable and useful for the analysis of the interviews as sites of cross-LI construction.

5. Results – findings, confirmations and new questions

In order to facilitate an overview of the results their presentation will be organized according to the questions (1-5) of the exploration presented in the previous chapter. This is at times a forced construction since the issues often are intertwined and overlapping. However, the presentation of the results is a process of narrative construction and as such has to follow a narrative logic rather than the logic of the data. As in the case of the methodological issues in the previous chapter, the presentation will also include some comments, conclusive remarks and evaluations of specific results in direct connection to their presentation, in order to facilitate the reader's access to the next chapter with a revised model of LI-construction and conclusions.

The model of the LI has guided the abovementioned narrative logic and the focus has been on those aspects of the results that confirm its functionality or indicate the need for adjustments and improvements. Although the data consists of a relatively small sample group, the interviews are rich source of data about many different aspects of the construction of the cross-activity LI. In the presentation the focus will be on some of the key aspects of the theoretical exploration, namely the notion of identity in general and LI in particular as a conceptual tool, the narrative activity as a technology of the self, the elements of the model and their connecting function and the exploration of the connection between the marks of different types of learning experience and the meanings about oneself as a learner.

While all the interviews offered valuable insight into either all or several of these aspects, the presentation will focus on the general conclusions and use a few of the interviews as illustrative examples of the observed general tendencies.

Consequently, without further a due, let us proceed to which responses to the questions were to be found in the interviews.

5.1. **Question 1**

What can narratives about subjective experience of learning tell us about the construction of the cross-activity LI?

To begin with and on a general level, the results support the recurring idea that narrative activity is a means to construct meanings about oneself as someone. The analysis also shows that an analysis of the narrative construction can reveal important aspects of the process through which marks from learning experiences are processed into meanings about oneself as a learner as well as when and how this process fails and succeeds. Most importantly, narratives about subjective experiences of learning that are constructed in a joint narrative activity such as an interview reveal the dialogic character of this activity and its impact on the construction of the meanings. This feature reinforces the view on identities in general and the LI in particular as dynamic and changing and the idea that in the social context of a co-constructive activity nothing is given. It is no exaggeration to say that everything is in one way or the another (re-)constructed.

5.1.1. **The narrative products and the narrative activity**

Through the narrative activity experiences, the marks and the previous meanings about these marks can be processed, relived and (re-)constructed. As such the experiences are rightly conceptualized as the providers of the raw material for the construction of the LI. However, just because the raw material is there it does not mean that it is used. Conversely, the raw material might not seem to be there but it can be produced as a part of the constructive process. Forgotten memories can be remembered. Experiences never ever imagined before can be envisioned for the first time, and barely noticeable marks from some experiences turn into fundamental marks. In short, the narrative activity enables a (re-)construction of meanings in potentially surprising ways, which, nevertheless, can always be understood in light of the conceptual artifact and the narrative activity which mediate the meaning construction.

In this study experiences with particular and strong marks were often possible to identify, both through the representation of the experience and its narrative

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treatment. At times the narrative (re-)construction of the experiences indicated that these marks were not entirely unprocessed but that they were integrated into a system of meanings about oneself as a learner or someone else, i.e. some other identity, and that the (re-)construction in the interviews was a way to "thicken" these identities. The most common example of this point was the interviewees' student identities and professional identities, although it could also involve their identities as daughters/sons, gender identity, national identity or a general self-identity.

Furthermore, micro-stories about these experiences with strong marks were often easily triggered through a question about a particularly negative or positive experience. In these cases the interviewee often responded quickly and easily as if the questions were expected. However, when asked about the significance of a specific experience and its influence on later experiences the responses could become more tentative and exploring using formulations such as "I think it might have…", "Maybe that's why…", etc. In these cases new narrative connections were being made and the construction of new meanings could be suspected or even confirmed when the interviewees for instance said, "I hadn't thought about it that way before." or "I never noticed that I am so concerned with the teacher."

In yet other cases the identification of the experiences that had left strong marks was difficult and seemed to be taking place during the interview. Notice that the assumption is not that this identification never had been made before, but that it might not have been consciously explored and processed, or that the processing had another aim than LI-construction, and subsequently had been integrated into another system of meanings about oneself, i.e. another identity. Although the focus of the interviews was LI and its construction, the mediating function of identities in the construction of meanings was at times made apparent to the point that the other identity could be described as interfering in the LI-construction.

In summary, some of the general insights gained about subjective learning experiences through narratives are that:

a.   Narrative activity is indeed effective for the construction of the cross-activity LI. Telling about experiences (re-)constructs the representation of them, their meanings and the sense that is made of the experiences. Through the narrative structure meanings are constructed about oneself as a learner.

b.   How marks may or may not become part of meanings about oneself as a learner is a complex and intricate process, which in general depends more on the narrative activity and the previously constructed meanings, than on the marks themselves. The narrative process constructs the meaning of the mark, whereby the representation of the mark can change and the experience make sense in new and other ways.

c.   Experiences that have left strong marks, become the constructive stuff of micro-stories more easily, but not necessarily part of meanings about oneself as a learner. The construction of meanings about an experience is the first step of the narrative processing for the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner. However, unless there are narrative connections between the experiences, and then between these experiences and the self, it is difficult to identify an LI-construction and know anything about the cross-activity LI. This observation brings additional value to the connections and their (re-)construction in the narrative activity.

d.   Marks can be re-processed again and again just as meanings can be (re-) constructed time an again, so that less conspicuous marks become noticed and ascribed more significance, depending on the joint narrative activity. Experiences are interdependent. One experience can serve as the background to another and these positions can change. A mark becomes more or less important depending on where it is positioned in the narrative construction and how it is connected to other experiences.

e.   Different systems of meanings, i.e. identities, can mediate the narrative activity itself, indicating that the less elaborated an individual's previous meanings about herself as a learner are, the more likely is it that another mediating conceptual tool is used during the activity, i.e. the interference of another identity, which could also be understood in terms of resistance to the construction of new meanings or the thickening of the other identity. This indication implies that the narrative processing of learning experiences can

display the previously constructed meanings about oneself as a learner and their level of elaboration. This is mainly detectable in the sense of recognition and acts of recognition and what identity these refer to, e.g. sense of recognition as a learner or as an expert. Again, the identification of connections, mainly type 2 (element – individual as a learner) and 3 (individual as a learner and self) is an accessible approach to these (re-)constructed meanings.

f.   The narrative activity is a dialogic and dynamic process where nothing is given, and on which the construction of meanings is highly dependant. As such the analysis of the *joint* narrative activity is as necessary as the analysis of the content of the narrative production and the meanings that are constructed.

g.   The type of marks from different experiences partially defines the type of narrative treatment. This is a qualified truth because of statements in previous points and the identification of the joint narrative activity as an influence on the narrative treatment of the mark and the consequent changes in the representation of the mark. However, the results indicate that the original mark of a subjective experience can execute considerable influence on the subsequent (re-) construction of meanings of that mark. In other words, qualitative differences in the marks can generate qualitatively different type of micro-stories.

These general features of cross-activity LI construction through narrative activity are detectable in all interviews, although to varying extents. In continuation the observations and conclusions will be presented with illustrative examples that mainly focus on selected interviewees.

The presentation will start with a closer look at Federico[30], a teacher in his early forties. In his interview many of the abovementioned features can be identified, but the potentially most prominent feature in his (re-)construction of meanings about himself as a learner is the interference of his teacher identity. The presentation starts with this aspect, as it is a clear illustration of the fundamental function of identities as mediators of meaning construction and the process of making sense of an experience.

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[30] Assumed names are used in all cases to refer to the interviewees.

5.1.2. **Federico - the interference of another mediating tool**

Federico's trajectory seemed to have had a rupture when he became a teacher and started to construct this identity. Quite often in the interview, he (re-)constructed the meanings about himself as a teacher, which mediate the (re-)construction of meanings about the subjective of experiences. Even when he was talking about the experiences where he was a student, he tended to position himself as a hypothetical teacher and evaluate what he would have done or what the teacher should have done from an educator's perspective. This feature was clear when he talked about his most recent experience of being the learner, which was the Master program. The initial question about the mandatory course 'Culture, development and learning in educational psychology' (in continuation this course will be referred to as CDL) triggered a series of statements where Federico conveyed that he was feeling insecure and uncomfortable in the context of this course and that he felt he needed to make an effort to grasp the contents.

F: *This course, I don't know. I really don't feel comfortable with that course. In that one my motivation has been rather low. I've read quite a lot about the topic. I've understood it. I was already quite familiar with Piaget, so I understand the antagonism between the Piagetian and the Vygotskian perspective. But this thing with the presenting group and the critical group, I don't know. There is something in that methodology that I think people still haven't grasped.*[31]

The methodology referred to the organization of the course and Federico explained how his peers failed to contribute to a good debate between the two groups where one presents and the other questions. He did feel like he was learning new things but at the same time he felt he was lost in face of the final task of the course which was to create a synthesis about some of the key concepts that had been treated in the course. He was expressing that he was struggling with his own sense of recognition as a learner in the course, but when he was (re-) constructing meanings about the subjective experience of the course he

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[31] *F: Esta asignatura, no sé. Tengo mucha incomodidad para esa asignatura. En esta mi motivación ha sido más bien baja. He leído bastante el tema. Lo he comprendido. Yo venía trabajando bastante Piaget entonces comprendo el antagonismo entre la perspectiva Vygotskiana y Piagetiana. Pero este asunto de grupo expositivo y grupo crítico, no sé. Hay algo en esa metodología que aún no siento que las personas se apropian.*

positioned himself as a kind of evaluator who established that the others had trouble with the pedagogical structure of the course. His teacher identity some how broke through and mediated the process of making sense of some of the aspects of this subjective experience. However, his teacher identity also interfered in the (re-)construction of another subjective experience where he felt good about his participation.

He connected the experience of the course CDL to another mandatory course on methodology and epistemology by establishing a difference.[32] While his sense of recognition as a learner in the course CDL was mainly negative, in the other course it was mainly positive. However, the positive sense of recognition as a learner in the methodology course was not mainly oriented towards him as a learner. Instead, it was a (re-)construction of the meanings about himself as a teacher.

F: *The level of complexity of the theme of epistemology and methodology of research is very high. I know there is an assumption that the students of a master should already be able to more or less manage the basics of epistemology but my impression is that the large majority doesn't. (Talks of these basics.) I think this topic should be approached in another way. At the beginning of this course there should be some kind of introduction to the different epistemological views.*
I: *Is it well adjusted to your own previous knowledge?*
F: *Yes. Me, yes! I used to teach this in philosophy. I learned it…(interruption by the interviewer who clarifies what Federico has just said.)* [33]

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[32] In the organization of the program these two courses are scheduled in close relation to each other. They take place on the same day as one session divided in two, starting with the course Culture, development and learning in educational psychology and then moving on to the course Methodology and Epistemology of psychoeducational research (Metodogía y Epistemología de la investigación psicoeducativa). Consequently, the two courses are spatially and temporally closely connected, which could at times be reflected in the narrative (re-)construction of the subjective experiences, such as in the case of Federico.

[33] *F: La complejidad del tema de la epistemología y metodología de investigación es muy alta. Yo sé que hay un supuesto que los estudiantes que llegan a una maestría ya deben más o menos manejar fundamentos de epistemología, pero yo percibo que la gran mayoría no. (Habla sobre estos fundamentos). Me parece que este tema se debería abordar de otra manera. Debería darse algún tipo de una temática inicial al comenzar este curso que pudiera abordar un poco las diferentes visiones epistemológicas.*
E: ¿Está bien ajustado para tu conocimiento previo?
F: Si. Yo sí. Yo enseñaba esto en filosofía. Lo aprendí… (Interrupción por la entrevistadora).

The interviewer asks how the inferior level of knowledge and comprehension of the peers has affected Federico and he explains that at times the work in small groups was rather demanding because the others often felt confused and lost. Subsequently, the interviewer asks how this aspect has influenced on Federico's motivation and general feelings towards the course.

F: *It's strange but it has been positive. In the country of the blind you are the king.[34] I feel great because I have a discourse and I can share it.*
I[35]: *But did you learn anything?*
F: *Yes, yes because I had to repeat stuff and share them.[36]*

So, in reliving the experience of this course he (re-)constructed the meanings of himself that strengthened his sense of recognition as a teacher where he was an expert that felt secure and could help other. The learning that occurred was described as a repetition of previously constructed meanings about epistemology which he used to mediate the (re-)construction of the meanings about himself as a teacher. In other words, in the narrative (re-)construction his teacher identity was the main mediator of the process of making sense of the experience, and this identity was interfering with the construction of meanings about himself as a learner. In the course CDL where the teacher identity was challenged and required (re-)construction, which implies that it could potentially have been an occasion for the construction of other meanings. However, the interpretation here is that as Federico could not use the tool that he applied most competently and frequently, there was no real mediating tool. The marks of the experience of the CDL course could be detected (he felt insecure and uncomfortable) but it was difficult to identify the meanings about how Federico recognized himself as a learner in this course. Consequently, following the design of the interview, the interviewer shifted focus and started the inquiry into Federico's previously

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[34] This is an example of how the transcription style omits some aspects of the narrative (re-) construction. Federico paraphrases the famous proverb "In the country of the blind, the one eyed man is the king", and even though one part of the proverb is omitted, the interviewer fully understands Federico's point, because of a shared frame of reference. She joins Federico and they utter the words of the incomplete proverb together in quire and laugh.
[35] I= Interviewer
[36] *F: Es curioso pero ha sido algo positivo. En el país de los ciegos eres el rey. Yo me siento muy bien, porque yo tengo un discurso y lo puedo compartir.*
E: ¿Pero aprendiste algo?
F: Si, si, porque tuve que repasar cosas y compartirlas.

constructed meanings about himself as a learner and other past subjective experiences of learning. Even though early and past experiences of learning seemed to be difficult to talk about to begin with eventually micro-stories about these representations were elicited.

When asked about one or more experiences that had had an impact on how he perceived and saw himself as a learner he started by giving a very general description of how many of the shifts and turns in his life had been accidental rather than planned and anticipated. He gave this response a few turns and then decided that he had done many things but no one singular experience stood out.

At this point the interviewer asked him to think carefully about the question once more. Federico thought for some 15 seconds and then described how he learned to play the guitar essentially on his own as well as driving a car. He explained how he used to wash the family jeep and how he had to take it in out of the garage and had a vague idea about how to do it by having watched his father, but that nobody had actually instructed or shown him. He explained this situation of learning how to drive with a hint of excitement in his voice, as if he had discovered something new, which the interviewer addressed.

I: *It sounds like you haven't thought about these things before. But now that I ask you, for instance the situation with learning to drive on your own, or the guitar, how have they affected you?*
F: *It's true, like you say, I hadn't thought about them as something important, but like something that just happened.*
I: *But then what has made you become the kind of learner that you are, if not these experiences?*
F: *I think it's been a process of being involved in certain contexts doing certain things.* [37]

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[37]*E: Parece como si no hubieras pensado antes en este tema. Pero ahora que te lo pregunto… por ejemplo esa situación de aprender a conducir solo, o la guitarra solo, ¿cómo te han afectado?*
F: Es cierto como lo dices, no lo había pensado como algo que… como algo importante, sino como una cosa que ocurrió.
E: Pero entonces, ¿qué te ha hecho ser el tipo de aprendiz que eres, si no son éstas experiencias?
F: Creo que ha sido más un proceso de estar metido en ciertos ambientes, haciendo ciertas cosas.

Federico could be said to acknowledge the co-constructive process. Something that he hadn't perceived as significant before had become important during the interview. A mark was given a renewed value and made potential raw material for meaning construction. This initial step could then be taken further to construct meanings that could become part of his sense of recognition of himself as a learner. However, this process was interrupted, because the narrative co-construction failed to do so. Federico downplayed the importance of these experiences and preferred to see his sense of recognition as a learner as the result of an accumulation of experiences, which had interacted, and the interviewer failed to orient the narrative process in this direction in that moment of the interview.

Federico's conclusion is in agreement with the theoretical conceptualization of the cross-activity LI – construction. His experiences build on each other, interact and a system of meanings is constructed based on situated meanings from specific situations and activities. However, the bridge between meanings from one or more specific activities and the system of meanings about him as a learner does not become manifest in this part of the co-constructive process. Instead the set of statements that are jointly constructed prove the previous claim that the experience of a learning activity does not necessarily result in the construction of a LI. The constructive process is complex and erratic and can be hindered in many ways. One way, which is made manifest in Federico's interview is that there might be an easier way to make sense of experiences using another identity with more elaborated features as the mediator.

The potential interference of another identity is related to the previously idiosyncratic feature of an identity as both that which is being constructed and the constructive tool. In the exchange of co-constructive statements above, the interviewer and Federico were making a first provisional attempt to ascribe meaning to some experiences in his past and explore whether they could be integrated into his cross-activity LI. As such the construction of the cross-activity LI could be described as initiated. The problem was that the conceptual tool that was guiding the interviewer was not shared. The interviewer knew why she was

saying what she was saying, but Federico had at that point in the interview still no idea about the aim of the interview being the exploration of the construction of his cross-activity LI.[38] In fact LI as a concept did not even exist for him. All he new was that he was going to be asked about his experiences of learning from formal and informal educational contexts.

A mediating and conceptual tool was nevertheless needed in order for him to process the experiences of which he had just recently become aware. With the risk of making a tautological observation, Federico's processing of the representation of the experience of learning to drive a car was an experience in its own right that needed to be processed and mediated. The activity in which he was participating was requiring the reformulation of previously constructed meanings about this experience, and imposing an alternative on him. The implicit requirement was that he (re-)constructed some meanings about himself that were based on this experience, but he didn't know how or why and his interpretation was that things just happened. There was no conceptual tool available.

Therefore, he turned to the best-developed mediating tool at hand, which was his professional identity, the teacher identity, which he had so far competently applied whenever he could during the interview. When asked to describe the "certain types of contexts and activities" he gave examples from his professional life as a psychologist and how he finally came to understand that he wanted to be a teacher.

I: *But what you are describing now is how you came to think of yourself as an educator. Rather than a learner. Why were you interested in this part? Because it is the other side of the coin?*

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[38] For the sake of clarification it should be noted that in the phase of data collection the degree of the interviewer's impact on the construction was still not acknowledged. The dialogic aspect of the construction was recognized but not fully developed. As an effect the interviewer was not aware she was co-constructing and processing the narrative products to the extent that she was. This aspect became evident in the analytical and interpretative process and is identified as a key element in an improvement and elaboration of the conceptualization of cross-activity LI construction.

F: *Yes.[39] It's more like the product of the experience. More the product of what I'm doing.[40]*

Here, Federico went back to describing a particular experience as a teacher in an impoverished part of the capital of his native country. Again, Federico's statements point to the importance of the activity and the object of the activity as an impact on the meanings about oneself that are constructed. Federico had spent the past 15-20 years teaching, participating in activities where his motive for participation was to be the best teacher he could. Any meanings that he might have constructed about himself as a learner, seemed to have been buried underneath the constant reconstruction and thickening of his teacher identity. What he had needed throughout all those years was a conceptual tool that mediated his participation in teaching activities and his enactment of the teacher role. He had become a competent user of this particular tool, which impeded the development and construction of his LI.

The question about why one identity can block or hinder the construction of another is a key issue. Manifestations of this kind of interference in the narrative activity can be an indication of the level of elaboration of the cross-activity LI. If the narrative (re-)construction of an experience is an activity that can require mediation, as in the case of Federico, and the cross-activity LI is not elaborated enough to support its own (re-)construction, then it is not surprising if another identity fulfils this necessity. The question is also a recurring research topic, with different explanations depending on the theoretical orientation.

One way to explain the phenomenon of identity interference is with the notion of identity defence (Illeris, 2009), which is more rooted in classical psychological models. Faced with a drastically different and challenging new situation the individual might reinforce an identity with which she feels comfortable, or put in

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[39] To give another example of the aspects of the narrative construction that are lost in the transcription but available in the audio file, at this point in the interview Federico laughed, as if recognizing the contradiction.

[40] *E: Lo que estás explicando ahora es cómo has llegado a pensar en ti mismo como educador, más que como aprendiz. ¿Por qué te interesaste por esa parte? ¿Porque es la otra cara de la moneda?*
F: Si (ríe). Es más como el producto de la experiencia. Más como el producto de lo que hago.

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other words, apply a conceptual tool with which she feels competent. Another explanatory idea is offered by the previously mentioned concept of thickening, which is based on a constructivist view on identities.

Yet another way to understand identity interference is in terms of identity theory and its notion of identity salience in a hierarchy of identities (Burke, 2003; Burke 2006; Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Burke, 2003). Approaches that apply identity theory are generally rather preoccupied with the relation between different identities. One of the main ideas of this approach is that identities are organized in a salience hierarchy that reflects and defines the probability that an identity is enacted in different situation. As a result, identities that are more important to the individual tend to be more frequently enacted across contexts than others. The level of importance is to a large degree influenced by the individual's commitment towards a particular identity. The commitment is in turn defined by the social extension of the identity, meaning how many people that the individual is connected to through a certain identity and how deep or intense these relations are (Burke, 2003).

Consequently, salient identities are closer to the top of the hierarchy and are more likely to be enacted across different situations, because the individual is involved in many different relationships and activities where the identity is enacted. The more often the identity is enacted the more committed is the individual to that identity. Losing the identity would mean losing the relationship and vice versa. According to identity theory the salience hierarchy can predict how people are likely to behave in different situation in the proximate future, whereas predictions for a longer timescale depend on prominence hierarchy, which defines the identities that are more prominent or important for the person in her general self-perception (Burke and Stets, 2009).

Although identity theory also emphasizes the activity and the social aspect of participation in it the approach mainly emphasizes the individual dimension of an identity with a much less dynamic view. Categorically speaking, according to this view, once identities are constructed the individual seeks to have the identity

verified in different activities and when this verification fails a crisis occurs. The notion of meanings is present in this conceptualization as well. A system of meanings connects identity to behaviour so that the meanings that a person's identity evokes about who she is should be reflected in the meanings of her activities (*ibid.*). An example is that if someone's student identity has the meaning of being academic, then this should be reflected in the fact that she behaves that way, attending many classes, passing exams, etc., whereas if the student identity contains the meaning of being social, the person should be expected to attend more to the social aspect of academic life (*ibid.*).[41]

From a strictly theoretical point of view, identity theory approaches the issue from an opposite direction compared to the here applied sociocultural and constructivist point of view. Nevertheless, this theory makes some useful and suggestive contributions to an understanding of identity construction. One of its main advantages is potentially its rather systematic way of concretizing abstract processes in how people come to construct and enact their identities. Furthermore, its origins in structural symbolic interaction can theoretically be connectable and compatible with the more dynamic and dialogic perspective of a sociocultural and socioconstructivist view. However, the use of this approach has to be done with caution as the very concretizations of, for example, how identities are structured in a hierarchical system and a discourse that emphasizes 'enactment' rather than 'participation', 'mediation' and '(re-)construction' could obscure the dynamic features of identity construction and hinder a dialogic approach to it.

Nevertheless, the ideas about a crisis as the result of failure to achieve verification of one's identity are useful for an understanding of Federico's LI-construction. From the viewpoint of this approach Federico's micro-story about his experience of the master program conveyed a crisis due to the failure of identity verification. His tendency to resort to his professional identity would be

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[41] The assumption is that a theoretical combination of these two approaches is possible and could contribute to the development of both perspectives. However, this exploration falls outside of the aims and extension of the present work and for this reason the integration of identity theory is limited to specific aspects of the approach.

because it was more salient than his other identities. For the most part of his professional life he had worked on constructing the meanings about himself as a teacher moving this identity to the top of the salience hierarchy. Within the theoretical framework of the present work it is, however, more consistent and adequate to consider this a result of the thickening of his teacher identity.

In the master program he could no longer enact this identity or use it to relate to others. No one looked up to him as an expert, as he explained it. He had no access to any meanings about himself as a learner and maybe this identity was not even in his salience hierarchy. In terms of identity theory this implies that he had no meanings attached to a potential LI. He didn't know who he was as a learner, and therefore didn't know how to act as one. Although, Federico never described the experience as a crisis the description of the emotional distress could be interpreted as one of crisis which he was trying to deal with. In the specific situation of the interview the manifestation of the crisis was the interference[42] of the teacher identity in his construction of meanings about himself as a learner.

Federico's situation was particularly precarious because even though there was a contextual change, the type of activity remained the same. He had gone from an educational context to another and with that move he needed to shift positions from teacher to student. It could have been as difficult if he had had to change his professional identity, say for instance from teacher to the director of an institution or to the chief editor of a journal, but the change from an expert identity to a learner identity in a familiar context is assumed to be especially challenging.

Federico described the difficulties involved in the transition to a student, where his skills and competence were questioned and scrutinized. Papers that he handed in came back full of critical comments, which made him question his abilities and

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[42] From an identity theory point of view "an interference from other identities" is a type II interruption in the identity as a control system, which happens when the processes that maintain one identity interrupt and disturb the processes that maintain another identity. This could also be described in terms of a role conflict (Burke & Stets, 2009). This approach to interference should not be confused with the notion as it is proposed in the present work. Here it is an effect of the dynamic, situated and dual nature of identities as both mediators of the constructive process and the product of the construction. In identity theory the interference is rather an effect of the static nature of identities.

affected his self-confidence. He could not enact his teacher identity. Nor could he use it to make sense of his new experience. Moreover, the acts of recognition that seemed to make the most impact were of a negative nature, which didn't promote the construction of a new identity as a learner. When asked how he had experienced this radical transition from teacher to student, he embarked on the (re-)construction of a set of meanings that could make sense of his subjective experience.

F: *The change has been rather significant. Not only because of the thought of having to adapt to being a student but also because I keep discovering…Let's say that I had a certain level of status at the university. There, my opinion was valued. Here I come and suddenly everything is new, I am learning a lot, I write and what I write is corrected and graded and sometimes it's so badly written that I don't even get a six. Well, I did actually get a six. Everything is six. And I, how is it that I write so badly if I, well I have published a few articles and stuff like that and now it turns that I am really bad at writing. For me this has been rather shocking. It's been a shock. At the beginning it affected it me in the sense that it made me re-evaluate my capacities. So there's a problem. One of two. Either the level of higher education in which we work in (country) is really low or that I've been working with dedication to whatever was there, I put more or less efforts in to things or valued the relevance of my work differently depending on the necessity and requirements to meet an objective. This could be the other option. So, I went for the first option. I decided that it's a question of the educational level of (country), the level of expectations on the students and the institutions where I work. This has been the theme.*[43]

When Federico's teacher identity was threatened and the acts of recognition that he experienced were negative, he tried to (re-)construct the meanings about himself as a teacher. In simplified terms this could be understood as a preference

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[43] *F: Ha sido bastante fuerte el cambio. No solamente por la idea de hacer esta adaptación a ser estudiante sino porque voy descubriendo… digamos que tenía cierto estatus en la universidad. Ahí estaba valorada mi opinión. Aquí llego y de repente todo es nuevo. Yo estoy aprendiendo muchas cosas, escribo y lo que escribo me lo corrigen y me lo califican y a veces está tan mal escrito que ni siquiera saco un seis, bueno me he sacado un seis. Todo seis. Y yo, ¿cómo es que escribo tan mal, si yo, pues yo he publicado algún que otro artículo, y esas cosas y ahora resulta que soy tan pésimo escribiendo? Pues eso para mí ha sido un poco chocante. Ha sido un choque. En un principio me afectó en el sentido de revalorar mis capacidades. Yo decía entonces hay un problema. Uno de dos: O el nivel en que estamos trabajando en (país) en educación superior es muy malo, o yo he estado trabajando muy dado a lo que viniera, me esforzaba más o menos por una cosa, o relativizaba mucho mi trabajo dependiendo de la necesidad o la exigencia de responder a un objetivo -Que puede ser la otra opción-. Entonces me he quedado con la primera opción. He pensado que es un asunto del nivel educativo en (país), el nivel de exigencia que estamos pues pidiendo a los estudiantes y en general las instituciones en que trabajo. Eso ha sido como el tema.*

to (re-)construct the meanings that he had instead of constructing new ones. The (re-)construction of the teacher identity was induced by the shock and the crisis that he was experiencing and was motivated by the need to make sense of what was happening. The explanatory options were formulated in terms of the two dimensions of the identity; the individual and the social context. Either he was the problem or the national educational system of his country. His solution was that the problem was one of an incompatibility of the two countries rather than he himself not being able to adapt.

Federico clutched to the identity that he had competently used as a mediator and enacted in educational contexts, even though it no longer was a functional tool. However, his case shows that even an interfering identity can mediate the construction of another identity, because in this extract it is possible to detect the initiation of the construction of meanings about himself as a learner through the connection between himself and the general characteristics of the sociocultural context of his previous experiences. He recognized himself as a learner who did not have the necessary competencies to succeed to the extent that he wanted to because he was educated and shaped by the educational context of his country which to him proved to be of poor quality compared to the Spanish educational context where he was experiencing the crisis.

5.1.3. **Narrative activity and the LI as a technology of the self**

Regardless of whether identity interference is understood in terms of a defence, salience or thickening, its presence in the constructive process was manifested in Federico's narrative activity. He could not enact the teacher identity in the interview situation, although there might have been an attempt to achieve co-recognition of this identity by the interviewer. He was there as the student of a master program and as a teacher. Nevertheless, his meanings about himself as a teacher were the mediator of the process of reliving his subjective learning experiences. From an identity theory point of view this identity could be established as more salient and left at that. From a dialogic point of view, where the narrative activity enables the (re-)construction of meanings, the question is

how to generate a constructive process where a more functional identity and context adequate identity can be constructed.

An identity is functional to the extent that it facilitates participation in an activity by making sense of that participation. One prerequisite for this is that the individual's actions support her fulfilment of her motives for participation as well as contribution to the achievement of the objective goal of the activity. In order for this combination to be possible the individual needs to be aware of her motives as well as the objective of the activity. In simple terms, the individual needs to know what she is supposed to do in order to know which tool she needs to use. Notice that Federico did not know the objective of the narrative activity. Nor is it likely that he had a clear motive for his participation in the interview. Was it to be a good student that doesn't reject an offer to participate in a study, or curiosity about a research project or the possibility to spend some time to talk about his experiences? The interviewer never asked about his motives to do the interview, and as previously mentioned the "real" objective of the activity was never made explicit. As a result Federico never could contrast the two aspects and adjust his motives to the objective. In this respect the interview situation is assumed to reflect the reality in most educational contexts, in that the occasion where the individual can consciously and deliberately reflect on her own motives and objectives for participation in an activity and contrast these with the conditions of the activity are scarce. As a result, the identities are often constructed more randomly than according to a deliberate intention. In addition, most educational contexts do not have identity construction as an explicit objective, which further complicates the potential mediating function of identities.

So, although this effect was unintentional, similar to most educational contexts, the basic condition for the functionality of any identity was absent in the interview. The fact that Federico's teacher identity came across so clearly despite this absence is an illustration of the important mediating function of identities in the process of sense-making. Nothing was said about the LI or any identity until the end of the interview and yet he was (re-)constructing the meanings about

himself as a teacher and using these to (re-)construct meanings about himself as a learner.

Federico's construction of a sense of recognition as a learner was eventually put in motion. In the follow up interview the mediating function of the interview as an activity became more evident. Federico explained how some of the aspects of the previous interview had lingered on in his thoughts and had made him sign up for a language class, even though he in the first interview claimed that he could not learn languages. He began the second interview with this point when asked about his impressions and memories of the first interview.

F: *The feeling that I had, as it's not a topic that you talk about with others, well exploring it you notice that there is a fulfilled agenda and one that is pending of things that still remain to learn. As a result of this I decided to take a course in Catalan. So I'm trying to learn a bit of Catalan. Because, I was thinking, strange things, in the wake of the interview, because I have a lot of problems with languages. English is really hard for me and I've made many attempts to study and learn, and one of the questions that you made was if I was willing to learn more things. Because, we were talking about the possibility for me to learn to play the piano. It got me thinking of this agenda that was developed of things that were pending. Which are the things that I haven't done. The languages, even if I've tried. Sometimes I think that I have like a brain damage or something of the kind for languages. So, if the language is closer (Catalan) it could give me some training that could allow me to make an effort later to go back and try with English again.* [44]/[45]

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[44] As a reminder, the second interview was solely used to complement and enrich the analysis of the first interview. The analysis was made directly on the audio files and the transcription is made for the purposes of the presentation of the extract in this text. For further information please see section 4.5 on the methodological procedure and the design of the study.

[45] *F: La sensación que tuve que al no ser un tema tan común que uno lo habla con los demás, pues explorándolo uno se da cuenta de que hay una agenda cumplida y una pendiente de cosas que aprender. A raíz de esto decidí tomar un curso de catalán, pues estoy intentando aprender el catalán, un poco porque estaba pensando a raíz de la entrevista, cosas curiosas, porque tengo muchos problemas con los idiomas. El inglés me cuesta muchísimo trabajo y he hecho muchos intentos por estudiar y aprender. Una de las preguntas que me hacías era si estaba dispuesta a aprender más cosas, porque hablábamos de la posibilidad de aprender a tocar el piano. Me puse a pensar en esta agenda que se desarrolló de cosas pendientes, cuáles son las cosas que no he hecho. Los idiomas aunque he intentado. A veces pienso que tengo como una lesión cerebral o algo para los idiomas... de pronto si es un idioma más cercano (el catalán)... puede darme algún ejercicio que me permita en un intento posterior volver a intentar con el inglés.*

This extract contains four interesting observations. To begin with Federico stated that talking about learning experiences was not something that he was used to. As the discursive activity with some kind of narrative elaboration is recognized as an essential aspect of LI construction this would indicate that the meanings that he might have had about himself as a learner before the first interview had not been (re-)constructed often, if at all. Secondly, he indicated that the narrative activity and the processing of his subjective experiences triggered a set of connections and also reminded him of some of his forgotten learning goals, such as learning to play the piano and improving his language skills. Thirdly, the extract proves that the meanings that were (re-)constructed in the first interview, however embryonic they might have seemed during the interview, were sufficient enough for Federico to construct a recognition of himself as a learner, or in the terms of the definition of the LI, as someone with disposition and capacity to learn in different contexts. He might have been doubtful about his level of capacity to learn English but assumed that he could improve this by experience. When Federico argued that the experience of the Catalan course could support him in his efforts to learn English, he made an interesting connection between two imagined future experiences, where he assumed that the meanings from the first would mediate the construction of the meanings in the second. This could be valid for the meanings that are constructed about the concrete content, i.e. the languages, as well as the recognition of himself as a learner. The implicit hope is that his recognition of himself as a learner who can appropriate new languages will be strengthened through the experience of the Catalan course whereby he will be more confident to return to attempts to learn English. Finally, the extract shows that although the LI as a conceptual tool mainly (or even only) was used by the interviewers in the first interview, in their hands, the LI had fulfilled its mediating function and supported Federico's (re-)construction of meanings about himself as a learner.

This example also illustrates the potential of imagined subjective experiences of learning. Meanings about oneself as a learner can be based on these as well as on real subjective experiences of learning. One tentative idea in the case of Federico is that it is possible that the (re-)construction of the meanings about his past

experiences for the construction of a cross-activity LI might have required more processing because they were so closely connected to meanings about his recognition of himself as a teacher. In other words, the 'un-thickening' of his teacher identity could have been more difficult with the use of raw material from past experiences compared to that from future experiences. This could imply that it would easier to recur to future imagined experiences for the construction of the recognition of himself as a learner. However, this is indeed a theoretical speculation that would require more focused exploration of the qualitative difference between imagined and real subjective experiences in the construction of the recognition of oneself as a learner. This could be a relevant issue, not the least for the questions that concern lifelong learning and the disposition and willingness to learn amongst adults who long ago left the contexts of formal education.

Consequently, the analysis of Federico's interview and basically all other interviews indicate that the LI can serve as a conceptual tool or a symbolic artifact in the mediation even if it is not shared. [46] Ideally both the interviewer and the interviewee have access to the tool and understand it before putting it to use. Federico could have had access to the tool from the beginning and so, would have been aware of the objective of the activity. However, the fact that the interviewers had access to the conceptual tool, facilitated their orientation in the interview and supported their ability to guide Federico in his narrative construction of representations of learning experiences, through which a rudimentary sense of recognition as a learner could be (re-)constructed.

It should be noted that in Federico's case there were actually two mediating tools at play at the same time, namely the teacher identity and the LI. The objective of the narrative activity was, however, the construction of Federico's LI. This brings the point back to the joint use of the two types of the technologies of the self, the narrative activity and the conceptual artifact, which interact. So, not only should

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[46] A curious indication of this was the case of one of the interviewer's who had difficulties with her own appropriation of the conceptual tool, which repeatedly caused disorientation in the narrative activity. The object of the activity was recurrently lost and her interventions complicated the construction of meanings about the interviewee as a learner.

the conceptual artifact be shared, but also the object of the narrative activity, in order to facilitate the narrative activity as a joint activity of meaning construction.

In this line, another indication of the results is that the less elaborate the individual's meanings about herself as a learner are, the more guidance is needed in the activity to orient the narrative construction towards the sense of recognition as a learner. This is particularly important when there is another mediating identity that repeatedly interferes in the process. Returning to the question of what narratives can tell us about the construction of the LI, it becomes evident that the interpretative tool is also the constructive tool. Hence, narratives as such cannot tell us much unless we know what we are looking for and how the constructed meanings are being constructed. Let us just assume that the interview had been carried out with an autobiographical approach where Federico had been asked to tell about his learning life or trajectory starting at the beginning as far back as he could remember and following a more or less chronological order of events. This approach would indubitably have elicited micro-stories about many experiences that could be interpreted as baring relevance for his LI. It is even possible that the chronological thread would have helped him remember and represent more experiences than the approach used in this study. The assumption is that the model of LI could be applied in both approaches for the analysis of the representation of the experiences. The elements that are identified in the model could guide the identification of significant aspects of these representations and how they are used to construct meanings about himself as a learner. Key experiences could be distinguished from less meaningful experiences and more importantly the sense of recognition as a learner and the acts of recognition in these representations would indicate whether the experiences were being used to construct a cross-activity LI or some other system of meanings. This would constitute the analytical dimension of LI as a symbolic tool.

However, as it has been indicated and argued there is also a meditative dimension, where the concept serves as a technology of the self and a constructive tool. Based on the analysis of the interviews and a general theoretical comparison between the two narrative approaches, it is assumed that

the mediating role of an identity becomes more evident in an activity when the activity requires some kind of initial orientation in itself. This means that the so-called narrative construction of an identity can be more or less dialogic and the more dialogic and dynamic it is the more complex is the constructive activity. The increased level of complexity is assumed to require a more explicit formulation of the objective of the activity and the motives involved in it as well as the presentation of the tools at hand. In simple metaphoric terms, the difference is comparable to being in a kitchen full of different kinds of ingredients and utensils and someone asking you to prepare something together, but without telling much about what, how and why, as opposed to having all the conditions explained first, have the ingredients and the utensils introduced and then be told to use previous experience and knowledge or recipes to prepare a meal.

At one point, in the 43rd minute, Federico interrupted himself and said that he was confused and made an explicit question about whether he was doing well in the interview. This happened short after the abovementioned intervention on behalf of the interviewer where she pointed put that the experiences that Federico was telling about were more concerned with how he came to recognize himself as a teacher. Shortly after and on his own initiative Federico started to talk about a teaching experience where he worked in an impoverished part of his hometown. This is where he stopped and asked if he was doing well, potentially because he at some level noticed that he had returned to the (re-)construction of the recognition of himself as a teacher. By that time, there had been many occasions for the interviewer to emphasize Federico's recognition of himself as a learner, through repeated questions, which in one way or another had signalled that there was an objective that was steering the activity, although Federico did not know what it was. From an analytical point of view he was doing the best he could, given the circumstances. The joint activity as such, on the other hand, was struggling to focus the constructive process on the recognition of Federico as a learner. (Note that this recognition concerned the recognition on the part of the interviewer as well as Federico himself.) With the model at hand the interviewer

could reorient the perspective and bring back Federico's attention to himself as a learner.

I: *And now that you find yourself in this situation of being the student or a learner again, what do you pay most attention to, so that you also can achieve what you want your students to achieve? What do you need in a learning situation?* [47]

So, the interviewer used the conceptualization of the LI as a tool to support and guide the narrative activity. Federico quickly answered that what he needed the most was motivation and dedication and went back to the experience of learning to play the guitar on his own and from there connected to the experience of learning to play instruments with friends and a connection to how his failure in mathematics had influenced him to think he was incapable of learning this subject.

In summary, the narrative activity can bring to light, not only how the individual's meanings about herself as a learner are constructed, but also how the (re-)construction of these meanings requires mediation. The mediating tool can be a conceptual tool consisting of previously constructed meanings, but the analysis of the interviews shows that this function can also be fulfilled by the joint narrative activity. This idea is in agreement with the conception of symbolic artifacts and specific types of activities as technologies of the self. Accordingly, the narrative mode of LI-construction requires that two artifacts interact, namely the conceptual tool and the guided narrative activity. The activity is guided on the one hand because it uses the conceptual tool, and on the other hand because it involves at least two persons involved in the co-construction of the recognition of one of them as a learner.

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[47] *E: Y ahora que te encuentras en esta situación de ser estudiante o aprendiz otra vez, ¿en qué te fijas para pensar bueno, para que tú también logres lo que quieres que logren tus estudiantes? ¿Qué hace falta en un contexto de aprendizaje?*

5.1.4. **Amelia - the elements as points of connection**

In the (re-)construction of meanings different aspects of the subjective experiences of the learning activity are represented and used as the raw material. In the complete and incomplete micro-stories about the experiences it is often possible to identify how different aspects of the activity or the situation of the experience are pondered, valued and used differently, to connect different experiences and formulate a sense of recognition as a learner. As a result the analysis of the micro-stories inform about the content of the cross-activity LI and its features as well as about how it is constructed.

Based on the theoretical exploration and the model of LI, the elements that were required to construct the cross-activity LI were the different features of the activity, i.e. the individual's motives, emotions, and acts of recognition and/or a sense of recognition as a learner in connection to her real or imagined experience of participation in the activity. This aspect of the conceptualization was applied in two different ways in the analytical process. As previously described, first it was used to identify the complete and incomplete micro-stories about the experiences that could be the basis of the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner. For instance, unless there was a reference to successful or failed learning of something or to an act of recognition or the sense of recognition in the experience, the micro-story could not be an integral part of the construction of meanings about the individual as a learner. In other words, these elements served as criteria to differentiate experiences that were from learning activities from other types of activities.

The second application of these elements was related to the narrative construction of the meanings. More specifically, they oriented the identification of the connections that the interviewee made between her/himself and the element, meaning a particular aspect of the experience. These connections could either be made in relation to a specific experience or a group of experiences, or with regard to the interviewee as a learner in general. More concretely, the interviewee could, for instance, say that the teacher had a key role in a particular experience or all

through her schooling, or say that the teacher always is of exceptional importance whenever she has to learn something.

In the narrative (re-)construction of the experiences, these elements were also often used as a reference point when different experiences were connected through a comparison which established a similarity or a difference between various experiences. Obviously each context and situation is always different and therefore the experience is always situated, but in the analysis of the interviews it is possible to trace what Bruner calls the hermeneutic composition of narratives, commented above. In the narrative (re-)construction of the experiences the interviewees tried to create a sense of coherence and consistency and make sense of what was being told through an interpretative process. If one element was emphasized in the narrative construction of one experience and completely neglected in another, the discrepancy and the contradiction needed to be addressed. Why was the teacher so important in one context and not relevant in another one? These connections could be made explicit by the interviewee as well as by the interviewer. This particular aspect of the analysis is relevant, partly because it describes how specific experiences are represented and made sense of through the narrative activity and how, in the next step, the meanings that are constructed based on them are connected to construct generalized meanings about oneself as a learner. The psychological necessity of these connections is potentially higher in this type of narrative activity where the narrative does not follow the chronological order of events. The interviewee is instead free to dive into any experience that comes to mind at the moment and depending on the discursive interaction new experiences come up that may or may not have been connected previously. Regardless, within the situated framework of the interview and with the interviewer's intentions as a more or less explicit guide, the representations of experiences are elicited and make a narrative emergence. No matter what meaning about these experiences the interviewee brings into the interview situation, she/he has to make sense of how these representations emerge in that specific situation. In other words, the narrative construction of the meanings about oneself as a learner is in part connected to a process of responding to questions such as "why did I think of this

now?", "how is this connected to that?", "shouldn't I try and remember something else", etc.

Often these responses are made explicit either due to a tacit process in the interviewee or because the interviewer makes them explicit. One example of this situated interpretative process of the construction of meanings revolving around an element and its role in experiences from different kinds of contexts is in the interview with Amelia.

As all interviewees, Amelia was first asked about her most recent experience, the master program.[48] More specifically, the questions revolved around the previously mentioned specific mandatory course *Culture, development and learning in educational psychology*[49], which is characterized by its highly theoretical focus with particular interest in Vyotsky's theory and post-Vygotskian thinkers. She was asked to describe how she experienced the course in general, the classes, the online activities, etc. Two elements that Amelia highlighted particularly were the teachers that led the course and the importance of feedback from them with regard to the content. She needed to know that she was learning what she was supposed to and expected to learn.

18 minutes into the interview the interviewer decided to move on to other experiences.

I: *If we leave the context of MIPE[50] and go the outside world, all throughout your life, which experiences stand out?*
A: *I think of two, off hand. One at the university when I worked with (project name)[51]. I went in as just another volunteer. From one minute to the other they asked me to become the head of a team and then of the entire project. Go ahead, try. We'll support you. That period of time of work there, for me, was learning for personal development as well as learning for life. Very strong. Something that I'll always remember. Like a key moment in life.* [52]

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[48] This particular aspect of the interview will be commented later on in the text.

[49] Cultura*, desarrollo y aprendizaje en Psicología de la Educación

[50] MIPE: Master Interuniversitario de Psicología de la Educación. The master program that all the participants are doing at the university of Barcelona. MIPE:

[51] In the quotes any reference to any detail that might make the interviewee identifiable and jeopardize her/his anonymity, are omitted.

[52] *E: Si dejamos el contexto del Mipe y vamos al mundo externo, en toda tu vida, ¿qué experiencias de aprendizaje hay que se destaquen?*

Amelia started off telling about the experience of the project with a few questions from the interviewer. Because Amelia had emphasized the importance of feedback in the master course the interviewer wanted to know who provided her with feedback and how this need was fulfilled in the project, which was a learning experience even though it was not primarily an educational context. Amelia explained that feedback was something that she missed in that particular situation.

I: *Was feedback as important then?*
A: *Feedback was something that I missed. As I was the manager, I got less. Besides a few friends and one that was my superior, but at the end of the day feedback worked in another way there. Working in small groups, see how they were doing things, but besides, you did this well and you did that bad, I don't know if it was so clear to me.[53]*
I: *But if you missed feedback, how did you know you were learning?*
A: *Because things were new to me. I could see that I was changing my way of doing things, that the different steps were challenging me, the way to do things, things that I had done before and which weren't useful now, so I had to look for other new ones, seeing things that I hadn't seen before.*
I: *So you were your own mirror?*
A: *No, sure there were people….see, I think that something similar happens with the MIPE. I notice that I'm learning, but with the MIPE what I need the most is feedback about what I learn. It's like the content.[54]*

A: *Se me vienen dos al tiro. Una cuando en la universidad trabajé en (nombre de un proyecto). Entré como un voluntario más. De un minuto a otro me pidieron tomar una jefatura de un equipo y luego del proyecto entero "Dale y te apoyamos". Ese tiempo de trabajo ahí -para mí- fue de aprendizaje tanto de desarrollo personal como aprendizaje para la vida. Muy fuerte. Algo que recuerdo siempre. Como un quiebre en la vida.*

[53] The expression of the time in present tense is understood as how Amelia experiences the feedback at the time of the experience, rather than in the situation of the interview. This type of discursive indicators are not analyzed but their presence in the interviews are at time intriguing and raise questions about their relevance and function in the (re-)construction of marks on the one hand and the meanings on the other.

[54] E: *¿La retroalimentación tenía la misma importancia entonces?*
A: *La retroalimentación era algo que yo extrañaba. Como estaba en rol de jefe, llegaba menos. Salvo algunos de amigos y uno que estaba sobre mí, pero finalmente, ahí la retroalimentación funcionaba de otra manera. Trabajar en equipo y pensando cómo hacían las cosas, pero más que mira lo hiciste bien, lo hiciste mal, no sé si lo tenía muy claro.*
E: *Si te faltaba retroalimentación, entonces ¿cómo sabias que estabas aprendiendo?*
A: *Por qué las cosas eran nuevas. Reconocía que estaba cambiando la forma de hacer las cosas, que las instancias me desafiaban maneras de hacer cosas que yo había tenido antes y que ahora no servían, entonces tenía que buscar otras nuevas, viendo cosas que nunca había visto antes.*
I: *¿Así que tú fuiste tu propio espejo?*
A: *No, había gente….es que, yo creo que con el Mipe me pasa algo parecido. Yo, me doy cuenta de lo que aprendo, pero en el MIPE lo que más necesito es retroalimentación de lo que aprendo. Es como de contenido.*

Amelia knew she was learning because she had to change her way of doing things and adjust to new circumstances, but because there was no actual learning content, specific feedback was not as necessary as in the case of a formal educational context such as the master program where there are specific objectives and expectations regarding her learning.

From there, Amelia spontaneously moved on to her travels as a group or type of activities where she had experienced learning and connected to the element of feedback and the learned context on her own. So, the first time, the connection was made by the interviewer when she asked who provided Amelia with feedback in the project where there were no teachers. This question indicated a potential difference between how she represented the different aspects of the two experiences, where one is from a formal context and the other from an informal context. The second time, Amelia made the same connection, with an explanatory statement using these particular elements to contrast experiences and make a general connection to herself as a learner. To clarify, first Amelia described the experience of the mandatory course and described how she focused on the teachers' feedback in order to know whether she was learning what she should. Then, she described an especially significant learning experience from a project where she knew she was learning even though she did not have enough feedback. Then, the interviewer compared the statements about the two experiences using the model and identifying the elements that Amelia talked about and identified the lack of feedback on what Amelia learned in the project. Amelia, compared the two experiences and explained that she noticed her own learning in both, but that in the formal context she needed the teacher's feedback in order to be sure that she was learning what she was expected to. In other words, the acts of recognition concerning her as an able learner were more important in formal educational activities. Consequently, here she used the elements teacher, content and the feedback (or acts of recognition) to connect different experiences through an evaluation of the situation, and subsequently made a connection back to herself. The chain of meaning construction included the connection between

micro-stories of type A (two specific experiences) through the connection of elements and a connection between herself and these elements.

The representation of the social and the individual aspects of the experience are used as basic raw material in the construction of meanings, through the joint narrative activity. The experience is separated from the situation, (in terms of Wallon) and basically picked apart in order to be reorganized and restructured on an operational level where meaning are (re-)constructed and Amelia (re-) constructs a generalized meaning about herself where she establishes that feedback is important but in a different way in different kinds of learning situations.

Here we are faced with an interesting problem, which is inherent to the narrative mode of construction of the cross-activity LI and related to the abovementioned hermeneutic composition of narratives and the relation between the narrative parts and the whole. The connections that are made are, on the one hand, connected to the experiential aspect of the cross-activity LI and the need to make sense of real and imagined experiences in a narrative construction, and on the other hand, they serve a hermeneutic function in the narrative activity. As previously indicated, they are needed in order to make sense of the situated emergence of representations of the experiences. The analysis that was carried out focused on the first function, and proves that the conceptualization of LI supports the analysis of meaning construction about the recognition of oneself as a learner. However, as it was signalled in Federico's case, the analysis of the interviews also proves that the narrative activity is an experience in itself. Expressed in other terms, the symbolic representation of an event is the creation of the event (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999 in Francis, 2003). Just as participation in the activity was an experience the first time, reliving the experience through the narrative activity is an experience. In Bakhtinian terms, it is indeed a shared event where the sense of recognition as a learner is (re-)constructed.

So, in response to the question of what narratives can tell us about the construction of the cross-activity LI, the final piece of the answer is that, while

they are rich sources of information about how experiences are represented, relived and processed through narrative activity, the analysis of the discursive activity would give a more complete answer. Nevertheless, the conceptualization of the LI and the analytical approach did enable the identification of salient features in the meanings constituting the cross-activity LI that were constructed through the narrative activity, which were addressed in question two.

5.2. **Question 2**

Is it possible to identify tendencies in and special features in the cross-activity LI based on the individual's trajectory across different learning activities, through narratives about subjective experiences of learning?

Taking the model as the point of departure, this question could be responded to from different angles and with different focuses of attention.

a. Experiences – Micro-Stories – cross-activity LI

Based on the analysis, patterns can be established in terms of the relation between generalized meanings about oneself as a learner and the micro-stories about different specific or groups or types of experiences. It is also possible to identify patterns in how the interviewee ascribes meaning to specific experiences and how these meanings establish patterns across diverse experiences and become integral parts of the cross-activity LI.

b. The sense of recognition as a learner – the sense of recognition as an integrated self

Moreover, it is possible to trace a relation between the general sense of recognition as a *learner* and the general sense of recognition as a *person*. There seems to be a need to create a sense of coherence and consistency by constructing meanings about oneself as a learner that are in line or compatible with the meanings about oneself as a whole. One indicator of this aspect is identifiable when the interviewees are asked to describe themselves as learners. In all the interviews they tend to construct a description of themselves as learners that could be connected to any identity or to their general sense of self. In a few cases

this connection is made explicit by the interviewee, through comments such as "I think I'm describing myself in general now." The LI can be in conflict with another identity in a situated in-activity construction, but this conflict is handled in the narrative treatment of the meanings. In other words, the narrative construction enables a re-authoring of the meanings to reduce the conflicts between different systems of meaning and create a coherent general sense of self. Another explanation to this particular feature is that different systems of meanings support each other or mediate the construction of other identities (as described in the case of Federico). If we consider life in general as an event, in Bakhtinian terms, and consider the importance of a sense of coherence, then it is plausible that the individual would need a general sense of coherence between identities that spring from different experiences and are (re-)constructed in them. Consequently, the interaction between different identities could be an implicit attempt to contribute to this general sense of coherence. The motive would be to make sense of life as an event in general.

c. Aspects of the experience in terms of the elements of the model

These patterns or tendencies are best identified through the analysis of the interviewees' point of attention in their representation of the experiences and how they tend to focus on some aspect of the activity more than others in the construction of their sense of recognition as a learner. These points of attention can be viewed as an indication of the initial mark where some things are more distinguished than others. However, as repeatedly indicated, the point of attention can also shift as a result of the joint narrative activity and the construction of micro-stories where the initial marks as well as their meanings are (re-)constructed.

As one of the aims of the theoretical exploration was to establish a connection between different individual and social processes and factors, the elements of the model and how they are used in the (re-)construction of meanings are of particular interest.

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5.2.1. **Identifying special features through the elements**

One example of this is the way Amelia emphasizes the formal feedback from the teacher, either as it occurs randomly during sessions or in evaluative talks and grading, across different experiences from formal contexts. The analysis brings forth this type of patterns in all the interviews and can be related to any element of the model. For instance, there is evidence of interesting tendencies in how the individual *motives* for learning influences the process of sense-making in general and the interviewees' inclinations to include some experiences more than others in their generalized meanings about themselves as learners. Experiences are given more attention and used as raw material in the construction of the cross-activity LI to the extent that they are perceived as relevant for the individual's high-level long term life motives, such as socio-economic development or personal development.

The analysis also shows an interesting relation between the *emotional* content of the representations and the sense of recognition of the individual as a learner in activities and their relation to the general sense of recognition as a learner. For instance, experiences where the interviewee experienced negative emotions due to failure to learn or lack of acts of recognition or negative acts of recognition are frequently the origin of the recognition of her/himself as more or less incompetent in one area or in certain types of activities. It is also repeatedly found that the elements that are used as connectors in the construction of the meanings are the focus of the interviewee's emotions. This means that the emotions are not an effect of the activity in general, but some specific aspects of the activity, even though, in the end, they may taint the emotional quality of the representation as a whole.

In summary, the features of the cross-activity LI can be recognized both in patterns of the constructive process and its product. This is not surprising and could be understood in terms of the mediating role of the LI and the meanings. Once certain meanings have been constructed in one experience and a situated sense of recognition has been constructed in one activity, there is an attempt to reused to make sense of later experiences. If the teacher was crucial in one

experience for how the sense of recognition as a learner was constructed, it is easier to continue focusing on this aspect in other experiences. Or, if the social relationships with peers had a prominent role in this process, then they tend to become the centre of attention as well as the focus of emotions in other experiences. It is easier to use the same element for meaning construction and for making sense than to focus on new elements.

This feature can be ascribed the individual dimension of the LI, implying that faced with a new situation the individual first uses her previous experiences to make sense of the new situation before entering the situated process of (re-) construction and adjustment. The situated (re-)construction then depends on how these meanings are compatible with the new situation. From an identity theory perspective, this would be understood as the individual trying to have her LI verified, which can be more or less difficult depending on how the characteristics of the new activity are compatible with the meanings that have been constructed in previous or even imagined experiences. From the viewpoint of this study, this feature should be understood in terms of the use of the identity as a mediating tool which requires practice and competence. Meanings that are more familiar and which feel more comfortable will be used as mediators to a higher extent and, hence, potentially result in the (re-)construction of the same meanings if the conditions allow this.

However, note that this process is in itself not analyzable in the interviews, because they are sites of the narrative (re-)construction of the experience and the meanings. In a way the narrative activity serves to construct meanings about meanings. Hence, the interviews do not give an insight into the situated features of the LI, i.e. in-activity LI, or which generalized meanings that the individual uses to mediate one specific experience. Instead, the interviews disclose certain tendencies in the cross-activity LI and patterns in how different experiences and meanings from these experiences are used to construct a general sense of recognition as a learner of some kind.

This brings us back to the relation between the experiences, the micro-stories and the cross-activity LI. A closer look at this equation revealed that the experiences' integral parts in terms of the elements are crucial for an understanding of each individual's cross-activity LI. However, there are also other complicating but intriguing factors to consider that emanate from the narrative activity. In simple terms, in order to identify and understand the features of the narrative construction of the cross-activity LI, the analysis needs to simultaneously consider the features of the representation of these experiences and the characteristics of the marks that they have left, as well as the features of the narrative treatment of these experiences.

Even though it is difficult to separate the representation of the experience from its narrative treatment, the analysis has identified some aspects of the experiences that differentiate them and their impact on the cross-activity LI. In continuation, the presentation will first focus on the experiences as separate from the narrative, before describing the results of their combination with the features of the narrative treatment.

The starting point was the question of what characterized the marks from the individual's experiences in her trajectory, which tended to be used to construct meanings about herself as a learner.

Informed by the ideas about key or peak experiences, the analysis started out in search of those experiences that had left deep and distinctive marks which the individual needed and/or wanted to relive and use in the (re-)construction of meanings. The guiding hypothesis was that the characteristics of these experiences should have a significant impact on how other activities were experienced and consequently influence on the features of the cross-activity LI. The results did partially confirm this idea but did once again show that the equation is more complex than imagined.

The results show that while the interviewees use representations of experiences that can be identified as a kind of key experiences, there were also another type

of experiences with deep marks, but which did not stand out or distinguish themselves as clearly from other experiences. In short, two main types of experiences can be identified: *short timescale single event experiences* and *long timescale habitual or generic experiences*.

5.2.2. **Miguel - Short timescale single event experiences**

The short timescale single event experiences bear many similarities with the notion of key or peak experiences and often constitute a kind of turning points, although the shift might not be as drastic as the conception of key events and turning points indicate. In the interviews, these experiences usually indicated a rupture in the trajectory, in the sense that there was a before and after, either in the actual turn of events or in the sense of recognition of the individual, or both. The changes in the sense of recognition were not always necessarily connected to the LI but could be about a change in another identity. The narrative (re-) construction of these events usually conveyed a strong emotional charge. The individual had either strong positive or negative feelings of some kind when the experience occurred, and the impact of the experience was often described as the result of the unexpected or the radical difference between this experience and the previous experiences. In other words, the representation and (re-)construction of these experiences indicated that they had left both deep and distinct marks. However, as indicated above, the results also indicate that while the mark of a short timescale single event could be of high impact for the interviewee because of its depth and distinctiveness, it was not necessarily integrated into a system of meanings about her/himself as a learner. In many interviews these experiences seemed to "overspill" and taint the sense of recognition as an individual in general, which made the identification of the meanings that were specifically connected to the LI difficult. Again, this was an indication of the interconnectedness of the individual's different identities.

As the single event experiences always were spatially and temporally situated in one specific activity on a short timescale in relation to the longer timescale, (i.e. they can be of one occasion or even the moment of winning a contest to a whole semester with one particular teacher), in the analysis they were always identified

as complete or incomplete type A micro-stories. Typical examples of short timescale single events are for instance present in Miguel's interview. Miguel was a student in his late twenties, working as a teacher and doing the master program at the same time. After finishing graduate school, he had spent several years travelling and learning two foreign languages, before returning to Spain to sign up for the master program. When he was asked about experiences that he felt had had a particular impact on him he said:

M: *Well… I don't know. I guess the negative experiences rather than the positive are the ones that one remembers from school. I never remember a day when I was given good notes and I was happy. Instead you remember the day when you were given the notes and you had failed in everything, and you had to hide them or destroy them so that your parents wouldn't see them. In this sense, failing in mathematics in sixth grade, to see the first failure in my report card, insufficient, the word, a failure in every sense of the word, I did badly, and yes, I guess the fear of having to take these report cards home, made you not want to be suspended.*"[55]

Miguel's initial point of entry was that the experiences that he remembered and had marked him were the four or five negative ones. He equalled the memory of an experience with its impact. If he remembered something it is because it had an influence on him, and the memories that he had were of the negative experiences, which were primarily connected to the experience of failing or the fear thereof. He connected this to the context of the experiences and explained how he was the first generation of boys being admitted to a religious school run by nuns, who up until that point were not used to the coeducational system. Miguel adapted himself to what he perceived as a rigid and strict educational context, which made him dread failures because of the fear of punishment, which actually never occurred, neither at school nor at home. After the suspending in mathematics he had one or two more failures, but he never failed in mathematics again.

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[55]*M: Bueno… No sé. Yo supongo que son experiencias negativas más que positivas las que se recuerdan de la escuela. Nunca recuerdo un día en que me dieran las notas y estuviera contento. Sino que recuerdas el día que te dieron las notas y eran suspensos y las querías esconder o destruir para que no las viesen tus padres. En ese sentido suspender matemáticas cuando hacia 6to de primaria, ver el primer suspenso en un informe de notas, "insuficiente" la palabra, un suspenso en toda la regla, "lo he hecho muy mal", y sí, supongo que el miedo de llevar estos informes a casa te hacían no querer suspender.*

Miguel's focus was, to begin with, mainly on the negative experiences. Despite of the impact of the suspension in mathematics, Miguel felt that he was recognized as a fairly good student. When asked about details around this sense of recognition Miguel described how one teacher of natural sciences in secondary school changed his view on this subject, by using a more flexible teaching method, leaving the classroom and the laboratories and taking the students outside. During the description of the teacher and his classes Miguel stated that it was actually a good educational experience, which he had forgotten about. From there the interviewer moved on to ask for more memories, whereby Miguel described how one teacher signed him up for a literature contest where his short story won. He had to go to another town for the event and the teacher followed him on a weekend, which impressed Miguel, since he didn't think teachers did that sort of things, as he said. This experience increased Miguel's interest in literature and he started reading more books and journals in his free time.

Miguel's narrative (re-)construction of both the positive and negative short timescale single event experiences clearly transmitted that he perceived them as milestones in his learning trajectory. However, he initially only remembered the negative experiences. Once again, the influence of the narrative activity is exhibited. Somehow the memory of the science teacher was elicited, which seemed to open up for other positive experiences. Winning the literature contest turned out to be a highly important experience and yet it was not the first that came to mind.

Similar episodes from other interviews indicate that while experiences may differ in their features with regard to how, when and how often they occur, the impact of the influence is at least partially a construction. In other words, the depth and the distinctiveness of a mark can be (re-)constructed in the narrative processing of the experience. Before the interview Miguel seemed to have constructed meanings that mainly used the negative experiences. Through previous processes of meaning construction these experiences had been assigned a prominent role in his trajectory. During the interview Miguel was encouraged or even pushed to

remember other experiences, whereby other high impact experience were not only remembered but also (re-)constructed in the sense that they were given a renewed significance. Although, this (re-)construction was not reflected in a (re-)construction of the meanings about him as a learner. About winning the context, Miguel said:

M: *I think I was the student that nobody noticed until one day they picked up my writing, well, who has written this? That one. Well, he must be pretty good. I don't know.*[56]

He felt that winning the contest made him "become someone" at school. Before this happened, Miguel never had excelled in anything. He wasn't good in sports and didn't have the highest grades, nor was he a natural born leader of the gang, as he described it. The sense of recognition that he was describing was more of a general nature and the experience was used to (re-)construct the situated meanings about himself as a person in general from the time of the experience.

In general, the meanings that were constructed about the single event experiences were often situated in the representation of the activity as it occurred at the time of the experience. In other words, Miguel talked about what the experience meant for him at the time of its occurrence and did not connect them to subsequent experiences or to those in the present. The analysis of the interview shows that the interviewer could have intervened more in the narrative construction in order to explore the possibility to establish more connections and integrate these experiences in Miguel's generalized meanings about himself as a learner in the present.

Consequently, another indication is that just because one experience was experienced as a milestone at the time of its occurrence, it does not mean that it can serve as the provider of raw material to (re-)constructed meanings throughout the whole learning trajectory of the individual. This is potentially a controversial

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[56] *M: Creo que era un estudiante del que nadie se daba cuenta que estaba ahí hasta que un día cogieron esa redacción, bueno, ¿esto quien lo ha escrito? "Ése de ahí". Pues debe ser bastante bueno. No sé.*

statement as it challenges both the approaches that emphasize the significance of early experiences, and the approaches that study the identification of exclusive life turning events. Certain occurrences can change the course of life drastically, but the meanings of these experiences can always be (re-)constructed and re-authored again and again. Through the narrative activity the short timescale single event experiences can be ascribed a more or less influential role in the representation of the learning trajectory. They can be brought to the foreground or be moved to the background, and be used in the construction of different meanings about oneself as a learner depending on how the experiences are connected. The suggestion is that this (re-)construction of the impact of the experience is enabled through the narrative activity, but mainly defined by the conceptual tool that mediates the motive of the (re-)construction. This means that while there might be experiences that have a profound life altering impact, most experiences become more or less important depending on the meanings that are being constructed. For example, the experience that is crucial for the gender identity might not have any significance for the cross-activity LI and vice versa.

5.2.3. Soraya and Hector - the family, significant others and long timescale habitual experiences

As mentioned above, the short timescale single event experiences always formed type A micro-stories. This does, however, not mean that all type A micro-stories were about short timescale single experiences. (This point will be elaborated on in the next section.) The type B micro-stories, which are about groups or types of activities, always consisted of experiences that had been repeated across a long timescale. These experiences were characterized by having left marks that could go very deep, but were not very distinctive. The denomination "habitual or generic" refers to the fact that in the interviews these experiences were often described in generalized terms highlighting some shared features of the experiences without specific reference to any one particular activity. However, at times a type A micro-story could spring out of these type B micro-stories, when the interviewer asked or encouraged the interviewee to give a concrete example. (This explains why not all type A micro-stories were about single high impact experiences.) While the analysis of the narrative construction of these

experiences identified them as a Type A micro-story, they were different from the type A micro-stories of single event experiences. In this case the type A micro-stories were rather examples of specific activities that had been grouped or joined in a type B micro-story based on a common denominator such as the activity itself, or the people involved or the physical location of the experiences.

In Miguel's case these habitual long timescale experiences seemed to be more processed and elaborated than the single event experiences. In the narrative (re-) construction, the marks of the single event experiences were more evident, but it was difficult to identify meanings where Miguel included these experiences in his sense of recognition as a learner. The long timescale habitual experiences, on the other hand, such as Miguel's experiences of the religious school run by nuns in general, resulted in elaborate narrative construction where both the representation of the experience and the previously constructed meanings about the experience were processed. Miguel made more connections between these experiences and other experiences, and more connections between the different aspects of the activities and himself.

From a theoretical point of view these experiences are especially interesting for the conceptualization of the LI because of the implicit connections between different experiences. Their narrative product implies at least a minimum level of previous processing in which the connections are embedded in the representation of the experience. The depth of the mark is the result of an accumulative process of experiences that are perceived as similar. For example, when the individual talks about the experiences from primary school a number of different types of activities and situations are already connected through the shared socio-institutional context. The temporal and spatial dimensions are there and defined but not necessarily explicit. Because the experiences are grouped, there is also a certain level of generalization in the meanings that are (re-)constructed about these experiences. Moreover, the habitual feature of the experiences implies that the meanings have repeatedly been processed through a movement between contexts that share features and where the individual has been able to repeatedly (re-)construct certain meanings. In short, the meanings that are generated from

the long timescale habitual experiences seem to be easier to integrate into a general sense of recognition of oneself as a learner because of their habitual and repetitive character across a longer timescale.

In light of the theoretical exploration and the line of argument about the interconnectedness of experiences and the mediating role of meanings from one experience in another, these findings were easy to understand and interpret. However, the conclusions are challenged by Gorard and Rees' (2002) identification of early learning experiences as determinants of the LI, mentioned above. Contrary to their findings, in general, the interviewees seemed to use experiences from adolescence onwards to a higher extent in the construction of meanings about themselves as learners. Furthermore, the type B micro-stories could unite experiences across a long timescale from early childhood to the present within a specific socio-institutional context such as the family, the school, neighbourhood friends, etc. As described in part 1, these authors study the learning trajectories of individuals across formal and informal learning contexts using Weil's conceptualization of learner identity. Their claim is that through different early experiences, which are defined by factors such as the family context and ethnic origin, individuals develop an attitude and values towards the learning process, which are embedded in the LI, and which orient their movement through different learning contexts. Evidently, neither the size nor the characteristics of the sample group in our study qualify to challenge Gorard and Rees' findings. Nor is this the intention. Instead, the aim is to problematize the question of how different experiences influence the cross-activity LI and use their perspective and findings in order to understand our results. The question was if there was any theoretical explanation to the discrepancy or if it all should be ascribed to differences between theoretical starting point and methodological choices.

To begin with, the results show that certain activity contexts or situations have a greater impact on the features of the cross-activity LI, and that the experiences from the family contexts are amongst the most influential in the formulation of the meanings about oneself as a learner and the construction of a trajectory as a

learner. In so far, the results are in accordance with Gorad and Rees' findings. However, the impact of the marks from these experiences should not be explained in terms of their place in the chronological order in the ontological trajectory of the individual. In other words, the issue is not whether these experiences were first or not, but how they have interacted with other experiences in a dynamic construction and configuration, where experiences alternately constitute each other's back- and foreground. The individual's learning experiences of activities in the family context are most probably the first experiences of learning activities, and as such the first meanings that are constructed about oneself as a learner are based on these experiences. On the other hand participation in new activities result in new experiences and each time the meanings are reconstructed, which is why the deterministic view of Gorad and Rees is problematic.

According to these authors, early experiences from informal contexts such as learning with parents and siblings predict later meaning construction and the formulation of the general sense of recognition. The significance of learning experiences with parents is also supported by the findings in our study. Parents are repeatedly identified as important 'others' in the acts that recognize the interviewees as learners and influence on their general sense of recognition as learners. However, there is one evident tendency throughout all the interviews; even though the family context is an important site of subjective learning experiences and although parents are significant others for the co-construction of the cross-activity LI, these experiences are not the first that come to mind. The generation of micro-stories about these experiences usually required considerable guidance on the interviewer's part. Moreover, these experiences often resulted in type B micro-stories, which means that they were grouped together under the socio-institutional umbrella of "the family", but could have occurred in a number of different and diverse activities.

Despite these distinctions, there are signs that are in agreement with Gorard and Rees' identification of the experiences from the family context as particularly important for the LI. Through the narrative co-construction it becomes evident

that, although these experiences might not be actively used in meaning construction to begin with, the meanings that are based on experiences from the family context constitute an important background for the construction of meanings about participation in other and new learning experiences. But if these are not necessarily early experiences, why are they so important?

Based on the analytical model, an alternative view to Gorard and Rees' is that it is not the fact that these are the first experiences which make their impact stronger, but the fact that participation in the family context often runs across a long timescale involving many different types of activities, and making these experiences a solid background against which other meanings can be constructed. In other words, the very first meanings about oneself as a learner are constructed within the framework of activities involving the parents and siblings. If there is a tendency to repeat some meanings in the continuous (re-)construction of meanings, it is reasonable to assume that meanings from activities where many contextual features are repeated from activity to activity result in a repetition of meaning construction. Furthermore, the family constitutes a context where many different identities are constructed and where meanings easily criss-cross and are generalized. One way to describe it is with Gee's notion of Discourse. The family is a first level macro-context for the individual's development, which is influenced by the Discourse that is established and enacted about what it means to be a good person, a good daughter/son a good learner, etc. Note that what Weil and Gorard and Rees describe as attitudes and values are here viewed as Discursive patterns that are enacted in actions and meaning construction.

Consequently, the previously described tendencies of directing attention towards certain aspects of the activity are accompanied by a tendency to understand this aspect in light of a Discursive pattern that runs through different experiences. More concretely, if, for example, the individual tends to focus on the feedback from the teacher, this is done in light of previous experiences where this aspect was important, but also because this aspect has been Discursively established as especially important. Therefore feedback is treated this way in many and diverse

activities across a long timescale and through repeated processes of meaning construction.

One example of how the Discursive family patterns influence on meaning construction across different contexts on a long timescale is Soraya's micro-story about her family and how she repeatedly sought to achieve her parents recognition in everything she did. Coincidentally, for Soraya, as for quite a few other interviewees the most distinct significant other was her father. Soraya had explained how her parents expected her to be a good student and always get the best grades, but that at some point her father had stopped making explicit demands about her grades and achievements.

I: *And what happened when your father stopped expecting good grades. Because, at some point you start questioning this father. Right?*
S*: That happened much later. I think that it did help me. During my childhood and adolescence it was always my father. Even now he's in a phase where he: What happened? How are you doing, you know? He's always been very consistent when it comes to following me, and this is why maybe I'm not as committed to myself as to my family. It's like this part, that I like that they're proud of me. That if I knew that I don't know, that doing what my peers are doing, I'll have a good time, that I'd be ok like that, because who doesn't like to laze around, right? And be comfortable, right? But I like that my parents are proud of me, that my boyfriend is proud of me, and myself too but not as much, well that they think I'm good.*[57]

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[57] *E: ¿Y qué pasó cuando el papá dejó de exigir buenas notas? Porque en algún momento tu empiezas a cuestionar a este papá ¿no?*
S: E: ¿Y qué pasó cuando tu papá dejó de exigir buenas notas? Porque en algún momento tú empiezas a cuestionar a este papá, ¿no?
S: Eso fue mucho más tarde. Yo creo que sí me ayudó porque este... durante mi infancia y adolescencia siempre ha estado mi papá, incluso ahorita todavía está en una fase en que él... "¿Qué pasó? ¿Cómo vas?", ¿Entiendes? Siempre ha sido muy constante en cuanto a seguir ahí y es por eso que a lo mejor no estoy tan comprometida conmigo como con mi familia. Es como esta parte de que a mí me gusta que ellos se sientan orgullosos de mi. Que si yo supiera a lo mejor que no sé... haciendo lo que a lo mejor hacen los compañeros, voy a pasarlo muy bien... pues así estaría yo bien, porque ¿a quién no le gusta la flojera, no? y estar cómodamente, ¿no? Pero a mí me gusta que mis papás se sientan orgullosos de mi, que mi pareja se sienta orgulloso de mi, y yo también, pero en menor medida, pues que me vean bien, no.

The interpretation of Soraya's interview indicates that her sense of recognition as a learner was highly (if not completely) dependant on the acts of recognition from certain specific significant others. She also paid attention to the acts of recognition directed towards her in specific activities from others such as the teacher. For instance, she explained how she used to ask her boy friend, who shared classes with her, to see if he could notice whether the teacher approved of some comment that she made during class.

Soraya's micro-story about her family and the connections that she made between the meanings that she constructed within the family and other experiences, as well as the connection between the specific element of the acts of recognition and herself, signalled that she did have rather elaborate generalized meanings about herself as a learner – recognizing herself as a good diligent student – which needed to be constantly (re-)constructed. Each new situation was a new site of construction in which she was trying to (re-)construct the circumstances that would secure her father's recognition of her. Just because the meanings had been constructed once did not mean that they would always be there.

In this case, like in some others, the juxtaposed features of the cross-activity LI as both dynamic and resilient to change were very tangible and evident. The meanings about oneself as a learner need to be (re-)constructed each time the individual is faced with a new situation. On the other hand efforts are focused on the (re-)construction of old familiar meanings. The individual tries to maintain the previously constructed meanings about herself, which requires considerable work, as these meanings are initially challenged in each new situation.[58] This also points to the two-dimensional nature of identity as partly individual and partly social. As a result, the extent to which meanings about oneself as a learner can be

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[58] A fitting metaphor for this continuous process can be found in the book *Through the looking-glass*, (a sequel to Alice's adventures in Wonderland) by Lewis Carroll, where the Queen of Hearts says: "It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that." It takes considerable re-constructive efforts on the individual's part to maintain the meanings that she has constructed and wants to keep intact, but constructing new meanings might be even harder.

(re-)constructed depend, on the one hand on the experience and the previously constructed meanings about it, and the joint narrative activity, on the other hand. There are not endless ways to (re-)construct an experience within a given contextual framework and it is easier to (re-)construct some of the experiences and meanings than others. Also, as mentioned earlier most experiences and the marks that they have left, have already been processed in one way or another, meaning that the narrative processing of the experience is not only dealing with the experience as such but also the meanings that the individual has constructed and the sense that she has made of them.

Although a new situation might introduce new elements and the potential to construct new meanings, it seems difficult to break the influence of habitual long timescale experiences through random short timescale experiences. In the case of Soraya, she mentioned an occasion when she started developing an interest in dance thanks to a teacher who Soraya perceived as particularly sympathetic. She went on to using the experience for the construction of a generalized meaning about herself as a learner by highlighting the importance of the teacher in learning situations. The narration of the experience resulted in a type A micro-story of a high impact single experience where she emphasized that it was important for her to feel mutual sympathy with the teacher. In order to construct meanings from this experience, she used the meanings from the long timescale habitual experiences with her father as a background.

I: *If we go back to the story about the dance teacher, in that context, you also were a good student…let's see, you told me, he managed to make a click and that he ultimately managed to show you something that previously hadn't interested you and that became an important interest, or that you were interested in studying and he said that one has to study. I mean, what role does he play in your life as a learner?*
S: *Well, maybe that I started liking it because I liked it and not because… if I had been a good student before in primary and secondary school and even in senior high school, it was because there was a father behind that was constantly demanding certain grades. So, maybe there wasn't an authentic liking, and with him, there was, because I got up early. I asked to go to the classes, and when there wasn't a class, well, I felt bad, but just because I liked it. [59]*

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[59] *E: Si retomamos la historia del profesor de danza, en ese contexto tu también ya eras buena alumna... a ver... tú me dijiste "el logró hacer un click" y que... porque en el fondo logró mostrarte otra cosa que a ti antes no te interesaba y que pasó a ser un interés importante, o igual*

Yet again the relation between different experiences becomes evident. One experience is understood in light of others and the meanings that are constructed about oneself as a learner interweave different experiences. In this extract there is yet another interesting occurrence, which is the connection that Soraya makes between a short timescale single event experience and a long timescale habitual experience. The experience of the dance class has left a mark that is both deep and distinctive whereas the habitual experiences with her father seem to be very deep. There is a connection that establishes a difference between two experience. However, this connection is not between two equally important experiences, in the sense that one is clearly the background of the other. In order to understand make sense of the experience of the dance class it has to be understood in light of the experiences with her father. Hence, the long timescale habitual experience constitutes the background against which the exception of a single event experience is understood. This seems to be a general tendency in the process of the (re-)construction of meaning in the interviews, however, this is a tentative conclusion which requires a systematic analysis, which requires more exploration. If the conclusion is adequate it could have relevance for how to approach the narrative (re-)construction of high impact single event experiences in order to facilitate their integration in the generalized meanings about oneself as a learner. The hypothesis is that the narrative (re-)construction would have to make deliberate and conscious attempts to connect the micro-stories about these to those about the long timescale habitual experiences.

It is impossible to know how elaborate the expressed understanding of the difference between the dance class experience and the previous experiences with her father was before the interview situation. The fact that Soraya used the word "maybe" twice when formulating these meanings could indicate that she was

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te interesaban los estudios y como él decía que hay que estudiar… O sea, ¿qué rol juega él en tu vida de aprendiz?
S: Pues a lo mejor que me empezó a gustar por gustarme y no porque…, yo si había sido buena alumna en primaria, secundaria e incluso en el bachillerato, era porque había detrás un papá que te estaba constantemente exigiendo unas calificaciones. Entonces, no había a lo mejor un gusto como auténtico, y con él sí que lo había porque me levantaba temprano, pedía ir a clase, y cuando no había clases, pues yo me sentía mal, pero justamente porque me gustaba.

trying out this new understanding in the (re-)construction of the meanings about the experience and herself as a learner. The question of a genuine interest in learning as opposed to learning by obligation was also resumed later in the interview, for instance when Soraya established that her boyfriend had more of an internal and authentic motivation driving his learning which made him less dependant on external feedback than her. It seemed that Soraya had identified a core element in her recognition of herself as a learner, which she perceived as somewhat problematic, but she did not know how to change it. Her whole trajectory within the family was filled with more or less deep marks, which had accumulated across her life. In her narrative treatment of the importance of the recognition from others and the external motivator she signalled, more implicitly with facial expression and tone of voice than explicitly, that it was problematic, but she did not quite manage to (re-)construct these meanings in a new way. In the second interview, however, she came back rather shaken after having been given a poor evaluation from one of the teachers of the mandatory course. The most painful aspect of the experience, which even had made her cry, was that a good friend of hers in the same course had been given a better grade than her for the same course. The recognition of this friend was important to her, but still she also recognized herself as a better student than her. Her generalized meanings about herself as a learner had been challenged twice on the same day; first by a bad grade from the teacher and then by the friend's good grade.

The second interview took place a few days after that day and she was still in the process of negotiating her meanings with herself. The interviewers followed her line of thought but had difficulties finding the focus of the narrative (re-) construction. While the interview was difficult to analyze with the studies' objectives in mind, it clearly shows Soraya's attempts to process the trauma. At one point the interviewer asked if Soraya thought that she would remember that day in two years time. Soraya, answered yes without a doubt and when asked if she thought that she would remember it in 20 years time, she confirmed again that she would. The experience had clearly left a deep mark due to the emotional pain involved, but it was also distinctive, because Soraya was not used to receiving bad grades, unless she expected it because she had not made the

necessary effort. At the time of the interview the interviewers were taken aback and did not have the necessary narrative strategies nor the theoretical conceptualization of the marks as part of micro-stories sufficiently developed to make the necessary interventions to generate connections and support Soraya's construction of meanings of this experience. The question is how much this mark affected and will affect Soraya's sense of recognition as a learner. Soraya laughed and found it difficult to answer the question. The interviewer tried asking if it meant that she hadn't changed at all, upon which Soraya said that sure she had.

S: *Maybe in front of the others I'm the same but when I'm alone I'm more structured and disciplined with my reading.*[60]

The change was explained in terms of behavioural adjustment in her study technique. In retrospective and listening to the audio file the initiation of some kind of meaning construction is sensed but left lingering. A clearer formulation of the joint narrative activity could have supported this process in a much more effective way, as the interviewers could have guided Soraya more deliberately in the process in order to make the necessary connections to the importance of the recognition of the 'other'. Because the experience was negative it is not evident that Soraya would have wanted to integrate it into her general sense of recognition as a learner, but she could have been given the opportunity to process the marks of the experience in a more constructive and potentially beneficial way.

In conclusion, the family can be seen as a temporally and spatially defined socio-institutional context, involving various interconnected activities of different types that generate long timescale habitual experiences. While experiences from these activities can leave deep marks in the individual and be processed in a narrative activity, it seems that the impact of these experiences is not a result of the depth or the distinctiveness of neither the mark, nor their place in the chronological order on the trajectory. Instead their impact seems to be the result of their habitual character. A continuous and recurrent process of repetition across a long timescale and many different types of activities drives and facilitates the constant

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S: A lo mejor frente a los demás sigo siendo la misma pero a solas estoy más estructurada y disciplinada con respeto a mis lecturas.

(re-)construction of similar meanings. The micro-stories about experiences from the family context also indicate that the meanings that are constructed about oneself as a learner do not necessarily use specific learning activities, but could in fact be any kind of activity that later is treated as a learning activity. Consequently, activities and situations are ascribed a learning objective retrospectively in the narrative treatment, even though the objective of the activity at the time of its occurrence might have been something else. The impact of these experiences can, however, not solely be attributed to their repetitive nature. There seems to be a key element in the experiences that have occurred in the family context, which moreover is a key element in the construction of LI (as well as any identity), namely the recognizing "other". As Bakhtin reminds us, life is an event that always is shared and some of the people that the experiences are shared with are more significant, just as the experiences that are shared with these people are more important.

In the interviews these significant others are often either family members, mainly parents (in the interviews primarily the fathers) or friends and life partners (boyfriends, wives, etc.) with whom the interviewees shared many and diverse experiences. The other persons involved in the activity are a crucial element of any activity as they are necessary for the construction of a sense of recognition. As stated, without co-recognition there can hardly be any self-recognition. As important as the other actors in an activity are, a recurring theme in all interviews is the role of the parents as co-recognizers. Experiences with parents seem to have the idiosyncratic feature of forming a kind of prototypic background. There recognition is sought even when they are not part of the activity. The individual acts in the activity in accordance with the expectations of the parents and even if the parents do not offer the recognition that is sought, they are still there as non-recognizing others with whom the individual shares the experience.

This aspect is slowly developed in the interview with Hector, who had made learning a life project. He described how he dedicated basically all his free time to learning different things, almost always in formal settings. He had also explained that he came from a non-academic family and was the first to continue

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to higher education and that his parents did not quite know to appreciate the value of what he was doing. Contrary to Soraya, he came from a family where academic achievement was not the basis for recognition. In connection to the master program the interviewer asked:

I: *But if you get it (the master title) your parents have to recognize it, don't you think? Even if they don't really know what it means, right?*
H: *Yes, but they don't value it the same way as a person that knows what I'm talking about.*
I: *But do you think that your parents talk proudly about you with others?*
H: *Yes. I think so. I don't know. [61]I guess so, but, they are proud, but they don't even know what the master is.*
I: *Were you always this relaxed about what your parents think?*
H: *I was always like that. Not just with my parents. [62]*

The interviewer kept trying to understand why Hector was doing all he was, and whose recognition he was trying to get. An improved life situation, social recognition and for his own sake, were some of the answers that Hector tried. Towards the end of interview he was asked, (the same questions as all the interviewees), if he had thought about the topics of the questions and the things that had been talked about before and he said yes, that he had thought about some aspects, such as the issue of recognition.

H: *Well the thing about recognition. I had thought about it superficially before, but you made me think about recognition from whom, what for and that I had never thought about. But the necessity of recognition is something that I experience every day. One always tries to please, to be liked, to fulfil other peoples' expectations. [63]*

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[61] Here Hector laughs.
[62] *E: Si lo sacas, igual tus padres tienen que reconocerlo, ¿no crees? aunque no sepan exactamente qué significa, ¿o no?*
H: Si, pero no sé, no lo valoran del modo que una persona que sabe de lo que estoy hablando.
E: ¿Pero tú crees que tus padres hablan de ti con orgullo con los demás? Yo creo, no sé. (Ríe) supongo que sí, pero... orgullosos están pero no saben ni que es un máster.
H: ¿Siempre has tenido esa actitud tan relajada hacia lo que piensan tus padres?
E: Siempre fue así, no solo con mis padres, con las problemáticas.
[63]*H: Pues esto del reconocimiento, lo había pensado superficialmente, pero me hicieron pensar reconocimiento de quién, para qué... y eso no lo había planteado nunca. Pero la necesidad del reconocimiento es algo que vivo cada día. Uno siempre trata de agradar, caer bien, estar a la altura de las expectativas de los demás.*

After many twists and turns at the very end Hector established an important connection between the acts of recognition and himself as a person, and because learning activities of different kinds were such an essential part of his life, he also constructed a meaning about himself as a learner.

So far, the examples have focused on experiences from two main contexts, namely the formal educational contexts and the informal educational context of the family. Both these context share the common feature that although they can be the sites of high impact single event experiences on the short timescale, they are two contexts that generate many habitual experiences. In a school, students move from class to class and activity to activity with different subjects, teachers and peers and yet these contexts are traditionally characterized by a high level of similarity, generating a rather narrow spectrum of experiences.

In general, the interviewees tended to focus on experiences from formal educational contexts. It seemed that learning was something that was primarily expected to occur in formal settings with a teacher and a specific content to be learned. These experiences from formal educational contexts were considerably more used for the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner than experiences from informal contexts. All the interviewees were initially instructed about the interest in learning experiences that occurred in formal educational contexts as well as informal educational contexts. With a few exceptions, more specifically three, all the interviewees needed to be repeatedly reminded about the interest in experiences from informal contexts. In general the experience of having learned seemed to be more strongly associated with the role of being a student or a pupil than any other role. In many cases when the interviewer insisted in experiences from informal context, the interviewees referred to organized extra-scholar activities, such as music lessons, sports or summer camps. In other words, a general tendency in many interviewees' cross-activity LI was that they were learners first and foremost in formal educational context.

The problematic aspect of this particular feature is the implications for lifelong learning once the period of formal learning is ended. The expectations of the

modern societies on their citizens to be able and competent lifelong learners, which was mentioned in the introduction, are still mainly established on a rhetorical level and little has been done to adapt the formal educational systems to fostering the life long learners that people are expected and wanted to be. As such, it is not surprising that experiences from school and graduate school are the focus of attention of these interviewees. The Discourse of learning outside of formal contexts has not become part of the practice.

However, there were three cases in which the informal contexts were valued more as offering occasions for learning, and where the cross-activity LI clearly consisted of meanings about oneself as a learner based on experiences from informal contexts. Interestingly enough, in all three cases the conscious use of experiences from informal contexts in the construction of meanings about themselves as learners was done in an oppositional relation to the experiences from the formal contexts. Consequently, the experiences from the formal contexts were also used in the constructions of the meanings, but more indirectly and with the purpose of juxtaposing the two kinds of contexts. The experiences from formal educational contexts served as the background for the construction of meanings about experiences from informal educational contexts. One of these interviews was with Amelia, who was mentioned earlier. The other two were Roberto and Ester, whose narrative construction will be compared to Pilar's focus on formal learning.

5.2.4. **Roberto, Ester and Pilar - formal vs. informal learning**

While Amelia's experiences from informal learning contexts were rather specific and concrete, such as the project or specific travels, Ester and Roberto's experiences generated type B micro-stories with elaborate connections between experiences from informal and formal contexts and themselves as learners. They talked about out-of-school contexts as a general and common context that shared certain features, which were in opposition to the formal educational contexts, usually with a tendency to depreciate the value and importance of learning in the formal educational context. This particular feature was more evident in Roberto's case, whereas Ester had a somewhat more nuanced view.

I: *If you look at all the experiences in your educational life, which have been really special to you?*
E: *In my education…I've travelled a lot. I think formal education is good, but I became who I am through my travels.[64]*

Although Ester assigned some importance to formal education in this statement, generally she talked more about her experiences from contexts outside of the formal educational system.

While the differentiation between formal and informal learning contexts is functional in these cases, in many others it becomes too unspecific and even misleading. As previously mentioned, in many interviews where it was difficult to elicit either complete or incomplete micro-stories about experience from informal contexts, with a little help, the interviewees told about experiences from organized learning activities outside of or in the margins of the regular educational system. Usually these were music classes, dance lessons or sports activities with an instructor. In the case of Ester, for example, she described how she learned Spanish through classes that she mainly structured herself even though she had a teacher.

E: *I went to (country) two years ago to learn Spanish. I did a one-on-one Spanish course. My teachers alternated. I spent about three weeks with intensive Spanish. My Spanish accelerated really fast. Somehow it seemed like words came out that I hadn't heard before. Didn't know where they came from. Because in the beginning of the course we talked about what I wanted. I only wanted to talk about interesting things. I didn't want to study from books. I wanted to interact and talk and go out to the streets. It was fantastic. We did grammar but the necessary grammar. Not a system of learning. We identified goals in the beginning and found a way to make them happen.*

The context was not formal, however, it was not entirely informal either. As a contrast Ester also identified the conversations she used to have as a child and adolescent with her grandfather as important learning experiences. These conversations would qualify as informal where as the individual language class was rather something in between.

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[64] The interviews with ester were conducted in English.

One way to refine the differentiation is to consider the distinction between non-formal and informal learning (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Learning that occurs at a family outing (informal) and that occurs in an outing with the Scouts (non-formal), are both outside of the formal context, but whereas the activities in the Scouts have a predefined structure according to a curriculum and a facilitator, the learning in the family outing is more likely to be the secondary result of a joined family activity for leisurely purposes. Another and a more elaborate differentiation is offered by Illeris (2009) who draws attention to the fact that learning occurs in many more situations than those offered by the formal educational system, and differentiates between five main types of learning in different types of situations, or as he also calls them 'learning spaces'. According to him there are qualitative differences between the learning that takes place in one space, compared to another. Besides 'school and educational learning' he identifies the learning spaces of 'everyday learning', 'workplace learning', 'interest-based learning' and 'net-based learning'. We question whether the net-based learning can be identified as a separate learning space, and whether it should not in fact be seen as a mediator of the other spaces, since it can encompass any of them.

Despite this small disagreement with Illeris, we find that his distinction gives a concrete picture of the distributed nature of learning across many different life situations, where some are formal and other informal and where indeed the learning that occurs in them is qualitatively different.

In this study the analysis of the personal experiences focused on the identification and codification of their formal or informal character. However, this differentiation proved to be too blunt and unspecific. A closer look at the contexts of the experiences show that the different types of learning in Illeris' classification are all identifiable in the interviews. The recurrence of the different types of learning differs from individual to individual depending on their life trajectory and age. The older the interviewees are the more experiences they have from professional life and therefore the more they refer to experiences from

workplaces and professional situations. The younger interviewees are instead more focused on school- and interest-based learning.

These observations cause a series of questions about the difference between the impact of marks from experiences from different types of learning and how they influence on the cross-activity LI. Because micro-stories about experiences from school and educational learning were considerably easier to elicit, it is possible that these experiences influence more on the cross-activity LI. On the other hand, as it was presented earlier, the learning that occurred in the family context, which in Illeris' classification falls under the category of everyday learning, was also a strong source of influence on the meanings that the interviewees constructed about themselves as learners.

The questions that arise are, hence, concerned with the qualitative difference between experiences from different types of learning and the meanings that are constructed about oneself. How do the meanings that are generated from experiences from different types of learning differ from each other? How does the process of integration of the different meanings in a cross-activity LI work? How can the concept of LI and the joint narrative activity support this process of integration? The results indicate a need to elaborate on this particular aspect of the model. The analysis has, nevertheless, resulted in a general conclusion about the qualitative difference between personal experiences from school and educational learning and all the other kinds of learning. Roberto, Amelia and Ester are as mentioned particularly interesting cases as they integrated this differentiation in the construction of generalized meanings about themselves as learners. While Ester and Amelia could (re-)construct concrete experiences of learning outside of the formal context, Roberto had a rather global vision where there was learning in school and then there was learning in life. He made a couple of evocative statements about how being him meant being a learner anywhere and everywhere.

R: *Life is learning, an opportunity to learn, at least.*
I: *Do you think you have a learner identity?*

R: *Yes. Definitely. I want to learn with everything, in every situation, I always have my role as a learner. Like Socrates said there's no ending to learning, there's not a moment where I'll stop being a learner.*

I: *You don't see a situation where your learner identity stops existing?*

R: *No. I could be talking to someone about something of which I have more knowledge, I'm being like the teacher, but the minute the other person responds, it could be something of which I hadn't thought. I see the topic in different ways. Like, there's always a small Roberto waiting an opportunity to learn. (…) In the end everything that happens to me in life is learning for life, things that mark me.*[65]

The identification of life as one big learning experience and the attribution of special importance to experiences from informal contexts was also present in the interview with Amelia, who was presented earlier, as well as with Ester. These three distinguished themselves from the other interviewees in how they used the formal and the informal context as two main arenas of experiences around which they constructed type B micro-stories, making connections between the two through a comparative process and finally constructing generalized meanings about themselves as learners. They all had their own individual narrative process in the construction of these meanings, but in all three cases the narrative activity mainly revolves around the elaboration of their cross-activity LI as an important aspect of who they are in general. While Ester and Roberto tended to use the contrast between formal and informal learning in the (re-)construction of most of their experiences and the sense of recognition as a learner, Amelia exhibited a different pattern. She distinguished herself from the other two in that she (re-)constructed experiences from both formal and informal context before arriving at the (re-)construction of a generalized meaning where she clearly put the two

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[65] *R: La vida es un aprendizaje, una oportunidad de aprendizaje por lo menos.*

E: ¿Tú crees que tienes una identidad de aprendiz?

R: Si, seguro. Yo estoy siempre, quiero aprender con todo. En toda situación siempre tengo mi rol de aprendiz, siempre hay más para aprender. Como Sócrates decía: "no hay fin en el aprender", no hay un momento en que no sea más aprendiz.

E: ¿No te imaginas una situación en la que la identidad de aprendiz deje de existir?

R: No. Puedo estar hablando con alguien de un tema acerca del cuál yo tengo más conocimiento, estoy siendo como un maestro, pero en el momento en que el otro me responde, puede ser una cosa que yo no había pensado... poder ver el tema de formas distintas. O sea, siempre hay un pequeño Roberto aprendiz que está esperando la oportunidad de aprender. (…) Al final todo lo que pase en mi vida, es un aprendizaje para la vida, cosas que nos marcan.

types of learning in opposition to each other. When she was asked how she imagined her learning in the future she said:

A: *When they talk about knowledge society and that the titles will be outdated and that you should be studying your whole life, it bores me on the one hand and makes me dizzy on the other. It's like No! No! It also makes me want to begin learning of life and not as much in the formal context.*[66]

As presented above, for Amelia the content was the main element which she used to differentiate between different kinds of situations and to construct meanings about herself as a learner. In the formal context she was expected to learn something specific, whereas in the informal context she could learn whatever she wanted or whatever the situation offered. She had many different experiences from informal educational contexts to talk about and where she reconstructed meanings that showed a clear sign of "thickening" in the sense that she seemed to have solidified certain meanings in her recognition of herself as a learner in these contexts. For example, she seemed convinced that despite having a trajectory filled with experiences from formal learning situations, the experiences that had influenced her most were from informal contexts, such as her travels.

What distinguished Roberto from Amelia and Ester is that he, throughout the interview, tended to talk of groups or types of experiences and made general statements about them, as for instance, when he talked about situations of crisis as a learning opportunity. Contrary to most other interviews the interviewer needed to insist on learning experiences from formal contexts, since Roberto's own focus was mainly on his experiences from informal contexts or life in general, which curiously enough did not include life at school.

 I: *If you look at your life as a learner as a whole, and think of those learning situations, which are the experiences that you remember as important for your way of learning?*

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[66] *A: Me pasa cuando se habla de la sociedad de conocimiento y que los títulos van a caducar y que uno debería estudiar toda la vida, me da entre un aburrimiento y un vértigo terrible. Como que... ¡No! ¡No! También me dan ganas de empezar a aprender de la vida y no tanto en el contexto formal académico.*

R: *I think that whenever there is a crisis, a problematic moment or one of difficultly, it's a fantastic opportunity to learn. Relationships, for example, it's a possibility to be a better person. In all kinds of relationships. I don't know. I've always travelled to different countries. You know. Like (Country) for instance. It was an incredible experience. To be in a culture that different is a shock that wakes you up form your routines, the shocks from the contrasts are a wonderful kind of learning.*[67]

When Roberto mentioned a specific travel to a particular country it served as a rhetoric example that reinforced Roberto's point rather than being an indication of this travel having left any deeper marks.[68] Nor did Roberto describe any particular relationship where he had learned something in specific. The main feature of a learning situation that he identified here were that it signified some kind of a valuable crisis in his life. The spatial/temporal framework of the situation was not defined, because a crisis can happen anywhere, but whenever and wherever it happens it is a learning opportunity of which Roberto liked to take advantage. Understanding a crisis as the encounter with a more or less dramatic and challenging situation with emotional turmoil that can be more or less easily overcome, the analysis identified the element of emotions from the LI-model, as an important aspect of the learning situation. One might say that in Roberto's recognition of himself as a learner, he was and should be a learner in any kind of situation that challenged him emotionally for one or another reason. It is also difficult to know exactly what he learned, in these situations although the motive of the learning was clearly stated: *to become a better person or personal development*, as he formulated it.

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[67] *E: En la panorámica de tu vida como aprendiz, si piensas en aquellas situaciones de aprendizaje, ¿cuáles son las experiencias que recuerdas como importantes en la forma de cómo aprendes?*
P: Creo que siempre que hay una crisis, un momento de problema o dificultad es una oportunidad fantástica para el aprendizaje. Las relaciones por ejemplo, es una posibilidad para ser una persona mejor... en todos los tipos de relaciones. Siempre he viajado mucho a países distintos (India) fue una experiencia increíble… estar en una cultura tan distinta es un choque que te hace despertar de la rutina. Los choques de los contrastes son una forma de aprendizaje ¡fantástico!

[68] This segment of Roberto's narrative about his personal experience has many similarities with "an exemplum" in narrative analysis. The statement is aimed at sharing a judgement about an important event, rather than transmitting an emotional response to the event. The usual structure of an exemplum is Orientation (learning from crisis), Incident (travel to India), Interpretation (a useful shock) and Coda (shocks and crisis as learning) (Martin & Plum, 1997). Though no narrative analysis has been conducted this is an example of the indications that the narrative structure of the stories about the personal experiences can be relevant for future development of the narrative activity as a tool.

While it is difficult to identify one particular experience and its marks in these words and in fact in Roberto's interview in general, it is easy to identify the types of experiences that have become integrated and that he wants to integrate in his meanings about himself as a learner. It is also possible that the construction of meanings based on these marks was mediated by previous meanings from other experiences of travels and integrated into Roberto's meanings about himself as a learner. In other words, it is difficult to know anything about the influence of this particular travel on Roberto's recognition of himself as a learner. It is, however, safe to conclude that the experience was an integral part of a system of meanings about his recognition of himself, and that during the interview he (re-)constructed these meanings to say something about his recognition of himself as a learner.

Ester, who also emphasized informal learning over the formal, also juxtaposed the two types of learning and just as Amelia and Roberto highlighted the value of travelling as an educational experience.

I: *I started travelling about ten years ago. The most developing or shocking of those was...I spent a lot of time in the (continent), in (country) which is a very strong Muslim country and culturally different from where I come from. There was a lot of pressure and need to conform and finding the balance between doing what you wanted to do and fitting into the culture. It took years. That was something that taught me adaptation, which I use here in this course and everywhere I go. I think that was an amazing learning experience.*

Contrary to both Amelia and Roberto, Ester identified several specific travels as learning experiences and (re-)constructed type A micro-stories about them, telling about what she had learned and how. She clearly identified that what she learned from this one particular experience was adaptation. She also talked about learning from conversations with her grandfather and father, who taught her to be curious and open to life and new experiences. While her micro-stories about the travels often referred to specific travels, the conversations were grouped together and described in general terms. The following extract was identified as type B micro-story although it misses direct reference to a spatially and temporally defined context. However, as the micro-story revolved around the relationship with the father the socio-institutional context was implicitly indicated and defined

as the family and the temporal dimension was extended, as there were no clear indications of a beginning and an end. The interview had been revolving around the importance of the teacher and the qualities that Ester wished for in a teacher. She was involved in a general and rather theoretical reasoning about how schools should be structured and how teachers should act. In order to bring Ester's attention back to her own subjective experiences, she made a connection to Ester's experiences of the conversations with her grandfather.

I: *Your grandfather in the shop was a kind of teacher. He talked, inspired, he listened, he gave you ideas. Were there any more teachers like that who have had an influence?*
E: *My father did. Most people where I'm from never did anything or travelled. Any time I had a new idea or I wanted to do something my father never questioned it. He always said go. Be happy. My mother would've said, no! There are strangers. Don't go. All my town said the same thing. But my father always said it's ok. Whatever you want. Just do it. I don't think that he directly taught me things but he taught me that I can learn them myself. He gave me the freedom or confidence to do it. My family in the end were behind me.*

Judging by this set of statements the emphasis on travels as an occasion for learning stemmed from meanings that were (re-)constructed in conversations with her father, as well as with her grand father who also talked about travels. In the case of the conversations with her grand father, Ester explained that she used to skip school to spend time with him and that what they talked about was travels. So, in a way the view on learning in school and on travels as oppositional was there already then, with the difference that as a child Ester only could imagine her subjective experiences of travelling. However, beyond the personal preference and individual taste, there also seems to be a Discursively or ideologically determined pattern in the identification of travels as influential learning experiences in Ester's interview as well as in Roberto's and Amelia's. The connections that were made between learning on travels and learning in the formal contexts were, as mentioned before, always comparative and evaluating rather than complementary. The comparison tended to evaluate learning from life and travels higher than formal learning. All three were, nevertheless, motivated students at the master program of the University of Barcelona and value what they are learning there. They do not denounce what they learned during their

master course, although they implicitly subordinated it to learning from travels and life.

This observation is understood as an indication of the Discursive patterns in the cross-activity LI, where experiences are understood not only in light of other experiences but also against the background of culturally formulated Discursive meanings about learning, about being a learner and ultimately about being an individual. While all three gave expressions of high social awareness and responsibility (having participated in different types of social projects on a volunteer basis) they also constructed meanings in agreement with an individualistic cultural pattern where they were individually accountable for and in control of their own learning and who they were. Ester made sure this point came across explicitly.

I: *Do we have an accurate picture of the kind of learner you are?*
E: *Yes. But I'm afraid that this link to the past is a bit strong. I feel maybe I've phrased it that way because the questions are directly trying to link learning with the past. But personally I feel that the past was a spark. Everything that came after, came from me. The influences maybe came from other places, but it wasn't my childhood that made me like this.*

Ester's interview is not only interesting for how she used the contrast between formal and informal learning to formulate a recognition of herself as a learner, but because the influence of the joint narrative activity was explicitly addressed. The way the questions were formulated influenced on the subjective experiences that she told about. Although Ester wanted to downplay the influence of her past experiences on her recognition of herself as a learner, in the second interview she said that the connection between her past and present learning self was one of the aspects of the first interview that she had dedicated most thought after the interview. In the first interview the statement reproduced above came after the interviewer had asked her whether Ester had thought about the questions of the interview before that occasion.

E: *Some of them, yes. I've never tried to relate my past to how I am learning now. Never done that. But I've thought about learning. Because that's what I'm studying as well. I believe in looking at yourself. Your the best subject. As*

opposed to analyzing other people. Start with yourself. Yes, I've looked at myself as a learner before. (...) If I really sat down and thought about it I could think of a lot of other situations and experiences and times from my past that have affected my learning now. It's interesting. I'll think about it a bit more on the way home. I've never done it before.

The interview was an event where Ester had the possibility to use her experiences to construct meanings about herself as a learner and she could potentially come up with more experiences if she sat down on her own or with someone else. Her reflections highlighted the co-constructive character of the interview. In the second interview she was asked about how she had perceived the interview.

E: *I think it made me see myself through you a little bit. I guess it's the interaction theory thing. Because you're constructing your questions following what I'm saying, I think I'm following your line of thought, because I hear the next question and I see where you're going and so, yeah, my mind is following where yours is going so I can see how you're thinking about me as a learner. Based on my answers maybe.*

Ester was then asked how she thought that the interviewers perceived her as a learner, following which she had a hard time formulating an answer, but eventually she gave an answer where the meanings that were constructed embodied the relation between the formal and the informal learning, but where here she positioned herself more in the middle, balancing the two, in comparison to the first interview.

E: *My aim is not to be an academic person. My aim is not to be an un-academic person. I hope that others see my ability or the potential in both those parts. I don't want to be in one category or the other. (..) I think you shut yourself of learning if you do choose one or the other. I mean. I meet a lot of people who are terribly academic, but don't have the other part or the opposite. They categorize institutional learning for instance and they don't want it because it's a society imposed thing or whatever. But I think you can't understand one without the other. You need the theory if you like and the practical stuff and you need to put your links together and yeah, it's a goal I have subconsciously.*

It should be noted that the interviewers had not made any explicit reflections about Ester's relation to formal and informal learning. In fact, the analytical conclusions presented here with respect to the contra positional relation between formal and informal learning had not been observed at that point. Yet, these were

the meanings that Ester constructed in her attempt to respond to the interviewer's question. How can this (re-)construction of a generalized meaning about herself as a learner be understood? What happened during and after the first interview, which led from a connection between experiences from different contexts to a connection to her and a (re-)construction of her sense of recognition as a learner?

The conclusion is that the answer to these questions is mainly rooted in the joint narrative activity, which allowed Ester to reprocess her personal experiences within the framework of the cross-activity LI. The analysis is here once again faced with the complication that Ester did not have the same access to the conceptual tool of LI as the interviewer, making her part of the construction more tentative. She knew she was supposed to remember and talk about her personal experiences but did not quite know the purpose and to what end. She did, however, feel that the interviewer was guiding her in a certain direction and both the interviewer and Ester were trying to follow each other. Similar processes in other interviews are yet another indication that not only is the narrative activity in itself important for the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner, but also, and potentially even more, the *joint* and *guided* features of this activity, in combination with the application of a conceptual tool that directs the construction.

Ester, Amelia and Roberto's interviews stand out because they manifest features in the cross-activity LI that are more Discursive than experiential and more elaborate in the generalization and connections to the individual as a self. These three interviews constituted a contrast in the data body and helped identify that the features of the cross-activity LI are not only influenced by personal experiences from specific contexts and situations with particular characteristics, but also by the type of learning that occurs in these contexts and situations. The qualitative difference between different types of learning also results in a qualitative difference between the meanings that an individual constructs about herself as a learner, and the value ascribed to these meanings is defined by the socioculturally decided value of different types of learning, where formal learning still is seen as the most exclusive and valuable kind of learning.

An example of an interview, which in contrast to these three interviews, demonstrates the strong influence of learning in formal contexts, is Pilar's. She was in her late twenties and had very limited professional experience and had experiences from formal education in three different countries (actually three different continents), which she described as very different in between them. She responded easily to all the questions and had a number of different experiences to refer to and reflections that she had made about the differences and how they had influenced her. However, the focus was more or less solely on formal educational contexts. Well into the interview (42 minutes) the interviewer asked if she could think of something that she had learned outside of formal educational contexts.

P: *Swimming, I learned to dance. There are also other kinds of learning, like motor learning, the stuff that you learn and later you don't know how to teach it someone else. For instance I learned to swim with a teacher, but I wouldn't know how to teach it to someone else, and the same with dancing. And then you learn in life. With the things that your friends tell you about their experiences, an also ways of thinking, where you have a change of chip just by talking to someone. When you talk to someone you notice a lot of things. [69]*

Up until this moment in the interview she had mainly focused on her graduate studies and during the interview she acknowledged that for her, learning had been closely tied to her preparation for a professional career. This was the first time that she mentioned anything about learning outside of the formal contexts. Unfortunately the interviewer let go of momentum and did not continue the exploration of the swimming and dance classes. Pilar mentioned a friend who had had a big influence on her and in her interest in learning during her adolescence and the interviewer followed this thread and asked about the friend. A few

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[69] *E: ¿Si piensas en contextos fuera de la carrera, algo que has aprendido fuera de esos contextos?*
P: He estado en natación, he aprendido baile. Hay otros aprendizajes, un aprendizaje motor, estos que aprendes y no sabes después como enseñárselos a otra persona. Por ejemplo la natación, tuve un profesor que me enseñó, pero yo no sabría como enseñarle a otra persona, lo mismo con el baile. En la vida se aprende, con las amigas cuando te cuentan cosas de experiencias que te dicen también formas de pensar, que tienes un cambio de chip, simplemente hablar con otra persona. Cuándo hablas con otras personas te das cuenta de muchas cosas.

minutes later (in the 45th minute of the interview) the learning through life itself was picked up again.

I: *If you had to give me a categorical response to where one can learn things, what would you say?*
P: *In general you learn in life. I'll tell you about something that I've learned in life, with a lot of pain: the practice. You learn a lot by doing. And that's what I miss.*
I: *Why do you say that you've learned it with a lot of pain?*
P: *Not with pain. I feel that I need it. I've had a lot of theory. I feel that I need the practice. I'd like to apply some of the knowledge of psychology that I have. I think, that's how you really learn. Trying to apply what you have to the problems that you have. How to solve and resolve them. You learn a lot talking. I mean as far as learning about yourself goes, you can do that talking with people, but about life and how to apply the concepts, it's by doing.*[70]

Once again the interviewer lost the opportunity to develop this aspect of Pilar's thoughts further. Then again, throughout the interview it was clear that the deepest marks were from long time scale habitual experiences in formal educational contexts and they were mainly the result of the challenge of adapting to changes and new types of educational contexts and situations, which clearly had influenced Pilar in the construction of her meanings about herself as a learner. She compared the educational systems of the different countries and explained how they affected her and how she has noticed that one suited her less because it was too individualistic whereas the master program that she was doing at the time of the interview suited her because of the emphasis on collaborative learning. The references to and elaborations of experiences outside of the formal contexts or in life as she called them were scarce and easily lost and overshadowed by the experiences from the formal contexts.

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[70] *E: Si tienes que darme una respuesta muy categórica de dónde se aprende, ¿qué dirías?*
P: En la vida se aprende en general. Te digo algo que he aprendido de la vida con dolor: "la práctica" se aprende mucho, y eso es algo que a mí me hace falta mucho.
E: ¿Por qué dices que lo has aprendido con mucho dolor?
P: No con dolor, siento que me hace falta, he tenido mucha teoría, siento que me hace falta más práctica, me gustaría aplicar un poco más los conocimientos que tengo de psicología. Yo es que creo que así es que se aprende en realidad, tratando de aplicar lo que tienes, y con los problemas que tienes cómo solventarlo, cómo solucionarlo. Se aprende mucho hablando, o sea en cuanto se puede aprender mucho de uno mismo hablando con otras personas, pero en cuanto a la vida, de cómo aplicar conceptos, es haciéndolo.

Pilar was the person amongst the interviewees where the dominant influence of formal learning in her recognition of herself as a learner was made the most explicit, but the general tendency was a recurrent pattern in most interviews. However, in Pilar's case as with other interviewees, a little bit of insistence on positive and negative experiences from informal contexts elicited narrative explorations of other experiences as well. Their elicitation did, nevertheless, require more on the interviewer's part than statements about stories of success and failure during primary, secondary or graduate school.

The starting point of the analysis was that the individual's experiences from different types of learning activities interact according to an internal and individual logic of meaning construction, where a person tries to make sense of past, present and future experience, through narrative processing. The interest in and the analytical distinction between formal and informal learning was mainly intended to highlight and capture how the recognition of oneself as a learner is constructed across multiple and diverse activities, although they might not be typical educational situations or contexts.

The results of the interviews indicate that while this assumption is valid, experiences of different types of learning are not necessarily joined or integrated into one general system of meanings, but that they are treated separately and that it might be difficult to integrate the learning self in a formal context with the learning self in an informal context. This is, however, understood as an effect of the level of processing that the subjective experiences and the meanings about them have undergone. The generalization of meanings across contexts requires a high level of separation of the experience from the situation, to paraphrase Wallon, in order to make its meanings able to transcend activities and subjective experiences of activities. This operation is assumed to be possible only in some kind of object oriented narrative activity. The proposal is that the dialogic approach to this type of activity as joint and guided, and where meanings are allowed (re-)constructed on an interpsychological level, is the most beneficial.

As a concluding summary of this aspect, the results indicate that the features of the cross-activity LI can be sought in how experiences of different types of learning are treated in their narrative processing. The narrative treatment and processing of these experiences can reveal the characteristics of the cross-activity LI in terms of experiences of types of learning. Different individuals can use experiences from different types of learning, as described by Illeris (2009), to different extent. The meanings can mainly focus on one type or another, or include a diversity of experiences. This diversity is fairly rare amongst the analyzed data. However, because the construction of meanings is a dynamic process that is framed and shaped by the narrative activity, it is possible to expand the spectrum of experiences that are integrated into the meanings that are constructed and the recognition of oneself as a learner. It also concluded that while short timescale single event experiences can be of high impact, the long timescale habitual experiences of a particular type of learning are more frequently and consistently used in the construction of generalized meanings, and consequently more decisive in the recognition of oneself as a learner. Furthermore, the analysis of the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner in relation to experiences from different types of learning reveals that these can include and be configured by Discursive patterns and sociocultural tendencies that define the formation of these meanings.

This conclusion inevitably, brings us to question 3 of the study concerning advantageous and disadvantageous of a particular cross-activity LI. Considering the identified differences in how experiences are used to (re-)construct meanings about oneself as a learner, is it possible to observe any difference between the interviewees' cross-activity LI with regard to how likely they are to support or obstruct participation in new learning activities?

5.3. Question 3

Following question 2, is it possible to identify and differentiate the cross-activity LI, which is more likely to promote learning and participation in new learning activities from one that is more likely to obstruct and inhibit participation and learning through narratives about subjective experiences of learning?

It should be noted that from a critical point of view, this question is a tacit reproduction of a traditional conceptualization of identities as established and formed at one time or another and then simply reproduced from context to context. It reflects a conceptualization that is more in line with the position of Gorard and Rees (2002), which was firmly criticized earlier, or the approach of identity theory, which focuses on the verification of identities rather than their (re-)construction in activities. Once the individual faces an actual situation, the identity processes that are activated are concerned with the in-activity LI. In other words, whether the previous meanings that the individual has constructed about herself as a learner are obstructive or constructive in a particular situation, depends on the level of congruence and compatibility between these meanings and the specific situation.

The question of the potential compatibility between the cross-activity LI of a person and the specific situations that she faces is highly relevant for educational practice. The idea is that an insight into the previously constructed meanings could enable a teacher's possibilities to support and scaffold a student's process of making sense of the activity and participation in it.[71] The issue is not concerned with diagnostic or evaluative purposes, but with educational influence. In order for a teacher to be able to support the students to make sense of the process and facilitate their learning, it would be valuable to have a simple schema for the identification of general patterns in the individuals' meanings and her sense of recognition as a learner.

These patterns should not be understood in terms of obstructive or supportive in general, but in connection to specific activities or situations, or types of activities and situations. Strictly speaking, a cross-activity LI cannot be generally obstructive or supporting. However, it can be a more or less effective mediator of the individual's process of making sense of particular experiences or groups of experiences from activities that are more or less similar. This depends on how the

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[71] How these activities would be designed is a large explorative area in itself, which is of acute interest for the development of the LI as a conceptual educational tool. However, it falls outside of the present work to enter into this exploration.

features of the activity or activities agree with the meanings that the individual has previously constructed about herself. As these meanings are based on real or imagined subjective experiences of learning, the more variation there is among these experiences, the easier it will be to adjust the (re-)construction to a new context. In other words, the more diverse the individual's learning experiences are, the more is it possible that she has constructed meanings about herself that can mediate her participation in different kinds of contexts. However, regardless of the level of diversity and variation, there is also the issue of the meanings about these experiences and the sense of recognition as a learner in them. In other words, the features of the cross-activity are on the one hand a reflection of the features of the activities where the subjective experience took place and on the other hand the meanings that have been and are being (re-)constructed about them at any given time. If an identity is the fusion of the social and the individual, then its features should reflect this fusion.

5.3.1. **Real and imagined experiences and the cross-activity LI**

To begin with, it should be noted that because the cross-activity LI can only be analyzed through the analysis of some kind of narrative processing of personal experiences, strictly speaking, any description and identification of patterns could only be accurate for a specific situated narrative treatment. This is yet again an important distinction in order to avoid any static and deterministic labelling of an individual's cross-activity LI. However, as the raw material of the meaning construction is the individual's personal experiences, be they real or imagined, the individual aspect is always present. The meaning construction is a joint activity but the meanings concern a specific individual, and as repeatedly established, meanings are moved from context to context to mediate the sense-making process. So, it is likely that in order to maintain a sense of coherence and continuity, the individual would try to (re-)construct the meanings and patterns from one occasion of narrative processing on other occasions, either when situated in a learning activity or in another narrative activity.

Consequently, the analysis set out to identify aspects of the incomplete and complete micro-stories that could be indicative of tendencies and patterns in how

the interviewees had recognized themselves as learners and constructed their meanings about themselves. Based on the previously presented results, the conclusion is that there are four main criteria that can be used to identify and describe patterns in the narrative content and process without entering into the specific details of each specific personal experience. These are 1) the diversity of experiences with regard to different types of learning (i.e. school learning, interest based learning, work place learning, etc.), 2) the character of the experiences in terms of whether they are long timescale habitual or short timescale single event experiences, and 3) the elements that connect different experiences and finally 4) the evaluative recognition of oneself as a learner, that is to say whether the meaning construction generated a positive sense of recognition as a learner or not.

The first two criteria (type of learning and habitual vs. single event experiences) are closely interconnected in how they configure the cross-activity LI. The results indicate that the flexibility of the cross-activity LI and its potential to mediate in different types of contexts mainly depends on a variation in the long timescale habitual experiences. The more habitual experiences for different types of learning that the individual has the more should this variation be reflected in the generalized meanings about herself as a learner. As the habitual experiences seem to be easier to integrate into the generalized meanings, they are more influential in the (re-)construction of the cross-activity LI.

This conclusion raises the question of what the influence of short timescale single event experiences can be and how they can change the features of the cross-activity LI. The proposal is that these are influential to the point that they involved a turning point that generated new habitual experiences. In other words, an experience with deep and distinct marks might stand out but unless it was followed by or generated new experiences that made it possible to (re-)construct these meanings, they are difficult to integrate into the cross-activity LI through the repetition of meaning construction in activity. The exception is assumed to be if the meanings from these experiences are integrated into the system of generalized meanings about oneself as a learner through a narrative activity.

The third criterion, the connecting elements, is indicative of what the mediation initially focuses on when the individual is faced with a new situation. This criterion is indicative of the potential compatibility with regard to the details of an activity. As such it can differentiate between different activities within one and the same type of learning. All classes in the formal educational system can be labelled as school learning but the meanings that are (re-)constructed about different school subjects can be very different depending on the subjective experiences of the teacher, the feedback, the subject, the social context with peers, etc. Identifying the connecting element enables a more precise analysis of the compatibility between the cross-activity LI and a given situation. Although the individual can connect her experiences through many different aspects of the activity, the results also confirm the theoretically established importance of the individual motives and goals. The more an activity can support the individual in achieving her near and distant goals the more likely is the individual to (re-)construct a positive sense of recognition.

And finally, the individual's general sense of recognition as a learner is an indication of how comfortable and competent she might feel when faced with different situations. However, in order to approach the issue of compatibility this sense of recognition has to be connected to the two first criteria, that is to say, the sense of recognition as a learner from a wide spectrum of long timescale habitual experiences should be more favourable than those from a limited selection of these. For instance, Pilar's positive sense of recognition as a learner from her long timescale habitual experience of formal learning does not necessarily imply that she can (re-)construct this sense of recognition in other types of learning, for example in her professional life. Whereas Ester's positive sense of recognition which had been generated from habitual experiences of formal (school), informal learning and semi-formal (the individual language classes) should be more flexible and more compatible with diverse new learning situations.

While these criteria can allow the identification of patterns in the meanings that are constructed, they are not predictors of situated processes of meaning

construction. They can only serve as indicators. In the joint narrative activity, the identification of these patterns could support the narrative co-constructor (interviewer or teacher) in their guidance of the individual's narrative construction of stories.

This aspect can be noticed in the projection of the sense of recognition as learners into the future. All interviewees were asked about where and how they see themselves learning in a distant future. In general the question generated incomplete type B micro-stories, where the interviewees referred to types or groups of activities where they could or would learn something. The majority of those who had focused on experiences from formal educational contexts referred to various types of learning such as in the professional area through courses, or taking the time to go back to a particular interest or learning from life in general. However, in the interviews where the interviewee's sense of recognition was more consistent throughout the interview and generally more positive, the narrative (re-)construction of the imagined future learning were also more consistent and coherent. Connections were made between the statements that referred to future experiences and the complete and incomplete micro-stories about past and present personal experiences, and these were connected to the generalized meanings about themselves as learners.

The conclusion is that it is possible to use narratives about personal experiences to explore the initial compatibility between an individual's cross-activity LI and different types of learning contexts. Based on the personal experiences that the interviewees talked about in the complete and incomplete micro-stories, it was possible to identify hypothetical types of learning activities or situations that could be more or less compatible with their cross-activity LI. The analysis of the elements of the model are particularly useful in this respect, as they enable the formulation of the role of each aspect of the situation, such as the motives of the individual, the emotions that different types of occurrences can generate or the specific characteristics of the activity.

Accordingly, the conclusion is that it is possible to use the concept of LI and the here proposed model to analyze the features of the personal experiences of an individual and compare these to particular real or hypothetical learning activities in order to analyze the compatibility between the individual's meanings about herself as a learner and a given real or imagined situation or activity.

Had the corpus of data included individuals who were not students at the time of the interview or had not been in an explicit educational context, the difference between the cross-activity LIs of different interviewees might have been more obvious. Some might have said that they did not think that they could learn any more because they were too old, for instance. This is, however, a strictly hypothetical conclusion. Considering the rather homogeneous educational background of the interviewees (mainly from formal education) and their shared present situation, it is difficult to draw any general conclusions about Discursive patterns in the influence of different types of learning on the meanings that are constructed and the individuals' sense of recognition as a learner. Nevertheless, the results do indicate that habitual long timescale experiences from a specific type of learning activities and situations tend to be easier to refer to in the narrative processes and generate more generalized meanings than single event short timescale experiences. This tentative conclusion could be of importance for design of curriculum and educational contexts, if the goal is to promote trajectories that facilitate flexibility and lifelong learning. In order to promote learning in the workplace and everyday life, for instance, formal educational systems would have to create learning situations that simulate these conditions in order to enable the recognition of oneself as a learner in more than just the traditional educational classroom setting.

5.3.2. **From meaning construction to the cross-activity LI**

As noted, throughout the text the cross-activity LI, the meanings that the individual construct about herself as a learner and the sense of recognition as a learner are used as more or less interchangeable. The cross-activity LI consists of the meanings that define the recognition of oneself as a learner. When the individual uses her real or imagined personal experiences of learning to construct

meanings about herself as a learner, she is assumed to be constructing a cross-activity LI and formulating a sense of recognition as a learner. The complicating factor is that this is an analytical approach defined by the analyzer's understanding of the process. As previously mentioned, in this study the interviewees did not know that the aim of the activity was the exploration of their cross-activity LI. They did not have access to the conceptual tool. Though the conceptual tool was implicitly applied in their construction of meanings through the interviewer's application of the tool, the interviewees did not know about it and therefore the use of the tool was not shared or joint.

The underlying reasons for how the tool was used were in part related to the relative novelty of the concept and its limited use and application in the everyday practice of educational realities. As previously stated, most people would be able to conceptualize the notion of gender identity without any detailed explanation, whereas the concept of LI would raise more questions about its meaning and definition. Therefore, the concept was introduced rather late in the interviews through an introductory presentation about different kinds of identities, which was followed by the question if the interviewee thought that she/he had a LI or not. The question was posed without any definition or explanation of the notion. In some cases the interviewees asked about the meaning of the concept upon which they were encouraged to respond the question based on their own understanding of the concept. In other cases they made spontaneous attempts to define the concept first before responding the question or used a tentative definition in order to justify their response to the question. These definitions ranged from LI as an attitude as a learner, the role as a learner, to a disposition and willingness to learn.

All the responses to this question resulted in incomplete type B micro-stories. The interviewees (re-)constructed generalized meanings about themselves as learners without situating themselves in any particular real or imagined situation, but rather indicating a general cross-contextual recognition of themselves as a learner that could be valid for any and every context. The response could be described as the summary of the general sense of recognition as a learner. As a

general tendency, the interviewer's guidance was very limited in the elaboration of these responses. There were no effective attempts to make any connection between the generalized meanings that were (re-)constructed as the response to this question and the previously constructed meanings.

As the analysis and interpretation of the results has revealed the guiding role of the interviewer as an active co-constructor has raised questions about how a more active intervention on the part of the interviewers could have enabled a more efficient use of the concept in the treatment of this question. Considering the fact that the LI is the conceptual tool that is supposed to support and frame the meaning construction, it could have been used to enable the interviewees' reflection over their narrative processing of their experiences and their relation to the generalized meanings that were being (re-)constructed as a response to the question about having a LI or not.

Overall the interviews exhibit a large variety of responses to this question and it becomes evident that in order to be able to respond to the question and make use of the concept as a mediator in the construction of meanings it is required that the concept is explained and defined to the interviewees and that there is a shared understanding between the co-constructors about the concept. While all the interviewees gave undeniably interesting responses, both with regard to the definition of the concept and their view on their own LI, the main conclusion is that the use of the concept as a tool for the interviewee is highly dependant on the definition of the concept. It is difficult to use a tool when you do not know what the tool is. It should be highlighted that, as previously mentioned, the conceptual tool was being used throughout the interview through the interviewers. The issue here is the use that the interviewees could make of the tool to bring together their processing of their personal experiences and construct summarizing generalized meanings that they could define as their own LI.

Despite some uncertainties about what the concept of LI referred to, all interviewees, with one exception agreed that they had a LI based on their own definition of the concept. Although all the responses are valuable, the

presentation will here focus on the two persons that stand out among the interviewees. One of these is Isabel, who was hesitant about having a LI, which makes her a clear exception and the other is the earlier presented Soraya. She is interesting because it is the only case where the concept is used to distil the meanings that she had been constructing throughout the interview and bring out the main integral elements of her recognition of herself as a learner, which she had been (re-)constructing throughout the interview. These were the importance of the recognition of significant others and the sense of obligation in learning situations. In response to the question about whether she thought she had a LI or not she answered:

S: *Sure I do. Because of all these developmental issues from my father and the fact that now… it's funny, because it would seem like I've never thought of myself, because first there was my father, more than for my mother, and then the moment where my boyfriend comes in, and since I'm thinking about a future with him, now I'm thinking what I want my children to think of me, and that they feel proud of the mother that they're going to have, right? But, yes, these are the expectations that have formed me and have made that in a given moment, if I don't like something I tell myself that, well, I have to keep going, because there's no option.*[72]

Here, Soraya's definition of the LI is embedded in her answer and only accessible implicitly. She returned to the issue of recognition from significant others as the main element in the construction of meanings about herself as a learner and connected the importance of her father's recognition in the past, her boy friends recognition in the present and as she imagined the future, the recognition of her unborn children. Her response summarized the main aspects of the interview and her processing of her personal experiences, with focus on the relation between her recognition of herself as a learner and the co-recognition of significant others.

Soraya's response is the only case where the previous processing of the personal experiences is directly used in the reflection about her LI. In other words, she

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[72]*S: Si que la tengo. Por todas estas cuestiones formativas desde mi papá y que ahora…. es que es chistoso porque pareciera que nunca he estado pensado en mi, porque primero era por mi papá, más que por mi madre, y después un momento de corte en el que llega mi pareja. Y a partir de que pienso un futuro con él, ahora pienso ¿qué quiero que mis hijos lleguen a pensar de mi de mi? y ¿cómo se sientan orgullosos de la madre que van a tener, no? Pero si, estas expectativas son las que me han formado y han hecho que yo a lo mejor en un momento determinado, si no me gusta algo pues digo bueno lo tengo que seguir, porque no hay de otro.*

used the question about her LI to tie together the main aspect of the meanings that had been (re-)constructed throughout the interview in a reflection about her recognition of herself as a learner, establishing that the expectations and the recognition of significant others is the main and most important aspect of this recognition, and that her motivation in different learning situations is mainly driven by these expectations rather than her own will.

As previously mentioned, the intervention of the interviewers and their co-constructive role in this particular part of the interviews was limited to non-existent. This is also the case in Soraya's interview. Nevertheless, she managed to make use of the concept as it is intended, that is to say as a symbolic artifact that supports her reflection on and processing of her personal experiences of learning activities and condensing the meanings that she had been constructing in a cross-activity recognition of herself as a learner. Although the theoretical conceptualization of how the cross-activity LI is constructed had identified the importance of connections between different experiences and the connection between these and the self in the construction of meanings, there was no preconceived vision of how these connections could be made in an actual narrative activity. In this sense Soraya's response serves as an important clue to how the guiding interventions need to be developed in the co-constructive process.

Moving focus to the other case that stands out in the analysis, there is Isabel. She was a student in her mid thirties, who mainly processed strong marks from her school trajectory in a catholic school where she felt lonely and inhibited by the competitive spirit of the school and the pressure and the expectations of both her parents and the school. Her recognition of herself as a learner was characterized by ambivalent statements, where she on the one hand described herself as an able student who wanted to go on with an academic career, and on the other hand as a student that was slower than others and needed to dedicate much more time than anyone else in order to grasp the content.

When she was asked whether she though that she had a LI she hesitated and established that she probably did not at that moment but that she could develop one in the future. Later in the interview, the second interviewer picked up that thread again.

I: *The learner identity, what idea or image do you have of what this learner identity would consist of? How would you know that now I have a learner identity?*
Is: *It should be clear what this learner identity is. It is important to know what we are referring to. I'm not quite sure about that. I think it is to define the different attributes that characterize a learner in relation to different circumstances and contexts, which give the specific features of that learner, which are probably different from the features of other people. This identity is like a background that defines you like a subject that is fulfilling a role with certain features, and this is what I think I can't define right now. In due time I could define it better.*
I: *Earlier we asked you if you could define yourself as a learner and you could. Following the definition that you're using now of how you understand learner identity, you <u>do</u> know how to characterize yourself as a learner.*
Is: *Yes, but more abstract and general characteristics, because they are related to a context that you have also somehow characterized, you have situated yourself in that context that somehow gives you the possibility to define it more accurately. Now these characteristics are… I pick those that I somehow feel stand out more in my personality in learning, but that I feel could help me to define the identity as a learner. I don't think that I have the fundament to say so yet.*[73]

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[73] *E: En el tema de identidad de aprendiz, ¿qué idea o imagen tienes de qué sería esa identidad de aprendiz, en qué consistiría esa identidad de aprendiz? ¿Cómo sabrías que ahora tengo una identidad de aprendiz?*
Is: Apunta a saber claramente qué es esa identidad de aprendiz. Es importante situar a qué estamos refiriéndonos, no lo tengo claro. Pienso que es definir en relación a distintos atributos qué caracteriza un aprendiz en relación a distintas circunstancias o contextos y te dan características propias de este aprendiz, y que probablemente va a ser distintas a otras personas. La identidad es como un background, que te define como sujeto que esta cumpliendo un rol con distintos atributos, y esto es lo que creo que en este momento no podría definir. En un tiempo más con propiedad podría definirlo.
E: Anteriormente te preguntamos si podrías describirte como un aprendiz y sí que podrías hacerlo. Siguiendo la definición que usas ahora de como entiendes la identidad de aprendiz, entonces ¿Sí que puedes caracterizarte como aprendiz?
Is: Si pero son como características más abstractas más generales, porque están relacionadas también a un contexto que también hayas de alguna manera caracterizado, te hayas situado en ese contexto que de alguna manera te da la posibilidad de definirlo con más propiedad. Ahora estas características son, las recojo que de alguna manera yo siento que sobresalen más de mi personalidad en el tema de aprendizaje, pero que me puedan servir para dar una definición de identidad como de aprendizaje. Creo que todavía no tengo ese sustrato para poder decirlo.

The reason why the statement is slightly difficult to understand and follow could be ascribed the constructive process. Isabel was trying to grasp and apply the conceptual tool of LI, through which she constructed meanings about her recognition of herself as a learner. She used her experiences and her theoretical knowledge about learning to respond to the interviewer's question. The question elicited the processing, but unfortunately Isabel was abandoned in the situation to try and sort out her thought on her own, with limited co-constructive support and guidance from the two interviewers.

Isabel's response to the question distinguishes itself in two respects. The first is, as previously mentioned, that she is reluctant to the idea of having a LI. The second is that this response challenged the theoretical assumption that through narrative processing of personal learning experiences it is possible to construct and (re-)construct meanings about oneself as a learner. Isabel had throughout the interview focused on some particular experiences, with a focus on formal learning. She had no difficulties in (re-)constructing generalized meanings about herself as a learner and making connections to herself as a learner when she processed her experiences. The analysis shows that the main source of influence on her sense of recognition as a learner in general or across different experiences was the long timescale habitual experience of her school years in a catholic institution. This was an experience that had left deep marks that Isabel processed in the narrative activity. She described the school years as mainly negative with little or no positive aspects. The only positive memories she could think of were solitary moments in the library where she could read and find tranquillity. She had proposed a change of schools to her parents, but they valued the school's academic merits and expected her to make the best of the situation.

For Isabel, just as for Soraya, feedback and recognition from others were essential. Just like Soraya, she had tried to live up to her parents high expectations of academic results, though with mixed results, and with limited experiences of positive acts of recognition at school. Isabel described the school as characterized by elitism. If you were not amongst the popular ones you were excluded, which was what happened to Isabel. She explained how she in

situations where there was a lack of external recognition and feedback she gave feedback to herself and compared herself to other peers in order to know how she was doing. The connections where she established a relation between herself as a person and as a learner were present almost throughout the interview and although she did not make explicit connections between these statements and particular experiences, the meanings that she (re-)constructed about herself as a learner were consistent all through the interview.

In summary, Isabel had no difficulties in reflecting around herself as a learner in generalized terms. In fact she preferred to engage in narrative activity about these generalized meanings rather than specific experiences and mainly generated complete and incomplete type B Stories. The only complete type A story revolves around the one particular course of the master program, which all the interviewees were asked about and which is discussed further down.

As the interview extract above shows Isabel's understanding of the LI as a concept and her intent to define it is very close to the conceptualization of the LI. In her response to the question about her LI, Isabel pinpointed several important aspects of the process. To begin with, she identified the problem of the absence of a shared understanding of what LI is. She made an effort to define it for herself and came very close to the basic understanding of the present study. This could possibly be the result of a tacit shared theoretical framework, since she just as the interviewers was the student of a master program with a sociocultural and constructivist view on education. In her definition of LI she identified it as a "background" to the role that one has in a given context; a mediator of the participation in an activity. She also recognized the interaction between the features of the context and the characteristics of the individual. She made the general observation that the individual can improve her recognition of herself when she situates herself in a context. This is, however, not quite understandable in connection to her statement about her characterization of herself as abstract and general. On the one hand, it is general and on the other hand, it is contextual. Although the statement might seem contradictory, Isabel's description of the LI captures its essence, as partly social and situated and partly individual. In the end,

her conclusion was that, following her own definition she could not say that she had constructed the "background" that the LI would constitute.

At that point, the interviewer made an effort to indicate that according to the definition that Isabel had used and which to a certain extent coincided with that used by the interviewers, Isabel did have a LI. From Isabel's point of view, however, the connections that she made between herself as a learner and herself as an individual in general were a way to overcome a lack of sense of recognition as a learner. This explanation could be understood in terms of the importance of an identity, any identity, as a mediator of the sense-making. Isabel did not feel that she had a sense of recognition of herself as a learner, but she did have a sense of recognition of herself as a person in general. The meanings that constituted this sense of recognition were the ones that she used to mediate her sense of recognition as a learner in her narrative processing of her personal learning experiences. This sense of recognition of herself as a person was characterized by being a shy person who needed time to follow and understand processes. These are also the characteristics that she transferred to her sense of recognition as a learner, which come through when she is asked about what kind of situations that make her feel insecure.

Is: *In general, when you know that there are people who know more about the topic and that you don't, it makes me insecure and makes me not participate as much and observe more to begin with and listen to the quality of the comments, questions and answers, and once I've observed that dynamic I begin to dare to participate. I think one of the things that makes me insecure is to feel that I'm let's say cognitively inferior in a group where I'm participating, to be scared of being ridiculed, feel that they are saying that she doesn't have a clue, that she doesn't know, what the others thing, above all the teachers, I think that's what makes me feel insecure, which fills me with fear and caution when I'm faced with it.[74]*

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[74] *Is: En general, cuando tu sabes que hay personas que tienen más dominio en el tema, y tú no tienes tanto manejo es lo que me lleva a inseguridad lo que me lleva a no participar tanto, a ser más observadora en las primera etapas de escuchar la cualidad de comentarios, las preguntas, y las respuestas y una vez que ya he observado esa dinámica después empezar a atrever a participar. Yo creo que una de las cosas que me inseguriza es eso, saber que estoy en desmedro cognitivamente digamos con un grupo en el que estoy participando, miedo al ridículo, sentir que digan que no tiene idea, no tiene conocimiento, lo que piense el resto, sobre todo los profesores, creo que eso me inseguriza, me llena de temor y cautela en enfrentarlo.*

The general conclusion of the analysis of the specific and explicit question concerning the interviewees' LI is that it was mistreated in the interview. To begin with it, the difficulties to understand the concept should have been anticipated. It is not only a fairly unknown concept but is also still a rather undeveloped conceptual tool. In order to be able to use it the interviewees should have been offered the definition and conceptualization that the interviewers were working with. As it were the interviewees had to create an understanding of the concept before using it to construct generalized meanings about themselves as learners through its use. Moreover, the help and support that the interviewers offered was scarce if not completely absent, which resulted in additional complications for the interviewees. Considering the fact they all were students of a master program in education, it is even possible that they felt that they had to give a positive response to the question, i.e. claim that they have a LI. Also, when some of them more or less explicitly asked for help with the definition and were responded that they could respond however they wanted depending on their own definition, it is possible that some might have experienced the question as a test of their theoretical knowledge.

Through the analysis it becomes clear that, as previously stated, in order for the concept to serve as a tool it needs to be shared by both the interviewer and the interviewee. It is also evident that the question should be formulated in such a way that the answer cannot be a yes or no. Having been through the narrative process of reliving different personal experiences the question should have been how the interviewees would formulate or describe their cross-activity LI in light of these experiences and the meanings that had been (re-)constructed. It should have been presented as a natural continuation of the narrative processing of these experiences instead of becoming a parenthesis in it, which is how it comes across with a critical eye on the interviews.

If the construction of the cross-activity LI is viewed as situated in the narrative activity, the explicit question about it must focus on how the narrative activity leads up to its (re-)construction. Asking whether the interviewee has a LI or not is

a neglect of the process preceding the question. It is nevertheless most plausible that the question would have been even more difficult to respond had there not been a previous process of meaning construction through the narrative processing of the subjective learning experiences. As such the narrative activity did fill an important function, but as it has been repeatedly indicated, the different aspects of the result indicate that in the construction of the cross-activity LI two technologies of the self are required; the conceptual tool and the narrative activity. Although the narrative activity was given some attention in the theoretical exploration, the main focus of attention was the conceptual tool. The results clearly indicate that the constructive tool has to be considered as a kit consisting of two parts that interact; the conceptual artifact and the joint narrative activity.

5.3.3. **Guided narrative activity for LI construction**

The main argument throughout the text has been that LI just as any identity is constructed and that the narrative activity is a mode of construction for the long timescale cross-activity LI, which occurs through the processing of personal learning experiences. It has also been argued that the raw material of the construction is the marks that are left of the experiences and the way they are represented in a given situation. The theoretical exploration also established that the representation should in itself be viewed as dialogically constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee, just as the complete and incomplete micro-stories about them.

Although the focus of the analysis was the exploration of the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner with the support of the proposed model, throughout the analytical and interpretative process different indicators have pointed to the important role of the narrative activity. In each interview there is evidence that indicates that it is not only the narrative activity as such that but the *joint* narrative activity that is the situational framework of the meaning construction. In other words, the raw material for the construction is provided by the personal experiences of the interviewee but the processing of the marks of these experiences and the meanings that are constructed have to be analyzed and

understood as situated within the joint activity where one guides and supports the construction of the other. The mere formulation of questions to drive the interviewee's narrative processing and meaning construction forward is the most basic element of this co-construction and guidance. However, because the interviewers used the list of questions as an interview guide rather than a fixed manuscript, their subjective processing as well as the interviewee's equally influenced the construction.

It is evident in all the interviews that the interviewers were applying the conceptual model of the cross-activity LI and their shared understanding of how it is constructed when they formulated the follow-up questions. However, while one interviewer might have for example focused more on the element of the motives, another focused more on the key experiences and yet another on the significant others. These subtle and yet detectable differences in the interviewers' point of attention bring forth the fundamental role of the guidance in meaning construction and the essentially dialogic nature of the narrative activity. As such these interviews were significantly different from the previously described life story approach applied by McAdams. [75] In this study the interviewers did not only pose questions that would help elicit micro-stories about personal experiences, but did also participate in the construction of generalized meanings and the recognition of the interviewee as a learner.

One example of this type of direct engagement in meaning construction can be found in the interview with the previously introduced Ester, where the interviewer's role as the narrative co-constructor who can contribute to the connection making is clearly manifested. When the interviewer wanted to raise the question about how Ester imagined her future as a learner, she conveyed her own vision of Ester's future as a learner and hence (re-)constructed a generalized meaning in Ester's recognition of herself as a learner.

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[75] It is also possible that the theoretical approach to the narrative activity as a dialogic process enables the identification of this dynamic relation and its consequences in the analysis conducted in this analysis. In order to identify the co-constructive aspects of a joint process one has to look for it.

I: *It sounds like you're going to go on learning as long as you live. It's hard to imagine you stopping. What would be the ultimate learning challenge?*
E: *It's difficult. Six years ago I wouldn't have thought myself capable of doing more than a degree. Like a master. No way. And then I did it. Then you think a doctorate. No, that's not for me. It's too much. But I don't think it is now. After that I don't know what's going to come next. I don't really want to know. Don't want to know how I'm going to learn or what, because that takes away the whole meaning of learning.*
I: *So, the element of surprise is important?*
E: *Yes. Satisfying desires and dreams. Wanting something and then getting it. Wanting it. It's difficult and then you get it. It's gratifying.*
I: *Succeeding in what you decided to do.*
E: *Yes.*

As can be read, the interviewer introduced a new question concerned with the motive for learning, when she asked about the ultimate challenge. Ester picked up the interviewer's generalized meaning and the question and (re-)constructed a generalized meaning about the motive through the connection to her previous personal experiences. What Ester did was a (re-)construction of how she had imagined and faced future experiences in the past, and based on that she (re-)constructed a meaning about the future ahead, thereby connecting the past to the future. Throughout this segment the interviewer is active in the meaning construction and the co-constructive process is explicit. The interviewer's engagement in the meaning construction and the co-recognition of the interviewee as a learner is manifest and not just an implicit participation through the posing of question.

The thoughts and ideas about the interview as a co-constructive activity started to take shape between the two rounds of interviews and in the second interview all the interviewees were asked the hypothetical question of whether they thought that they could have talked about their personal experiences of learning the way they did in the first interview if there was no interviewer but just a sheet of paper with a list of questions. Not surprisingly they all claimed that it would have either been difficult or even impossible without the presence of another person who helped them through the process of recalling the experiences and processing them. All the interviewees stated that the first interview had made them think about their experiences as learners. Some claimed that they had remembered

things they had forgotten and that through the interview they had become aware of certain aspects of themselves. For instance, Pilar who was introduced above, said that the interview had made her aware of how closely she related learning to being a student. Similarly, in the second interview Federico said that he had signed up for a language course after the first interview, in which he had talked about and more or less established his inability to acquire new languages. These and other similar examples are indications of the dynamic features of the cross-activity LI and the potential impact of a joint narrative activity where personal experiences of learning are relived, processed and meanings are (re-)constructed about oneself as a learner. The individual's recognition of herself is not static and the meanings that are constructed about oneself as a learner are not carved in stone, but changeable. The change can occur in a learning activity where a situated (re-)construction occurs, in which case it would be the in-activity LI. From a dialogic point of view, in a joint narrative activity, the co-construction of meanings gives the cross-activity LI.

5.3.4. Narrative processing of distant and proximate experiences

The notion of a dialogic discursive tool through a joint narrative activity where one guides the other in the construction of the meanings raises questions about the design of such an activity. With regard to this aspect the analysis of the results brought some features of the interview design into light.

The primary basis for the design of the interview was the assumption that most people are not familiar with the concept of LI and that while they might have had reasons to reflect upon their learning they are not used to talking about experiences of learning from both formal and informal contexts. In trial rounds where the questions were tested, there were also indications that there might be a need to "warm up" before going into the memory bank and draw on experiences in the near or distant past. For this reason it was decided that the interview would start off with questions about the mandatory CDL course in the master program, which the interviewees were just about to finish. The rationale behind this decision was that the interviewees could begin by talking about an experience that was in close temporal (and spatial) proximity to the interview situation and

where the different aspects of the activity were fresh in mind as well as the emotions and reflections about the experience. This way the interviewee could become familiarized with the interview set up and the questions and more easily talk about the different aspects of other personal experiences. The analysis shows that this decision had both positive and negative outcomes.

One of the difficulties with this starting point was that at times there was a tendency to treat the questions about the experience of the course as an evaluation of the course. The answers tended to express the interviewees opinion about the different aspects of the course and the interviewers had to make an effort to redirect their attention towards personal experience of the course. While the question served the "warming up" purpose that it was intended to do, it also resulted in some initial dispersion and distraction. In some interviews the interviewee extended the focus of the question to the master program in general and made connection to personal experiences from other courses, comparing them to the mandatory course that was the initial focus of attention of the course.

In general, the impression is that the question did fulfil its original objective of instigating the narrative process and help the interviewees establish a narrative tone for the treatment of other experiences. However, throughout the analysis this starting point has also generated questions with regard to its implications for the construction of a cross-activity LI. The main question is how distant and proximate experiences interact in the construction of the cross-activity LI. Although the theoretical model of LI construction included the *on-activity* construction, which focused on specific ongoing activities that were treated more or less in isolation and with clear delimitations, the mixture of the *on-activity* and *cross-activity* construction in the interview had not really been contemplated, nor was it intended as part of the analysis. The way the interviews were carried out, this unplanned mixture was generated and, hence, had to be handled and considered in the analysis of the results. However, the choice to start off the interview with questions about the specific personal experience of the mandatory course did not only have consequences on an analytical level but also on the narrative activity as such. Before having a closer look at the theoretical

implications, there will be some comments and reflections on the ramifications for the interview, the narrative processing and the meaning construction.

A questionable aspect of this starting point is that it could be considered as excessively controlling and steering. Instead of allowing the interviewee to decide where to begin on their learning trajectory their attention was directed towards an experience in the present. Even though the control was intentional with the purpose of helping the interviewees to start with something concrete and a more hands-on experience, it is debatable whether it is an adequate point of entry into the narrative exploration of an individual's personal trajectory and experiences of learning. The most problematic aspect of this choice is that the course is part of a formal educational context and by beginning with it there was an implicit emphasis on experiences from formal educational contexts. This was potentially a complicating factor when the interviewees later were asked to talk about their learning experiences in general from both formal and informal contexts. However, from a theoretical and analytical point of view, this particular choice of opening up the interview has resulted in some interesting observations.

To begin with, the experience of the specific course is the only one that is shared by all the interviewees. This enabled a comparative analysis of how a specific learning activity is processed and which aspects of the activity that was the focus of the narrative treatment. Of particular interest were the similarities between the interviewees rather than the individual differences. One easily identified similarity was that the narrative processing of the experience of this specific course generated complete type A micro-stories in all the interviewees. This is possibly because the interviewees were processing an experience that was on going, rather than the representation of the experience in their memory or their imagination. The different aspects of the activity were relevant in the present and the descriptions of the activity and the subjective experience of it were more detailed. The interviewees commented on the teachers, the peers, the different teaching and learning activities in detail and formulated how they felt that they were doing and what kind of learner they saw themselves as in this course.

Another similarity was statements about the content of the course and the two teachers who were responsible for it. In general the course was described as highly theoretical and demanding and the teachers were distinguished and evaluated based on their different approaches. There was a clear pattern of one teacher being recognized as more knowledgeable whereas the other was conceived as more sympathetic and likeable. These similarities bring attention to the social aspects of the meanings that are constructed about an experience. The results indicate that while the interviewees shared many meanings about the different aspects of the activity, the meanings that they constructed about themselves as learners in this particular activity still differed due to individual differences in learning trajectories. This observation points to the dualistic character of the cross-activity LI as partly social and partly individual. Through discursive activities in the form of conversations in different context the students processed their experience of the course and constructed some shared meanings about it. However, in the narrative processing during the interview, these meanings were put in the context of the individual's trajectory and connected to generalized meanings, through which these meanings were compared, related and connected to other experiences and new meanings were (re-)constructed.

Yet another similarity among the interviewees was the treatment of the web-based part of this course. As part of the course the students were required to carry out some online activities, such as a discussion forum and an online personal diary. There is a clearly detectable pattern in the interviewees' experience of these activities. In general the students reported having reacted with dislike, lack of motivation and preoccupation when they were introduced to this aspect of the course. The few interviewees who had not reacted negatively to this aspect recognized themselves as fairly skilled in their interaction with computers. The interviewees who were reluctant explained that their resistance and aversion stemmed from having to change their ways of doing things. Actions that usually were carried out with paper and pen, such as keeping a journal, now had to be done with the computer in online forums where their thoughts were shared with others, even if subject of the diary was the course rather than private details about life.

The discussion forum had also caused some preoccupations and difficulties for the large part of the interviewees. Mostly, they were not used to processing content in this way and had doubts about the learning outcome of the activity. In general, the interviewees felt that they would have needed more interventions from the teachers in order to avoid that the discussion got out of hand and unfocused. While active participation in the classroom sessions was voluntary, in the discussion forum they were obliged to make a minimum amount of contributions per week. For those who were reluctant or just shy about making their opinions, thoughts and questions public, this requirement generated some anxiety. Furthermore, in the classroom sessions the statements are uttered and only remain to the extent that they remain in the memory of the peers. In the discussion forum, on the other hand, everything is saved and put on public display for anyone to see at any time.

These observations are in line with the earlier mentioned conclusions, made by Vuorela and Nummenmaa (2004a; 2004b). The changes that web-based learning implies can cause resistance, aversion and anxiety. Although some of the interviewees had previous experiences of this type of technology-based learning activities, for the majority, it was a first time experience. It should be highlighted that most of the interviewees were used to using computers and online resources for browsing for random or specific information and for social purposes. The novelty consisted in using the online resources for learning. In some cases the processing of the online activities was dedicated exclusive attention and was separated from the micro-story about the course as a whole. In these cases the experience of the online elements of the course generated complete type A micro-stories. It is difficult to make any conclusions about the qualitative influence of this experience on the general recognition of themselves as learners. However, in the analysis it is possible to detect certain differences among the interviewees with regard to how this experience is intertwined with the general sense of recognition as a learner.

Though the general tendency was to face the online activity with reluctance and certain level of dislike, some of the interviewees had come to value certain favourable aspects of these activities. For others the negative feelings had remained more or less intact or even been reinforced. Such was the case with Christina, who could not come to terms with the particular features of the online discussion forum. Christina's interview was particularly interesting because her generalized meanings about herself as a learner were often disconnected from the situated and context specific meanings that she (re-)constructed throughout the interview. More concretely, she could talk of painful experiences of, for instance, changing schools but the meanings that she (re-)constructed about this experience were not integrated in to the (re-)construction of the generalized meanings about herself as a learner. Her statements about different experiences revealed that while she had some positive learning experiences, her experiences of formal educational contexts had been mixed from early schooling to the master's level. One experience that distinguished itself was the change of primary school where Christina said that it took her three years to fit in after the change. The next change was in secondary high school, where she again experienced some difficulties, which finally led to the fact that she decided not to graduate. Although she mainly focused on formal learning when asked if she had an example of an experience from outside of the formal educational context she mentioned a friend.

C: *I guess, yes. I have a friend who is like a big sister for mi. She comes to visit all the time. She lives in (country). She has her own business and she's built it up from nothing. She gives me a lot of advice. I feel like I learn a lot from her. I turn to her with the smallest problem. She guides me. She's like my guide, my inspiration so to say. I learn a lot from her and on a personal level she has helped me a lot.*[76]

Christina firmly expressed that she had learned from the conversations with her friend but she had nevertheless problems with the (re-)construction of the content

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[76] *C: Me imagino que sí. Tengo una amiga que es como una hermana mayor para mí. Viene a verme a cada rato. Vive en (país). Ella tiene su negocio propio, se lo ha trabajado desde cero. Ella me aconseja mucho. Yo siento que aprendo mucho de ella. Tengo el más mínimo problema y recurro a ella. Me guía, me orienta. Es como mi guía, mi inspiración por decirlo. Aprendo mucho de ella en sentido personal me ha ayudado muchísimo.*

of the conversations, the relationship as such and also with the concretization of what she had learned. She indicated that it was learning on a 'personal level', but either could not concretize more, or she did not feel comfortable to do so because of the private nature of the issue. So, she recognized the experience as one of learning, but the activity and the situation of the experience was rather sketchy and the content or the outcome of the learning was unclear. At that point it would have been valuable to directly ask Christina if she had thought of the relationship with her friend in terms of learning or if she was formulating for the first time.

The influence of the parents was also present in Christina's interview. She repeatedly made reference to their expectations of her and their efforts to provide her with an education. She stated that her father had insisted that she continued studying although she had started working and that she had chosen the master program to broaden her knowledge but she was not quite sure to what extent it was helping her to improve her abilities as a teacher with pre-school children. The theoretical content of the master program, such as the mandatory course, had been particularly challenging. In fact, she had never felt the way she did in the master, because she often felt that she was not keeping up with the others. This statement indicated that the experience of the course was a high impact single event experience in the making. The experience and the emotions involved in it were new to her. On the other hand, there were indications in her statements that she might have had similar experiences of insecurity and discomfort before. One of her generalized meanings about herself as a learner was that she preferred to learn from experience in real life than from theory seated in a classroom. Furthermore, these feelings of insecurity seemed also to spill over on the online situation, which was of a highly theoretical character but not "seated in a classroom". Consequently, this particular high impact single event experience seemed to match or even reinforce some previously constructed meanings mainly connected to feeling insecure when faced with demanding theoretical contents. These feelings were present both in the classroom situation and in the online discussion forum.

C: *Last time, talking to (the teacher), he was asking me about my participation in the forum and I explained that I feel stupid, insecure and he was telling me that everyone is in the same situation. I know that, but I don't feel like that. I feel that a lot of people are one step ahead of me and I feel frustrated and I know that I should do something to change this but then I say later, later.*[77]

Feelings of insecurity, discomfort and incapability were a recurring theme in her micro-story about the master program and in particular the mandatory course with a heavy emphasis on theoretical knowledge and reflection. For Christina who preferred practical knowledge which could help her in her work teaching pre-school children, the theoretical features of the master program were challenging her abilities and as a result her sense of recognition as a learner. Yet, she kept trying to surpass the difficulties and finish what she started off, mainly due to the external pressure and expectations of her parents. Her narrative treatment of this particular experience distinguished itself from other experiences in that the complete micro-story about the mandatory course and the online forum was more emotionally charged and she made more references to her inner emotions than to the external factors of the activity. This, as opposed to her processing and reliving of other previous experiences, where she made more references to other features of the activity and the situation, such as the teachers, the peers, the content, etc. It is as if the proximity of the experience prevented some of the emotional filtering of the experiences. This could be understood in terms of the experience still being part of the activity. Christina was in a way still in the situation and was not dealing with a mark of the experience, but with the actual experience. Even in the case of the difficulties that she faced when she changed schools, which evidently was an emotionally demanding experience, the emotional references were not as frequent or as strong.

Christina is no exception in this regard. The presence of an emotional filter in the processing of past experiences is a general pattern in most interviews. Similarly, there are more expressions of emotions in the treatment of the master program

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[77] *C: La vez pasada, hablando con (el profesor), me preguntaba por mi participación en el foro y le explicaba que me siento corta, insegura, y me decía pero si todos están en mismas condiciones. Yo sé que sí pero no lo siento así. Siento que mucha gente está un paso adelante que yo y me siento frustrada y sé que debería hacer algo para cambiar eso pero. Digo ya después, ya después.*

and the mandatory course in particular. This is an indication that the temporal and potentially even the spatial proximity of the experience might execute an important influence on the details of the narrative processing. One plausible explanation is that because the experience is so close in time there has not been any extensive previous processing or (re-)construction of the experience. These conclusions need, however, to be treated with caution, as the study was not designed to explore the on-activity construction modality. Nevertheless, these observations indicate that the on-activity construction of meanings about oneself as a learner can be a potent educational tool that can support the process of making sense of an ongoing experience or one that is temporally and spatially proximate to the present. This could for instance be the case in situations of evaluation talks or in the transfer from one school year to another or even one educational phase to another.

The difference between the on-activity and the cross-activity LI construction could be described in terms of the focus of the narrative (re-)construction. Where the focus for the first would be the experiences that the individual just had or is having, the focus of the latter would be any experience that the individual has ever had or will have. The assumption is that the on-activity LI is more directed towards the past and the present than the future and depends on real experiences.

Despite the preliminary nature of these conclusions, it is evident that the treatment of a proximate experience is considerably different from processing real or imagined experiences in the distant past and the future. While the interview as a whole was intended as a type 4 construction activity, the questions about the mandatory course generated a type 3 activity, where the interviewees' narrative processing was *on* the activity as opposed to *across* activities. As previously mentioned type 3 constructive activities are most likely to occur in the hallway conversations before or after class, or as a type of narratives in interaction during an ongoing task such as group work or joint study groups or in conversations with parents and peers. Even the evaluative talks where teachers give feedback on the accomplishments and results of a student in a particular

course fall under this activity category for the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner.

Consequently, the interview mixed two types of constructive activity and hence was elaborating on the construction of two different dimensions of the LI; the cross-activity LI and the on-activity LI. In the cases where the experiences from the mandatory course were connected to other previous personal experiences, it is assumed that the interview supported the interviewees' process of making sense of this particular experience in relation to other experiences and their learning trajectories. In some cases, such as in the interviews with the previously mentioned Amelia, the experience of the mandatory course was used to (re-) construct generalized meanings about themselves as learners. For instance, when Amelia identified the importance of the content and feedback in relation to the content in formal learning contexts as opposed to informal contexts. Generally, however, the meanings about this experience remained more or less detached from other experiences. This feature could have been avoided with more elaborate and conscious guidance from the interviewers.

Because the questions about the mandatory course were viewed as a kind of warming up, the interviewers often made an abrupt shift of focus once the topic of this course was exhausted, and asked the interviewee to reflect upon her/his experiences in general throughout life. The processing of the experience of the mandatory course was often extensive and detailed, but there were no systematic attempts to connect these meanings to other experiences in the interview. In the few cases where this occurred it was the result of random associations and ideas on the interviewer's part. As such the narrative processing of this particular experience can be conceived as a separate discursive activity where narrative strategies were used to process different aspects of the mandatory activity.

On a theoretical level, the narrative processing of this specific course needs to be handled as any other experience upon which meanings about oneself as a learner were constructed. The temporal and spatial framework of the activity brought this experience together and joined it with the interviewees' other experiences. First

they were asked about this specific experience and then about other subjective experiences of learning. As a result, the experience was not treated in isolation but as part of the individual's personal trajectory, and therefore an implicit attempt to connection-making was embedded in the interview design.

The interviewees' processing of the specific experience of the mandatory course indicates that the on-activity construction can be constructed through guided joint narrative activity as well. Furthermore, the frequent occurrence of emotional references in the micro-stories about the mandatory course and the master program indicate that, contrary to previous statements, it is not necessarily only representational but can also be experiential, in the sense that the raw material can be the experience as such rather than its marks. Also, because of the proximity of the experience and the assumed lower level of previous processing it is possible that meanings about the experience are being constructed for the first time or that rudimentary meanings are elaborated into making sense of the experience and constructing the sense of recognition of oneself as a learner.

In conclusion, from the point of view of educational practice, the on-activity construction of LI seems to be a promising modality, which deserves and urges further exploration.

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter on results, the focus has been on those features, patterns and tendencies in the results that are conceived as directly relevant for the conceptualization of the LI and the formulation of the model. As a brief summary of the main aspects of the results, it was observed that:

a. The narrative activity is an influential and powerful constructive activity and should be conceptualized as a joint guided activity when there are at least two co-constructors involved, where one guides and supports the other.

b. The conceptualization of the activities where the experiences occurred needs to be refined. Conceiving the contexts in terms of formal informal

is not enough. The conception of different types of experiences from different types of learning needs to be considered and elaborated on.

c. Experiences are not only different with respect to the features of the activity where they occurred and the type of learning but also with respect to their temporal and spatial extension and limitation. Two main types of experiences are identified; long timescale habitual learning experiences and short timescale single event experiences. Their influence on the individual's general sense of recognition as a learner is different and the meanings based on these experiences are integrated into the cross-activity LI in different ways.

d. The Discursive patterns in meaning construction need to be considered, especially with regard to meaning construction that involves specific groups or types of learning as either complementary or as oppositional.

e. Some features of the cross-activity LI are not exclusively integral parts of the LI but can be shared with other systems of meanings about oneself, i.e. other identities. Motives and significant others are the two main identifies elements.

f. In connection to the previous point, different systems of meaning seem to be able to play a role in the mediation of the construction of other identities. One identity can interfere in the construction of another, but can potentially also facilitate it.

g. The LI as a conceptual tool and the joint and guided narrative activity should be seen as a tool kit which interact with as technologies of the self in the construction of the cross-activity.

This chapter has presented some of the key aspects of the results with regard to the questions (1-3) that are mainly concerned with the phenomenological aspects of the cross-activity construction, that is to say, an understanding of how meanings are constructed about oneself as a learner based on real or imagined personal experiences in the past, present and the future. This analysis was carried out through the application of the model of LI construction, which was presented in the theoretical exploration in part 1. As previously and repeatedly stated, the LI is envisioned and suggested as both an analytical tool and a phenomenological

artifact for the individual's construction of the LI. In light of the results in general and the summary of the highlighted points, the process returns to the theoretical level and the question of how it needs to be adjusted which is the concern of question 4 and 5 about the LI as an analytical tool. In continuation these questions will be addressed.

5.4. **Question 4**

Is the model of LI as it is conceptualized here a useable and useful tool for the analysis of the cross-activity LI?

The short answer to this question is that the conceptual model has proved itself as both useful and useable in the analysis of the cross-activity LI. However, as the presentation of the results has indicated, there are some problematic aspects that need to be further explored and elaborated on in order to improve the conceptualization and ultimately refine the usefulness of the concept as a conceptual artifact that can serve, not only analytical purposes, but also educational practice.

As far as the usefulness and usability of the model is concerned, it enabled the identification and analysis of key aspects of the process of meaning construction about oneself as a learner based on personal experiences of learning. It facilitated the identification of the raw material of the meaning construction and an approach to how the experiences and the meanings are intertwined. It was possible to identify key elements such as the motives for learning, the emotions involved, the characteristics of the activities and the situations of these experiences and finally the acts of recognition and the sense of recognition as a learner. Furthermore, the analytical procedure with the identification of complete and incomplete micro-stories made it possible to differentiate between different levels of processing and meaning construction, through which it was possible to distinguish between different types of experiences with a qualitative difference: short timescale single event experiences and long timescale habitual experiences. It was also possible to distinguish between meanings about oneself as a learner

that are closely connected to specific experiences and those that are generalized into a cross-activity sense of recognition as a learner.

In summary, the model was sufficiently elaborated to allow an exploration of the process of the cross-activity LI. It was useful because it enabled an understanding of how experiences of learning are processed in the construction of a sense of recognition of oneself as a learner, and it was useable in the sense that the analysis was fairly unproblematic and easy to apply in between multiple users without any unnecessary confusion. Also, its usability for the purpose of identifying the cross-activity LI became clear when it enabled the distinction between meaning construction that was aimed at the LI or focused on some other identity, through the identification of the elements of the model of which the sense of recognition is the main distinguisher.

However, as the presentation of the results has shown, there are aspects that can be further elaborated and developed in order to improve the analytical features of the model as well as its potential as a conceptual tool for LI construction. Throughout the presentation of the results problematic aspects were highlighted and the need for elaborations and development introduced. This brings us to question 5 about how the conceptualization needs to be improved and elaborated for further use. The focus of this re-elaboration is on the elements of the model. However, it is also required that the basic conceptualization of the experiences is developed. As the personal experiences are identifies as the basic source of the raw material with which the LI is constructed their conceptualization is critical to the model. Therefore, the response to question 5 will start with this issue.

5.5. **Question 5**

How does the model need to be modified and completed in order to improve its analytical qualities as well as its potential use as an educational tool?

5.5.1. **Different types of learning and transformed experiences**

To begin with, the conceptualization of the LI needs an improved contemplation of experiences from different types of learning and refinement of the

conceptualization of learning outside of formal contexts. There seems to be a clear difference between how individuals experience and (re-)construct the sense of recognition as a learner when it occurs in activities and situations that are explicitly oriented towards learning compared to those that result in random and unintentional learning. In order to elaborate on and complete the model as an analytical tool it is necessary to further develop the differentiation between these different types of learning and the characteristics of the situations and the activities where these occur. Illeris' (2009) distinction between different learning types is a good starting point, but it is also necessary to explore and establish how different types of learning generate different types of experiences and how they influence on the cross-activity LI. Considering the increased use of virtual learning contexts, for instance, we need to know more about the processes of co-recognition of one another as learners and also how the sense of recognition as a learner in these contexts translates into or moves to the sense of recognition in the face-to-face learning context and vice versa. This is particularly useful for formal educational contexts that apply the model of blended learning, where one and the same content can be treated both in a face-to-face situation and in an online context.

However, there is also a rather complicated question concerning the individual's subjective experiences of different types of contexts as learning context. Although the theoretical conceptualization states that learning can occur in many different types of contexts, the individual might not necessarily conceive it the same way. The interviews asked about experiences from both formal and informal context and yet most of the interviewees focused on the formal. In order to generate statements about experiences of informal learning the interviewers needed to intervene and insist more, upon which all kinds of experiences could occur. Most of these (travels, conversations, co-living with people, living in general) were not activities that had an explicit learning objective, but the interviewees claimed that they had learned or could learn form them. So, when does an experience become one of learning?

Let us recapitulate some ideas in order to approach a potential answer to the question. An experience becomes the provider of raw material for cross-activity LI construction in the joint narrative activity. In order for experiences and their marks to be elicited, surface and become part of the construction, some kind of discursive action is required. Some experiences were more obvious as the providers of raw material for LI construction because they were framed by an explicit learning activity, whereas others were from activities that were oriented towards some other kind of activity but which were experienced as having involved learning. They might or might not have been considered as learning activities before the interview context. This is difficult to know, and if they were used to construct meanings about oneself as a learner for the first time in the interview, it is hard to know how this happened in the interviewee's mind. However, it is possible to follow the social dimension in the joint narrative activity and the discursive interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. Whenever the interviewees were asked to think of learning experiences outside of formal educational contexts, they were more or less indirectly forced to think and (re-)construct the representation of some experiences that could be ascribed a new meaning as a learning experiences. As a result, it seems that the marks from any experience could be used to construct meanings about oneself as a learner, as long as the orientation of the narrative activity is LI-construction. This point is particularly significant for the development of the model and the conceptualization of the ideas about lifelong learning. Its implication is that it is possible to make sense of a situation and an activity in many different ways and make the experience part of many different meaning systems, regardless of the original objective goal of the activity.

As it has been indicated before, one and the same experience can be used as the raw material of multiple identities. Consequently, the individual can define any experience as a personal learning experience as long as there is a sense of having learned something. This can happen during an ongoing activity as well as in real or imagined experiences in retrospective or in a projection into the future. Through the narrative treatment, the activity where the personal learning experience occurred can change, because the individual's goals and motives for

participation can change as well as its outcome. It might even not necessarily be a change but an addition of new motives and objects, which are created in the narrative process. Experiences and meanings that had been disconnected are connected and given new meanings in light of and in relation to each other. As these changes and additions occur, the activity gains new meanings for the individual and makes sense in new ways and thereby the (re-)construction of different identities is enabled.

This implies that the analysis should pay more attention to the actual subjective experience of having learned. This would be the experiences where the individual clearly had a positive experience of learning, which could occur either in activities where learning was the explicit goal or in any other type of activity. As the analytical approach was formulated, the focus of the study was to generate stories about experiences of learning activities, where learning might or might not have occurred. However, for the general sense of recognition as a learner, the experience of not learning is not the same as one of doing so. This point has two interconnected implications. One is concerned with the situated sense of recognition as a learner and the other with the subjective experiences.

To begin with, the results indicate that there is a qualitative difference between a *subjective learning experience*, that is to say an experience of knowing or sensing learning, on the one hand, and the *subjective experience of a learning activity* or *subjective experiences of learning in activities*, on the other hand. The difference is subtle but nevertheless important and therefore the two types of subjective experiences should be differentiated. The latter two are the formulations that have been used interchangeably in this text for the sake of variation. None of them captures the individual's highly subjective sensation of having learned. Instead they mainly refer to the contextual conditions, which are oriented towards learning either as a primary or secondary objective. Consequently, the difference consists in that the *subjective learning experience* emphasizes the individual dimension of the experience more than the activity and its characteristics as such. It refers to something inside of the individual, where as the *experience of a learning activity*, situates the individual in the activity and captures her subjective

experience of that situated participation in general, where the sense of recognition as a learner is one aspect.

This differentiation is not an exercise in verbal hair-splitting, but is aimed at capturing the formulations that can add to the differentiation of different types of experiences. So, to continue, the main qualitative feature of a *subjective learning experience* is that it is a positive feeling of having learned, implying that the sense of recognition in such an experiences is always positive.

These ideas give rise to a series of interesting questions about the difference between real and imagined experiences in the construction of the cross-activity LI. Similarly, it would be highly valuable to map out and analyze how experiences from learning activities with objective learning goals are treated differently from those which are defined by the individual as learning experiences in the construction of meanings, although the activity was not objectively defined as one of learning. These are the experiences that are transformed into *learning experiences* through a process of meaning (re-)construction. In fact, one might say that once an experience is defined as a *learning experience* it makes sense and is ascribed meaning, whether this happens before, during or after the experience took place. As such they can also constitute the raw material for the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner. As the joint narrative activity is identified as an important and potent tool for meaning construction, more knowledge is required about how this type of activity and the conceptual tool of LI can transform an experience into a *learning experience.* The potential of this transformative process is not only its value for informal learning outside formal educational contexts, but also the transformation of learning experiences within these contexts. If an experience of any activity can be (re-)constructed into a learning experience, then negative experiences of failure, miscomprehension, not belonging or not making sense, could also be transformed into making sense in the learning trajectory of the individual through the use of LI as a conceptual tool in a joint and guided narrative activity.

In the analysis, the criteria used for the identification of type A and B micro-stories were specifically aimed at the identification of personal experiences of learning. However, the initial idea did not take the potential construction of a learning experience into consideration. Instead the idea was that a learning experience is one where the individual has experienced learning of some sort with more or less success. The fact that experiences could be (re-)constructed into learning experiences was not contemplated. As it has been stated before, the narrative activity is not a processing of the actual experience, but rather of the representation of the activity and through narrative processing these representations can be given new meaning and make sense in new ways. In layman and everyday terms this would be the case when someone experiences that she learned something of a crisis long after it is over and in retrospective. The experience is then connected to other experiences and made sense of in relation to other experiences through which recognition of oneself as someone can be (re-)constructed.

In case of the cross-activity LI, any kind of experience could become a learning experience. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult if not impossible to know whether the sense of recognition as a learner, for example, during the travels or while cooking with a friend, or talking with parents, was present during the activities or if they became a learning experience later on or during the interview. Even though it is possible to ask the interviewee about this, the response in itself would be a representation of how previous meanings were constructed.

The (re-)construction of a learning experience is closely related to the individual's sense of recognition as a learner in one way or another. Unless the individual experiences some kind of learning or failure to learn, the experience cannot be one of learning. This is where personal experiences from formal educational contexts with explicit learning goals are different from experiences where the activity has no objective learning goals at all. As a rule, the interviewees described a positive sense of recognition in all of these experiences. To exemplify, when someone engages in a conversation with someone or goes off on a travel, learning is not the goal, so the individual can difficultly

experience failure to learn. Moreover, in these activities and situations the individual has complete freedom to decide whether what she learned is adequate and relevant. (This was part of the meanings that Amelia constructed about herself.) There are no external formulations or expectations, nor are there any real evaluations of the learning. The content of what is learned is fluid and in general more related to the personal aspects of the individual's life. As a result the individual is not as dependent on external recognition of her learning, or on external motivators. These are the learning experiences where the individual controls all aspects of the learning process.

This is a confusing and problematic observation, since the theoretical exploration of identity construction established co-recognition as an essential element in the emergence of an identity. The individual's recognition of herself is not sufficient unless someone else shares it. The recognition is in itself an event that needs to be shared. Following this logic, theoretically, it is questionable whether these experiences can constitute a basis for cross-activity LI construction. As presented earlier the recognition of others is an essential element for many of the interviewees. Contrary to this assumption, it seems that when these interviewees are processing personal experiences from activities and situations that have had no direct or explicit learning objectives what so ever, the emphasis of the recognition of the other is not only toned down but practically non existent. This is a pattern that is detectable in all the interviews but is particularly conspicuous in the case of Ester and Roberto, who both emphasize the value of learning outside of the formal educational contexts and especially in life experiences in general.

There are two potential explanations to this occurrence, which both are intriguing but also problematic. One theoretical approach to this complexity is that the recognition of the individual as a learner is occurring in the interview situation, where the experience is being (re-)constructed as a learning experience and is shared in the moment of this (re-)construction. As the experience is shared through the narrative process, the interviewer is there as a recognizer of the individual as a learner. The interviewees were asked to talk about subjective

experiences of learning and through the narrative they shared that experience or event, which the interviewers recognized as just that; experiences of learning. The interviewers never questioned the interviewees' claims about having learned. Consequently, there was at all times an implicit recognition of their learning.

As stated above, methodologically it is next to impossible to differentiate the (re-)constructed from the *just*-constructed. However, as mentioned before, from a dialogic and socio-constructive point of view the question is not only redundant but also erroneous. Meanings are constantly (re-)constructed with or without small adjustments or complete reformulations. Strictly speaking, each time a meaning is (re-)constructed, it is being constructed for the first time according to the surrounding context and situated circumstances of the construction in that moment. The fact that these meanings can be similar to each other from one context to another should not be mistaken for evidence of an objective truth about a certain experience, but rather as a consequence of people's ability and need to repeat meanings from context to context. After all, it is easier and more convenient to repeat and reuse social and cultural patterns than to invent new ways and meanings. This rule applies for the collective level as well as the individual level of meaning construction.

Another possible explanation to how the sense of recognition as a learner can occur without "an other" to share that recognition is a kind of general *recognition diffusion*. The experience is at all times a shared event with someone that is present and sharing it with the individual, or someone who is indirectly part of the experience. The latter could for instance be the case of a significant other in the life of the individual, whose recognition is important for the individual in one way or another, such as a parent, a best friend, a life partner, etc. One clear example of this is Soraya, who kept seeking her father's recognition in different ways and then later her boyfriend's. Even though these persons might not be present in the actual situation, they are present in Soraya's mind through a tacit process of co-recognition. In these cases, it seems that the recognition is of a generalized character concerned with general approval and can as such be applied to any kind of activity or situation where success contributes to the recognition of

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the other. Consequently, the recognition might not be of the individual as a learner, but because of the generic features, it is tacitly present in any and every context and situation where the individual's participation could result in a shared sense of recognition with those particular others. Therefore, this generic sense of recognition could also apply to the individual as a learner.

These two explanations are not completely different or disconnected, but can in fact be seen as two aspects of the same phenomenon. In the first case, the focus is on contextual familiarity, which enables the repetition of meanings and in the second, on those "significant others" who share the experience with the individual through their implicit and indirect presence. In either case, there is a cross-contextual repetition of meanings about oneself. When the focus of the identity construction is LI, these meanings are incorporated into the system of meanings about oneself as a learner through a (re-)construction of meanings. However, this can only occur if the objective of the constructive activity is LI construction, prompting this (re-)construction. This brings us once again back to the importance of an object-oriented activity, such as the joint narrative activity, which drives the meanings construction in one or another direction. A closer look at the processes through which the experiences are represented and how and why they are defined as *learning experiences* would considerably contribute to an understanding of how different experiences are integrated into a cross-activity LI.

5.5.2. The elements of the model - elaborations and additions

Regardless of what kind of experience the raw material comes from, some basic elements are required for the construction of the cross-activity LI. The claim here is that the original formulation of the model includes these basic elements for the identification of meanings about oneself as a learner. However, for a richer understanding of these meanings and their construction some of these elements require further elaboration and others could be added.

- **Emotions – beyond positive and negative**

One of the most important elements of the model, but also the least developed, is the emotional aspects of the experience. As was mentioned in the previous

section, the emotional charge of an experience seems to be related both to the impact of the experience, particularly short timescale single event experiences, and to the temporal and spatial proximity to the experience at the time of the narrative processing. The theoretical exploration of this particular aspect left it at a rather sketchy level and the analysis of the emotional elements in the micro-stories was not refined enough to understand the narrative processing of the emotions per se. The analytical identification of the emotions was delimited to their classification as positive, negative or other, where the last category included anything and everything that was not immediately identifiable as positive or negative. Consequently, the model would benefit from a more detailed description of emotions in learning and in narrative activity, and most importantly how different emotions and the sense of recognition are related.

- **Motives – a key element?**

The initial approach to how motives are involved in the construction of the LI established that motives matter and that they are related to the level of compatibility between the objectives that drive the activity and the individual's particular personal motives. Furthermore, although the initial model did make a conceptual differentiation between the individuals' personal motives and objectives, they were not treated as separate elements that can configure the sense of recognition as a learner and the meanings that are constructed differently. The analysis of the results, however, indicates that the picture is more complex and that because of the qualitative difference between the motives and objectives, they should be treated differently. Furthermore, the results indicate that the motives are potentially a particularly important element in the construction of a sense of recognition as a learner. In fact, there are indications that support the theoretical assumption that the sense of recognition can be a motive in itself. The strongest indication thereof is the importance of living up to the expectations of specific significant others, such as for instance the parents. Reception of acts of recognition from parents seems to be a motive in its own right, which influence the sense of recognition as learners across different types of learning activities and the experience of these activities. Similarly, the search for general social recognition is for some interviewees a motive that drives and conditions their

sense of recognition as learners. As such, the motives seem to play the role of a kind of implicit connectors that relate different personal experiences to each other. The objectives, on the other hand, are often more concrete and activity specific.

Furthermore, there seems to be a difference between motives that are driven by "having to" and those who are driven by "wanting to". These are not necessarily separate entities but can interact, cooperate or cause ambivalence or conflict. Some motives are defined by the individual, whereas others are "given" by others although when the individual thrives to fulfil these motives they are in effect her own motives. Nevertheless, there seems to be a qualitative difference between the motives that the individual identifies as originating from someone else, such as a parent.

It should also be noted that at times it is difficult to differentiate between a goal or an object and a motive. For example, when an interviewee says that she wants to learn more in order to improve her professional skills, it can be difficult to define whether this aim is a personal objective for participation in a particular learning context or an overall long timescale motive that drives her learning in general. Judging by the interviews in this study, in general, the motives seem to have more of a cross-contextual character. That is to say, the statements that refer to motives seem to be relevant for the individual across many different types of contexts and activities, and therefore, they are also more likely to be relevant for many different types of identities. For example, the recognition of the parents is not only relevant for the sense of recognition as a learner but also for any identity that the parents value. In this sense, it could be relevant to make a timescale differentiation between motives as well. Some motives seem to be more long-lived and durable across time (e.g. parents' recognition, social recognition), whereas others are momentary and more situation and time specific (e.g. professional excellence). In this line, the short timescale motives seem more concrete and object-like than the long timescale motives.

Beyond the complex nature of the motives, there are strong indications that the motives do play an important role as the point where the individual and the social or contextual meet. Earlier, the argument was that the extents to which the objectives of the activity can support the individual's fulfilment of her motives play a crucial role in the process of making sense of the participation and the construction of a sense of recognition as a learner. While this assumption still is valid, it seems that the motives of the educational context and the individual's representation of these motives should also be included in the analysis. When an individual asks, either herself or a teacher, why she should learn what she is supposed to learn, the question is implicitly asking for the underlying motives as formulated by the teacher or the educational system as a whole. Consequently, an analysis of the motives should include, not only the individual's personal motives, but the multiple motives (as indicated by Kaptelinin, 2005), mentioned in the theoretical exploration) that are at play in a given learning situation or context. In the case of the cross-activity and on-activity LI, this issue would have to be approached through an inquiry into the individual's perception and representation of the multiple motives that are at stake in different learning situations. In the case of the in-activity LI, the analytical view would revolve around the identification of the explicit and implicit motives that define the object of a given activity and how these influence the process of making sense and the individual's sense of recognition as a learner. This issue is particularly relevant for questions concerning educational influence and the design of educational contexts and their activities.

In summary, the inclusion of the motives in the model is highly adequate and relevant. However, a more in-depth exploration of the nature of the motives, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they influence the construction of the LI in different modalities is necessary. Moreover, the motives and their corresponding objectives should be treated as separate entities in order to facilitate an understanding of how the individual formulates her own objectives, based on her personal motives, and represents the potential to fulfil these goals depending on the compatibility between her objectives and the object of the learning activity.

- **Long timescale significant others**

One of the basic pillars of the conceptualization of LI construction is its dialogic and social feature, emphasising the essential importance of co-recognition. There are always at least two individuals involved who share the construction of the meanings about oneself as a learner. While the analysis confirmed this aspect, it also revealed that the "other" who shares the experience and participates in the co-recognition is not necessarily someone who is immediately present in the experience. Instead these co-recognizers can be persons who have become significant in the lives of the individual due to their participation in multiple and diverse habitual experiences on a long timescale. The recognition of these persons seems to be cross-contextual and is present through a kind of internalized pattern, which the individual can repeat and (re-)construct across different types of experiences. This recognition is not necessarily identity specific but can be generalized and, as such, constitute a basic element of any kind of identity construction. Furthermore, there are also indications that this recognition matters regardless of its positive or negative nature. In the case of the cross-activity LI, these significant others need to be incorporated into the model and included in the analysis of the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner on a long timescale.

- **Identity interference**

In the presentation of the results there was mentioning of cases where there was an interference of other identity types who mediated the construction of meanings. It was also established that one and the same experience could serve as the basis for the construction of multiple identity types, even when the object of the activity is the construction of a particular identity, such as the LI. If identities are understood as important mediators of meaning construction and sense-making, and if learning and identity construction are closely related, then, a theoretical conceptualization and model of LI construction needs to consider the relation between the LI and other identity types.
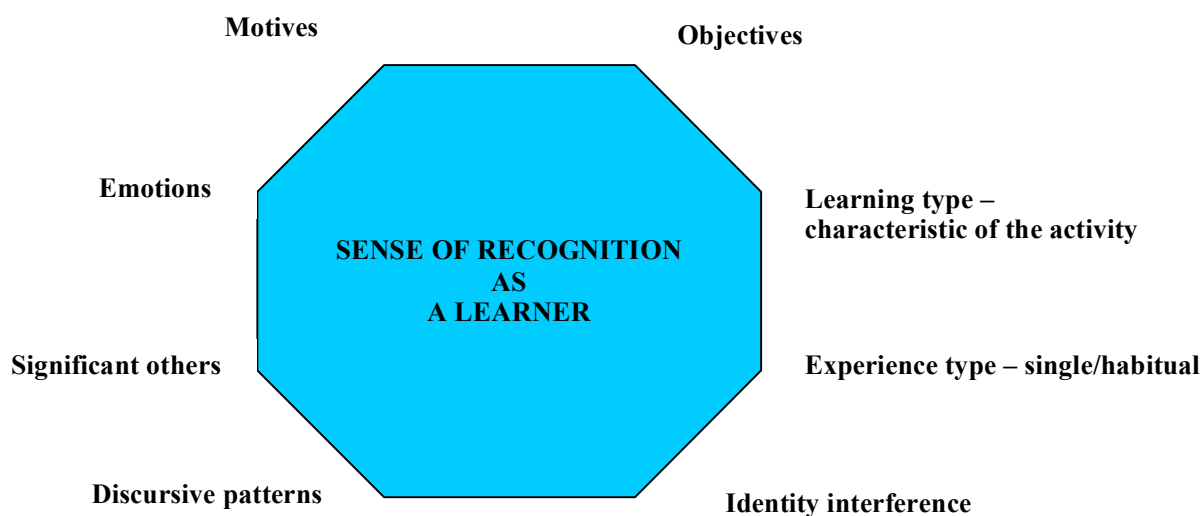
Figure 2. Revised model of the elements in the conceptualization of the cross-activity LI construction.

- **Discursive patterns**

With a sociocultural point of entry and understanding of human processes it is almost an obligation to explore social, cultural and Discursive patterns of meaning construction. The meanings that the individual constructs are never made in a void, but always within a proximate and distant sociocultural framework. This is the reason why it was possible to establish similarities and shared patterns among a highly heterogeneous group of interviewees. The meanings that they constructed about themselves as learners exhibited a high degree of diversity with regard to the experiences they had had and how they connected these. Yet, the results showed, for instance, a clear emphasis on experiences from formal learning as opposed to learning outside of formal educational contexts. Furthermore, the social, cultural and Discursive patterns were detected in how these experiences were treated, what was valued and how. Therefore, the model is in need of the addition of an element that captures these sociocultural macro-patterns in how individuals come to recognize themselves as learners. This aspect is not the least important for the analysis of differences between different socio-economic groups in their cross-activity LI construction,

between different age-groups, gender or ethnic categories, or any other category that is identified as crucial from a socio-political point of view in a particular society. This is also related to the previous point about the contemplation of the interaction between different identity types. For example, in a society where there is a Discursive and rhetoric focus on the situation of minority students in educational contexts, the ethnic, religious or cultural identity of the student is bound to have some influence on the LI construction. Similarly, the difference in the treatment of female and male students at all levels, which can be detected for instance in gender differences with regard to interest for natural sciences versus humanistic programs, cannot solely be understood as different individual patterns in LI construction, but as a gendered LI construction. In conclusion, the conceptualization of the LI is revised and suggested to include both an elaboration of some of the initial elements but also complemented with a few additions, which complete the picture. The suggestion is that a detailed and accurate analysis of the cross-activity LI, should include the identification of elements and their interrelation. Similarly, when designing an educational context or activity, these factors should be contemplated for the sake of conscious and systematic promotion of constructive, coherent and flexible LI construction.

While the suggested complementation of the model is a continuation of the original proposal in the theoretical exploration and an accurate summary of the findings in the analysis, it would be presumptuous to suggest or assume that it offers a complete and final model of the cross-activity LI. However, it does offer a significant improvement from the initial point of entry and does enable a significantly more comprehensive and detailed analysis of future data on much more diverse groups of individuals with more diverse learning trajectories and experiences.

	Cross-Activity	On-Activity	In-Activity
Temporal perspective	Long timescale	Short timescale	Short timescale
Site of construction	Narrative activity	Interaction/**Narrative in or close (temporal/spatial) to activity**	Interaction in learning activity
Object of activity	**Cross-activity LI**	**On-activity LI**	**Learning or other, primary. LI and other identity construction are secondary objects.**
Phenomenological modality	Representational	**Experiential**/ Representational	Experiential
Mode of construction	Narrative strategy	**Narrative Strategy**/Discourse in interaction	Action in activity (discursive and non-discursive)
Constructive action	Connect meanings from different experiences, (re-)construct them and formulate generalized meanings about oneself as a learner	**Negotiate/(re-)construct previous meanings, confirm or discard this negotiation/construct new situated meanings**	Enact previous meanings and negotiate them in action
Connections	**Representational: Between learning experiences of all kinds – similarity and differences, aspects of these experiences, and oneself.**	**Representational: Between the aspects of the learning activity or situation and oneself**	**Enacted (discursive or non-discursive): Between the aspects of the learning activity or situation and oneself**
Interpsychological Function	Mediate sense-making in and across activities	Support sense-making of the activity	Enable and support meaningful participation
Intrapsychological Function	Support sense of coherence and continuity in the recognition of oneself as a learner	Support the **construction of sense of recognition as a learner in a particular activity**	Regulate and supports the sense of recognition as a learner in the activity

Table 2. Overview of the three modalities and their role in the complete LI construction, with adjustments and additions. (Changes and additions are indicated in bold and light green field.)

6. Conclusion and final comments

6.1. Main conclusions

The work with the formulation of a model of LI construction has resulted in a solid basis for further explorations of its constitution and construction and offers a basis for the formulation of its application in educational contexts. However, as indicated in the previous section the work has, undeniably, also generated new questions that need to be addressed. In summary the main conclusions are that:

1- The identification of subjective experiences of learning as the source of the raw material for learning construction is adequate.

2- The (re-)construction of meanings based on these experiences through some kind of narrative activity is a fruitful mode of construction, particularly when the narrative activity is guided.

3- The LI does fulfil the intended function as a conceptual mediating artifact in the narrative activity but its use would be more optimal if all those involved in the activity shared it.

4- The motive, the emotions, the characteristics of the activity where the experience occurred/occurs or will occur, and the sense of recognition as a learner are indeed the core elements in the constitution of the LI. However, their refinement and the addition of some new elements, such as for example the Discursive patterns that regulate the (re-)construction of the meanings make the model more complete. This is an advantage both for analytical reasons and for the application of the model in educational practice.

5- There are two main types of subjective experiences, which are used in the construction of the LI; the long timescale habitual experiences and the short timescale single event experiences. The type of experience is partially reflected in the narrative treatment of the experiences. The habitual experiences tend to generate type B micro-stories, while the single event experiences tend to type A micro-stories. The meanings that

are constructed using the habitual experiences tend to be made part of a generalized cross-activity LI to a larger extent. These relations require further explorations.

6- The narrative activity does not only enable the (re-)construction of the meanings about oneself as a learner, but also the (re-)construction of the experiences upon which these meanings are constructed. The (re-)construction of the meanings and that of the experiences are not two separate processes but two aspects of one of the same process where one results in the other in a dynamic and circular mode. Experiences of any kind can potentially become learning experiences provided that they are processed within the framework of a narrative activity oriented towards LI construction.

7- The connections that are established between different subjective experiences through the narrative process are a key aspect of the construction of the meanings about oneself as a learner. The connections are usually made with one or more elements of the model.

8- The (re-)construction of the on-activity LI is also possible in narrative activities, generating detailed type A micro-stories. The exploration of the (re-)construction of the on-activity LI in less structured and more spontaneous discursive activities would add considerably to an understanding of this specific modality of the LI.

9- The in-activity (re-)construction of the LI remains completely unexplored. The model would benefit from more insight into both the in-activity and on-activity modalities and the interrelation between the three modalities.

10- LI serves both as an analytical tool and a symbolic artifact in the construction of meanings about oneself and the other as a learner.

6.2. **Further development and future explorations of the LI**

As previously mentioned, compared to other identity types, the LI is still a fairly unknown concept and an underdeveloped tool that is undergoing an ontological

process in its own right. This implies that people in general can difficultly be competent users of this tool when they are constructing meanings about themselves as learners. This is, however, also true for the investigator who tries to unravel some of the complex processes involved in LI construction. As an analytical tool, the LI is also in the making.

The core intention of the present work has been to contribute to the development of this conceptual and analytical artifact. The exploration has been highly dialogic in itself, with a continuous process of going back and forth between the theoretical notions and the data. The data collection was based on the theoretical conceptualization, but the data also altered the theoretical foundation, not in a linear mode, but in a complex circular fashion. Part 1 consisted of the theoretical exploration of identity in general and the identification of the pieces that can contribute to a formulation of a model of LI construction. As with any explorative project it is still indeed very much a work in progress and the present work is the presentation of a first solid theoretical model that could serve as the basis for further explorations of the model as well as the phenomenological experiences that can be labelled as LI.

The initial questions of the work were concerned with the formulation of what LI is and how it is constructed across different learning activities as well as within specific learning activities. These ideas were informed by the previously mentioned ideas about the necessity to timescale differentiate identity construction, based on the assumption that there is one situated identity construction in-the-moment and one that works and is constructed across contexts and activities on a large timescale. In the end, the proposal is that there are three modalities of LI construction that all interact. The present work has mainly focused on the cross-activity long timescale construction and touched upon the short timescale on-activity construction. The in-activity construction is, however, still an unknown territory. This implies that any exploration of that modality could have consequences for the formulation of the other two modalities. Though the results of this study offer a solid basis for further studies of the cross-activity

LI construction, there is still more to be studied and understood about all three modalities on their own and more importantly, in connection to each other. From the point of view of educational design and influence, the question is how the individual connects different experiences of activities and situations, and how these connections influence on her sense of recognition as learners.

The underlying conviction of this work is that the present and future educational systems of our societies need this conceptual artifact. If the LI is to be used and applied as an educational tool, it is necessary to provide the educational systems and its institutions with practical guidelines for its implementation. Without these elaborations and an in-depth study of the practical use of the conceptual tool and the narrative activity, the concept will remain an interesting curiosity of the academic world with little impact on the educational everyday lives of parents, teachers and students. Therefore, the first and primary suggestion for further work is that the empirical exploration of LI as a concept and phenomenon should be carried out in close connection to real contexts where cross-, on- and in – activity LI is being constructed. The controlled empirical exploration in interview settings needs to be complemented with random and spontaneous LI construction in evaluation talks between teachers and students, in peer conversations, or when parents talk to their children or teach them. Although the focus of this work has been the construction of the cross-activity LI in narrative activities that are specifically oriented towards LI construction, the meanings about oneself as a learner are constructed in many different contexts and often more arbitrarily than systematically. The model proposed here needs to be applied, tried and completed with data from these real-life contexts.

Yet another concrete next step is the exploration of a more planned, intentional and systematic model of the joint and guided narrative activity. Such a next step would imply the development of other part of the constructive kit, namely the narrative tool (the first part being the conceptual artifact). This field of research about the narrative construction of identities is in itself rich on many and diverse theoretical approaches. The idea is, however, not yet another exploration of the narrative construction of the LI through the application of different narrative and

autobiographical interview methods. Instead, the suggestion is an exploration of the construction of meanings about oneself as a learner in a narrative activity that is based on and guided by the model of LI and its elements. Such a narrative activity would be consciously aimed at the construction of a coherent cross-activity LI, through a focus on the making of the three kinds of connections (connecting experiences to each other, the elements of the experiences to oneself as a learner and oneself as a person in general to oneself as a learner). The narrative activity would, hence, be designed according to the theoretical model of LI construction in specific. By combining the narrative activity as a tool and the LI as the conceptual artifact, the LI construction would not be a random process of meaning construction, but a conscious use of technologies of the self, which can either be used individually or together with equals or, as it is suggested here, together with a co-constructive guide. In other words, the suggestion regards the development of the educational "tool kit" for LI construction as a whole. A methodological development in this line could be an important and highly concrete contribution to educational practice.

Beyond general recommendations, the distinction between the long timescale habitual experiences and the short timescale single event experiences is identified as a particularly interesting next step for a deeper understanding of how an individual's personal experiences influence on their recognition of themselves as learners. It is also suggested that this distinction could be of value for an understanding of other identity types as well.

In order to use the LI as an educational tool among students of all ages, it is necessary to know more about the interaction and relation between experiences from different learning contexts but also the relation between the two types of experiences that are generated in these contexts. It would, for instance, be highly useful to have an in-depth look at the difference between different short timescale single event experiences in different types of learning contexts and explore the potential difference in their impact on the meanings that are constructed about oneself as a learner. The question would then be how influential specific key experiences are in comparison to long timescale habitual experiences that do not

stand out but which execute a continuous mellow influence. In relation to this question we would need to know more about the qualitative difference between the marks that are left by each type of experience and how their narrative processing might be different. Similarly on a long timescale and with lifelong learning in mind, it would be valuable to look at how different parallel, consecutive and overlapping long timescale experiences from different types of contexts and activities are processed and influence on the recognition of oneself as a learner.

The implications of these thoughts are that just as the conceptual tool needs further development, there is a need to explore the guided narrative activity and identify the features of a more constructive joint narrative activity. The closer we look at the process of meaning construction through a narrative processing of subjective learning experiences, the more the complexity of this process stands out. With regard to the narrative activity, it would also be interesting to include some analysis of the narrative structure of the micro-stories in order to explore the potential of different types of narrative constructions and structures to generate different types of connections and meanings about oneself as a learner.

It becomes evident that an analytical model cannot be more than a guiding map through which identifiable phenomena are recognized and new territories are uncovered. As usual, human processes are far too complex to be simplified into a simple model, but without such an analytical model, however rudimentary, it becomes even more difficult to approach and understand processes of identity construction in general and LI construction in particular.

The analysis carried out in this exploratory study has confirmed and elaborated on some previously shared conceptions about identity construction and their relevance for LI construction. It has also unravelled some new relevant and interesting knots that remain to be explored and untied. The proposal is that the study of LI is a potent and fruitful addition to the field of identity studies, which can contribute to constructive cross-fertilization of ideas.

6.3. **Managing challenges and avoiding risks**

In order to bring the concept of LI to a sufficient level of concretization, it was required that some of the contradictions and problems inherent to the formulations and conceptualizations of most identity theories were dissected and picked apart, before they could be joined and reconstructed in a conceptualization of LI. The aim of this work was to handle these contradictions and inconsistencies with as much caution and rigour as possible. However, when the focus of attention is something as complex and abstract as an identity, it is easy to get lost in the theoretical and conceptual maze of notions, theories, methods and interpretations. As in the case of any explorative study, the present work has suffered from both constructive and destructive errors. To the extent that these errors have been identified, they have been made manifest in the presentation of the methodological procedure and the results. Similarly, the outcomes of these errors, which have not always been negative, have been made known throughout the text in part 2. At this point there will only be a general comment on, not so much an error, but a pitfall that can be difficult to avoid when the theoretical framework clashes with surrounding sociocultural tendencies.

Despite considerable efforts to maintain coherence and theoretical consistency throughout the work, when it came to taking theory to practice in the empirical exploration, it was difficult to avoid a common risk and difficulty in most research. This consists in remembering that the surrounding context and culture are there and exercise an explicit and implicit influence on us as reserachers. In research and theory about educational practices and human development, particularly with a sociocultural and socioconstructivist approach, there is an abundance of statements about the social nature of all constructive processes, often using this argument to criticize approaches with cognitivist over- and undertones. Similarly, in the present work it has repeatedly been emphasized that identities have both a social and an individual dimension and that this is one of the conceptual strengths of the notion, which makes it particularly useful for the analysis of educational contexts. However, most works on identity, including the study presented here, are for the most part being carried out by people who have

been trained, fostered and developed according to more individualistic approaches, which speak of innate selves, individual talents that unfold in a Piagetian sense and problem-children instead of problem-contexts. Moreover, most western societies are at present time dominated by neo-liberal ideas, which give the individualistic perspectives yet another turn and make the individual responsible for her own successes and failures. According to this view, the responsibilities of a society are to provide citizens with possibilities and then its up to each individual to do what they can and want. Within this general individualistic framework, caution and attention is required on the researcher's part in order to maintain a dialogic sociocultural view. It can be difficult to keep a "clean" theoretical outlook throughout the process and remember that learner identity, and identities in general, are both dynamic and changing. In the present work this risk was the most present in the formulation of question 3 regarding different types of learner identity that are more or less beneficial or obstructive. The formulation of the question should have included the context by, for example, asking for when a learner identity becomes beneficial or obstructive. In order to restore theoretical coherence and consistency, a common strategy was used. This consisted in using the theoretical perspective to scrutinize the questions in the process of analysis and interpretation of the results, instead of maintaining the theoretical view all the way through the formulation of the questions to the conclusions.

This point is highlighted here is because it is partially an addition to the methodological challenges that the large and vast field of identity studies need to handle. As indicated in the beginning, questions of methodological rigour and theoretical consistency are a problem that makes it very difficult to compare studies and results to each other and generate a cumulative process of joint knowledge building. In the present work, one of the main challenges was to handle the dual nature of the exploration. On the one hand, there was a theoretical exploration and, on the other hand, an empirical exploration. As such there have been two different studies although they were treated as two pieces of one overall exploration of the LI. Some might call the approach ambitious, others might label it as imprudent. The underlying motive behind the combination of two

explorations was to use whatever theoretical knowledge available and bring it together in order to formulate a conceptualization of the LI that could be consistent with other neighbouring theories on identity, human development, activity and on existence as such. The suggestion is that, just as there is plenty of interesting and relevant work to be done on the empirical exploration of LI construction, the theoretical exploration is not finalized and could be the focus of in-depth studies of interdisciplinary nature.

The final general recommendation for future explorations of LI concerns the all too common and well-known gap between academic research and educational practice and reality. The challenge consists in making the conceptual artifact accessible and useable not only for the researchers but also, and maybe even mainly, to educators and learning individuals in general. This would imply another line of research in its own right where the conceptual tool can be made concrete and tangible enough to literally put it in the hands of the people of the formal educational systems. If learning and identity are so closely interconnected, then our educational systems need to start taking responsibility for the identities that are being constructed in them. More importantly, they need to make deliberate and conscious efforts to promote certain identity types over others. As mentioned in the very beginning of this work, the suggestion here is that the LI is the most functional identity type for an educational context. It has promising potential as an educational tool, but it needs to be developed for these purposes specifically.

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Appendix 1

Items to cover in the interview

1. Positive/good/successful/satisfactory experiences of learning
2. Negative/failes/insatisfactory experiences of learning
3. Experiences of learning in formal educational contexts (school, university, etc.)
4. Experiences of learning in informal educational contexs (home, with friends, free time, religious organization, ONGs, etc.)
5. Concrete educational experiences that have marked the person as a learner in a positive or negative sense (*peak experiences*)
6. Experiences of learning of the almost finalized master course Experiencia de aprendizaje del curso de master casi acabado (Basic reference: the course "Culture, development and learning in educational psychology): the aspects that are perceived as more important and significant
7. Characteristics of the most important and significant activities, situations and contexts of learning; both the positive and the negative aspects
8. Activities, situations and conetxs of learning that are the most or the least motivating
9. Activities, situation and contexts of learning that are most satisfying/least satisfying, threatening or worrying/calming
10. The valuation of the own capactiy to learn and the management of the own learning processes (agency)
11. Description and characterization of oneself as a learner (*sense of recognition as a learner*)
12. Future expectation of learning in different types of activitites, situations and contextsExpectativas futuras de aprendizaje en diferentes tipos de actividades, situaciones y contextos (taking as the elements that have been mentioned by the subject as the point of reference, with regard to the view on oneself as learner as well as the view on the activities, situation and contexts that have been identifies as more important)

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW

A research project about experiences of learning and how these marks us and affect us in how we perceive ourselves as learners.

A series of open questions.

If any question is unclear, please ask for clarifications.

Only the members of the research group have access to audio recordings of the interviews. The anonymity of the interviewees will be protected at all times,

through out the process of data collection as well as in the final written products.

Duration of the interview; approximately one hour.

QUESTIONS

(For the case of contextualization of the interview, makes clear that the course "Culture, development and learning in educational psychology" is not the focus of the interview, although the first questions will revolve around this course. The focus is all and any experiences of learning in formal and informal contexts that the interviewee has had or will have throughout life and that have marked her/him in one way or another. The interview will begin with questions about the specific course in the MIPE because the interviewers also have taken the course and it constitutes a shared point of reference, which can facilitate the commence of the interview and generate fluidity and ease the process.

1. Starting with the course "Culture, development and learning in educational psychology"

- How would you describe the learning experience in this course
- How would you valuate it?
- Which aspects of the design of the course have most caught your attention? How has this course been different from or similar to other previous courses that you have taken throughout your life?
- Which aspects have been most favourable for you, helped you learn?
- Which aspects have been least favourable, impeded your learning or helped you the least?
- If it were in your hands to design the course, how would you have done? What would you have changed?
- The use of the CIT in the course – virtual classroom Moodle, forums, etc. – have helped you, made it difficult to learn or have not have any significant role in your learning process?
- How well adjusted is the design and the progress of the course to you as a learner? Which aspects are well adjusted and which aspects are not?

2. Now, if you think about all the experiences of learning that you have ever had, no doubt you have had a number of different experiences from different places and contexts, formal and informal.

- Is there any that your remember particularly well for some reason?
(For each mentioned experience by the subject, induce/generate descriptions focusing on the elements of the theoretical model of the LI.)

- What do you think that you remember this particular situation?
- What happened? Who were you with? (other actors, relations, etc.) What were you doing? How did you do it? What did you have to do? What the others do? What did they have to do? What was the task? What was it about (content)? What happened in the end? (results)
- How did you feel? At the time, did you feel like you did well/bad? In what way was it a good/bad experience of learning
- How did it affect you? What were your conclusions after the course? How

do you think that this experience has influenced the way in which you face other and new situations and activities of learning?

(In the efforts to help the subject to remember the significant experiences of learning, bare in mind the temporal dimension (childhood, school age, higher education, and the contexts, mainly family, school, relations with peers, activities in their free time – cultural, sportive, or professional, etc.)

- In which way was this experience different from or similar to other previously mentioned experiences?

3. When you are faced with a new learning situation

- What do you first notice? What do you first try to find out?
- Is there anything that you think helps you to anticipate the learning results that you will achieve?
- Which are the characteristics of the situation that make you feel comfortable or sure of yourself? Why do you think that you notice these features of the situation?
- Which are the characteristics of the situation that make you feel uncomfortable or to doubt yourself? Why do you think that you notice these features of the situation?

4. We know that motivation is important for learning.
- What makes you feel particularly motivated to learn?

- What kind of learning activities, situations or contexts is especially motivating for you? Could you please give me some examples of such situations? Which are the characteristics that these situations have in common?

- What kind of learning activities, situations or contexts does not motivate you at all? Could you please give me some examples of such situations? Which are the characteristics that these situations have in common?

- When you are faced with a new learning activity or situation, which you don't find motivating, how does it affect you? What do you do? How do you usually react? Do you manage to somehow overcome the lack of motivation or do the circumstances impede your learning all together?

5. If we look at the future

- How do you see your immediate future as a learner within the framework of the MIPE?

- Do you think that your future learning experiences within the framework of the MIPE will be largely satisfying/not satisfying/positive/negative? What makes you think that? Is there anything that would make you change

your view?

- How do you see your future learning experiences in the MIPE? As a challenge that has to be handled? Or an opportunity that you need to make the most of? Like a threat that you would avoid if you could? Like a risk that you just have to take?, etc.

- How do you think that the teachers that you have had so far in the MIPE and the course CDL value your capacity to learn? And your peers, how do they value your capacity? And yourself, how do you see value your capacity to learn?

7. After having had all the learning experiences that you have had across your life and in different types of contexts and situations, like in school, at the university, with your family, in your free time, with sports, at work, with your friends, etc.

- How would you describe yourself as a learner?

- What features define you as a learner?

- Which type of activities and situations is more/less suitable for your characteristics as a learner?

- If you had to briefly describe your strengths as a learner, what would they be?

- If you had to briefly describe your weaknesses as a learner, what would they be?

- Generally, how do you value your capacity to learn and your capacity to plan and manage your own processes of learning?

8. We know that the expectations and opinions of others about our capacity to learn can influence they way we face learning activities and situations and also our view on our selves as learners and even our learning results. In your case

- Do you think that this factor has been important?

- In your learning experiences across your life, have you had persons whose expectations on and opinions about your learning or how you are as a learner have been particularly significant and important to you? Who? In which situations? How have theses expectations and opinions affected you?

- In general, how do you think that other perceive you as a learner? How do you think that they value your capacity to learn? Does the view of others about you as a learner usually coincide with how you see yourself as a learner?

- In general, are other people's expectations on you and opinion of you as a learner important for you? How important? Little, very, nothing?

9. We all have many different identities. For instance, a gender identity, cultural or national identity, a professional identity, etc. There are discussions about whether we also might have a learner identity.

- Would you say that you have a learner identity?
- If you don't think that you have one, why not?
- If you do think that you have one, what does it consist in? How would you define it? What does it mean to you?

9. How do you see yourself as learner in the near and distant future?

- What kind of learning activities and contexts do you think you'll be most comfortable in, in 10-15 years time?

- What kind of learning activities and contexts do you think that you'll find most satisfying in 10 to 15 years time? And what kind of contexts would be the opposite – least satisfying?

- What do you think might change in the future compared to now? Why? (Pay particular attention the objectives motives and the characteristics of the activity or the situation of learning)

- How do you see your capacity to learn in the future? Similar to now, higher, lower, different from now? Why do you think that?

- If you think that you have a learner identity now, how do you think that it might change with time? How could it change? What aspects of it? What could cause these changes?

- Do you think that it is possible that you might lose your learner identity some day? What would have to happen in order for you to lose this identity?

- If you consider that you at the moment do not have a learner identity, do you think that you could have it one day/construct it? Why do you think that you could have one in time, even though you have not developed one in the past?

CLOSURE

Pass the words over to the other interviewer.
Information about the potential need for complementation.
Thank you for your participation and collaboration.

Appendix 2

Data collection purpose:
The purpose of this second interview is to explore thoughts, feelings and feelings about oneself as a learner which haven been generated after the first interview.

Analytical purpose:
The question that we are addressing through this interview is:
Are there any reported subjective experiences of changes or shifts in the recognition of oneself as a learner, i.e. the LI, after having made the first interview, (after having used the narrative structure and organization to construct an LI)?

The question is based on the assumption that the narrative structure and the discursive construction is an important mediator of the construction of an LI.

The interview:
Thank you for once again offering your time and efforts in helping us with our project.
We'll try to keep this interview as brief as possible and will only focus on a couple of primary questions, followed by a couple of follow up questions.
We estimate that it should take about 30 minutes (+/- 10 minutes).

Questions:
1. What were your general thoughts and feelings about the interview?
    a. What did it feel like to respond to our questions?
    b. Were they difficult/easy?
    c. How did you feel afterwards?
    d. Was there anything that you thought afterwards you should have brought up?
2. What do you remember the most of the interview?
    a. Which questions?
    b. Which responses?
    c. Why?
3. Imagine you would have had to talk about your experiences of learning without two interviews; just you and the recorder. What would it have felt like?
    a. What would you have talked about?
    b. Could you do that now after having made the interview?
    c. Compared to having had to talk about your gender or professional experiences and identity, do you think it would have been more or less difficult, or the same?
4. In the previous interview you said that you do you have a learner identity (all but one interviewee).

a. In retrospective, would you say that you had a LI before the interview?
b. How would you describe your LI today?
c. Could you please try and describe how the interview influenced on your LI?
    i. NOTE! Change in the LI or in the perception of the LI?
d. How do you feel and think about the learner identity as a concept? Does it mean anything special to you now that you've been introduced to it? Does it help you in any way? Any significance?

5. In the previous interview we asked you about significant experiences that have affected you in one way or another in how you perceive yourself as a learner. Could you briefly give us a summary of these experiences, please?
a. Can you think of any other experience now that you would like to add?

6. Would you like to talk about this matter in one way or another again some time in the future?
a. When?
b. Why?
c. With whom?

7. Do you think you would be able to talk about your learner identity more freely now that you have done it once, for instance the way you might do about your national or gender identity?
a. Would it be as easy/difficult?
b. What would the difference be?
c. Why?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to add in this matter? Any thoughts?

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Appendix 3

LEARNER IDENTITY NARRATIVES. GUIDELINES FOR THE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS ABOUT LEARNING EXPERIENCES
(17.05.2010 version)

I. GUIDELINES ABOUT THE FOCUS AND CONTENT OF THE ANALYSIS

The analysis focuses on statements and sets of statements that can be identified as:

- Micro-stories about the interviewee's personal learning experiences, which are built (jointly by interviewee and interviewer) during the interviews;
- Independent statements and sets of statements with meanings about the interviewee's personal learning experiences, which are built (jointly by interviewee and interviewer) during the interviews;
- Connecting statements between different aspects and elements of the interviewee's personal learning experiences or between them and the subject as learner, which are built (jointly by interviewee and interviewer) during the interview.

1. MICRO-STORIES

Characterization

A micro-story is a set of statements made by the interviewee, together with the interviewer, about the interviewee's personal, real or imagined, past, present or future learning experiences in defined spatial/temporal and/or socio-institutional contexts. Micro-stories may or may not include connecting statements (see "connections" below).

Types

The analysis will focus on two types of micro-stories that can tell about personal learning experiences related to:

a) *specific* learning activities that have taken, take or will take place in *specific* spatially/temporally defined contexts and/or defined socio-institutional contexts (examples: one specific course, pre-grad program, learning how to ride a bike with a parent);

b) *groups or types of* learning activities that have taken, take or will take place in *extended or generic* spatially/temporally defined contexts and/or in defined extended or generic socio-institutional contexts (examples: the school years, the university, the family, living in a country, travels, conversations with friends, etc.).

Elements

A. ***Type A micro-stories.*** Micro-stories about personal past, present or future personal learning experiences related to *specific* learning activities that have taken, take or will take place in a *specific* spatially/temporally defined context and/or in a specific socio-institutional context (examples: a course, a travel, a project, a job, etc.). Type A micro-stories must include the following elements:

    i) A specific spatially/temporally defined context or a defined socio-institutional context for the learning situation or the learning activity (examples: a course, a job, a project, a travel, etc.).
        Supporting question for identification: where did/does/will the learning take place?

ii) A specific learning activity that is aimed at, or results in, learning (examples: forum discussion, presentations, synthesis, talking, cookery, etc.)
Supporting question for identification: Doing what did/does/will the learning take place?

iii) A reference to the object of the learning activity –the content– what was/is/will be taught/learned (examples: the guitar, languages, course name, learning about life, etc.) or the learning outcome of the activity –what did/does/will the person learn– (example: "From the ritual I learned that there are many different ways to see the world").
Supporting question for identification: What was/is/will be learned?

iv) An explicit reference to oneself and at least one more actor in the activity. The other person does not necessarily have to be physically present in the activity. The person can be present through mediating artefacts (computer, Youtube, book- author, internalized voice-parent, etc.)
Supporting question for identification: Besides the interviewee, who else participated/participates/will participate in the activity?

v) Either Sense of Recognition as a learner in the specific activity or situation with a learning objective or a learning outcome, positive or negative, (examples: "I learned a lot from participation in an indigenous ritual"; "While doing the synthesis I realized I had learned a lot from the forum"; "I didn't learn anything from that course"), or an Act of recognition, explicit or implicit, positive or negative, (examples: "Afterwards the teacher congratulated us"; "The note I received was not very good"; "The teacher made funny faces"; "My parents never asked about my notes.").
Supporting question for identification: Did/does/will the interviewee feel like he/she had/is/will learned/learning/learn? Were there/is there/will there be any reactions/actions from others on the interviewee as a learner?

B. ***Type B micro-stories.*** Micro-stories about personal past, present or future learning experiences related to *groups or types of* learning activities that have taken/take/will take place in *extended or generic* spatially/temporally defined contexts and/or in a defined extended or generic socio-institutional contexts (examples: MIPE, university, school, formal education, upbringing, etc.). Type B micro-stories must have the following elements:

i) An extended or generic spatially/temporally defined context and/or a defined extended or generic socio-institutional context related to a group or a type of learning activities (examples: The university of …, the MIPE, the family, the Scouts (Espai), the work place etc….).
Supporting question for identification: where did/does/will the group or type of the learning activities take place?

ii) A group or a type of learning activities that are aimed at, or result in, learning (online learning, universities, religious school, family travels and excursions).
Supporting question for identification: Doing what did/does/will the learning take place?

iii) A reference to the object –the content: what was/is/will be taught/learned (e.g. the guitar, course name, languages, learning about life)–, or to the learning outcomes of the group or type of learning activities –what does/did/will the person learn? (e.g. "I've learned about different cultures in the travels with my family." "I learn about life through my conversations with my friends.").
Supporting question for identification: What was/is/will be learned?

iv) An explicit reference to oneself and at least one more actor in the group or type of learning activities. The other person does not necessarily have to be physically present in the activity. The person can be present through the mediating artefact (computer – youtube, book – author, internalized voice – parent etc.)
Supporting question for identification: Besides the interviewee, who else participated/participates/will participate in the activity?

v) Either <u>Sense of Recognition as a learner</u> in the learning activity, positive or negative, (examples: "Everything that I've learned that really matters I've learned from life") or an <u>Act of recognition</u>, explicit or implicit, positive or negative, in the group or type of learning activities (examples: "My parents never commented on my notes.")
Supporting question for identification: Did/does/will the interviewee feel like he/she had/is/will learned/learning/learn? Where there/is there/will there be any reactions/actions from others on the interviewee as a learner?

In addition to the required criteria, type A and type B micro-stories may or may not contain statements about other aspects of the interviewee's learner experiences. If they contain these statements, they would mainly be connections (see "connections" below.)

2. INDEPENDENT SETS OF STATEMENTS EXPRESSING MEANINGS ABOUT ONESELF AS A LEARNER

The independent sets of statements are statements made by the interviewee, together with the interviewer, about the interviewee's personal, real or imagined, past, present or future learning experiences. The most important difference between independent sets of statements and micro-stories is that in the former it is not possible to find ALL the elements (of micro-stories (see above elements "i" to "v" of type A and type B micro-stories). The independent sets of statements may contain or not statements about other aspects of interviewee's learner experiences. If they contain these statements, they would mainly be connections (see"connections" below.)

3. CONNECTIONS

Characterization

Connections are statements made by the interviewee, together with the interviewer, establishing associations or relations between Different aspects and elements of the interviewee's personal learning experiences or between them and the subject as learner.

Types

There are different types of connections according to the elements in the interviewee's personal learning experiences and aspects of oneself as learner which are related or associated to:

Type 1 connections. These are statements that connect *two or more micro-stories, independent sets of statements or micro-stories and independent sets of statements*, through one or more elements of the interviewee's personal learning experiences (examples: the difference between the course in the university -micro-story- and the travels -micro-story-; the importance of learning content in formal contexts –more important- and in informal contexts -less important-). In this case, the connections also establish similarities, differences, oppositions, preferences, etc. between the related micro-stories.

Type 2 connections. These are statements that connect *one or more elements of the interviewee's personal learning experiences* and *the interviewee as a learner*, in terms of the elements of the model (examples: "I never could learn <u>languages</u>. I just don't like the process of learning them"; "I did my best to get <u>good notes</u> –CA– <u>because I knew my parents had to sacrifice a lot to put me through university</u> –Motive–"; "I always liked talking to my <u>grand father</u> –CA– <u>because he taught me so much</u> (sense of recognition); "I always <u>enjoy</u> –emotions– learning <u>something new</u> –CA–").

Type 3 connections. These are statements that connect the *interviewee in general* and *the interviewee as learner*, in terms of the elements of the model (examples: "Ever since I was

a child I've been a curious person and always wanted to learn new things"; "I think I'll continue learning until the day I die").

II. GUIDELINES ABOUT PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA TO BE APPLIED IN THE ANALYSIS

1. **The analysis of the interviews should follow this order and procedures in Transana:**

   a) Before anything read through the transcription of the interview and make a general picture of potential MSA:s, MSB:s and Sets of Statements that do not form complete MSA or MSB:s

   b) In Transana, create a collection for each single interview in Transana.

   c) Within each interview collection create three sub-colelctions: MSA, MSB, Set of Statements.

   d) Identify reference to a spatial/temporal or socio-institutional context in a set of statements. The identification of this should respond to the question about where the interviewee situates her/his personal experience.

   e) Create clips of the set of statements that refers to one or more aspects of the different identified contexts, and move the clip to one of the collections that you think it belongs based on your initial preliminary analysis after reading the transcription.

   f) Name the clips following these rules:

       a. When possible, the name should always be according to the spatial/temporal/socio-institutional context (e.g. For MSA:s - complete or incomplete - Music class, Fifth Grade, Pre-Grad. For MSB:s - complete or incomplete – The family, Travels, Sports.)

       b. When a direct reference to an identifiable context is missing, because the statement is generalized and implicitly a meaning that concerns any context, name the clip according to the keyword that is applied. (e.g. Motives, Element – Learner, Self – Learner, etc.)

   g) If there are more than one clip with the same name according to f)b. add a number (e.g. Self-Learner1, 2, 3 etc., or Family1, 2, 3, etc.).This is due to the restrictions of Transana that will not allow the application of the same name more than once.

   h) Once you have at least two clips that refer to one and the same experience, or element of the model, create yet another sub-collection for all the clips that form a MSA/MSB/Set of Statements about that experience.

   i) Before moving on, contrast the creation of clips with the co-analyzer.

   j) Once the creation of clips is in order and the sets of statements are identified as being part of a MSA, MSB or a Set of Statements that do not form a complete MS, next thing to do is to codify the content of the statement and to assign them relevant keywords.

   k) Following the system of keywords (se document about the elements of the model and their corresponding keywords in Transana) identify each reference to an analyzable element and assign the correct keyword to the clip.

   l) Once all the clips of an assumed MSA/MSB are categorized control and confirm that they contain all necessary requirements for the set of statements to be considered a MSA or MSB. If anything is missing, move the collection of clips from the collection of MSA/MSB to the collection of Set of Statements.

2. Specific guidelines for the analysis of micro-stories

2.1. In order for a set of statements to be considered a micro-story, they need to refer to all the elements that are required for a micro-story, following A i-v and B i-v above.

2.2. The statements that form a micro-story can appear as *grouped* or *consecutive* at one place/moment (that is to say, one following the other) or be *distributed* at various places/moments in the interview. It is absolutely necessary to consider the interview as a whole in order to establish whether a set of statements form a micro-story or not.

2.3. Following 2.2., the very first set of statements about one personal experience in the interview can possibly contain a connection to another set of statements about another personal experience. The connection is then coded as MS-MS/MS-SOS/SOS-SOS

2.4. In order for a set of statements to be considered a micro-story, all the identified elements must refer to the same personal learning experience, the same specific or groups/types of learning activity or the same specific or expanded/generic spatially/temporally or socio-institutional defined context.

2.5. The statements of the interviewer are analyzed and coded as part of the set of statements about the interviewee's personal learning experience.

3. The analysis of connections

7.1. MS-MS/MS-SOS/SOS-SOS

Identifying connections between micro-stories requires identifying: 1) two or more micro-stories; b) one comparative statement or a set of comparative statements establishing similarities or differences between the identified micro-stories; c) one or more elements of the learning experiences as established by the model around which comparisons or connections are made in the Sets of Statements (be they complete or incomplete MSA/MSB)

7.2. Element - Learner

Identifying connections between the learning experiences as a whole or the characteristics of the activities and the interviewee as a learner requires to identify: 1) a statement or a set of statements establishing an association or relation between the learning experience or the learning activity and the interviewee as a learner; 2) the element/s of the learning experiences or the characteristics of the learning activities as taken into account in the association; and 3) the element/s according to the LI model as taken into account in the association.

7.3. Self - Learner

Identifying connections between the interviewee in general and the interviewee as learner requires the identification of a statement or a set of statements that include simultaneously an explicit reference to the self in general, the self as a learner (sense of recognition as a learner) and to one or more elements of the proposed model de LI.

III. <u>OPERATIONAL DECISIONS</u>
Order of keyword assignment to clips:
1) Always begin with **Soc._Inst./Spac._Temp_Context** first, and apply the keywords:
   a) Formal - Informal
   b) Specific – Generic/Expanded Context
   c) Specific – Group/Type Activity
   And if applicapble:
   d) Virtual learning
   These keywords only need to be coded once for each experience that is taking place in a particular identifiable spatial/temporal/socio-institutional context. This means that they are only coded was in the first clip of the MSA/MSB (complete or incomplete) and in the consecutive clips they are omitted.

2) If it is clear where in the chronological order of life (in which life period) the experience is situated, then code this using the Lifelong learning dimension – keyword, before moving on.
This is also only coded once per MSA/MSB (completer or incomplete)
In case of MSB:s, the lifelong learning dimension can either be extensive, meaning that it runs across many life periods, (in which case which apply the keyword Extensive) or be specified to more than one period (in which case we apply the corresponding keywords, for instance childhood and adolescence)

3) Do not apply unnecessary truncation of the set of statements into different clips. At times a set of statements might seem too long or extensive to constitute one single clip, because there are references to many different aspects of the experience and the same key element can occur with different nuances. Since Transana only permits the use of a keyword once per clip, some of the richness of the content of the set of statements might be lost if the clip is too long. As a rule, if one element occurs in different ways and in diverse ways in the same group of statements, then they should be truncated into different clips. For instance, if there are many different references to the teacher and different emotions in connections to the teacher depending on what the teacher does or does not do.

4) When a set of statements contains a connection between two different experiences in close relation, it can be difficult to identify whether the clip should be grouped with the set of statements belonging to one or another experience, that is to say, decide whether it belongs to one MSA/MSB or another. This is usually resolved by the control question of where the interviewee is situating herself to make the connection in the narratives.

5) If the keyword option "other" is applied in any of the keyword groups, make a comment in clip properties indicating what this keyword refers to. For instance in case of "Emotions", if the interviewee states that she felt overwhelmed or nervous, this cannot be codified with "content" or "discontent". In this case chose "other" and enter the words used by the interviewee or interviewer in the comment field in clip properties. Another example is reference to a subject that cannot be assigned any of the available keywords in the keyword group "Subjects", for instance an implicit other such as an author, a discussion moderator in a web-based forum or an implicit instructor in an online learning tool, for example web-based music lessons.

6) Avoid interpretations of the subject's enunciations in the sets of statements. Unless the subject is explicitly stating something it cannot be coded, even though you might think that the information is there. For example, if the subject does not explicitly state that she was insecure in a certain class setting, you cannot code this, even though indications are there that she/he felt so.

7) After the analysis of approximately three interviews we have identified the occurrence of an explicit reference to the influence of the macro socio-cultural context of the experiences on the learner. Examples are reference to the religious character of the educational system when growing up, or to the social-class background, or gender patterns, etc. This is only coded when it is mentioned as a connection between the macro-context and the learner. This keyword is added to the keyword group "Connections" as "Macro-Context – Learner".

Note! The keyword is intended to cover a focalization of a specific aspect of the keyword Element-Learner. If the Macro-Context – Learner keyword is applied, then do not use Element – Learner unless there is another connection of this type.

8) When there is a suspected interference of the construction of meanings about oneself as something other than a learner, that is to say, the construction of another identity, make a comment in the clip properties of the clip.

9) Be careful with the codification of "me gusta" or "me parece interesante" as "Emotions – Content". Unless there is an elaboration of in what way the interviewee is satisfied or

content with the element that these expressions refer to, it can be just a manner of speaking. However, "me encanta" is always an expression of positive emotion.

10) With regard to the "Actions"; unless it is clear whether they are individual/group, structured/unstructured, do not code. The options "other_GRIND" and "Other_Struct" should NOT be used to indicate that the information is missing, but that the interviewee is referring to actions that have features that are neither individual nor group, or neither structured nore not structured. These would for instance be applied to actions such as conversations with a friend) that are told as learning experiences (Other_GRIND; neither individual nor group) or travels with a guidebook (Other_STRUCT; neither structured/guided, nor not structured/guided).

11) If a set of statements refer to an experience in a generic/expanded context (for instance the family) and a group/type of activity (conversations with a parent), which would be a complete or incomplete MSB, and at some point there is an illustration of these conversations by an example referring to one specific occasion or one specific conversation, this is considered part of the set of statements that refer to the context-family, and group/type activity – conversations with parent. The exception to this rule is if the example in itself constitutes a complete MSA, in which case it is separated from the MSB.

Appendix 4

Guidelines and rules for transcription and analysis of the interviews with

Transana

1- Basically we will transcribe only, but all, the statements that can be related to a keyword or anything that refers to any aspect of the interviewee's experience.

2- Having said 1, we also have to transcribe any statements that cause doubts about being included in the analysis or not. These are statements that cannot be connected to any of the keywords in the keyword system, but which are significant and contribute to the description of the interviewee's experience of any aspect of the sense of recognition as a learner.

3- Always transcribe complete phrases where there are any parts of the statement that can be connected to a keyword.

4- Marks the beginning and ending of the statements by inserting a time code.

5- Statements that will not be codified (not analyzed) but which contextualize the statements that are being analyzed, are transcribed briefly with short phrases and time codes. (For example reference to the bureaucratic regulations that decide eligibility for scholarships, background information about the parents' economic situation, descriptions of siblings' academic and professional careers, etc.)

6- The interviewers' questions and comments are always marked with an "E" (Entrevistadora) at the beginning of the statement.

7- Mark the beginning and the ending of the interviewers' statements with time codes.

8- When creating a clip and adding it to a collection, Transana asks you for a clip ID.
   a. Rules for creating clip IDs (naming the clips):
      i. The name of the MS (micro stories) is always based on the specific activity or group/type of activities that the interviewee is talking about. For example, a course name, travel, project, presentation, discussion forum, personal diary, learn to play the guitar, cooking, driving, ride a bike.
      ii. If the statement includes a connection between two complete MSs the name of the clip uses the name of each MS with a hyphen. For example, travel – course name, family excursions – school, etc.
      iii. Similarly, if the connection is between a complete MS and an incomplete MS, the clip uses the name of the complete and incomplete MS with a hyphen.
      iv. If the connection is between two incomplete MSs, the clip uses the name of each incomplete MS with a hyphen.
      v. If the connection is a type 2 connection (element – learner), the clip ID is Element – Learner followed by 1, 2, 3, etc. (Element – Learner_1, Element – Learner_2, etc.).
      vi. If the connection is a type 3 connection (self – learner), the clip ID is Self – Learner, followed by a number 1, 2, 3, etc. (Self – Element_1; Self – Element_2, etc.)

9- Remember to always connect words and/or numbers (fill empty spaces) with hyphens or an underscore. Transana's restrictions – it does not like empty spaces where nothing is inserted.

10- It is advisable to always transcribe more rather than less.

Appendix 5

The analyzed elements of the model and their corresponding keyword group and keywords in Transana

Elements model	Keyword in Transana

1. **Activity or situation of the experience**	**MS identifier marked in** green
	 Socio-institutional context and/or spatial/temporal context
	 Keywords:
	 a) Formal
	 Def: Organized educational context with 1) a formulated learning content and objective, 2) a designated instructor, teacher or tutor that usually has this role on a professional basis, 3) some kind of expectations and requirements with regard to the learning result and outcome. Ex. Schooling, university, courses in different settings. There is usually a clear socio-institutional context with teaching and learning as the main objective. The teacher-learner roles are often clearly assigned and defined the relationship between the individuals involved.
	     b) Informal
	 Def: Context that are not primarily or at all educational but that, from the individual's point of view, have resulted or can result in learning. These can be more or less organized, but the main purpose and objective of the organization is not learning, or that if it is, for instance among friends, the learning context is within a larger socio-institutional context that has other primary objects and purposes. Ex. The family, flat mates, friends, peers. The expert other may or may not be a professional teacher or instructor in the taught/learned topic. Learning can occur ad hoc and randomly, as well as intentionally. The teacher-learner roles are not necessarily clear and often secondary to other roles (parent-child, friend, boy friend – girl friend, etc.)
	     c) Generic/Expanded (socioinst-spat./temp)
	 Def: A socio-institutional context that runs across a long timescale, and multiple periods of life (ex. school) or that runs across a long timescale as well as an extended or unspecified spatial framework (family, friendship). Usually recognized by the presence of multiple and mixed activity types, actors and objectives. Within this generic expanded context there are or have been many different specific context with different spatial/temporal framing (school>Primary level>semester>course>class> Task> etc.; Family>Childhood>Excursions>Different locations>Different types of activities>etc). This keyword tends to (but is not necessarily) be accompanied by the keyword Group/Type activity.

d) Specific (socioinst. – spat./temp)

Def: A spatially and temporally defined and closed context, characterized by a specific object oriented activity, specific actions and actors, and that is part of a larger socio-institutional/spatial/temporal context, that is more or less defined. This keyword tends to be (but is not necessarily) accompanied by the keyword Specific Activity.

e) Group/type (activity)

Def: Activities that are generalized and grouped as a category or a type, based on similarities in types of actions, social structure and activity structure, but which nevertheless can be different depending on the framing socio-institutional/spatial/temporal context. Ex. travels, sports, university program. This keyword tends to be (but is not necessarily accompanied by the keyword Generic/Expanded context.

f) Specific (activity)

Def: An activity belonging to a category of activities, but which is oriented towards a specific object, with specific actions, a specific social and activity structure and specific actors. This keyword tends to be (but is not necessarily) accompanied by the keyword Specific socio-institutional/spatial/temporal context.

Lifelong learning dimension

Keywords:

g) Childhood

Def: 0-13 years.

h) Adolescence

Def: 14-19 years.

i) Early adulthood

Def: 20-25 years

j) Adulthood

Def: 26 - >

Note:

Clip ID: The denomination of the experience in terms of the activity, i.e. Viajes, Curso de…, Postgrado, Deportes, Volleyboll, etc

Note 2: These keywords are coded only once for each told experience.

Actions

Keywords:

k) Guided/Structured

Def: With a more or less clear and more or less explicit and intentional organization through a set of instructions that guide and direct the structure of the activity and the social participation. Can be through the explicit presence of an assigned expert other/leader/ teacher/tutor, etc. or through the implicit or tacit presence of an organizing "other" in the form of general instructions and directions (in a book, leaf let, web site, soft ware, etc.)

2. **The actions in the activity/situation of the experience**

l) Not guided/Not structured

Def: Without any intentional organization of the social and activity structure.

m) Other_STRUCT

Def: Any form of organization that is not covered by the two other keywords. For instance the occurrence of ad hoc or random organization of the social and activity structure amongst a group of peers or friends, or for instance an exam or a presentation which are on the one hand guided and structured through the rules and norms that should be followed, but where the instructions and the guidance do not cover all the aspects of the actions in the activity.

n) Individual

Def: The actions are mainly executed by the individual on her/his own, without direct interaction with others.

o) Group

Def: The actions are mainly executed by the individual together and in direct interaction with others.

p) Other

Def: The action are neither clearly individual or in a group. Applies to the case of actions that are executed in a two-person activity (ex. conversation) or when the other person is a general other, as in the case of an interactive computer based tutorial or course.

3. The subjects in the activity/situation of the experience

==**Subjects**==

Keywords:

q) Teacher

Def: Any person that is assigned the role to direct and guide the knowledge construction (teacher, tutor, instructor). Mainly applies to the formal contexts with a professional in this role.

r) Friends/Peers

Def: Any person who shares the experience with the individual and to whom he/she has some level of mutual relation and with whom he/she is interacts more or less directly.

s) Parents/Family

Def: Any members of the immediate or extended family.

t) Other

Def: Any persons who fall outside of the above categories but who figure in the narrative of the experience. People in general – generalized others – fall within this category.

Note: The subject him/herself always assumed to be present. Otherwise the statement is not included in the analysis.

4. Acts of recognition in the activity/situation of the experience

Note: Only code acts of recognition concerning the involved individuals as

==**Acts of recognition**==

Keywords:

u) Explicit/direct

Def: Any verbal actions or non-verbal formal actions (such as notes, report cards, test results

learners.

etc.) that directly convey some kind of evaluation of, reflection on or simply acknowledgement of the individual as a learner in the activity where the experience that is talked about took place.

v) Implicit/indirect

Def: Any non-verbal or tacit actions that are perceived as conveying some kind of evaluation of, reflection on or simply acknowledgement of the individual as a learner in the activity where the experience that is talked about took place.

w) Other_Expl/Impl

Def: Any actions that are neither explicit nor implicit but that do convey some kind of evaluation of, reflection on or simply acknowledgement of the individual as a learner in the activity where the experience that is talked about took place. Should always be applied to statements where the individual expresses doubts about having been "seen" or acknowledged at all in the context.

x) Positive

Def: Favourable reflection, evaluation or acknowledgement of the individual as a learner, to a higher or lower degree, in the activity where the experience that is talked about took place.

y) Negative

Def: Unfavourable reflection, evaluation or acknowledgement of the individual as a learner, to a higher or lower degree, in the activity where the experience that is talked about took place.

z) Other_Pos/Neg

Def: Evaluative or descriptive with no clear tendency towards neither the positive nor the negative, remaining in the neutral zone. Should be applied when the individual tells of evaluations that contained mixed messages such as "on the one hand..on the other hand…" or "You have the intelligence, but lack the will…", etc. Note! If the individual tells about a clear positive feedback and a clear negative feedback in the same activity where the experience took place, then we code it as both "positive" and "negative". This keyword is applied for "mixed messages".

aa) Subject to other

Def: The interviewee is the recognizer.

bb) Other to subject

Def: The interview is the recognized.

Object

Keywords:

cc) Content/Object

Def: The predefined learned/taught object or content of the activity.

dd) Outcome

Def: The predefined or random result or learning outcome of an activity.

5. Object of the activity of the experience

6. **Emotions related to the activity/situation of the experience**	**Emotions**
	Keywords:
	ee) Content
	Def: Expressions of some degree of positive emotions, such as being satisfied, pleased, at ease, comfortable, happy, etc.
	    ff) Discontent
	Def: Expressions of some degree of negative emotions, such as being unsatisfied, uncomfortable, insecure, irritated, etc
	    gg) Other
	Def: Expressions of a feeling that is difficultly identified as content or discontent, either to a higher or lower degree, for instance being afraid, being anxious or nervous, or indifferent/neutral.

7. **Object of emotions related to the activity/situation of the experience**	**Object_of_Emotions**
	Keywords:
	hh) Social structure
	Def: Reference to emotions in relation to the social and relational aspects, organization, rules and norms, etc. of the activity where the experience took place or can take place.
	    ii) Activity structure
	Def: Reference to emotions in relation to the organization of the tasks, the content, goal formulation, distribution of responsibilities, etc.
	    jj) Object/Content
	Def: Reference to emotions in relation to the objector content of the learning, that is to say what is learned or supposed to be learned.
	    kk) Other
	Def: Reference to emotions in relation to any other aspect of the activity where the experience took place or can take place.

8. **Motives/Objectives related to activity/situation of the experience**	**Motives/Objectives**
	Keywords:
	ll) Specific
	Def: A particular, concrete and delimited high or low level, immediate or distant goal.
	    mm) Generic
	Def: A general, not clearly defined or not concrete high or low level, immediate or distant goal.
	    nn) None
	Def: A lack or absence of high or low level, immediate or distant goals.

9. **Sense of Recognition related to the activity/situation of the experience**	<mark>**Sense of Recognition**</mark>
	Keywords:
	oo) Positive
	Def: An acknowledgement of being competent, able, with capacity to learn, or having learned.
	    pp) Negative
	Def: An acknowledgement of not being competent, able, lacking capacity to learn or not having failed to learn.
	    qq) Uncertain
	Def: An acknowledgment of doubts about being

competent, able, with capacity to learn or not knowing if you have learned.

10. Projection of a meaning about any part of the model towards the future

Projection_Future

Keywords:

rr) Yes

Def: Confirmation of any aspect of an experience with potential of being one of learning occurring in the future.

ss) No

Def: Denial of the possibilities of any aspects of an experience with potential of being one of learning occurring in the future.

11. The narrative elaboration of the marc of the experience

Reference_Interview

Keywords:

tt) Awareness

Def: Explicit acknowledgement of an increased level of consciousness or understanding during the course of the interview.

uu) Reminder_memory

Def: Explicit acknowledgement of the recovery of a forgotten experience during the course of the interview.

vv) Reflection

Def: Explicit acknowledgement of thinking about or processing during the course of the interview.

ww) Other

Def: Explicit acknowledgement of some other effect, function or feature of the interview. Can, for instance, be an evaluation of the interview or the interviewers.

12. The elaboration of connections between experiences and their marks

Connections

Keywords:

xx) MS-MS/MS-SOS/SOS

Def: Statements that relate complete or incomplete MS:s to eachother.

yy) Element-Learner

Def: Statements that relate some aspect of a learning experience according to the model, to the interviewee as a learner. Usually generalized meanings, implying that the relation is not isolated to a specific context or experience.

zz) Self-Learner

Def: Statements that relate some aspects of the interviewee as a person in general to her/him as a learner. Usually generalized meanings, implying that the relation is not isolated to a specific context or experience.

aaa)Other

Def: Statements that relate anything in connection to a learning experience that may or not may be relevant to analyze.

bbb) Similarity

Def: Always accompanied by the keyword xx! Statement that relate complete or incomplete MS:s to each other through a comparison that establishes similarities between them.

ccc)Difference

Def: Always accompanied by the keyword xx!
Statement that relate complete or incomplete
MS:s to each other through a comparison that
establishes differences between them.

      ddd)   Macro-Context – Learner
Def: Statements that relate some aspect of the
macro socio-cultural surrounding (national
context, political context, social categories, etc)
of one learning experience or the interviewee's
learning experiences in general, to herself as a
learner.

Appendix 6

Transana Collection Report

Collection: 02-1 > MSA > Cultura **Collection:** 02-1 > MSA > Cultura **Clip: 1Cultura_general1** **Collection:** 02-1 > MSA > Cultura **File:** /Users/leililfalsafi/Desktop/Tesis/Entrevistas_Primera_Ronda /2-1.WMA **Time:** 0:00:00.0 - 0:03:49.5 (**Length:** 0:03:49.5) **Episode Transcript:** 2-1

Clip Transcript:

¤<94845>Cultura-contexto compartido? ¤<126149>Asignatura cultura; en prinicpio al ser la primera del master me pareció un poco difícil al empezar pq era un sistema totalmente distinto del que estaba acostumbrada. La metodologia de las clases, el marco teorico del master en general. Claro yo venía más, en la carrera de un sistema más como de clases magistrales , algun trabajo en grupo pero no era tan, bueno me chocó la metodologia más que nada.¤<150371> ¤<154074>Te daste cuenta de esto ya el primer día? ¤<160659>Si ya el primer día me di cuenta de que era totalmente distinto a lo que andaba haciendo y que tendría que modificar algunas cosas. <167206>¤<167072>Cómo te hizo sentirte, eso de saber que uy será totalmente distinto? ¤<171411>Muy nerviosa, al principio, horrible. Muy nerviosa. Pensaba a ver qué tal va a ser, pq claro no me veía, bueno no me había encontrado antes en la situación y pensaba a ver qué, cómo va ir. Pero en la medida que va pasando vas viendo que es factible, que se tiene que trabajar mucho, leer mucho, pero que se puede ir haciendo. ¤<190853>Habia algún elemento particular que te asustó más que otros? <198440>¤<198417>Bueno, asustó, asustó no...hm...más que nada el hecho de tener que hacer el diario personal de forma continua pq yo estoy muy acostumbrada a hacer mis eschemas y apuntes, pero en papel y el hehco de tener que plasmar en ordenador aunque sea una tontería pero me representaba el doble de trabajo o acostumbrarme a hacerlo directamnete en pantalla o primero tener que hacer mis eschema en papel y pasarlo. Me resultaba más trabajo. Al principio. Luego ya aprendí a hacelo en pantalla directamnete, y bueno.

Clip Keywords:

Connections : Element-Learner

Connections : MS-MS/MS-SOS

Emotions : Other

Focus_of_Emotion : Activity_Structure

Lifelong_Learning_Dimension : Early_Adulthood

Sense_of_Recognition : Uncertain

Soc._inst./Spac._temp._Context : Formal
Soc._inst./Spac._temp._Context : Specific_Activity
Soc._inst./Spac._temp._Context : Specific_Context

Clip: 4Cultura4 **Collection:** 02-1 > MSA > Cultura **File:** /Users/leililfalsafi/Desktop/Tesis/Entrevistas_Primera_Ronda /2-1.WMA **Time:** 0:07:04.3 - 0:08:04.7 (**Length:** 0:01:00.4) **Episode Transcript:** 2-1

Clip Transcript:

¤<424321>(0:07:04.3)La diferencía de la estructura de esa asignatura...en comparación con lo que habías hecho antes, te ha gustado más o menos? ¤<442877>(0:07:22.9)Bueno, se aprende muchisimo más pq claro en la otra forma te dan el contenido y bueno tu tienes que o estudarlo para un examen o hacer algun ejercicio pero bueno, en cambio aqui como eres tu la que elaboras bueno de esas lecturas lo que elboras tu lo que entiendes de ellas, entonces el trabajo es todo tuyo. Como más productivo. Eres tu la que lo hace. - Pero se aprende más? - Si yo creo que si. En la otra forma claro tenemos también si te dan un temario, el examen no es hasta el final del curso por ejemplo, si una semana no lees tanto, pues no pasa nada, en cambio aqui si una semana

no lees pues, la siguiente semana no puedes seguir tampoco.

Clip Keywords: Actions : Group

Actions : Guided/Structured

Actions : Individual   Connections : Difference

Connections : Element-Learner

 Connections : MS-MS/MS-SOS

Emotions : Content

Focus_of_Emotion : Activity_Structure

Subjects : Other

Clip: 2Cultura_Diario_personal2

Collection: 02-1 > MSA > Cultura **File:** /Users/leililfalsafi/Desktop/Tesis/Entrevistas_Primera_Ronda /2-1.WMA **Time:** 0:04:17.0 - 0:06:11.7   (**Length:** 0:01:54.6) **Episode Transcript:** 2-1

Clip Transcript: 2

¤<268110><266494>Cómo te hacía sentir, pq es distinto apuntar algo en un cuaderno privado comparado con un espacio más bien publico? Hombre, supongo que, como que, como te motiva intentar hacerlo mejor, pq sabes que, bueno no sé si te van a evaluar pero que te están juzgando entre comillas, no. Que están sabiendo como lo has trabajado y asi, pero bueno al principio he intentado hacer lo que haría, que creo que es lo correcto, lo que yo querría poner en el diario y bueno, esperando que se lo que se pide. Y que me sea útil a mi para entender los temas. ¤<323745>Al principio te hizo nervioso. Con el tiempo mejor. Qué pasó? Acostumbrarse o algo particular? ¤<342858>El hecho de ver que cada semana intentaba terminarlo todo a tiempo, las lecturas, tenerlas bien leídas, apuntadas en el diarío, también el hecho de haber hecho las exposiones de los temas que me tocaban y bueno que han ido bien más o menos, pues te da confianza como decir si he hecho eso más o menos bien pues el resto también lo voy ir haciendo. Solo a partir de eso. Al llevar un mes, un mes y medio algo así, que empezé a ver que la

dinamica se podía llevar.

Clip Keywords: Actions : Individual

Actions : Other_STRUCT

Emotions : Other

Focus_of_Emotion : Activity_Structure

Motives/objectives : Specific

Object : Content/Object

Sense_of_Recognition : Positive

Clip: 3Cultura_general3 **Collection:** 02-1 > MSA >
Cultura **File:**
/Users/leililfalsafi/Desktop/Tesis/Entrevistas_Primera_Ronda /2-
1.WMA **Time:** 0:06:11.7 - 0:07:04.3 (**Length:** 0:00:52.7) **Episode**
Transcript: 2-1

Clip Transcript:

¤<371654>Algo que te gustó más que otras cosas en esa
asignatura? ¤<377644>Bueno el tema en concreto de Mercer, me pareció
bastante interesante y no en general, no sé. Me parece que es muy
progresivo, como muy empezar al principio y ahora que estamos en la
última sesión, pues englobarlo como tod, y no en general más o menos
todo.¤<399261> ¤<399458>Te has sentido motivada todo el
tiempo? ¤<406521>Por la acumulación de trabajos sobre todo, cuando me
tocaron tres expociones de otras asignaturas de golpe, entonces claro
la motivación, no puedes disfrutar de cada trabajo como me habría
gustado a profundir? más. Con tres de golpe no pude trabajarlos tanto

en profundidad. A parte de eso no.
Clip Keywords:

Emotions : Content

Emotions : Discontent

Focus_of_Emotion : Activity_Structure

Focus_of_Emotion : Object/Content

Subjects : Other

Clip: 5Cultura_Debate5 **Collection:** 02-1 > MSA >
Cultura **File:**
/Users/leililfalsafi/Desktop/Tesis/Entrevistas_Primera_Ronda /2-
1.WMA **Time:** 0:08:04.7 - 0:11:27.1 (**Length:** 0:03:22.4) **Episode**
Transcript: 2-1

Clip Transcript: ¤<484731>(0:08:04.7)Has participado mucho en las
discusiones en el aula? ¤<490466>(0:08:10.5)No en el aula, la verdad es
que no. - Por qué? - Hay veces que me cuesta mucho seguir lo que están
diciendo mis companeros, y cuando tengo una idea tengo que
refleccionarla. No me sale así, no sé expresarme así en una aula
grande. Bueno depende del tema no, pero en general cuando las
discusiones se iban a un nivel elevado según mi punto de vista, no
sabía como, qué aportación dar o como
introducirla. 5 ¤<516062>(0:08:36.1)Como te sentiste en una situación
así, donde había leido pero sacan un tema que pensabas dónde ha leído
esto? ¤<541275>(0:09:01.3)Bueno al principio pensaba, pues eso, te has
saltado una parte, no has entendido esto, algo falla, pero luego empezé
bueno empezé a pensar que si----? eso pero que la gente tiene una
cultura distinta y a lo mejor les interesa mucho el tema y han
profundizado más o tenían conocimientos previos o experiencia en su
practica profesional. Bueno pueden ser las dos cosas. A lo mejor no lo
he trabajado tanto como ellos pero tal vez también ellos lo sabian por
otras fuentes.¤<568831>(0:09:28.8) ¤<570209>(0:09:30.2)Estabas a veces
valorando lo que estaban diciendo - algo bien pensado, o una
tontería? Hombre en general si que lo pienso siempre. Y siempre acabo
entendiendo más o menos lo que intentan decir, no, y creo que es, bueno
logico, pero a veces si que hay alguna aportación que pienso que ha
dicho mucha cosa pero que si intento quedarme con una idea o no la veo

o no lo ha dicho o lo ha dicho tan, tan rebuscada que no se entiende.
Yo pensaba que yo no lo entiendo pero luego ya vi que se podía ver que
no se entendia en
general.¤<615287>(0:10:15.3) 6 ¤<617669>(0:10:17.7)Estoy buscando -
después de haberte preparado, si alguién dice que no entiendes, si
podría salir la emoción de que soy tonta
yo?¤<631500>(0:10:31.5) ¤<632815>(0:10:32.8)Si al principio si que
pensaba que soy yo el problema, que soy tonta no, porque creo que no lo
soy, pero pensaba que no hecho lo suficiente. No me he preparado
suficiente. Pero al final ya vi también a raiz de hablar con otros
companeros que no es que todos fueramos tontos sino que tal vez a
alguién no se entiende. Cuando habla. Usa palabras muy rebuscadas o da
muchas vueltas al asunto y no se entiene. No, no creo que
sea... ¤<664111>(0:11:04.1)Esa parte de hablar con los otros companeros
para valorar lo que alguién habia dicho era importante, como tener algo
compartido?¤<672490>(0:11:12.5) ¤<673632>(0:11:13.6)Si, claro para
coraborar si es tu sensación o si es una cosa general. Y nos
tranquiliza que sea una cosa general. Que, bueno al menos, no , no solo

pasa a mi.

Clip Keywords:

Actions : Group

Actions : Guided/Structured

Acts_of_Recognition : Other_EXP_IMP

Acts_of_Recognition : Other_POS_NEG

Acts_of_Recognition : Other_to_Subject

Connections : Self-Learner

Sense_of_Recognition : Uncertain

Subjects : Friends/Peers

Summary

```
Actions : Group                                                    2
0:04:22.8   Actions : Guided/Structured
2   0:04:22.8   Actions : Individual
2   0:02:55.0   Actions : Other_STRUCT
1   0:01:54.6   Acts_of_Recognition : Other_EXP_IMP
1   0:03:22.4   Acts_of_Recognition : Other_POS_NEG
1   0:03:22.4   Acts_of_Recognition : Other_to_Subject
1   0:03:22.4   Connections : Difference
1   0:01:00.4   Connections : Element-Learner
2   0:04:49.9   Connections : MS-MS/MS-SOS
2   0:04:49.9   Connections : Self-Learner
1   0:03:22.4   Emotions : Content
2   0:01:53.1   Emotions : Discontent
1   0:00:52.7   Emotions : Other
2   0:05:44.1   Focus_of_Emotion : Activity_Structure
4   0:07:37.2   Focus_of_Emotion : Object/Content
1   0:00:52.7   Lifelong_Learning_Dimension : Early_Adulthood
1   0:03:49.5   Motives/objectives : Specific
1   0:01:54.6   Object : Content/Object
1   0:01:54.6   Sense_of_Recognition : Positive
1   0:01:54.6   Sense_of_Recognition : Uncertain
2   0:07:11.9   Soc._inst./Spac._temp._Context : Formal
1   0:03:49.5   Soc._inst./Spac._temp._Context : Specific_Activity
1   0:03:49.5   Soc._inst./Spac._temp._Context : Specific_Context
1   0:03:49.5   Subjects : Friends/Peers
1   0:03:22.4   Subjects : Other
```

```
2   0:01:53.1   Clips:          5
Total Time:  0:10:59.6
```