ERIES
JOURNAL

JOURNAL ON EFFICIENCY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Time For Action

Special Issue

Practitioner Inquiry: Towards Efficiency and Responsibility in Teaching and Teacher Education

www.eriesjournal.com

volume 16
issue 1

2023

EDITORIAL BOARD

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

The Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science publishes papers of the following categories: full research papers, short communications, review studies and book reviews (on invitation only).
- FULL RESEARCH PAPERS
- SHORT COMMUNICATION
- REVIEW STUDY

Papers are published in English. A paper may comprise an empirical study using an acceptable research strategy, such as survey, case study, experiment, archival analysis, etc. It may contain a theoretical study aimed at advancing current theory or adapting theory to local conditions or it may arise from theoretical studies aimed at reviewing and/or synthesizing existing theory. Concepts and underlying principles should be emphasized, with enough background information to orient any reader who is not a specialist in the particular subject area.

Submission checklist

The paper. The paper is carefully formatted according to the template of the journal (see bellow). Special attention is paid to the exact application of the Harvard referencing convention to both continuous citations and list of references. If an electronic source has the DOI number assigned, also it will be provided in the list of references. Manuscripts are submitted via the editorial system in the DOC.

Research highlights. The core results, findings or conclusions of the paper are emphasized in 2-4 bullet points (max. 250 characters per bullet point including spaces). The highlights are submitted as a text into the submission form in the editorial system.

Copyright form. The submission of a paper will imply that, if accepted for publication, it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in any language, without the consent of the Publisher. The manuscript submitted is accompanied by the copyright form signed by the corresponding author who declares the agreement of all authors with the conditions in the Form. The Form is submitted into the editorial system in the PDF format.

Suggested reviewers. It is required to suggest two experts appropriate to evaluation of the paper. The experts should be out of the affiliation of the author(s), Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, and also both experts should be from different affiliations. The reviewers are submitted into the text fields in the submission form of the editorial system.

Preparation of the manuscript (technical notes)

Authors are responsible for applying all requirements that are specified in the journal's paper template in individual sections. Especially, the paper must provide a short review of current state in the area of the paper's aim in Introduction. The paper should refer significant sources, particularly scientific journals or monographs.
Papers must be closely scrutinized for typographical and grammatical errors. If English is not author's first language then the paper should be proof-read by a native English-speaking person, preferably one with experience of writing for academic use. Spelling should follow the Oxford English Dictionary.
Tables, graphs and illustrations should be drawn using a suitable drawing package. Colour may be used. Place all diagrams and tables where you wish them to appear in the paper. Ensure your diagrams fit within the margins and are resizable without distortion.

Review procedure

Following Editorial recommendation, papers are submitted to a double-blind peer review process before publication. Commentary by reviewers will be summarized and sent by email to authors, who can choose to revise their papers in line with these remarks. Re-submitted papers should be accompanied by the description of the changes and other responses to reviewers' comments (see above), so that the desk-editor can easily see where changes have been made.

Copyright

Authors are fully responsible for the paper's originality and for correctness of its subject-matter, language and formal attributes. Author's statement should be enclosed declaring that the paper has not been published anywhere else.

The submission of a paper will imply that, if accepted for publication, it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, in any language, without the consent of the Publisher. Before publication, authors will be asked to complete a copyright release, giving the publisher permission to publish the paper in a specific issue of this Journal. Overall copyright ownership of the paper, however, remains with the author/s. It is the authors' responsibility to obtain written permission to quote material that has appeared in another publication.

In contrast to top-down professional development practices mandated by institutions, outside experts, and local educational authorities, teachers all over the world who wish to enhance their competences as professionals are now more willing to pursue their professional development by engaging in different modes of practitioner inquiry - action research, teacher research, exploratory practice, and self-study (Hanks, 2019; Mercer et al., 2022; Rutten, 2021). Although the terminology for practitioner inquiry differs across different teaching contexts, it continues to be the key focus of teacher professional development at both pre-service and in-service levels as it enables teachers to transform their practices and increase student learning by intentionally creating reflective and reflexive spaces for them to identify their professional learning needs (Hanks, 2019; Uştuk and Çomoğlu, 2021) and encouraging teacher autonomy and agency (Dikilitaş and Griffiths, 2017; Uştuk and Çomoğlu, 2019). Thus, the aim of this special issue is to display the implementation of some critical pedagogies of bottom-up teacher professional development as practitioner inquiry from a range of international perspectives through a holistic depiction of opportunities and tensions in the practitioner inquiry process.

The seven articles and two book reviews that follow consider not only the extent to which practitioner inquiry empowers teachers and their learners but also the extent it informs policy and practice in pre- and in-service teacher education. The first two articles center around an issue that has gained much attention lately: pre-service teacher action research. Action research in pre-service teacher education based on an evidence-based approach enhances pe-service teachers' teaching and enables them to take control of their professional pathway in their future careers (Forster and Eperjesi, 2021). In her article titled *Preservice teacher action research: Making meaning and generating knowledge through inquiry*, Rachel Ginsberg explored the ways in which action research during pre-service teacher education influenced the development of a critical inquiry stance as pre-service teachers conducted research in the context of a large state university in the U.S. The findings suggested that through inquiry, preservice teachers disrupted the hierarchy of knowledge generation in teaching as they theorized instruction, problematized pedagogy, and improved their teaching practices. In the next article Ekaterina Koubek and Stephanie Wasta present their study into pre-service teacher action research in an article with the title *Preservice teachers' experiences on becoming culturally responsive educators*. This action research case study explored how one teacher preparation program in the U.S. implemented reflective and experiential
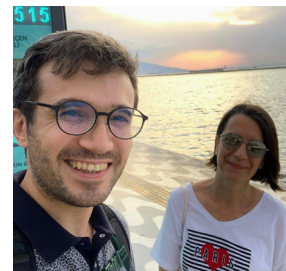
practices in their graduate TESOL coursework to assist pre-service teachers in systematically examining their understandings of culturally responsive practices for multilingual learners. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers developed an awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy; they recognized the importance of learning from and with their students and families but still had areas for growth when implementing culturally responsive practices.

The third article titled *Teacher-tailored classroom observation for professional growth of EFL instructors: An exploratory case study* shifts the focus in this special issue to the role of practitioner inquiry in in-service teacher development. In their article Sabire Pınar Acar, Eda Akgün-Özpolat and Irem Çomoğlu explore the insights of four EFL teachers about classroom observation as a professional development tool tailored by teachers themselves in a higher education context in Türkiye. The findings provided evidence of the importance of empowering, collaborative, and sustainable practices for teacher professional development especially in contexts where top-down professional development practices are still prevalent. The next study in this issue also highlights the collaborative nature of practitioner inquiry yet provides an account of tensions in ESL and content teachers' collaborations. Amanda Giles and Bedrettin Yazan's article *Constructing teacher identity in teacher collaboration: What does it mean to be a teacher of culturally and linguistically diverse English learners?* is about teacher identity construction in a collaborative partnership between an ESL and English Language Arts (ELA) content teacher in a seventh grade ELA classroom in the U.S. The study found that this partnership did not change the novice ELA content teacher's positioning linguistically diverse ESL learners through a deficit lens, which proves that practitioner inquiry is not a panacea and the collaboration in it is not always flawless.

In the fifth article, Kenan Dikilitaş and Asli Lidice Gokturk Saglam offer us insights about the experiences of teacher researchers in an online teacher education course within the scope of TESOL's Electronic Village Online (EVO), an emergent area in teacher professional development especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. In their article *Exploring the practical impacts of research engagement on english language teaching: Insights from an online community of practice*, the authors found out that research engagement supported within the online community of practice created change in two areas; (1) research-driven practical change and (2) research-driven professional development. The paper concludes by exploring the implications of

the present study for in-service teacher educators and research mentors who provide online research-driven professional development.

In the next article titled *Facilitating the transitioning of an FL teacher from teaching adults to teaching young learners through mentoring*, Yasemin Kirkgöz also touches on the importance of supporting teacher researchers as mentors, an issue that remained underexplored in the enactment of practitioner inquiry (Smith, 2022). The study deals with the transition process of an EFL teacher from teaching older students to younger students at a primary school in Türkiye and the impact of a mentoring program in the form of a Collaborative Action Research (CAR) project on this process. The results showed that the mentoring practices within the CAR community afforded the teacher a smooth transition and helped him develop a teacher-researcher identity.

The very last article in this special issue is about a topic that cannot be neglected while considering the complexities that arise during practitioner inquiry: the importance of context as 'the overall complex and holistic socio-educational landscape in which teachers' educational practices are embedded' (Banegas and Consoli, 2020: 177). In their study, *Teacher-practitioner inquiry in professional development: A case of adaptation and resistance to genre-based systemic functional linguistic as a new writing instruction*, Hanh Dinh and Lan Nguyen Thi Huongpresent the results of a practitioner inquiry project embedded into a professional development program for 120 Vietnamese EFL teachers. The program aimed to equip teachers with the basics of the genre-based systemic functional linguistic approach so that teachers could more effectively use the new locally produced textbooks in teaching writing. However, the results indicate that teachers faced some challenges in implementing what they learned due to the socio-educational issues surrounding them.

In addition to the seven research articles, this special issue includes the reviews of two impactful books on practitioner inquiry. In her review of *Sustaining action research: A practical guide for institutional engagement* authored by Anne Burns, Emily Edwards, and Neville John Ellis, Erzsébet Ágnes Békés remarks that this volume is a valuable source of manageable tasks and activities for teachers, teacher educators and administrators who want to sustain action research at micro and macro levels. In his review, Raúl Enrique García López describes *Inquiry and research skills for language teachers* by Kenan Dikilitaş and Ali Bostancioğlu as an innovative and practical source which provides a step-by-step guide for teacher educators to design research courses specifically in initial English language teacher education.

As the editors of this special issue, we believe this set of studies from diverse contexts will constitute a valuable resource for language teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and administrators who intend to take up practitioner inquiry as a way of transforming educational practices and policies. It is important to note that we have had a great support system besides the contributing authors. That said, we would like to thank the Executive Editors of the ERIES Journal, the Editorial Board and the team for their trust and support along this journey. We are also grateful to the practitioners who contributed to this special issue as -reviewers for their valuable insights and meticulous work.

Sincerely

Irem Çomoğlu
Dokuz Eylul University, Turkey
Special Issue Editor, Member of Editorial Board

Özgehan Uştuk
Balikesir University, Turkey
Special Issue Editor, Guest Editor

REFERENCES

Banegas, D. L. and Consoli, S. (2020) 'Action research in language education', in McKinley, J. and and Rose, H. (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of research methods in applied linguistics* (pp. 176–187), New York: Routledge.

Dikilitaş, K. and Griffiths, C. (2017) *Developing language teacher autonomy through action research*, Cham: Springer.

Forster, C. and Eperjesi, R. (2021) *Action research for new teachers: Evidence-based evaluation of practice*, London: Sage.

Hanks, J. (2019) 'From research-as-practice to exploratory practice-as-research in language teaching and beyond', *Language Teaching*, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 143–187. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444819000016

Mercer, S., Farrell, C. and Freeman, D. (2022) *Self-directed professional development in ELT*, [Online], Oxford: Oxford University Press, Available: www.oup.com/elt/expert [1 Mar 2023].

Rutten, L. (2021) 'Toward a theory of action for practitioner inquiry as professional development in preservice teacher education', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 97, pp. 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103194

Smith, R. (2022) 'Mentoring teacher-research: From situated practice to 'global' guidance', in Wyatt, M. and Dikilitaş, K. (eds.), *International perspectives on mentoring in English language education* (pp. 229–247), Cham: Springer.

Uştuk, Ö. and Çomoğlu, I. (2019) 'Lesson study for professional development of English language teachers: Key takeaways from international practices', *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 41–50. http://dx.doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2019.120202

Uştuk, Ö. and Çomoğlu, I. (2021) 'Reflexive professional development in reflective practice: What lesson study can offer', *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 260–273. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLLS-12-2020-0092

CONTENT

PRESERVICE TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH: MAKING MEANING AND GENERATING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INQUIRY

Rachel Ginsberg

Montclair State University, United States of America

✉ racheginsberg@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the ways in which action research during preservice teacher education influences the development of a critical inquiry stance. By following eight preservice teachers as they conducted action research in their final semester of student teaching, this article demonstrates how action research created the space for preservice teachers to engage in practical and critical inquiry, which allowed participants the opportunity to develop a critical inquiry stance, to varying degrees. Discussed are the disparate ways participants thought about the meaning they made and the knowledge they generated during their action research assignment. The freedom action research granted preservice teachers to make meaning of their classroom instruction, generate knowledge, and bridge the gap between theory and practice, instruction and learning, and their students and themselves, allowed for the development of a critical inquiry stance. Findings suggest that through inquiry, preservice teachers disrupted the hierarchy of knowledge generation in teaching, as they theorized instruction, problematized pedagogy, and improved their teaching practices.

Highlights

- *Action research was a vehicle for preservice teachers to develop, enact, and make meaning of critical teacher inquiry.*
- *Teacher inquiry was a means of disrupting the hierarchy structures that value scholarly generated knowledge over teacher generated knowledge for education.*
- *There was a fluidity between the moments of critical and practical inquiry.*
- *Action research helped bridge the gaps between theory and practice, practical/critical praxis, and teaching and student learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Within the educational field, a longstanding hierarchy exists between knowledge generated by educational scholars and academics and knowledge generated by practicing teachers. Traditionally, research and knowledge produced by university scholars are privileged over teacher research and inquiry as the source of educational knowledge (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009). Similarly, Britzman (1991: 39) held that from the university perspective, 'the work of teachers is viewed as technical rather than intellectual'. Rethinking this hierarchy and the hegemonic hold universities and scholars have over educational knowledge has the potential to alter the relationship of knowledge, power, and practice in the field of education

as it suggests a new, valued, and unique way of knowing about teaching (Lytle and Cochran-Smith, 1992).

Current neoliberal agendas and policies in education fortify and strengthen this hierarchy. In our current political climate, fueled by neoliberal ideology, the paradigm of student-centered education is being eroded as a result of a climate of accountability stemming from the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and the scrutiny of teacher quality that permeates our educational landscape (Sleeter, 2019). The neoliberal standardization and accountability movements led to the deskilling of the teaching profession, repositioning teachers as technicians, complying with prescribed curricula, obsessive oversight, and constant quantifying of student achievement (Ball, 2010; Britzman,

1991; Sleeter, 2019). It changed the current teaching culture to one characterized by performance and competition rather than collaboration and professional judgement.

Thus, there is a need for classroom teachers to reclaim their role as decision makers and knowledge generators. There are numerous calls within the literature (Freire, 1970; López-Gopar et al., 2021; Pennycook, 2004) for teacher education programs to play a part in the disruption of the knowledge hierarchy and the nurturing of critical pedagogy in preservice teachers. Aligning with López-Gopar (2014), I contend that teacher education programs should seek, value, and integrate knowledge generated by preservice teachers in their local contexts into the coursework and requirements of their programs. Preservice teachers need to experience the productions of knowledge and learn to value the meaning they construct for themselves if we hope to see classroom teachers position themselves as problem posers, decision makers, and generators of educational knowledge alongside, not subordinate to, scholars and universities. This kind of transformative experience enables preservice teachers to envision themselves as leaders and advocates for a moral and equitable education for all students.

There is an untapped arena in teacher education, that of teachers as intellectuals, generators of knowledge, and critical consumers of knowledge. The methodology of action research speaks to this untapped arena and it is therefore the focus of this qualitative study. This study was situated in a large state university in the Northeast United States and followed the experiences of preservice teachers conducting action research in their full-time clinical placements at the end of their two-year teacher preparation program. The participants were all enrolled in a seminar course in which they were assigned an action research project to complete within the context of their clinical placement. The aim of the study was to follow the development of preservice teachers, looking specifically at how action research influenced their ability to hold up a critical lens to their teaching, incorporate that critical lens into their teaching stance, and use that stance to generate knowledge for teaching. The action research conducted by preservice teachers in this study was in and of itself a critical act of resistance against the oppressive pressures of neoliberal forces that bear down on the United States education system.

This study was designed to investigate the following question:

- How does the experience of action research for preservice teachers foster a critical teacher inquiry stance?

More specifically, I was interested in understanding the following:

- How does action research influence the ways in which preservice teachers think about how they make meaning and generate knowledge as teachers?
- How does action research allow preservice teachers to make meaning and generate knowledge for themselves and the educational field?

Critical Teacher Inquiry – A Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guides this study was one I termed critical teacher inquiry. The tenets of critical teacher inquiry drew from Freire's (1970) notion of problem-posing education and Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) work on practitioner research. Merging these two frameworks allowed me to develop a synthesized approach to teacher inquiry, as critical teacher inquiry views teacher inquiry through a critical lens, prioritizing the need and importance of viewing teachers' inquiry in the classroom as a means of disrupting and pushing back against the current paradigm of teacher-as-technician and the hierarchy that exists between scholarly generated knowledge and teacher generated knowledge.

Critical teacher inquiry positions teachers as knowers, problem posers, and knowledge generators both inside and outside the classroom. The tenets of critical teacher inquiry are based on five principles: (a) Critical teacher inquiry is a purposeful, systematic, intent-driven investigation into classroom work and school life conducted by teachers to improve teaching and learning, which draws on Zeichner's (1987) work on action research; (b) Knowledge is arrived at through the struggle of inquiry with one's world and with one another, much like Dewey's (1904) and Waff's (2009) notion of teacher and classroom inquiry; (c) Critical teacher inquiry is a reorientation of knowledge production (Cochran-Smith and Lytle's, 2009); (d) Critical teacher inquiry is a means of disrupting the scholar/teacher hierarchy, aligning with Rudduck's (1988) scholarship on creating a role for teachers in the production of educational knowledge; and (e) Teachers, not policy makers, should control the decisions in classrooms, rejecting current paradigms of 'teacher as technician' (Sleeter, 2019).

This model of critical teacher inquiry views the world as dynamic, with room and space to transform it through critical inquiry and reflection, drawing on Freire's (1998) notion of the 'unfinishedness of our being' (p. 52). As teachers build and acquire knowledge about teaching and learning, they have the power to use it to intervene and make thoughtful decisions about the current situations they find themselves in. Critical teacher inquiry rejects the stance of adapting to a prescribed world, rather it embraces creativity, critical thinking, decision making, and the act of understanding the work of education in order to change and improve it (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009; Freire, 1970).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Engaging preservice teachers in conducting action research in their clinical placements is one possible way teacher education programs can create opportunities for preservice teachers to inquire into their teaching and generate knowledge about teaching and learning. For the purposes of this study, I adopt Zeichner's (1987: 568) definition of action research: 'a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in a social setting in order to improve their own practice, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out'. Applied in the education field, action research is a systematic investigation by practitioners into their teaching for the purpose of understanding or improving

practice (Dodman et al., 2017; Lattimer, 2012; Levin and Rock, 2003; Ulvik and Reise, 2015).

Action research methodology involves a series of iterative inquiry cycles, beginning with the identification of a question or concern. Next, an action is planned to address the identified question. The action is enacted and results are observed. Reflection follows to understand the impact of the action and finally, meaning is made from the experience and applied to the next inquiry cycle (Faikhamta and Clarke, 2015; Kennedy-Clark et al., 2018; Lattimer, 2012). According to Kennedy-Clark et al. (2018), action research has two key tenets-addressing localized problems through the construction of practical outcomes and developing new understandings. Action research attempts to try out ideas in practice with the goal of constructing knowledge and improving practice (Hansen and Nadler-Godfrey, 2004).

Within the literature, preservice action research serves various goals and functions. In Price's (2001) study of four preservice teachers engaged in action research, he found that each participant experienced change in disparate ways. All four case studies highlighted different aspects and dimensions of agency and a preservice teacher's role as an agent of change. Though the preservice teachers' changes were different in nature, these changes were situated in their personal experiences, positionality, contexts, and histories.

Building on Price's (2001) view of change brought about by action research, Hulse and Hulme (2012) found that action research encouraged change in preservice teachers, as they transgressed the boundaries of current educational practice to arrive at and develop new ideas and approaches to teaching, pushing back on the notion of teachers as technicians. The researchers asserted that action research engages preservice teachers in asking their own questions, inviting them to problematize their teaching practice, their learning, and their experiences. Preservice teachers in this study viewed professional knowledge as evolving rather than static, and saw themselves as contributors to the process of knowledge generation.

Furthermore, Kizilaslan and Leutwyler (2012) argued that in their review of three teacher education programs in Israel, Australia, and America, where preservice teachers engaged in action research as part of their coursework, the notion of 'teacher as researcher' was vitally important to the way preservice teachers constructed their teacher role. The authors described action research with preservice teachers as 'a process of learning with community to think and act critically' (2012: 155), illustrating the explicit connection between critical pedagogy and the disruption of the knowledge hierarchy in education.

The above findings suggest that action research is an effective systematic approach to changing teaching practices and a way for preservice teachers to push back on the 'teacher as technician' paradigm, as they critically interrogate their teaching practices and generate educational knowledge. Studies have investigated the type of questions preservice teachers ask, their ability to be critical in their problem posing, and their ability to view themselves as knowledge generators. This study addressed a gap in the literature by investigating the process of change and development that occurs when preservice teachers engage in action research and how preservice teachers make meaning of their experience generating educational and pedagogical knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using qualitative research methodology. The study design was inductive and I served as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). As I was the teacher of record for the seminar course in which data was collected, I was positioned as an insider because I was affiliated with the setting and participants of the study, as they were my students. I knew participants for six months prior to the commencement of the study as this course was structured as a sequenced, two-semester course. I also considered myself an insider as I had full control over the way in which I constructed, framed, and presented the action research to the students in my class. As a result of my positionality, I do not claim to be indifferent in this process, I understood that I brought a level of subjectivity to the research. I monitored and discussed how these subjectivities influenced interpretation of the data, making them visible through my audit trail and my researcher journal (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Setting

The study was conducted at a large State University in northern New Jersey in the Secondary and Special Education division housed in the Teaching and Learning Department. The data was collected from a required undergraduate seminar-style course which supported preservice teachers' final full-time student teaching placements in K-12 classroom in urban and suburban public schools. The course was structured to support the investigation of democratic classroom practices regarding planning and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of student learning. Embedded in this course was an assignment that asks preservice teacher to engage in an action research cycle. The goal of the assignment was to provide preservice teachers with a tool to systematically reflect on their work to improve and develop as teachers.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected using a purposeful sampling that would yield as much insight as possible (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). I obtained approval for the study from the University Institutional Review Board. All participants submitted written consent to participate in the study. All names that appear below are pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. The criteria for participant selection were: participants in a full-time student teaching placement enrolled in the accompanying required course called, Advanced Seminar in Inclusive Pedagogy. I secured eight participants that met the above criteria, three females and five males. The three female participants' content area were Math, English Language, and Physics, and the five male participants' content areas were Art, Social Studies (2), Dance, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Two participants taught in suburban school districts

while the remaining six participants taught in urban school districts. All participants were pursuing undergraduate degrees and were teaching online, as the study took place in the fall of 2020, during the Covid pandemic.

Table 1 below describes the context, research question, and theme of participants' action research. The theme refers to the nascent conclusions participants reached based on the data they analyzed in their action research.

Participant	Context	Research Question	Theme
Jillian	9th Grade Geometry	How does student achievement change when working in small groups?	Students learn from students when a group leader is appointed.
Felipe	Elementary Art	Will the use of visual aids, such as bar graphs created with in-class student data, help increase the frequency of students handing in their assignments?	Visual cues help students to submit work when learning remotely.
Justin	Middle School Social Studies	How can teaching to the lower middle still fulfill my high achieving students and bring up some of my lower achieving students?	Planning using the principles of Universal Design for Learning helps meet all students' needs.
Alonzo	Middle School Dance	Will a daily journal help students stay on track with important ideas during lesson(s) and unit progression?	Students need more direction to express emotions in their journals and connect them to their dancing.
Joshua	9th Grade World History	Would assigning a current events assignment related to the topic I'm teaching further the students' understanding and enhance the relevance of it for them?	Including current events assignments related to unit topics increased participation in class discussion.
Mara	6th Grade English Language Arts (ELA)	How do the preset backgrounds on Google Meet help and hinder our virtual experience in my target class?	Students used the backgrounds to be involved and "seen"
Amal	7th and 8th Grade TESOL	How does having students practice writing out their own answers without any advice until only after they have written their work, instead of before, influence English Language Learners' English writing skills?	Having students feel comfortable in your class makes a significant difference in their learning.
Claire	11th Grade Physics	How will my students' exam grades change if I give them a summative project instead of a test?	Increased student collaboration and peer-to-peer interaction support higher student achievement

Table 1: Context, research question, and theme of action research

Data Collection

Data collection began at the start of the Fall 2020 semester and concluded at the end of that same semester. Data collection included two focus group interviews, artifacts from the seminar course such as action research assignments, reflections and oral presentations, and a researcher journal.

Focus Group Interviews

Two focus group interviews were conducted, one at the start of the Fall semester, prior to engaging in action research, and one at the conclusion of the Fall semester, after action research projects were completed. The focus group interviews were held on Zoom, as the university was operating remotely at the time. The focus group interview sessions were recorded and transcribed. The questions that guided the first focus group interview consisted of six open-ended questions that were related to the notion of critical teacher inquiry, scholar/teacher hierarchy of knowledge production, and action research. The second focus group interview consisted of 11 open-ended questions that asked preservice teachers to reflect on their experience conducting action research, their opinions on teacher knowledge production, the ways in which the action research influenced their teaching stance, and their thinking on making meaning in a classroom. One of the purposes of

the post-action research focus group interview was to compare initial responses with these secondary responses, specifically looking for any evidence of the development of a critical inquiry stance and changes to the ways they thought about and valued the teacher knowledge they generated.

Artifacts

The action research assignments that preservice teachers produced for the seminar course served as artifacts for the study. The assigned action research proposal, product, and final reflection were collected as data. All participants' oral presentations were recorded and transcribed, including all follow up questions, and discussion. What was of particular interest to me in the artifacts was how preservice teachers articulated and expressed their role in the inquiry process, if and how they positioned themselves as problem-posers, and how they constructed their understanding and knowledge as a result of their action research.

Researcher Journal

As the collection of data took place over the course of a 14-week semester, I documented my thought process throughout this period. Ortlipp (2008) noted that reflexivity has become a widely accepted approach to qualitative research and as

such, researchers need to document their actions, choices, and experiences during the research process. This journal provided organization of my thoughts as it documented a research 'trail' of gradually altering methodologies and reshaping analysis (Ortlipp, 2008: 696).

Data Analysis

Once the semester was complete and grades were distributed, I analyzed the data sources inductively using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), looking for themes, categories, and patterns to emerge in the data. Using the critical teacher inquiry framework as a lens, I used an open coding approach to make sense of the data from the focus group interview transcripts and the action research documents. I looked for regularities and items of relevance to the study, breaking the data down into codes, assigning these codes to categories, then synthesizing these categories based on commonalities among the codes. I conducted a third analytical level of coding, referred to as selective coding, where I contemplated how the categories relate to one another, intuitively looking for the underlying themes or stories of the categories (Harry et al., 2005).

The data sources described above included rich data in that they were detailed and sufficiently varied to capture and reveal a full picture of what is happening in the study (Maxwell, 2010). During the data analysis stage, I used the strategy of triangulation, as my data sources included a diverse range of data collection methods, sources, and settings. Using the transcripts from the focus group interview discussions, classroom artifacts, and transcripts of action research presentations, I triangulated and crosschecked the data from one source to another. I looked for converging evidence to corroborate or dispute the ideas and understandings in one data source with the ideas and understanding from a second data source to further substantiate the findings and conclusions of the study.

Findings

Throughout the study, there were numerous ways in which action research was a vehicle for preservice teachers to develop a critical inquiry stance. Action research created a space for participants to simultaneously enact, make meaning of, and develop, to varying degrees, a critical inquiry stance. Thus, the overarching theme that emerged from data analysis was that of preservice teachers *developing a critical inquiry stance*. All of the subsequent themes, *making meaning, generating knowledge, and bridging the space between*, contributed to this foundational theme in a multitude of ways. The circular model in Figure 1 presents the themes discussed in the findings section. The model is intentionally circular as the process of developing a critical inquiry stance is iterative, nonlinear, and quite fluid, much like the process of action research itself. Participants' processes of developing a critical inquiry stance by making meaning, generating knowledge, and bridging spaces occurred simultaneously, each process exerting influence over the other and contributing to the progression of each process, indicated by the arrows pointing back-and-forth.
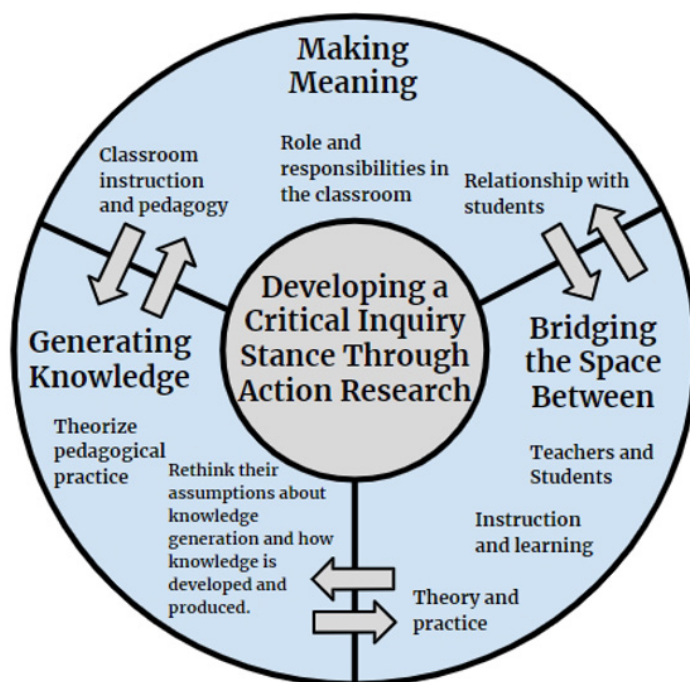
Figure 1: Developing a critical inquiry stance through action research

Developing a Critical Inquiry Stance Through Action Research

As participants conducted action research, they recognized the processes that were at play. They understood that they enacted, made meaning, and developed, to varying degrees, a critical inquiry stance. When asked about their definition of action research, Mara, a preservice English teacher, stated, "The action should be specific, and be able to create some sort of change… it's the most cyclical and metacognitive exercise you can participate in as an educator" (Second Focus Group Interview

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

5

Transcript). Alonzo, a preservice dance teacher, defined action research as, "really wanting to understand how to fix this problem that you may be having in the classroom, diving into it and then almost ripping it apart so that you can almost come at it at a new angle, come at it with a new point of view, come at it with a new idea" (Second Focus Group Interview Transcript). Both definitions referenced the processes that were happening for the participants as they conducted their inquiry, that of enacting an intentional action, the generative process of making meaning, and the resulting change that developed.

As Jillian acknowledged the way action research has supported her growth as a new teacher, she alluded to the idea of *becoming*. She shared, "It [action research] helps because we're new teachers, we're always, we continue to evolve, every day, every year. So, I will definitely use action research again" (Second Focus Group Interview Transcript). While Jillian credited the action research with helping her evolve and grow as an educator, there is an awareness that she is experiencing a process of becoming, becoming a teacher, becoming a problem poser, becoming a life-long learner.

Within participants' action research, there is evidence of both practical and critical aspects of the work. Justin, Joshua, and Jillian's research questions probed issues related to the student achievement gap, lack of representation in curriculum, and grouping students heterogeneously respectively, all issues centered around equity, justice, and democratic approaches to education. At the inception, these questions indicated a critical stance and intent towards their action research and allowed them to explore and make meaning of these problems from a critical perspective. However, over the course of the action research, their inquiry weaved in and out of the practical realm, as they were inquiring into living, breathing classroom, which necessitated a practical aspect to the inquiry.

Joshua, a middle school preservice social studies teacher, questioned the curriculum and pointed to the lack of representation it encompassed, "the curriculum that was presented to me, it tends to be extremely Eurocentric, extremely male and extremely white" (Action Research Presentation transcript, p. 11), situating his action research in a very critical dimension. However, he then moved into the practical dimension of classroom life when discussing classroom participation, "I believe that the increasing number of students participating will directly correlate to the increased relevance and significance of the content as a result of the current events assignments" (Action Research Plan Assignment, p. 2). His action research moved back and forth between the critical and practical realms of classroom life.

Alternately, Claire's research question was quite practical, but her inquiry led her to critically look at facets of her classroom assessment strategies. Although Claire's intent was practical in nature, in that she was exploring changes to assessment pedagogy, she began to take on a more critical stance, engaging in critical action research praxis, as she problematized traditional assessment approaches. Her trajectory went from practical to critical, a different experience than Joshua, Justin, and Jillian's.

In contrast to Justin, Joshua, and Jillian, for Felipe, a preservice art teacher, the action research lacked a critical tone, he viewed it as a very casual exercise to determine the effectiveness of an action. He stated, "The assignment taught me how to figure out if things work… it gave me a way to have evidence behind it, I guess, instead of just saying, yeah I think this works" (Second Focus Group Interview Transcript), omitting any connection to a critical component to the work. He valued the systematic approach of action research and action research as a tool to analyze teacher moves and judgements but did not see the potential it held to bring about change, disrupt injustice, or engender moral and democratic pedagogy.

Making Meaning

The data revealed how participants made meaning of their inquiry in varied ways, directions, and degrees. For some participants, the action research brought into focus their classroom instruction and pedagogy and allowed them to make meaning about their teaching and pedagogical choices. Amal and Felipe both explored principles of Universal Design for Learning pedagogy and made meaning of the benefits of structuring lessons with multiple means of student expression. Amal, a preservice middle school TESOL teacher realized, "the importance of giving students the flexibility of how to answer a question" (Action Research Reflection Assignment, p. 4) and Felipe reflected that his action research, "has shown me the importance of giving students options for completing their assignments along with options on how to submit or present their work" (Action Research Reflection Assignment, p. 10).

For other preservice teachers, the action research led them to think about themselves as educators and make sense of their role and responsibilities in the classroom. Claire, a preservice high school physics teacher, acknowledged the pressure teachers feel to cover material but sought to prioritize social and emotional learning as part of her responsibilities as a teacher:

> It has inspired me to be more of a well-rounded teacher, rather than just a physics teacher. I think it inspired me to take a step back, because a lot of times teachers are worried about content, I need to get this done… you need to take a step back and decide how you can still incorporate real life skills and social emotional learning and support your students in other ways, rather than just content wise, and this project has shown me that. (Second Focus Group Interview Transcript)

Finally, many of the preservice teachers made meaning about their relationship with students through their action research. Jillian shared very clearly and succinctly during our second focus group interview that the action research, "helped me make meaning of my relationship with my students, although that had nothing to do with my question at all" (p. 10). Similarly, Claire found that her relationships with students were impacted through her action research, she stated, "This has affected my relationships with my students as well. I feel like I know so much more about my students after this project because I saw their thought process when contributing to the assignment" Action Research Reflection Assignment, p. 2).

Generating Knowledge

The participants with whom I worked were comfortable in the role of knowledge consumers, having completed many

education courses and studied various educational theorists, principles, frameworks, and approaches. They were far less familiar with the experience of being asked to generate knowledge, as the action research study demanded of them, so much so, Amal enthusiastically recommended:

> After experiencing action research, I think this should be standard for all future student teachers to do as well. It is definitely beneficial for all our new teachers to not just copy the old ways of teaching but to think outside the box and try to see what ways can be improved. (Second Focus Group Interview Transcript)

Engaging in action research invited preservice teachers to theorize pedagogical practice as they experienced it. Justin, a middle school social studies teacher, was explicit in the way he labeled his thinking when he explained, "My theory is that one [grading on a 10-point scale instead of a 100-point scale] would impact the other [confidence of struggling students] and bring up the kids who are on the lower level, while not making a negative impact on the kids who are already high performing" (Action Research Plan, p. 4). Justin named the intellectual work he engaged in by using the word theory, highlighting how the action research process created the space for preservice teachers to theorize about the educational problem they were addressing.

As they generated their own teacher knowledge, they came to rethink their assumptions about who is responsible for developing educational theory, who participates in knowledge generation, and how knowledge is developed and produced. After the conclusion of his action research, Joshua positioned the generation of knowledge for teaching more so within the classroom. He passionately stated in his action research reflection assignment, "Lastly, teachers, indisputably and unequivocally, are primarily responsible for generating knowledge about learning and teaching. Teachers are the ones on the front lines living this every single day" (Action Research Reflection Assignment, pp. 8-9). Claire explained, "I think the responsibility is on teachers to generate knowledge about teaching and learning" (Action Research Reflection Assignment, p. 2). She continued, "I have learned about 'teaching and learning' through the act of doing. It is the teachers with experience, that have gone through trials and tribulations that know what is effective and what is not' (Action Research Reflection Assignment, p. 3).

Bridging the Space Between

The final theme of the findings explores the many ways in which action research helped preservice teachers bridge the *space between*. The space between refers to the gaps that exist between such things as teachers and students, instruction and learning, and theory and practice.

Participants commented on how their action research helped them bridge gaps relationally, between themselves and their students and between their students to one another. As Amal enacted his planned action, meeting one on one with students to share feedback on assignments, students shared very specific personal information with him. He explained, "I learned that some students in my class, they've experienced bullying, I even learned that some students had their accounts hacked into by other students" (Action Research Presentation, p. 24). The focus of his action research was feedback, however a very real and meaningful outcome for Amal was the development of his relationships with his students.

Another aspect of relationships on which preservice teachers reflected was the relationship between students. Not one of the participants' research questions focused directly on student-to-student relationships, however many of the participants came to value the need to foster relationships between students in their classroom. Mara began thinking about student relationships with peers as soon as she began her action research. In her Action Research Question and Narrative Assignment, she explained how as a result of the work, she found herself, "zeroing in on the affect that they have on our interpersonal relationships, both between students and teachers and among groups of students" (p. 2). In Claire's Action Research Reflection, she began thinking about relationship building beyond the relationships she established with her students to include the relationships her students were building amongst themselves. She explained in her Action Research Reflection, "The themes really made me think about my students as human beings and not just "the people I teach." My vision of teaching has been shifted to include the relationships that form between myself and the students, and the students with each other" (p. 1).

Additionally, some students observed that their inquiry helped them bridge the space between their teaching to student learning, as evidenced in Alonzo's action research reflection, "Action Research is an amazing way to gain insight on the students, it helped me figure out ways to guide students learning" (p. 9). Additionally, during our second focus group interview, when asked how action research influenced their teaching practice, Jillian responded, "it made me feel like I, as a teacher, and this sounds terrible because you should always teach like this, but be more attentive to my students' needs and how they learn through their eyes" (p. 4). Both examples highlight the space that was bridged between participants teaching and student learning.

And finally, it helped some participants bridge the space between theory and practice. Claire used her action research to apply principles from the theory of Universal Design for Learning and was able to gather data to support the effectiveness of the theory. She shared, "This is a huge take-away in the fact that I can say with evidence that this model allowed students to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways" (Action Research Reflection, p. 1). She could comprehend the Multiple Means of Expression principle after having enacted her action research, thus bridging the gap between the theory and practice.

DISCUSSION

With Freire's (1970: 65) assertion that, 'Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to be, it must become', he called and set the stage for the development of a critical inquiry stance for teachers, which is the ability, drive, and disposition needed to regularly and systematically investigate personal teaching practices to improve upon them and engender equitable and accessible learning experiences for all students. The above statement suggests that it is in the

'becoming', in the praxis of educational theory and pedagogy, that pedagogical learning develops. Similarly, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) posited that specifically through the practice of teacher research, teachers come to know, understand, and develop an inquiry stance.

Both of these arguments undergird the findings of the study, that of action research as a vehicle to develop a critical inquiry stance as action research is the praxis of critical inquiry. As Jillian stated, and many of the other participants' definitions of action research pointed to, as they engaged in action research, they saw themselves becoming, changing, developing, through the connections and meaning they made of their action research experiences, through the theories they developed, through the relationships they forged, and through the knowledge they generated. For most of the participants, their self-view was not static but rather quite dynamic; they fully embraced the change and growth inherent in learning to teach and honored the developmental process of becoming a problem-poser.

Ultimately, the most effective way to understand what it means to be a teacher as problem-poser, is to engage in inquiry. As teachers inquire into their practice, they embody this critical approach towards teaching, thus authentically making meaning of the teacher as problem-poser paradigm. Engaging in this inquiry process is what supported the development of a critical inquiry stance. For some participants like Joshua, Jillian, Claire, and Justin, I observed the teacher as problem-poser paradigm begin to take hold towards the end of the semester after the completion of their action research, evidencing the development of a critical inquiry stance. For others, like Felipe, development towards a critical inquiry stance was slower and less apparent however it was clear, based on his research question, that Felipe was further behind in his development of a critical inquiry stance from the onset of the study.

In line with Price's (2001) and Parker et al.'s (2016) findings, I observed how varied the critical component was in participants' action research experiences. Ultimately, the questions asked and the meaning participants made were driven by participants' lived experiences, educational experiences, and where they were on their journey towards a critical inquiry stance. In analyzing the above set of action research questions, it is quite clear that there is a spectrum of preservice teacher's critical thinking that intersects with their development as educators. Some preservice teachers, like Joshua and Jillian, brought a critical stance to their action research question, able to frame their work with a critical view, problematizing not only classroom pedagogy and structure, but the inequities, injustices, and systematic issues imbedded in them. Their view was critical from the onset and the action research supported and encouraged further degrees of critical thinking and questioning. Other participants, like Felipe, came to their work with a very practical lens, unable to think beyond the utilitarian purpose of their question. Participants' development along the spectrum of a critical inquiry stance influenced the course of their action research.

Congruent with the literature on preservice action research (Manfra, 2019; Price, 2001), the participants posed problems that fell within both the practical and critical dimensions of action research, however what is striking in looking at what preservice teachers choose to problematize is the fluidity with which their thinking and questioning moved back and forth between the two. Jillian, Joshua and Justin all problematized issues of equity and justice but inevitably shifted into practical classroom concerns, indicating the complexity and interconnectedness of these two dimensions of problem posing in action research. As they engaged in the praxis of action research, the practical and critical aspects of the work became enmeshed and intertwined. Claire's experience was the opposite, it began in the practical realm but shifted into a more critical stance as she began to problematize current assessment strategies. Because all of the action research took place in a live classroom, it mirrored the realities of that classroom, moving from moments of genuine critical praxis to moments of authentic practical praxis.

The action research prompted meaning making about how the experience influenced their understanding and meaning making of the pedagogy that grounds the action their chose to implement. They were learning to make meaning beyond the isolated moments of instruction towards a more comprehensive understanding related to educational pedagogy. Both Amal and Jillian developed their understanding around UDL and groupwork pedagogues and began to think about ways these pedagogues create access to learning for all students. In that sense, pedagogy was viewed from both a practical and critical stance within the inquiry.

Many of the preservice teachers noted that they gained understanding about their relationship with students through their action research. Immaterial of the topic of inquiry, the participants found that they were making meaning of the relational aspects of teaching. The findings suggested that action research may serve as a portal or window into this arena of classroom life, despite the fact that it is not the primary purpose of the work. The action research experience appeared to create opportunities for preservice teachers to think about and develop their relational competencies and draw their focus to their relationships with students, unveiling the potential action research has, to some degree, in addressing relational aspects of teaching. The lack of research surrounding this topic is notable and it is important to address this overlooked area of teacher development in future research.

Inviting preservice teachers to theorize practice as they experience it aligns with the experience of the participants, who as they enacted action research in their teaching practice came to theorize the practices they enacted. As found in the research (Lattimer, 2012; Parker et al., 2016), many participants began to develop and build upon theory as a result of their action research. Identifying an action or intervention that would address the stated problem of their action research necessitated the type of thinking that led to nascent theories, as participants hypothesized actions that had the potential to improve a problem of practice. In doing so, they narrowed the gap between consuming outside knowledge to generating their own knowledge. When Felipe and Justin presented their action research, they framed their conclusions as theories. The work they conducted was generative and meaningful to them and they valued it by naming it as theory.

Furthermore, for Amal, it was clear that engaging in the praxis

of action research was critical to becoming a successful teacher who could contribute to and develop theory and educational knowledge. He recognized and valued his own ability to improve upon the 'old ways,' or the established scholarly knowledge about teaching, by acting and reflecting on theory and practice in his classroom, thereby experiencing praxis as defined by Freire (1970). In disparate ways, this praxis led to the transformation of Amal's and many of the participants' knowledge about teaching, learning, knowledge generation, and ultimately, knowledge itself, shifting participants from knowledge consumers to knowledge generators.

Responses from their action research reflections and during our second focus group interview, both completed after the action research studies, suggested that participants experienced some shifts in their views of where knowledge for teaching is produced, from outside the classroom to inside the classroom, a clear disruption to the traditional hierarchy of educational knowledge found in the literature on action research (Hulse and Hulme, 2012; Kizilaslan and Leutwyler, 2012; Roulston et al., 2005). Claire, Joshua, and Mara's thinking about who generates knowledge for teaching evolved over the course of the action research, the inquiry positioned them as knowledge generators, empowering them and giving them the confidence to believe that they, as classroom teachers, could contribute to the canon of knowledge in education. This shift highlights the development of a critical inquiry stance in the participants as they pushed back on the traditional hierarchies of knowledge generation, disrupting the hegemonic hold scholars and theorists have on education knowledge and who has the power to generate knowledge.

Throughout the data, there were moments of discovery and growth, moments where a gap appeared to be filled or narrowed that previously held a wide divide. These divides were brought together as participants inquired into their practice through action research. As such, action research was not only a vehicle for preservice teachers to develop, enact, and make meaning of critical teacher inquiry, but it served as a means for connection, or the bringing together of ideas, practices, and people, that necessitate being connected in education.

The call to educate and prepare preservice teachers to teach for social justice has evolved extensively over the past two decades, from Gay (2002) and Villegas and Lucas' (2002) work on culturally responsive teaching, to Ladson-Billing's (1995, 2017) work on culturally relevant pedagogy and most recently, to Paris (2012) and Alim and Paris' (2017) research on culturally sustaining pedagogy, teaching for social justice and equity drives the current lexicon of educational pedagogy, practice, and expectations in the education field. Teacher preparation programs incorporate the above texts into many of the required courses included in their programs. The tension,however; lies in the practical application of teaching for social justice. Teacher education programs assert a 'teaching for social justice' stance, predicating coursework and fieldwork on this assertion, but in reality, there is little room carved out for the hands-on, practical application of these theories. Teacher education programs have incorporated the research and scholarship of teaching for social justice into their coursework but now have to create spaces where preservice

teachers can explore what it means and looks like to teach for social justice.

Teacher education programs need to cultivate dispositions in their preservice teachers that allow for the investigation of new pedagogy and application, the development of new teaching practices, and the space to critique existing theory. In order for preservice teachers to successfully reimagine, innovate, and apply culturally responsive, relevant, and sustaining pedagogies, they must develop a critical inquiry stance and the skills and disposition that support this type of inquiry.

The current work surrounding teaching for social justice requires the bridging of theory and practice through inquiry. Preservice teachers should be given ample opportunity to inquire into the application of the above theories, such as action research, to develop practices that execute these pedagogies with authenticity and fidelity, and further the work of social justice in education. Without these opportunities, without the space to inquire and explore social justice pedagogy, these theories will remain just that, theories that educators advocate for but struggle to practice.

Additionally, teacher education programs should be looking at how to address the gaps that preservice teachers encounter as they move into the field to complete their clinical work. As with many other studies on preservice action research (Hulse and Hulme, 2012; Kizilaslan and Leutwyler, 2012; Lattimer, 2012; Mok, 2016), this study found that preservice teachers wrestled with the gap between theory and practice. Beyond that, findings from this study suggest that teachers are more focused on their teaching and struggle to see the connection from their instruction to student learning. Further, there appears to be a relational gap between preservice teachers and their students, a distance that preservice teachers struggled to close during their clinical work.

The critical aspects of action research influenced how participants thought about their process of meaning making and knowledge generation. As they fluidly crossed the boundaries between critical and practical inquiry, they began to develop an understanding of the relationship between the two and understood the need to be critical about instruction and classroom life. This understanding supported the development of a critical inquiry stance. The action research allowed participants to problematize pedagogy, theorized instruction, shift into a problem poser mindset and develop a critical inquiry stance. This critical stance supports the ability to generate knowledge, as it sets the stage for inquiry into the work of teaching, bringing about a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of teaching and learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Within this study, action research was a vehicle for preservice teachers to develop, enact, and make meaning of critical teacher inquiry. These processes occurred simultaneously and fluidly, they exerted influence over one another in multi-directional ways, were iterative, and non-linear. Preservice teachers became critical inquirers and problem posers as they engaged in the critical praxis of action research. Future research should investigate different and disparate pedagogy that supports the development of a critical inquiry stance in preservice teachers.

Today, teachers are still relegated to the role of knowledge receptors rather than knowledge generators. The hierarchy of knowledge still holds a strong grasp on knowledge for teaching and the ways the education field values knowledge. In light of the evidence presented above, we, as an educational community need to galvanize and harness the knowledge of teachers if we are to see authentic, lasting, and widespread improvements in teaching and learning. This study further extends this call to arms to include not only teachers, but preservice teachers as well, to establish from the beginning, that teachers can and should be driving innovation and improvement in teaching and learning.

REFERENCES

Alim, H. S. and Paris, D. (2017) 'What is culturally sustaining pedagogy and why does it matter?', in Alim H. S. and Paris D. (eds.) *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Ball, S. J. (2010) 'The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity', *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 215–228. https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/0268093022000043065

Britzman, D. P. (1991) 'The structure of experience and the experience of structure in teacher education', in *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*, New York: State University of New York Press.

Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*, New York: Teachers College.

Dewey, J. (1904) 'The relation of theory to practice in education', in Borrowman, M. (ed.) *Teacher education in America: A documentary history*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Dodman, S., Growth, L., Ra, S., Baker, A. and Ramezan, S. (2017) 'Developing an inquiry stance through PDS action research: Does it maintain after graduation?', *School-University Partnerships*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 30–46.

Faikhamta, C. and Clarke, A. (2015) 'Thai pre-service science teachers engaging action research during their fifth year internship', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 259–273. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2013.860011

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, London: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1998) *Pedagogy of freedom*, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Gay, G. (2002) 'Preparing for culturally responsive teaching', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 53, No. 2, pp. 106–116. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*, London: Aldine.

Hansen, J. M. and Nalder-Godfrey, N. (2004) 'The Power of action research, technology and teacher education', *Computers in the School*, Vol. 21, No. 1-2, pp. 43–57. https://doi.org/10.1300/J025v21n01_04

Harry, B., Sturges, K.M. and Klingner, J. K. (2005) 'Mapping the process: An exemplar of process and challenge in grounded theory analysis', *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 3–13. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x034002003

Hulse, B. and Hulme, R. (2012) 'Engaging with research through practitioner enquiry: The perceptions of beginning teachers on a postgraduate initial teacher education programme', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 313–329. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2012.676310

Kennedy-Clark, S., Eddles-Hirsch, K., Francis, T., Cummins, G., Feratino, L., Tichelaar, M. and Ruz, L. (2018) 'Developing pre-service teacher professional capabilities through action research', *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 43, No. 9, pp. 39–58. http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n9.3

Kizilaslan, I. and Leutwyler, B. (2012) 'Pre-service teacher action research: Concept, international trends, and implications for teacher education in Turkey', *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society*, Vol. 10. Kyustendil, pp. 155–162.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) 'But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy', *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 159–165. http://doi.org/10.1080/00405849509543675

Ladson-Billings, G. (2017) 'The r(e)volution will not be standard: Teacher education, hip hop pedagogy, and culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0', in Alim, H. S. and Paris, D. (eds.) *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Lattimer, H. (2012) 'Action research in pre-service teacher education: Is there value added?', *Inquiry in Education*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 1–25.

Levin, B. B. and Rock, T. C. (2003) 'The effects of collaborative action research on preservice and experienced teacher partners in professional development schools', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 54, No. 2, pp. 135–149. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102250287

López-Gopar, M. E. (2014) 'Teaching English Critically to Mexican Children', *ELT Journal*, Vol. 68, No. 3, pp. 310–320. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu017

López-Gopar, M. E., Cordova, V. H., Sughrua, W. M. and Jiménez, E. N. L. (2021) 'Developing Decolonizing Pedagogies with Mexican Pre-Service "English" Teachers', in Hawkins, M. R. (ed.) *Transmodal Communications: Transpositioning Semiotics and Relations*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters (Translanguaging in Theory and Practice, Vol. 1), pp. 152–175. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788926379-010

Lytle, S. L. and Cochran-Smith, M. (1992) 'Teacher research as a way of knowing', *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp. 447–475. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.62.4.4lm3811r1033431n

Manfra, M. M. (2019) 'Action research and systematic, intentional change in teaching practice', *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 43, No. 1, pp. 163–196. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732x18821132

Maxwell, J. A. (2010) 'Validity: How might you be wrong?', in Luttrell, W. (ed.) *Qualitative educational research: Reading in reflexive methodology and transformative practice*, London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.553

Merriam, S. and Tisdell, E. J. (2016) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*, 4th edition, San Francisco: The Jossey-Bass.

Mok, A. O. (2016) 'A reflective journey in teaching: Pre-service music teachers' action research', *Australian Journal of Music Education*, Vol. 50, No. 2, pp. 58–70.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) *Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 101, Stat. 1425* (2002) [online], Available: https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml [17 Jul 2022].

Ortlipp, M. (2008) 'Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process', *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 695–705.

Paris, D. (2012) 'Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice', *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 93–97. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244

Parker, A., Bush, A. and Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2016) 'Understanding teacher candidates' engagement with inquiry-based professional development: A continuum of responses and needs', *The New Educator*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 221–242. https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688X.2015.1027978

Pennycook, A. (2004) 'Critical Moments in TESOL Praxicum', in Norton, B. and Toohey, K. (eds.) *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139524834.017

Price, J. N. (2001) 'Action research, pedagogy and change: The transformative potential of action research in pre-service teacher education', *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 43–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270118039

Roulston, K., Legette, R., Deloach. M. and Pitman, C. B. (2005) 'What is "Research" for teacher-researchers?', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 169–190. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790500200283

Rudduck, J. (1988) 'Changing the world of the classroom by understanding it: A review of some aspects of the work of Lawrence Stenhouse.', *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 30–42.

Sleeter, C. (2019) 'Introduction to "Emerging from standardization: Learning to teach for cultural, cognitive, and community relevance', *The Educational Forum*, Vol. 83, No. 3, pp. 231–236. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2019.1599643

Villegas, A. M. and Lucas, T. (2002) 'Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 20–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053001003

Waff, D. (2009) 'An insider voice: Leading as a teacher', in Cochran-Smith M. and Lytle, S. L. (eds.) *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*, New York: Teachers College.

Zeichner, K. M. (1987) 'Preparing reflective teachers: An overview of instructional strategies which have been employed in preservice teacher education', *International Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 11, No. 5, pp. 565–575. https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-0355(87)90016-4

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES ON BECOMING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATORS: AN ACTION RESEARCH CASE STUDY

Ekaterina Koubek⊠
Stephanie Wasta

James Madison University, United States of America

⊠ koubekex@jmu.edu

ABSTRACT

Reflection on teaching and learning is considered one of the most essential elements of teacher development. With the rise of multilingual learners in U.S. public schools, the role of critical reflection has become even more prominent in teacher preparation programs to disrupt preservice teachers' (PSTs) biases and stereotypes regarding these learners and their families. Moreover, to address the widening educational inequities and to enact more equitable teaching practices, PSTs ought to reflect on their pedagogical practices with the guidance of an educator-mentor. Therefore, this qualitative action research case study explored how one teacher preparation program implemented reflective and experiential practices in their graduate Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages coursework to assist PSTs in systematically examining their understandings of culturally responsive practices. Our research was grounded in culturally responsive teaching. Our findings revealed that our PSTs had an awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy; they recognized the importance of learning from and with their students and families but still had areas for growth when implementing culturally responsive practices, prompting us to further explore how these PSTs enact culturally sustaining practices in their future classrooms.

KEYWORDS

Action research, case study, culturally responsive pedagogy, multilingual learners, reflection, tutoring

HOW TO CITE

Highlights

- *The findings revealed PSTs' awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy, areas for growth, and the importance of learning from/with students and families.*
- *PSTs valued the one-on-one experiences of tutoring multilingual learners in order to become familiar with the complexities of their identities.*
- *Reflective practices are crucial to assist PSTs in recognizing ways they can better support multilingual learners' educational experiences.*

INTRODUCTION

Reflection on teaching and learning is considered one of the most essential elements of teacher development (Daniel, 2016; Ryken and Hamel, 2016). With the rise of multilingual learners (MLs) in U.S. public schools (Irwin et al., 2021), the role of critical reflection becomes even more prominent in teacher preparation programs (Koubek and Wasta, 2022) to disrupt preservice teachers' (PSTs) biases and stereotypes regarding their perceptions of these learners and their families. Moreover, to address the widening educational inequities and to enact more equitable teaching practices, PSTs ought to reflect on their pedagogical practices with the guidance of an educator-

mentor (Salerno and Kibler, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative action research case study is to explore how one teacher preparation program implemented reflective and experiential practices in their graduate Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) coursework to assist PSTs in systematically examining their understandings of culturally responsive practices. To address this purpose, we first present a review of the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy and action research in graduate teacher education. Next, we provide our justification for the methodology chosen, including our data collection and analysis. Following this section are the findings of our study in which we uncover the

meanings our participants make regarding their perceptions of MLs and newly discovered understandings of culturally responsive practices. Finally, the discussion ties our findings back to the literature discussed previously, and our conclusion highlights the implications of this study for our program and any other similar programs in graduate teacher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our study is grounded in the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy and action research. Therefore, prior to describing our study, theoretical underpinnings coupled with published research studies ought to be shared.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Our research is grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy that combines the body of research on culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018; Villegas and Lucas, 2007) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014, 2021). Culturally responsive pedagogy offers theoretical underpinnings aimed at reducing opportunity gaps for diverse P-12 school student populations (Carter and Welner, 2013); however, helping PSTs translate this research into practice turns out to be a persistent challenge in teacher preparation programs (Allen et al., 2017; Fasching-Varner and Seriki, 2012; Warren, 2017).

Over 25 years ago, Ladson-Billings (1995) urged educators to critically challenge their thinking about students of color, which resulted in a new pedagogical model, called culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy 'is designed to problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society' (Ladson-Billings, 1995: 483). At the foundation of this pedagogy lies three distinct components: student learning, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Student learning prioritizes their intellectual growth, including their ability to problem-solve. Cultural competence emphasizes the importance of developing an environment where students appreciate their culture of origin while developing an appreciation for at least one other culture. Finally, critical consciousness focuses on teaching students how to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems rooted in societal inequalities. Recently, Ladson-Billings (2014: 74) has advocated for "remixing" of her original theory in light of the new culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012) that takes into account evolving scholarship and changing student populations. Paris and Alim (2017) also posit that educators need to utilize student culture and language through pedagogy that improves student engagement and motivation.

A proponent of culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2018: 36) defines this teaching as 'using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them'. If educators ignore these student orientations and values, they may continue perpetuating educational inequity and viewing students from a deficit-based perspective instead of acknowledging their assets and strengths. Gay (2018) asserts that culturally responsive teaching has the following characteristics: it is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering,

transformative, and emancipatory. It is validating because this type of teaching capitalizes on student assets and teaches to and through culturally and linguistically diverse students' strengths. It is comprehensive because it focuses on the whole child as these teaching practices help students preserve and value their identity and ethnic backgrounds, helps establish a sense of belonging, and promotes success. To accomplish common learning outcomes, these expectations should be woven into each classroom curriculum, and students should have ownership in decision-making and caring relationships, similar to what Ladson-Billings (2021) proposed in one of her components of culturally relevant pedagogy. Furthermore, culturally responsive pedagogy is multidimensional because it takes into account teaching and learning contexts, curriculum, relationships, instructional practices, classroom management, and assessments. Additionally, it is empowering because it promotes academic competence, builds the courage to act, and promotes self-confidence. To ensure students experience success, teachers should believe that their students can succeed and support their learning and growth. Defying conventions of traditional instruction and showing respect to the cultures and experiences of diverse students underscores the transformative characteristic because academic success is no longer tied to the white group of students but instead is shared with diverse students who are taught to be proud of their origin and cultures. The final characteristic of culturally responsive teaching is emancipatory, which implies that all students have access to knowledge about different ethnic groups. As Gay (2018) denotes culturally responsive teaching promotes student validation, and, as a result, allows them to feel liberated to focus more on academic endeavors. The ultimate goal is to produce winners among all students regardless of their origin, ethnicity, or cultural background.

Additionally, Villegas and Lucas (2007) outline six principles of their culturally responsive teaching framework. Principle 1 focuses on the need for teachers to understand how learners construct knowledge and to guide students to use their background knowledge to understand new knowledge and skills they learn in schools. Principle 2 emphasizes learning about students' lives. Without knowing students' family makeup, interests, strengths, and concerns, it is difficult for teachers to create meaningful bridges between students' experiences and school content. Principle 3 asserts that teachers ought to be socioculturally conscious, which implies being cognizant of students' and their own experiences being affected by factors, such as social class, gender, ethnicity, and race. Principle 4 stresses that teachers who affirm diversity hold students to high standards and make them accountable to those standards, provide intellectually challenging curricula, help students monitor their learning, and integrate students' individual and cultural resources into the curriculum. Principle 5 addresses the implementation of equitable instructional strategies. Culturally responsive educators should engage learners by activating their background and prior knowledge, incorporating their home languages to provide access to new material, integrating hands-on and visual supports, and incorporating students' examples from their lives in instruction. Lastly, Villegas and Lucas's (2007: 32) final principle asserts that educators should see themselves as part of a community of educators working to disrupt inequities and

'move toward greater cultural and linguistic responsiveness' by becoming advocates for their students.

Given the changing educational context with P-12 students becoming more diverse while the majority of PSTs continue to represent white middle-class educators, teacher preparation programs should play an instrumental role in challenging PSTs' preexisting ideas and notions of P-12 students' knowledge and skills by promoting PSTs' sociocultural awareness through reflection and self-evaluation. PSTs' reflections on their biases and beliefs provide opportunities for a critical dialogue that is essential for a transformation of thoughts and actions (Batchelor et al., 2019).

Research on preservice teacher preparation and their development of culturally relevant pedagogy is limited (Christ and Sharma, 2018). More research is needed to prepare culturally competent teachers for diverse students (Lewis Chiu et al., 2017). One qualitative study examined questions about how teacher preparation programs prepare PSTs to teach in culturally responsive classrooms (Lambeth and Smith, 2016). The researchers shared the difficulties their PSTs encountered when interpreting culturally responsive teaching methods through critical discussions about racial issues and the experiences of students of color. They all had the intention of helping their students succeed. Yet, while some PSTs emphasized the importance of building relationships with students and relating to them, only a few PSTs were able to identify how to make that happen in the classroom. The researchers acknowledged that teacher preparation programs need to do more to prepare PSTs to work with diverse students who are different from them.

Another study explored PSTs' challenges and successes with culturally relevant text selection and pedagogy for their literacy instruction (Christ and Sharma, 2018). When children saw themselves in books and these books mirrored their lives, they were motivated to read and thus had a higher engagement in literacy activities (Christ and Sharma, 2018; Nieto and Bode, 2018). Through readings of culturally relevant texts and professors' modeling of culturally relevant pedagogy and texts, PSTs were encouraged to implement both culturally relevant texts and pedagogy in their field-based practicum. However, Christ and Sharma (2018) discovered challenges, such as PSTs' resistance to implementing these texts, limited view of culture, lack of knowledge about students' cultures and interests, and lack of opportunities for their students to develop critical consciousness. They also discussed criteria for success, such as knowledge about the students' culture and interests, attention to multiple dimensions of text selection, and use of culturally relevant text selection and pedagogy in combination. The researchers posited, 'although readings and models of practice may be helpful, teaching practice and reflection on practice are key features of effective teacher preparation for culturally relevant text selection and pedagogy' (Christ and Sharma, 2018: 69).

Similarly, Skepple (2015) focused on the identification of culturally responsive practices and the perceived influence these practices had on PSTs' perception of their preparedness to teach diverse students in an urban setting. In the focus group, PSTs shared that they were less confident in their abilities to work with diverse students, thus calling for teacher education programs to

expand future educators' level of sociocultural conscientiousness. The researcher proposed that teacher preparation programs should include sociocultural consciousness awareness, modeling of culturally responsive instructional practices, dialoguing among PSTs on diversity topics, and exposure to diverse students and educators through their programs.

The above-mentioned studies underscore the importance of reflection and self-evaluation, mentorship, critical dialoguing, and experiences over time in preparing future educators to engage in culturally responsive pedagogy.

Action Research in Graduate Teacher Education

Many graduate teacher preparation programs grapple with adequately preparing their PSTs for working with MLs (Allen et al., 2017; Fasching-Varner and Seriki, 2012; Warren, 2017). Nieto and Bode (2018) call for educational reforms to prepare educators to become better equipped to support diverse students. Moreover, Allen et al. (2017) advocate that providing isolated coursework on diversity topics with ineffective field experiences tends to perpetuate the implicit biases and misconceptions among PSTs instead of preparing competent educators. Therefore, Daniel (2016) suggests that teacher education programs need to guide teacher candidates to enact culturally responsive practices across their coursework and field-based practicum experiences by engaging in self-reflective practices. Action or applied research as a methodology may serve as a conduit to develop these practices since it 'provides teachers with opportunities to build and sharpen the dispositions that create reflective and collaborative teacher leaders' (Vaughan and Burnaford, 2016: 286).

In a comprehensive literature review on action research in graduate teacher education from 2000 to 2015, Vaughan and Burnaford (2016) proposed that although action research studies varied, they had three goals in common: action research as reflective practice, action research as participatory inquiry, and action research as teacher leadership. Regardless of their foci, all three shared the same features. These included the recognition of individuals to actively participate in all aspects of the research process and to focus on making improvements in their practices and/or settings (Kemmis et al., 2014).

In our study, we focused on the first goal: action research as reflective practice (Vaughan and Burnaford, 2016). Since action research aims to promote systematic, intentional, and planned reflection to ensure a change in teachers and their educational contexts (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2014), it has the ability to impact teacher professional growth and as a result further their professional development. By guiding PSTs in completing a research project with authentic reflection on their teaching practices, PSTs have the ability to develop their skills as reflective practitioners (Gujarati, 2018), which helps build their dispositions as effective educators and researchers.

In a study on graduate PSTs' participation in action research in a yearlong residency program in which they co-taught with mentor teachers in a high-need rural school, Schulte (2017) discovered that the majority of PSTs felt confident in their abilities to reflect on their teaching and student learning, analyze student data, and collaborate with others. Based on the survey data and focus group, many attributed their sense of preparedness

to their involvement with action research, especially as it relates to using student-level data to make instructional decisions. PSTs felt that they gained confidence and higher skill levels through action research projects compared to other PSTs who did not have this experience.

Furthermore, in an ethnographic study, Storms (2015) examined how graduate PSTs' action research projects demonstrated commitment toward change agency. Through a semester-long action research course in which PSTs learned about the stages of action research and how to collect and analyze data in their classrooms, the researcher discovered that PSTs focused on topics that were practical and emancipatory in nature. Their projects explored cultural and institutional factors that affect student learning and demonstrated democratic principles of the teaching and learning process. The author argued that PSTs showed their developing commitments toward change agency through action research and that more studies should be conducted to explore pedagogical practices in action research courses to support teacher educators in designing meaningful experiences for their PSTs.

Additionally, in a longitudinal study of teachers of English as a foreign language who were part of a master's degree program, Gomez (2020) determined that implementing action research in the classrooms provided these teachers with an opportunity to hone effective pedagogical practices to meet their students' needs. These educators continued putting students at the core of their instruction even after finishing their programs, thus demonstrating pedagogical content knowledge through reflection on and interrogation of their instructional practices. These findings concurred with Shosh and McAteer's (2016: 14) study, which revealed that in-service teachers, who conducted action research in their graduate programs, continued to 'talk of their continued reflective practice, the centrality of action research to their current practice, and to their hopes that this changed practice would impact positively on the lives and education of their students'.

Moreover, Honigsfeld et al. (2013) examined the impact of a master's program capstone action research experience at their college in which researchers collected data over a decade. Based on faculty and graduate student surveys, they found that professors believed in the role of action research as professional development but were unsure of its impact on comprehensive school reforms. Graduates appreciated that they were able to design a study based on their interests, grow professionally, improve instruction for students, and apply theory to practice. Ultimately, the researchers concluded that the action research requirement 'continues to be the hallmark feature of the graduate education program' (Honigsfeld et al., 2013: 21) because it fosters inquiry into one's own teaching and learning practices, thus stimulating professional learning of both graduate education students and their faculty.

As Hine (2013: 161) posits, 'the solutions-based focus, emphasis on fostering practitioner empowerment, and pragmatic appeal of action research collectively render this research methodology a worthwhile professional development activity for teachers'. He argues that due to the ever-present need for educators to become involved in professional development, conducting action research as part of their graduate education coursework

provides these teachers with a systematic and reflective approach to address the needs of their respective educational communities. Therefore, our research aimed to add to the literature by utilizing action research to help us examine our graduate students' reflections and understandings of culturally responsive practices within a community-based experience in an effort to systematically evaluate our program. We investigated the graduate students' perceptions towards teaching migrant education students and their learning outcomes, utilizing reflective practices that asked them to apply two TESOL courses' content to their tutoring field experience with their assigned migrant education students. Our research question was: How did self-reflective practices on tutoring in a community-based experience affect PSTs' understandings of culturally responsive practices about teaching MLs?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We employed action research methodology (Mertler, 2020) because we, two teacher educators, were interested in examining how our program affected PSTs' beliefs about teaching MLs to inform our future programmatic decisions. Additionally, our PSTs employed action research, as they worked with their MLs in one of our courses. Due to the collaborative and cyclical nature of action research, this research methodology was best aligned with our study because it explored PSTs' critical reflection on their instructional strategies and their students' learning. We incorporated a systematic approach by examining specific assignments and implementing regular reflective practices with the ultimate goal of improving our program and guiding our PSTs to be engaged in their own professional development. We employed Mertler's (2020) design of action research, which consists of four stages: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. Planning consists of identifying a research topic, conducting Reconnaissance (reflecting on one's beliefs and gathering contextual information to set the stage for research), reviewing existing literature, and developing a research plan. The acting stage consists of collecting and analyzing data. The developing stage is the action plan with suggestions for the next cycle of action research. Finally, the reflecting stage takes place throughout the entire study in which researchers continuously reflect on the process and eventually share their findings with others. As part of this study, we reflected on every assignment and our students' attainment of knowledge and skills with the goal of continuously adjusting our teaching practices and assignments. Additionally, we as researchers collaborated with one another by sharing our experiences with the courses we were teaching at the time of the study and tapping into each other's expertise for language acquisition and cultural competence topics. Because of our trust and willingness to be vulnerable with each other, we honed our critical reflection skills as we collaborated together (McNiff, 2016; Norton, 2019; Schneider, 2019). To us, this reflective process is the core component of action research.

Additionally, our study was a qualitative case study as we explored the experiences of six PSTs who were part of our program and took a second language acquisition and diversity course along with a field-based practicum in which they tutored migrant education students. We were 'interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences'

(Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 6), all hallmarks of qualitative research. Furthermore, in our research, the researchers were the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; we used inductive processes and focused on providing a rich-thick description in the write-up of the results (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Finally, our research represented a case study because we analyzed a bounded system; participants were from two cohorts of our graduate program.

SETTING

Our master's comprehensive university is located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States and is considered primarily an undergraduate institution with over 20,000 students including 10 percent of whom are graduate students. Our program consists of M.Ed. in Equity and Cultural Diversity and MAT in TESOL, in which graduate students learn about second language acquisition theories, theories of cultural competence, language assessment, and other courses related to their specialization, such as immigration and education, methods for teaching MLs, and literacy courses among others. The students in our programs primarily come from middle-class families and are white and female corresponding to the sample in this study. Each cohort consisted of five to six students, thus enabling us to conduct rich and critical discussions with and among our students. As researchers, we are both white cisgender female teacher educators who have been working with graduate and undergraduate TESOL students. One of the researchers is a former language learner who is trilingual and who was born and raised outside of the United States and has 15 years of experience teaching TESOL-related courses in the U.S. The other researcher is bilingual and has 10 years of experience teaching TESOL-related courses and 20 years of teaching diversity-related courses in the U.S. Despite our combined 35 years of experience, we consistently strive to be abreast of the current research related to our field and refine our teaching practices to promote our student learning. Therefore, action research plays an essential role in our praxis.

Our program partnered with a state-run migrant education organization that has a branch in our town. This organization assists migrant families and their children with various support services to help them adjust to U.S. society. Approximately 110 families participate in a regular academic year. The program's goal is to ensure that all migrant students reach academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma or equivalency. To qualify for this program, families must have moved within the past three years in search of work in agriculture or raw food processing. The majority of families are Latinx, but there is a growing population of individuals from North Africa and the Middle East.

SAMPLE

The majority of our six participants were female, white, middle-class, and native speakers of English, corresponding with the demographics of typical U.S. teachers (Nieto and Bode, 2018). One of the female participants was of Chinese descent and considered herself multilingual, and the male participant was white and had experience teaching English in China. Two other female participants had undergraduate degrees in Spanish and study abroad/work experience in Spain. Another female participant had some international experiences due to mission trips and was also exposed to diverse student populations from her previous work as a teaching assistant in an elementary inclusive classroom. The fifth female participant engaged in a study abroad trip in Switzerland, Ethiopia and Rwanda. She later served as a resident advisor for the same study abroad experience. All PSTs had exposure to cultures different than their own. These PSTs took part in this study during the beginning stages of our graduate program.

Our PSTs were engaged in one-on-one tutoring of these migrant education students. To serve their students, our PSTs were required to do a background check and complete formal training in which they learned appropriate cultural norms and expectations. They conducted tutoring sessions once or twice a week for an hour each in the students' homes, schools, or public libraries. In our study, migrant education students were predominantly of Latinx background with Spanish being their home language. However, two students were of African descent. Table 1 provides the demographic information of our PSTs and their tutees.

Participant	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Language Proficiencies	Tutee Information
P1	M	White	Native English, Intermediate Spanish, Beginner Mandarin	High schooler, male, Sudan, intermediate English proficiency, content - mathematics: algebra
P2	F	White	Native English, Beginner Spanish	Kindergartner, male, Cuba, beginning English proficiency, content - emergent literacy
P3	F	Asian	Native Mandarin, Advanced Japanese, Advanced English	Kindergartner, male, Puerto Rico, beginning English proficiency, content - emergent literacy
P4	F	White	Native English, Beginner Spanish	First grader, female, Mexico, beginning English proficiency, content - emergent literacy
P5	F	White	Native English, Advanced Spanish	Eighth grader, female, Dominican Republic, intermediate English proficiency, content - language arts and science
P6	F	White	Native English, Advanced Spanish	Second grader, female, Congo, high conversation English proficiency, low academic English proficiency, content - language arts, social studies, and science

Note: P = participant; M = male; F = female

Table 1: Demographic information, 2018-2020

Data Sources and Analysis

Our data sources consisted of 10 weekly practicum journals, an action research project, a philosophy of diversity paper, and an individual semi-structured interview upon completion of the courses for each participant. The weekly practicum journals (see Appendix A) prompted PSTs to provide a detailed summary of their tutoring experience and to reflect on one major course connection from either the second language acquisition course or the diversity course. As course instructors, we provided weekly feedback in which we asked questions and guided PSTs in making connections to content in our respective courses or reflecting more deeply about their understandings of these concepts. Related to the journals, PSTs orally shared aspects of their tutoring experiences as part of weekly class discussions in both the language acquisition and diversity courses. While the discussions were not considered a formal data collection source, they did serve as one way for PSTs to reflect on their experiences, raise questions, and gain insights from their peers about language acquisition and diversity-related topics.

In the action research project, PSTs were asked to pursue their "burning question(s)" related to their tutoring of a migrant education student and second language acquisition course. They were free to choose any questions connected to the teaching-learning process; however, these questions had to be measurable and observable to evaluate any potential changes in their instructional practices. First, PSTs were required to read and analyze 12 recent peer-reviewed journal articles to learn any evidence-based practices that could potentially be applied to their tutees. Second, they were asked to apply these practices during their tutoring sessions and reflect on their effectiveness (or lack of) as measured by their students' achievement and satisfaction in their weekly practicum journals in addition to formal observation papers. Additionally, they were asked to interview a language specialist to gain other insights into their research focus. PSTs were asked to submit individual papers based on these assignments throughout the semester, which eventually contributed to a culminating action research project paper at the end of the semester.

The philosophy of diversity was a summative assessment in which PSTs wrote a teaching statement grounded in texts about multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy. PSTs reflected on their concept of learning, the concept of teaching, goals for their students, instructional strategies, interactions with students, assessment, and their focus on professional growth. Within the project, they also added appendices that included their reflections on past journal posts to highlight growth in their development or key diversity-related points they chose to emphasize as evident in their migrant education experiences.

Finally, the individual semi-structured interviews took place after students had completed all coursework and received their grades. We created open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B) pertaining to their beliefs about culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate practices they implemented with their migrant education students. We also included follow-up questions about some of their written work in which we asked them to elaborate on their remarks. These practices helped us with the triangulation of data and ensured the validity of the themes we uncovered (Mertler, 2020).

We employed thematic analysis (Mertler, 2020) by first reading and rereading data multiple times as they became available and developing a preliminary coding list together prior to coding the rest of the data. Both researchers were involved in gathering data sources and their analyses and meeting frequently to review each other's analyses. This process served as a peer review to ensure the trustworthiness of the data categories (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, we conducted member checking with our participants to ensure the accuracy of our interview transcripts. We triangulated our sources to establish the dependability and credibility of our findings (Mertler, 2020). Our themes clustered around the following categories: teacher growth in awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), asset-based perspectives, equity-oriented approaches, teacher expectations, and relationship building between teachers and students/families. When we analyzed our themes more carefully, we recognized a strong alignment between them and Villegas and Lucas's (2007) culturally responsive framework. Subsequently, we organized our codes under appropriate Villegas and Lucas's (2007) culturally responsive framework principles. Table 2 displays our original coding practices.

Theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	Total
CRP Teacher Growth	17	37	9	15	23	39	140
Asset-Based Perspectives	15	18	8	7	20	9	77
Equity- Oriented Approaches	11	20	10	7	17	7	72
Teacher Expectations	3	5	5	5	7	3	28
Relationship Building	8	24	6	12	6	6	62
Total	54	104	38	46	73	64	379

Note: P = participant; CRP = culturally responsive pedagogy

Table 2: Original themes and number of participant codes, 2018-2020

RESULTS

Our findings revealed PSTs' awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy, areas for future growth in their instructional practices, and a recognition of the importance of learning from and with their students and families. The predominant themes that emerged corresponded to Villegas and Lucas's (2007) research that we slightly reframed to the following principles: understanding how students learn, learning about students' backgrounds, becoming socioculturally conscious, holding affirming views about multilingual learners and their families, enacting equitable teaching practices, and advocating for multilingual communities. Because our participants were closely involved in supporting students

and their families, we focused on family connections in addition to student connections when examining Villegas and Lucas's (2007) framework.

Understanding How Students Learn

All six of our PSTs discussed the importance of striving to understand how their tutees learned best. Villegas and Lucas (2007) explain that this theme focuses on how teachers create bridges between the knowledge students possess and with new content they are learning. This principle stresses having students use prior knowledge and beliefs to assist with their learning process. We noticed our theme of asset-based perspectives also included codes related to building background knowledge and incorporating choice to build on student strengths. Some of our participants' remarks under the theme of CRP teacher growth also made reference to their awareness of how to support their students' learning processes more effectively. A few representative quotes are provided in Table 3.

Participant	Source	Quote
1	Interview	*"I need to learn those types of things that are going on with the students, and that means asking questions or just trying to observe or talking to other educators"*.
2	Journal 7	*"My goal in our weekly tutoring sessions is to enhance K.'s Spanish while also working towards English proficiency. Rather than reduce his use of his native language, I am using it to help him learn"*.
3	Journal 7	*"I think it is good to try to build his background knowledge on this Latino culture and help him to feel kind of connected between two cultures"*.
4	Interview	*"…when you're allowing them to use their native language in the classroom or you have visuals in the classroom that have their language that they can see it. And usually when you see something that's familiar, it's like a source of comfort"*.
5	Journal 9	*"With the time that we had left we read more of Under the Mambo Moon. I think it is really important that B. is able to make connections from her life to the books that she reads"*.
6	Journal 3	She noted that her student struggled *"because she does not have the basic vocabulary to understand the explanations"*.

Table 3: Representative quotes related to principle 1, 2018-2020

Our PSTs included different ways they sought to build bridges between their students' knowledge and the content they were teaching. Participant 1's comments are grounded in his awareness to collaborate with other educators to provide academic support for his student. In particular, he consulted with the math teacher to gain strategies to enhance his tutoring sessions with his tutee. Participant 1 also regularly noted that he needed to ask his student questions about how he learns best. Participant 6 was also reflecting on the learning challenges her student exhibited and recognized that she needed to implement other strategies to build from her student's knowledge base, the vocabulary she did know. In future tutoring sessions, she intentionally strived to make connections to her tutee's background knowledge by incorporating visuals and terminology she knew. Participant 2 went further and addressed the need to incorporate her student's home language in learning activities as one way to build on her student's prior knowledge understanding. For her, the student's home language was an invaluable resource that needed to be cultivated and maintained, so her tutee could learn at a high level. Participant 4 echoed these sentiments in her commitment to using the student's home language to serve as a source of comfort, which she believed would help her tutee learn more effectively. In a similar way, both Participants 3 and 5 intentionally sought out books that they hoped would be representative of their students' Latinx cultures to attempt to link those stories to their students' life experiences. Moreover, they were considering how their tutees learned by striving to create meaningful culturally and linguistically rich experiences for them. Both had some initial challenges in finding appropriate resources that resonated with their students, but ultimately, they were successful. Even with these positive examples, many of our PSTs remarked that this principle was an area that they needed to continue to learn more about. They recognized the importance of strengthening their own knowledge base from colleagues, workshops, and other resources to help their students learn at a high level.

Learning About Students' Backgrounds

Our PSTs' reflections demonstrated awareness of learning about students' lives when they described the importance of learning about their students' cultures, identities, and interests. Villegas and Lucas (2007) describe this principle as one that focuses on learning about the students' family makeup, their immigration history, favorite activities, and experiences that contribute to their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005). The PSTs addressed connections to this principle in many of the statements we coded under asset-based perspectives, relationship building, and CRP teacher growth. Several participants mentioned the need to 'get an inside view of the student' and to 'learn more about her home country and culture' as well as the 'importance of listening' to students to gain insights about their experiences. Several representative quotes from this theme are provided in Table 4.

All of our participants discussed the importance of learning about their tutees' cultural or familial backgrounds. Some intentionally incorporated the tutee's home language in their instruction to affirm their student's cultural background, as evident in Participant 4's remarks. Even if PSTs were unable to incorporate their home language in instruction, they valued learning about their culture as noted in Participant 1's reflections. He took time to learn about C.'s traditions, showing a genuine interest in his culture. C., his student, reciprocated by sharing a traditional bread his family made with Participant 1 at one of their sessions. Our PSTs

Participant	Source	Quote
1	Action research	*"While I was unable to ask C. questions in his native language, we spoke about his cultural identity and other cultural aspects important to him".*
2	Interview	*"I think it's important to realize that you're not only working with students in an education setting, you're also working with their family or their parents or guardians that are also with them".*
3	Journal 2	*"When I read the page about reading picture books, I asked G., 'Does your dad read books to you too before bedtime?' G. said, 'Yes. My dad read books to me too!'"*
4	Philosophy	*"To include a student's language, is to welcome and accept more of the student".*
5	Philosophy	*"I gave my migrant education student a survey about reading preferences, to help guide me in choosing books that she might enjoy reading".*
6	Journal 4	*"I had a matching game for her to play in which she matched the animals to where they lived. She loved it so much she ended up playing 5 times".*

Table 4: Representative quotes related to principle 2, 2018-2020

valued these relationship-building experiences and felt they contributed to the effectiveness of their tutoring experiences. Some participants had the benefit of tutoring their students in their homes, affording more opportunities to learn about the students' families and home environment. Participants 2, 3, and 5 conducted their tutoring sessions in the students' apartments, which seemed to provide them with an enhanced awareness of the role of their tutees' families in their lives. Participant 2 demonstrated a firm commitment to collaborating with the entire family to support the child's needs in her interview a year and a half after the tutoring took place. She recognized that "it takes a village" to fully assist learners by incorporating their interests or culture in lessons. As she gained a stronger relationship with her tutee's parents, Participant 2 used that awareness to create literacy games that incorporated their son's interests and that the family could play with him to reinforce the academic content he was learning at school. Participant 3 also made an effort to incorporate familial connections in her lessons as evident in her journal response. She was interested in learning about her student's home life, especially when she read books that included characters and their families. Participant 5 knew she might have challenges finding books that included examples of Dominican Republic cultural

traditions and her student's ethnic background, so she created a survey to learn more about her student's interests as another way to try to connect to her life. Similarly, Participant 6 focused on creating activities that pertained to her student's interests in the game she developed. All of these examples convey the PSTs' attempts to learn about their tutees' backgrounds and to incorporate these understandings into their lessons.

Becoming Socioculturally Conscious

By tutoring students whose life experiences differed from their own, our PSTs grew in their sociocultural awareness that one's worldview is influenced by life experiences and these are mediated by a variety of factors. In our original theme of CRP teacher growth, we included codes in which our PSTs recognized they had a culture and biases, important aspects of this principle. Our PSTs' reflections also conveyed understandings of how status differentiation relates to differential access to power and most importantly that schools should play a role in mitigating these inequities (Villegas and Lucas, 2007). These ideas reflected our original themes of equity-oriented approaches and CRP teacher growth. Some representative quotes related to this theme are provided in Table 5.

Participant	Source	Quote
1	Interview	*"That teaching requires helping students gain cultural capital; they need cultural understandings and real life knowledge of the US".*
2	Philosophy	*"Due to this experience with K., I have now made a personal goal to look for signs of trauma or home stressors within all of my future students in order to provide any additional support they may need".*
3	Philosophy	*"After reflecting on my education journey, I am totally convinced by the fact that the sociopolitical context of China influenced significantly my education and teaching philosophy".*
4	Philosophy	*"Just like I did when substituting, I hope to place myself or be placed at a school where I am the minority so that I can push my biases and uncomfortability daily".*
5	Action research	*"This lack of availability [culturally relevant literature] sends the message to children that their cultures do not matter, and that is not something Mrs. S. or any EL teacher wants their students to think".*
6	Interview Journal 6	*"I'm still wrapped up in American culture. I need to open my lens".* *"In the future, I am going to try to pick books that will resonate more with J. and her experiences and try not to forget that her childhood has not been like all of the other American students".*

Table 5: Representative quotes related to principle 3, 2018-2020

Several of our participants discussed their own worldviews or the biases they held. Participants 3 and 6 made direct remarks about how they were greatly influenced by their own culture. By interacting with students who practiced different cultural norms from themselves, they recognized their own cultural practices and the need to "open their lens". Participant 4 opined that she needed to address her own biases and would actively seek out other experiences where she was not in the majority to broaden her understanding of others. She recognized that she would need to feel uncomfortable to change her views and to become more socioculturally conscious.

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

19

In other cases, our PSTs reflected on societal challenges their tutees experienced and articulated their awareness of these struggles. Participant 1 reflected on the Sudanese high school student he tutored who struggled with math in part because of the American cultural experiences (e.g., football) that were embedded in story problems. Without this type of cultural capital, this student was unable to complete the assignments. By tutoring in her student's home, Participant 2 experienced hearing prejudicial comments from neighbors and learning about police intrusions into the family's apartment. She realized these experiences could cause trauma and impact the child's ability to attend to his studies. To be an effective teacher, she would need to be attentive to various emotions the child could display. Additionally, both Participants 5 and 6 suggested that one way to acknowledge other worldviews and begin to mitigate one-sided curriculum was through the selection of culturally responsive literature.

Our PSTs seemed to recognize that developing cultural competence was a life-long endeavor and that they would need to continue to read multicultural literature, engage in professional development workshops, and constantly expand their understandings beyond their own experiences.

Holding Affirming Views About Multilingual Learners and Their Families

Holding affirmative views about multilingual students and their families also emerged as an important theme for our participants. As Villegas and Lucas (2007) suggest, this theme means that teachers need to have faith in students' abilities, challenge them in academic activities, and hold them to high standards in order for them to succeed in and out of the classroom. To assist students in reaching these goals, educators need to provide appropriate scaffolding that utilizes the background knowledge students bring to the academic experience. We noted many parallels in our themes of CRP teacher growth and teacher expectations. Several representative quotes related to this principle are provided in Table 6.

Participant	Source	Quote
1	Journal 4	*"His energy may be lower during school, which his previous economics teacher mentioned, but he is an intelligent and hardworking student who wants to succeed"*.
2	Philosophy	*"For English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers to be all that teachers are, facilitators of language, and leaders in multicultural education they must be clear, considerate, and challenging"*.
3	Philosophy	*"In my view, teaching is not just providing knowledge and skills that meet students' needs for learning, but also creating an inviting and culturally respectful and responsive learning environment in which every student feels proud, respected, and valued as a member"*.
4	Journal 11	*"This time we took a picture of our mural and our adventure to the giant atlas book. Both times I allowed L. to take the photo. Empowering and trusting her with items, I hope, gives her validation"*.
5	Philosophy	*"I hope that my belief in students' abilities will give them the confidence to do greater work than they ever thought possible"*.
6	Philosophy	*"I believe that all students should be exposed to high expectations from educators who recognize and believe in their potential to find success in academic, personal, and social situations"*.

Table 6: Representative quotes related to principle 4, 2018-2020

This principle emphasizes teachers' belief systems, a necessary component to provide culturally responsive practices. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 provide comments that demonstrate their beliefs in student abilities, a need to value students' contributions, a commitment to promoting rigorous learning experiences. They want their students to feel proud, gain confidence in themselves, and find success in all aspects of their lives. An effective learning environment means creating a space in which students feel respected and have opportunities to thrive academically and personally. Participant 4 recognized that her tutee, L., who was in the silent phase for much of the semester, needed assistance in building confidence in her abilities. By giving L. opportunities to take photos of her artwork and other activities they completed in the public library, where they met for their tutoring sessions, Participant 4 hoped to empower her student. A key philosophical tenet for Participant 4 was the ethics of care (Noddings, 1984), a critical aspect of her beliefs for affirming students. She believed that through care, she demonstrated acceptance and affirmation of the child. All of the PSTs believed that their students could be successful, and by creating an environment where their students felt valued, challenged, and supported, they could achieve academic, personal, and social accomplishments.

Enacting Equitable Teaching Practices

In our themes of asset-based perspectives, equity-oriented approaches, and CRP teacher growth, our PSTs also mentioned instructional strategies and assessment practices that supported Villegas and Lucas's (2007) equitable teaching practices. The PSTs drew upon their tutees' home languages, used a variety of instructional strategies, and sought to use examples from their students' lives to bridge the content they were learning. A few representative quotes are provided in Table 7.

Since all of our PSTs were engaged in action research based on their tutoring experiences with MLs, they were intentionally asked to focus on the use of instructional strategies to support their students' language and content development. Many PSTs saw the results of their practices in students' improved literacy skills by using culturally relevant texts and bilingual books, as stated by Participant 5. Participant 6 observed vocabulary improvement with her tutee when she utilized instructional conversations. These types of oral practices replicate more typical conversations and can include opportunities for the teacher to think aloud and create meaning about content with the student. When students have a balanced partnership with the instructor, they gain autonomy to help direct the learning experience. Participant 2 emphasized the importance of student

Participant	Source	Quote
1	Philosophy	*"Assessing students through different mediums and considering multiple intelligences can help students find their unique abilities and challenge others to step outside their comfort zone".*
2	Philosophy	*"I believe that the development of an individual's voice and identity is a significant indicator that an educational opportunity has taken place".*
3	Philosophy	*"My knowledge about the family makeup of G., a student whom I have tutored in the last two months, helped me better understand his situation and cultural background and make adjustments in my lesson plans for him".*
4	Philosophy	*"Also, we started each session with something she loved, drawing. I did not know much about her, but I could show care by always creating time for that. Eventually, I discovered she loved manipulatives and embraced her need to move around, so our activities started using these as learning methods more".*
5	Journal 7	*"I saw an increase in her abilities from the first time we read Día de los Muertos and even more to the second reading. I think that comprehensible input in the form of culturally relevant texts is working well".*
6	Philosophy	*"Throughout the remainder of the semester, as I was doing formative assessments, I noticed that the concepts and vocabulary set that J. seemed to retain most were those which we discussed in a more conversational sense….this reaffirmed my belief in the value of instructional conversation and has led me to be more cognizant of content and how to make it more comprehensible in the future".*

Table 7: Representative quotes related to principle 5, 2018-2020

voices and identities being present in their work to indicate that learning had taken place. In essence, she believed that students needed to have ownership over their learning for it to be meaningful. Where possible Participant 2 incorporated her student's home language, even though she did not know it well, to connect to her student's identity. Participant 3 echoed these sentiments; one adjustment she made in her instruction was utilizing some of her student's home language later in the semester. She also inquired about her tutee's interests and created lessons that included drawing, movement, and music to tap into those strengths. Participant 4 employed similar strategies, first learning her tutee's interests and then incorporating them into her lessons. Participant 1 summarized the other participants' ideas well; they all were striving to

utilize a variety of instructional strategies to promote increased engagement and motivation of their students.

Advocating for Multilingual Communities

Finally, our findings revealed that becoming an advocate for students and their families was another important component of PSTs' reflections. They viewed themselves as part of a community of educators who were striving to create more equitable learning experiences for their students. They also perceived teaching as an ethical activity, another concept highlighted in Villegas and Lucas's (2007) definition of advocacy for students. In the PSTs' quotes from our themes of CRP teacher growth and equity-oriented approaches, we noted numerous connections to this principle, as shown in Table 8.

Participant	Source	Quote
1	Interview	*"I want to advocate for my students and help give them the resources on whatever fields they're interested in or whatever things they are curious about and want to learn more".*
2	Philosophy	*"I seek to have students, colleagues, and community members challenge me and ask, "What are you going to do about it?" in order to find solutions to issues that arise and advocate for change that positively benefits all involved. Even if my initial answer is, "I don't know," I seek to be exposed to events, stories, and literature that assist me in gaining knowledge about an issue at question".*
3	Action research	*"Collaboration between ESL teachers and content teachers is a very effective and applicable way that many teachers and schools are practicing to better meet ELL students' needs".*
4	Philosophy	*"Care displays itself through acceptance, affirmation, and advocacy of students. These attributes are important since an ESOL teacher may have a representation of the whole world in front of them".*
5	Interview	*"She [tutee's mother] was definitely invested in her kids, and she cared so much about them. But if you weren't there and you weren't in that setting, you might not know that".*
6	Philosophy	*"I believe the physiological and safety needs of students, as set forth by Maslow (McLeod, 2022), must be met before a student can truly begin learning any of the content, whether it be standards based or life skills based… We must be there to support and advocate for a student".*

Table 8: Representative quotes related to principle 6, 2018-2020

The PSTs' understanding of becoming part of a community of educators to disrupt inequities manifested in their desire to be challenged in order to grow in this area, as highlighted by Participant 2. She realized that she would need to intentionally reach out to others to acquire knowledge to better support and advocate for her students. In a similar manner, Participant 3 recognized the need to collaborate with other educators to effectively advocate for

MLs. Furthermore, Participant 1 felt that advocating for students would require him to learn about other topics that might not be directly related to his content. In his work with his high school migrant education student, he discovered that C. was interested in becoming a pilot. By broadening his 'own horizons' about pilot schools, Participant 1 was able to support his student's aspiration by explaining the requirements in a more comprehensive way.

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

21

Participants 4 and 6 demonstrated their beliefs of teaching as an ethical activity. Participant 4 focused on her beliefs about the importance of the ethics of care; she recognized that multilingual students represent the entire world and may need individualized support. Participant 6 held firm convictions in Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs and believed to advocate for students well, teachers and schools first needed to address their basic physiological needs before meaningful learning could take place. She acted on this principle by providing her student, J., with a snack at each tutoring session, once she realized her student was hungry after school. In another example, Participant 6 attended to her student's emotional needs by taking a walk around the school before engaging in academic tasks to help J. contend with that challenge in an appropriate way.

Finally, Participant 5 believed in advocating for the entire family. She recognized that educators may have limited knowledge of parents' commitment to their children's education because those actions are not revealed in typical ways such as attending parent-teacher conferences. In her example, Participant 5 witnessed her student's mother supporting her child, B., largely through care and commitment to her schooling. Participant 5 would not have been a tutor for B. had her mother not taken the initiative to be involved in the Migrant Education program. Yet, Participant 5 realized that as an ESOL teacher, she will need to advocate for the parents of her students and disrupt other educators' beliefs of them if she hears negative or degrading comments.

DISCUSSION

Our findings revealed that our PSTs had an awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Villegas and Lucas, 2007), they recognized the importance of learning from and with their tutees and families but still had areas for growth when implementing appropriate instructional strategies, leading us to examine more fully the strengths and gaps in our program. Villegas and Lucas's (2007) framework served as an important starting point for recognizing strengths. We found clear connections to the themes of understanding how students learn, learning about students' backgrounds, becoming socioculturally conscious, holding affirming views about multilingual learners and their families, enacting equitable teaching practices, and advocating for multilingual communities as noted in our results.

Analysis using Gay's (2018) research also suggested that our PSTs implemented culturally responsive practices. Our PSTs' reflections indicated their beliefs in validating their students by teaching to and through their strengths. They incorporated the use of games, drawing, singing, movement, and the home language of their tutees to capitalize on these strengths. They wanted their students to learn and continuously tried different strategies until they could utilize students' abilities and interests. Because many of our PSTs had sessions in their students' homes, they were afforded ready-made opportunities to learn about their students' identities and create comprehensive connections to their ethnic groups and communities. They witnessed the foods they ate, family interactions and other cultural traditions. Yet, our PSTs still needed to engage more

in the discipline of noticing (Daniel, 2016) in order to realize these whole-child connections. As participant 6 acknowledged, she needed to 'open [her] lens'. We could have encouraged our participants to be genuinely curious and to give clearer accounts of their experiences (Daniel, 2106) to lead them to a deeper recognition of multiple perspectives. Our class discussions and journal assignments attempted to promote this act of noticing, but we need to be more intentional with this focus in the future. The after-school tutoring also lent itself to Gay's (2018) multidimensional characteristic of culturally responsive pedagogy because our students needed to consider student-teacher relationships, curriculum and instructional strategies to assist their tutees in learning effectively. Their tutoring was one-on-one necessitating the need for a meaningful relationship with the student, and the focus of the session was the remediation of curriculum concepts fostering their careful examination of the curriculum and instructional strategies. Many of our PSTs' reflections demonstrated their understandings of the intersection of all three. In particular, Participant 6 mentioned the value of instructional conversation to enable the content she was teaching to be more comprehensible for her tutee; this practice also promoted a stronger relationship between them. Likewise, the strategies our PSTs used were both empowering and transformative (Gay, 2018). Many PSTs mentioned their tutees' gains in self-efficacy and confidence over time. Participant 4's tutee was in the silent phase during much of the semester, at first not speaking at all or only in Spanish. Yet, after several weeks, her student began making simple requests to draw a picture or go to the bathroom, a big breakthrough in her agency. Other PSTs noted that their students reveled in 'being the teacher' and leading their tutoring sessions. These lessons did not follow traditional teacher-centered approaches and often included students' home languages where appropriate, giving them access to another strength and source of pride.

Our research also had parallels with other studies that stressed the need for teacher preparation programs to focus on sociocultural awareness through reflection and self-evaluation (Bachelor, deWater and Thompson, 2019; Skepple, 2015). Because our PSTs engaged in weekly reflections about their tutoring experiences and were asked to review their journal entries again as they developed their philosophy of diversity, they were prompted to self-evaluate and re-evaluate their initial beliefs. Our study compared with Bachelor, deWater and Thompson's (2019) research that PST reflections provided opportunities for critical dialogue and consequently led to a transformation of thoughts and hopefully actions. Participant 4 mentioned the need to constantly put herself in situations where she was the minority, so she could be uncomfortable and gain empathy. Several of our participants remarked that they would now focus on ways to utilize student capital and look for appropriate resources that would reflect their students' experiences and specific needs. These examples show that our PSTs were recognizing differences between their experiences and their students and the need to take action to provide more meaningful learning experiences for them.

Skepple (2015) focused on the importance of increasing the use of dialogue among PSTs on diversity topics. While our students had weekly discussions on their migrant education

experiences at the start of each diversity and second language acquisition class, we recognized that sociocultural awareness took time and intentional effort. Our study demonstrated that this process was slow and not a linear path. Participant 3 needed much of the semester to realize that she was focusing too much on her own culture and not the student's. Unlike Skepple's (2015) suggestion for multiple diverse experiences, our students were only exposed to the one student they tutored. This practice was a weakness of our study; yet, our students experienced a greater diversity of students in other practicum experiences later in the program.

Our study compared and contrasted with Christ and Sharma's (2018) research. Many of our participants focused on the importance of finding and utilizing culturally relevant texts with their tutees. Unlike Christ and Sharma's (2018) findings, none of our PSTs resisted using culturally relevant texts, yet some had challenges finding appropriate books. Similar to these authors' results, our participants needed to expand their understanding of culture. When Participant 5 could not find children's literature pertaining to the Dominican Republic, she instead sought out books with Latinx characters dealing with immigration, an identifiable experience for her tutee. Participant 3 came to realize that Latinx culture is varied and complex after some of her book selections that focused more on Mexican American heritage did not resonate with her Puerto Rican tutee. And perhaps equally important, some of our PSTs began to recognize that their tutees, the majority of whom were early elementary-aged students, were still forming their own understandings of their family's culture. Consequently, our PSTs needed a more nuanced and complex understanding of culture to better support their students (Hammond, 2015). This area was a gap in our instruction and deserves more attention in the future.

Nevertheless, our PSTs were successful in connecting to their tutees' interests. Several used interest surveys, and all discovered topics and activities that were motivating to their tutees. In this way, they incorporated Daniel's (2016) act of noticing and developed critical consciousness (Christ and Sharma, 2018) for guiding their students' learning experiences. In addition, our PSTs seemed to recognize the importance of incorporating appropriate pedagogy with the selection of meaningful texts. Some used instructional conversations, others incorporated music and movement, while others focused on their tutees' personal connections to the literature they read. Our study also contributed to the research of Lambeth and Smith (2016). Similar to their investigation, our PSTs had intentions of helping students succeed, but in our case, they were able to make a positive impact. Like Lambeth and Smith (2016), our PSTs emphasized the importance of relationship building with their students and their families. Our PSTs' one-on-one interactions with their tutees likely contributed to their abilities to foster genuine relationships. They gave undivided attention to their tutees, providing them with opportunities to cultivate meaningful interactions. They were dedicated to exploring various instructional strategies until they found some that resonated with their learners. They also embraced opportunities to talk with their students and learn together, key components of a learning partnership (Hammond, 2015).

Yet, the relationship-building with the parents took longer, even with those who tutored in their students' homes. Their attempts to use the families' home language often was the ice breaker, putting our PSTs in vulnerable positions, but paved the way for more authentic relationships (Bettez, 2017). Now the challenge for our PSTs is translating those relationship-building experiences into a classroom of students. Our PSTs aspire to embrace relationship building, as evident in their philosophy statements, but we do not have evidence that they will be able to accomplish this goal in their own teaching practices with larger groups of children.

Through critical, intentional, and systematic reflection on pedagogical practices and student learning, our PSTs were able to delve deeper into their analyses of their own beliefs and biases, an important component for becoming culturally competent educators (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Nieto and Bode, 2018). Since they worked one-on-one with their respective students, they gained more complex understandings of their tutees (Paris and Alim, 2017), and, as a result, were able to support their learning in affirming, meaningful ways. These practices also fostered individualized professional development for our graduate students due to the action research projects they conducted (Mertler, 2020). They implemented different types of instructional strategies to determine their effectiveness in supporting their MLs. The PSTs had autonomy in directing the focus of their research project and consequently agency in their own learning, making this professional development process relevant and meaningful to them (Honigsfeld et al., 2013).

To embrace the cyclical nature of action research, our findings propel us to further examine questions that go beyond culturally responsive pedagogy into the realm of culturally sustaining practices in our TESOL programs (Paris and Alim, 2017). How can we recognize and foster ways that young people 'are enacting race, ethnicity, language, literacy, and their engagement with culture?' (Paris and Alim, 2017: 7). How can we encourage those practices with our own students? What challenges do they face in enacting culturally sustaining practices? Therefore, further questions will explore PSTs' journeys in becoming reflective multicultural educators and the roadblocks they experience as they strive to enact culturally sustaining practices with their MLs in educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

Our community-based tutoring program provided an avenue for graduate PSTs to integrate theory into practice under our mentorship. Because this experience nurtured critical thinking and reflective practices in which our PSTs analyzed their teaching and student learning through the lens of culturally responsive pedagogy, it also served as their own professional development (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Hine, 2013). Additionally, our study addressed Daniel's (2016) recommendations for integrating coursework and field experiences with self-reflective practices to provide PSTs with a deeper awareness of culturally responsive practices. The findings of this study enabled us to reflect on our program's outcomes in order to assess its strengths and gaps in ensuring

that our graduate students are well-equipped to meet their culturally and linguistically diverse students' needs. We need more longitudinal studies to examine how well these PSTs transfer their understandings of culturally responsive practices to their daily instruction. Future studies need to explore ways graduate students and early career professionals enact culturally sustaining practices and the types of professional development that encourage their continued focus on equity work.

REFERENCES

Allen, A., Hancock, S. D., Starker-Glass, T. and Lewis, C. W. (2017) 'Mapping culturally relevant pedagogy into teacher education programs: A critical framework', *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 119, No. 1, pp.1–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811711900107

Batchelor, K. E., DeWater, K. and Thompson, K. (2019) 'Pre-service teachers' implicit bias: Impacts of confrontation, reflection, and discussion,' *Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Article 3.

Bettez, S. (2017) 'Flipping the script from talking to teens about "celebrating diversity" to promoting equity through embracing vulnerability and enacting courage', *Multicultural Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 90–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2017.1301091

Carter, P. L. and Welner, K. G. (eds.) (2013) *Closing the opportunity gap: what America must do to give every child an even chance*, Oxford, UK: University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199982981.001.0001

Christ, T. and Sharma, S. A. (2018) 'Searching for mirrors: Preservice teachers' journey toward more culturally relevant pedagogy', *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 55–73.

Dana, N. F. and Yendol-Hoppey. D. (2014) *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daniel, S. M. (2016) 'Grappling with culturally responsive pedagogy: a study of elementary-level teacher candidates' learning across practicum and diversity coursework experiences', *The Urban Review*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 579–600. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-016-0369-6

Fasching-Varner, K. J. and Seriki, V.D. (2012) 'Moving beyond seeing with our eyes wide shut: a response to "there is no culturally responsive teaching here"', *Democracy & Education*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 1–6.

Gay, G. (2018) *Culturally responsive teaching: theory, research, and practice*, 3rd edition, New York: Teachers College Press.

Gomez, J. C. (2020) 'Development of EFL teachers' pedagogical content knowledge through action research in a master's program', *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, Vol. 78, No. 4, pp. 533–552. https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/20.78.533

González, N., Moll, L. C. and Amanti, C. (2005) *Funds of knowledge: theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gujarati, J. (2018) 'Taking action: (Re)imagining professional development through the teacher research project', *i.e.: inquiry in education,* Vol. 10, No. 2, Article 2.

Hammond, Z. (2015) *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*, Thousand Oakes, CA: Corwin.

Hine, G. S. (2013) 'The importance of action research in teacher education programs', *Issues in Educational Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 151–163.

Honigsfeld, A., Connolly, M. and Kelly, S. (2013) 'Demystifying teacher action research: lessons learned from a graduate education capstone experience', *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, Vol. 79, No. 2, p. 15–21.

Irwin, V., Zhang, J., Wang, X., Hein, S., Wang, K., Roberts, A., York, C., Barmer, A., Bullock Mann, F., Dilig, R. and Parker, S. (2021) *Report on the condition of education 2021. NCES 2021–144*, [Online], Available: https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2021144 [12 Dec 2022].

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R. and Nixon, R. (2014) *The action research planner: doing critical participatory action research*, Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2

Koubek, E. and Wasta, S. (2022) 'Examining the role of self-reflection as an impetus for cultivating equitable practices for multilingual learners', *The Teacher Educators' Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Article 5.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) 'Toward a theory of culturally relevant teaching', *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 465– 491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014) 'Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix', *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1, pp. 74–84. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751

Ladson-Billings, G. (2021) *Culturally relevant pedagogy: asking a different question*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Lambeth, D. T. and Smith, A. M. (2016) 'Pre-service teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive teacher preparation', *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 85, No. 1, pp. 46–58. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.1.0046

Lewis Chiu, C., Sayman, D., Carrero, K. M., Gibbon, T., Zolkoski, S. M., and Lusk, M. E. (2017) 'Developing culturally competent preservice teachers', *Multicultural Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 47–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2017.1267515

McLeod, S. A. (2022) *Maslow's hierarchy of needs – Simply Psychology*, [Online] www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html [12 Dec 2022].

McNiff, J. (2016) *You and your action research project*, London, UK: Routledge.

Merriam, S. B. and Tisdell, E. J. (2016) *Qualitative research: a guide to design and Implementation*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Mertler, C. A. (2020) *Action research: improving schools and empowering educators*, 6th edition, Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Nieto, S. and Bode, P. (2018) *Affirming diversity: the sociopolitical context of multicultural education*, 7th edition, Boston: Pearson Education.

Noddings, N. (1984) *Caring: a feminine approach to ethics & moral education*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Norton, L. (2019) *Action research in teaching and learning: a practical guide to conducting pedagogical research in universities*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge.

Paris, D. (2012) 'Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice', *Educational researcher*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 93–97. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X1244124

Paris, D. and Alim, H.S. (eds.) (2017) *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Ryken, A.E. and Hamel, F.L. (2016) 'Looking again at "surface-level" reflections: Framing a competence view of early teacher thinking', *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Vol, 43, No.4, pp. 31–53.

Salerno, A.S. and Kibler, A.K. (2015) 'Questions they ask: Considering teacher-inquiry questions posed by pre-service English teachers', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 399–415. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1012174

Schneider, J. (2019) 'Teaching in context: Integrating community-based service-learning into TESOL education', *TESOL Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1. pp. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.380

Skepple, R. G. (2015) 'Preparing culturally responsive pre-service teachers for culturally diverse classrooms', *Kentucky Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning*, Vol. 12, Article 6.

Shosh, J. M. and McAteer, M. (2016) 'The CARN/ARNA inaugural Study Day inquiry: What happens to action research after the master's degree?', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 4–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1132001

Schulte, A. K. (2017) 'The impacts of preservice action research in a rural teaching residency', *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 69–76.

Storms, S. B. (2015) 'Social justice in practice? Exploring teacher candidates' commitment toward change agency through action research', *Action in Teacher Education*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 156–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2015.1004600

Villegas, A. M. and Lucas, T. (2007) 'The culturally responsive teacher', *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 64, No. 6, pp. 28–33.

Vaughan, M. and Burnaford, G. (2016) 'Action research in graduate teacher education: A review of the literature 2000–2015', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 280–299. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1062408

Warren, C. A. (2018) 'Empathy, teacher dispositions, and preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 69, No. 2, pp.169–183. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487117712487

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A. JOURNAL PROMPTS

You may attach a Word or PDF document or upload your response in the textbox. Only use the first name of the participant when describing information about your experience. Limit your remarks to two (2) double-spaced pages.

In your post do the following:
1. Summary of visit: Describe in detail how you assisted the individual and how he/she responded.
2. Brief Reflections: What questions were raised for you? What were you left pondering? Think about concepts from your TESL classes or others that were evident during your time with the student. Highlight one connection and reflect on the meaning to you. Discuss *different* concepts each week. Where possible, incorporate concepts from the previous week's TESL courses. Cite the source of the course resource in your remarks following the current edition of APA.

Evaluation will be based on the ability to:
- Provide clear descriptions of the experience with details of what the tutor did and how the tutee responded. Give enough detail that others can "feel like they are there".
- Include reflections that go beyond descriptions and instead focus on thoughtful questions and issues raised about culture, language, equity, support of MLs, etc. Reflections show clear connections to course content by referring to key concepts and ideas, where possible.
- Follow APA 7th edition when making in-text citations. Example: (Nieto & Bode, 2018, p.__) for a direct quote. Remember to list your citations in the references, using APA 7th edition.
- This assignment will be assessed with the rubric.

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell us about your experiences with a migrant education student.
   Probe: Who did you work with? Where? How long? What did you work on with your migrant education student, and why? Did you have a choice in choosing the age of your migrant ed student? And if yes, why did you choose that student?
2. Could you describe an experience you had with a migrant education student that you felt really influenced or impacted you?
   Probe: If so, tell us about this experience and why it was significant to you.
3. What cultural and linguistic knowledge, if any, did you gain through your experience with a migrant education student?
   Probe: If so, can you provide an example or experience that relates to your newly acquired knowledge?
4. What pedagogical skills, if any, did you gain through your experience with a migrant education student?
   Probe: If so, can you provide an example or experience that relates to your newly acquired pedagogical skills?
5. How did the experience with a migrant education student influence your attitude toward teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students? Explain.
   Probe: Has this experience made a change in your perceptions of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students? If so, how? Please explain.
6. After reviewing your written work, we found this statement "_____". Please tell us more about how this statement relates to your views on supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students.
7. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we didn't ask you?

TEACHER-TAILORED CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF EFL INSTRUCTORS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

Sabire Pınar Acar✉
Eda Akgün Özpolat
İrem Çomoğlu

Dokuz Eylul University, Turkey

✉ sabirepinar.acar@ogr.deu.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

Contemporary approaches to professional development (PD) involve investigating ways of bottom-up, self-directed practices while addressing various needs of teachers. Yet, utilized as a tool in such practices, classroom observation (CO) is not considered to promote teacher professional learning since it is generally regarded as part of the appraisal process. Thus, this exploratory case study aims to explore the insights of four EFL teachers about CO tailored by teachers themselves for their professional growth in a higher education context in Türkiye. Focusing on a bottom-up practice, the teachers pursued a collaborative act on their PD in this specific context. Based on the participants' previous and current experiences of CO, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews and teacher educator notes. The inductive thematic analysis of the data revealed three major interconnected themes providing pathways toward CO as a PD tool with special emphasis on the generic features of the teacher-tailored CO process. The discussion of findings highlights the importance of empowering, collaborative, and sustainable practices in teachers' professional growth. Implications are included for English language teacher development programs.

HOW TO CITE

Highlights

- *Teacher-tailored CO offers a bottom-up, self-directed perspective for the PD of in-service teachers.*
- *Teacher learning is supported through empowerment, collaboration, and sustainability in PD practices.*
- *Bottom-up, self-directed PD practices can be used as a basis for teacher learning and development.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching requires lifelong learning and engagement in 'continuing career-long professional development' (Day, 1999: 15). It is indeed crucial for teachers to continue their professional learning because the quality of their teaching plays a pivotal role in the success of an education system and learner outcomes (Borg, 2015). Traditionally, teachers were provided with learning opportunities in the form of training workshops and courses where they were passive recipients of knowledge (Ying, 2012), but today, the content and mode of PD practices assign teachers a more active role in their own learning journey (Borko et al., 2010).

Contemporary approaches to PD value context-based and personalized practices for teacher development (Borg, 2015; Broad and Evans, 2006; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003). To enhance teacher learning supported by workshops and seminars with

the traditional one-size-fits-all view (Kumaravadivelu, 2012), modern PD needs to be relevant to teachers' and their students' contexts and needs (Borg, 2015). An effective PD practice also involves reflection, inquiry, and collaboration (Borg, 2015; Broad and Evans, 2006; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003; Richards and Farrell, 2005). Furthermore, in successful PD practices 'teachers are centrally involved in decisions about the content and process' of their PD (Borg, 2015: 3). Overall, as opposed to the traditional form of PD following a top-down approach, modern PD employs a bottom-up view where teachers are active participants in their own professional growth (Tanış and Dikilitaş, 2018).

To this end, a variety of PD forms have been introduced and practiced. Some examples of these include exploratory action research (e.g., Akcan et al 2019; Dikilitaş and Çomoglu, 2022), critical friend groups (e.g., Carlson, 2019; Vo and Mai Nguyen,

2010), lesson study (e.g., Cajkler et al., 2014; Hurd and Licciardo-Musso, 2005; Uştuk and Çomoglu, 2021), reflection groups (e.g., Aydın and Çomoglu, 2023; Mayoral, 2014), professional learning communities (e.g., Goodyear et al., 2019; Owen, 2016), curriculum study groups (e.g., Heikkilä, 2021; Unlu, 2018), and mentoring (e.g., Gjedia and Gardinier, 2018; Suchánková and Hrbáčková, 2017; Walters et al., 2019). CO has been utilized as a tool in some of these contemporary forms of PD. Peer observation, in particular, allows teachers to evaluate each other's lessons in a constructive fashion (Fletcher, 2018; Gosling, 2002; Paul, 2021; Visone, 2022). Yet, there have been few attempts (e.g., Challis-Manning and Thorpe, 2016; Grimm et al., 2014) to use classroom CO in a teacher-tailored fashion. In a teacher-tailored CO, the foci, and the time of observation as well as the observer are determined by the teacher. Hence, in this case study, we aimed to explore the insights four tertiary-level EFL instructors gained into bottom-up CO as a tool for PD, taking cognizance of their previous experiences. To this end, we asked the following research questions:

1. How do the tertiary level EFL instructors describe their previous experiences of CO?
2. What are the insights of the tertiary level EFL instructors into the teacher-tailored CO process?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the British Council's CPD Framework (Borg, 2015: 4), there are four stages of teacher development: awareness, understanding, engagement, and integration. Correspondingly, teachers learn about a PD practice, they understand the meaning and importance of it, they develop competence in using it and they reach the point where they skillfully use this competence to inform themselves of what they do at work. As it is evident, traditional PD practices are far from helping teachers complete these stages as they are dictated in a top-down fashion (Borko, 2004; Broad and Evans, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Uştuk and Çomoglu, 2021). Traditional PD addresses practical methodological issues such as teaching writing or classroom management. By contrast, modern approaches reflect a more complex understanding of professional practice with a broader view, enabling teachers to go through a deeper process, constantly building up their thinking, and growing personally as well as professionally (Borg, 2015; Kennedy, 2011; Padwad and Dixit, 2011). In addition, Dikilitaş and Mumford (2019) underline the importance of teachers' developing agency for their professional growth. Agency emanates from 'deliberation' and 'choice' (Huang, 2011: 242), and it is defined as 'the capacity to initiate purposeful action that implies will, autonomy, freedom, and choice' (Lipponen and Kumpulainen, 2011: 812). It is 'a point of origin for the development of autonomy' (Benson, 2007: 30), which is 'the capacity to take control over one's own learning' (Benson, 2013: 58).

Experts in the field of education and PD (e.g., Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Borko et al., 2010; Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Richards and Farrell, 2005) define effective PD today. They agree that modern PD leads to teacher agency and involves reflection, collaboration, and inquiry. It also focuses on student learning. Additionally, it is need/context-based and

sustainable. Considered individually, each of these qualities contributes to teacher learning and growth. To explain, through reflection, teachers learn from their own experiences and avoid burnout while, at the same time, preparing for unforeseen events in the classroom at present and in the future (Borg, 2015; Farrell, 2018; Tanış and Dikilitaş, 2018). Collaboration helps them to construct knowledge together with others and increase their awareness (Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz, 2015; Mann and Walsh, 2017). Moreover, through inquiry, teachers can focus on the issues in their own local context (Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016). In addition, contextual and sustained PD practices support student learning (Broad and Evans, 2006; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003; Guskey and Yoon, 2009). Such a focus on student learning brings about teachers' enhanced knowledge and awareness of content and language (Freeman and Johnson, 2005; Uştuk and Çomoglu, 2021).

As opposed to top-down approaches to PD, one framework for bottom-up PD proposed by Mercer et al (2022) involves self-directed learning of teachers. In such self-directed PD, 'teachers take the initiative to select and manage their own forms of professional development' (Mercer et al., 2022: 6). Initially, teachers reflect on their current availability and resources for PD, then they identify their goals and purposes for themselves and decide on a PD activity. This is followed by teachers' carrying out a PD activity and reflecting on it. Finally, teachers try out the ideas they have gained from the PD activity in practice and reflect on the results. In the process, teachers shape their own PD, by choosing what aspects to focus on, the time frame, the location, and with whom they want to work and how they work on a PD activity. This type of bottom-up, self-directed PD leads to self-determination, motivation, and positive and sustainable professional growth (Mercer et al., 2022), promoting agency, collaboration, and reflective thinking (Başar et al., 2020; Dikilitaş, 2020; Kuchah et al., 2019). In line with this perspective, the current study adopts a flexible, bottom-up, and self-directed approach to PD in which teachers play a leading role in the design and application of a PD practice based on CO.

CO, one of the practices fostering reflective thinking, may be conducted formally by a teacher educator observing and evaluating a teacher's lesson (Copland and Donaghue, 2019; Wragg, 2011). Alternatively, it may be done informally by teachers observing the lessons of their colleagues or of their own (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Richards and Farrell, 2005). When it is not used for appraisal or evaluation purposes, CO encourages teachers to try out innovative ideas (Taylor, 2016). Despite several studies indicating teachers' positive attitudes toward their lessons being observed (e.g., Barrogo, 2020; Caratiquit and Pablo, 2021; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2011; Merç, 2015; Smailes, 2021), CO does not foster autonomy when used as a formative assessment to improve individual performance (O'Leary, 2013). Such traditional observations are top-down practices, and they are rather deficiency-focused and prescriptive (Hayes, 2019). They are also likely to be transmissive, where a more knowledgeable person transmits his or her knowledge to the less knowledgeable one (Kiely and Davis, 2010). More importantly, top-down observations are stressful for teachers owing to the critical role they may

play in appraisals (Montgomery, 2014; Taylor, 2016). Previous research also confirms the fact that such observation causes anxiety (e.g., Ali, 2007; Cockburn, 2005; Merç, 2015) and that teachers prefer their lessons to be observed by those who have content knowledge in their field (Dos Santos, 2017; Özdemir, 2020) as opposed to those in administrative positions.

By contrast, teachers' self-observations or peer observations appear to be more bottom-up and transformative as teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own or with the help of their peers (Farrell, 2014; Mann, 2005). These teachers later discuss what they have reflected on or observed in a constructive manner, and 'without formal evaluation' (Borg, 2015: 4). A review of research supports teachers' disapproval of top-down CO. The findings of a study conducted in Saudi Arabia by Tawalbeh (2020) on tertiary-level EFL instructors' perceptions of observations by supervisors revealed that teachers wish to be informed about their strengths rather than weaknesses. They also expect to receive supportive and constructive feedback after an observation, which they prefer being done in a collaborative fashion. This was echoed by Sibanda et al (2011), who investigated primary school teachers' perceptions of COs administered by their school heads in Zimbabwe. Another review study by Cockburn (2005), who evaluated observees' perspectives and politics regarding CO, also opposes top-down CO.

Yet, despite their paramount effect on teachers' ability to reflect on and take control of their professional learning, peer observation and self-observation are not introduced as better replacements for traditional observations by experts since teachers may still need support regarding 'subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and understanding of curriculum and materials' (Richards and Farrell, 2005:4). Therefore, this study adopted a bottom-up, self-directed PD approach to CO tailored by teachers themselves and mediated by a teacher educator (the first author) working in the same institution as a teacher. Drawing on the framework for self-directed PD that allows teachers greater agency in decision-making processes (Barrell, 2016), the observation process in our study was completely teacher-tailored, shaped by the teachers deciding on the observer, observation time, and focus. Thereby, we aimed to explore the four tertiary-level EFL instructors' understanding of CO as a bottom-up PD tool, using Mercer et al (2022)'s framework of self-directed PD as a general pathway for conducting teacher-tailored CO.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Having witnessed the prevalence of top-down PD activities in the context of Türkiye (Başar et al., 2020; Hos and Topal, 2013), the current study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore four tertiary-level EFL instructors' insights into self-tailored CO. We opted for an exploratory case study since it provides 'an in-depth description and analysis' of a chosen case, which could be a single person or a group of people and develops ideas for further studies (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015: 39; Yin, 2018). Descriptive in nature, the case study design appeared to fit in our research as the case may represent 'a typical instance of other comparable cases', that is, the insights of the participants in the current study might shed light on what EFL instructors think of top-down and teacher-tailored CO (Saldaña and Omasta, 2016: 214).

Research Context and Participants

This study took place in the School of Foreign Languages (SoFL) at a state university in the west of Türkiye. The school had 448 students and 26 instructors at the time of the study. It offers English language education for a year period for students before they start their undergraduate degrees. During preparatory education, skills-integrated English lessons are conducted at A1, A2, and B1 levels based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The students who successfully complete the preparatory program continue their university education in 10 different departments. Lessons are delivered through 30% in English in one department while in the other nine undergraduate departments, the only medium of instruction is English. According to the Council of Higher Education regulation (YÖK, 2018), having an MA degree is a prerequisite to being a full-time instructor in SoFLs in Türkiye. The instructors have an approximate workload of 24 hours of teaching per week. The SoFL has five academic units: Testing and Assessment, Material Development, Curriculum Development, Extra-curricular Activities, and Professional Development. The Professional Development Unit (PDU), which was established in 2020, includes two experienced teacher educators with internationally approved certificates. The PDU activities consist of seminars, workshops, and classroom observations, which are organized based on the needs of the instructors and students in the SoFL.

The current study has its roots in the sudden and compulsory shift to distance education in 2020 when most schools had to quickly switch to online education at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was at that time that the first author assumed the responsibility of setting up a PDU in the SoFL. Following needs analysis surveys, the PDU delivered online workshops addressing the immediate needs of the teachers, most of which were related to the use of technological platforms and tools. Following the workshops on teacher-determined topics, the teacher educator (first author) noticed the teachers' willingness for their lessons to be observed. This was one important pillar of the current bottom-up CO study as the teacher educator had become assured of the importance of teacher-directed PD.

Thus, at the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year, we -as the research team- called for participants who would like to participate in our study on CO as a bottom-up PD activity in this specific SoFL. Four EFL instructors (1 male and 3 females), all of whom completed their BA in literature-related departments, volunteered to participate in the study. In our informal conversations with these four teachers, we observed that the participants were all agentically engaged in the study since they believed that they had professional shortcomings due to their non-ELT bachelor backgrounds and considered the current study as an opportunity for conquering those shortcomings.

28

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Prior to our research, we obtained ethical approval from the Social and Humanities Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of the university. Also, each participant gave written consent for participation in the study. We used pseudonyms to provide confidentiality. The background information about the participants is given in Table 1.

Name	Gender	Years in teaching	Academic Background/Teaching Qualifications
Ayşe	Female	7	BA in English Language and Literature/ MA in English Language and Literature, CELTA
Gökhan	Male	12	BA in American Culture and Literature/ MA in American Culture and Literature, CELTA
Özge	Female	10	BA in English Language and Literature /MA in ELT, Ph.D. Candidate in ELT
Yasemin	Female	3	BA in English Language and Literature/ MA in English Language and Literature

Table 1: Participant information

Research Procedure and Data Collection

For this study, we informed the instructors in the SoFL about the stages of the teacher-tailored CO practice that would sustain and empower their presence as a part of PD. Being informed about the process, the four instructors volunteered to participate in our study by giving their consent. First of all, they filled in a form in which they chose several focal points from the list suggested by the teacher educator or determined their own focal points for observation. Then, they stated their preference about the time and date of CO, feedback sessions, and interviews. Accordingly, the COs were held and during the observations the teacher educator took small notes based on the predetermined foci by each participant. She also added her observation notes of the participants' attitudes towards being observed. Right after each observation, the teacher educator and the observee held a 15-minute immediate feedback session and co-discussed the major aspects of the observed lesson. Based on the observation notes and the feedback session, the teacher educator emailed the observee a detailed commentary for the observed lesson. Afterward, a 30-minute online/face-to-face reflection session was conducted with each participant to co-reflect on the observed lesson. During these sessions, the teacher educator also took notes on 'what appear to be salient, important, or confusing moments in order to select key moments' (Miller, 2018: 622) for further reflection.

Finally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant about their previous experiences of CO and their overall experiences of teacher-tailored CO as a bottom-up, self-directed PD activity in the current study. Some of the questions we asked in the interviews were: "How important is PD for you?", "Will you please tell us about your previous experiences of CO?" and "What do you think about the observation process in this study?". The interviews which lasted between 30-45 minutes were conducted by the first and the second author of the study collaboratively as an interview may be administered by one or more interviewers (Glesne, 2016). These co-interviews lessened the stress of assuming sole responsibility for listening, questioning, observing, and probing (Velardo and Elliott, 2021). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis

Data from semi-structured interviews and teacher educator's notes were analyzed through initial coding, which 'breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them and compares them for similarities and differences' (Saldana, 2016: 295). The first and the second authors first read the data several times and conducted initial coding separately, the examples for which are given in Table 2. Afterward, we (the three authors) came together to discuss the codes and identified several categories, which helped clarify and develop insights of the data (Saldaña, 2013). We then asked for a debriefing from another researcher who is also a Ph.D. candidate and finally came up with three major themes.

Data	Initial Codings	Categories	Emerging Theme
"I feel like I have to, how can I say?, prove myself to someone else. Of course it would be different if only I were a teacher with an ELT background." (Yasemin, Interview)	Feeling of inadequacy (Author 1)		Teacher-tailored CO as an empowering PD practice
"As a teacher, I thought I had a lot of shortcomings." (Özge, Interview)	Need for CO for further learning (Author 2)	Need for professional growth	
"She stood still in front of the board for the first 7–8 minutes of the lesson and her awkward posture indicated that she was not comfortable. Fortunately, this was replaced by more lively and cheerful body movements." (Teacher educator's notes)	Initial discomfort (Author 1)

Feeling uncomfortable with being observed (Author 2) | Initial discomfort with CO | |

Table 2: Examples of data analysis process steps

Researchers' Positionalities

Conducting qualitative research is about embracing researchers' subjectivity, which is 'a human dimension that is both an advantage and liability' building the trustworthiness of the study (Saldaña and Omasta, 2016: 66). The first and second authors were also instructors in the SoFL where we conducted this study. This provided us with an emic perspective. The first author also functioned as a teacher educator to enable the participants to be active in the observation process and their PD overall, which strengthened this emic perspective. On the

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

29

other hand, the third author, the qualitative research Ph.D. course instructor of the first and second authors, positioned herself as a critical observer with an etic perspective, focusing on both the qualitative research processes and the first and second authors' developing researcher identity throughout the study. In our co-reflections and discussions, the emic perspective provided by the first and second authors was supported by the etic perspective of the third author (e.g., see Dikilitaş and Bahrami, 2022) as someone who is not familiar with the research context, but knowledgeable about qualitative research design.

Findings

We aimed to explore (1) how teachers describe their previous experiences of CO and (2) how they describe the teacher-tailored CO process in this study. The findings based on the teacher educator's notes and transcription of the interviews elicited three major themes: teacher-tailored CO as an empowering PD practice, teacher-tailored CO as a collaborative PD practice, and teacher-tailored CO as a sustainable PD practice. Below we discuss these themes with excerpts, depicting an interconnected portrait of CO as a bottom-up, self-directed PD practice.

Teacher-tailored CO as an empowering PD practice

Focusing on both their previous CO experiences and the current teacher-tailored one, all of the teachers indicated that they valued CO as an evolving PD process that nurtures and empowers their teacher identities. Yet, this did not happen overnight. In the beginning, the teachers defined their earlier CO experiences as stressful and irritating situations and chose similar analogies to describe such initial feelings of discomfort. For instance, when asked about her previous CO experiences, Ayşe said, "I feel like a student taking an oral exam. The teacher doesn't ask anything I don't know and I'm prepared, but I still panic. I must answer it correctly or do it right, or it will have consequences".

Likewise, Yasemin said, "First, I feel nervous. What am I going to do? But then I relax. It is like bungee jumping." Gökhan also likened an observee to "a soldier under great stress" and Özge underlined, "It can be a little scary at first". All the participants thought they needed COs because they lacked the required content knowledge as they did not study ELT in their undergraduate programs at university. It was evident in most of their responses that they felt inadequate. Gökhan said, "I had just completed my master's degree in the field of cultural studies, so I had a great lack of (content) knowledge (in ELT)". Ayşe also stated that she needed to be observed for her PD as she had studied literature just like Özge, who said, "as a teacher, I thought I had a lot of shortcomings".

This initial discomfort experienced by the participants was noticed by the teacher educator, too, and included in her notes, "(Gökhan's) nervousness in the beginning was apparent, he was constantly sweating and speaking tremulously, but the ease in his face and behavior towards the end of the lesson made me think that he was not anxious anymore". She made similar comments about Ayşe, "She stood still in front of the board for the first 7-8 minutes of the lesson and her awkward posture indicated that she was not comfortable. Fortunately, this was replaced by more lively and cheerful body movements".

In time, the stress and anxiety seemed to disappear and be replaced by a sense of empowerment as the teachers' metaphors for teacher-tailored CO suggested. Both Yasemin and Gökhan used the analogy of "journey" while describing CO focusing on the resemblance of CO process to life itself. Gökhan explained, "It is like a journey through which you can see the bad and good things that are happening to you" and continued, "there is always the chance of learning something new during this journey". Similarly, Yasemin explained how the CO experience empowered her professionally despite the challenges she faced in the very beginning, "CO reminds me of journey themes in literature. There is a young child who confronts challenges and gradually learns how to deal with them. In the end, he grows as a human".

The teachers further shared some detailed examples of how they advanced themselves through teacher-tailored CO as a PD practice. Gökhan highlighted the eye-opening and inspiring aspect of CO and said, "When you are evaluated by someone you value for their earlier work, knowledge, and experience, it can widen your horizon because you see something that you did not see from that perspective before". Özge added how she learns from CO and considers it to be a continuous learning process that provides reflection and fosters her agency, "(through teacher-tailored CO) I see myself better, I learn about my strengths and weaknesses". Yasemin also added a comment on her PD process, "Thanks to this CO experience, I started to find solutions by myself.", which displays how teacher-tailored CO supports teacher agency. The shift in participants' thoughts about CO as an empowering PD tool could also be seen in the teacher educator's notes. After observing Gökhan's lesson, the teacher educator wrote, "Gökhan had received feedback on his lack of time management skills earlier and support on how to improve them. Thus, as the observation focus point, he chose "time management" and did his best to show how well he improved in timing the tasks in class".

Teacher-tailored CO as a Collaborative PD Practice

The second theme that emerged was related to the collaborative atmosphere of teacher-tailored CO. The participants were content to be actively involved in the entire process of their CO. The integration of teachers enriched teacher-tailored CO practice and pointed out the significance of teachers' choosing the focus points for CO by themselves. While talking about her current experience with teacher-tailored CO, Yasemin said, "(Teacher educator) is improving my teaching. She says, 'Let's try it this way, let's see how it will work.' We discuss our thoughts. I am very comfortable during observations now." She also added, "It feels good to know what to focus on. I plan my lessons accordingly". Özge, too, was happy to be a part of the CO planning process, "It is good to choose the time of CO and its focus. I need a reference point". Likewise, Gökhan commented on the significance of collaboration during the CO process, "Considering someone (the observer) as part of the lesson is a good thing. No one likes to feel like a 'colonel' in the classroom". The positive impact of involving teachers in the CO process was also evident in the teacher educator's notes. Following her feedback session with Yasemin, she wrote, "She is the least experienced teacher but moving on step by step,

focusing on the areas where she wanted to improve herself, seems to boost her confidence. She's full of enthusiasm and constantly plans for her future lessons to be observed".

The teacher educator pointed out the teachers' initial confusion and hesitation when asked to decide on the content of their CO and concluded, "At first, they didn't have a clue of how to do it, but in time they got used to it". She then added, "As an observer, I feel more welcome in the classroom when teachers make the decisions". The teachers' contentment resulting from their becoming active agents in their professional growth was also recorded in the teacher educator's notes, "Özge said she wanted COs to be conducted in this way, with no change at all. She looked happy with that". Obviously, the collaborative aspect of CO enabled the teachers to play an active role in their professional learning and shaped the effectiveness of the whole process.

Teacher-tailored CO as a Sustainable PD Practice

The participant teachers explained that they would like to sustain CO as a PD practice at the individual level in their future careers. For instance, Ayşe stated she would like to have more teacher-tailored COs, "I wish we could have peer observation sessions like we do now once or twice a month. There are teachers in the school who I would like to observe. They can come and observe my classes, as well". Yasemin further added, "I want to have COs (in the future)", highlighting the positive feedback she received during the teacher-tailored CO process. The participant teachers described CO, specifically the teacher-tailored CO, as a PD activity sustainable at the individual level and explained it through two dimensions. According to the teachers, the multimodal forms of feedback provided, and the observer attitudes are two main aspects that encourage them to have more teacher-tailored COs as PD practices in the future. Two of the teachers mentioned the significance of the detailed multimodal feedback the teacher educator provided on their instructional practices. For instance, while describing his teacher-tailored CO experience as a bottom-up PD practice, Gökhan reported:

> First, she (the teacher educator) gave short verbal feedback in the class in a very kind fashion, and then we held a thorough face-to-face post-observation session, which was followed by detailed written feedback. It was so valuable and motivating. I was really satisfied.

Likewise, Özge highlighted the importance of the observer's feedback on the focal points she had chosen in teacher-tailored COs, "(The post-observation) feedback I received was mostly verbal. It was very professional and detailed, which motivated me a lot". Yasemin commented on the role of feedback and explained how she planned her future lessons accordingly, "I focus on the topic that was highlighted during the feedback for my next lessons. I act like this, and I think it becomes effective this way". The teacher educator, too, stated that her feedback to the participants was highly appreciated and noted that "it played an important role in their willingness for future CO plans".

Furthermore, the observer attitudes were recognized as a crucial element considering the sustainability of CO practice and were presented in an interplay of many related concerns.

Özge highlighted the importance of mutual trust between the observer and the observee, while Yasemin commented on the importance of the attitude of the observer and a greater emphasis on the strengths of a lesson rather than weaknesses. She said she was motivated by the constructive approach of the teacher educator and added, "She does not talk negatively. She recommends an extremely easy solution, something very practical, something that is applicable, catchy and that does not demoralize the other party at all". Gökhan said, "We are all humans, we all make mistakes, but these need to be pointed out very nicely and politely, so style is very important here". Furthermore, he emphasized the attitudes of the observer, "the positivity of (observer's) attitude and approach to us and the courtesy of the person who observes our lesson is so valuable". Additionally, reflecting on a previous CO experience, Ayşe complained about the judgmental and critical look on the face of the observer and mimed the expression on his face, and added, "Sometimes (observers) had a poker face but (the teacher educator in the study) is smiling and encouraging me all the time". Later, during the interview, Ayşe added how (the teacher educator in the study) motivated her during the feedback session by giving specific examples about the strengths of her lesson and the way she concluded the session, "I enjoyed it!". During informal conversations, Özge also commented on the teacher educator's attitudes in this study describing her style as motivating and encouraging.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study illustrate the potential of conducting teacher-tailored COs designed in a bottom-up fashion to promote an orientation toward contemporary PD approaches. It is acknowledged in national and international contexts that sustainable PD practices converge on providing more constructive support for teachers contrary to the conventional perspective (e.g., Borg, 2015; Uştuk and Çomoglu, 2021; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016). Thus, this current study supports the significance and value of teacher involvement, experience, and knowledge for professional growth (Borg, 2015) through bottom-up CO practices in our context, where top-down PD practices are still prevalent.

Regarding our first research question of how teachers describe their previous experiences of CO, the findings show that they consider CO as an empowering opportunity to improve their instructional practices despite the discomfort it creates in the beginning. Such CO-induced stress and anxiety as reported by previous research (e.g., Ali, 2007; Cockburn, 2005; Merç, 2015) seem to result from the participants' sense of inadequacy as ELT instructors due to their non-ELT backgrounds and their previous CO experiences which were mainly deficiency-focused (Hayes, 2019). Yet, once the stress and anxiety are overcome, the teachers' (re)conceptualization of CO as a learning possibility echoes the findings of similar studies (e.g., Barrogo, 2020; Caratiquit and Pablo, 2021; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2011; Smailes, 2021).

As for the teachers' insights into teacher-tailored CO presented in a bottom-up style in this study, the findings indicate that the participants relished the empowerment promoted by a democratic model of PD, which allowed them to decide

on their professional needs (Taşdemir and Karaman, 2022). As opposed to 'a prescriptive model of feedback', where the teacher is expected to adopt the opinions and actions suggested by the supervisor, the teacher educator in the current study had a 'collaborative style' and involved the teachers equally in the CO process (Copland and Donaghue, 2019: 406). The positive effects of being an actual partner during the CO stages worked as a facilitator from the participant teachers' perspective. Congruently, considering the collaboration between the observer and observee during the CO practice, Barócsi (2007) reports the need for the involvement of observees in the selection of foci under investigation. The significance of teachers' involvement in their own PD practices is also argued by Garman and Holland (2015), who suggest teachers should assume active roles in their own learning because it might cultivate teacher agency, self-confidence, and collaboration. Thus, supporting teachers to play active roles while making decisions for their own professional growth through various tools (King, 2014; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016) enables an empowering and collaborative PD practice environment.

In addition, the participants highlighted the role of the observer in the CO process for its micro sustainability as a PD practice. They expected that their strengths and weaknesses in teaching would be equally evaluated in multimodal forms - written and/or verbal- by someone who does not claim a hierarchy of power. Such an equal distribution of power and control during the CO process in our study might have been enabled by a slightly more emphasis on the strengths of a lesson rather than weaknesses. Nevertheless, the teacher educator's meticulously chosen and politely conveyed comments in the feedback meetings and forms should not be mistaken for equivocal language, which may 'fuel misconceptions' (Wajnryb, 1998: 541). Thus, explicitness is essential in feedback. It is also noted that the utilization of teacher-tailored CO facilitates collegial learning when it is offered through dialogue between the observer and the observee (Dymoke and Harrison, 2006). In our study, the interaction between the teachers and the teacher educator has supported teacher agency (Insulander et al., 2019) and encouraged the teachers to sustain CO as a PD practice on a micro level thanks to the positive attitudes of the teacher educator.

To conclude, the current study suggests that CO could function as an empowering, collaborative, and sustainable PD activity for EFL teachers' professional growth once it is tailored by teachers themselves and mediated by a teacher educator and/or peers in a collaborative atmosphere. Creating collaborative spaces that give teachers PD options and agency, as we did in our study, would enhance sustainable professional teacher development (King, 2014; Lopes and D'Ambrosio, 2016; Priestley et al., 2012; Voogt et al., 2015). Tracing from past to present, the CO practices of the participants highlight the value and significance of experiencing teacher-tailored CO as an empowering, collaborative, and sustainable PD practice. Knowing that it is a valued practice by teachers themselves, conditions for more bottom-up, teacher-directed COs should be created for sustainable teacher PD. Just as importantly, teacher educators need to transcend the limitations of conventional, deficiency-based CO practices and improve themselves on how to co-conduct empowering and sustainable COs with teachers.

REFERENCES

Akcan, S., Büyükgümüş, S., Mor, K. and Çoban, M. (2019) 'Exploratory action research practices in a language teacher education programme', in Dikilitaş, K., Wyatt, M., Burns, A. and Barkhuizen, G. (eds.), *Energizing Teacher Research*, Kent: IATEFL.

Ali, S. (2007) 'Reflective teacher observation model for in-service teacher trainees', *English Teaching Forum*, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 16–25.

Aydın, B. and Çomoglu, I. (In press 2023) 'Reflective practice groups in ELT: An emergent model for professional development', in Gün, B. and Üstünlüoğlu, E. (eds.) *Exploring the Principles of Reflective Practice in ELT- Research and Perspectives from Turkey*, Sheffield: Equinox Publishing.

Barócsi, S. (2007) 'The role of observation in professional development in foreign language teacher education', *WoPaLP*, Vol. 1, pp. 125–144.

Barrell, E. (2016) 'Grades don't count building success from the inside out', in O'Leary, M. (ed.) *Reclaiming Lesson Observation: Supporting Excellence in Teacher Learning*, London: Routledge.

Barrogo, S. D. (2020) 'Teachers' perception of standardized classroom observation tool', *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research*, Vol. 4, No. 7, pp. 33–37. https://doi.org/10.33902/jpr.v3i3.124

Başar, S., Çeliktürk, H. and Çomoglu, İ. (2020) 'English language teachers' insights into continuous professional development: A cross-case exploration', *The Literacy Trek*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 55–80. https://doi.org/10.47216/literacytrek.793002

Bautista, A. and Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2015) 'Teacher professional development: International perspectives and approaches', *Psychology, Society, & Education*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 240–251. https://doi.org/10.25115/psye.v7i3.1020

Benson, P. (2007) 'Autonomy in language teaching and learning', *Language Teaching*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 21–40. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444806003958

Benson, P. (2013) *Teaching and Researching: Autonomy in Language Learning*. London: Routledge.

Borg, S. (2015) 'Overview-Beyond the workshop: CPD for English language teachers', in Borg, S. (ed.) *Professional Development for English Language Teachers: Perspectives from Higher Education in Turkey*, Ankara: British Council.

Borko, H. (2004) 'Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain', *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 33, No. 8, pp. 3–15. http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033008003

Borko, H., Jacobs, J. and Koellner, K. (2010) 'Contemporary approaches to teacher professional development', in Peterson, P., Baker, E. and McGaw, B. (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Education*, Oxford: Elsevier.

Broad, K. and Evans, M. (2006) *A Review of Literature on Professional Development Content and Delivery Modes for Experienced Teachers*. Toronto: University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Cajkler, W., Wood, P., Norton, J. and Pedder, D. (2014) 'Lesson study as a vehicle for collaborative teacher learning in a secondary school', *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 511–529. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2013.866975

Caratiquit, K. and Pablo, R. (2021) 'Exploring the practices of secondary school teachers in preparing for classroom observation amidst the new normal of education', *Journal of Social, Humanity, and Education*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 281–296. https://doi.org/10.35912/jshe.v1i4.721

Carlson, J. R. (2019) '"How am I going to handle the situation?" The role(s) of reflective practice and critical friend groups in secondary teacher education', *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching Learning*, Vol. 13, No. 1. https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2019.130112

Challis-Manning, S. and Thorpe, S. (2016) 'Introducing and piloting a model of non-graded lesson observation: Chichester College as a case study', in O'Leary, M. (ed.) *Reclaiming Lesson Observation: Supporting Excellence in Teacher Learning*, London: Routledge.

Cockburn, J. (2005) 'Perspectives and politics of classroom observation', *Research in Post-compulsory Education*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 373–388. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596740500200211

Copland, F. and Donaghue, H. (2019) 'Post observation feedback', in Walsh, S. and Mann, S. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teacher Education*, New York: Routledge.

Day, C. (1999) *Developing Teachers: The Challenges of Lifelong Learning*, London: Falmer Press

Desimone, L. M. (2009) 'Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures', *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 38, No.3, pp. 181–199. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140

Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2003) 'Professional development for language teachers', *Eric Digest*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 1–4.

Dikilitaş, K. (2020) 'Teacher autonomy and good language teachers', in Griffiths, C. and Tajeddin, Z. (eds.) *Lessons from Good Language Teachers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dikilitaş, K. and Bahrami, V. (2022) 'Teacher identity (re)construction in collaborative bilingual education: The emergence of dyadic identity', *TESOL Quarterly*. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3168

Dikilitaş, K. and Çomoglu, I. (2022) 'Pre-service English teachers' reflective engagement with stories of exploratory action research', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 45, No.1, pp. 26–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1795123

Dikilitaş, K. and Mumford, S. E. (2019) 'Teacher autonomy development through reading teacher research: Agency, motivation and identity', *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 253–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2018.1442471

Dos Santos, L. M. (2017) 'How do teachers make sense of peer observation professional development in an urban school?', *International Education Studies*, Vol. 10, No.1, pp. 255–265. http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n1p255

Dymoke, S. and Harrison, J. K. (2006) 'Professional development and the beginning teacher: Issues of teacher autonomy and institutional conformity in the performance review process', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 71–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/02607470500511009

Farrell, T. S. C. (2014) *Promoting Teacher Reflection in Second Language Education: A Framework for TESOL Professionals*, New York: Routledge.

Farrell, T. S. C. (2018) 'Reflective practice for language teachers', in Liontas, J. I. (ed.) *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Fletcher, J. A. (2018) 'Peer observation of teaching: A practical tool in higher education', *The Journal of Faculty Development*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 51–64. https://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.19455.82084

Freeman, D. and Johnson, K. E. (2005) 'Toward linking teacher knowledge and student learning', in Tedick, D. J. (ed.) *Second Language Teacher Education: International Perspectives*, New York: Routledge.

Garman, N. and Holland, P. (2015) 'Getting to the new work of teaching, learning, and supervision: Are we finally at the quantum moment?', in Glanz, J. and Zepeda's, S. J. (eds.) *Supervision: New Perspectives for Theory and Practice*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Gjedia, R. and Gardinier, M. P. (2018) 'Mentoring and teachers' professional development in Albania', *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 102–117. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12258

Glesne, C. (2016) *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*, Boston: Pearson

Goodyear, V. A., Parker, M. and Casey, A. (2019) 'Social media and teacher professional learning communities', *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, Vol. 24, No. 5, pp. 421–433. https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2019.1617263

Gosling, D. (2002) *Models of peer observation of teaching*, Keynote address at the LTSNGC Peer Observation of Teaching Conference, Birmingham, 29 May.

Grimm, E. D., Kaufman, T. and Doty, D. (2014) 'Rethinking classroom observation', *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 71, No. 8, pp. 24–29.

Guskey, T. R. (2002) 'Professional development and teacher change', *Teachers and Teaching*, Vol. 8, No.3, pp. 381–391. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000512

Guskey, T. R. and Yoon, K. S. (2009) 'What works in professional development?', *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 90, No.7, pp. 495–500. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170909000709

Hayes, D. (2019) 'Continuing professional development/continuous professional learning for English language teachers', in Walsh, S. and Mann, S. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teacher Education*, New York: Routledge.

Heikkilä, M. (2021) 'Finnish teachers' participation in local curriculum development: A study of processes in five school contexts', *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 19, No. 7, pp. 752–769. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210320967816

Hos, R. and Topal, H. (2013) 'The current status of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' professional development in Turkey: A systematic review of literature', *The Anthropologist*, Vol. 16, No. 1–2, pp. 293–305. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2013.11891357

Huang, J. (2011) A dynamic account of autonomy, agency and identity in (T)EFL learning, in Murray, G., Gao, X. and T. Lamb, T. (eds.) *Identity, Motivation and Autonomy in Language Learning*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Hurd, J. and Licciardo-Musso, L. (2005) 'Lesson study: Teacher-led professional development in literacy instruction', *Language Arts*, Vol. 82, No. 5, pp. 388–395.

Insulander, E., Brehmer, D. and Ryve, A. (2019) 'Teacher agency in professional development programmes – A case study of professional development material and collegial discussion', *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, Vol. 23, pp. 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2019.100330

Kennedy, A. (2011) 'Collaborative continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers in Scotland: Aspirations, opportunities and barriers', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 25–41. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2010.534980

Kiely, R. and Davis, M. (2010) 'From transmission to transformation: Teacher learning in English for speakers of other languages', *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 277–295. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810365241

King, F. (2014) 'Evaluating the impact of teacher professional development: An evidence-based framework', *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 89–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2013.823099

Kuchah, K., Djigo, O. M. and Taye, B. (2019) 'English language teacher education and collaborative professional development in contexts of constraints', in Walsh, S. and Mann, S. (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teacher Education*, New York: Routledge.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006) *Understanding Language Teaching: From Method to Postmethod*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012) *Language Teacher Education for a Global Society: A Modular Model for Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing, and Seeing*, New York: Routledge.

Lasagabaster, D. and Sierra, J. M. (2011) 'Classroom observation: desirable conditions established by teachers', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 449–463. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2011.587113

Lopes, C. E. and D'Ambrosio, B. S. (2016) 'Professional development shaping teacher agency and creative insubordination', *Ciência & Educação*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 1085–1095. http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1516-731320160040015

Lipponen, L. and Kumpulainen, K. (2011) 'Acting as accountable authors: Creating interactional spaces for agency work in teacher education', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 812–819. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.01.001

Mann, S. (2005) 'The language teacher's development', *Language Teaching*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 103–118. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444805002867

Mann, S. and Walsh, S. (2017) *Reflective Practice in English Language Teaching: Research-Based Principles and Practices*, New York: Routledge.

Mayoral, P. (2014) 'Peer learning: An analysis of secondary school teachers' reflection groups on teaching practice', *Infancia y Aprendizaje*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 816–850. https://doi.org/10.1080/02103702.2014.977108

Mercer, S., Farrell, C. and Freeman, D. (2022) *Self-directed professional development in ELT* [PDF]. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at www.oup.com/elt/expert [15 Nov 2023].

Merç, A. (2015) 'The potential of general classroom observation: Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions, sentiments, and readiness for action', *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 193–205. http://dx.doi.org/10.11114/jets.v3i4.821

Merriam, S. B. and Tisdell, E. J. (2015) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Miller, E. R. (2018) 'Interaction analysis', in Phakiti, A., De Costa, P., Plonsky, L and Starfield, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Applied Linguistics Research Methodology*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Montgomery, D. (2014) *Positive Teacher Appraisal through Classroom Observation*, New York: Routledge.

O'Leary, M. (2013) 'Surveillance, performativity and normalised practice: the use and impact of graded lesson observations in Further Education colleges', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Vol. 37, No. 5, pp. 694–714. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2012.684036

Owen, S. (2016) 'Professional learning communities: Building skills, reinvigorating the passion, and nurturing teacher wellbeing and "flourishing" within significantly innovative schooling contexts', *Educational Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4, pp. 403–419. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2015.1119101

Özdemir, N. (2020) 'How to improve teachers' instructional practices: the role of professional learning activities, classroom observation and leadership content knowledge in Turkey', *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 58, No. 6, pp. 585–603. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JEA-10-2019-0189

Padwad, A. and Dixit, K. (2011) *Continuing Professional Development: An Annotated Bibliography.* Kolkata: British Council.

Paul, A. K. (2021) 'Enhancing performance of teachers through peer observation: A critical review for implementation in Bangladeshi colleges', *International Journal of Asian Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 64–78. https://doi.org/10.46966/ijae.v2i1.76

Priestley, M., Edwards, R., Priestley, A. and Miller, K. (2012) 'Teacher agency in curriculum making: Agents of change and spaces for maneuver', *Curriculum Inquiry*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 191–214. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2012.00588.x

Richards, J. and Farrell, T. S. C. (2005) *Professional Development for Language Teachers: Strategies for Teacher Learning* (Cambridge Language Education). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667237

Saldaña, J. (2013) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Saldaña, J. and Omasta, M. (2016) *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Sibanda, J., Mutopa, S. and Maphosa, C. (2011) 'Teachers' perceptions of lesson observations by school heads in Zimbabwean primary schools', *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 21–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2011.11892925

Smailes, J. (2021) 'Peer support: A critical review of CPD to extend beyond classroom observation', *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 272–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2020.1733043

Suchánková, E. and Hrbáčková, K. (2017) 'Mentoring in the professional development of primary and secondary school teachers', *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 7–15. https://doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2017.100102

Tanış, A. and Dikilitaş, K. (2018) 'Turkish EFL instructors' engagement in professional development', *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 27–47. https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.460628

Taşdemir, H. and Karaman, A. C. (2022) 'Professional development practices of English language teachers: A synthesis of studies published between 2006 and 2020', *Review of Education*, Vol. 10, No. 1. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3350

Tawalbeh, T. I. (2020) 'Instructors' perceptions of EFL supervisors' classroom observation practices at university level', *International Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 45–56. https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.61.2020.81.45.56

Taylor, L. (2016) 'Somewhere over the rainbow: Transitioning from performative to informative models of observation', in O'Leary, M. (ed.) *Reclaiming Lesson Observation: Supporting Excellence in Teacher Learning*, London: Routledge

Unlu, S. (2018) 'Curriculum development study for teacher education supporting critical thinking', *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 18, No. 76, pp. 165–186. https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2018.76.9

Uştuk, Ö. and Çomoglu, İ. (2021) 'Reflexive professional development in reflective practice: what lesson study can offer', *International Journal for Lesson & Learning Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 260–273. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLLS-12-2020-0092

Velardo, S. and Elliott, S. (2021) 'Co-Interviewing in qualitative social research: Prospects, merits and considerations', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 20, No. 1. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211054920

Visone, J. D. (2022) 'What teachers never have time to do: Peer observation as professional learning', *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 48, No. 2, pp. 203–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2019.1694054

Vo, L. T. and Mai Nguyen, H. T. (2010) 'Critical friends group for EFL teacher professional development', *ELT Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 2, pp. 205–213. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccp025

Voogt, J, Laferriere, T., Breuleu, A., Itow, R. C., Hickey, D. T. and McKenney, S. (2015) 'Collaborative design as a form of professional development', *Instructional Science*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 259–282. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-014-9340-7

Wajnryb, R. (1998) 'Telling it like it isn't—exploring an instance of pragmatic ambivalence in supervisory discourse', *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 531–544. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(97)00076-3

Walters, W., Robinson, D. B. and Walters, J. (2019) 'Mentoring as meaningful professional development', *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 21–36. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijmce-01-2019-0005

Wragg, E. C. (2011) *An Introduction to Classroom Observation*, 1st edition, London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203357279

Wyatt, M. and Dikilitaş, K. (2016) 'English language teachers becoming more efficacious through research engagement at their Turkish university', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 550–570. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1076731

Yin, R. K. (2018) *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Ying, I. D. (2012) 'Exploring discursive practices of teacher learning in a cross-institutional professional community in China', in Kooy, M. and van Veen, K. (eds.) *Teacher Learning That Matters: International Perspectives*, New York: Routledge.

YÖK (2018) *Higher Education Council of Turkey* [Online, in Turkish], Available at https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.2547.pdf [01 Jul 2022].

CONSTRUCTING TEACHER IDENTITY IN TEACHER COLLABORATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TEACHER OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE ENGLISH LEARNERS?

Amanda Giles[1]✉
Bedrettin Yazan[2]

[1]Hoover City Schools, United States of America

[2]The University of Texas at San Antonio, United States of America

✉ amanda.k.giles@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Research calls for practice-based inquiry where language teachers conduct exploratory action research to transform their pedagogical practices to impact student achievement. This study builds on the research in practitioner inquiry, teacher collaboration, and teacher identity to investigate how a seventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) teacher (Heather) constructed her identity as she collaborated with an ESL teacher (Amanda) to plan for and teach ESL students in a collaboratively taught ELA classroom. Our qualitative inquiry included data gathered from two collaborative cycles with three semi-structured interviews, two collaborative planning sessions, fieldnotes of the collaborative teaching sessions, and two reflective journals authored by the ELA teacher. The findings illustrate that Heather constructed her teacher identity as a novice teacher with surface-level understandings of ESL students and a limited knowledge about how to plan for the ESL students in her classroom. Collaboration did not disrupt her deficit student perspectives nor did this partnership pave the way for Heather's renewed understandings about how to teach ESL students in the ELA classroom. Collaboration, instead, provided Heather access to Amanda, whom Heather positioned as an experienced content teacher who could make the content accessible to ESL students.

Highlights

- *A qualitative exploratory case study explored teacher identity construction in a collaborative partnership between an ESL and ELA content teacher.*
- *The ESL teacher served dual participatory roles as the researcher and the ESL teacher.*
- *The ELA teacher constructed her teacher identity as a novice teacher with surface-level understandings of ESL students.*
- *Collaboration did not disrupt the ELA teacher's deficit student perspectives nor did this partnership pave the way for Heather's renewed understandings nor lead her to position herself as a teacher of ESL students.*

INTRODUCTION

Recent research calls for practice-based inquiry where language teachers conduct exploratory action research and engage in collaboration to transform their pedagogical practices (Rebolledo et al., 2016; Uştuk and Çomoğlu, 2019) with the aim of improving student achievement. This teacher-led approach often rejects top-down mandates for professional development and creates reflective opportunities (Uştuk and Çomoğlu, 2021) for teachers to 'understand why things are the way they are and to imagine and enact ways to make them better' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005: 43–44). Despite calls for increased action research, there are few known studies where teachers attempt to answer this call for bottom-up professional development where teachers pursue and participate in opportunities for their own learning outcomes. This is most likely because teachers favor practice over research and/or lack the knowledge about how to conduct academic research about their own practice (Dikilitaş and Griffiths, 2017; Hanks 2017). In response to this

36

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

call, the current study explores how a practicing English as a second language (ESL) teacher worked to provide equitable educational opportunities for linguistically diverse students through a collaboration with an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher in a U.S. middle school. No known studies report the influences of ESL teachers' collaboration on content teachers' beliefs or assumptions related to working with ESL students. Thus, our current study investigated how a seventh-grade ELA teacher constructed her professional identity as she collaborated with an ESL teacher to plan for and teach ESL students in a collaboratively taught ELA classroom.

Teacher Identity Construction in Teacher Collaboration

The teacher identity research in language teacher education has concluded that becoming a teacher means and requires constructing a professional identity as a teacher (Barkhuizen, 2017; Varghese et al., 2016), and teacher learning and teaching practice are informed by that professional identity (Reeves, 2018; Yazan and Lindahl, 2020). Research also converges on the finding that every time teachers make instructional decisions and take action, they agentively construct and enact an identity. Acknowledging the multiplicity of definitions available for teacher identity, for the purpose of the current study, we define teacher identity as 'teachers' dynamic self-conception and imagination of themselves as teachers, which shifts as they participate in varying communities, interact with other individuals, and position themselves (and are positioned by others) in social contexts' (Yazan, 2018: 21). We locate teacher learning in a collaborative relationship between an ELA and an ESL teacher and conceptually assume that such professional learning in a small community would include negotiation and renegotiation of professional identities.

We argue that teacher identity development in this collaborative partnership is a crucial component of learning especially when teacher learning is conceptualized as teacher identity construction (Beijaard, 2019). More directly, the ways that collaborating teachers exercise their own agency in this partnership can provide insights into the identity work they engage in during their collaborative learning partnership (Olsen, 2016). Studies emphasize that content teachers' lack of knowledge of language instruction (DelliCarpini, 2021) and the rigorous content-specific demands (Duff, 2001) in the content classroom can lead to teachers' low expectation for student outcomes and overall deficit student perspectives (Harklau, 2000; Yoon, 2008). For example, Yoon (2008) showed how three ELA teachers' beliefs paralleled their pedagogical practices related to teaching linguistically diverse students. In Yoon's study, Mrs. Taylor viewed herself as an ELA content teacher and did not assume the responsibility for her ESL students' language learning. Her perspective led her to view ESL students' language needs from a deficit perspective, which caused the students to feel invisible, powerless, and unwilling to participate in her classroom. Duff (2001) found that the content teacher's emphasis on the content standard and continuous references to pop culture in the U.S. created this teacher's assumption of a monolingual American culture that all people from the U.S. seemingly share. This meant that the content teacher did not always attend to the ESL students' language and content needs in the content classroom because the students did not understand these cultural references and/or relate to the monolingual cultural assumption. Harklau (2000) pointed out how such perceptions of ESL students create student representations, which led to different educational trajectories over the course of multiple years in public high schools and local universities for the ESL students.

The above studies demonstrated the content teacher's priority of the content standard (Duff, 2001; Yoon, 2008) and their overall unpreparedness to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Rubinstein-Avila and Lee, 2014). Despite the applicability of the studies' findings, all previous studies report content teachers working in isolation without the support of the ESL teacher.

Educational Policy and Professional Development in the United States

In the U.S., equitable and equal opportunities for all students, including ESL students, have been encoded in national law (See Lau v. Nichols of 1974 and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974). Even with requirements for equity and equal educational opportunity, the early 2000s ushered in the age of standardization and accountability in response to the national concern for improved student performance in reading and mathematics. President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into law in 2002. During the time of this study (2016–2017), NCLB was the primary educational policy in the United States. This law required all students, regardless of English language proficiency or time spent in the United States, to attain reading and math achievement as measured on standardized assessments. Educational researchers overwhelming argued that NCLB is the most restrictive educational policy in U.S. history for ESL students because this law requires ESL students to show proficiency in English on standardized assessments without having first the opportunity to learn English (Giles et al., 2020; Evans and Hornberger, 2005; García and Otheguy, 2016; Mahoney, 2017; Menken 2008). Garcia and Ortheguy (2016: 10) compared the performance on standardized assessments for ESL students to the performance of their monolingual English-speaking peers using a drummer analogy: 'one of the drummers [a monolingual English speaker typically born in the United States] gets two sticks, one for each hand, while the other [an ESL student] is forced to play with only one stick in one hand, the other hand tied behind the back'. This analogy plainly points out the inequities inherent in the law for ESL students and ultimately explains the unfairness of its stipulations for this student population.

In 2015, NCLB was reauthorized to become the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This reauthorization, however, only delegated the states as the primary constituents responsible for determining the assessment for standardization. While purportedly providing more flexibility to the states, ESSA still required that states report student performance on standardized assessments to the federal government with the understanding that student academic performance determines the amount of funding given from the federal government. This fact still expects ESL students to show similar academic and

language proficiency in English as their monolingual peers, ultimately perpetuating English-only ideologies (Giles and Yazan, 2020) and positioning ESL students as deficient learners (Ravitch, 2016). Neither NCLB nor ESSA stipulate required teacher training or professional development for working with linguistically and culturally diverse students, leaving state departments of education to determine such appropriate training.

The state of this study required no specific training in working with ESL students prior to earning a teaching certificate in any field of study. The practical implications meant that degree conferring institutions likewise did not require their teacher candidates to take courses in working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Such limited coursework and training help explain way many teachers across the nation report feeling unprepared to work with ESL students once they begin teaching (Rubinstein-Avila and Lee, 2014). Traditional professional development consequently for practicing teachers in the U.S. is often characterized by one person or group of people making generalizations about teaching and learning usually in large group settings (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). What is *learned* rarely makes its way through the classroom door to influence the teacher's actual pedagogical practice (Smith, 2017). We contend that such learning opportunities are ineffective because they are not relevant to classroom practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Smith, 2017; Wei et al., 2010) because of their 'short, episodic, and disconnected' nature (Wei et al., 2010:1). We argue that professional development should then be content-specific (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) and relevant to teachers' actual practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2010) and take place routinely in authentic classroom environments (Bocala, 2015). We also conceive that teacher collaboration can be the most effective form of this professional development because teachers share expertise, plan lessons together, and assume shared teaching roles with the goal of impacting student achievement (Giles, 2019; Giles and Yazan, 2020).

Teacher Collaboration

Previous studies report the benefits of ESL and content teachers' collaborations (Honigsfeld and Dove, 2022). Teachers state the benefits of collaboration when teachers divide planning and teaching responsibilities, and when teachers work toward the shared goal of improved student learning outcomes (Giles, 2020; Giles and Yazan, 2020; Martin-Beltrán and Peercy, 2014; Peercy et al., 2016). While the collaborative benefits are documented, the benefits do not negate the challenges in collaboration, which include divergent pedagogical beliefs (Arkoudis, 2003), conflicting schedules (Peercy et al., 2016), and unequal responsibilities (Giles, 2018). The ESL teacher's perceived inferior status is also well documented in earlier studies (Ahmed Hersi et al., 2016; Arkoudis, 2003, Creese, 2002; McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). According to Creese (2002), one student viewed the ESL teacher as the less 'proper' teacher because both the ESL and content teachers explained the lesson objective differently even when the content teacher attempted to justify the ESL teacher's role to the student in the classroom. This study made clear that

students can perceive the ESL teacher's relegation in the co-taught classroom. Different racial constructions (McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010), an overemphasis of the content standard (Ahmed Hersi et al., and Lewis, 2016), divergent pedagogical beliefs (Arkoudis, 2003), and dissimilar teaching styles (Creese, 2002) can worsen the ESL teacher's relegation and make sustaining the collaborative partnership much more difficult. Such studies, while clearly explaining the challenges, do not show the ESL teacher assuming a classroom role beyond that of a classroom assistant. This current study, however, is distinct because the ESL teacher in this study, also the lead researcher, must have had a planning and teaching role for the experience to involve collaboration. Such an understanding about collaboration and practitioner research is important as we now turn to discuss the study's methodology.

METHODOLOGY

We employed an exploratory qualitative case study (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) to explore how Heather (all names are pseudonyms except for the names of the authors) constructed her teacher identity while collaborating with Amanda, the ESL teacher, in a seventh grade collaboratively taught ELA classroom in a Southeastern U.S. suburban city. Data collection methods included three semi-structured interviews, two collaborative planning sessions, Amanda's fieldnotes of the collaborative teaching sessions, and Heather's two rounds of reflective journals. To analyze teacher identity constructions in ESL and content teachers' collaboration, we focused on understanding how teachers viewed themselves, each other, and ESL students as they co-planned and co-taught ESL students, assumed multiple responsibilities, and engaged in collaboration. That understanding can provide further insights into teachers' 'dynamic self-conception and imagination of themselves as teachers' (Yazan, 2018: 21) of ESL students in relation to students, colleagues, subject matter, pedagogy, and context because we theorize teacher identity as relational. This framework included the content teacher's discursive constructions of (a) ESL students, (b) ESL instructional practices, (c) ESL teaching in the content classroom, (d) socio-educational context, and (e) the ESL teacher (see Uzum et al., forthcoming). Building on the research literature in teacher collaboration and teacher identity, our study utilized practitioner inquiry to address the following research question: How did an ELA teacher (Heather) construct her teacher identity in working with the ESL teacher (Amanda) in a seventh grade collaboratively taught classroom in the Southeastern U.S.?

The School and Classroom Context

Starcreek Middle School was the research site of this study and served a little over 800 students during the 2016–2017 school year. Twenty-six students were identified as ESL students, which meant these students indicated an additional language on a home language survey at registration and made a qualifying score (4.7 or below) on the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)-Access Placement Test (W-APT), the initial English language proficiency assessment specified by state and district

regulations (See Table 1 for school demographic data during the 2016–2017 school year). We understand that there are more inclusive ways to speak about this culturally and linguistically diverse student population other than referring to the students as "ESL students." Such terminology does not reflect our own personal beliefs about these students. This school and district specified an ESL program model, so we used the terminology that most appropriately explained the school context, which was ESL students. All students at Starcreek were typically enrolled in four core classes (i.e., ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies), physical education, a reading strategies class, and an elective class of their choice. The ESL students took a language class taught by Amanda in place of a reading strategies class. Amanda, the only ESL teacher at the school, taught the 55-minute language class where she sought to build a learning community and teach academic language through content-related topics. Most of the ESL students' language instruction occurred in content area classrooms since ESL students had only 55 minutes with Amanda daily.

Starcreek Middle School			
Total Students:	approximately 800 students		
Total ESL Students:	26 students	Percentage: 3.25%	
	Language	Total Number of Students	Percentage
	Spanish	21	81%
	Arabic	4	15%
	Chinese	1	4%
	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
	7 students	14 students	5 students

Table 1: ESL demographics at starcreek middle school, 2016–2017

The ELA Teacher

Heather reached out to Amanda because she needed help teaching Claudia, an emerging speaker of English, in Heather's seventh grade ELA classroom. Claudia was one of five of Heather's ESL students. Heather did not need assistance teaching the other four ESL students because she believed the four ESL students had enough conversational English to understand her instruction of the ELA content standards (Interview #1). The four students were not in the same ELA class period with Claudia. They were placed in Heather's three other ELA classes. Heather did not initiate this practitioner inquiry even though she expressed the need for assistance. Because of Amanda's own pedagogical beliefs about teaching ESL students and her knowledge that Heather needed assistance with Claudia, Amanda asked Heather to participate in this study. The Institutional Review Board granted research approval (Reference #17-OR-002), and Heather voluntarily agreed to participate in this exploratory case study by signing an informed consent form.

Prior to her collaboration with Amanda, Heather described teaching Claudia as a "trial by fire" process. She meant she had to learn how to teach Claudia as she was in the process of teaching her (Interview #1). Her learning process was not a smooth one as she often ran to Amanda's classroom for advice. Thus, a collaboration between the two teachers emerged. When we asked Heather to elaborate on the ESL teacher's assistance, she stated:

> I think the best thing a regular classroom teacher can do is work with the ESL teacher and then from there be in constant communication and try to apply the wisdom of someone who knows what they're doing. I don't want that to sound like that's a cop out, you know, just push off the work on the ESL teacher, you know? Learning from someone who knows what they're doing I guess especially for me as a young teacher. (Interview #1)

While communication and collaboration among teachers are generally viewed as positive, Heather's reliance on Amanda throughout the school year delegated Amanda as the primary teacher responsible for Claudia's content and language instruction. Heather seemed to be justifying this delegation by constructing her identity as "a young teacher." While "push[ing] off the work on the ESL teacher" may not have been Heather's intention, Amanda bore the brunt of the workload in this partnership. Heather's lack of experience and training in working with ESL teachers (as well as linguistically diverse students) is typical of many content teachers (DelliCarpini, 2021; Rubinstein-Avila and Lee, 2014); her approach was not a sustainable one given that Amanda was the only ESL teacher at Starcreek.

The ESL teacher

Amanda was the collaborating ESL teacher in this practitioner inquiry. She began her teaching career in 2010 at Starcreek as an eighth grade ELA teacher. Since she majored in Spanish and English in college, she often taught most of the ESL students in her ELA class. This meant that administration preferred to put ESL students in Amanda's ELA classroom because she could communicate in English and Spanish. That is, she could use her Spanish to help her students attain the ELA standards. During Amanda's tenure as an ELA teacher, there was another ESL teacher employed at the school. Amanda vividly remembers standing at her classroom entryway watching her principal at the time run quickly down the hallway toward her classroom. When he arrived, he breathlessly explained, "We got it! We got it!" as he shut the classroom door behind them. His words meant the district had approved Amanda to replace the existing ESL teacher and become the ESL/Spanish teacher. Despite the untraditional offer, she accepted and assumed the role of ESL teacher in the fall of 2015 at Starcreek. Like many other states in the U.S., this state's standards allowed for a teacher

who held certifications in either a foreign language or ELA to teach ESL students, of which Amanda held both certifications. Amanda was not surprised by her principal's offer because such conversations began as early as her second year of teaching. While not surprised, she felt unequipped to accept this position without any training related to second language teaching and learning. Her inadequate feelings and lack of certification at the time left her to admit she became an ESL teacher through "the back door." These feelings led her to enroll in a doctoral program with a concentration in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching (SLAT) that same year, where she met Bedrettin (Author #2), who became one of her dissertation

chairs, colleagues, and friends. ESL and content teachers' collaboration became the topic for her dissertation because she believed such collaboration was the most productive way to work toward equitable learning outcomes for ESL students in secondary public schools (See Giles, 2019 for her dissertation research). Amanda's goal in this practitioner inquiry was to support the ELA teacher's learning and potential identity renegotiation to start conceiving and imagining herself as the teacher of ESL students who is willing to assert agency to change her practices to facilitate those students' language and content learning. Amanda's collaboration with Heather became the pilot study to her dissertation research.

Demographics of Collaborating Teachers				
Name	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Languages	State Certifications
Heather	White	1	English + high school Spanish	English/Language Arts, grades 6-12
Amanda	White	7	English + Spanish	English/Language Arts, grades 6-12 Spanish, grades P-12

Table 2: Demographics of collaborating teachers, 2016–2017

The Collaborative Cycles

This study took place during the spring semester during the academic year, 2016–2017. In the two collaborative cycles, Heather and Amanda collaborated to plan for and teach Claudia based on the content and language standards for ELA (Please see Table 3 for a list of the collaborative process). The first collaborative cycle began with an interview where we asked Heather to describe her training, previous experiences teaching ESL students, and working in collaboration with an ESL teacher. A collaborative planning session followed this introductory interview where Heather and Amanda planned a lesson exploring the theme in the first few chapters of *When My Name was*

Keoko by Linda Sue Park. After we planned the lesson together, Amanda wrote fieldnotes of the collaborative teaching experience and asked Heather to record her thoughts in a reflective journal. The second interview concluded the first cycle and began the second one where we clarified responses in Heather's reflective journal, sought to explore collaborative learning experiences, and ideas for the second collaborative lesson. The second cycle continued similarly as the first cycle with the addition of a second poetry lesson where Amanda experimented with Spanish-English bilingual texts of poems in the collaboratively taught ELA classroom. The cycle and study culminated in a final interview where Heather reflected on the entire collaborative process.

The Collaborative Process		
Academic School Year: August 4, 2016 – May 24, 2017		
Data Method	Medium	Date
First Collaborative Cycle		
Interview #1	Audio-recorded	April 12, 2017
Collaborative Planning Session #1	Video-recorded	April 19, 2017
Co-Teaching Session #1	Fieldnotes	April 19, 2017
Reflective Journal #1	Journal entry	May 3, 2017
Second Collaborative Cycle		
Interview #2	Audio-recorded	May 3, 2017
Collaborative Planning Session #2	Video-recorded	May 9, 2017
Co-Teaching Session #2	Fieldnotes	May 12, 2017
Reflective Journal #2	Journal entry	May 12, 2017
Interview #3	Audio-recorded	May 17, 2017

Table 3: The collaborative process, 2016–2017

DATA METHODS AND ANALYSIS

The data for this qualitative study included three semi-structured interviews, two collaborative planning sessions, fieldnotes of the collaborative teaching sessions, and two reflective journals authored by Heather. We created a framework to analyze how Heather was discursively constructing (a) ESL students, (b) ESL instructional practice, (c) ESL teaching in the content classroom, (d) socio-educational context, and (e) the ESL

teacher. How she viewed her professional identity as an ELA teacher in relation to this framework helped us gain insights into her identity as a teacher of ESL students at Starcreek Middle School. During the first coding cycle, we deductively analyzed the data using this framework. Four hundred and fifty-four in vivo and descriptive codes emerged to help us understand the collaborative process during this first cycle. During the second collaborative cycle, we refined our initial codes and examined

the codes for patterns that fit within our analytic framework. During the last coding cycle, we turned the patterns into theme statements. The theme statements are the subheadings in the findings, which will be explained in the next section.

Findings

Heather constructed her teacher identity as a novice teacher with surface-level understandings of ESL students and a limited knowledge about how to plan for the ESL students in her classroom. Collaboration did not disrupt these deficit student perspectives nor did this partnership pave the way for Heather's renewed understanding about how to teach ESL students in the ELA classroom. Collaboration, instead, provided Heather with access to Amanda, whom Heather positioned as an experienced content teacher who could make the content accessible to linguistically diverse students. Such collaboration made it easy for Heather to designate Amanda, the ESL teacher, the primary teacher responsible for the content and language instruction of ESL students in the ELA classroom. Below we present each finding with illustrative examples from the data analysis.

Novice Teacher with Surface-Level Understandings of ESL students

Heather had no training or coursework related to working with culturally and linguistically diverse students as part of her undergraduate teacher education program. When asked in the second interview to describe ways she related to ESL students, Heather cited examples of diverse characters from literature, explaining:

> We're reading *When My Name Was Keoko,* and the focus is on Asian culture. I've gotten to pause when we're reading and talk about… this is a good example of their culture, you know, talking about how this is different from our culture, and then pulling in my experiences from my own personal travel overseas, talking about here's a funny story of when I went here that just illustrates a difference in culture. I'm trying to make the kids aware. I feel like that's a major theme that we've looked at in studying the novel. Look at different cultures and different people groups. (Interview #2).

Heather's description of culture and people groups lumped all people not from the United States into one large group of "different". Such a dichotomy was made clear through her references to "their culture" and "different from our culture," which served to highlight Heather's assumption about how people from the United States should speak and act. She created a category for people who were from the United States and suggested that there was one singular culture that represented all those from the U.S. Similarly, she lumped the Asian cultures into one category, conveying the message that all people who identify as Asian must have had similar experiences to that of the book character, Keoko, who is a fictional young woman who lived during Japan's occupation of Korea during WWII. While Heather's stated intention was to "make the kids more aware," her intention fell short in actuality because she only offered to tell a "funny story" to the students in the class. What constitutes a "funny story" might be interpreted differently among different people even within a similar culture, notwithstanding different cultures. Second, newcomers to the

U.S. and perhaps other ESL students may not even understand her story at all depending on the students' English language proficiency. Students also might mistake her attempt at humor as ridicule or a harsh joke. She concluded that her "experiences from [her] own personal travel overseas" worked to illustrate her own cultural awareness, yet it was doubtful that her own narrative achieves her stated goal because her words might only represent a small group of people rather than promote cultural sensitivity and awareness.

The excerpt also illustrates how Heather positioned ESL students through a deficit lens. For instance, Heather described Claudia, one of the ESL students in her seventh grade ELA class, as speaking "broken English" (Interview #1). Due to the student's beginning level of English, she could not express her own academic intelligence in ways that Heather could recognize and legitimize. For example, in the first collaborative planning session, Heather stated that she wanted students to write a thematic paragraph based on the first chapter of the book. Amanda suggested that Claudia complete an assignment on the theme because this was the stated content objective. Heather questioned, "Can she do that?," doubting Claudia's ability to understand the theme simply because she could not communicate the content in English (CPS, #1). Amanda emphatically responded, "Of course, I will make a graphic organizer, and she can write the theme in Spanish and English. I will create something." (CPS #1). By offering language strategies (e.g., graphic organizer with bilingual supports), Amanda rejected Heather's deficit perspective to showcase the student's strengths. In Amanda's mind, the graphic organizer with sentence frames would articulate visually what was expected of Claudia (i.e., the content objective), and the use of Spanish afforded the student an opportunity to show her understanding of the content in the language that she best understood. To this suggestion, Heather responded, "If she can do that, that would be great. So today she can work on that" (CPS #1). The phrase "if she can do that" illustrates that Heather doubted Claudia's academic abilities. She also assumed Amanda would create this graphic organizer immediately so that the student could work to complete the ELA assignment "today." Heather's expectation of an immediate ELA assignment showed her disregard for Amanda's schedule even though Amanda ultimately created the assignment in time for the student's ELA class. Had Amanda not created the assignment in time for class, Claudia would have sat in the ELA class without an assignment accessible to her language and content needs.

ESL and Content Teachers' Collaboration

Even after the first cycle, collaborative planning and teaching did not disrupt Heather's strong deficit perspective of ESL students. After Claudia and the other ESL students used the graphic organizer to write the thematic paragraph, they still struggled to meet Heather's expectation of the content objective because Heather continued to explain that Claudia could not "do all the assignments" (Interview #1). During the second collaborative planning session, Ashely created the graphic organizer as Heather watched, so that Heather could learn the process Heather stated that Claudia "[didn't] have to do

every poem" because Heather continued to doubt Claudia's abilities (CPS #2). In response to Heather, Amanda insisted, "If we can find them, we should. I'll keep looking. So yeah, if you'll send me a list of the poems, I mean that's not hard to find at all. We'll just do a bilingual side by side version of each poem" (CPS #2). Amanda's statement reflected her own belief that she and Heather should work to ensure that Claudia could access the poems in Spanish, comparable to her monolingual peers.

In addition to comprehending the poems, Heather wanted students to identify poetic devices (e.g., rhyme scheme, alliteration, repetition) as they read the poems together in class. Likewise, Amanda continued to insist that Claudia could achieve the same content objective even if she showed her mastery of the content in Spanish. Amanda explained this expectation for the content and language objectives in the next exchange:

> *Amanda*: I might say examples of alliteration. She can follow along easier so for language I might pick words that she might need to know… like year, ago, so… She can look across and put it in Spanish, amor, because love is his reason behind the poem. So she's learning vocabulary words as well. I mean she's learning language too by being able to look at the bilingual text. So, I mean she's learning with the bilingual side by side version.
>
> *Heather*: Okay, that's amazing. How do you know how to do all that? Did you do this for all your ESL students when you taught language arts? Can I do anything to help?
>
> *Amanda*: Um… I don't think so. I'm good. I'm pretty much done now. What I was thinking, I'm gonna go back in and put… because I don't know the words. I don't know how to say all of the poetic devices in Spanish. I've always said them in English, and it's been a while since I learned the Spanish word. I've never used it, so I've forgotten it. If I saw it, I'd remember obviously, but right off the top of my head, I don't know them. So you're planning on giving her this tomorrow?
>
> *Heather*: Yeah, if that's okay. (CPS #2).

Amanda created the graphic organizer so that Claudia had the opportunity to read the parallel bilingual poems in both Spanish and English. As Heather watched Amanda create the graphic organizer, she exclaimed that the assignment was "amazing", and she wondered if Amanda did this for her ESL students when she taught ELA. While not answering her question, Amanda admitted that she did not know how to say all the poetic devices in Spanish because she had never used them and wanted to know when Heather planned to use this lesson activity. Like the previous lesson, Heather wanted Claudia to complete this graphic organizer tomorrow in class. Heather did ask if she could "help" Amanda with the assignment, although Amanda shut down Heather's offer by saying, "I don't think so. I'm good". Had Amanda given Heather the opportunity to co-create the assignments, she might have also created potential learning opportunities for Heather to construct future lessons for ESL students. When Amanda reflected on this missed opportunity, she felt pressure to create the assignment immediately. She stated, "I'm going to have to do it all anyway. And then, teach this to Claudia.

I might as well do it because Heather can't" (Fieldnotes). Amanda's statement reflects her belief that Heather did not have the ability to create the assignment. This statement also reflected Amanda's frustration with Heather's inability to create the assignment as well as the expectation to create the assignment immediately. The academic school year ended on May 25, 2017, so Heather and Amanda were also running out of time at this point in the year. Amanda, however, never voiced these frustrations to Heather, and instead stated, "I'm good", during the collaborative planning session, which constrained the opportunity for Heather to learn how to create assignments for ESL students in the ELA classroom.

When asked to describe her own learning, Heather stated, "I think I have learned that she's [referring to Claudia] able to do more than I think she can" (Interview #3). Claudia's performance did challenge Heather's deficit assumptions about the student's ability to master the content objective. However, we argue that Heather's statement alone was insufficient to disrupt such deficit perspectives completely because Heather did not change her pedagogical approach in practice. That is, we did not observe changes in Heather's teaching practice during the period of the study. She did not work to include more culturally responsive practices, which is an enactment of her professional identity. For instance, during the period of this study, Heather continued to plan lessons as if there were no ESL students in her classroom Thus, there was not enough evidence to suggest that ESL and content teachers' collaboration disrupted Heather's deficit perspectives of students, and hence, she did not conceptualize her teacher identity identity as a teacher of ESL students.

The Impact of the ESL Teacher

Even though collaboration did not appear to change Heather's deficit perspectives of ESL students during the period of this study, Heather began to position Amanda as a language expert, ELA teacher, curriculum designer, and a "safe haven" for ESL students. Such descriptions began to bolster Heather's perception of the ESL teacher in the content classroom, and more generally, the entire school community. Heather noticed Amanda's impact on the ESL students' learning opportunities in the ELA classroom, even early in the first cycle. Heather admitted, "I've almost let you determine her English/language arts curriculum this year" (Interview #2). In this comment, Heather acknowledged that Amanda served as both the ELA and ESL teacher to Claudia. In the final interview, Heather praised Amanda's ability to build relationships with her students so that they would feel comfortable at school in the following:

> I see kids come into your classroom… I feel like Claudia and I have a good relationship. She likes me and gets along with me. But I know that your room is a haven for her. She's always saying Miss Amanda, Miss Amanda, and I'm like yes, you can go to Miss Amanda. So I think that's the best thing about what you're doing. And then just all the curriculum that you've designed and modified for these kids. (Interview #3)

Heather's description of Amanda highlights her perception of Amanda's relationship with students and her identity as an ESL

teacher who is committed to students' learning of language and content. More specifically, she explains that Amanda is a relational teacher who creates safe environments for her students and attends to the language and content needs of her students in her classroom, so much so that the students would rather be in Amanda's classroom rather than Heather's classroom.

While the above dialogue certainly positions Amanda in favorable ways and highlights the impact of the ESL teacher on the collaborative experience, Heather also reinforces our earlier claims that she never attended to the needs of ESL students in her classroom regarding language, content, or any other related need. Rather, she continued to assign Amanda as the primary teacher responsible for the ESL students in the ELA classroom. By this assignment, Heather renounces her own responsibility to teach all students in her own ELA classroom. In addition, Heather's assumption that Amanda "modifies curriculum" suggests that she failed to distinguish between content and language constructs, essentially stating Amanda made easier or "watered down" the content standards. Overall, such descriptions exemplify further that Heather had no knowledge about nor did she learn through collaboration how to make the ELA content accessible to the ESL students in her classroom and serve to reiterate the fact that Amanda assumed all the planning and teaching responsibilities for the ESL students in the ELA classroom.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The teacher collaboration under scrutiny in this practitioner inquiry was initiated to ultimately support a newcomer ESL student's learning of content and language, representing access to education, which is protected by a federal law. When Amanda designed the inquiry, her goal also included helping Heather learn how to work with ESL students or at least question the ideologies around culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. However, Heather did not seem to have engaged in that learning which would support renegotiating her identity as a teacher who is also responsible for devising strategies to make the content accessible to Claudia and focusing on her language development. One reason for that would be time constraints which were reported by previous studies, too (Giles, 2018; Peercy et al., 2016). That is, the collaboration was not planned before the semester started. Rather, it emerged due to Heather's challenges to work with Claudia. Also, as a beginning teacher, Heather might have had a steep learning curve with numerous new tasks and roles to serve as part of her induction and socialization. Adding ESL on top of that might have been even more challenging given that she never took any courses on how to work with ESL students in her undergraduate teacher education program, which is a dire issue, in and of itself, in the state's (secondary) teacher education curriculum and policy. Learning to serve ESL students within the bounds of the collaboration timeline might not have been her priority and having Amanda to rely on for the preparation of ESL-friendly activities seemed to be a more desirable course of action for her. One conclusion we can reach from examining this collaboration is that professional learning and change in teaching practice is unlikely to occur immediately, and it

might take longer or more sustained collaboration with novice teachers to learn and start renegotiating their professional identities to imagine ESL students as part of their responsibility. On the other side of the collaboration, Amanda expected Heather to assert agency and contribute to the preparation of lesson materials or prepare those materials by herself. and ask Amanda for feedback. Amanda seemed to be experiencing some tension in her identity as well. That is, on one hand, as a former ELA teacher with extensive experience with ESL students, Amanda hoped that her enacting and modeling the identity of an ESL teacher would encourage Heather to become more agentive, creative, and strategic in finding ways to support Claudia. On the other hand, Amanda needed to prepare those lesson activities and materials because Heather immediately needed them to differentiate her teaching for Claudia. Neither Amanda nor Heather had the time to let Heather experiment with or try out creating such materials herself.

Additionally, Heather seems to be grappling with the well-entrenched pedagogical-language ideology that assumes common language as the ultimate prerequisite for the learning of academic content (Uzum, Yazan, and Avineri, 2022). That is, pointing out the student's beginning level English proficiency, Heather seemed to feel helpless and powerless when working with Claudia as a culturally and linguistically diverse student. Although that feeling led her to consult Amanda, the resulting collaboration did not suffice for Heather to question that ideology much. The fact that Amanda could prepare learning materials in Spanish for Claudia looked the most desirable strategy, and Heather went with it. However, at the same time, that strategy might have reinforced a misconception Heather that is common amongst teachers who work with these students: "if I don't speak ESL students' language, I can't teach them." Those two ideologies inform Heather's dynamic construction of what an ESL student is capable of doing, what their needs are, what instructional strategies content-teachers can devise to support their learning, and what content-teachers need to do when working with ESL students. This construction, we argue, provides a basis for her professional identity as a teacher of ESL students who can cater to their academic needs to keep learning language and content concurrently (Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Morgan, 2004; Reeves, 2009).

Although the collaboration between Amanda and Heather did not yield the outcome that Amanda, as the leader of this practitioner inquiry, hoped for, Heather observed Amanda work with Claudia and saw that it was possible and practical to support ESL students' learning of content. It is not explicit in her commentary or interaction with Amanda, but Heather must know that without Amanda's help in this collaboration, Claudia could easily become invisible and inaudible in Heather's class. Focusing on the benefits of Amanda's support, Heather missed the point. That is, within the school context, Amanda was positioned as the go-to person with a panacea when it came to ESL students. This positioning was based on all the time, energy, and expertise that Amanda invested in working with teachers to support ESL students' learning. However, likely due to the ideological compartmentalization of subject matter teaching in the middle school (Arkoudis, 2003; Giles, 2019), the borders around what ('kind' of

students) each teacher is responsible for are maintained by the teachers. That is, all ESL students were considered students that Amanda was responsible for and Heather did not assert any agency to learn how to work with ESL students. Content-area teachers cling to their subject-matter identities only and are reluctant to renegotiate their professional identity to include supporting ESL students (Rubinstein-Avila and Lee, 2014). Heather constructed her teacher identity in relation to that ideology or secondary school culture. She viewed herself as an ELA teacher who is supposed to call Amanda whenever she needed help with the ESL students. As discussed earlier, this dominant view in the school exacerbated Amanda's identity tension. Although she hoped the collaboration would contribute to content-area teachers' emerging self-sufficiency

to work with ESL students, it ended up reinforcing her dominant positioning as the only person who can serve ESL students in the school.

Amanda used practitioner inquiry to initiate and examine a collaboration with a content-area teacher which she viewed as the best way (a) to not only support ESL students in the content-area classes (b) but also help teachers learn new strategies to work with ESL students and claim a professional identity as a teacher of language and content. Even though the collaboration reported on in this practitioner inquiry did not entirely accomplish those goals, the study helped Amanda, and the reader via this paper, understand the complexities involved in a novice ELA teacher's professional identity in relation to serving ESL students.

REFERENCES

Ahmed Hersi, A., Horan, D. A., and Lewis, M. A. (2016) 'Redefining 'community' through collaboration and co-teaching: A case study of an ESOL specialist, a literacy specialist, and a fifth grade teacher', *Teachers and Teaching*, Vol. 22, No. 8, pp. 927–946. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1200543

Arkoudis, S. (2003) 'Teaching English as a second language in science classes: Incommensurate epistemologies?', *Language and Education*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 161–173. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780308666846

Barkhuizen, G. P. (ed.) (2017) *Reflections on language teacher identity research*, New York: Routledge.

Beijaard, D. (2019) 'Teacher learning as identity learning: models, practices, and topics', *Teachers and Teaching*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2019.1542871

Bocala, C. (2015) 'From experience to expertise: The development of teachers' learning in lesson study', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 66, No. 4, 349–362. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487115592032

Creese, A. (2002) 'The discursive construction of power in teacher partnerships: Language and subject specialists in mainstream schools', *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 597–616. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588242

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M., and Espinoza, D. (2017) *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

DelliCarpini, M. (2021) 'Developing the C in content and language integrated learning: Teacher preparation that builds learners' content knowledge and academic language through teacher collaboration and integrated pedagogical training', in Hemmi, C. and Banegas, D. L. (eds.). *International Perspectives on CLIL* (pp. 217–237), Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70095-9_11

Dikilitaş, K. and Griffiths, C. (2017) *Developing language teacher autonomy through action research*, Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50739-2

Duff, P. (2001) 'Language, literacy, content, and (pop) culture: Challenges for ESL students in mainstream courses', *Canadian Modern Language Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1, pp. 103–132. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.58.1.103

Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA) (1974) Act of 1974, Pub. L. 93–380, title II, §201, Aug. 21, 1974, 88 Stat. 514

Evans, B. A. and Hornberger, N. H. (2005) 'No Child Left Behind: Repealing and unpeeling federal language education policy in the United States', *Language Policy*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp.87–106. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-004-6566-2

Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) 20 U.S.C. § 6301

García, O. and Otheguy, R. (2017) 'Interrogating the language gap of young bilingual and bidialectal students', *International Multilingual Research Journal*, Vol 11, No. 1, pp. 52–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2016.1258190

Giles, A. (2018) 'Navigating the contradictions: An ESL teacher's professional self-development', *TESL Canada Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 104–127. https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v35i2.1292

Giles, A. (2019) *The influences of ESL and content teachers' collaboration on teachers' learning and ESL students' participation: A case study of middle school mainstream classrooms*, [dissertation thesis], Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama.

Giles, A. (2020) 'They're participating way more': The impact of ESL and content teachers' collaboration on students' participation', *Language Teaching*, Vol. 53, No. 4, pp. 529–532. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000361

Giles, A. and Yazan, B. (2020) '"You're not an island": A middle grades language arts teacher's changed perceptions in ESL and content teachers' collaboration', *Research in Middle Level Education Online*, Vol. 43, No. 3, pp. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2020.1724045

Giles, A., Yazan, B., and Keles, U. (2020) 'Educational language policies in the United States: A critical discourse analysis of ELPA21', *European Journal of Language Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 5–35. https://doi.org/10.3828/ejlp.2020.2

Hanks, J. (2017) *Exploratory practice in language teaching: Puzzling about principles and practices*, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-45344-0

Harklau, L. (2000) 'From the 'good kids' to the 'worst': Representations of English language learners across educational settings', *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol 34, No. 1, pp. 35–67. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588096

Honigsfeld, A., and Dove, M. G. (2022) *Co-Planning: Five Essential Practices to Integrate Curriculum and Instruction for English Learners*, Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Kamberelis, G., and Dimitriadis, G. (2005) *On qualitative inquiry*, New York: Columbia University.

Kayi-Aydar, H. (2014) 'Social positioning, participation, and second language learning: Talkative students in an academic ESL classroom', *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 686–714. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.139

Lau v. Nichols (1974) 414 U.S. 563

Mahoney, K. (2017) *The assessment of emergent bilinguals: Supporting English language learners*, Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters.

Martin-Beltrán, M., and Peercy, M. M. (2014) 'Collaboration to teach English language learners: Opportunities for shared teacher learning', *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 20, No. 6, pp. 721–737. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2014.885704

McClure, G., and Cahnmann-Taylor, M. (2010) 'Pushing back against push-in: ESOL teacher resistance and the complexities of co-teaching', *TESOL Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 101–129. https://doi.org/10.5054/tj.2010.214883

Menken, K. (2008) *English learners left behind: Standardized testing as language policy*, Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Multilingual Matters.

Merriam, S. B., and Tisdell, E. J. (2016) *Designing your study and selecting a sample. Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.

Morgan, B. (2004) 'Teacher identity as pedagogy: Towards a field-internal conceptualisation in bilingual and second language education', *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, Vol. 7, No. 2–3, pp.172–188.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107–110, § 115. Stat, 1425, 107–10.

Olsen, B. (2016) *Teaching for success: Developing your teacher identity in today's classroom*, New York: Routledge.

Peercy, M. M., Ditter, M., and DeStefano, M. (2016) 'We need more consistency': Negotiating the division of labor in ESOL–mainstream teacher collaboration', *TESOL Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 215–239. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.269

Ravitch, D. (2016) *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*, Philadelphia: Basic Books.

Rebolledo, P., Smith, R. and Bullock, D. (2016) 'Introduction', in Rebolledo, P., Smith, R. and Bullock, D. (ed.) *Champion teachers: Stories of exploratory action research* (pp. 4–8), British Council.

Reeves, J. (2009) 'Teacher investment in learner identity', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 34–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.06.003

Reeves, J. (2018) 'Teacher identity work in neoliberal schooling spaces', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 72, pp. 98–106. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.03.002

Rubinstein-Avila, E., and Lee, E.H. (2014) 'Secondary teachers and English language learners (ELLs): Attitudes, preparation and implications', *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, Vol. 87, No. 5, pp. 187–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2014.910162

Smith, K. (2017) *Teachers as self-directed learners: Active positioning through professional learning*, New York: Springer.

Uştuk, Ö. and Çomoğlu, İ. (2019) 'Lesson study for professional development of English language teachers: Key takeaways from international practices', *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 41–50. https://doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2019.120202

Uştuk, Ö. and Çomoğlu, İ. (2021) 'Reflexive professional development in reflective practice: What lesson study can offer', *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 260–273. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLLS-12-2020-0092

Uzum, B., Yazan, B. & Avineri, N. (2022) 'Becoming teachers of emergent bilinguals: Navigating ideological and identity tensions', *Language Teaching Research*. http://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221127646

Varghese, M., Motha, S., Trent, J., Park, G., and Reeves, J. (2016) 'In this issue', *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 545–571. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.333

Wei, R.C., Darling-Hammond, L. and Adamson, F., (2010) *Professional development in the United States: Trends and challenges*, Stanford: National Staff Development Council and the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

Yazan, B. (2018) 'A conceptual framework to understand language teacher identities', *Journal of Second Language Teacher Education*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 21–48. https://doi.org/10.1558/slte.24908

Yazan, B. and Lindahl, K. (2020) 'Language teacher learning and practice as identity work', in Yazan B. and Lindahl, K. (eds.), *Language teacher identity in TESOL: Teacher education and practice as identity work* (pp. 1–10), New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429342875

Yoon, B. (2008) 'Uninvited guests: The influence of teachers' roles and pedagogies on the positioning of English language learners in the regular classroom', *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 495–522. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831208316200

EXPLORING THE PRACTICAL IMPACTS OF RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: INSIGHTS FROM AN ONLINE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Kenan Dikilitas[1]
Asli Lidice Gokturk Saglam[2]✉

[1]University of Stavanger, Norway

[2]University of South Eastern Norway, Norway

✉ asli.saglam@usn.no

ABSTRACT

Practitioner research has been gaining prominence as a means for professional development (PD) since it provides teachers with opportunities to reflect on, comprehend, and transform their practices. However, there is a dearth of research that examines how teachers learn in online communities established to mentor teachers across the world to learn how to do research for PD. This study explores teacher researchers' use and integration of their research experiences in their teaching as well as uncovering how they develop professionally. To this end, we contacted and interviewed 5 international teacher researchers who participated in our 5-week online training in 2021 within the scope of TESOL's Electronic Village Online (EVO) and shared the preliminary findings. Interviews lasted around 50 minutes during which teachers reflected on their research experience in retrospect and self-reported how this influenced and informed teaching. Transcripts are analyzed thematically through the NVivo software. Findings indicate that our participants reported practical improvement in their instructions not only during but also after the research. They also highlighted how research implementation with their students created opportunities to revisit their own beliefs and the corresponding practices. The study has implications for in-service teacher educators and research mentors who provide online research-driven PD.

HOW TO CITE

Dikilitas K., Gokturk Saglam A. L. (2023) 'Exploring the Practical Impacts of Research Engagement on English Language Teaching: Insights from an Online Community of Practice', *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 46-54. http://dx.doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2023.160105

Highlights

- *An online CoP functions as a learning space for teachers who want to learn to do research facilitated by research mentors.*
- *Engaging in teacher research in own classrooms influences teachers' instructional practices since it provides contextual insights.*
- *Teacher research engagement appears to lead to research-driven practical change and research-driven professional development.*
- *Teacher researchers tend to substitute, or modify, re-define, or enrich their teaching based on the outcomes of their research.*

INTRODUCTION

There is growing interest in facilitating professional development of teachers through online educational communities of practice (e.g., Eshchar-Netz and Vedder-Weiss, 2020; Feldman, 2020; Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018) since they are flexible and accessible, and they provide geographically dispersed teachers with opportunities of virtual collaboration (Dille and Røkenes, 2021). It is argued that online communities of practice are considered a key form of professional development due to sustained interaction and collaborative learning between groups of teachers (Lantz-Andersson et al, 2018; MacPhail et al., 2014; Murugaiah et al., 2012).

Practitioner research, also associated with teacher research and action research, is reported to influence professional learning in various ways: leading to greater teacher autonomy (Cabaroğlu, 2014; Wang and Zang, 2014; Wyatt, 2008),

46

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

increasing self-efficacy beliefs, cultivating teacher researcher identity (Dikilitaş and Çomoğlu, 2022b; Edwards and Burns, 2016; Dikilitaş and Yaylı, 2018), improving the understanding of learner needs (Burns, 2014; Dikilitaş and Yaylı, 2018; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016), developing research skills (Burns, 2014; Wyatt, 2011) as well as prolonging the process of engagement in professional learning (Edwards and Burns, 2016), and enhancing practical knowledge (PK) for teaching (Burns, 2014; Dikilitaş and Yaylı, 2018; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016). However, despite the prevalence of adopting an inquiry approach to research as a means for language teacher professional learning, there is a dearth of research that examines how teachers learn in online communities established to mentor teachers across the world to learn how to do research for PD. We address this gap in our study by exploring how teacher researchers in such a community interact with others to reflect on the PK development enacted by their own research experiences and what specific practical changes research led to in their teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional learning of teachers is considered as an active, collaborative, constructive and context-bound endeavor rather than an individual pursuit (Murugaiah et al., 2012). Sustained interaction between groups of teachers is seen as an important form of professional learning (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018). These views resonate with the conception that learning is a socially constructed process which occurs within a collaborative professional learning environment through sharing knowledge and experience on practice thus leading to learning from others (Dikilitaş, and Çomoğlu, 2022a; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Vangrieken et al., 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Lave and Wenger (1991) propounded the concept of Communities of Practice (CoPs) to refer to groups of people who come together to share their practice and learn ways for development through social, collaborative, and regular interaction. These groups are characterized by 'their social relationships and commitment to a shared understanding' (Gilken and Johnson, 2021: 158), and they gather in different social contexts to engage in meaningful activities that lead to deep learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Teacher networks are formed for the purpose of PD and sustained social interaction that facilitates collective construction of new understandings of pedagogy and different forms of professional knowledge including content-specific knowledge and new technologies that cater for their needs (Jones and Dexter, 2014; Vangrieken et al., 2017). It is argued that 'when a conducive collaborative environment for communication is created, the features lead to a change in knowledge, and skills and ultimately to change in practice emerge' (Murugaiah et al., 2012: 164). Gholami and Husu (2010: 1520) remark 'teachers generally acquire most of their knowledge during their interaction with a variety of systems. This knowledge is then converted into practical knowledge in order to meet practical and situational demands of teaching'.

According to Elbaz (1983), practical knowledge (PK) comprises knowledge of self, subject matter, curriculum development, instruction, and the milieu of teaching. She conceptualized how teachers use their PK as situational, social, personal, theoretical, and experiential, asserting that feelings, needs, beliefs, and values of teachers and intertwined with their theoretical knowledge and experience to transform their practice (Elbaz, 1983). Clandinin (1986 cited in Golombek, 1998) expanded Elbaz's conceptualization through 'personal practical knowledge' which includes personal philosophies (teacher beliefs/values based on experience), metaphors (the way teachers think about teaching and act), rhythms (teacher knowledge of cyclical patterns of school), and narrative unity (grounding teacher beliefs/values within the classroom context). Clandinin (1992: 125) remarked personal practical knowledge is composed of 'a kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through the process of reflection'. Similarly, Golombek (1998: 447) defines personal practical knowledge as 'an affective and moral way of knowing that is permeated with a concern for the consequences of practice for both teachers and students' since it informs teacher practice through filtering and reconstructing experience to fulfil needs of a teaching situation. Thus, teachers' PK guides their actions when they consider what to do in a particular situation (Glolami and Husu, 2010). In our study, we based our understanding of PK on Elbaz's framework and defined teachers' practical knowledge as the knowledge, values, beliefs, and skills that guide teaching practices.

Wyatt and Borg (2011) argue that PK can be developed by teachers when they are encouraged to reflect on their initial understandings of their teaching and current teaching practices, whereby they can construct new ideas through experimentation of practice. Drawing on this, we argue that research is the key potential learning practice for teachers to generate PK since research leads to new ways of teaching as research activities that are used during teaching. PK is generated when teachers integrate research activities as teaching activities as an organic part of the instructional process rather than a separate and additional one for the sake of research. It is this integration of teaching and research that leads to development of research. It is argued that teachers need to ground their teaching practice in research insights and outcomes to transform teacher knowledge into professional knowledge (Ion and Iucu, 2014). Thus, teachers' PK should be linked to knowledge from research (Wieser, 2016).

Several research studies have argued that there is a strong relationship between conducting research and teacher change in PK of teaching (Burns, 2014; Dikilitaş and Yaylı, 2018; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016). Wyatt (2011), for example, reported on the development of ELT teachers who researched their own practice within the scope of a three-year BA TESOL program and concluded that teachers conceived various benefits of research including development of PK by way of development of self-confidence, autonomy, and empowerment. Tanış and Dikilitaş (2018) explored the role of action research in Turkish EFL teachers' beliefs, and compared action research, as a transformative model, with other forms of transmissive and transitional professional development. Findings indicated that the PD beliefs of the teachers who conducted research into their own practice displayed variety in comparison to teachers 'engaging in transmissive PD models in terms of access to and reflection on knowledge' (Tanış and Dikilitaş, 2018: 27). Teacher researchers prioritized collaborative and inquiry-based PD processes since they encouraged teachers to reflect on their

experiential knowledge. Research engagement, with its bottom-up orientation, was conceived as highly effective for fostering teachers' practical knowledge.

Van Schaik et al (2019) explored approaches to knowledge co-construction of 39 teachers in teacher learning groups using different sources including PK of colleagues, collaborative research activities and educational research literature. Research findings indicated that teachers demonstrated a changed understanding of the role of the teacher in the classroom towards more student-oriented teaching and differentiated instruction based on the needs of their learners. The teacher learning groups which adopted a research-based approach acquired a combined knowledge of how to conduct research and pedagogy. It was concluded that research literacy and skills gained both by conducting and reading research can inform practice.

However, there is a scarcity of research on how teachers construct knowledge in professional learning communities identifying what kind of changes occur in teaching (Van Schaik et al, 2019) and whether and how community members link research and practice (Margalef and Pareja Roblin, 2016). Therefore, this study explored the impacts of ELT teachers' research engagement within an online CoP in relation to their classroom practices and their PD. The interaction between research engagement and teachers' PK is analysed to respond to the following research question: What is the impact of research engagement on the classroom practices of English language teachers and PD?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts phenomenology as the qualitative research design methodology. Phenomenology epitomizes the meanings constructed by several individuals from experiencing a single phenomenon 'to reduce individual experiences of such phenomenon to a description of the basic 'essence' of that experience, by creating a composite description of that experience for all the participants' (Heigham and Croker, 2009: 15). In the current study this includes understanding and representing the impact of research engagement experience of teacher researchers within an online community of practice upon their practice.

Context

The present study is conducted in an online CoP designed as research-based language teacher education course within the scope of TESOL's EVO. Since 2016, the session entitled Classroom-based Research for PD adopted the CoP approach and brought teachers who are interested in research as a means for PD together in an online professional learning community (Göktürk-Sağlam et al., 2018). Instructional design was based on the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model postulated by Garrison et al (1999). Participating teachers were also mentored based on this framework (Göktürk-Sağlam and Dikilitaş, 2020). Thus, in a collaborative, constructivist approach, learning in the online CoP was facilitated by the interaction of social, cognitive, and teaching presences (Arbaugh et al., 2008) and guided by the mentoring presence (Göktürk-Sağlam and Dikilitaş, 2020). Online training utilized three core features of a CoP including mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Teachers worked on the course content

collaboratively and engaged actively in the weekly tasks through (a)synchronous platforms. According to Wenger (1998) when members actively participate in a CoP, they associate 'doing' with 'being' which in turn impacts their identity. In a similar vein, this happens when the teachers discuss content of the training through posts on discussion boards and share their experiences of research engagement. Collective interaction and mutual engagement within the community lead to 'doing' which then creates 'being', bringing about an impact on both teacher and researcher identity. The joint enterprise refers to being a part of an online community of teacher researchers who are in pursuit of conducting research and sharing research findings within the community. Using the resources and scaffolded course content which guide the participants through different stages of research generated a shared repertoire.

Participants

Five teacher researchers took part voluntarily in this study based on theoretical (purposive) sampling. They were active members of the online professional learning community and carried out most of the tasks throughout the course. Having completed the stages of the research process, they also shared their preliminary research findings in an online event with the other members of the community. Thus, we believed that they would provide rich data related to their online learning experience. We approached the participants after 6 months after the completion of the training. Participants teach English to various profiles of learners ranging from young learners to tertiary level in different countries including India, Argentina, Lithuania, and Hungary. To ensure anonymity the participants are given pseudonyms in the study. Participants came up with a range of research questions that they chose to examine within their research study and reported their research outcomes and reflections during the interviews which are outlined in Table 1.

Data Collection and Analysis

Teacher conceptions about the impact of research engagement upon their instruction were elicited through one-on-one online interviews. Before the interviews, participants received an interview guideline and gave their written consent. At the onset of the interview, participants provided background information with respect to their teaching and research background. The interview guideline had questions about their motives and motivation to conduct research, the methodology of their research (research questions, context, participants, findings, implications), and whether and how they made use of your research findings after completing their research. Semi-open questions were asked to elicit participant perceptions about the impact of their research engagement upon their teaching practices. Teachers were asked to consider whether and how their instructional decisions linked to their research findings. Interviews lasted around 45 minutes. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Verbal accounts of the participants (15.871 words) were analyzed thematically using inductive analysis procedures (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). Thematic analysis was conducted iteratively to monitor the coding and categorization process. Disagreements between raters were resolved in further discussions.

Participants	Research Question(s)	Research Findings	Reflection
Ati Teacher/Teacher educator	What do the students think about the communicative group work projects (entitled English learners' Club) conducted in the English classes?	Communicative group activities supported the promotion of learner autonomy and helped learners to increase their self-efficacy by developing their self-esteem and acting as a means for lowering their affective filters. Learners seemed to understand the importance of collaborative learning and perceived learning from each other positively.	Although I had some challenges in communicative group activities such as large classes, inadequate classroom space, previous experiences of the learners (low level of confidence and fear about using English), time management and some inactive students, students stated these activities were enjoyable and effective for their learning.
Ada Teacher	EFL teachers' language use in the Hungarian primary school context	Foreign language teachers are not willing to use the target language even if they have knowledge of the foreign language due to a variety of factors including perceived low self-esteem in pronunciation.	Examining teacher beliefs about classroom language use is important because beliefs may affect teachers' pedagogic decisions and help understand what happens in the classroom.
Dania Teacher	1. What strategies do I use to correct during the fluency-focused activities? 2. What do my learners think about error correction in fluency-focused activities? 3. What are other possible ways to do it?	I discovered that I corrected very little in fluency-focused activities whereas learners tended to prefer to be corrected more often. Deliberate and sustained attention to the error and balancing correction practices are important.	In future, I will work on improving the speaking of my learners and I will correct more. By the end of the course, I decided to collect feedback on how much learners improved and how much correction contributed to it. Finally, I decided to keep a reflection diary on the effectiveness of various strategies and collect data for further exploration of balance between correction strategies in speaking.
Jose Teacher/Teacher educator	1. How prepared do teachers feel themselves for implementing blended learning? 2. What activities/ tools do teachers consider useful for teaching remotely?	Teachers are aware of the characteristics of the blended learning model but a teacher training policy to help teachers manage the organization of their teaching effectively is needed. There is also a need for organizational and collaborative tools. Teachers seem to lack the ability of embedding correcting and grading tools efficiently in their actual teaching.	Strengthening the role of collaborative strategies is necessary and the concept of planning should be recast into a new mould shaped by wider planning schemas that include teamwork and cross-curricular strategies.
Divya Teacher/Teacher educator	What can I do to motivate teachers of Unicent School to do classroom-based Action Research for their professional growth? What are the possible roadblocks a teacher researcher might encounter?	I found out a variety of factors impeding teacher research such as lack of time or management of time, class size, the difficulty of data collection, lack of support from students and parents, lack of teamwork, empathy, availability of resources and constructive guidance. research, and carry-on conducting research for PD as a teacher educator.	I will hold interactive group talks to change perceptions of the teachers and persuade them to do research. My future actions include mentoring teachers in completing their classroom-based research, motivating more teachers, through talks and workshops, to do classroom-based action

Table 1: Summary of participants' research questions, findings, and reflection

FINDINGS

Findings indicated that research engagement supported within the online CoP brings about change on two dimensions; (1) research-driven practical change and (2) research-driven PD.

Research-driven PK Change

Thematic analysis conducted for the interview data revealed that teachers' practice was affected by the process and results of research engagement since they reported various forms of practical changes which we categorized as substitution,

modification, re-definition, and enrichment in their instruction. Each of these themes is discussed separately.

Substitution

Substitution refers to using an instructional methodology and/ or activity in the place of others based on research outcomes. Substitution involves teacher researchers' replacing what they normally do with a new practice as suggested by the results of their research. Participants reported that they substituted some elements of their methodology based on the

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

49

new understandings stemming from their research. Jose, for example, said:

> *My current experience in teaching includes a lot of digital facilities and digital devices that I needed to learn how to manage. My research helped me a lot with that, because it showed me what people needed to know, in terms of how to work with blended learning, how to work with technology in a context like ours, where technology is not one of the most favored aspects in education; actually, we lack technology a lot.*

In another instance, Jose comments on how he used research findings to change his teaching environment during the emergency remote teaching in Covid-19 lockdowns and replaced some routine synchronous reading activities in the classroom with other online asynchronous ones.

> *I think research changed my teaching because it helps me manage other devices that I didn't take into account or perhaps I thought were a hindrance at the time of teaching. I'm going to give you a very brief example, these activities, where you were working with a reading comprehension activity, and you started asking your students. And what did you ask them? Question being okay, it's okay, it's wrong, and you lose a lot of time in that, when you can be using that time, to having them produce, create, do something more productive. So, I learned how technology helped me, like, put that outside the classroom, and transform that into an asynchronous activity. So that I could have more teaching time, I mean, real teaching time, with my students' synchronous time, in a way in which that synchronous time, teaching time is really useful and productive for my students.*

Ada also substituted the use of first language for that of the target language when she could not explain to her students what she wanted to say.

> *I have to say I was not so confident. So, for example, when I can perceive that a student cannot understand what I'm saying in English or in German, then I leave the, the How to say that I leave this and I changed into Hungarian, into my mother tongue, but nowadays, No. So, I'm trying to explain in my own words in English or German, and I'm trying to use as much body language as I can in the classroom.*

Modification

Modification indicates the making of a limited change in teaching pedagogy. As opposed to substitution, modification refers to the making of a limited change in something. Some teachers pointed out that because of their engagement in research, they decided to make some changes in their teaching and become more understanding towards their learners. To illustrate Divya, as a teacher educator, was doing her research with teachers. She observed that the teachers she mentored at times did not respond to her open-ended questions. Then she decided to modify her practice as in the following statement:

> *So, what I do is I give them a fill-in-the-blank kind of activity; you know, I start, I give them a sentence as a sentence starter, and ask them to complete that sentence. So, I say 'doing research has changed my teaching by'… and I say complete the sentence. So, if they add to that, then that will give me an idea about what they're doing.*

For Divya, integrating this change into her instruction, giving a fill-in-the-blanks to cue learner responses rather than asking open-ended questions, had led to positive perceived changes in her teaching. She considered herself more resourceful (as she suggested she has 'more solutions to offer' and 'tips') and more understanding towards learners when they have difficulty with deadlines to submit their work.

> *I feel that I know the teaching and teachers better now, I will be able to handle features about mentoring better now. So, I have mostly solutions to offer. And it has, it has been a growth in me. I can see that. So don't get too agitated. If teachers do not submit things on time, I give them time. And I tell I give them tips to complete also.*

Similarly, Dania, who focused on error correction in her research, referred to the changes she observed in her teaching as "little change" but concurred that these perceived changes impacted her instruction and proved to be beneficial for her learners by stating the following:

> *I am not going to go into detail correcting everything. But I'm going to be very systematic and making sure. that you really use the things we learnt you know, we learnt properly. It is not like I force them to speak correctly all the time, but I am much more rigorous with myself about correction. Like I don't let them just pass it and I try not to recast. I try to pay their attention to the error to make them notice it. So that is what has changed, and I like it. I think that it is more effective. I can see a lot of benefits of **this little change**. This little change is a very small change, but I think that it is very beneficial for my learners.*

Jose also highlighted the chances he started making not only in teaching/ lesson planning but also in teacher training saying:

> *I use research findings… I apply them in my planning. I started planning in **a different** way in online lessons. I use it for my own classes, and also for helping other teachers who might train to plan their classes in the most minimal effective way. I use it (research findings) for teaching. I use it for lecturing, I use it for publishing.*

Re-definition

Redefinition, on the other hand, encompasses the idea of reevaluating teaching practices after research with a view to change and developing new insights. It entails the re-evaluation of the teaching practice investigated in the research to develop new insights and make changes. Dania, for example, investigated the role of error correction in students' improvement in speaking and reconsidered how error correction can be non-interruptive and decided to attend to the learner mistakes through self and peer correction.

> *So, these were the findings that I found. It was kind of just the exploration phase for me during the research. Like, you know… to decide what do I do more? How do I change my practice? So, I came up with the conclusion that I need correct more and it doesn't really interrupt their speaking. It doesn't destroy their motivation to speak at all. But it needs to be, you know, kind of not just instance correction, but make them pay attention to the error. And they would be like… thinking about it and correcting themselves or I would ask follow-up questions. Then you know a learning opportunity occurs.*

Similarly, redefining her role as a teacher in the classroom, Ati indicated that her research engagement and experience led to a conceptual change in her instructional practice in favor of attaining learner agency rather than teacher-centered teaching.

I also realized how to plan for the students; what type of activities are very effective to develop their various language skills; that means listening, reading, communicating. So which type of activities will help my learners to develop themselves? How to make my classroom more student-centered, more learner-centered... How to bring collaboration in my classroom so that all students can participate, and they will have the responsibility of the work? So, I started thinking over that.

Within the scope of her research study, Dania consulted her colleagues as well as her learners to explore their opinions towards error correction. She remarked: "*It was very interesting for me to see that majority thought what I had thought before that we should not correct, they need to speak. I collected feedback from my learners, and they wanted to be corrected. It was so interesting for me to see such a kind of discrepancy between opinions*". She also indicated that after asking her colleagues about their own practices into error correction she elicited some teaching ideas. Consequently, she started to inquire about her own teaching and get learners' feedback about effectiveness of her error correction techniques. Research outcomes compelled Dania to redefine her participation, intervention, and role in error correction of her learners as indicated in her following remark:

So, I found that learners want to be corrected. They see balance as an important aspect and that there is a discrepancy between teachers' views and learners' views. That error correction might not be such a scary thing for a learner as teachers see it. And the free speaking practice you know, maybe in my case, it doesn't have to be so vast. So, I find these aspects that correction is very important that paying attention to the errors is very important and learners need balance, and they need correction.

Because of her research engagement, she concluded that her practice changed in terms of re-defining her error correction approach.

So, I started correcting a little bit more in my lessons and I ask my students how they felt about it and the feedback was overly positive. So, that changed my practice. Definitely did! I started to look at it a little bit differently. You know I see the lesson time as more of a learning time. What I mean by that is this is me I am your teacher. I need you to pay attention to the errors. Nobody will do that in such a systematic way that as I would do in the lesson. Maybe somebody would do that but not in such a systematic way. And another thing that my learners said that I really liked... they mentioned they need a balance.

Enrichment

Finally, enrichment involves making teaching practice richer, especially by the addition or increase of some desirable quality or attribute. It entails the concept of adding or increasing some desirable quality, attribute, or ingredient (activity, method, etc.) to the teaching methodology. In enrichment the focus is not on changing one's instruction; it rather conveys the idea of adding another layer to what you already have been doing. For example, Ada's research focused on her colleagues' attitudes towards using mother tongue (L1) or foreign language in multilingual primary classes and how these interacted with their instruction in exploiting classroom materials. She emphasized that her research informed her own teaching practice and brought about enrichment. Building on her instructional practices, she decided to make more use of the native and target language of her learners as stated in the following quotation: "*Well, I'm using more foreign language in my, in my own classroom, so that, probably that is the result of the questionnaire or of the research. Yeah, and as I said, I use the parallel versions of the two languages, so I can make connections between the languages*".

Ati conducted her research on student interaction in groups. She reported that her learners tended to exclude their peers with low language proficiency. It was argued that based on research findings she chose to enrich her use of group work by adding randomization as a technique to form clusters/groups.

As a result of my research, I found the students are ready to work in the groups. Before that everybody wanted to work individually. no one wanted to work with the lower proficiency student. because they feel that our work will be spoiled. and our work will not be very effective. So many students have formed their own groups but with the higher proficiency students only. Everybody wants to work with those students and automatically lower proficiency students were out of this project. When I observed all these things, then I used another formula, another technique for the group formation which is random. That helped me a lot. Those who are in the role number 1 to 15, they will be in the first group. According to their role call I formed a group. Then all kinds of learners joined together.

Similarly, Jose suggested that drawing on the findings of his research into planning online teaching he decided to allocate more time to activities that encouraged active participation of the learners through engagement in activities that required analysis, synthesis, evaluation and creation.

And I devoted my teaching time to the higher levels of the of the of the Bloom's taxonomy: that is creating, evaluating, and analyzing. And students produce much more than they did when we have like the regular class. And this helped me a lot noticing how I could manage my time better. And it actually took a lot of stress out.

How Personal Knowledge Change Nurtured Research-driven Professional Development

Our participants identified the practical changes they self-regulated and integrated into their teaching. Motivated by these changes they also narrated how they also help them see the potential PD in the process of developing practical knowledge. We see these two parallel processes as complementary because research engendered changes in classroom teaching which linked closely the PD activity, mainly research, and how they described the PD they have experienced. Therefore, a second major theme emerged, research-driven PD, and helped strengthened the development of PK change.

Participants conceived that their engagement in the research process within the scope of the online CoP facilitated research-driven PD. Teachers reported that being immersed in the research experience and reflecting on the process within the online community when interacting with mentors, peers, and others not only changed their practices but also contributed to their self-efficacy and fostered a sense of teacher researcher identity. Verbal accounts of the teacher researchers implied a substantial, long-term, and transformational impacts on their PD beyond the actual training program.

To begin with, the concept of research being a distant, isolating academic endeavor seemed to change for some of the teachers; for example, Dania said:

I remember the webinar and I was like: 'Yeesss!!'. Oh my God! This is amazing because the speaker was talking about how research is a skill. This made me see research as not meant for somebody just sitting there in a throne in academia and just sacrificing all their personal lives. It really showed me, and that research can be very classroom-based and that is me the teacher in the classroom, I am the expert my classroom. Research is just a skill, and you learn it as a skill and do it to improve yourself. I thought this is such a shift of perspective. This is taking the control into my own hands. I don't need to wait for anybody to do research for me I can do it for me, and I don't need to wait for somebody to discover some better ways of teaching for me because I can find what works the best in my classroom context. That was incredible. That was very inspiring and very empowering.

Dania referred to the guest talks given by the experts within the scope of the online sessions and reported that the content of these talks impacted how she viewed research and the link with her own teaching. She believed that the research engagement process, online training, and support from the community were empowering as was reported by other participants. Ati, on the other hand, drew specific attention to how the interaction and collaboration between the members of the online CoP fostered her own PD by saying:

"For the first time I realized that teachers could do research, explore many new things and they can share their ideas. when I joined EVO and read other people's post from different parts of countries, I learnt about their innovative practices. Then I realized I can do the same. And I can practice in my own classroom and do action research".

Paul also highlights how research has helped him become a better teacher by revisiting his own teaching and a facilitative mentor by providing research support for his mentees.

This idea of doing research in my classroom to see how I needed to modify my teaching to improve my classes turned to be very useful. So, I decided to go on with that. Well, not only do I do it now, but I also try to ask my mentees to do it. I try to work with my mentees in the same way and like to show them how important research is. So, to help other people with research, you have to work a lot of research yourself. So, there is no other way than working on improving your research skills. That's why I was interested in working on that and trying to see what else I could do. And it actually helped me a lot.

In addition, Ada suggested that conducting research led to the emergence of a new layer of her teacher identity which encompasses the concept of being and becoming a researcher: "*Yeah, I learned a lot about myself, while, how to say analyzing the data, and the whole research and yeah, so the part of the research is, always a self-reflection? I think so. Yes, I consider what am I doing in my own classroom? And I try to be a better teacher and educator*".

Dani, on the other hand, pointed out the sustainability of this process, research integrated teaching experience, by mentioning how other future research projects are triggered by her previous engagement/experience.

I have further research in mind now. I've always wanted to do it and I just didn't have time. It was a little bit of hectic. I found a book while doing these workshops and it is about exploratory practice. I started reading now and it is super interesting. I really like it. I want to do similar research, an exploratory practice on my class and my strategies because now I work with young learners. The lessons are shorter; just 45 minutes. I noticed that in the first moments of the lesson they are so focused, and I really want to make use of it. How can I make use of those precious moments better? And that's what I want to research during this year at least.

In sum, teacher accounts imply that their participation and engagement in the online CoP provided them with the opportunity of research-driven practical change and research-driven PD. Classroom-based research was portrayed as a powerful means for PD which impacted teachers' practice based on systematic collection of evidence, analysis of and reflection on the research outcomes, as well as the process. The following reflection by Ati is elemental in demonstrating how research process brings about reflection and impacts teacher agency.

During my research, I observed the students closely for 5 months. How they were discussing with each other while completing the work and after completing work. How give the response to me. So, I took reflective notes about students' work and how they felt about the practices while doing the work. In my teacher journal, I reflected on myself about the effectiveness of the activities. I mentioned my own reflection on whether I am on the right track or not whether my objectives were fulfilled or not particular. I reflected on whether my objectives were achieved or not, whether I have to make a different plan another plan for them. if some activities for not effective then how to plan for different activities.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to explore the development of PK to identify the practical scope of change enacted by teachers' engagement in practitioner research in an online community-based course. Findings suggest that research engagement in this context, within the online CoP, impacted development of their PK. These findings are in line with prior research outcomes arguing for a strong relationship between research-oriented professional development activities and PK (e.g., Burns, 2014; Tanış and Dikilitaş, 2018; Van Schaik et al., 2019; Wyatt, 2011). We also found that personal knowledge

change based on rsearch engagement nurtured professional development and triggered their motivation to pursue research-driven PD (c.f. Tanış and Dikilitaş, 2018). This finding also resonates with previous research (Edwards and Burns, 2016; Cabaroğlu, 2014; Dikilitaş and Yaylı, 2018; Wang and Zang, 2014; Wyatt, 2008). Although we did not observe the actual changes in teaching, teachers' continuous written reflection on their process of research and teaching gave us insightful evidence together with the interviews we conducted with the participants.

Therefore, our emerging framework included how the intricacy of practical change by describing the nature and process of practice change in teaching. We used the following major themes to identify the process of change: substitution, modification, re-definition, and enrichment in their instruction. In close relation to this, we also presented their views of the kind of PD that was enacted by practitioner research training in the CoP, which provided opportunities for collaboration, ongoing dialogue, and 'a shared social identity in an online learning environment' (Göktürk-Sağlam and Dikilitaş, 2020: 10). Drawing on the thematization of the process and nature of practical change that participants narrated, we argue that PK development and change translated into teaching is the building block of PD, which ultimately entails teachers to change or promote their teaching process. We claim that PK change can be seen as a layered process where teachers can substitute, modify, re-define, or enrich their teaching process as suggested by their practitioner research.

We show the close relationship between teachers' research and their practices which could be referred to as PK change.

Research offers the potential to change practices since it is also a practice that can be integrated into teaching. For example, a research activity that engages students in elaborating on their process of learning vocabulary could also be a thinking and verbal reflection activity that promotes meaningful verbal skills while also offering the teachers data that can be used as evidence to explore learner voice and consider PK development. Research itself is a practical activity that can engage students and teachers into knowledge building and development not only in formal learning and teaching but throughout their life cycle (Hodge et al., 2008).

The findings revealed several key implications to state. Motivated by the themes we revealed, we propose several practical considerations when teachers are mentored to engage in research for PD. These include

- encouraging teachers to make purposeful links to their teaching when they engage in practitioner research
- teaching them to reflect on the translation of their PK from research into practice of teaching
- inspiring them to identify topics of research grounded on their teaching issues to strengthen the influence on teaching
- facilitating a process of researcher and teacher roles as complementary that makes PD a research-based engagement
- discussing with teachers the PD opportunities that could be gained into research-teaching links
- building communities of practices which aim to support research engagement and increase the chances of support from multiple knowledgeable and experienced others.

REFERENCES

Arbaugh, J. B., Cleveland-Innes, M., Diaz, S. B., Garrison, R. D., Ice, P., Richardson, J. C., and Swan, K. P. (2008) 'Developing a community of inquiry instrument: Testing a measure of the Community of Inquiry framework using a multi-institutional sample', *The Internet and Higher Education,* Vol. 11, No. 3–4, pp. 133–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2008.06.003

Burns, A. (2014) 'Professional learning in Australian ELICOS: An Action Research Orientation', *English Australia Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 3–20.

Cabaroğlu, N. (2014) 'Professional development through action research: Impact on self-efficacy', *System*, Vol. 44, pp. 79–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.03.003

Clandinin, D. J. (1986) *Classroom practice: Teacher images in action*, London: Falmer Press.

Clandinin, D. J. (1992) 'Creating spaces for teachers' voices', *The Journal of Educational Thought*, pp. 59–61.

Dille, K. B. and Røkenes, F. M. (2021) 'Teachers' professional development in formal online communities: A scoping review', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 105, 103431, pp. 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103431

Dikilitaş, K. and Yaylı, D. (2018) 'Teachers' professional identity development through action research', *ELT Journal*, Vol. 72, No. 4, pp. 415–424. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccy027

Dikilitaş, K. and Çomoğlu, I. (2022a) 'Mentoring beginning TESOL teacher researchers: experiences from international contexts', *European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 135–150.

Dikilitaş, K. and Çomoğlu, I. (2022b) 'Pre-service English teachers' reflective engagement with stories of exploratory action research', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 26–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1795123

Edwards, E. and Burns, A. (2016) 'Language Teacher–Researcher Identity Negotiation: An Ecological Perspective', *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 735–745. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.313

Elbaz, F. (1983) *Teacher thinking: A study of practical knowledge*, London: Croom Helm.

Eshchar-Netz, L. and Vedder-Weiss, D. (2020) 'Teacher learning in communities of practice: The affordances of co-planning for novice and veteran teachers' learning', *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 366–390. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21663

Feldman, J. (2020) 'The role of professional learning communities to support teacher development: A social practice theory perspective', *South African Journal of Education*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 1–8. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n1a1668

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., and Archer, W. (1999) 'Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education', *Internet and Higher Education*, Vol. 2, No. 2–3, pp. 87–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6

Gilken, J. M. and Johnson, H. L. (2019) 'Implementing a Peer Feedback Intervention within a Community of Practice Framework', *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 155–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2019.1655502

Gholami, K. and Husu, J. (2010) 'How do teachers reason about their practice? Representing the epistemic nature of teachers' practical knowledge', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 26, No. 8, pp. 1520–1529. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.001

Golombek, P. R. (1998) 'A Study of Second Language Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge', *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 32, pp. 447–464. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588117

Göktürk-Sağlam, A.L. and Dikilitaş, K. (2020) 'Evaluating an Online Professional Learning Community as a Context for PD in Classroom-Based Research', *TESL-EJ*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 1–17.

Heigham, J., and Croker, R. (eds.) (2009) *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction*, London: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230239517

Hodge, D., C. Haynes, P. LePore, K. Pasquesi, and M. Hirsh (2008) *From inquiry to discovery: Developing the student as scholar in a networked world*, [Online], Available: https://www.readkong.com/page/from-inquiry-to-discovery-developing-the-student-as-6869220 [3 Nov 2022].

Ion, G., and Iucu, R. (2014) 'Professionals' perceptions about the use of research in educational practice', *European Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 334–347. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2014.899154

Jones, W. M. and Dexter, S. (2014) 'How teachers learn: the roles of formal, informal, and independent learning', *Education Technology Research Development*, Vol. 62, pp. 367–384. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-014-9337-6

Lantz-Andersson, A., Lundin, M. and Selwynab, N. (2018) 'Twenty years of online teacher communities: A systematic review of formally-organized and informally-developed professional learning groups', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 75, pp. 302–315. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.07.008

Lave, J., and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacPhail, A., Patton, K., Parker, M. and Tannehill, D. (2014) 'Leading by example: Teacher educators' professional learning through communities of practice', *Quest*, Vol. 66, No. 1, 39–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2013.826139

Margalef, L. and Pareja Roblin, N. (2016) 'Unpacking the roles of the facilitator in higher education professional learning communities', *Educational Research and Evaluation*, Vol. 22, No.4, pp. 155–172. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2016.1247722

Murugaiah, P., Azman, H., Thang, S.M and Krish, P. (2012) 'Teacher learning via communities of practice: A Malaysian case study', *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, Vol. 7, No.2, pp. 162–174. https://doi.org/10.5172/ijpl.2012.7.2.162

Tanış, A. and Dikilitaş, K. (2018) 'Turkish EFL Instructors' Engagement in Professional Development', *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 27–47.

Van Schaik, P., Volman, M., Admiraal, W. and Schenke, W. (2019) 'Approaches to co-construction of knowledge in teacher learning groups', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 84, pp. 30–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.04.019

Vangrieken, K., Meredith, C., Packer, T., and Kyndt, E. (2017) 'Teacher communities as a context for PD: A systematic review', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 61, pp. 47–59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.10.001

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wang, Q., and Zhang, H. (2014) 'Promoting teacher autonomy through university–school collaborative action research', *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 222–241. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813505942

Wenger, E. (1998) 'Communities of practice: Learning as a social system', *Systems Thinker*, Vol. 9, No. 5, pp. 2–3.

Wieser, C. (2016) 'Teaching and personal educational knowledge conceptual considerations for research on knowledge transformation', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 39, pp. 588–601. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2016.1253673

Wyatt, M. (2008) *Growth in practical knowledge and teachers' self-efficacy during an in-service BA (TESOL) programme*, [dissertation thesis], Leeds: School of Education, University of Leeds.

Wyatt, M. (2011) 'Teachers researching their own practice', *ELT Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 4, pp. 417–425. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq074

Wyatt, M., and Borg, S. (2011) 'Development in the practical knowledge of language teachers: a comparative study of three teachers designing and using communicative tasks on an in-service BA TESOL programme in the Middle East', *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 233–252. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2010.537340

Wyatt, M. and Dikilitaş, K. (2016) 'English language teachers becoming more efficacious through research engagement at their Turkish university', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 550–570. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1076731

APPENDIX

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Introduce yourself (your teaching and research background).
2. How did you get involved in classroom-based research? How did you decide to conduct research?
3. Tell us about your research.
   a. Which topic did you explore? Why did you choose that topic?
   b. What tools did you use for collecting data?
   c. What did you find?
   d. How did you arrive at your conclusions/ research outcomes?
4. What have you done with your research findings? How did you make use of your research findings after completing your research?

   Concluding remarks

FACILITATING THE TRANSITIONING OF AN EFL TEACHER FROM TEACHING OLDER LEARNERS TO TEACHING YOUNGER CHILDREN THROUGH MENTORING

Yasemin Kırkgöz

Çukurova University, Türkiye

✉ ykirkgoz@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper reports the professional journey of an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher from teaching older learners to teaching younger children at a primary school, and the impact of mentoring on the teacher in facilitating the transitioning process. The participant is a Turkish native-speaker male English teacher with 23 years of teaching experience. He participated in the mentoring programme, which was organized as a collaborative action research teacher development project, and implemented by the author of the present study. During this process, the participant completed three cycles of action research. For each cycle, he identified a problem and/or any aspect of teaching he wished to improve, designed an action plan, applied it in his Grade 2 English classes, reflected upon his action, and documented his action research. He was also interviewed to gain additional insight into his experiences. Qualitative inductive analysis was used to analyse the interviews and reflective writings. The findings suggest that the mentoring process led to an increase in the teacher's self-efficacy in young learner pedagogy and teaching performance, helped him socialize into the community of young learner teachers, and gain teacher-researcher identity, which is perceived to smooth his transition into teaching a younger age.

HOW TO CITE

Highlights

- *Transitioning from teaching older learners to younger children is a challenging process.*
- *Mentoring can smooth the transitioning process.*
- *Mentoring process can change an adult English teacher's self-efficacy in young learner pedagogy, teaching performance, professional socialisation, and teacher-researcher identity.*
- *Teachers need to be supported through mentoring following educational change.*

INTRODUCTION

'Transition' has become a subject that should not be considered as 'a manageable or quickly adaptable period of time' (Phan and Pham, 2022: 1). Examining this *movement* or a *transfer* for novice teachers into the school environment has been a topic of investigation for researchers. It has been argued that any transition is 'problematic' (Ecclestone et al., 2010: 4), involving an 'inevitable shock' (Stokking et al., 2003: 331) because 'the school-work transition might make graduates realize what they are taught at school is not exactly the same as what is expected from them in the new school environment'

(Phan and Phamb, 2022: 1). Experienced English teachers are no exception when they need to transfer into a new teaching context to teach a different age group from the one they had been acquainted with.

Mentoring between a new teacher and an experienced one is a common strategy used in teacher professional development programmes to address such a crucial transition period (Ewing, 2021; Morettini et al. 2019). This strategy can be a type of therapy to help teachers who are going through a transitional stage in their careers. While experienced teachers may think that they are fully acquainted with teaching one specific age,

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617
Printed ISSN
2336-2375
55

such as adults, classroom practices of a different age group that they are required to teach, such as younger children, may actually reveal more challenges than they anticipated previously (Onat-Stelma, 2005).

In Türkiye, in response to the recent curriculum change, which was put into implementation in the 2013-2014 teaching year, the starting age of learning English was lowered to the second year of primary children around the age of seven (Kırkgöz, 2015). Consequently, many English teachers who had been teaching in secondary or high schools moved to primary education with no experience in teaching young learners. The present study investigates the professional journey of a Turkish native-speaker English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher from teaching older learners to teaching younger ages at a state primary school. The study also investigates how a mentoring programme, offered as part of a collaborative action research (CAR) teacher development project, assisted the process of transitioning into teaching young children in his new school context.

Relatively few studies have examined the impact of mentoring on teachers or used a university-school CAR to help teachers tackle their daily emerging issues, particularly following a curriculum change (Kırkgöz, 2016, 2019; Onat-Stelma, 2005). The present study is based on a single participant study, which was carried out by the author as well as one mentor who was also a university teacher educator working on the project. The research is also a response to a call for further research into teacher professional development following such curricular reforms to investigate how best to facilitate the teaching of English in primary schools (Onat-Stelma, 2005).

The paper continues with an overview of the existing literature related to the research area, followed by providing a description of the research context before moving on to the results and discussion of the study. The paper ends with a conclusion section giving a brief summary of key findings of the study.

Transition

Transition is described as 'the major shaping event in the professional life' (McDonal 1980: 22). Different stakeholders, comprising beginning teachers, teacher educators as well as experienced teachers can have different perceptions of this stage (McDonal, 1980). The transition from initial teacher education to the classroom is one of the most critical phases of a teaching career (Zuljan and Pozarnik, 2014). Empirical studies show that during this transition period, new teachers, in many countries face common challenges such as 'feelings of inadequacy in terms of their skills and knowledge, leading to decreased self-efficacy and increased stress; uncertainty regarding their role and position as newcomers in the education community; and threats of job loss due to precarious employment conditions' (Heikkinen et al., 2018: 1).

Phan and Phamb (2022) conducted a qualitative case study to investigate how a mentoring programme facilitates the transition of two newly qualified teachers, working in a higher education institution. The results demonstrate changes in the teachers' teaching beliefs, self-efficacy, teaching performance

and professional development, and the socialisation process into the profession, facilitating the transition process. Self-efficacy refers to 'beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given actions required' (Bandura, 1997: 3). Teachers' self-efficacy serves as the foundation for their core belief in their capacity to use a variety of tasks arising from context-specific demands to support student learning (Wyatt, 2010). As stated by Bandura (1986), none of the forms of beliefs that influence action is more important or pervasive than people's assessment of their capacity to deal effectively with various actions.

While the experience of first time or novice teachers who are making the transition from pre-service training to their first year of teaching during the transition period has been investigated extensively (e.g., Farrell, 2003; Harfitt, 2015; Hebert and Worthy, 2001; Phan and Phamb, 2022), a gap exists in the literature describing the experiences of teachers making a transition from teaching one age group to another, particularly in the Türkiye context. One earlier study that focused on this issue was by Onat-Stelma (2005), who investigated the experiences of four English language teachers who were previously teaching adults in high schools or language schools, and moved to teach English to young learners. The study was conducted following the educational reform, which introduced English into the primary curriculum to grade four students (aged 9) in 1997, in Türkiye. These teachers were followed in their first year of teaching in primary school to identify changes they experienced in their approach to teaching English to young learners, and what influenced these changes. In-service training through one-off seminars and workshops organized by publishers, and textbooks, as well as emotional and professional support from colleagues were found to have a positive influence on teacher change during the transitioning process. In adjusting to teaching children, the main issue the teachers focused on was developing effective classroom management strategies.

Collaborative Action Research (CAR) Professional Development Programme

Action Research (AR) is conceptualized as the process by which practitioners study problems systematically to increase their knowledge of the curriculum, teaching, and learning (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982). AR has been widely used as a viable professional development approach for classroom teachers to bring about change in their instructional practices, and to promote teachers' professional competence (Atay 2008; Gao, Barkhuizen, and Chow 2011; Kırkgöz, 2017). The process of AR includes action cycles of planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation. In some AR projects, the approach adopted is individualistic in nature in that practitioners conduct their AR with little or no external contact with others (Burns, 2009). Although such an approach can help teachers improve their teaching practice, teachers may still face various challenges, such as a lack of professional isolation (Gao, Barkhuizen and Chow, 2011; Wallace 1998). Burns (2010) maintains that AR becomes far more productive when teachers collaborate with others, rather than working in isolation to get support so that they can deal with potential challenges.

Mentoring

Mentoring has generally been associated with school-based support for pre-service or in-service teachers' professional learning or decision-making. It involves 'sharing knowledge, skills and experience in order to encourage and empower another person' (Smith, 2020: 14). Mentors are experienced teachers or colleagues having the necessary knowledge and assume certain roles (Dikilitaş and Wyatt, 2018; Malderez, 2009). Roberts (2000: 162) reports that during the process of mentoring 'a more knowledgeable and experienced person actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning with another less experienced and knowledgeable person so as to facilitate that person's career and personal development'.

Stories of mentoring via teacher AR conducted in various forms have been reported in many countries around the world. One example is exploratory action research of the teachers in Nepal, supported by the British Council as an Action Research Mentoring Scheme. It is a teacher research-mentoring project, which supports teachers to bring about change and improvement in their instructional practices and develop confidence in teaching through teacher research (Negi, 2019). Another example is the Champion Teachers Project in Chile, which began in 2013 as a British Council/Ministry of Education initiative to bring about an alternative to the top-down in-service teacher education system in the country (Rebolledo, Smith and Bullock, 2016).

Common findings of these studies show that teachers find it valuable to explore problematic issues in their classrooms prior to planning a change to bring about improvement in their teaching practice, and they become aware of a teacher researcher perspective. All these positive outcomes result in an increase in the quality of learning.

Recently, the university-school partnership has been proposed to enhance teachers' professional development through AR (Day and Hadfield, 2004; Kırkgöz, 2015, 2017; Yuan and Lee, 2015). Within a university-school partnership, teachers can receive mentoring from university teacher educators to help enhance their research knowledge and skills and to enable them to embrace new ideas about language teaching and learning through AR (Wang and Zhang, 2014). Yuan and Lee (2015) investigated two EFL teachers' AR experiences in a university-school collaborative project in China. A team of university researchers collaborated with 15 English teachers from five high schools in Beijing, China to provide mentoring to the teachers in conducting their own AR, assisting them as facilitators and collaborators. It is found that 'university–school collaboration can yield great benefits for teachers by developing 'their reflective abilities and research competence helping teachers resolve contextual problems with the support from the university researchers' (Yuan and Lee, 2015: 8).

Another study (Kırkgöz, 2017) reports mentoring AR experiences of two teachers participating in a CAR project. The teachers working in the same school were experiencing problems in their Grade 2 classes related to children forgetting what they learn quickly. One of the characteristics of young learners is that they learn quickly and forget quickly. Teachers were facilitated to use such real objects or images as colourful balloons and a poster of a rainbow in their instructional practices. It was found that using real objects enabled young learners to make an association, namely, to link certain concepts with those objects, which enabled children to retain knowledge more effectively and for a longer period. Findings of the studies reported above show that the mentoring provided by an external facilitator, i.e., a university researcher can help teachers gain teacher researcher identity when teachers are involved in researching their own instructional practice through AR. Teacher researchers are teachers who take ownership of their professional development, and have the ability to cope effectively with classroom issues by taking necessary action and they are interested in developing professionally.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Research Context

The research context for this study is an in-service teacher development programme, through which three teacher educators, including the author of the present study, from the same university, collaborated with ten English teachers teaching Grade 2 classes to young learners (aged around 7) in different state primary schools in a province, in Turkey. The fundamental aims of this collaboration were to provide teachers with mentoring to facilitate their implementation of the new ELT curriculum through AR, and to help teachers achieve a smooth transition in terms of not only professional development, but also professional socialisation into teaching a younger age. The study, lasting over a year, was conducted following the first critical years of the curriculum change, which was executed in the 2013-2014 teaching year, one main impact of which was to lower the starting age of learning English to the second year of primary school in Turkey (Kırkgöz and Yasar, 2020). Consequently, many English teachers who had been teaching in secondary or high schools moved to primary schools with no experience in teaching young learners.

Background to the Research Participant

The participant of this study -*Sahil*- (real name) is a male Turkish native-speaker EFL teacher with 23 years of teaching experience. Consent was obtained from him to use his real name. He is a qualified English teacher as he graduated from an ELT department of a state university in Türkiye. During his university education, *Sahil* received various courses including teaching language skills, literature, and language testing to prepare him for the teaching professions, except for the *Teaching English to Young Learners* course, which was introduced into the pre-service teacher education programmes after his graduation. Nor had he received any professional training to teach young learners.

Having taught English to adult learners (aged 15-18), for 23 years *Sahil* decided to teach younger children to gain experience in teaching a different group of students. His application to the Provincial Directorate of National Education was accepted, and he was appointed to teach English at a state primary school to Grade 2 students. Despite being experienced in teaching adults, things did not go well as he anticipated

at the commencement of teaching second graders with 35 and 34 students in each class. Second graders were different from adults in terms of classroom management, the use of methodology, and classroom materials. The curriculum (See MNE, 2013) promoted activity-based teaching. He had great difficulty in having student-centred classes. Nor was he familiar with the young learner's pedagogy to be able to design appropriate lesson plans. Soon after beginning to teach this new student demographic, he had difficulty adjusting to the primary English curriculum and teaching English to young children. As a result, he felt dissatisfied with the quality of teaching and learning in his classrooms, which gave him an impetus to participate in the CAR project.

Overwhelmed with such problems, one day he received a call for an invitation to join the CAR project supervised and directed by the author of the present study. As reported earlier, the project aimed to provide second-grade English teachers with the mentoring needed to help them effectively implement the new ELT curriculum and achieve a smooth transition into teaching young children. This project was a perfect opportunity for him to be supported by academics, and to be a part of a community of teachers having similar problems in their classes.

The Positionality of the Author

The author of this article is a teacher educator (specializing in young learner pedagogy, AR, and teacher development), and the project coordinator who organized and supervised all the project activities, collected and analysed data. She collaborated with two additional university teacher educators, working as mentors on the project, both of whom were specialists in young learner pedagogy, drama, and AR. Each English teacher was assigned to one of the mentors in the project team, including the author, herself. Unlike the traditional position of 'experts' adopting a prescriptive approach and dictating what was right or wrong, (Harrison, Lawson and Wortley, 2005), the role of each mentor was to act as facilitators, co-researchers, and senior colleagues who would support teachers in their professional development. Furthermore, each mentor agreed to have "the responsibility of gaining teachers' trust and creating an environment that cultivates reflection, exploration and change' (Bailey, 2009: 271). The subsequent section will detail how mentoring has been provided.

Data Collection and Analyses

To investigate the experiences of the participant more deeply during the process of transition from teaching young adults to teaching young learners, a qualitative case study research was adopted (Creswell, 2006). The data collection instruments include a series of interviews I held with him, reflective writings of the participant after each AR cycle and documentation of his AR project (ARP, 2020), which was included in the final project book (Kırkgöz and Yaşar, 2020) to disseminate CAR project to a wide community of language teachers. The collection of data from multiple sources was intended to enrich the data source and reinforce the validity of the study.

Three semi-structured interviews, each lasting 15 minutes were conducted (in English) at the end of each AR cycle.

The interview questions focused on the participant teacher's actual AR experience; namely, how each AR cycle helped him to resolve his initial problem or concern, thereby contributing to his professional development; whether the participant teacher perceived any changes in his teaching practices in young learner classrooms, the potential effects of mentoring and focus group discussions on the transitioning process, and his acclimatization into a new school environment. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Through reflective writing, the participant wrote a reflection on his teaching practice and action research experiences.

A qualitative inductive process was applied to analyse the interview data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). First, the interview transcripts were reviewed to identify the themes in relation to his professional learning in teaching young learner classes and his development through AR. These themes were then compared, confirmed, and modified with data from his reflective writings leading to the final interpretation of the data. The teacher's own AR report was used to triangulate with the interview and reflective writings. During the process of data analysis, the author of the study conducted the coding along with a project researcher independently. Inter-rater agreement was over 92.2 percent. Finally, member checking was carried out with the participant teacher himself to ensure that the views of the participant has been accurately interpreted when reporting the findings.

The Mentoring Procedure

The participant completed three cycles of AR, which was a 'cyclical or spiral process' of reflective teaching, involving a continuous evaluating and revising of one's own practice' (Pollard et al., 2008: 17). During this cyclic procedure, the participant was assigned a mentor (a male teacher educator working on the project). This was in addition to the mentoring he was also receiving from the project's author. The detailed procedure of the mentoring activity for each AR cycle is described below:

First, *Sahil* identified a problem and/or any aspect of teaching he wished to improve. In the planning stage, after conducting research, he took the initiative in designing an action plan. *Sahil* and his mentor communicated via e-mail, phone, or in person. The process of collaboration between them was initiated by the mentor meeting with *Sahil* to discuss the lesson plan. This pre-lesson encounter was used as a golden opportunity for the mentor to listen to his thoughts about his lesson, and be acquainted with the teacher's beliefs about activities to be used in young learner classes. During this process, the participant gained considerable support from his mentor who acted as a facilitator and a counsellor offering advice, recommendations, and suggestions rather than dictating what is right or wrong, and supporting his transformative development into teaching a younger age group.

The mentor listened to *Sahil*'s description of the lesson and the reasons for his choice of activities, scaffolded him by asking encouraging questions, and offered suggestions or possible alternatives when needed, while at the same time allowing space for *Sahil* to develop his own judgment. Randall and Thornton (2005) state that the need to 'effectively listen

(attend) to the teacher at this stage, and try to understand his/her actions in the context of the intended aims, the developmental perspective of the teacher, and the classroom situation' (p. 90). Similarly, by having a pre-lesson conversation, the mentor and the teacher agreed on the lesson objectives, type of activities, and their suitability for young learners. An interview I held with the mentee reported that

"The dialogue I held with my mentor has always been productive. Although he was an expert on young learner psychology, he valued my ideas and asked my opinions through his questions. This made me think more critically. He was always patient and a very good listener."

Following this, *Sahil* put the lesson plan into action in his Grade 2 English classes, and observed the effectiveness of his action in addressing the initial problem in relation to children's learning. Finally, he wrote a reflection on his own experiences of the AR process. In his reflective writing, he expressed whether there were any adjustments in his teaching practices and beliefs toward teaching a new age group. Reflection was important for the participant to assess how his transition from teaching older learners to younger children was eased by the mentoring program. Through reflection, he was supported to enrich and construct professional knowledge and gradually acquire new insights for practice (Mena Marcos, Sanchez and Tillema, 2009). Finally, he was guided to write an AR project (ARP), which was included in the final project book (Kırkgöz and Yaşar, 2020) for project dissemination.

The above process is repeated in the three AR cycles fulfilled by the participant.

The Action Research Cycles
Action Research Cycle 1

In the first AR cycle, *Sahil* sought answers to the questions: My students are not engaged with activities in the classroom. How can I increase young children's engagement with class activities? How can I create real-life experiences for my students?

Sahil consulted related literature and read some articles to address these issues, working collaboratively with his mentor. In the planning stage of the AR, he collaborated with his mentor. To give young learners a real-life experience, he decided to use real objects and to increase children's engagement with class activities he prepared some games.

The topic of the Unit was "Pets" so using live or toy pets would make the lesson more productive and increase the love of animals in children. In his pre-lesson conversation, his mentor agreed with him to teach this unit with his four-month-old Golden Retriever puppy, called Buffy to give children a real-world experience. As *Sahil* reports in his reflective writing: *"My mentor never judged my lesson plan saying that this is right and that is wrong. Instead, he made me think more deeply about the kind of activities I was planning to use by asking me questions. He asked me why I should bring Buffy to school. My reply was to teach the topic more efficiently with real materials and living things and to instil a love of animals in children"*.

Along with this, he mentions another dialogue he had with his mentor as leading him to think more deeply and revising his lesson plan upon the mentor's suggestions: *"Another dialogue we had was about where to have the lesson whether in the class or in the garden. We decided to have the class in the school garden"*.

Collaboratively, they decided that children with pets such as a bird, a rabbit, and even a fish, would bring them to the lesson; those who did not have live pets would bring toy pets instead, or even those who are interested would make a pet album and bring it to the lesson. In addition, *Sahil* prepared a list of relevant activities and games, and added them to his revised lesson plan.

The lesson took place in the school garden during the allocated two lesson hours (each lesson 40 minutes). The children were very happy to see *Buffy* and the other pets. First, they petted *Buffy*. Then, they showed their pets to each other while *Sahil* was teaching the names of the pets. The lesson continued with children playing games with *Buffy* by giving him instructions using English words on the syllabus/unit such as *jump/walk/sit down,* which *Buffy* performed.

Sahil evaluated the effectiveness of this action/practice in his ARP (2020: 94) as a 'productive, enthusiastic, and well-attended lesson'. He believed that 'students participated more and enjoyed it a lot'. He was convinced that when topics are supported with real materials and actions, children retain their knowledge better.

When he asked the students' opinions on his using real objects (pets) and games, all students agreed that they learned the name of pets, and action words easily, they could remember them well and at the same time, they got entertained. Their overall response to the lesson was very positive as evidenced by the children's use of the words such as 'excellent, entertaining, and unforgettable'.

Action Research Cycle 2

In the second cycle of AR, *Sahil* focused on resolving classroom management difficulties he was facing in his lessons. He expressed concerns about children's lack of attentiveness to activities in the classroom. His lesson plan involved using *the drawing a picture of two faces* activity to capture children's attention.

He drew two faces on the board: a smiling face on the right corner of the board, and an unhappy face on the left corner. When he was happy with the children's behaviour, he was standing under the happy face and when unhappy he was standing under the drawing of the unhappy face. Surprisingly, using these activities did not go as planned because when he stood on the unhappy side, waiting for the class to be quiet, the opposite happened. The class got up and started pushing him to the happy side.

At this point, he sought advice from his mentor and discussed using the *six thinking hats* method to resolve classroom management issues. In fact, this method was already applied by one of his peers, and was proven an effective strategy in capturing children's attention on the intended activity (Kırkgöz, 2018). *Sahil* became familiar with this activity during a focus group meeting and was inspired by it and decided to apply it in his classes.

Accordingly, he prepared six coloured hats, each corresponding to a different activity such as the blue hat represented *game*

activity, the yellow hat *speaking activity*, and the black hat symbolized *quiet time*. He first explained to the students what each hat symbolized, and then he started wearing the coloured hat during the relevant activity. Switching to a different activity involved wearing a different coloured hat. He observed that using the different coloured hats had a positive effect on engaging students in the related activity. As he reported in his reflective writing, "*Children associated each coloured hat with the intended activity and they could better engage themselves in that activity. When I was wearing the yellow hat, they immediately remembered that the yellow hat meant song time and they got ready to sing songs*".

Action Research Cycle 3

Sahil continued exploring classroom management issues more in order to take the control of the whole class, one of the critical issues in young children's classrooms. He wanted to investigate the effects of using engaging games on classroom management. He prepared different age-appropriate games, supported by his mentor. *Guess what* and *lip-reading* were the two activities that he was particularly interested in using. To apply the *guess what* activity, first, he introduced the names of all the fruits to the students, in the Fruits Unit. Then, he blindfolded the children, put a piece of fruit in their mouths, and asked the child to say the name of the fruit he tasted. He observed that each child in the class was engaged in the activity and followed it excitedly.

He applied a *lip-reading* activity with the words *strawberry, orange, melon*, and asked the children to guess what the word he was saying would be by his lip movements. Then, he used a drama activity, asking the children to show him the lip movement of the word he showed and then say it. His reflection on the effectiveness of this activity demonstrates that students showed full interest in this activity, the class did not disperse, and classroom management problems were minimised. He decided to continue using it in his subsequent teaching practices.

Focus Group Meetings

As McLaughlin and Talbert (2001: 22) indicate, 'a collaborative community of practice in which teachers share instructional resources and reflections in practice appears essential to their persistence and success in innovating classroom practice'. Likewise, an important component of CAR was to hold focus group meetings after the completion of each AR cycle (lasting 1.5 hours) where teachers presented their AR projects, reflected upon their experiences, exchanged ideas, and received comments from the mentors. *Sahil* attended three focus group meetings where he also presented his AR project, learned useful strategies his peers/colleagues' were applying in their young learner classes, and received comments on his AR.

RESULTS

In this section, the results of data analysis are presented under three main themes; the first theme is self-efficacy in young learner pedagogy, under which two related subthemes are identified: (1) implementing child-appropriate activities, and (2) classroom management, the second theme is professional socialisation, and the third theme is teacher-researcher identity.

Self-efficacy Beliefs in Young Learner Pedagogy

The fact that the participant collaborated with his mentor and peers promoted growth in self-efficacy beliefs in relation to young learner pedagogy. *Sahil* had low self-efficacy and felt less confident in the initial days of his teaching young learner classes. He was well aware of his shortcomings, which he sincerely reflected in his ARP (2020: 91): 'I couldn't work with drama, I couldn't teach student-centred lessons, and I had problems in classroom management due to not knowing the age group'. He felt dissatisfied with the quality of teaching and learning in his classrooms.

After participating in the CAR, he increased his self-efficacy and began to feel more confident in teaching a younger age group. Particularly, he perceived himself as more confident in using age-appropriate games, and drama activities, as can be understood from AR cycles presented earlier, thanks to the favourable effects of the mentoring and peer support. Additionally, his teaching beliefs in young learner classes showed significant change from a teacher-centred to a student-centred pedagogy, after receiving mentoring. He enjoyed using child-centred methodology, and he was significantly influenced by the experience of his colleagues in focus group meetings. He started using innovative age-appropriate techniques, which led him to gain self-efficacy and improved his teaching practice. He described the atmosphere in the three focus group meetings he attended as motivating, fruitful and so effective. In brief, the mentoring programme did lead to a significant change in self-efficacy of *Sahil*, as a first-time young learner teacher, to be more efficacious in his own teaching practices. This support assisted in facilitating the transition of the adult-experienced teacher into teaching young learners and making adjustments in his teaching practice. As understood from his reflections, *Sahil* created an environment where all students were actively engaged in the activities, and observed a great change in the quality of his teaching.

Implementation of Child-appropriate Activities

Students' engagement in activities is highly prioritised in young learner classrooms. *Sahil* admitted in the interview that he was not well acquainted with setting games, and drama activities that satisfied students' needs and interests. However, he showed a great change in the way he prepared for his students' learning thanks to the mentoring programme. Although he had never used games in his previous teaching with adults, he now believed that lessons should be entertaining and fun for children. Therefore, there were many exciting games in his lessons in line with lesson objectives, as illustrated in AR cycles. In planning his AR, he ensured that the games are closely related to the objectives of each unit, made sense to children, and were engaging for them. As he mentioned in the interview "*I made sure that children could be involved in the games and use new knowledge and vocabulary learnt during the lesson to those games*". Thanks to mentoring, he became aware that the activities should be meaningful and relevant to the needs and interests of children, and they are thought in a logical order.

In addition, the project team organized drama training; the teachers displayed their AR projects and shared useful activities they used in their Grade 2 classes in focus group meetings. These were learning opportunities for *Sahil* to embrace different ideas and use them in his classes. As he reports in the Unit on Pets, he had an opportunity to use drama. Students tried to explain a pet they identified to their friends with gestures. As a result, they did not get bored.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is another significant area in which *Sahil* gained confidence. With the help of mentoring and the good practices of his peers/colleagues, he could explore useful strategies to take management problems under control. The conversations that he had with other teachers during focus group sessions provided learning opportunities for him to consider what he could do better to facilitate his students' learning and inform his instructional decisions in his lessons. There were some useful classroom management techniques that he was acquainted with such as applying the six thinking hats activity to handle management problems. Overall, receiving comments from the mentors and his peers/colleagues offered *Sahil* an opportunity for improvement in and refinement of his professional practices from teaching older learners to younger children. As he reported in his reflective writing: *"I also changed the language I used from 'naughty children' to 'more active children' to be a model teacher who is 'more fun' and 'less strict' to them, which proved to create more friendly relations with my students".*

Professional Socialisation

An additional finding of this research is professional socialisation. Undoubtedly, experiencing feelings of isolation and uncertainty when one starts teaching first time to young children can mark a dramatic professional transition for a mid-career teacher. Initially, *Sahil* felt isolated and left alone as he expressed 'I felt the lack of a group of friends with whom I could exchange views. I needed to see the work of my colleagues and share the work that I did or will do'. (ARP, 2020: 91). Joining focus group meetings helped *Sahil* establish a collegial relationship with other young learner teachers, whom he describes as 'friendly and approachable' helping him overcome his feelings of isolation.

To sum up, thanks to the guidance provided by the mentoring and the support of his peers/colleagues, *Sahil* was able to cope with challenges arising from his initial sense of isolation as the only young learner teacher in his school, and manage the transition process more effectively. In addition, the seminars and workshops that were provided as part of the CAR project helped him learn the objectives of the young learner curriculum, and enhance his understanding of the methodology of AR.

Teacher Researcher Identity

The final benefit of the mentoring programme was that it had an encouraging effect on *Sahil* to gain a teacher-researcher identity. From the beginning of the programme, he emphasised his desire to be more professional, and be open to learning new ideas on young learner pedagogy. He was ambitious to

do research and complete AR cycles successfully. In his ARP, he underlines *the teacher researcher* dimension of the CAR project stating that in this process, he learned how to research, produce ideas, apply, and ultimately do an evaluation. His remark is that 'no matter how senior you are in teaching profession you need dynamism'. (ARP, 2020: 92). He believes that gaining a *teacher researcher* identity has been one of the fundamental takeaways for him.

Overall, with the mentoring he received, *Sahil* formed a better understanding of young learner pedagogy and learned how to integrate AR into his practice, which led to his emerging role as a *teacher researcher* identity. *Sahil* can be considered an exemplary case demonstrating that learning is a life-long process. He clearly admitted that through the project, he improved his understanding of AR, and how to teach English to children. He expressed his hope that in the future, more teachers can collaborate with university researchers to form an AR community to bring about change in their instructional practice (ARP, 2020).

DISCUSSION

Three themes were identified emerging from the participant's reflections on this transitioning journey. The first theme was about increasing self-efficacy in young learner pedagogy, under which two related subthemes were identified: (1) implementing child-appropriate activities, and (2) classroom management. The second theme was professional socialisation, and the final theme focused on teacher researcher identity.

The findings of this study show that undertaking AR supported by mentoring and peer-support during the transitioning process can enhance the mid-career first-time young learner teacher's self-efficacy beliefs in young learner pedagogy, particularly in using child-appropriate activities and handling classroom management issues.

In relation to using child-appropriate activities, this study confirms previous research (Kırkgöz, 2017) that using real objects increases children's retention of learning and that adapting the six thinking hats activity contributes significantly to fostering children's engagement thus managing young learner classroom more effectively (Kırkgöz, 2018).

Additionally, as in the study of Onat-Stelma (2005), who investigated the transitional experiences of English teachers who were previously teaching adults and moved to teach English to young learners in Turkey, the participant of this study found classroom management issues particularly challenging in young learner classes. The present study differs from Onat-Stelma's research (2005) in that while the in-service training provided in the former study was a one-shot seminar, the present study took over a period of one year using CAR teacher development model, in which the participant teacher received continuous mentoring and peer support and the use of AR, which provided him an opportunity to be reflective, critical and a problem solver in resolving his classroom challenges. In this respect, this study makes an important contribution to the literature on a mid-career English teacher's professional development.

The findings from the present study resonate with previous research (Kırkgöz, 2016, 2017; Wang and Zhang, 2014; Yuan and Lee, 2014), which shows that mentoring programme, as part of

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

61

a university-school collaboration, can enable a teacher to combine his/her practical knowledge with the academics' expertise in managing emerging challenges from his/her classroom.

Although mentoring has been acknowledged to provide effective support for prospective/new teachers, and ample studies exist on mentoring through AR, not much has been done to explore mid-career language teachers' transitioning experiences. In relation to this, this study provides a unique contribution to the literature by offering a useful framework demonstrating how effective mentoring, using CAR as a valuable professional development model, should look like. Transition is a critical period in the professional life of a mid-career first-time young learner teacher, and as revealed by the findings from this study such teachers have specific needs: informed understanding of young learner pedagogy, child-appropriate activities, and managing young learner classroom effectively. It is mainly through a well structured mentoring programme, such as the one described in this study, that the specific needs of those teachers can be addressed and the transitioning period can be facilitated.

Another important finding of this study is the need for mentoring programmes to give teachers opportunities to socialize with others, who have similar transitioning challenges. Teachers often feel alone at schools and being unsupported naturally creates a need for teachers to seek actions for their professional development, as in the case of the participant teacher in the present study. Although there are numerous in-service programmes and workshops, their efficiency in relation to creating teachers with socialisation opportunities are doubtable. As such, this study gives important insight into incorporating focus group discussions into mentoring programmes.

The participant of this study completed three cycles of AR and he gained *teacher researcher* identity, a finding echoed in other studies (Kırkgöz, 2017; Malderez, 2009). It is observed that he gained the ability to continue exploring further the benefits of AR in his classes, experiment with new teaching techniques, and resolve emerging problems. The participant's written reflections on the impact of his AR engagement at the end of the 3-cycle process clearly confirm this: 'I have seen very clearly that I have improved myself, the quality of my lessons has increased, which is reflected on the children'. (ARP, 2020: 97).

During this process, I was the project supervisor, a collaborator, and a facilitator, which was an invaluable experience for me. I was able to follow the developments and changes in the participant's thinking, observe the whole transitioning process, and how he managed to cope with problems as a first-time young learner teacher through CAR. I have gained useful insights that I can practice in my future mentoring experiences. I have learned that an effective mentor should identify the teacher's needs and provide scaffolding, use appropriate questioning techniques, adopt a non-judgemental approach, and be a helper, a supporter, a co-constructer of knowledge with the mentee, plus create a trustworthy environment that leads to nurturing reflection, development, and change (Bailey 2009; Randall and Thornton, 2005). This is important information that will serve as a guide in the design of future mentoring programmes for first-time young learner teachers, particularly those in the transitioning process.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the transitioning experiences of a teacher who previously taught older learners and moved to teaching younger children as a first-time primary ELT teacher, following a curriculum change. It has been found that the mentoring process helped the participant grow in self-confidence, increase his awareness of using new and innovative age-appropriate techniques, led him to improve his teaching practice, socialise with colleagues, and gain 'teacher research' identity, thus facilitating the transitioning process into teaching English to a younger age group. The study contributes to our knowledge by revealing the impact of mentoring on a mid-career EFL teacher, who is experienced in teaching adults; yet lacks the pedagogy to teach younger children. It may have useful implications for EFL teachers who are undergoing such transitioning and thus need support for their professional development. Transition is hardly considered an easy process due to a number of challenges a first-time young learner EFL teacher may encounter in his new school environment. As demonstrated in the present study, mentoring and peer-support can ease the transitioning process by providing the needed support in terms of professional learning and socialisation. As such, the study by presenting a transitioning journey of an adult-experienced teacher into teaching young learners as a first-time young learner teacher in a state school, contributes to the literature. Finally, the present study investigated the experiences of one English teacher working in a state school. Future research with teachers having similar transitioning experiences in different contexts around the world may be valuable in uncovering the more context-specific challenges of teaching young learners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REFERENCES

ARP (Onat, S.) (2020) 'Öğrenmenin Gerçekten Yaşı Yok, Sonu Da Yok!'[There is no end to learning] in Kırkgöz, Y. and Yaşar, M. (eds.) *Araştırmacı* Öğretmen*: Daha* İyiye *Yolculuk*, [Teacher as a Researcher: Journey for the Better], (pp. 91–97), Ankara: Akademisyen Publisher.

Atay, D. (2008) 'Teacher research for Professional development', *ELT Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 2, pp. 139–47. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl053

Bandura, A. (1986) *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*, New York: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997) Self-efficacy: The exercise of control, New York: W. H. Freeman.

Burns, A. (2009) 'Action research in second language teacher education', in Burns, A. and Richards, J. C. (eds.) *Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*, (pp. 289–297), New York: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, A. (2010) *Doing action research in English language teaching. A guide for practitioners*, New York: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, 3rd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Day, C. and Hadfield, M. (2004) 'Learning through networks: trust, partnerships and the power of action research', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 575–586. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790400200269

Dikilitaş, K. and Wyatt, M. (2018) 'Learning teacher-research-mentoring: Stories from Turkey', *Teacher Development*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 537–553. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2017.1403369

Ewing, L.-A. (2021) 'Mentoring novice teachers', *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 50–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2021.1899585

Farrell, T. S. C. (2003) 'Learning to teach English language during the first year: Personal influences and challenges', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 19, pp. 95–111.

Gao, X., Barkhuizen, G. and Chow, A. (2011) '"Nowadays, teachers are relatively obedient": understanding primary school English teachers' conceptions of and drives for research in China', *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 61–81. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810383344

Harrison, J., Lawson, T., and Wortley, A. (2005) 'Facilitating the professional learning of new teachers through critical reflection on practice during mentoring meetings', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 267–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760500269392

Hebert, E. and Worthy, T. (2001) 'Does the first year of teaching have to be a bad one? A case study of success', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 17, No. 7, pp. 897–911. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00039-7

Heikkinen, H. L. T., Wilkinson, J., Aspfors, J. and Bristol, L. (2018) 'Understanding mentoring of new teachers: Communicative and strategic practices in Australia and Finland', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 71, pp. 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.11.025

Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (1988) *The action research planner*, Geelong: Deakin University Press.

Kırkgöz, Y. (2015) 'A collaborative action research teacher development programme', in Dikilitaş, K. Smith, R. and Troran, W. (eds.) *Teacher Researchers in Action,* (pp. 387–398), IATEFL, No 2–3.

Kırkgöz, Y. (2016) 'Improving teaching practices through a university-school collaboration in young learner classrooms', in Dikilitaş, K., Wyatt, M., Hanks, J. and Bullock, D. (eds.), *Teachers Engaging in Research*, (pp. 89–99). Kent: IATEFL.

Kırkgöz, Y. (2017) 'Insights into the process of mentoring action research by teachers of young learners', in Burns, A., K., Smith, R. and Wyatt, M. (eds.) *Developing Insights into Teacher-Research*, (pp. 19–28), IATEFL Research Special Interest Group.

Kırkgöz, Y. (2018) 'Adapting the Six Thinking Hats Principle to overcoming classroom management issues of young EFL learners', in Garton, S. and Copland, F. (eds.) *Voices from the Classroom: Young Learner Classes*, (pp. 25–32), Alexandria, Va: TESOL Press.

Kırkgöz, Y. and Yaşar, M. (2020) (eds.) *Araştırmacı* Öğretmen*: Daha* İyiye *Yolculuk*, [Teacher as a Researcher: Journey for the Better], Ankara: Akademisyen Publisher.

Malderez, A. (2009) 'Mentoring', in Burns, A. and Richards , J. C. (eds.) *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*, (pp. 259–268), New York: Cambridge University Press.

Marcos, J. J. M, Miguel, E. S. and Tillema, H. (2009) 'Teacher reflection on action: What is said (in research) and what is done (in teaching)', *Reflective Practice*, Vol.10, No. 2, pp. 191–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940902786206

McDonal, F. J. (1980) *Study of induction program for beginning teachers. Volume 1. The problems of beginning teachers: a crisis in training*, Princeton, NJ: Education Testing Service.

McLaughlin, M. W. and Talbert, J. E. (2001) *Professional communities and the work of high school teaching*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

MNE (Republic of Turkey, Ministry of National Education) (2013) 'İlköğretim *Kurumları (*İlkokullar *ve Ortaokullar)* İngilizce *Dersi (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 ve 8. Sınıflar)* Öğretim *Programı* [Elementary (Primary and Lower Secondary) English Language Teaching Program (Grades 2–8)], Ankara: T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı.

Morettini, B., Luet, K. and Vernon-Dotson, L., (2019) 'Building beginning teacher resilience: exploring the relationship between mentoring and contextual acceptance', *The Educational Forum*, Vol. 84, No. 1, pp. 48–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2020.1679933

Negi, J. S. (2019) (ed.) *Exploring for action, acting for change: stories of exploratory action research in Nepal*, [Online], Available at: https://www.supportsocietynepal.org.np/publication [3 Jan 2023].

Onat-Stelma, Z. (2005) *Moving from teaching older learners to young learners: Cases of English language teachers in Turkey*, [Dissertation thesis], Leeds: The University of Leeds.

Phan, A. N. Q. and Pham, T. X. (2022) 'Mentoring programme and the transition of beginning teachers: view of the insiders', *PRACTICE*, https://doi.org/10.1080/25783858.2022.2086060

Pollard, A., Anderson, J., Maddock, M., Swaffield, S., Warin, J. and Warwick, P. (2008) *Reflective teaching: Evidence-informed professional practice*, 3rd edition, London: Continuum International Publishing.

Randall, M., and Thornton, B. (2005) *Advising and supporting teachers*, 3rd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rebolledo, P., Smith, R. and Bullock, D. (2016) 'Introduction', in Rebolledo, P., Smith, R. and Bullock, D. (eds.) *Champion teachers: Stories of exploratory action research*, (pp. 4–8), British Council.

Roberts, A. (2000) 'Mentoring revisited: A phenomenological reading of the literature', *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 145–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/713685524

Smith, R. (2020) *Mentoring teachers to research their classrooms: A practical handbook*, British Council, [Online], Available at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Mentoring_Teachers_Research_classrooms_handbook.pdf [3 Jan 2023].

Stokking, K., Leenders, F., De Jong, J. and Van Tartwijk, J. (2003) 'From student to teacher: reducing practice shock and early dropout in the teaching profession', *European Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 329–350. https://doi.org/10.1080/0261976032000128175

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wallace, M. (1998) *Action research for language teachers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wyatt, M. (2010) 'An English teacher's developing self-efficacy beliefs in using groupwork', *System*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 603–613. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2010.09.012

Wang, Q. and H. Zhang. (2014) 'Promoting teacher autonomy through university–school collaborative research', *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 222–241. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813505942

Yuan, R. and Lee, I. (2015) 'Action research facilitated by university-school collaboration', *ELT Journal*, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp.1–10. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu031

Zuljan, M. V. and Pozarnik, B. M. (2014) 'Induction and early-career support of teachers in Europe', *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp.192–205. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12080

TEACHER-PRACTITIONER INQUIRY IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF ADAPTATION AND RESISTANCE TO GENRE-BASED SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTIC AS A NEW WRITING INSTRUCTION

Hanh Dinh[1]✉
Lan Nguyen Thi Huong[2]

[1]University at Albany, United States of America

[2]Hanoi National University of Education, Vietnam

✉ mdinh@albany.edu

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study reports the results of sensemaking when teacher-practitioner inquiry in professional development (PD) is carried out for 120 Vietnamese K-12 and college teachers. The PD was designed to prepare teachers to teach with different newly-approved English language coursebooks using a genre-based systemic functional linguistic approach (SFL). During scaffolds in workshops, teaching staff guided teachers in cooperating and drafting lessons using genre-based SFL, examining the lessons' impacts on students' responses. Teachers also journaled to unravel the knitted instructional complexities and express their willingness to adapt to emerging teaching practices. Data were collected via the video recordings, teachers' interviews, and content analysis of their inquiry products. Four themes representing the complexities in teachers' sensemaking of scaffolded collaborative PD were: 1. Improved teacher agency in terms of planning and instruction; 2. Research-based experiential learning creating a venue for intrinsic motivation to innovate in instruction; 3. An overwhelming feeling of inequity between high and low-resourced instructional situations; 4. The mismatch between teachers' advocacy for desired deep-learning approach and the traditional ideology of rote learning for exams.

Highlights

- *Teacher-practitioner inquiry in professional development helps students' sensemaking process to adapt to new pedagogical standards and motivate their commitment to change.*
- *The values and positive outcomes of teacher-practitioner inquiry may fade out if it is not maintained in daily practices.*
- *Challenges in maintaining the impact of teacher-practitioner inquiry could come from several internal and external factors.*

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the quality of Vietnamese foreign language instruction is one of the fundamental missions in the process of creating a globally competitive and innovative national educational system in the 21st century (Hoang, 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Tran, 2014; Tran et al., 2021). Language policy about reforms in English language instruction emphasizes the essence of investing in improving the teaching capacity of in-service teachers through a sustainable and consistent teachers' professional development (PD) plan (Canh, 2002; Le et al., 2022; Nguyen and Burns, 2017; Nguyen and Newton, 2021; Thao and Mai, 2022). Nevertheless, the extent to which the PD accomplished its objectives and succeeded in improving English proficiency and pedagogical capacities of teachers at all educational levels is still a matter of debate, with academic and public discussions on the gaps between expectations and reality in planning, managing, and implementing the PD.

For example, when the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Vietnam launched an effort in decentralizing the English language textbook last year so that schools can choose the

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

65

quantity and type of textbooks and reading materials they require, a series of PD has been offered to help teachers transfer gradually to a new selected textbook. Genre-based SFL writing instruction is a promising pedagogic application, because no matter what textbook is adopted, teachers can apply this writing instruction approach confidently since its unified aim is to help raise students' awareness of the lexicogrammatical features and generic structures of each genre (Nagao, 2019; Yasuda, 2012). On the one hand, these PD programs equip Vietnamese teachers with the most updated knowledge about subject matter and pedagogy to align with the new standards, as well as research-informed practice in the field (Hashimoto, 2018; Canh, 2020; Van Ha and Murray, 2021). On the other hand, the systematic impact of those PD programs on the English teaching ideologies and practices of millions of Vietnamese teachers has still been documented as limited changes on the surface instead of a paradigm shift in teaching pedagogy and evaluation as expected (Nghia, 2015, 2017; Nghia, Phuong and Huong, 2020; Nguyen, 2018; Peeraer and Van Petegem, 2012; Tran et al., 2021).

In that context, it is implicated that PD planners and academic managers need to avoid top-down information provision; rather, they could try to focus on using teacher-practitioner inquiry as a method of PD delivery. Teacher-practitioner inquiry is a thinking tool for teachers to flexibly customize their teaching and derive meanings, assumptions, and beliefs-in-action that underlie their ideas and methodologies in class (Groundwater-Smith and Dadds, 2004; Ngo, Cherrington, and Crabbe, 2022; Phan, 2020; Pringle, 2020; Tuan, 2021). Specifically, teacher-practitioner inquiry offers a structured sense-making opportunity, such as doing a scaffolded collaborative lesson planning, inviting them to explore and justify their own pedagogical practices through lesson study and reflective practices in a trusting environment (Duffy, 1995; Gutierez, 2019; McArdle and Coutts, 2010; Robbins, 2020). The central questions for sensemaking when using teacher-practitioner inquiry are 'how they [i.e., active agents] construct what they construct, why, and with what effects?' (Weick, 1995: 4). Teacher-practitioner inquiry makes PD more participant-centered, contextualized, and relevant so that they could explore their willingness to adapt and unravel the knitted instructional complexities (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Lieberman and Miller, 2014; McChesney and Aldridge, 2019). However, to date, as this teacher-practitioner inquiry is still an emerging trend in the teaching profession (Gutierez, 2019), few studies of teacher PD have examined how the teacher-practitioner inquiry in PD training for in-service teachers is systematically operated and in which ways such inquiry affects teachers' perceptions and reactions towards it.

This qualitative study is about the case of training 120 head teachers of Vietnam, including K-12 and university, of English language education using teacher-practitioner inquiry to understand genre-based systemic functional linguistic (SFL) writing instruction. This study aims to obtain the stages of learning and perceptions of participating teachers in training, regarding how they engage in teacher-practitioner inquiry under the facilitation of teaching staff, and whether this novel approach in PD will result in relevance and long-term commitment in applying the introduced teaching method. Accordingly, we used teachers' interviews and content analysis of their inquiry products. More specifically, the content analysis included the participating teachers' conversational and PD learning artifacts and their self-perception questionnaires.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher-practitioner Inquiry in PD for In-service Language Teachers

Towards a theory of action for practitioner inquiry as PD, Rutten (2021) emphasizes that the core of any new knowledgebase consists of five elements: (*1) scaffolded process orientation, (2) organized collaborative network, (3) practice-based problem solving, (4) skilled facilitation, and (5) reflection*. In essence, designing teacher-practitioner inquiry as a sustainable PD must first engage a meaningful scaffolding and demonstration to guide teachers in constructing lessons. That being said, various perspectives of experienced co-teachers and mentors, administrators, teacher educators, and researchers on the gaps between educational theory and practice have to be included and co-constructed during the process orientation because they prompt teachers to reflect and share their opinions about good practices and the potentials of a new method in a real-world context (Charteris, and Smardon, 2015; Von Gnechten, 2011; Wolkenhauer and Hooser, 2017). With professional scaffolds and constructive dialogic feedback given by specialists, teachers can ensure their generated lessons are theoretically grounded and receive support to evaluate their impacts based on students' responses.

Furthermore, teacher-practitioner inquiry in PD also reflects what Wenger (1999) referred to as communities of practice (CoP) that develop mutuality of engagement in activity, negotiability of the repertoire-honoring collective performance, accountability, credibility, and intersubjectivity, especially when practitioners work as and work with researchers to co-construct knowledge in the interpretive zone. For instance, unlike researchers who work in linguistic laboratory offices at the university, or teachers who tend to focus more on practical instruction, experienced co-teachers and mentors are experienced K-12 practitioners who, before these workshops, are willing to receive intensive training about SFL and have extensive hands-on experience and practical insights in applying it in their schools. Therefore, in teacher-practitioner inquiry, while the Head Teacher Educator and researchers would focus primarily on the theoretical foundation of SFL, academic mentors can act as demonstrators and small-group discussion facilitators, mentoring the think tank, and assisting workshop attendees who first approach this new way of teaching in terms of the new method's implementation and different kinds of challenges and obstacles. They bring along personal narratives for reference and could relate to workshop attendees' concerns about the complex nature of implementing innovative instructional approaches into existing teaching practices and the hardships of navigating teachers' professional lives in reality (Groundwater-Smith and Dadds, 2004; Gutierez, 2019; McArdle and Coutts, 2010).

In addition to discovering repertoires of possibilities during dialogic feedback with specialists, teachers are required to link structural, skill, and material domains of their learning with sociocultural contexts and conditions by resolving a problem they detect. In other words, there will be no impactful and sustainable results if teacher agency and teacher's robust conception of how to launch the introduced method in class are neglected (Von Gnechten, 2019). Several studies (cf. Barron and Darling-Hammond, 2008; Nghia, 2015, 2017; Nghia, Phuong and Huong, 2020; Nguyen, 2018; Peeraer and Van Petegem, 2012) underscored significant factors that affected the in-service teachers' learning retention effects and applications after teacher-practitioner inquiry PD, amongst which are teachers' English competence, teaching methods they currently use, information technology ability, and socio-affective skills to prepare students for changes. Lack of understanding about how the new instructional method works, lack of management skills, and insufficient time of doing preparation are the other challenges teachers face while applying new content introduced in PD into practice (Milton et al., 2022). Hence, teacher-practitioner inquiry utilizes practice-based problem solving, along with reflection and skilled facilitation, as contextualized and experiential learning to consolidate skill acquisition and urge teachers to ascertain implications for their professional practice. For instance, teachers could be guided to analyze case studies or examine their own teaching artifacts to ensure they not only enact what they think will be effective teaching but also form data-driven decisions based on what they know about their students' needs (McArdle and Coutts, 2010). When teachers were involved in the planning early on, tackling their proposed learning problem, and enactment during PD practices, they could better prepare how their commitment and engagement were usually compromised due to the effect of work overload, time constraints and limited institutional support (Gutierez, 2019).

Another thing that matters is that teacher-practitioner inquiry does not only involve collaboration, skill building, and critical thinking but also reflection. Teacher-practitioner inquiry is a professional stance, a mechanism that allows a teacher to systematically study his or her own practice and then create a critically-inquiring community of professionals (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2019; Murray, 2013; Uştuk and Çomoğlu, 2021). Thinking, particularly reflective thinking or reflective inquiry, is essential to teachers. According to Rodgers (2002), teacher-practitioner inquiry encompasses reflection, which is a meaning-making process to gain a deeper understanding of a topic with progressive connections to the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others; it is a systematic, scientific, and disciplined way of thinking that involves in interaction with others. Reflection during collaborative activities makes teachers accountable for their own learning and more faithful implementers of received knowledge instead of being a more or less static object for knowledge to be transmitted from them to students (Avidov-Ungar, 2016).

Policy and Pedagogical Context for the Teacher-Practitioner PD for Genre-based SFL Writing Instruction

The PD series in this current study took place within Vietnam at a time when many provinces throughout the country had just adopted ambitious new standards in English language education after a shift in paradigm from teaching English as a second/foreign language to teaching English as an international language (EIL) (Hoang, 2016; Ngo, 2021; Nguyen, Marlina and Cao, 2021). Accordingly, one textbook written called *Tieng Anh 3, 4, 5* and so until 12, published by the Vietnamese MOE, has gradually been replaced by various series of locally produced English textbooks published by private commercial publishers, orienting towards the EIL paradigm. For writing instruction from the teaching EIL perspective, the new locally-produced textbooks[1] (see Figure 1) intend to provide alternative viewpoints on how not to privilege native speakers' norms and instead embrace other topics related to local linguistic and cultural practices, local functionality of English, global awareness, and cross-cultural communication (Canh, 2018; Dang and Seals, 2018). However, such content is still limited, and the books still tended to focus exclusively on British English linguistic models with heavy grammar-based practice (Nguyen, Marlina and Cao, 2021). Furthermore, in the scenario of changing the books and writing sections, teachers start to display confusion and resistance to change because each book seems to display disparate topics and a non-linear topical trajectory. Their most notable pedagogical orientation in teaching writing is helping students master the lexicogrammatical level of a topic or model text only, which aligns with preparing students for standardized multiple-choice grammar tests, rather than understanding the characteristics and discourse fluency of a specific genre to communicate or writing skills across languages and cultures for multilingual writers (Hang, 2021; Ton Nu and Murray, 2020; Thao and Mai, 2022; Tran et al., 2021).

In that context, genre-based SFL is suggested by university literacy specialists and researchers because no matter which textbook designs or writing topics or themes are assigned to them, teachers could be capable of teaching writing. The method focuses on grouping and categorizing writing topics into specific genres based on their functional meaning (i.e., writing to persuade, writing to describe). SFL emphasizes that any genre has three general functions – the *interpersonal function* which denotes the social relationships that are enacted by language (i.e., who is involved or targeted in this communication), *the textual function* (to do with how language vocabulary and structures work to create a connected and coherent discourse in a mode of communication, such as writing in this case), and *the ideational function* (to do with the experiences that are construed and conveyed by language, known as the field of the idea delivery and experience) (Rose and Martin, 2012). Therefore, genre-based SFL is a text-oriented theory of language to encourage students to compare how people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds convey messages versatilely across genres (Byrnes, 2012;

---

1   Some textbooks are created by a collaboration between Vietnamese publishers and foreign publishers under their brand names, such as joint-published by the Educational Publishing House and Pearson Education or Cambridge University Press.

CONTENTS

Writing	Language Focus
Writing a paragraph about TV-viewing habits	**Vocabulary:** TV programmes **Pronunciation:** Sounds: /θ/ and /ð/ **Grammar:** - *Wh*-questions - Conjunctions in compound sentences: *and, but, so*
Writing a paragraph about a sport / game	**Vocabulary:** Sports and games **Pronunciation:** Sounds: /e/ and /æ/ **Grammar:** - Past simple - Imperatives
Writing a holiday postcard	**Vocabulary:** Cities and landmarks **Pronunciation:** Sounds: /aʊ/ and /aʊ/ **Grammar:** - Possessive adjectives

Figure 1: Samples of textbooks currently used by participating Vietnamese teachers with a focus on different topics to write, so a unified approach to genre-based teaching is encouraged

McCabe, 2017). This pedagogical method of genre-based SFL approach was inspired by Martin and Rose (2007) (see Figure 2), exerting the impact on improving the writing of students via different levels of linguistic and discourse analyses, especially emphasizing the functional properties of language use with a specific social context and purpose. Equipped with genre knowledge in writing, teacher educator in this study helped participating teachers explicitly understand the reasons behind the construction of a text and thus form a repertoire of background knowledge to activate in their next writing situation. In Figure 2, essential concepts are translated or integrated with comments in Vietnamese and diagrams so that teachers may rely on and use them in the classrooms of students with varying degrees of language competency. The translated annotations of the native tongue, as well as visual aids, aided instructors' inquiry in a systemic manner, since they simplified and made the theory more approachable.

For example, when teachers introduce a text that explains a topic (i.e., deforestation), teachers' writing aim is moving beyond the topic-based focus in the textbook design. Teachers do not stop requiring students to imitate the model text or a list of relevant vocabulary. Rather, they need to further guide students to connect the language parts with their functions. For instance,

the use of declarative mood in the texts is relevant to the purpose of persuading people by providing information regarding a topic. Next, teachers assist students in distinguishing whether the text is constructed with a factual text genre which has one of the following schematic structures: *sequential* explanation (arranging details in a procedure or process such as cause-effect), *factorial* explanation (providing a list of causes), *consequential* explanation (citing multiple outcomes and effects), or *conditional* explanation (including conditions and possibilities). Hence, when students need to recruit words and language structures for a specific genre when writing with similar communicative purposes, they know with whom they try to communicate, the idea organization of that genre, types or domains of vocabulary, and the extent of emotion embedded to express their ideas. Teachers also encourage students to develop metacognitive awareness to compare how a genre is expressed differently in English and Vietnamese despite serving the same communicative function (Rose and Martin, 2012). Additionally, a genre-based SFL treats language as an integral part of empowered personal voices, thus understanding a genre at depth, including linguistic and contextual levels, allows students to communicate more effectively and persuasively.
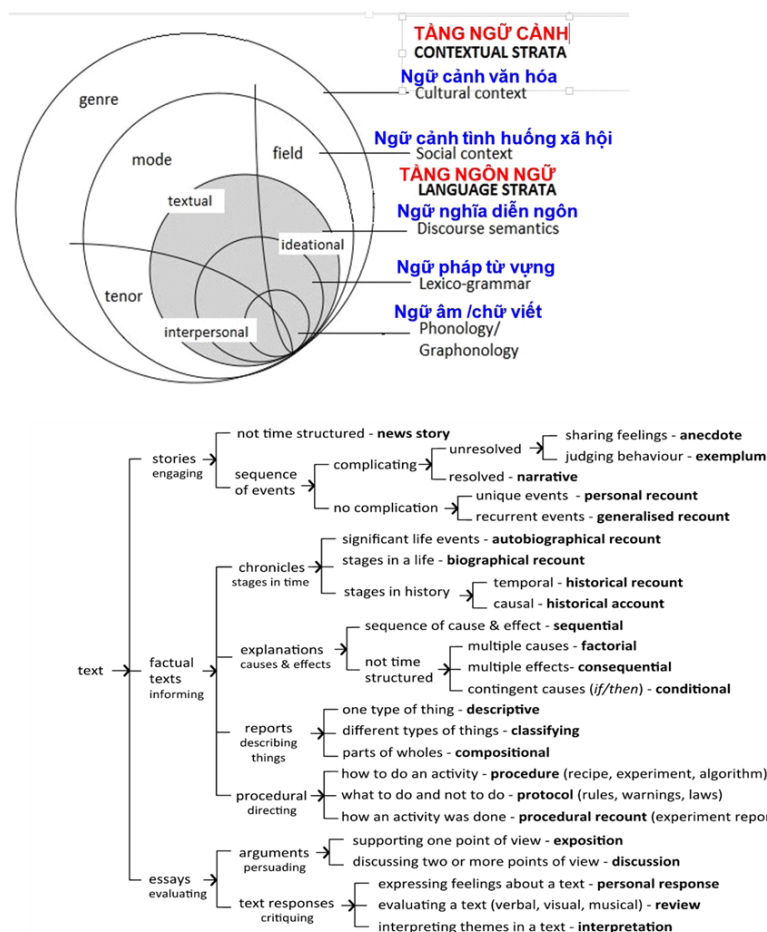
Figure 2: The genre-based SFL framework used in the PD with annotations in Vietnamese (adapted from Rose and Martin, 2012) and specific text types in focus on English language education in Vietnam

There is a practical three-stage writing instructional method for genre-based SFL (based on the work of Derewianka and Jones, 2012). The method consists of three stages. The first stage is to deconstruct a written text that is representative of a genre. It also includes building topic vocabulary and knowledge, evaluating the extent of embedded emotions (i.e., Are there more nouns or adjectives used in this text? Does the writer express any attitudes or feelings?), relevant linguistic devices (i.e., Does this genre include a specific type of logical connectives or conjunctions?), and contextual analyses (i.e., Is the text formal? What is a possible relationship between writer and reader?). Particularly, this stage requires teachers to help students investigate texts using the genre in focus to determine how they are organized in stages, the function of each stage, and the particular language features used (e.g. the use of modality, saying verbs, references to authorities). The second phase is joint construction where teachers model the genre by extracting a set of vocabulary from a topic and demonstrating how to rebuild the text. Then, teachers lead a guided writing activity where one student is invited to the board to inscribe the text while other students discuss and show how the text should be written. Teachers give feedback on the collaborative activity to construct the text until the students are in good control of the schematic structure of the generic form. Finally, the third stage is to create a text independently and conduct reflection on students' writing 'to help students build awareness, knowledge

and strategic competence to develop skills to better monitor their own writing in the future' (Bitchener and Ferris, 2012: 140). When applying this method, teachers are required to be proactive in critically selecting and modifying the tasks in the selected coursebook so that enough practice is conducted in that aforementioned sequence. The method is supposed to apply to English language beginners at the elementary level (i.e., descriptive genre) up to the high school level (i.e., argumentative and exposition genre) and advanced learners at the university.

Therefore, providing PD and support for individual in-service teachers will be a critical condition for the success of the genre-based SFL writing method. Such PD is necessary to develop teachers' understanding of the science content behind the SFL method, the vision of the SFL framework that aligns with the new standards and educational paradigm shifts, and instruction that engages students in writing practices. Specifically, to move away from the traditional one-shot PD models that have been running for some years and using the genre-based SFL framework stated in Figure 2, workshop designers and facilitators, who are co-teachers and mentors, teacher educators, and researchers constructed two interwoven pillars to design a teacher-practitioner inquiry PD for genre-based SFL writing instruction. The first one is the discipline-specific knowledge, which is the writing instruction method and the second one is the teacher-practitioner inquiry-based

approach. Appendix illustrates the five-week workshops on integrating genre-based SFL method with teacher-practitioner inquiry

Sensemaking as Conceptual Framework

In this study, we examined this process of how participating teachers made sense of the genre-based SFL instructional method while using the methodology of teacher-practitioner inquiry and using the theory they receive in the context of their classrooms and with their background knowledge (Gutierez, 2019). To document the learning process during teacher-practitioner PD and teachers' perceptions, we build on the evident output learning instances as a concrete and tangible manifestation of logic (Potter, 2017) via artifacts such as PD worksheets, chat boxes, course design and generated materials, journal blogs, self-assessment surveys, and leadership standards carried out in each group, and verbal and non-verbal communication and advice given by a teacher educator. Furthermore, sensemaking is contextualized, so it is important to take into account the individuals' prior knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, the social context of the work, and connection with the message when they interact with the message (Duffy, 1995; Weick, 1995). To understand how teachers make meanings of the multiple messages they received, we would investigate the three concomitant elements of sensemaking (Spillane et al., 2002) throughout their activities of collaborative lesson planning and lesson study, groupwork as think tanks and problem solvers, and reflective journaling and communication. Three concomitant elements are *(1) teachers' (prior) knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, (2) the socio-cultural and socio-economic context of their work, and (3) personal perspectives with the conveyed message(s).*

In PD participants' typology, sensemaking denotes the complex reactions and perceptions of participating teachers towards the teacher-practitioner inquiry PD about a topic because it describes how their prior knowledge (their intellectual, professional, and cultural histories) and beliefs about the instructed knowledge influence their cognitive structures about which aspect of the new idea they will take up in practice (Nghia, 2015, 2017). Furthermore, sensemaking can offer rich evidence about the engagements and conflicts between the teachers' responses and institutional logic by demonstrating teachers' thoughts on the coherence or mismatch between their classroom context and district and national contexts. Sensemaking specifically emerges when teachers interact with presented material and method demonstration, and with colleagues and PD teaching staff about how things should be done, what problems could be targeted, what to include, and what to exclude (Allen and Penuel, 2015). It also takes place when teachers collaborate in scaffolded lesson planning and confront the individual case study to reveal tensions and competing notions. For example, an individual teacher's sensemaking may indicate strong support from district leaders who are eager to adopt the new method and therefore perceive a high level of coherence. Meanwhile, teachers in the same district or same group could perceive a low level of coherence because of differences in how they perceive school- or district-level support. Prior research suggests that teachers' perceptions of incoherence among their

interpretations and evaluations of student learning, district goals, assessment goals, and goals presented in PD may partly explain why they may or may not hesitate to implement the change (Uştuk and De Costa, 2021; Von Gnechten, 2011).

In particular, considering the diversity of ideas and the significant learning points that can be obtained from the teacher-practitioner inquiry PD, the study investigates the following guiding questions:

(1) As teacher-practitioner inquirers, how did the Vietnamese teachers make sense of their experience in the teacher-practitioner inquiry PD about genre-based SFL?

(2) Based on their sensemaking, what implications could the sustainable teacher-practitioner inquiry PD have on the teachers' current professional practice using genre-based SFL?

Methods

We spent the 2021-2022 school year shadowing the teacher educators about teacher-practitioner inquiry and worked collaboratively with them to finalize the agenda for the PD workshops. In the summer of 2022, we launched the workshop series which consisted of a series of seven face-to-face workshops for three weeks with two weeks for self-study and self-assessment. The whole program lasted for five consecutive weeks. The subsequent sessions after the first session were also planned contingently by the academic mentors according to the needs articulated by the teachers and the goals of the participating schools. A list of 120 English head teachers representing K-12 and university schools in 63 provinces of Vietnam was created and sent to the teaching staff. At the beginning of the project, the teachers were surveyed to determine their previous research experience, or prior knowledge of teacher-practitioner inquiry as well as genre-based SFL content, and their decisions and thoughts after the workshops. This qualitative study collected data from interviews and content analysis aforementioned. Specifically, the interviews included 180 hours of focus group reflective discussions before and after the PD sessions. The content analysis included one pre- and one post-self-assessment surveys, learning outcomes via worksheets, conversations via chat boxes, and teacher-generated materials.

The qualitative data from the audio and video recordings were transcribed verbatim while all their reflections were closely documented and analyzed. The first author input all data into NVivo software version 12 and organized the sources chronologically of the PD procedure which is referred to as the interactive synthesis of information synopses and 'general condensations' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 176). A priori codes were based on existing literature on the elements of sensemaking theory, teacher-inquiry PD practices, and partially on the content of genre-based SFL approach to writing instruction. Specifically, they include (1) the connection with instructed genre-based SFL method (ideas, practices), (2) schema (principles of conducting teacher-practitioner inquiry, scripts of actions), and (3) context. Next, we conducted open coding where the emergent common themes reflect the collections of data-driven evidence and recurring patterns. Using the constant comparison method of the grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990), we conducted axial coding to determine the themes and their relationships on how the

teachers made sense of their collaborative lesson planning activity and what are their implications on their future teaching practices (Blair, 2015). All diverging codes were discussed to finally establish the consensus and the final codes and themes between two researchers/authors, including, for example, level of teacher experience, resistance to changes, fossilized thoughts on writing instruction, etc. Representative quotations of individual teachers, from both the formal and informal individual reflections, were used to support the evidence of sense-making of their teacher-practitioner inquiry PD activities and their impact on teaching practices. Finally, after triangulating the data across learning artifacts, interviews, and questionnaires, researchers created themes by fusing related codes from both the a priori and emerging codes to formulate a matrix of main ideas and a summative narrative. To verify our findings, we searched for disconfirming evidence in all stages

and investigated those learning moments that were outliers to challenge the extant theory.

Contextual background on the participating teachers

Particular contexts of the participating teachers, their schools, and the school district location were essential to their sensemaking processes. Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3 illustrate several key characteristics of 120 teachers, including their grade levels and overall level of experience. The demographic information collected indicated that the target population in this PD training series is representatives from secondary and high schools. The majority of teachers are females, and teachers are mostly from the urban contexts in the Northern part of Vietnam with years of experience falling into the range of five to ten years. There is a minority of teachers coming from schools in neighboring countries and in Southeast Asia.

School level	Percentage	Teaching contexts	Percentage
Primary school(K1-5)	13.33%	Urban areas	67.5%
Secondary school (K6-9)	41.67%	Rural areas	32.5%
High school (K10-12)	35.00%	Total	100.00%
Higher education (colleges and universities)	10.00%		
Total	100.00%		

Table 1: The demographic information about participating teachers' school level and teaching contexts

Teachers from schools in the northern parts of Vietnam	64.16%
Teachers from schools in the middle parts of Vietnam	14.16%
Teachers from schools in the southern parts of Vietnam	19.16%
Teachers from schools in neighboring countries (Taiwan, Laos, Thailand)	2.52%
Total	100.00%

Table 2: Participating teachers' school districts' location

Years of teaching experience	Percentage	
	Male (36 teachers)	Female (84 teachers)
Fewer than five years	22.22%	39.38%
Five to ten years	75.00%	57.14%
More than ten years	2.78%	3.48%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

Table 3: Participating teachers' years of teaching experience

RESULTS

Four themes of professional learning outcomes and teachers' perceptions were detected. These are, (1) improved teacher agency in terms of planning and instruction, (2) research-based experiential learning creating a venue for intrinsic motivation to innovate in instruction, (3) an overwhelming feeling of inequity between high and low-resourced instructional situations, and (4) the mismatch between teachers' advocacy for desired deep-learning approach and the traditional ideology of rote learning for exams and other interfering factors. The first two themes belong to the overarching theme of "Adaptation" which was evident in the sensemaking of the teacher-practitioner PD in genre-based SFL via learning artifacts and collaborative interactions. The last two represent the second overarching theme of "Resistance" which was apparent in the sensemaking of the teacher-practitioner PD in genre-based SFL via questionnaires and interviews of teachers pre- and post-PD.

Sensemaking of the Teacher-practitioner PD in Genre-based SFL via Learning Artifacts and Collaborative Interactions

Improved Teacher Agency in Terms of Planning and Instruction

For a PD to have a positive impact on teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and skills, and more importantly, to lead to durable or even immediate changes to their instructional practice, teachers should be encouraged to take ownership and agency of their professional learning (McArdle and Coutts, 2010; McChesney and Aldridge, 2019, Nghia et al., 2020). 85% of participants enjoyed the discussions and groupwork after listening to the presenters who were teacher educators. That is, a significant sense-making process of the study group was that their learning was situated in a specific social and cognitive task to suit the needs of their target students such as the scaffolded collaborative lesson planning. According to Teacher

Ha (a pseudonym),

Knowledge is so confusing without scaffolding and interactions. When I interacted with other teachers, I felt like my knowledge is consolidated and strengthened. Thus, when I needed to apply this method in the future, I knew which teaching ideas would work and would be appropriate because I raised questions, thought them together with colleagues, and got feedback… I had the feeling that the problems were resolved, so I could overcome them in my teaching. I felt like we were not told to do things. We were able to discover the right solutions with the assistance of others. The researchers made us feel that our solution is solid and grounded in theory while colleagues confirmed the practicality of the proposed solutions.

When Ha and her colleagues designed the lesson plans for secondary students in the phase of deconstructing the text, they encountered a learning problem that students from minority ethnicities or rural backgrounds would take more time to do question-answer activities and figured out the characteristics of the text. Only via teacher-practitioner inquiry can instructors get the collaborative experience necessary to remain thoughtful about the suitability of learning activities for a certain student population level. Figure 3 demonstrated how less cognitively demanding alternative tasks such as labeling directly on the text (instead of extracting or paraphrasing them in answers), fill-in-the-blanks activities, or coloring the focused linguistic elements were collaboratively designed to serve the same pedagogical functions with the original activity designed with only prompting questions.
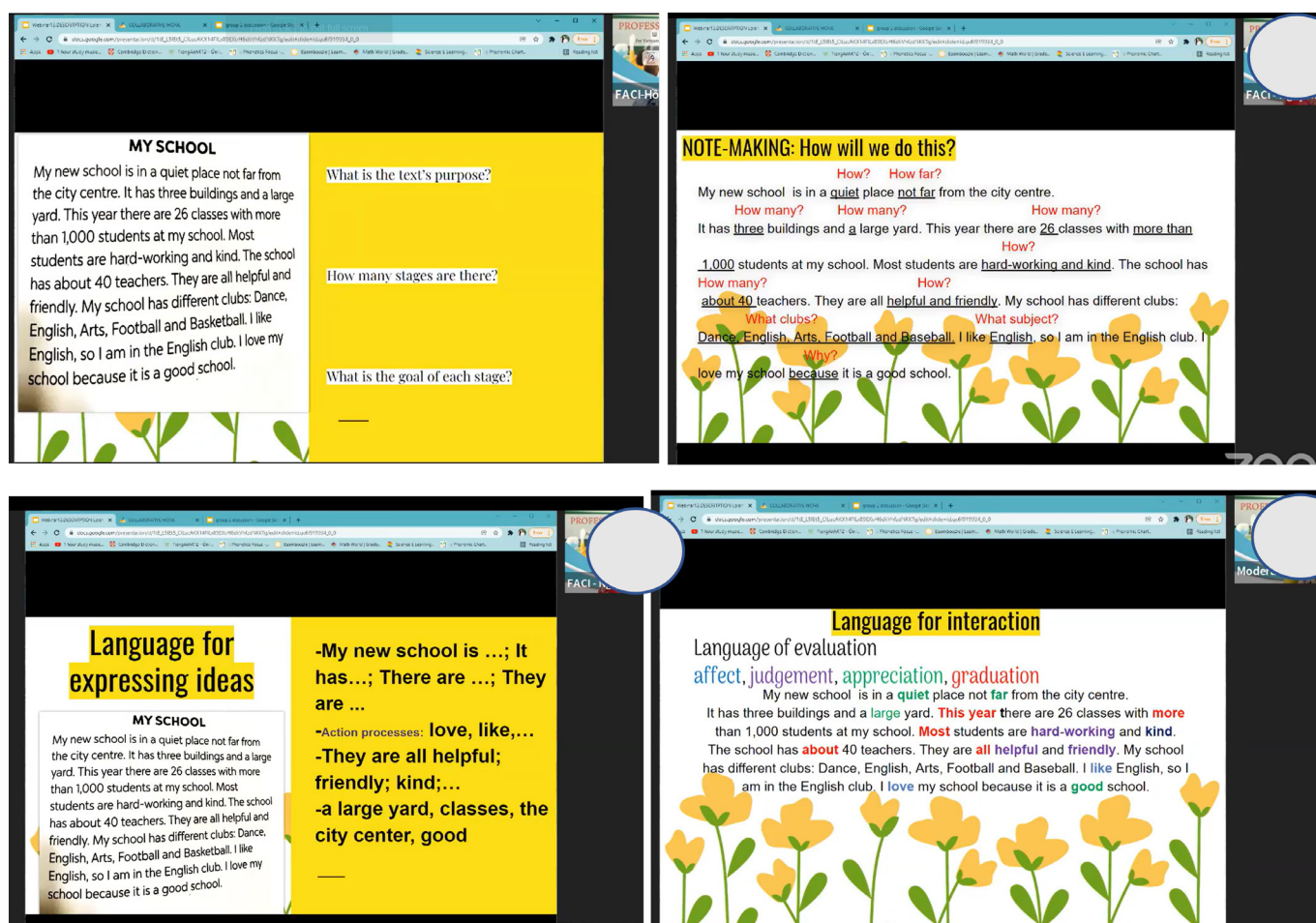

Figure 3: (left to right, top to bottom) Teacher-practitioner inquiry suggested replacing the difficult task with prompting questions with different alternative tasks for low-proficient students.

The teacher-practitioner inquiry activity made them negotiate meaning, reflect on what they were given, and compare how the new idea fit into actual practices through a scholarly way of knowledge exchange and critical inquiry. Such a process of gradual evaluation and analysis of what was learned was documented via journaling and conversations, so teachers could explicitly review and revise. A detailed documentation of an individual's learning during the PD series promoted them to practice skills to systematize and synthesize information and connect the new information with prior understanding. In other words, teacher-practitioner inquiry made them recycle the knowledge in a meaningful way as if they were the ones discovering the rationale for applying the novel knowledge into practice. Therefore, after the collaborative learning, each teacher could attain a shared common ground about the topic and start to expand on the discussed issue with his or her ideas naturally. To complete the activity described in Figure 3, for example, they co-constructed knowledge with each other, and teacher educators functioned as the knowledge facilitator and only intervened when conceptual misunderstandings

demanded clarification. Essential statements that emerge in this inquiry process such as "I *wanted to ask* you about this aspect of the method", "I think this is not clear to me *because…*", "If I conducted this method, I *would struggle* to…", "I want *to challenge* this assumption" were essential for conceptual changes (Peeraer and Van Petegem, 2012; Pringle, 2020).

Research-based Experiential Learning Creating a Venue for Intrinsic Motivation to Innovate in Instruction

As mentioned in the structure of the PD design, the inquiry process was bottom-up. The teaching staff depended on the teachers' learning capacities and questions as obtained from their collaborative reflections and lesson planning progresses to reinforce and appropriate selected and focused aspects of the knowledge. For example, a formative assessment from the teaching staff recorded after the second session showed 41.66% of participating teachers struggled with the lexico-grammar items used for specific word categories that represent different genres while 53.8% had difficulty in classifying a text into a genre and its meta function of an organization of language (e.g., What is the main idea? Who is the audience? What is the similarity and difference between this text and similar texts?). Teachers who taught for more than ten years claimed that such aspects of written texts were not taught during teacher education, so it was quite challenging for them to grasp the idea. However, 46.3% acknowledged that they needed to teach students about the context of the situation instead of decontextualized text imitation because students could write more effectively if they understood how to organize their ideas and communicate about a specific genre. 57.5% after discussion with other teachers on the method admitted that culture is reflected in language use and English writing genres are different from Vietnamese writing genres, and genre-based SFL would help enhance students' metacognitive abilities to better control the production in each language. A teacher-practitioner inquiry PD used teachers' feedback as materials for further inquiry on the topic.
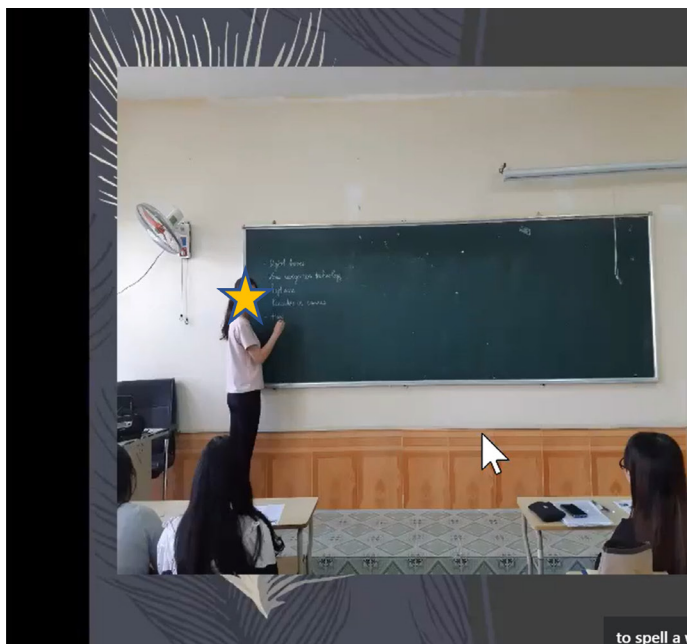
From that information, the experienced co-teacher and mentor demonstrated teaching two typical genres picked out from random textbooks of secondary and high schools, yet instead of giving out the answers, she guided teachers through the process of working out the answers. She defined the term, demonstrated how to identify the elements, and invited teachers to join, focusing on why and how questions, "*Why* did you think this genre requires this set of words showing gradual appraisal? Do Vietnamese express feelings with different types of words in this text compared with American writers in another text?", "Why do we need to understand the relationships between the organization of ideas and the communicative functions?"

Another factor that will facilitate the teacher practitioner's inquiry is organized presented knowledge using visual aids and mind mapping tools. Compelling visual aids, diagrams, and charts instead of complex and dense texts were preferred to encourage online emergent teacher-practitioner inquiry because teachers relied on those visual and organized aids to compartmentalize to systematically understand the dynamics of difficult concepts. The visuals were easier and more succinct to process, establishing a vivid direction for them to see how this method works and sustain their curiosity and engagement. As such, those visual aids were necessary to create a context or an object of engagement between the experts and the teachers or practitioners. With the scaffolding of visual aids, such as diagrams, (process) maps from experts and contextualized and experience-based information, instructors could see the significance of their PD as a practical and applicable implementation of the theory. They could just cite or modify the presented information made by the experts to make it relevant and suitable for their classroom context. Teacher Quoc Huy elaborated on how these aids helped him grasp the conceptual understanding,

Teacher-practitioner inquiry made me able to manage uncertainty, ambiguity, and perceived incoherence productively. For example, I did not know what contextual strata meant before the training because there were so many sophisticated concepts, and I was afraid to teach that topic to my students. Yet, knowing others are struggling with the same thing and it was okay to not know about everything as a teacher, I felt more assured. Plus, the visual illustrations showed me how the theory could be translated into step-by-step practice so gradually with examples and guiding questions, I was motivated to bring this discovery journey to my class because I was fascinated by it myself.

While the lesson planning played a good part in helping teachers to transfer learning into a practice task, it was the assignment that asked them to predict a learning problem and students' responses in their class that motivated them to innovate and made learning personalized. Their individual experiences with mini-data collection and mini-experiment with their class during the break week became their object of inquiry. Their direct exposure to professional inquiry strengthened their commitment, which was a crucial element in any PD activity because changing a teacher's knowledge or belief is insufficient unless teachers make their commitment to change (Jacobs et al., 2015; Uştuk and De Costa, 2021). In Figure 5, teacher Huy compared the difference in demonstration of the expert teacher with recording of his class when it came to stage 2 "constructing the genre from a set of words" and he recorded the discrepancies between training and reality. For example, his student had difficulty in listening so she could not write clearly on the board, so in reality, this method took a longer time than intended to operate. Such experiences made his beliefs in the method application more tied to data-driven decision making and came back to subsequent sessions with more students' responses and practical discussion issues on what worked and what did not go as expected.

Figure 4: Huy's presentation on his reflection about the effectiveness of the introduced method in his own class using class video-recording

Sensemaking of the Teacher-practitioner Inquiry PD via Pre-and-post Questionnaires: Teachers' Perceptions Reveal Their Self-assessments and Resistance to Change

Almost half of the participants (46.6%) considered this topic a brand-new concept for them. On the contrary, a relative percentage of participating teachers (43.2%) knew about this writing methodology on the theoretical level, yet they admitted that they had not applied it in their teaching practice. Only 10.2% of participants are implementing or have implemented the methodology in their teaching to varying degrees before joining the PD program.

After the practitioner inquiry was carried out during the PD workshops, 92% of participating teachers appreciated that teacher-practitioner inquiry is an effective tool for continuous instructional improvement and helps teachers to become active in launching the introduced instructional innovation. 89% of teachers expressed an interest in participating in workshops related to or expanded on the topic of Genre-based SFL Writing Instruction in the future.

An Overwhelming Feeling of Inequity Between High and Low-resourced Instructional Situations

Nevertheless, unlike the positive attitudes towards the workshops and the use of practitioner inquiry, as well as the presented topic, there was substantial resistance from the teachers to apply the new method of instruction into their classroom practices after the workshops ended. This resistance seemed to show consistency with the pre-workshop survey which indicated that 43.2% knew about this innovative approach but had not applied it. After the workshop, it was certain that more teachers gained awareness and obtained knowledge about the topic, yet only 2.5% claimed that the instructional method was easy to set up and implement, and

they would apply it to their lesson planning and delivery. They were all from urban public schools. Teachers in that group of 2.5% who said that it was effortless to apply the new teaching method considered the enhancement both in their linguistic and pedagogical knowledge as a major motivation. For example, one teacher expressed his belief that the method would benefit teachers' confidence in teaching writing as well as students' writing development,

The theoretical approach that SFL adopts views that language is functional and meaningful in its sociocultural communicative contexts. It says that English is not a language that belongs to a specific community of native speakers. Rather, it is a lingua franca, so it releases teachers' stress to meet up the expectations of being nativelike all the time. I think this method also helps teachers to teach English more engagingly not by rote-learning but embedding in the normative ways it is used by different communities of language users (which is called genre), increasing students' pragma-linguistic awareness [R35][1].

Another common reason for motivating teachers in urban areas to adopt the instructional transformation is their ability to stay flexible and creative, which, according to them, is a requirement when they choose to be teachers. They considered such a requirement fundamental because teachers are lifelong learners and active agents to support innovative effective ways of teaching for optimal learning results, so they did not mind making great attempts, "I take challenges as a natural thing when we try to create a welcoming space for innovations. I will try my best to adapt to use this method because the PD instructor showed me how it aligns with the new learning objective stated in the national program and I think my school could afford it: students will understand writing with its communicative goals and master the academic language and literacy skills" [R47].

---

1   Teachers' names which were cited in this study corresponded to those who agreed that a name could be assigned and used for discussion. Otherwise, teachers who may want to remain anonymous were cited with an assigned number.

Although not all current textbooks include tasks designed to be aligned with SFL teaching principles, those teachers claimed they are willing to cut down or tailor current tasks, research more SFL resources outside PD training, and create teacher-generated materials, as well as complementary materials, "so that lessons are much more meaningful and interactive, and the transmission of SFL knowledge will be highly effective although it is a new learning approach to students" [R113]. Those teachers estimated that the time to adapt would take longer at first but would ease out gradually, "During PD, I learned that students always need time to become accustomed to a new teaching method, so teachers may spend a lot of time experiencing this new method themselves first to share the experience with students" [R105]. However, they emphasize that the schools need to support their initiatives to change and agree to lend support in terms of technology and infrastructure. Educators from urban districts with low financial resources or from rural regions were hesitant to use the strategy they had been educated in, and they did not believe its implementation was simple… When asked to explain their hesitation and even resistance in using the new method, those in-service teachers cited time as the thing they were most concerned about. The concept of time, and time efficiency specifically, is understood and interpreted in different ways. 38.8% of teachers perceived the time factor in a positive light though showing hesitation. They said that it was time-consuming and arduous to study all genres during PD and be asked immediately to design lesson plans using SFL because,

> As teachers, I first must make sure that I understand it before carefully trying it. Even during PD I do lesson planning with other colleagues, it may be hard for me to plan a lesson by myself later because it is not the normal way I did. Even with a team, they are so fast and I could not catch up. The teacher educator's English is so fast, so I could not understand the theory sometimes and did not understand what we were supposed to do. For a teacher from an ethnic minority like me, English was like my third language, so I need more time to mingle with those who excel at it [R42].

Time was not just about applying the method after PD. Time also meant the amount of their own time that they were willing to spend on continuing to master the new content. However, such time investment would be worth it since "I love teaching and learning something new so I never give up the new method which is good for my students" [R48].

On the contrary, for the rest of surveyed participants (59.2%), despite the excitement of learning more about it as aforementioned, they did not plan to apply the method. On the surface, the time factor was also cited with negative and uncomfortable feelings; nevertheless, time was just an excuse since those teachers further disclosed the powerlessness in implementing instructional innovations. For example, 33.8% of teachers, after teacher-practitioner inquiry, concluded that they did not want to spend more time on the new method and would rather keep the current method of teaching writing. Given the fact that in-service teachers had already claimed to be overwhelmed by the current workload and paperwork, along with a low payment (around $213 per month), they were not willing and patient to adapt to change. They even had high hopes that this method would make the teaching job less tiring and more seamless. However, contrary to their expectations, the new method required teachers to understand the written texts in depth and use a genre-based approach, instead of a grammatical approach, to teach writing. The thing is, instead of figuring out a way to transfer lesson planning from a grammar-based approach to an SFL-based approach, or following up with PD instructors and colleagues about implementing this new approach in a specific local context, teachers categorized knowledge delivered via PD as additional or referential knowledge, which would hardly apply to the existing way of teaching and learning. Because the novel knowledge and method of teaching are perceived supplementary, they claimed it redundant to revisit and renovate current instructional materials or spend to further research how the two methods could somehow complement and work with each other to better support students' learning. Teachers were also previously well-trained and used a grammatical approach, so they did not want to consume a lot of time to systematically adapt during lesson planning and lesson delivery, yet assessment stayed the same as an examination-focused approach.

The amount of time required for children to embrace this new method of learning how to write in English was also highlighted by teachers… Despite the benefits of this method and the promise for a sustainable way of developing writing skills, such as knowing the functional communicative meaning in addition to linguistic characteristics of a genre, 18.8% of the teachers indicated that students would be confused and uncomfortable rather than excited about genre-based SFL learning. Teachers cited students' limited understanding of English grammar as an obstacle for them to follow this method,

> Most EFL students have been taught traditional grammar. They cannot tell if a sentence is grammatically correct or not. But it will take a lot of time for them to know if the sentence is used appropriately or not in a context. They are too lazy to explore and practice the language in context. They are used to tasks that are language drills. It would take me forever to motivate them [R113].

Such a mindset is deeply rooted in teachers' disbelief in students' abilities to succeed in an innovative way of learning and their inflexibility to modify both the method of teaching and the time spent on each activity. While the new method could be operated in a student-centered approach, teachers assumed that students had long experienced a teacher-centered approach, thus would fail to quickly adapt to a new way of learning,

> Genre-based SFL activity requires students to explore the genre and know many vocabularies to support in their writing. Even when the PD instructor demonstrated how it could work for lower-level students, in reality, I think they cannot do well in the allowed time for the lesson [R56].

The Mismatch Between Teachers' Advocacy for Desired Deep-learning Approach and the Traditional Ideology of Rote Learning for Exams

Even though students could write more confidently after learning about different genres, the national curriculum

and assessment still focused on sentence-level grammatical tasks. The essay part played an insignificant role in the final assessment. Teachers thus decided that they would rather spend class time preparing their students for passing the tests. They also cited that their schools would take a lot of time, money investment, and infrastructure to train teachers to adopt a new method, especially those in remote areas,

> *Our school is situated in a remote area in the North, and most students are ethnic minorities of Red Dao, Hmong, their abilities are quite different. Therefore, it is time-consuming to re-train teachers to use new methods immediately. We wanted the students to pass the tests and go to the next grade, but we would rather let them memorize the answers to score high in the multiple choice test rather than learn something in-depth, but they are not tested on what they understood. They are not asked to write any essays during the exam, right? So, we must be practical* [R57].

The last 6.1% of teachers struggled to comprehend the content of PD despite it being delivered using translanguaging (in English and then converting into Vietnamese for clarifications and explanations), claiming that some concepts need more examples and demonstrations for them to understand,

> *I think it not all writing tasks are clearly genre-based, are they? I am frightened to teach something that I myself do not quite understand, so they just ask teachers to grade multiple-choice tests and not require teachers to analyze a writing genre. I think I would just opt for the imitation task for grammar accuracy than this method of writing with functional meaning* [R9].

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest the need for teacher-practitioner PD to engage teachers in sustained sensemaking activity around issues of instruction, such as genre-based SFL. The method works effectively to help teachers not just to gain knowledge about the topic with excitement and intrinsic motivation but also persuade them to commit to innovation. However, our findings also find evidence of resistance and fixed mindsets, as well as their constant perceived incoherence between applying the emergent method and new standards and fighting against interfering internal and external factors that prevent changes from happening. The likelihood of implementing instructional practices aligned to new writing standards is still inconclusive after the study, yet the study shows that the teacher-practitioner PD promises a deeper understanding of the conveyed content and insightful thoughts on the connection between theory and practice and the effectiveness of co-teaching and co-planning. This finding supports the generalization from previous authors who have stated that professional commitments to making a new instructional method habitual in a community of practice are shaped through social relations rather than merely information provision (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2019; Dinh, 2022; Groundwater-Smith and Dadds, 2004; Lave and Wenger, 1991; McChesney and Aldridge, 2019; Orland-Barak, 2009).

Although the findings could not warrant a generalization, the study still theorizes that teacher-practitioner inquiry results in divergent perceptions and learning acquisition outcomes (see Figure 9). Whether the habit of critical inquiry and sensemaking process stay

consistent in the mindset of in-service teachers depends on the teachers' prior knowledge that shapes what and how they perceive their own teaching capacities during PD. Such knowledge can interfere with teachers making changes intended by the teaching staff (Nghia et al., 2017; Canh, 2020; Van Ha and Murray, 2021). Of particular importance are also factors that during the inquiry the teachers could pinpoint, yet they feel helpless to change. Hence, teacher-practitioner inquiry provides a tool to explore and analyze how teachers' practical knowledge shapes their response to PD, yet it is much more essential to put a focus on how such knowledge develops within the larger ecology of teachers' work (McArdle and Coutts, 2010; Nguyen, 2018; Tran, 2014). This study provides evidence that teacher-practitioner inquiry prompts teachers' profound interpretations of their socio-cultural and economic contexts to vary widely and diverge from school settings to cultural local- ethnical settings, which aligns with Allen and Penuel, 2015; Barron and Darling-Hammond, 2008). Finally, their interpretations shape the outcomes of PD, particularly teachers' judgments about how well the goals and strategies of the PD are in line with local and national standards and assessments (Hoang, 2016, Le et al., 2021; Tran, 2014; Tran et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Teacher-practitioner PD in training in-service teachers in developing countries such as Vietnam has still been a new idea. With its application to help teachers to implement genre-based SFL in writing instruction and familiarize with updated new standards and curriculum, teacher-practitioner PD is effective in stimulating meaningful sensemaking processes and demonstrates how systematic way of thinking could lead to different perceptions of coherence and appropriation of ideas from PD. Those divergent ways of thinking generated from collaborative tasks inform each teacher to enhance their understanding of the content and upgrade their pedagogical skills. The inquiry-based approach is also a tool to help in-service teachers to access the tools they need to teach flexibly customized lessons to their student populations and ask critical questions about their current knowledge, practices, and the status quo of educational settings. Teacher-practitioner inquiry in PD changed the quality of PD from expecting teachers to be mere consumers of pedagogy, curriculum, and system expectations to active agents of change and innovation.

However, depending on the individual exposure and socio-economic and sociocultural conditions of teaching outside PD, the impact of teacher-practitioner inquiry might fade out or erode. Therefore, it is even more necessary to think about maintaining the inquiry outside of the PD contexts and creating a forum of collaboration between experts and practitioners to further and continually collect and analyze data. Even if the data is not substantial and can be personalized to each teacher, teachers can strengthen their new habit of using theory and evidence to back up their claims so that as in-service teachers they have the confidence that stands behind their professional decisions. Finally, reflective practices, one of the core activities in the inquiry-based approach, should not only exist in PD series or when new subject content is introduced, they must be practiced so that stronger senses of professional identities and self-assessment abilities could be sustained.

REFERENCES

Allen, C. D., and Penuel, W. R. (2015) 'Studying teachers' sensemaking to investigate teachers' responses to professional development focused on new standards', *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 66, No. 2, pp. 136–149. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487114560646

Avidov-Ungar, O. (2016) 'A model of professional development: Teachers' perceptions of their professional development', *Teachers and Teaching*, Vol. 22, No. 6, pp. 653–669. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1158955

Barron, B., and Darling-Hammond, L. (2008) *Teaching for Meaningful Learning: A Review of Research on Inquiry-Based and Cooperative Learning. Book Excerpt*, [Online], George Lucas Educational Foundation. Available at: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED539399.pdf [14 Feb 2023].

Bitchener, J., and Ferris, D. R. (2012) *Written corrective feedback in second language acquisition and writing*, New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203832400

Blair, E. (2015) 'A reflexive exploration of two qualitative data coding techniques', *Journal of Methods and Measurement in the Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 14–29. https://doi.org/10.2458/v6i1.18772

Byrnes, H. (2012) 'Conceptualizing FL writing development in collegiate settings: A genre-based systemic functional linguistic approach', *L2 writing development: Multiple perspectives*, Vol. 6, pp. 190–218. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781934078303

Canh, L. V. (2002) 'Sustainable professional development of EFL teachers in Vietnam', *Teacher's Edition*, Vol. 10, pp. 32–37.

Canh, L. V. (2018) 'A critical analysis of moral values in Vietnam-produced EFL textbooks for upper secondary schools', in Widodo H. P., Perfecto, M. R., Canh, L. V. and Buripakdi, A. (eds.) *Situating moral and cultural values in ELT materials*, pp. 111–129, Cham: Springer.

Canh, L. V. (2020) 'Remapping the teacher knowledge-base of language teacher education: A Vietnamese perspective', *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 24, No.1, pp. 71–81. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818777525

Charteris, J., and Smardon, D. (2015) 'Teacher agency and dialogic feedback: Using classroom data for practitioner inquiry', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol. 50, pp. 114–123. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.05.006

Corbin, J. M., and Strauss, A. (1990) 'Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria', *Qualitative sociology*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00988593

Dana, N. F., and Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2019) *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Dang, T. C. T., and Seals, C. (2018) 'An evaluation of primary English textbooks in Vietnam: A sociolinguistic perspective', *TESOL Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 93–113. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.309

Derewianka, B., and Jones, P. (2012) *Teaching language in context*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Dinh, H., (2022) 'Synergic Concepts, Lexical Idiosyncrasies, and Lexical Complexities in Bilingual Students' Translated Texts as Efforts to Resolve Conceptual Inequivalences', *Languages*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 94. https://doi.org/10.3390/languages7020094

Duffy, M. (1995) 'Sensemaking: A collaborative inquiry approach to" doing" learning', *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 1–6. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/1995.2066

Groundwater-Smith, S., and Dadds, M. (2004) 'Critical practitioner inquiry: Towards responsible professional communities of practice', in Day, C. and Sachs, J. (eds.) *International handbook on the continuing professional development of teachers*, pp. 238–263, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Gutierez, S. B. (2019) 'Teacher-practitioner research inquiry and sense making of their reflections on scaffolded collaborative lesson planning experience', *Asia-Pacific Science Education*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41029-019-0043-x

Hashimoto, K. (2018) 'The professional development of English language teachers in Asia: Lessons from Japan and Vietnam', in Hashimoto, K. and Nguyen, V-.T. (eds.) *Professional Development of English Language Teachers in Asia*, pp. 1–10. New York: Routledge.

Hang, N. T. T. (2021) 'Vietnamese upper-high school teachers' views, practices, difficulties, and expectations on teaching EFL writing', *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 1–20. https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v11i1.2228

Hoang, V. V. (2016) 'Renovation in curriculum design and textbook development: An effective solution to improving the quality of English teaching in Vietnamese schools in the context of integration and globalization', *VNU Journal of Science: Education Research*, Vol 32, No.4, pp. 4–15. https://doi.org/10.25073/2588-1159/vnuer.3845

Hoang, V. V. (2016) *Đổi mới chương trình và sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh ở trường phổ thông Việt Nam: Một giải pháp nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học môn học* [Tranformative curriculum design and materials development in Vietnamese K-12 system: a solution to enhance the quality of teaching and learning the subject matter], Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE), [Online] Available at: http://repository.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/handle/ULIS_123456789/967 [14 Feb 2023].

Le, M. D., Nguyen, H. T. M., and Burns, A. (2021) 'English primary teacher agency in implementing teaching methods in response to language policy reform: A Vietnamese case study', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, Vol.22, No. 1–2, pp. 199–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2020.1741209

Lieberman, A., and Miller, L. (2014) 'Teachers as professionals: evolving definitions of staff development', in Martin, L. E., Kragler, S., Quatroche, D. J. and Bauserman, K. J. (eds.), *Handbook of professional development in education*, pp. 67–71. New York: Guilford Press.

Jacobs, J., Yendol-Hoppey, D., and Dana, N. F. (2015) 'Preparing the next generation of teacher educators: The role of practitioner inquiry', *Action in Teacher Education*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 373–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2015.1078758

Martin, J. R., and Rose, D. (2007) 'Interacting with text: The role of dialogue in learning to read and write', *Foreign Languages in China*, Vol. 4, No. 5, pp. 66–80.

McArdle, K., and Coutts, N. (2010) 'Taking teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) beyond reflection: Adding shared sense-making and collaborative engagement for professional renewal', *Studies in continuing education*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 201–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2010.517994

McCabe, A. (2017) 'Systemic functional linguistics and language teaching', in Bartlett, T. and O'Grady, G. (eds.) *The Routledge handbook of systemic functional linguistics*, pp. 615–628, New York: Routledge.

McChesney, K., and Aldridge, J. M. (2019) 'A review of practitioner-led evaluation of teacher professional development', *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 307–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2018.1452782

Miles, M. B., and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Milton, E., Daly, C., Langdon, F., Palmer, M., Jones, K., and Davies, A. J. (2022) 'Can schools really provide the learning environment that new teachers need? Complexities and implications for professional learning in Wales', *Professional development in education*, Vol. 48, No. 5, pp. 878–891. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1767177

Murray, J. (2013) 'Academic induction for new teacher educators: Forging authentic research identities through practitioner inquiry', in Campbell, A. and Groundwater-Smith, S. (eds.) *Connecting inquiry and professional learning in education*, pp. 110–122. London: Routledge.

Ngo, X. M. (2021) 'Vietnam's trillion-trillion-dong attempt to reform English education: A laudable reform or a costly failure?', *English today*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 115–119. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0266078419000440

Nagao, A. (2019) 'The SFL genre-based approach to writing in EFL contexts', *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, Vol 4, No. 1, pp. 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-019-0069-3

Nghia, T. L. H. (2015) 'Vietnamese students' perception of English teacher qualities: Implications for teacher professional development', *International Journal of Academic Research in Education and Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 7–19. https://doi.org/10.14662/IJARER2014.058

Nghia, T. L. H. (2017) 'What hinders teachers from translating their beliefs into teaching behaviors: The case of teaching generic skills in Vietnamese universities', *Teaching and teacher education*, Vol. 64, pp. 105–114. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.02.003

Nghia, T. L. H., Phuong, P. T. N., and Huong, T. L. K. (2020) 'Implementing the student-centred teaching approach in Vietnamese universities: the influence of leadership and management practices on teacher engagement', *Educational Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 188–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2018.1555453

Ngo, N. H. H., Cherrington, S., and Crabbe, D. (2022) 'An Integrated Framework of Professional Development for Vietnamese Lecturers of English as a Foreign Language', *RELC Journal*, 00336882221085783. https://doi.org/10.1177/003368822210857

Nguyen, T. N. (2017) 'Đề án ngoại ngữ quốc gia 2020 có thể học được gì từ kinh nghiệm châu Á?', *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4166

Nguyen, N. T. H. (2018) 'Vietnamese teachers' views on a large-scale professional development course on using computer-assisted language learning', in Hashimoto, K. and Nguyen, V-.T. (eds.) *Professional Development of English Language Teachers in Asia*, pp. 130–148. New York: Routledge.

Nguyen, H. T. M., and Burns, A. (2017) 'Teacher language proficiency and reform of English language education in Vietnam, 2008-2020', *Phnom Penh*, Vol. 19.

Nguyen, T. T. M., Marlina, R., and Cao, T. H. P. (2021) 'How well do ELT textbooks prepare students to use English in global contexts? An evaluation of the Vietnamese English textbooks from an English as an international language (EIL) perspective', *Asian Englishes*, Vol 23, No. 2, pp. 184–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2020.1717794

Nguyen, L. T., and Newton, J. (2021) 'Enhancing EFL teachers' pronunciation pedagogy through professional learning: a Vietnamese case study', *RELC Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 77–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882209524

Orland-Barak, L. (2009) 'Unpacking variety in practitioner inquiry on teaching and teacher education', *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 111–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790802667485

Phan, N.T. T. (2020) 'Can I teach these students? A case study of Vietnamese teachers' self-efficacy in relation to teaching English as a foreign language', *Arab World English Journal*, [Online], Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3582383 [14 Feb 2023].

Peeraer, J., and Van Petegem, P. (2012) 'The limits of programmed professional development on integration of information and communication technology in education', *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, Vol. 28, No. 6. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.809

Potter, H. M. (2017) *Principal Sensemaking in Implementation: How Perspectives Influence Outcomes*, [dissertation thesis], East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.

Pringle, R. M. (2020) *Researching Practitioner Inquiry as Professional Development*, Cham: Springer.

Robbins, J. (2020) 'Practitioner inquiry', in Conway C. M. (ed.) *An Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research in American Music Education*, pp. C11.S1-C11.S18. Oxford: Oxford university press

Rodgers, C. (2002) 'Defining reflection: Another look at John Dewey and reflective thinking', *Teachers college record*, Vol. 104, No. 4, pp. 842–866. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9620.00181

Rose, D., and Martin, J. R. (2012) *Learning to write, reading to learn: Genre, knowledge and pedagogy in the Sydney School*, London: Equinox.

Rutten, L. (2021) 'Toward a theory of action for practitioner inquiry as professional development in preservice teacher education', *Teaching and teacher education*, Vol. 97, 103194. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103194

Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J. B., Burch, P., Hallett, T., Jita, L., and Zoltners, J. (2002) 'Managing in the middle: School leaders and the enactment of accountability policy', *Educational Policy*, Vol 16, No. 5, pp. 731–762. https://doi.org/10.1177/089590402237311

Thao, L. T., and Mai, L. X. (2022) 'English language teaching reforms in Vietnam: EFL teachers' perceptions of their responses and the influential factors' *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 29–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2020.1846041

Ton Nu, A. T., and Murray, J. (2020) 'Pragmatic Content in EFL Textbooks: An Investigation into Vietnamese National Teaching Materials', *TESL-EJ*, Vol. 24, No. 3.

Tran, T. T. (2014) 'Governance in higher education in Vietnam–a move towards decentralization and its practical problems', *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 71–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/17516234.2013.873341

Tran, N. G., Ha, X. V., and Tran, N. H. (2021) 'EFL reformed curriculum in Vietnam: An understanding of teachers' cognitions and classroom practices', *RELC Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688221104367

Tran, H. N., Ha, X. V., Le, V. A., and Nguyen, A. N. (2021) 'Principal Leadership and Teacher Professional Development in a Vietnamese High School for Gifted Students: Perspectives into Practice', *European Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 1839–1851. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.10.4.1839

Tuan, D. M. (2021) 'Vietnamese EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Reflective Teaching as a Tool for Professional Development', *REiLA: Journal of Research and Innovation in Language*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 170–180. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.10.4.1839

Uştuk, Ö., and Çomoğlu, İ. (2021) 'Reflexive professional development in reflective practice: what lesson study can offer', *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 260–273. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijlls-12-2020-0092

Uştuk, Ö., and De Costa, P. I. (2021) 'Reflection as meta-action: Lesson study and EFL teacher professional development', *TESOL Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1, e00531. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.531

Van Ha, X., and Murray, J. C. (2021) 'The impact of a professional development program on EFL teachers' beliefs about corrective feedback', *System*, Vol. 96, 102405. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102405

Von Gnechten, M. P. (2011) *Collaborative practitioner inquiry: Providing leadership and action research for teacher professional development*, [dissertation thesis], Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University.

Weick, K. E. (1995) *Sensemaking in organizations*, (Vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wenger, E. (1999) *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge university press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803932

Wolkenhauer, R., and Hooser, A. (2017) '"Inquiry is confidence": How practitioner inquiry can support new teachers', *Journal of Practitioner Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 5. https://doi.org/10.5038/2379-9951.2.1.1028

Yasuda, S. (2012) *The implementation of genre-based tasks in foreign language writing instruction: A longitudinal study of writers' rhetorical awareness, writing quality, and lexicogrammatical choices*, [dissertation dissertation], Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa.

	Workshop timing	Topics	Directions integrated with teacher-practitioner inquiry
First week	50 min	Expert panel on language, culture, and social functions	Teachers reflect on the language representations and their culture and social functions in the adopted textbook(s) under the facilitation of researchers. Teachers *analyze* the writing topics covered in locally produced textbooks: the pros and cons of teaching writing via topic-based and theme-based approaches. – individual journaling on thoughts and comments after the workshop
	90 min	Genre-based SFL Theory and Appraisal Theory (language and attitudinal and emotional expressions in genres) (Part 1)	Pre-surveying on the prior knowledge of attendees about SFL Teachers explore the **linguistic strata** in the genre-based SFL (Figure 2), including phonology/graphology, lexical-grammar, discourse semantics, and the text's function in terms of interpersonal, textual, and ideational aspects, under the facilitation of teaching staff. Teachers *collaboratively* select and filter out linguistic strata of a written model text in an adopted textbook. – individual journaling on thoughts and comments after the workshop.
	90 min	Genre-based SFL Theory and Appraisal Theory (language and attitudinal and emotional expressions in genres) (Part 2)	Teachers explore the **contextual strata** in the model of genre-based SFL (Figure 2), including social (tenor, mode, and field) and cultural contexts (genre), under the facilitation of teaching staff. Teachers *collaboratively* select and filter out contextual strata of a written model text in an adopted textbook. – individual journaling on thoughts and comments after the workshop
	90 min	Applying SFL into Practice: A Genre-based Teaching Approach (Part 1)	Teachers *listen* to the three-stage instructional genre-based SFL instructional method presented and demonstrated by the teacher educator. Teachers *observe* two model lessons and activities of experienced teachers and mentors designed with the genre-based SFL instructional method. Teachers *discuss in groups* the advantages and challenges they may encounter if the genre-based SFL instructional method is applied. Teachers *work with researchers to understand* the challenges in depth by *collecting* data (i.e., interviewing students, doing a mini demo in class) and *writing a report* about it.
A one-week break for teachers to reflect on instructed content and collect some data they are interested in.			
Third week	90 min	Applying SFL into Practice: A Genre-based Teaching Approach (Part 2)	Teachers are grouped with colleagues who teach at the same level (i.e., high school teachers in a team) and collaboratively design a lesson using the genre-based SFL three-stage method. Teachers present the challenges and insights about the problems they predicted from the previous session and the collected data. Teachers collaboratively brainstorm how they could resolve those problems and how their collaborative lesson plan could tackle them.
A one-week break for teachers to work in teams to prepare a genre-based SFL lesson to discuss in the gallery presentation			
Fifth week	90 min	A gallery on teaching artifacts of collaborative lesson plans integrating genre-based SFL method	Teachers present the lesson plan of their team to the teaching staff. Teachers receive comments and constructive feedback from colleagues. Teaching staff discusses questions and concerns teachers raise and directs teachers, if needed, to referential materials in the research literature. Teachers write a reflective essay on how genre-based SFL could be applied to writing instruction and resolve a writing problem.
	90 min	A panel of experienced co-teachers and mentors and case studies	The panel first shares personal experiences of implementing SFL into classroom practices. Post-surveying teachers' thoughts on the PD and their intention to apply the method.

SUSTAINING ACTION RESEARCH: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT BY ANNE BURNS, EMILY EDWARDS AND NEVILLE JOHN ELLIS

Erzsébet Ágnes Békés

Retired teacher educator, Ecuador

✉ ebekes@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

The volume *Sustaining Action Research: A Practical Guide for Institutional Engagement* by Burns, Edwards and Ellis looks at Action Research (AR) and similar participant-oriented approaches from a new perspective. Rather than adding to the growing literature of AR research reports and accounts provided by individual teachers or small groups of teachers, the volume looks at how, beyond the micro level, educational leaders can initiate, support, and sustain AR at their institutions and influence educational developments at meso and macro levels. The book provides teachers, teacher educators, mentors, and educational leaders with a wealth of activities that, in themselves, create an AR cycle, moving from the local context of the microcosm of a classroom up to the institutional and, ultimately, the national and even international level. The volume looks at education from a socioecological perspective and convincingly establishes a solid link between theory and practice, where the individual experiences of classroom practitioners are scaffolded by relevant research and the AR process is both reflected on and celebrated at key stages. The presentation is user-friendly, the information is up-to-date, and the resources are both varied and easily accessible.

The volume on sustaining Action Research was published in the series titled *Research and Resources in Language Teaching* whose explicit aim is 'to integrate the latest research in language teaching and learning with innovative classroom practice' (p. xi). The organisational principle is the same for each volume: Part 1 describes current research and its implications for classroom practice, Part 2 focuses on providing a rich set of activities that can be instantly used in practitioners' teaching practice, Part 3 contains suggestions on methodological applications, while Part 4 returns to the issue of how the materials in the book can support professional development and Action Research. This structure creates a full, uninterrupted cycle by presenting how research can scaffold practice and how practice can feed back smoothly into research.

The novelty of the present volume lies in the fact that rather than describing and reflecting on the experiences of individual teachers or small groups of teachers carrying out AR (an expanding field in the literature), it focuses on the institutional systems where AR might be carried out. Educational organisations are perceived 'as the creators, initiators and supporters of sustainable AR, in partnership with the teachers' (p. xi). This change in perspective is important, since it is by far not evident that there is always managerial support for teacher research in contexts where the majority of language teachers globally work (Xerri and Pioquinto, 2018). Burns,

Edwards and Ellis (2022), therefore, focus on providing support for those who wish to facilitate AR within their institutions both by initiating AR and making it sustainable while following the thinking and utilising the resources presented in the volume with great flair and methodological rigour.

In Part 1, the authors lay the theoretical groundwork. They start by defining AR as a research approach and describe how it can lead to transformative practice as well as continuing professional learning and development. The concept of sociocultural ecological theory is introduced as it provides a suitable framework in which the various interacting levels in educational contexts can be described, namely, microsystems, mesosystems and macrosystems. These are helpful for the reader to understand the interrelated levels of the teaching context (p. 13). The issues of teacher agency and teacher identity are discussed and the concept of 'sustainability', a key term for the book, is defined as 'the extent to which development continues or is sustained over time for the teacher(s) involved in AR' (p. 25). A brief discussion of the challenges teacher researchers often face (e.g., lack of time, lack of confidence in doing research, and lack of resources) is followed by ideas on how a positive and supportive institutional framework can be created even under challenging circumstances. Finally, before introducing the activities in Part 2, the design phases for supporting and sustaining AR are laid out.

The six activity sets in Part 2 correspond to the six design phases and provide a structure aligned with the sequence of how AR is usually carried out: needs analysis for AR, designing and planning AR, implementing and supporting AR, sharing AR with the school community, sharing AR with the broader community, and planning the next steps for AR (p. 31). The activities themselves are structured in the same fashion. The introduction provides a summary of the activity and its aim(s), while the "connections to research" box describes the research issues that are directly related to it. This is followed by the description of the procedure, the resources, and often the extensions and variations that allow the adaptation of the activity to the local context.

While it is beyond the confines of a book review to provide a detailed account of all the activities that form the bulk of the volume (205 pages out of 297), it is still possible to highlight several aspects that make it an essential resource for those looking for guidance on how AR can be initiated, facilitated, and sustained in educational organisations. The activities are both straightforward and well-designed, and incrementally build up research and project management competencies (e.g., designing surveys, analysing the data gathered, creating flowcharts, using databases). The resources contain not only books from established publishers but also online resources and open-source volumes including essential reading, such as Smith and Rebolledo (2018), as well as freely available interviews, videos, and podcasts. There are activities that link AR to the professional development goals of the institution, others take us through the steps of creating a timeline for an AR initiative or look at the financial resources required for it. Taking stock of the hindering factors or barriers that AR practitioners may encounter as well as the supporting factors or facilitators that may make the job easier is a crucial task from the point of view of sustainability and is duly highlighted as such. Further activities deal with AR project planning and its regular review as well as its alignment with institutional needs, with the ethical principles for research also included.

As an emerging teacher-research mentor, I was particularly interested in the activity related to the dimensions and indicators of quality teacher mentoring (pp. 135-138) as well as the need for reflection in AR, for which a rich set of methods is offered (p. 166). It was satisfying to see that the affective aspect, namely, the emotional experiences of AR are also included, making a special point of celebrating AR successes. Sharing AR with the broader community is likewise dealt with by a set of activities from poster presentations to the writing of research reports and narrative accounts and even fully-fledged academic articles.

Part 3, titled *From Application to Implementation*, contains further ideas and discussions on how AR can be included into classroom practice and how pursuing systematic inquiry can lead to the development of research cultures. Returning to the ecological view of the teaching context and based on the activities presented in Part 2, the authors, once again, look at the micro, meso and macro levels, emphasising the cooperative and collaborative nature of AR. Various scenarios are considered, for example, a situation when there is only one teacher at an institution who is interested in AR. At this micro level, the good news is that the person with such an interest is not alone since there are a number of partners and stakeholders, such as students, AR mentors, and critical friends as well as the teacher's manager or principal. The meso-level suggestions focus on how the whole institution where AR is conducted can get involved and, especially, how institutional leaders can plan and sustain this type of teacher research. The macro level concerns 'communities of practice across institutions' (p. 253) which move beyond the local to regional, national and even global initiatives (for example, the UK-based organisation, Cambridge Assessment English supports international AR programs through national associations in the UK and Australia). The potential enabling factors are listed down followed by boxes that present the benefits and challenges of each ecological level.

Finally, Part 4 looks at how institutions that have set up and sustained AR initiatives can move one step further and come full circle by investigating the AR that they have initiated. The authors emphasise that 'This kind of research is 'insider' research, where those internal to the institution, organisation or social structure systematically inquire into their 'ways of doing things', usually with a view to improve, change, enhance and understand them the better' (p. 261). Part 4 also contains a useful description of other participant-oriented approaches followed by examples of how this reflective stage of AR may be carried out at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

Altogether, *Sustaining Action Research* is a ground-breaking volume with its consistent focus on how educational leaders can be supported in their efforts to initiate, facilitate, and sustain AR in their organisations. The authors manage to connect theory and practice by leading the reader through an impeccably structured cycle. They also present a convincing case that, broken down to manageable tasks and activities, AR is both doable and enjoyable. More than that, it can be made sustainable when there is sufficient level of institutional engagement providing support for teachers' continuing professional development, which leads not only to transformative practice at the level of the individual AR practitioner but to the reaching of the educational organisation's development goals as well.

The book should serve as indispensable reading for teachers, teacher educators, and educational leaders that are considering starting on a journey of AR and aim at doing their best to make such initiatives sustainable.

REFERENCES

Burns, A., Edwards, E., and Ellis, N. J. (2022) *Sustaining Action Research: A Practical Guide for Institutional Engagement*, New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429265273

Smith, R. and Rebolledo, P. (2018) *A Handbook for Exploratory Action Research*, London: British Council, [Online] Available: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_30510_BC%20Explore%20Actions%20Handbook%20ONLINE%20AW.pdf [31 Oct 2022].

Xerri, D. and Pioquinto, C. (eds.) (2018) *Becoming Research Literate: Supporting Teacher Research in English Language Teaching*, Sursee: English Teachers Association (ETAS), [Online], Available: https://www.e-tas.ch/sites/default/files/content/06_journal-images/etas_research_book_1.pdf [8 Oct 2022].

INQUIRY AND RESEARCH SKILLS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS BY KENAN DIKILITAŞ AND ALI BOSTANCIOĞLU

Raúl Enrique García López

Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany

✉ raul.garcia@tu-dortmund.de

ABSTRACT

Published in 2019, Inquiry and Research Skills for Language Teachers is written to assist teacher educators in the design of research methodology courses in English teacher education programs. Conceived in the authors' conviction that most research courses do not succeed in empowering teachers' professional practices, the book resorts to Exploratory Practice to configure an approach that appeals to the interrogation of pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward research to increase engagement and foster inquiry skills. In the book, Kenan Dikilitaş and Ali Bostancıoğlu lay out a step-by-step guide for teacher educators to design research courses that are more connected to the realities of future teachers, in the hopes of achieving a long-lasting effect on teachers' professional identities. The book addresses an audience that is familiar with the challenges teachers face when trying to bridge the gap between theory and practice and implement evidence-based teaching.

In *Inquiry and Research Skills for Language Teachers*, Dikilitaş and Bostancıoğlu (2019) offer English teacher educators an alternative for the design of research methods courses in English teacher education. The book is a response to the authors' perception that research courses usually fail to prove their value for the professional development needs of future English teachers. Research methods courses are common in pre-service teachers' education. Unfortunately, many English teachers report that such courses have little to no practical impact on their classroom practices. This is the case of the authors, whose experiences as students of research methods courses were not particularly beneficial.

The little impact that research courses have on English teachers' education is part of the larger problem of English teachers' lack of engagement with research. The literature on research skills displays that many teachers perceive teaching and research largely as unrelated activities and, consequently, do not adopt the latter within the core of their professional practices. Teachers' lack of involvement with research has been extensively discussed in literature for decades (Borg, 2007; 2009; 2010; Hancock, 1997). Part of the solution to this problem, according to the authors, lies in offering courses that prioritize the development of an inquisitive mindset, rather than the teaching of 'hard' technical research skills. Throughout the book, the authors advocate for an approach that delves into future teachers' beliefs and emotions toward research, by means of constant reflection and a focus on exploratory practice.

In the introduction to the book, the authors share with the readers the rationale behind their proposal. They recall the negative experiences with methods courses during their formative years and argue that research and inquiry skills should play a more significant role in English teacher education. They champion the idea that research courses should be more realistic and designed in forms that are more attuned to the needs of teachers. The authors discuss Exploratory Practice as the main theoretical tenet of their proposal since this type of practitioner research fosters reflection, relies on students' creativity, and validates students' interrogation of their contexts. The authors invite teacher educators to capitalize on Exploratory Practice since it results, they argue, in a higher level of student engagement.

In the first chapter, the authors underscore the importance of motivation in the development of research skills. They intend to '…produce a book that could address pre-service teachers' negative attitudes and help them develop positive attitudes toward research through an enjoyable process of learning to do research' (Dikilitaş and Bostancıoğlu, 2019: 3). In an attempt to legitimize pre-service research, they compare it to canonical academic research. In their view, pre-service teacher research should be simpler, personal, contextual, and practical. They also state that it should address pre-service teachers' spaces and learning histories, and focus on personal and dialogical reflection. Interestingly, they call for pre-service teacher research courses to be designed bearing in mind that students will become teachers rather than researchers, a reality that many research methods books fail to address. Additionally, the authors discuss a diversity of concepts to establish the foundations of their proposal, including the types of knowledge that pre-service teachers can access, the idea of research as professional development, the importance of a growth mindset, the characteristics researchers should have (Dörnyei, 2011), the inquiry process (Duran and Duran, 2004) and the idea of reflection as a form of learning. The authors underline the latter, putting it at the core of a research mentality, and emphasizing that individual and shared reflection is an essential tool in the education of language teachers.

ERIES Journal
volume 16 issue 1

Electronic ISSN
1803-1617

Printed ISSN
2336-2375

83

In Chapter 2, the authors proceed with more practical aspects. They adopt the concept of puzzles (Allwright, 2003), as opposed to research problems in an attempt to make the research experience more accessible to students. In the authors' view, puzzles are more personal, subjective, reflective, and explorative than research problems. A clear and easy-to-use taxonomy of sources from which students can derive their puzzles is presented. The authors suggest students should focus their research on their experiences and/or those of others. When focusing on their own experiences, students can investigate puzzles about their own learning or teaching. When about others, puzzles can be about learners, teachers, or parents. I found this classification simple but effective in helping students identify ideas they can investigate, a task that many students find challenging when first confronted with research courses. The chapter continues to discuss some collaborative and didactic techniques to help students identify and establish their puzzles. Toward the end of the chapter, some examples of such puzzles are presented.

As with all courses on research methods, this book offers information on conventional themes in research education, such as data collection, analysis, ethics, and quality criteria. In Chapter 3, the authors discuss interviews, questionnaires, and observations as the most accessible tools for pre-service teachers. The authors resort to the concept of Pedagogically Exploitable Pedagogic-Research Activities – *PEPRAs* - (Hanks, 2017: 267) and argue that the construction of data collection, or generation tools, as they call them, can also be used as a pedagogic activity. In Chapter 4, the authors address epistemological, ethical, and methodological principles of research. In regards to epistemological principles, the authors succeed in exemplifying the iterative nature of the research process, and the need to develop data collection techniques that are consistent with research puzzles. They also do a good job explaining how students can consider validity and reliability in the data collection/generation processes. In the second part of the chapter, the authors propose a number of activities that can be used to generate data while being observant of the aforementioned principles. It is worth mentioning that these activities are conceived mostly for in-service teachers, unlike all previous discussions, which presents ideas for undergraduate courses. This ambivalence remains throughout the book.

Data analysis and report writing are the subjects of the next two chapters. Chapter 5 is perhaps one of the most conservative sections of the book. The authors present basic levels of qualitative and quantitative analysis, focusing on thematic analysis and descriptive statistics. The information presented in this chapter is useful to novice researchers with no experience in data analysis and who do not have access to specialized software. Chapter 6 provides insights into how quantitative data should be interpreted in a matter that is consistent with the identified puzzles. The authors also present some of the generic conventions of written and spoken reports. More interesting and useful is a short section that addresses how pre-service teachers can use their research experiences to reflect on their own ideas, beliefs, and practices and establish possible avenues for their development and identity construction.

Chapter 7 gives readers an interesting insight into how reflective writing can be used throughout the research process. The authors present a diversity of foci that students can use to reflect, develop critical thinking toward their own learning and teaching preferences, and gain a more abstract understanding of their own positioning within the field of English language teaching. I found this chapter notoriously useful for teacher educators who wish to use reflection to enhance students' inquiry and research skills. The ideas presented are accompanied by examples from the authors' research courses, which makes this chapter relatable and easily applicable.

The final chapter features six research methodology courses from Argentina, Brazil, Turkey, Japan, and Pakistan. Each course is described briefly, with a focus on the context, the content, the tasks, and the types of assessment used. Of particular value are the reflections by the courses' authors. Teacher educators can use this chapter to get an insight into different approaches to the teaching of research and benefit from the lessons learned by those who designed and taught the courses.

Written in a friendly, easily accessible language, *Inquiry and Research Skills for Language Teachers* is a practical and original book for teacher educators who understand the value of research, but acknowledge the difficulty that teachers face bridging the gap between theory and practice and incorporating evidence-based teaching into their professional practices. The book's most important contributions include the techniques, activities, and suggestions for helping students identify viable and engaging research topics, as well as the use of reflective writing to capitalize on the lessons learned through the research process.

REFERENCES

Allwright, D. (2003) 'Exploratory Practice: rethinking practitioner research in language teaching', *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 113–141. https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168803lr118oa

Borg, S. (2007) 'Research engagement in English language teaching', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, pp. 731–747. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.03.012

Borg, S. (2009) 'English Language Teachers' Conceptions of Research', *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 358–388. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amp007

Borg, S. (2010) 'Language teacher research engagement', *Language Teaching*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 391–429. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000170

Dikilitaş, K. and Bostancioğlu, A. (2019) *Inquiry and research skills for language teachers*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21137-0

Dörnyei, Z. (2011) *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, China: Oxford University Press.

Duran, L. B. and Duran, E. (2004) 'The 5E Instructional Model: A Learning Cycle Approach for Inquiry-Based Science Teaching', *Science Education Review*, Vol 7, No. 2, pp.49-58.

Hancock, R. (1997) 'Why are class teachers reluctant to become researchers?', *Journal of In-Service Education*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 85–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/13674589700200009

Hanks, J. (2017) *Exploratory Practice in language teaching: Puzzling about principles and practices*, London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-45344-0