Minh Hue Nguyen

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A Sociocultural Perspective on Preservice Teachers' Learning in the Professional Experience

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Preface

This book aims to be inviting and readable to teacher educators, researchers, curriculum developers, and preservice teachers in English language teacher education. It draws on my Ph.D. research and incorporates my postdoctoral understandings gained from my direct involvement in English language teacher education at Monash University over the years as both a teacher educator and a researcher. This book includes case studies that examine in depth the professional learning experiences of preservice English language teachers during the practicum in the neoliberal world that is mobile, diverse, and changing in many ways. It engages with major contemporary issues pertaining to neoliberal English language teacher education, such as curriculum design, mentoring, pedagogical learning, professional identity, and emotions. These issues are tied together coherently through the use of a sociocultural theoretical framework.

In collecting data for this research, I went to practicum sites and had in-depth conversations with preservice teachers, their mentors, and academics. I heard thought-provoking and gripping stories about the journeys of becoming teachers in Australia and the enormous amount of challenges as well as support inherent in the institutional and policy contexts of English language teaching in Australia that influenced their learning. The four preservice teachers I studied, attending the same English language teacher education programme, were from very different but typical cultural and educational backgrounds, including three international students from English-speaking background and non-English-speaking background and a domestic student returning to study for a formal English language teaching qualification after years spent overseas. The practicum contexts concerned also differ significantly and again were representative of the major types of English language teaching contexts in Australian schools and other neoliberal contexts. These include an English language school, an English language centre, a mainstream government school, and an elite independent school.

Since I heard these professional learning stories, I have always felt the responsibility to make them known to the broader readership. This book came about as I feel obliged to speak to English language teacher education researchers, teacher educators, preservice teachers, and curriculum developers on the participants'

behalf about these learning journeys and their shaping factors. This book is set in Australia as a specific English language teacher education context. However, it argues that Australia shares many of the contextual features with other neoliberal English language teacher education contexts. With the use of a broad sociocultural theoretical lens to underpin the research, the insights gained can be relevant to many of these international contexts. Regardless of readers' teacher education and research contexts, they can take away practical ideas to inform their English language teacher education reforms and an example for the application of sociocultural theory in researching preservice teacher learning.

Clayton, Victoria, Australia Minh Hue Nguyen

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I am wholeheartedly grateful to the participating university and schools for granting me research permission and providing support for my data collection. I really appreciate the kind cooperation and support of the anonymous research participants, who have made me more committed to my research and to teacher education.

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About the Author

Minh Hue Nguyen is Lecturer in TESOL Education in the Faculty of Education at Monash University, Australia. Her research, supervision, teaching, and engagement are in the areas of second language teacher education and second language teaching and learning. She is interested in creating productive learning experiences for preservice teachers to transition effectively into the teaching profession. She is passionate about finding ways for institutions to support both preservice teachers and teacher educators in this transition. She has been involved in TESOL, TESOL teacher education, curriculum development, and research for over 15 years in a number of Vietnamese and Australian institutions. Her scholarly publications have been largely underpinned by a sociocultural perspective. Her research has been recognised through, for example, Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)/Kay Martinez Award for Best Paper at the 2013 ATEA Conference, Monash Education Research Community's Publication Award, Monash University's Postgraduate Publication Award, Penny McKay Award Special Commendation for Outstanding Doctoral Thesis in Language Education, Monash Dean of Education's ECR Project Award, and Monash's Advancing Women's Research Success Grant.

Abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
AMES	Adult Multicultural Education Services (Australia)
AusVELS	Australian Curriculum in Victoria
CBI	Content-based instruction
CBLT	Content-based language teaching
CD	Compact disc
CLIL	Content and language integrated learning
CLT	Communicative language teaching
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
EAL	English as an additional language
EAL/D	English as an additional language/dialect
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
ELTE	English language teacher education
EMI	English as medium of instruction
ESL	English as a second language
ICT	Information and communications technology
IT	Information technology
L2	Second language
LOTE	Language other than English
LTE	Language teacher education
NES	Native English speaking/speaker
NNES	Non-native English speaking/speaker
OTP	Organiser of teaching practice
SLA	Second-language acquisition
SLTE	Second language teacher education
SOSE	Studies of society and environment
TEEL	Topic, explanation, evidence, and link

TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VELS	Victorian Essential Learning Standard
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

Chapter 1
English Language Teaching and Teacher Education in Neoliberal Contexts



Abstract This opening chapter presents an overview of the current status of English language teaching and teacher education in neoliberal contexts. It suggests that across the globe, English competency has been considered human capital for pursuing economic advancement, enhanced status and prestige, and transnational mobility. In the age of neoliberalism, it is essential for English language teacher education to prepare preservice teachers for working in dynamic and diverse contexts and to recognise the personal diversities that they bring to teacher education and shape their professional learning. The chapter highlights the need for empirical research to examine the complexities and diversities of the contextual and personal dimensions of teacher learning to better inform practice in English language teacher education in these contemporary contexts. Due to transnational flows, Australia presents an empirical setting to interrogate such complex issues because of its large culturally and linguistically diverse populations of English language learners and preservice teachers and a broad range of contexts for practice. Understanding how preservice teachers learn to teach English language in Australia can offer insights that could transcend the Australian context.

1.1 English Language Education and Teacher Education in Neoliberal Contexts

1.1.1 English Education in Neoliberal Contexts

We are in the age of neoliberalism, which has impacted the field of English education. The concept of neoliberalism originated in the nineteenth century as an economic ideology. It has quickly become a dominant and pervasive organising principle in many of today's societies (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism is grounded in the idea that "human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). This means that in the age of neoliberalism, human activity is driven by the so-called free market and is liberated from governmental regulation. Within language education, language is

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seen as a commodity, and learning powerful and dominant languages, English being one of the most prominent examples, is considered across international, national, institutional, and individual levels as human capital for pursuing economic advancement, enhanced status and prestige, and transnational mobility (Ennser-Kananen, Fallas Escobar, & Bigelow, 2017; Price, 2014; Shin, 2016). As a result, there has been a significant growth in English education, associated with which are changes in many facets of the field (Kubanyiova, 2018; Murray, 2018). English language teacher education is experiencing many challenges in its efforts to prepare English language teachers to work in the expanded, diverse, and dynamic neoliberal contexts (Freeman, 2018; Murray, 2018; Shi & Lin, 2016).

With the rapid growth of the English education industry under the influence of neoliberalism comes the changing face of the field. The contexts of English education and the population of English language learners have become much more complex, disparate, and diverse than ever before. According to Freeman (2018), "[s]ocial and political dynamics of migration are impacting who comes to schools and the roles English plays in classrooms" (p. 6). In his recent article, Murray (2018) outlines a broad range of personal and contextual diversities in English education in our modern world. These include English as human capital, resettled English learners, immigrants in Anglophone countries, English learners in the fractured lines, international students, and Web-based English learners. In this section, I unpack the issues related to the learners, contexts, content, pedagogy, and teachers of English education in the age of neoliberalism.

First, under the influence of neoliberalism, English has become a dominant language and is seen as human capital. As a result, many national education systems place English education at the centre of their educational curriculum. English has been taught as a subject at different schooling levels in many nations as a way to build human capital and enhance economic development and international mobility (Flores, 2013; Lee, 2016; Murray, 2018). In an increasing number of countries, students start learning English in primary schools and continue through to postgraduate studies with mixed results (e.g. Mondejar, Valdivia, Laurier, & Mboutsiadis, 2012; Murray, 2018; Ng, 2016; Nguyen, 2011; Qi, 2016; Shrestha, 2013; Zein, 2016). In addition to the public English education sector, the for-profit sector is also flourishing (Freeman, 2018). There have been greater demand and supply as families and individuals are increasingly investing in building English competence as human capital through extracurricular English classes (Gkonou & Miller, 2017).

Second, the findings of Murray (2018) show that there is a growing number of English learners who are learning English as they resettle in English-speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA. According to Murray (2018), these learners may have arrived in these countries as asylum seekers and refugees fleeing conflict. There are vast cultural, economic, linguistic, and educational diversities among individuals within this population of English learners. For example, many youth asylum seekers and refugees have minimal, interrupted or no prior schooling and English ability while many others come with high level of literacy in their first language. Many adults arrive with high level of education and may speak English. English education is one of the services which the receiving countries

offer to asylum seekers and refugees in support of their resettlement. Programmes of English education vary from one country to another and depend on the characteristics and needs of the learners, including, for example, government-funded programmes within schools, adult English education, and programmes offered by non-profit organisations.

Third, many people receive English education in "the fracture lines" (Erling, 2017, p. 11). This happens in many places around the world in the age of neoliberalism, including "ongoing conflict areas, refugee camps, and countries recovering from civil war or insurgency" (Murray, 2018, p. 4). According to Murray, humanitarian agencies in these places, while focusing on survival issues such as food, water, shelter, and health care for asylum seekers, consider education an important means to provide opportunities for individuals to pursue a better life when they move on to other countries, and English education is regarded as an essential part of such education. However, Murray also notes that English education in these contexts faces many challenges when catering for the English learners who bring with them heavy burdens resulted from dislocation, fear, deprivation of children and ruptured families and who often care more about survival than education.

Another group of English learners that is increasing rapidly in number is international students. Due to the strengthened status of English, international students have been attracted to courses delivered in English. Australia, the UK, and the USA are the top countries in terms of number of international students (Murray, 2018), who either just study English, complete schooling, or pursue undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Many other countries such as Germany, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, which are not English-speaking countries, also offer educational programmes in English that attract large numbers of international students. Many countries also 'export' their educational programmes where international students complete a part of or the entire international educational programme in English in their home country (Murray, 2018). If international students have not met the English language proficiency requirements for entry into the overseas educational programmes, English learning is mandatory before they can enrol in schools or courses. International students have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, due to the course entry requirements, international students within the same course tend to have less diverse educational backgrounds in comparison with other groups of English language learners presented above. International students are also often funded by family, scholarship providers, or self-funded. The majority of study abroad students have high motivation to succeed and also abide by visa/scholarship conditions. These learner characteristics influence their learning as well as formal classroom instruction.

Furthermore, with the popularity of internet use, social media technologies, and tools for Web-based English education, access and participation in virtual English education have been made possible (Freeman, 2018). The English education industry has been embracing and integrating Internet and technology into their programmes. There has been a remarkable increase in the number of online English language learners across all the English learning populations mentioned above (Murray, 2018).

Online learners have unique expectations and social participation practices, which entails redefinition of English teaching practices to accommodate this trend.

The diversities of learners and contexts of English education mentioned above largely drive the content and pedagogy of English teaching. All of these issues contribute to the changing demands for English language teaching. According to Freeman (2018), in addition to the changing expectations and needs of English language learners,

> …classroom content is being reframed de facto by new contexts of use, escalating technologies, and changing classroom demands. Certainly the internet alone has radically expanded what is available, considered, and accessible for use as content in language teaching. (p. 5)

The changes in who learns English, where it is learned, and the redefined classroom content of English education shape new ways of conceptualising pedagogy. For example, English is increasingly delivered in conjunction with content areas (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a; Lightbown, 2014) through programmes such as content and language integrated learning (CLIL), content-based language teaching (CBLT), content-based instruction (CBI), or English as medium of instruction (EMI). There are also bilingual/multilingual education trends where teachers are expected to teach with consideration of how languages can be combined (Fielding, 2015; Freeman, 2018). English teaching pedagogy is also being reshaped by the increasing demand for attention to cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in addition to basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1979, 2008) due to the needs of learners to move on to and succeed in their disciplines. English language teachers are now expected to perform culturally and linguistically responsive teaching to meet the changing demands of their role (Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Premier & Miller, 2010). And on top of all these changes, English language teachers are increasingly expected to deliver content using Web-based technologies.

Lastly, who teaches English in neoliberal contexts is another major issue of today's English education. With increased international mobility and changing demands of the profession, "the majority of the ELT teaching force globally comes from, and teaches in, settings well outside the 'inner circle'" and they are "doing different kinds of teaching than they were 20 years ago" (Freeman, 2018, p. 6). As the number of people speaking English expands, the demands for English language teachers increase, and the concept of native speaker "cannot be fully defined linguistically" (Freeman, 2018, p. 8), it is becoming more legitimate and common for teachers who would traditionally identify as 'non-native' teachers to train as teachers and teach in diverse contexts. Consequently, the English education field now has a highly culturally, linguistically diverse workforce, who also possess different kinds of knowledge, skills, and experiences than in the past.

1.1.2 Challenges for Neoliberal English Language Teacher Education

The issues related to learners, contexts, content, pedagogy, and teachers discussed in Sect. 1.2.1 all contribute to redefining the knowledge base for English language teaching (Freeman, 2018; Freeman & Johnson, 1998). This in turn poses a range of challenges for English language teacher education in the age of neoliberalism, which this section now turns to.

The main challenges facing neoliberal second language teacher education (SLTE) are associated with the aforementioned diversities of learners and contexts that English language teachers are expected to work with. In their most recent work, Johnson and Golombek (2018a) wrote, "The globalization of English has pushed LTE to prepare teachers for multifaceted and demanding instructional contexts" (p. 2). As a result, the theoretical knowledge base for second language (L2) teaching, SLTE pedagogy, and SLTE research are evolving.

First, with regard to the theoretical knowledge base for L2 teaching, traditionally, knowledge of language structures and culturally appropriate pedagogies are the main domains of knowledge that language teachers are expected to have to do their job (Kubanyiova, 2018). However, today, language teachers' roles are changing. For example, L2 teachers are expected to teach language(s) in conjunction with content areas (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a; Lightbown, 2014), so knowledge of content and how to use content for teaching language(s) has become an essential component of the knowledge base for language teaching. Kubanyiova provides convincing evidence to argue that language teachers need to be responsive meaning makers, to adopt a critical advocacy role for the populations of language learners, as well as teachers, who are underserved by sociopolitical systems, and to ensure social justice (see also Linville, 2016). Associated with this is the ability to understand and practice intercultural teaching (Oranje & Smith, 2018). In addition, teacher research is increasingly recognised as an important set of skills for professional development and reforms in L2 education (Borg, 2009, 2010; Burns, 2015; Le, 2018). Furthermore, the strengthened position of Web-based L2 teaching and learning means that ICT has become another important aspect of the knowledge base for L2 teaching (Thorne & May, 2017). In fact, SLTE itself has actively embraced ICT as many teachers are being prepared through online programmes (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a).

Second, in order to meet the challenges of the changing knowledge base for L2 teaching, SLTE pedagogy needs to be reconsidered. Johnson and Golombek (2018a) insist that SLTE pedagogy be located, which means creating "locally appropriate professional development opportunities, practices, and resources that are socially, culturally, historically, and institutionally situated in and responsive to teachers', students', and community needs" (p. 5). SLTE practices, therefore, need to consider the social, cultural, political, and economic contexts of English language education and tap into how teachers understand and practice their roles in relation to such contexts and learners (Cross, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2018a; Kubanyiova, 2018; Nguyen, 2019). SLTE practices need to provide language teachers with opportunities

to understand and practice their new roles, "which include but are not restricted to teachers of language(s)" (Kubanyiova, 2018, p. 3). It is also vital for teacher educators to acknowledge and prepare teachers for addressing potential contradictions that may emerge within located teacher learning in ways that transform teachers professionally (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a). This may involve, for example, strategies to deal with tensions within power relations and the subsequent emotional experiences for teachers (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Nguyen, 2014, 2018). SLTE pedagogy must also recognise that L2 teachers have diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, and each has their own personal histories that impact on their learning (Cross, 2018; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2018a, 2018b). It is essential that the practices of SLTE capitalise on these personal values to make teacher education most relevant and meaningful for teachers.

Third, there are challenges that research into neoliberal SLTE needs to meet to inform how SLTE meets the above challenges. Kubanyiova (2018) believes that research on L2 teacher learning is the key to an informed approach to educating L2 teachers for the neoliberal world that is mobile, diverse, and changing:

> … in order to come closer to fulfilling its role in educating responsive meaning makers in the world, language teacher education knowledge base might be usefully informed by research that has looked more closely at how language teachers make sense of themselves, their students and their teaching worlds and how their sense making shapes language learning opportunities for their students. (p. 5)

Here, Kubanyiova (2018) draws attention to the need for research on situated L2 teacher learning, which places great importance on the context of such learning, the learners, and how teachers make sense of their role in relation to these. This contention is well supported by prominent scholars in the field (e.g., Cross, 2018; Freeman, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2018a). In an editorial article on studying L2 teacher cognition, Johnson (2018) suggests that one key to the work of educating L2 teachers for today's world will be research on teacher learning in relation to the design, implementation, and consequences of SLTE pedagogy.

Motivated by the challenges facing SLTE in terms of its changing knowledge base, located pedagogy, and contextualised research, I now move on to describing the Australian context of the research in this book.

1.2 English Language Education and Teacher Education in Australia

Most of the issues in English language education and teacher education in neoliberal contexts identified above are inherent in the Australian context. The country has a large and increasing population of English language learners in a vast array of contexts such as mainstream school systems, university preparation courses, vocational education courses, and Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES). English

language learners in Australia include all of the groups classified in Sect. 1.2.1, including immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, international students, and online learners. These groups cross over in all contexts, but are most well represented in the schooling system. This section focuses on English language learning and teaching in Australian schooling system and initial English language teacher education as these are selected to be the research settings for this book.

1.2.1 English Language Learners in Australian Schools

English language learners in Australia are commonly referred to as English as an additional language/dialect students (EAL/D students). According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2014), "EAL/D students are those whose first language is a language or dialect other than English and who require additional support to assist them to develop proficiency in English" (p. 6). They come from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds, which may include:

- overseas and Australian-born students whose first language is a language other than English
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose first language is an Indigenous language, including traditional languages, creoles and related varieties, or Aboriginal English (ACARA, 2014, pp. 6–7).

About one in four students in Australia come from language backgrounds other than English. These include "children of recent or settled migrants, refugees, rural, remote and urban Aboriginal students, and increasingly, international students" (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 14). Apart from their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, EAL/D students also have varied educational backgrounds, which according to ACARA (2014) may include:

- schooling equivalent to their age peers in Australia
- limited or no previous education
- little or no literacy experience in their first language (or in any language)
- excellent literacy skills in their first language (or another language)
- learned English as a foreign language and have some exposure to written English, but need to develop oral English (p. 7).

In addition, according to ACARA (2014), many EAL/D students may have good academic language skills, high level of cognitive development, and rich life experiences but have difficulties with social registers of the English language. EAL/D students are usually placed in Australian schools with students of the same age groups. Therefore, they require specific support to develop the English language skills and knowledge to access the mainstream curriculum and to function in the new society in Australia.

Because of EAL/D students' diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, there are various factors that affect their learning. Some examples include

the distinctive features between languages such as the ways sentences and texts are constructed, vocabulary items that are problematic for EAL/D students, their previous schooling, intercultural awareness, assumed cultural understanding, and expectations regarding schooling (ACARA, 2014). A number of EAL/D students have limited or interrupted schooling, and their English proficiency levels may vary greatly. They may:

- be unfamiliar with accepted classroom routines and the organisational aspects of learning, such as deadlines, dates and divisions of time […]
- be unfamiliar with the purposes for reading and writing, and rely heavily on visual cues
- be unfamiliar with some digital technologies or subject-specific equipment commonly used in Australian classrooms (ACARA, 2012, p. 4).

ACARA (2014) advises that this group of EAL/D students may need high levels of emotional, social, cultural, and bilingual support, and they may take more time than other EAL/D students to understand concepts and classroom discourse and to complete academic tasks.

The State of Victoria, where the research in this book is situated, has a typical situation of EAL/D education in Australia. In Victoria, the term English as an additional language (EAL) and EAL/D is used interchangeably, with the former more commonly used. In 2018, about 25% of the student number in Victorian government schools have language backgrounds other than English, and 13% of the government school population are EAL students qualifying for government funding (Department of Education and Training, n.d.). The funding is used for a range of support services, including intensive EAL education for newly arrivals' programmes, EAL support in the mainstream school, support for parents, and support for schools to employ teaching and multicultural education aides (Department of Education and Training, 2018). Apart from funded EAL students, many students who need EAL support do not qualify for funding because they have been in the country for over five years. In addition to the EAL student population enrolled in mainstream schools, many EAL students attend newly arrival EAL programmes delivered through English language schools and centres before starting mainstream school. In 2017, for example, these include 5202 international fee-paying students (Department of Education and Traning, n.d.) and 6984 newly arrived students who were eligible for non-fee-paying enrolment in government schools (Department of Education and Training, 2018). EAL students in Victorian government schools and language centres come from a multitude of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, in 2017, newly arrived EAL students in Victoria came from 134 language backgrounds and 128 countries of birth (Department of Education and Training, 2018).

1.2.2 English Language Education in Victorian Schools

Each Australian state has its own policy for English language education, depending much on the population of learners within its schools. Victoria is one of the states that have the largest numbers of English language learners in the country. The Victorian Government provides funding for EAL students through two major types of programmes, one of which is for newly arrived EAL students and the other for EAL students in mainstream schools. Private, Catholic, and independent schools also have access to the government-funded new arrivals' programmes. Schools are funded for the EAL mainstream programme based on the number of EAL students who match the criteria for funding.

The new arrivals' programmes provide intensive full-time EAL study for six to twelve months. Newly arrived students are those from language backgrounds other than English who are eligible to enrol in government schools on a non-fee-paying basis (Department of Education and Training, 2018). The programmes "aim to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of newly arrived students from language backgrounds other than English by developing their English language competence and facilitating their transition to participation in mainstream education" (Department of Education and Training, 2017, p. 5). It is provided through metropolitan English language schools and centres and regional programmes. Within the new arrivals' programmes at English language schools and centres, students are placed into classes based on their age and English language proficiency levels. According to Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD, 2013; now Department of Education and Training), these students are:

- taught English through subject areas such as mathematics and science, and the curriculum is based on what is taught in mainstream schools
- taught the English needed to function in the community
- helped to settle into their new country and to learn about a new school system
- given special assistance if they have had interrupted schooling, or if they need to learn to read and write (p. 2).

On completion of a new arrivals' programme, EAL students are helped to select and transition to a mainstream school and, if eligible, further supported in EAL programmes in the mainstream school, which is the second type of EAL provision programme considered in this study.

The second type of EAL programmes is provided in Victorian mainstream schools. According to Department of Education and Training (2017, p. 11), EAL students in Victorian mainstream schools receive EAL support through a range of programme types, including:

- timetabled EAL classes taught by specialist EAL teachers
- in-class support (provided by a specialist EAL teacher to a small group of students or single student in a mainstream class)
- withdrawal from a class, in a small group (support provided for either English language learning or curriculum-related content by a specialist EAL teacher)

- withdrawal from class, one-on-one support from a teacher
- team teaching (the joint instruction of a lesson or unit of work by a classroom or subject specialist teacher and an EAL specialist teacher).

The broad range of programme types aims to accommodate a multitude of cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds among the EAL students' population. In addition, EAL students enrol, transfer, and leave at any time of the year, requiring the programmes to be flexible and varied. In Australia, EAL programming and provision follow a whole school approach (Department of Education and Training, 2015).

Although EAL students have access to intensive full-time EAL tuition in the new arrivals' programmes, EAL provision in the mainstream school appears to be less intensive. This gap in the level of EAL provision is partly related to the difference in curriculum as in mainstream schools students spend most of their time studying the mainstream curriculum while in the intensive new arrivals' programmes they study the English language full time. Another reason for this gap is the decrease or discontinuation of funding as the students move to mainstream schools.

1.2.3 Current Practices and Challenges for English Language Teacher Education in Australia

As stated above, Australia has large culturally and linguistically diverse populations of English language learners as well as a broad range of contexts for English language teaching. Due to its political, social, cultural, linguistic position, Australia is facing similar challenges as many other neoliberal contexts and presents itself as an empirical setting to research English language teacher education. Understanding how preservice teachers learn to teach EAL in Australia can offer useful insights that can transcend the Australian context. In this section, I provide an overview of the current practices of English language teacher education in Australia and the challenges it is facing in step with other contexts in the age of neoliberalism.

Initial teacher education in Australia, including EAL teacher education, is regulated by the national accreditation standards and procedures set out by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2018). According to AITSL (2018), accredited initial teacher preparation programmes are required to meet national standards in the areas of outcomes; development, design and delivery; entry; structure and content; professional experience; and evaluation, reporting, and improvement. Programmes typically consist of university-based course work components and school-based professional experience components. In terms of professional experience, programme providers are required to have formal partnerships with school/sites to deliver professional experience placements of no fewer than 80 days in undergraduate programmes and a minimum of 60 days in graduate entry teacher education programmes. Graduate teachers who wish to qualify for an additional specialist method (such as TESOL or EAL teaching) after completing initial teacher education are expected to complete methodology units together with 22 days

of supervised teaching practice (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2015). The professional experience must be organised so that preservice teachers have opportunities to observe and participate in the schools/sites and be supervised and assessed. In Australia, preservice teachers are usually supervised and assessed by mentors who are experienced teachers in schools/sites and/or university supervisors.

Like in many other neoliberal contexts across the world, graduate teachers in Australia must meet requirements to be registered as teachers. In Victoria, teachers' registration is managed by the Victorian Institute of Teaching. They must meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011b) at their appropriate level. The Standards expect teachers in Australia, including EAL and non-EAL trained teachers, to meet EAL learners' learning needs. For example, at graduate level, teachers need to "[d]emonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds" (Standard 1.3, AITSL, 2011b, p. 8). EAL teachers increasingly teach in collaboration with content areas teachers (Nguyen, 2019). The use of ICT in teaching has long become a required part of teacher knowledge, including for EAL teaching, as set out by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (See Standards 2.6, 3.4, and 4.5, AITSL, 2011b).

Across the globe, concerns are frequently raised about the quality of initial teacher preparation (Diamond, Parr, & Bulfin, 2017). In the discourses around Australian teacher education, the value of the professional experience in preparing the next generation of teachers has been identified as a key area of concern. More than a decade ago, concerns about problems with the professional experience were raised by The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (2007):

> The problems with practicum have been outlined in nearly every report addressing teacher education in the last decade. The fact that these problems have still drawn so much attention in this inquiry indicates the need for major reform in this area, involving all players and all aspects of the system. (p. 73)

More recently, The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG, 2014) highlights a number of persistent issues concerning the professional experience in Australian initial teacher education as follows:

> The relationships between higher education providers and schools are not considered adequate to manage the complexities of professional experience or to effectively integrate professional experience with course work and theory. Submissions called for better integration and stronger links between providers, school systems, schools and supervising teachers. (p. 27)

The extracts above emphasise the importance of strengthening teacher education practices in the design and delivery of professional experience programmes, and this work involves a range of stakeholders. This is further supported by a core principle for quality teacher education that all stakeholders including institutions, schools, employers, teachers, and teacher regulatory bodies (AITSL, 2011a) need to share responsibilities and obligations in educating teachers. Some Australia-based researchers advocate a model of learning communities for professional experience which has the potential to consolidate such relationships (Grimmett, Forgasz,

Williams, & White, 2018; Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White, Bloomfield, & Le Cornu, 2010; White & Forgasz, 2016). However, TEMAG (2014) notes "a high degree of variability in the types and quality of pre-service professional experiences and the extent to which they are integrated as part of the program" (p. 27). In the same vein, White et al. (2010) found that there is a range of professional experience practices within Australian teacher education institutions. While some institutions are exploring alternative professional experience models that enhance reciprocal learning relationships, others embrace a traditional model that places pre-service teachers' learning in a theory–practice dichotomy (White et al., 2010).

There are other issues related to the professional experience in Australian initial teacher education. First, while Australian policy makers are interested in reforming the professional experience in order to enhance the overall quality of teacher education, they tend to pay little attention to the specific disciplines. Like other subjects, EAL teaching, despite its unique and demanding nature as described previously, is hardly mentioned in the policy and theoretical discussions about professional experience. Second, there has been growing research interest in the professional experience in Australia (Bloomfield, 2010; Grimmett et al., 2018; Nguyen & Loughland, 2017, 2018; Nguyen & Parr, 2018; Ure et al., 2017; White & Forgasz, 2016), but little has been done that considers preservice teachers' professional learning in specific disciplines, especially the teaching of EAL. The need for research into preservice EAL teachers' development during the professional experience is inclusively articulated in a recent extensive review of current professional experience practices in Australian initial teacher education:

> Research about pre-service teachers' development is needed to inform current understandings of, and expectations for, assessment of pre-service teachers' performance leading up to the Graduate Teacher Standards. (Ure et al., 2017, p. 14)

In addition, Australian EAL teacher education also has a culturally and linguistically diverse population of preservice teachers. In the age of neoliberalism with increased international mobility, Australian initial teacher education has become an attractive destination for many international preservice teachers. In 2013, nearly 5000 international preservice teachers were enrolled in Australian teacher education programmes (Nallaya, 2016). Fan and Le (2010) observe that the number of international preservice EAL teachers is increasing in Australia. These preservice teachers encounter a unique range of challenges, particularly during the Australian school-based professional experience, due to their varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds and English proficiency levels (Fan & Le, 2010; Nallaya, 2016; Spooner-Lane, Tangen, & Campbell, 2009). It is even more challenging for international preservice teachers who speak English as a second/foreign language to teach the language in an unfamiliar, English-speaking context (Miller, 2007; Nguyen, 2014, 2017). Apart from international EAL preservice teachers, the population of domestic preservice teachers in Australian EAL teacher education also has multicultural and linguistic backgrounds as a result of ongoing inflows in immigrants that have been happening for decades (Phillips & Simon-Davies, n.d.). Preservice teachers' personal histories play an influential role in shaping their learning (Johnson, 2009, 2018); therefore,

research that investigates in depth how preservice EAL teachers learn to teach in relation to personal histories in situated contexts, especially the school-based professional experience, would be useful for informing and enhancing EAL teacher education practices, as it has been suggested previously in this chapter.

1.3 The Research

The information presented thus far in this chapter shows that English education in neoliberal contexts, including Australia, has become more complex, diverse, and dynamic than ever before in terms of learners, contexts, content, pedagogy, and workforce. Associated with these changes are the challenges for English language teacher education in terms of theory, practice, and research to prepare the next cohorts of English language teachers ready for the complexities, diversities, and dynamics of neoliberal English language education. One key to fulfilling this work is research into preservice teachers' learning to inform theory and practice of English language teacher education. Australia is one of the neoliberal contexts of English language education. The majority of the neoliberal English language education issues in the broader spheres are inherent in the Australian context. Therefore, the country represents itself as an empirical setting suitable for research into SLTE that promises to yield findings relevant to many other neoliberal contexts.

The professional experience plays a pivotal role in the learning of preservice teachers because it offers opportunities for them to transition into real-life teaching contexts. However, it has also been identified as one of the key areas of concern. In response to the previously discussed challenges for SLTE in neoliberal contexts, the research in this book aims to explore preservice English language teachers' learning during the professional experience in Australia. It focuses on English language education in government schools, which is the largest sector compared to the private, adult, and other sectors. English language education in government schools is also the primary target of initial English language teacher education in the country.

The research in this book examines the complex issues of the professional experience in English language teacher education with regard to curriculum design and implementation and professional learning. The study is underpinned by a sociocultural theoretical framework to allow for examination of preservice teachers' learning in relation to the complexities of personal diversities and contextual complexities presented in the age of neoliberalism. It specifically explores the sociocultural contexts of the professional experiences, the preservice teachers as learners of English language teaching, and the process of learning to teach English language in relation to the contextual and personal issues and their interrelationships. Contextual issues such as policies, curricula, university–school partnerships, and mentoring relations are explored in relation to personal issues such as beliefs, expectations, educational experiences, teaching experiences, and cultural–linguistic backgrounds of preservice teachers. Issues of professional learning, namely professional identity development, emotional experiences, and pedagogical learning, are explored in depth.

Although the book is set in a specific Australian context, it has the potential to make conceptual contributions through the use of a sociocultural theoretical framework in analysing the complexities of preservice teachers' professional learning during the English language teaching professional experience. The broad sociocultural theoretical framework allows for comprehensive and systematic examination of preservice teachers' professional learning as being shaped by their personal histories, the cultural historic context of their learning, and the nested relationships among these domains. Such conceptual tools might be useful to a wider readership, regardless of their distinctive teacher education and research contexts since they allow for possible aggregation and comparison of findings across different contexts. Together with theoretical and research contributions, the book offers practical implications for developing the knowledge base for English language teaching and an effective model of English language teaching professional experience that fulfil the demands of English education in the age of neoliberalism.

1.4 The Structure and Content of This Book

Following on from the current chapter, which is on the issues of English language teaching and teacher education in neoliberal contexts and Australia, the subsequent chapters are laid out as follows.

Chapter 2 critically reviews the contemporary literature on SLTE, especially L2 teacher cognition and professional experience, and highlights a shift in the field towards a sociocultural perspective on language teacher learning. The chapter identifies theoretical and research gaps and concludes that a sociocultural perspective on second language teacher learning is powerful in addressing these gaps.

Chapter 3 critically engages with the principal tenets of sociocultural theory and discusses the implications that a sociocultural theoretical framework has for practice and research in English language teaching professional experience. The chapter emphasises that sociocultural theory is a powerful broad theoretical framework for professional experience research and practice because it highlights the importance of social interactions and historicity in learning and development. The chapter ends with the methodological details of the research in this book in the light of a sociocultural theoretical framework.

Chapter 4 introduces the use of a school-based model of English language teaching professional experience in Australia. It presents a case study on the design and delivery of the English language teaching professional experience at a major Australian university. The chapter offers insights into how the professional experience is structured and implemented and how preservice teachers are supported by the university and schools involved. It then discusses implications for developing professional experience and partnerships that foster professional growth for preservice English language teachers and teacher educators.

Chapter 5 provides an Australia-based research example that examines the mentoring relations between school-based teacher educators and preservice teachers of

English language in different school contexts. With the support of rich qualitative data, the chapter argues that mentoring by school-based cooperating teachers is a key source of support to foster productive professional experience. It specifically reveals personal and contextual factors shaping the nature of the mentoring relations and how these relations facilitated professional experience. The chapter discusses implications for teacher educators, institutions, and schools in creating a supportive professional learning environment for both mentor teachers and preservice teachers.

Chapter 6 presents another research example to demonstrate that mentoring relations can be a source of tensions and negative emotions that have mixed influence on preservice teachers' learning. The chapter shows that some tensions and emotions motivate change and development while others inhibit productive learning. With insights into personal and contextual sources of such tensions and emotions, the chapter discusses implications for research and practice with a view to developing productive professional experience in English language teacher education.

Chapter 7 reports comprehensive case studies on the professional identity development of three preservice English language teachers in Australian secondary schools. The chapter reveals the support and challenges inherent in the professional experiences and examines how such support and challenges inhibit and/or facilitate identity development among the preservice teachers. It also shows how personal issues of preservice teachers such as their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and prior experiences contribute to their different identity development trajectories. The chapter puts forwards recommendations for research on teacher identity and support for preservice English language teachers in forming productive professional identities through the placement.

Chapter 8 reports a study on the pedagogical learning experiences of preservice English language teachers during their Australian professional experiences. Drawing on a sociocultural perspective, the study examines the personal and social forces that shape the preservice teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools. The study generates implications for supporting preservice teachers in effectively transforming theoretical knowledge into practical skills and understandings.

Chapter 9 summarises the key ideas of this book and offers recommendations for theory, practice, and research in English language teaching professional experience. From a sociocultural perspective, it highlights the importance of taking into account the personal and social dimensions of professional experience in research and practice. Implications are discussed in terms of developing an effective knowledge base for English language teaching and reconceptualising the professional experience for more productive professional learning. The chapter ends with directions for future research on professional experience in English language teacher education.

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Chapter 2
Theory, Practice and Research on L2 Teacher Learning and Professional Experience



Abstract This chapter presents a critical review of the contemporary literature on teacher cognition and professional experience in language teacher education and highlights a shift in the field towards a sociocultural perspective on language teacher learning. It argues that a sociocultural perspective is powerful in understanding language teachers' learning in the age of neoliberalism because it places the complexities of contextual and personal issues at the centre of this research. Of significant importance in this epistemological shift is the teacher cognition literature, which reveals that teachers' past experiences, beliefs, expectations, knowledge, and the contexts of their teaching are highly influential in shaping their practices. The chapter also engages with the literature on professional experience, which is an essential site of teacher learning. Based on that, it highlights the use of an increasingly common learning communities model of professional experience in which preservice teachers have opportunities built into their professional experience for engaging in reciprocal learning partnerships with their peers, school-based mentor teachers, and university lecturers as well as its underlying sociocultural perspective. The chapter then identifies theoretical and research gaps and concludes that a sociocultural theoretical framework is powerful in addressing these gaps.

Keywords Sociocultural perspective · Professional experience · Teacher cognition · Teacher learning · Second language

2.1 A Shift Towards a Sociocultural Perspective in SLTE

In my earlier article on the conceptual issues of SLTE (Nguyen, 2016), I argue that while the behaviourist and positivist perspectives on SLTE emphasise the application of model skills in educating language teachers, they do not recognise the complex and multidimensional nature of SLTE in which personal and contextual influences interface in shaping this process. Humanistic theory is acknowledged for its focus on individual inner resources, especially autonomy and individual needs, but it neglects

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the influence of a multitude of other personal and contextual factors and how these interact. Therefore, the field has been seeking an epistemology that can address the need for a more comprehensive understanding of second language teachers' learning.

A major epistemological shift in SLTE in response to the issues above is towards a social constructivist perspective (Crandall, 2000). Constructivism is grounded in the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and has its origin in the social practices and contexts in which people participate (Brandt, 2006; Chiang, 2008; Crandall, 2000; Johnson, 2009a). In his explanation of constructivist theory, Roberts (1998) argues that "each person's development occurs in constant exchange with their social circumstances: their immediate working relationships, the climate of the school and the wider social forces that affect it" (p. 44).

The constructivist perspective on SLTE as such has the capacity to address the critiques of behaviourist, humanistic, and positivist perspectives previously discussed. According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), research in mainstream education has contributed to the shift away from a behaviourist view of SLTE as the field has come to understand that:

> teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills; they are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms. (p. 401)

Freeman and Johnson (1998) further argue that learning to teach is not merely the accumulation of research outcomes, a view held by advocates of positivism in SLTE. Rather, it is "a long-term, complex, developmental process that operates through participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 402). Research on SLTE driven by a constructivist perspective seeks to uncover "how teachers participate in and constitute their professional worlds" (Johnson, 2009a, p. 9). Emphasising the important role of the sociocultural aspects of teacher learning, the constructivist view also overcomes the overemphasis on inner resources of the humanistic view on SLTE.

This epistemological shift towards constructivism entails a methodological change in SLTE research from merely descriptive, observational studies towards descriptions and explanations of teachers' practices. Within a constructivist paradigm, the personal and contextual aspects of teacher practices have powerful roles in shaping the ways teachers learn and work and therefore are instrumental in the understanding of teachers' learning and practices.

One of the most influential instances of the shift towards a sociocultural perspective in SLTE is a reconceptualisation of the knowledge base of the field. In a special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* devoted to SLTE, Freeman and Johnson (1998) argue for the need for a reconceptualisation of the knowledge base of SLTE and put forward a proposal for the reconceptualised knowledge base. In this proposal, Freeman and Johnson (1998) make two major critiques against current SLTE practices based on which they argue for an imperative need to reconceptualise the knowledge base of SLTE. First, they claim that SLTE programs currently do not adequately take into account what we know about the process of teacher learning. They further argue that

"the field must better document and understand teacher learning for teacher education to be more effective" (p. 402). Second, they claim that the current knowledge base of SLTE remains generally disconnected from the social contexts of the activity of teaching in authentic schools and classrooms.

In order for the field to overcome the shortcomings mentioned above, Freeman and Johnson (1998) advance a reconceptualised knowledge base of LTE that addresses three major issues: (1) the teacher as learner (of teaching), (2) the activity of teaching and learning, and (3) the contexts of the teaching activity (schools). The researchers explain that the reconceptualised knowledge base is:

> an epistemological framework that focuses on the activity of teaching itself – who does it, where it is done, and how it is done. Our intention is to redefine what stands at the core of language teacher education. Thus we argue that, for the purposes of educating teachers, any theory of SLA, any classroom methodology, or any description of that English language as content must be understood against the backdrop of teachers' professional lives, within the settings where they work, and within the circumstances of that work. (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 405)

Freeman and Johnson's (1998) proposal has been an influential framework that accounts for the teacher-learner, the context, and the process of teaching. It corresponds to the emerging sociocultural approach to SLTE research, which considers the interplay between these three aspects as instrumental in understanding teacher learning. Nearly 20 years after the proposal, the influence of Freeman and Johnson's reconceptualised knowledge base of SLTE is summarised in a reception study as follows:

> [W]hile [Freeman & Johnson]'s reconceptualization paper sparked some initial controversy, its proposals have gained wider acceptance and have edged closer to the center of SLTE over time. The SLTE community's strong endorsement of F&J's work further highlights it as a foundational article for the professional practice of language teaching. (Lee, Murphy, & Baker, 2015, p. 18)

In addition to the three domains proposed by Freeman and Johnson in 1998, 20 years on the two authors argue (in separate papers) that the emphasis of today's knowledge base for SLTE has both shifted and expanded. According to Johnson and Golombek (2018a), SLTE pedagogy must be at the centre of the knowledge base:

> Twenty years later, we believe a framework for the knowledge-base of LTE must include greater attention to LTE pedagogy; that is, what teacher educators do and say in their activities and interactions and the reasoning behind those activities and interactions. And that attention must be far-reaching. [….]. [This] is critical in order to meet the needs of current and future English language teachers in an increasingly diverse, mobile, unequal, and globalized world. (p. 2)

Freeman (2018) concurs with this view in saying that the 2018 knowledge base for SLTE needs to address how teacher education is preparing and supporting teachers through its practices. He further adds that the content of English language teaching must be emphasised in the 2018 knowledge base. As mentioned in Chap. 1, English language teachers in today's neoliberal world are increasingly expected to teach language in conjunction with content, and the language being taught also changes.

2.2 The Professional Experience as a Site of Preservice Teacher Learning

2.2.1 The Role of the Professional Experience in Preservice Teacher Learning

Most preservice teacher education programmes including SLTE are organised around university-based coursework and professional experience (also referred to as teaching practice, placement, practicum, or school-based field experience). This structural feature of teacher education programmes offers opportunity for preservice teachers to learn the theoretical knowledge and skills relevant to teaching and to learn from and through the practice of teaching. According to Graves (2009), the practicum allows preservice teachers to engage in practice in two related ways: engaging in classroom practice and participating in communities of practice. First, through engagement in classroom practice, preservice teachers have opportunities to observe experienced teachers and peers, plan and implement their teaching, and reflect on it. Second, through participation in communities of practice, they immerse in the complex social, cultural, and political contexts where teaching is situated. These contexts "are communities of people, entrenched in social systems that operate according to tacit and explicit norms, hierarchies and values" some of which may conflict with one another (Graves, 2009, p. 118). Participation in these communities of practice requires preservice teachers to learn to position themselves in the contexts and negotiate conflicting discourses in order to participate in them (Graves, 2009).

There is rich evidence suggesting that the practicum is one of the most important and influential parts of preservice SLTE (e.g. Chiang, 2008; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Farrell, 2001, 2008; Phairee et al., 2008). According to Farrell (2001), the TESOL practicum is "one of the biggest influences within the preservice teacher education course" (p. 50). Farrell (2008) further emphasises that the TESOL practicum is "one of the most important aspects of a prospective teacher's education during their language teacher training program" (p. 226). Additionally, asking 115 student teachers to identify the most influential and useful aspects of the TESOL programme, Faez and Valeo (2012) found that most of them cited the practicum and many suggested longer practical teaching periods.

The specific benefits of the practicum are reported in a growing body of empirical studies on the TESOL practicum. First, the practicum offers preservice teachers the opportunity to emerge into the real classroom and learn about the students, the school and classroom reality (Chiang, 2008; Faez & Valeo, 2012). Participation in the practicum allows preservice teachers to "observe and work with real students, teachers, and curriculum in natural settings" (Huling, 1998, p. 2). Similarly, Villegas and Lucas (2002) emphasise that field experiences "offer prospective teachers the only opportunity to build a contextualised understanding of culturally responsive teaching by getting them out of the university classroom and into schools and communities" (p. 137).

Second, the practicum offers preservice teachers opportunities to develop the hands-on experience, practical skills, and knowledge needed to transition to the profession. With evidence from a preservice teacher's narrative during a TESOL practicum in the USA, Johnson (1996) found that the teacher was able to develop strategies to cope with the tensions of the practicum and to deepen her understanding of herself as a teacher, of second language teaching and of the practicum. Similarly, Pence and Macgillivray (2008) accounted for an international field experience in Italy, in which US preservice teachers were reported to gain increased confidence, as well as appreciation and respect for individual and cultural differences. The study also found that, through the practicum, preservice teachers became appreciative of the importance of feedback and reflection in personal and professional development. This finding is congruous with the findings of Chiang (2008) and Faez and Valeo (2012) that the practicum helps student teachers to become reflective of the strengths and weaknesses of their personal methodologies and to enhance their teacher efficacy.

In addition, according to Pence and Macgillivray (2008), "stepping outside one's comfort zone and reflecting on one's reactions" (p. 16) provide other opportunities for preservice teachers to develop professionally. In an Australian study, Thomsett, Leggett, and Ainsworth (2011) found that a well-designed practicum yielded a number of positive outcomes. For example, preservice teacher participants reported that the practicum offered them the opportunity to establish rapport with students, gain confidence in teaching ESL students, and develop pedagogical understanding and skills. The literature above demonstrates that the professional experience is an essential site of L2 teacher learning and a worthwhile avenue for research in SLTE.

2.2.2 Models of Teacher Learning in the Professional Experience

Different models of professional experience have been implemented around the world. Recently, teacher education providers have been moving away from traditional models towards models that focus more on developing learning communities (Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White, Bloomfield, & Le Cornu, 2010). While traditional models emphasise individual preservice teachers and individual classrooms, the learning communities model expects preservice teachers to work collaboratively with their peers, mentors, university-based teacher educators, and professional experience coordinators in learning to teach. Different variations of the learning communities model for professional experience have been reported in international contexts. According to Le Cornu (2016),

> [d]ifferent models have been implemented depending on people's interpretations of learning communities. For example, Sim (2006) described a model of preparation for professional experiences whereby on-campus tutorials were specifically developed around the notion of "communities of practice" and Mule (2006) highlighted an inquiry-based practicum in a professional development school which she claimed may make it possible for interns

> to participate in a learning community. Most recently, Hou (2015) described an online community of practice for student teachers in China. (p. 7)

In Australia, a national report (TEMAG, 2014) shows that the learning communities model has also been variedly interpreted and implemented. For example, an internship model at Kingston Primary School in Western Australia allows merit-selected preservice teachers from partnership universities to concurrently complete the final year of their teacher education programme and undertake full-time employment in a school. In the first semester, they complete their professional experience and then are granted limited teaching authority such as paid relief teaching. Another employment-based internship programme has been implemented at the University of Melbourne where preservice teachers first complete on-campus coursework followed by a placement in a school then transition to part-time employment in the school. In the final year, they are supported by their mentors and supervisors to transition to full-time employment in the school at the end of their degree. At La Trobe University, paired preservice teachers share a mentor teacher and work in a classroom two days a week for the whole school year.

In all the three Australian examples of the learning communities model above, preservice teachers spend extended periods of time on professional experience in schools and are able to routinely apply theory into practice, socialise into the school context, develop sustained contextual understanding and relationships with the school communities, and promote positive learning experiences and outcomes for all involved. This is supported by Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) as below:

> …contemporary research suggests that learning about teaching best develops when prospective teachers encounter content in context in which it can be applied. Teachers benefit from participating in the culture of teaching – by working with the materials and tools of teaching practice and by examining teaching plans and student learning while immersed in theory about learning, development and subject matter. (p. 122)

The learning communities model has also been advocated as a model that works for "engaging participants in schools and universities in new ways that emphasise collegiality, authenticity and reciprocity" (Le Cornu, 2010, p. 204). According to Le Cornu (2010), it does this by redefining the roles of different participants in ways that require their commitment to reciprocal learning for all parties involved. In the learning communities model, preservice teachers are in charge of their own professional learning and that of others in their professional learning community, especially peer preservice teachers. University teacher educators are responsible for supporting preservice teachers' learning in coursework, online and on-campus, during the professional experience, and in the future. They also act as partners to school-based mentors in supporting preservice teachers and in their own professional learning. School-based mentor teachers in a learning communities model take up more responsibilities than in traditional models as they provide the principal source of scaffolding support for teacher candidates' learning during the professional experience. The mentor not only supervises, supports, and assesses preservice teachers' learning but also positions as a "*trusted professional colleague*" (Le Cornu, 2010, p. 200, original emphasis). The organiser of professional experience, who is usually

a senior administrative staff member at the school, plays an essential role in building learning partnerships among the participants because they are the common point of contact for all the other participants and is in the best position to do so.

The learning communities model of professional experience is underlined by a social constructivist perspective on learning. It places the role of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) at the heart of professional learning for teachers and demands that members of the learning communities rely on one another to learn and develop. It also values who the participants are and what they bring into the communities of learning. Within communities of practice, social interactions are fundamental in shaping learning. These principles are in line with a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning discussed in the previous sections of this chapter (Johnson, 2009a, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2011b), which the field of SLTE has embraced as a versatile conceptual framework to inform its practice and research.

2.2.3 Research on L2 Teacher Learning in the Professional Experience

Since the aforementioned proposal of a reconceptualised knowledge base for SLTE (Freeman & Johnson, 1998), which places the activity of teaching itself at the core of the new knowledge base, empirical research in the field of SLTE has had an increased focus on (1) the teachers as learners of teaching, (2) the contexts of the teaching activity, and (3) the teaching activity. I find Freeman and Johnson's (1998) framework comprehensive and useful for organising research on the TESOL practicum research because the review of literature shows that studies on the TESOL practicum fit into one or more of these three domains. Therefore, I use this framework as a guideline for organising the review in this section. These three aspects of learning to teach are interrelated and contingent on one another, as Freeman and Johnson (1998) note, "teaching as an activity cannot be separated from either the person of the teacher as a learner or the contexts of schools and schooling in which it is done" (p. 410). In examining the process of learning to teach, it is fundamental to understand its context and the person who performs the learning activity. Therefore, the review in this subsection is divided into two parts: (1) studies that look into the preservice teachers as learners of teaching and how the personal factors interplay with the preservice teachers' learning experience and (2) studies that account for the context of teacher learning during the TESOL practicum and its influence on the experience of learning to teach.

2.2.3.1 Preservice L2 Teachers as Learners of Teaching

Preservice teachers as the subjects of learning to teach have been neglected in most part of the history of SLTE. Recent reconceptualisation of SLTE has resulted in increased attention to understanding the teacher-learners and their experience in learning to teach so as to better support them in this process (Johnson, 2009a). A growing body of research now looks at a variety of factors such as preservice teachers' personal histories, beliefs, perceptions, and emotions that they bring with them to or develop during the professional experience. It also examines how the preservice teachers function during the L2 professional experience in relation to these.

Regarding personal histories of preservice teachers, the literature on the L2 professional experience reveals three main influential aspects, including non-native English-speaking (NNES) background, teacher education experience, and prior teaching experience. Firstly, NNES background is a factor that some studies explore in relation to preservice teachers' experience during the English language teaching practicum (Benson, 2012; Gan, 2013; Gao & Benson, 2012; Miller, 2007; Nguyen, 2014, 2017; Phairee et al., 2008). All of these studies have identified the challenges associated with the identity of a NNES preservice teachers, such as anxiety and low self-efficacy in linguistic competence and teaching ability. Secondly, teacher education experience is another aspect of background that some studies have accounted for in researching the TESOL practicum (Gan, 2013; Premier & Miller, 2010). Both studies found that the preservice teachers faced a number of challenges as they did not feel well-prepared for the complexities of English language teaching. Lastly, prior teaching experience has also been found to influence preservice teachers' TESOL practicum experience. In an Australian study on the practicum experience of preservice TESOL teachers who had experience teaching in the mainstream classroom, de Courcy (2011) found that the participants experienced a difficult transition as they realised that the mainstream teaching strategies they had developed could not be easily transferred into an ESL classroom.

Teacher beliefs have also been the focus of research in a number of SLTE studies. A growing body of scholarship on the L2 practicum suggests that preservice teachers' beliefs change under the influence of the different aspects of their professional experience (e.g., Mak, 2011; Ng, Nicholas, & Williams, 2010; Yuan & Lee, 2014b). While much attention has been focused on how the realities of the L2 practicum shape the development of preservice teachers' beliefs, the prior beliefs that they bring into the practicum and how these beliefs influence their professional learning experience remains under-explored. Given the important role of teachers' beliefs in their conceptualisations of themselves as teachers and explanations of their practice (Johnson, 1999), this gap needs to be filled. From a sociocultural perspective on SLTE (Johnson, 2006, 2009a; Johnson & Golombek, 2011a), taking into account preservice L2 teachers' prior beliefs as part of their whole persons is essential in understanding their professional learning during the practicum.

Preservice teachers' emotion experienced during the professional experience is a blooming field of research. A number of scholars highlight the need to understand the affective dimension of L2 teacher cognition (Dang, 2013; Golombek & Doran,

2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Nguyen, 2014, 2018). On the one hand, positive emotions have been found to benefit L2 teacher learning during the professional experience in a number of ways (Dang, 2013; Golombek & Doran, 2014). On the other hand, most existing studies reveal that negative emotional experiences have damaging consequences for L2 teacher learning during the professional experience (Atay, 2007; Brandt, 2006; Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2010, 2014; Trent, 2013). A number of studies examine the sources of preservice L2 teachers' emotions and found influential factors such as the preservice teachers' personal backgrounds (Gao & Benson, 2012; Miller, 2007), conflicts with mentor teachers (Brandt, 2006; Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2010), EAL learners' characteristics (Benson, 2012; de Courcy, 2011; Le, 2014) and the rigid system of rules at the practicum school which prevented the application of innovative teaching methods and experimental learning (Atay, 2007). Taking a more comprehensive approach to teacher emotions, Yuan and Lee (2014a) demonstrate that preservice L2 teachers' emotions were tightly related to moral, social, and political concerns within the teacher education context.

Similar to research on emotions as a dimension of L2 teacher learning during the professional experience, the field has seen an increasing interest in preservice teacher identity formation in the practicum context. This is justified in relation to the need to recognise who the teachers-learners of teaching are because learning to teach is learning to think, know, and feel like a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). A sociocultural perspective on SLTE also views L2 teacher identity as being at the centre of teacher development (Cross, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2018a). Some researchers in SLTE have explored preservice teachers' identity in relation to their personal background and through their personal lens (Haniford, 2010; Miller, 2007). Some others have adopted a sociocultural view in examining preservice teachers' identity construction during the English language teaching practicum where preservice teachers' identity construction is influenced by the interaction they have with the practicum community including the mentor teachers (Dang, 2013; Nguyen & Loughland, 2018; Nguyen, 2017; Trent, 2011, 2013). The literature has shown that preservice teachers' personal histories and social relations are fundamental elements for understanding their professional development including identity formation. However, the field still lacks empirical studies that see the English language teaching practicum as a complex, multidimensional context of identity work.

2.2.3.2 The Context of Preservice L2 Teacher Learning

The importance of accounting for the context in researching teacher learning has been raised by many researchers (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Golombek, 2011; Johnson, 2009a; Singh & Richards, 2006; Waters, 2005). However, this strand of TESOL practicum research, which sheds light on the contexts in which preservice teachers learn to teach, seems to be represented by a small body of studies. More than a decade ago, there were a limited number of studies examining the TESOL practicum context, which involves such factors as the classroom realities, mentor teachers' support, the system of rules at practicum school, and the school examination

system (e.g. Farrell, 2001; Johnson, 1996). Only during the last decade has the field witnessed an increasing number of studies that explore the contextual dimension of the TESOL practicum, such as the practicum community, rules, and policies. Yet, there is inconsistency in the nature of context in this body of scholarship. This section surveys the existing literature within the last ten years and discusses the types of context accounted for.

The Practicum Community

The community of people co-participating in the practicum with preservice teachers has been documented as a primary influential contextual factor in preservice teachers' TESOL practicum experience. During the teaching practice, preservice teachers interact with members of the practicum community to make a transition from the role of student to that of teacher. Studies are varied in terms of the focal groups of community members they consider in relation to preservice teachers' practicum experience. Major groups that have been documented in the literature on TESOL practicum include mentor teachers, English language learners, peer preservice teachers, university supervisors, and other community members.

School mentors are commonly the principal point of contact for preservice teachers within most TESOL practicum models. Most studies that look into the TESOL practicum community consider the mixed influence of school mentor teachers on preservice teachers' professional learning (e.g. Gan, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012; Nguyen, 2010; Riesky, 2013; Trent, 2013; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008; Yuan & Lee, 2014b). The studies demonstrate that mentor teachers may have powerful positive or negative influence on the preservice teachers' professional learning. Positive influence has been found to manifest through the interaction that preservice teachers have with their mentors (Gan, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012; Nguyen, 2010; Yuan & Lee, 2014b). Preservice teachers also reportedly learn and grow through their observation and perception of the mentors' practices (Riesky, 2013; Trent, 2011). On the other hand, there has been empirical evidence to suggest that mentor teachers' influence on preservice teachers' learning experience during the TESOL practicum can be negative (Brandt, 2006; Farrell, 2008; Le, 2014; Trent, 2013).

English language learners are another influential component of the practicum context where preservice TESOL teachers learn to become professional teachers. Studies that take into consideration the learners as part of the context also report mixed findings. Some researchers indicate that preservice teachers initially encounter a number of issues associated with the students they teach, but then develop strategies to handle the issues and grow professionally (de Courcy, 2011; Gao & Benson, 2012; Riesky, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014b). Several studies found negative influence of issues associated with English language learners on preservice teachers' practicum experience (Benson, 2012; Le, 2014).

Fellow preservice teachers have been reported in a number of studies as being influential in preservice teachers' TESOL practicum experience. Favourably, the findings of a series of Vietnam-based studies on the TESOL practicum by Nguyen and colleagues (e.g. Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012) show that preservice teachers who were placed in a peer mentoring practicum model offered each other

a valuable source of support such as pedagogical support and psychological support. Specifically, preservice teachers who received peer mentoring were found to outperform those in non-peer placement (Nguyen & Baldauf, 2010) and demonstrate professional growth in a number of areas (Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012). Gao and Benson (2012) also report helpful support among fellow preservice teachers in student management, development of better resilience and pedagogical skills. Exploring a paired placement model in a Vietnamese university context, Dang (2013) identified a number of conflicts within a preservice teacher pair, such as conflicts related to multiple identities, conceptions of preservice teaching, conceptions of pair work, allocation of responsibilities within pair work, and so on. However, through collaborative practices, the pair constructively resolved most conflicts and developed their teaching identities. Similar to Dang (2013), Gan (2014) also identified occasional conflicts between co-teaching preservice teachers. However, rather than working as motivation for the preservice teachers' professional development as in Dang's (2013) study, the conflicts in Gan's study adversely affected the participants' relationship, cooperation, and thus performance during the practicum.

University supervisors are an important link between preservice teachers and schools and can exert powerful influence on how preservice teachers transition from university coursework to real-life teaching. However, to date there has been only a limited body of research examining this group of community members in relation to student teachers' learning in the TESOL professional experience. Among these studies, Nguyen (2010) found that university supervisors provided limited professional and emotional support to preservice EFL teachers during the school-based practicum. University supervisors' support included feedback on lessons and advice on how to solve pedagogical problems. Emotional support from university supervisors was cited by the preservice teachers more often than professional support and was useful for them in handling stress during the practicum. The study, however, does not provide further findings on how these types of support from university supervisors contributed to the preservice teachers' practicum experience. Gan (2014) reports mixed findings regarding university supervisors' support for preservice teachers during the practicum. Interactions with university supervisors, though useful for some preservice teachers in that they created growth-producing learning experiences and triggered positive changes in preservice teachers' attitudes, were not productive for others as they did not receive quality comments for improvement of practice from the supervisors.

The literature also shows that other community members, although not the primary participants in preservice teachers' TESOL practicum, have strong influence on the preservice teaching experience. Riesky (2013) found that preservice teachers encountered some challenges related to their mentor teachers, such as lack of guidance, long teaching hours and lack of choice in teaching materials. The study found that when consulted by the preservice teachers regarding these difficulties, other school teachers provided advice for them to become more independent in their pedagogical decision making. Similarly, according to Gan (2014), school staff appeared to offer preservice teachers a positive and supportive learning environment that enhanced their sense of self and belonging. Adversely, Farrell (2001) reveals that

the student teachers experienced separation and received insufficient support in the school, together with ineffective communication and intense relationships between the principal and teaching staff. Due to such experiences, he felt "left out of the process completely" (p. 54) from the beginning of the practicum. The preservice teacher's emotional response was intense, which made him unenthusiastic about pursuing a career in English language teaching. Similarly, the student teachers in another Hong Kong study (Gao & Benson, 2012) were located in isolation from the school's staff and lacked collegial interaction during their time spent at the school. As a result, their transition to the role of a teacher was uneasy.

Rules and Policies

Rules and policies make up an important part of the teacher learning context (Cross, 2009). A small number of studies have investigated how rule systems and policies in individual schools influence preservice teachers' socialisation process. Some studies reveal rules that work against preservice teachers' learning during the English language teaching practicum. For example, Atay (2007) found that the school's policies against 'noise' in the classroom and change of seating arrangements of the class made it challenging for preservice teachers to use group work in their classroom, which resulted in disappointment and lack of opportunity for applying their pedagogical knowledge, understanding, and skills. Similarly, as the school only allowed their overhead projector to be used for the chemistry lab, it limited the resources that preservice teachers could use to support their English language teaching. Moreover, preservice teachers were not placed to sit with their mentor teachers in the staffroom, causing a lack of interaction with their mentors and limited opportunity to learn from them. All these rules reportedly had negative impact on the preservice teachers' efficacy during the practicum.

Within the Hong Kong TESOL practicum context, Gao and Benson (2012) found that the rule set by the university and the practicum school of using '100% English' in teaching placed preservice teachers in a dilemma related to the tensions between their perceptions of what was realistic to do and what the university and the school expected them to do in their preservice teaching. If they followed the rule, they would disadvantage some students whose English comprehension was not good enough. With the issue of 'unruly pupils' being characteristic of their practicum experience, the rule put the preservice teachers into an even more challenging situation with a high possibility of "the wrong response to one or more 'unruly' pupils resulting in the whole class getting 'out of control'" (Gao & Benson, 2012, p. 133).

On the other hand, Engin (2014) found that a shared understanding of the systems of rules within the teacher learning context provided scaffolding support for preservice teachers' professional learning in the English language teaching placement at a Turkish university. The rules include accepted effective teaching practices and other conventions and norms of the teacher education context. Findings of the study show that a shared definition of good and legitimate teaching guided the preservice teachers in planning and preparing for teaching, reflecting on their practice, as well as understanding their roles and relationships in teaching conversations with their mentors. One preservice teacher, however, was reportedly not aware of his mentor's

expectations for self-assessment in a feedback session; consequently, he was not willing to reflect on his weaknesses due to misunderstanding of the conventions of a feedback session.

2.2.3.3 The Complexities of Teacher Learning During the Professional Experience

Preservice teachers bring to the practicum a multitude of personal factors that interplay with each other and with contextual factors in influencing their preservice teaching experience. Various personal factors have been accounted for in the literature above. However, none of the studies offers a comprehensive view of the preservice teacher as a learner of teaching. Similarly, the context of the teaching practicum is complex and involves multiple factors that not only interact with the preservice teachers and their learning activity, but also interplay with each other in shaping the way preservice teachers learn to teach. The studies reviewed above offer valuable insights into different aspects of the context and how they influence preservice teachers' professional learning during the TESOL practicum. However, each of them only focuses on certain aspects of the context.

Since both the person of the preservice teacher and the context of their professional learning appear to be fragmented in each individual study mentioned above, a comprehensive picture of the issue of preservice TESOL teaching is still missing from this body of research. Perhaps the highlight of the past decade, therefore, has been the emergence of some studies that take into account the complex, multidimensional context of preservice teaching during the TESOL practicum. From a sociocultural perspective, Ahn (2011) analyses "the various individual, social, and sociocultural factors" (p. 240) present in the context and how they influence preservice teachers' practicum experience within the context. The study reveals a range of contextual factors shaping the preservice teaching experience, such as classroom rules and an expansive community that includes pupils, mentors, peers, parents, and university professors. Using activity theory as an analytical framework, the study sheds light on the contradictions between contextual factors and how the contradictions shaped the preservice teacher's instructional activity.

Also from a sociocultural perspective, several studies by Dang and colleagues (e.g., Dang, 2013; Dang & Marginson, 2013; Dang, Nguyen, & Le, 2013) explore preservice EFL teachers' university-based practicum experience in Vietnam. The studies examine the influence of context at local, institutional, national, and global levels on preservice teachers' professional learning during a paired placement. Factors such as border-crossing of people and organisations, rich source of Internet ELT materials, availability of Internet technological tools, a world-shared culture, the spreading of English as a means of instruction, global knowledge flows, and national language policies are among the most important contextual factors that influence the paired placement experience of the Vietnamese preservice ELT teachers. In general, supported by a sociocultural framework, the studies by Ahn (2011) and Dang and colleagues (Dang, 2013; Dang & Marginson, 2013; Dang et al., 2013) demonstrate a

more comprehensive understanding of the preservice TESOL practicum experience in relation to the complexities of personal and contextual factors.

2.3 Summary and Research Gaps

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on the main conceptualisations of SLTE, including traditional views and the shift towards a sociocultural conceptualisation. The chapter revealed limitations in traditional conceptualisations of SLTE and the need to reconceptualise SLTE as a field. I then discussed the recent reconceptualisation of SLTE with a focus on the shift towards a social constructivist perspective, a redefinition of the knowledge base of the field, and a sociocultural perspective on SLTE. The chapter has also identified that the TESOL practicum plays an important role in preservice teachers' learning. I have also discussed models of teacher learning in the professional experience and identified that a learning communities model has been widely accepted as an effective model that is underpinned by a sociocultural theoretical framework. The survey of current studies on the TESOL practicum shows that there is growing interest in (1) the preservice teachers as learners of teaching and how their personal factors contribute to shaping their TESOL professional experience and (2) the context of the TESOL practicum and its influence on preservice teachers' professional experience. In reviewing the contemporary research on the TESOL practicum, I have identified a number of research gaps and implications for subsequent research in this area as follows.

First, the chapter suggests that the practicum is an important part of preservice TESOL teachers' professional learning, yet it still remains what Crookes described some 15 years ago as an "undertheorised and underresearched" aspect of SLTE (Crookes, 2003, p. 2). The TESOL practicum is underresearched since to date there have only been a limited number of studies in this area (Borg, 2011; Thomsett et al., 2011). It is undertheorised because what is involved in the TESOL teaching practicum has not been adequately theorised, and the 'context' of it has not been broadly defined. Exceptions to this generalisation include Ahn (2011) and Dang and colleagues (Dang, 2013; Dang & Marginson, 2013; Dang et al., 2013), who used sociocultural theory to conceptualise preservice teachers' learning experience during the TESOL practicum. This is consistent with several researchers' (e.g., Borg, 2006; Cross, 2010) observation that studies in the field of SLTE have neither embraced a broad coherent theoretical framework for understanding language teacher learning nor offered a justification of their "contextual boundaries" (Cross, 2006, p. 74).

Second, on the international map of sparsely published research on the TESOL practicum, Australia seems to be less represented than countries in America and Asia. In general, there is a dearth of research on preservice teachers' learning in the TESOL practicum in the Australian context. As presented in Chap. 1, about 25% of students in Australian schools come from language backgrounds other than English and at least 13% needing EAL education by specialist EAL teachers (Department of Education and Training, 2018), EAL teaching is a significant section of the country's

education. Moreover, EAL students in Australia arrive in the country from a broad range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, making EAL teaching an even more challenging job for teachers in Australia than it is for those who teach more uniform groups of students (Gearon, Miller, & Kostogriz, 2009; Miller, Kostogriz, & Gearon, 2009). It is especially challenging for preservice EAL teachers, who have limited or no experience teaching EAL in an Australian school. Therefore, there needs to be more published research on preservice teachers' learning during the EAL professional experience in Australia to inform preservice EAL teacher education in the country and similar neoliberal contexts (also see national reports by TEMAG, 2014; Ure et al., 2017).

Third, a current trend revealed in the literature is that the field is shifting towards a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning, which conceptualises such learning as originating in teachers' participation in social practices in specific contexts and mediated by culturally constructed tools/artefacts (Johnson, 2009a, 2009b, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2018a, 2018b). This epistemological stance calls for research that not only describes how preservice teachers teach but also explains "why they teach the way they do" (Johnson, 2009a, p. 9). In order to do so, it is imperative that the preservice teachers as learners of teaching and the sociocultural context of their preservice teaching be thoroughly understood as interrelating dimensions because this understanding helps to shed light on their practice (Johnson, 2009a). The field also needs a broad theoretical framework that can capture all three elements of preservice teachers' learning experience during the practicum, namely the person, context, and practice of teacher learning, and allow for explanation of the experience rather than merely describing it.

Moreover, although as a field SLTE has studies on the TESOL practicum that accumulatively examine all the three aspects of teacher learning proposed by Freeman and Johnson (1998), including the context of learning to teach, the preservice teachers as learners of teaching, and the activity of learning to teach, individual studies tend to focus on one or a few issues under these broad aspects. As a result, most studies fail to offer comprehensive insights into the practicum experience. The exceptions that consider the complexities of contextual and personal factors in understanding preservice teachers' learning experience during the practicum (Dang, 2012, 2013; Dang & Marginson, 2013; Dang et al., 2013) are supported by a sociocultural framework. Nevertheless, all of these studies are situated in EFL contexts in Asia. Furthermore, the context of studies by Dang and colleagues is a university-based practicum in Vietnam in which fourth-year TESOL students taught EFL to freshmen from the same university rather than to school students. Given that schools are generally the most common sites of the TESOL practicum across settings, the field imperatively needs more studies that consider the comprehensive nature of the school-based practicum in different contexts to have more comprehensive and comparable accounts of preservice teachers' learning in different school contexts.

Additionally, preservice teachers' emotions and identity are two emerging themes in research on the TESOL practicum experience. The literature reveals that these are two integral aspects of preservice teachers' professional learning. Nevertheless, there has only been a limited body of scholarship examining the issues and how they

interplay with preservice English language teachers' learning during the practicum. Also, there is a lack of a broad conceptual framework that allows research into preservice teachers' emotions and identity to systematically take into account the different aspects of preservice teaching in relation to these two issues.

Finally, some other issues have been sparsely documented as influential to preservice teachers' learning during the EAL practicum, but these have received little attention so far. For example, although prior language learning experience has strong influence on language teacher learning (Miller, 2007; Rayati Damavandi & Roshdi, 2013), the literature reveals a lack of empirical studies on the influence of previous L2 learning experience on the EAL practicum experience. Similarly, from a sociocultural perspective discussed earlier in the chapter, teacher learning is mediated by socioculturally constructed tools/artefacts (Johnson, 2009a; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013). However, how tools/artefacts mediate preservice teachers' learning during the TESOL practicum has received little scholarly attention in SLTE. Also, while the literature emphasises the influential role of preservice teachers' prior beliefs in shaping their positioning of themselves as teachers and interpretations of their practices (Johnson, 1999), the prior beliefs that preservice TESOL teachers bring to their preservice teaching is under-explored. There need to be more studies that look into these issues in understanding preservice EAL teachers' learning.

In an attempt to address some of the gaps identified above, the present book explores the professional learning experience of preservice EAL teachers during the teaching practicum in secondary schools in Victoria, Australia. Inspired by the theoretical and empirical literature on a sociocultural perspective on preservice teachers' learning in the English language teaching practicum, the study seeks to understand the preservice teachers undertaking the practicum, the context of the EAL practicum in Victorian secondary schools, and the process of learning to teach EAL during the practicum in relation to personal and contextual factors. In the following chapter, I account for the key tenets and implications of a theoretical framework that draws on Vygotskian sociocultural theory for the research in this book.

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Chapter 3
A Sociocultural Perspective on Second Language Teacher Learning



Abstract This chapter argues that a sociocultural perspective is a powerful theoretical framework to support research on preservice teacher learning in the English language teaching professional experience. The chapter first critically engages with the relevant principles of sociocultural theory and then discusses the implications that a sociocultural theoretical framework has for the research on English language teacher cognition. Discussion emphasises that sociocultural theory highlights the importance of social interactions and historicity in learning and development and the need to consider personal and contextual issues in a comprehensive, systematic manner. The chapter ends with the methodological specifics of the research in this book in the light of a sociocultural theoretical framework.

Keywords Vygotsky · Sociocultural perspective · Second language · Teacher education

3.1 Introduction

Based on comprehensive reviews of international research on teacher education, a number of researchers have argued that there needs to be a coherent, shared theory of learning as a lens for a common understanding of teacher learning. Examining contemporary empirical research on teacher education, Borko, Liston, and Whitcomb (2007) note that the central limitation of interpretive educational research is "the lack of shared conceptual frameworks and designs, which makes it a challenging task to aggregate findings and to draw comparisons across studies, even when those studies are of similar phenomena" (p. 5).

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Researchers in the sub-field of the second language teacher education (SLTE) also share this view. In an editorial on researching SLTE, Barkhuizen and Borg (2010) remark that although there have been significant advances, it remains a nascent field of inquiry that is "not yet characterised by a well-defined research agenda and a programmatic approach to research" (p. 237). Similarly, according to Johnson and Golombek (2003):

> Although the field of L2 teacher education has a growing body of research characterizing what teacher learning is and where it takes place, it has yet to embrace a coherent theory of learning upon which to ground a common understanding of what the internal cognitive processes of teacher learning actually are. (p. 728)

On the same note, Burton (1998) argues that there remains a missing link in TESOL research that serves as a shared reflective framework for researchers, teachers, and teacher educators to theorise and compare practice across contexts. In an extensive review of research on language teacher learning, Borg (2006) found that in order for the field to move forward, it is imperative to have a broader, coherent conceptual framework to organise our current understandings of teachers' thinking, knowing, and doing. Borg (2006) succinctly elaborates on the benefits of having such a conceptual framework as follows:

> [A unifying framework] militates against the accumulation of isolated studies conducted without sufficient awareness of how these relate to existing work; it reminds researchers of key dimensions in the study of language teacher cognition; and it highlights key themes, gaps and conceptual relationships and promotes more focused attention to these. (p. 284)

In response to the urges in the literature for a shared theoretical frame to support research on SLTE, a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical framework has become a versatile theoretical lens for examining L2 teachers' learning (Cross, 2010; Johnson, 2009, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2003, 2011, 2016). It represents "a coherent theory of mind, can inform and transform our conceptions and activities of [language teacher education]" (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a, p. 3).

In this chapter, I outline the fundamentals of sociocultural theory with a view to conceptualising a unifying theoretical framework to support the study of preservice EAL teachers' learning during the school-based professional experience. I argue in this chapter that a sociocultural perspective offers a powerful lens to 'see' preservice EAL teachers' learning in its context, and this conceptual contribution can transcend the Australian context of the research in this book. Specifically, I begin in Sect. 3.2 with a background to sociocultural theory and a clarification of the term 'sociocultural' and its use in this study. Under this section, I also review the principal themes of Vygotskian sociocultural theory and their implications in the field of SLTE. Under Sect. 3.3, following that, I highlight the implications that the sociocultural theoretical framework has for the study of preservice EAL teacher learning during the professional experience.

3.2 A Sociocultural Perspective on L2 Teacher Learning

3.2.1 Overview of Sociocultural Theory

Before I proceed further with the chapter, terminological clarification is necessary. As Lantolf and Thorne (2006) note, there are multiple uses of the term 'sociocultural' by different research communities, resulting in considerable debate. Researchers of broader sociocultural domains such as in psychology, linguistics, and education (e.g., Heath, 1983; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) use the term 'sociocultural', or sometimes 'socio-cultural', to refer generally to social and cultural contexts of the individual's activity. In the mid-1980s, when Frawley and Lantolf first began their sociocultural theory research on SLA, the term was used in reference to Vygotsky's theory of mental functioning and development (Lantolf, 2006). Since then, although several terms have been proposed to refer to Vygotsky-associated research, such as 'cultural psychology' (Cole, 1996) or 'sociohistorical psychology' (Ratner, 1991), 'sociocultural theory' remains a familiar term among the second language researchers (Lantolf, 2006).

The term 'sociocultural theory' adopted in the current book is used in specific association with Vygotsky-inspired theory, which has been influential especially in research in the field of second language education and SLTE (see Frawley & Lantolf, 1985; Hawkins, 2004; Johnson, 2006, 2009; Lantolf, 2000, 2004, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Ratner (2002; cited in Lantolf, 2006) defines Vygotsky-inspired sociocultural theory, which he termed 'cultural psychology', as the field that "studies the content, mode of operation, and the interrelationships of psychological phenomena that are socially constructed and shared, and are rooted in other social artifacts" (p. 9). According to Lantolf (2004), although the theory is labelled 'sociocultural', it is not a theory of the social and/or the cultural facets of human existence. Rather, it is 'a theory of mind' that acknowledges social interactions and culturally constructed artefacts as having a central role in shaping human higher mental functioning. Lantolf (2004) further notes that the sociocultural theory is a cognitive theory which holds that human thinking is a mental process that is socioculturally constructed rather than one that assumes that thinking only occurs in the head. I use 'sociocultural theory' in this sense as the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

A sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning has become "a way of conceptualizing teacher learning that informs how teacher educators understand and support the professional development of L2 teachers" (Johnson, 2009, p. 16). A sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning considers teachers as the learners of teaching and sees teachers' learning as originating in and shaped by sociocultural contexts and mediated by artefacts. It thus offers a theoretical lens for analysing language teacher learning. The sub-sections below review these themes, namely teachers as learners of teaching, the social origins of teacher learning, mediated teacher learning, and genetic method as an analytical approach to examining teacher learning. In doing so, I draw connections with the SLTE literature with in order to establish

the key relevant principles of a theoretical framework for the study of preservice English language teachers' professional learning during the professional experience in Australian secondary schools.

3.2.2 Teachers as Learners of Teaching

According to Johnson (2009), from a sociocultural perspective, L2 teachers are considered the learners of teaching. What they bring to the social situations of professional learning and how they function in these situations is of prime importance in their cognitive development and the understanding and support of such learning. This sociocultural view of the teacher–learner recognises "who the teacher is and who the teacher wishes to become" (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a, p. 5). Understanding the teacher as a whole and a culturally and historically situated person involves recognising a wide range of personal issues pertaining to their past, present, and future.

The personal histories of teachers have been examined in a number of research studies on L2 teacher cognition. For example, cultural backgrounds have been considered an important aspect of L2 teachers' personal histories that has a great impact on their learning experiences and outcomes (Gan, 2013; Gao & Benson, 2012; Miller, 2007; Nguyen, 2014, 2017). Another influential aspect of teachers' personal histories is their prior educational and professional experiences (Ng, Nicholas, & Williams, 2010; Nguyen & Brown, 2016). Teacher beliefs have also been viewed as shaping and being shaped by teachers' practice (Le, 2014; Ng et al., 2010; Nguyen, forthcoming; Tang, Lee, & Chun, 2012; Yuan & Lee, 2014). However, Donato and Davin (2018) maintain that the role of L2 teachers' personal histories "deserves more attention in the sociocultural literature in particular for the analysis of teacher learning and classroom performance" (p. 457).

A sense of the teacher–learner's past, present, and future is essentially linked to teacher identity (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a). In efforts to understand who L2 teachers are and their role projection, researchers have looked at how L2 teachers make sense of themselves and their role in the cultural and historical situations of their work and how they choose to act within these situations (e.g., Cross, 2006a; Dang, 2013; Golombek & Klager, 2015; Nguyen, 2017). There is increasing documentation of the role teachers' emotional experiences play in their professional learning and especially identify formation (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Nguyen, 2014, 2018). From a sociocultural 'identity-in-activity' perspective, as Cross (2018) puts it:

> Teacher identity is profoundly tied up with understanding the activity that teachers do; and the activity of teaching is profoundly tied up with who and what the teacher him or herself brings to each instantiation of practice; this, in turn, then *continues* to define, and *re(de)fine*, who one is, and goes on to become. (p. 3)

Cross argues in this quote that there is a strong dialectic relationship between teachers' identity and activity, where one defines and is defined by the other. In addition, human agency is emphasised in a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning (Johnson, 2009; Lasky, 2005). This is because teacher learning emerges from constructing and reconstructing existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices in response to individual and contextual needs rather than transmitting theories, methods, or materials to teachers (Golombek, 2011; Johnson & Golombek, 2003, 2011; Singh & Richards, 2006; Waters, 2005). Johnson and Golombek (2018a), with "a transformative model of the human mind" (p. 3) based on Vygotskian sociocultural theory, recognise teachers–learners as actors, who are both influenced by and influencing the social situations of their cognitive development. They agentively draw on personal and contextual resources to mediate their learning and appropriate these for use in response to personal and contextual needs (Yang, 2015). For the reasons above, an understanding of L2 teachers as learners of teaching is a fundamental part of research on their learning and development.

3.2.3 The Social Origins of Teacher Learning

A sociocultural perspective treats the sociocultural context and practices in which L2 teachers function as having a powerful influence on teacher cognition. These interplay with the personal histories of the teacher in shaping their learning experience. A predominant theme that runs through Vygotsky's writings is the social origins of mental functioning. Vygotsky argues that individuals' higher mental functioning has origin in the individual's social relations. Vygotsky's (1987) core argument states, "all higher mental functions are internalized social relationships" (p. 164). He formulates this view in the 'general genetic law of cultural development' as follows:

> Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition… [I]t goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships." (Vygotsky, 1981a, p. 163)

The literature has suggested that teacher learning originates in a range of social situations. There has been rich evidence suggesting that the interactions L2 teachers have with the school community (e.g., management, colleagues, and learners) have a strong influence on their emotions and shape their practices as well as the way they respond to their emotions (Nguyen, 2018). The rules and policies regulating language teaching and learning in specific contexts also have a strong impact on teachers' practices (Atay, 2007; Cross, 2009; Gao & Benson, 2012). As an important form of policy governing L2 teaching contexts, curricula and curriculum reforms have been the subject of inquiry in a number of studies on the cognitions of L2

teachers within the sociocultural research literature (e.g., Ahn, 2009, 2011; Kim, 2011; Le & Barnard, 2009; Lee, Huang, Law, & Wang, 2013; Lee & Yin, 2011). With human agency, L2 teachers often construct and reconstruct their learning in ways responsive to both the context and their individual circumstances (Johnson, 2009). Teacher education is considered the only occasion for many teachers to engage in well-organised, systematic, and intentional interactions conducive to professional learning. Johnson and Golombek (2016) contend that:

> it is inside the practices of L2 teacher education, both the 'moment-to-moment' interactions (oral and written) between teacher educators and teachers as well as the assignments and activities that teacher educators ask teachers to engage in, perhaps face-to-face but many times 'at-a-distance,' where teacher educators can best see, support, and enhance the professional development of L2 teachers. (p. 3)

Johnson and Golombek's acknowledgement of the relevance of teacher education practices points to the need to study such practices in order to understand, support, and enhance L2 teacher cognition. Therefore, the study of English language teachers' learning must take into account the social origins of such learning.

3.2.4 Mediated Teacher Learning

Relevant to the concept of the social origins of higher mental functioning and development is the notion of mediation. Vygotsky consistently claims that human higher mental functioning and development is mediated by tools and artefacts and is object-oriented. He claims that humans' interaction with the world is indirect, and tools and artefacts (e.g., numbers, graphs, gestures, and a hammer) mediate humans in mastering higher mental functions through the interaction with the world. Although Vygotsky mostly focuses on semiotic signs as mediational tools in his research, the term 'tools' or 'artefacts' that he uses is not restricted to cultural signs and symbols, such as language, charts, and counting methods, but also includes physical tools such as hammers, pens and sticks, and even other people as mediating tools (Vygotsky, 1981b).

Mediation has become an emerging theme in research in SLTE (Dang, 2012, 2013; de Courcy, 2011; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013). Johnson (2009) suggests that there are three major types of tools that teacher educators and teachers use to mediate their activities, including *social activities*, *social relations*, and *concepts*. First, language teachers' cognition originates in and is mediated by the *social activities* they participate in. This involves the internalisation of external forms of social interaction. According to Johnson (2015), the *social activities* that take place between people within teacher education constitute the external manifestations of social interaction (*interpsychological category*). It is hoped that this category will become internalised psychological tools which will inform teachers' thinking and pedagogically sound practices appropriate to their particular learners and contexts. According to Johnson (2009), "[w]e can trace teacher learning from a sociocultural perspective by looking

at the progressive movement from externally, socially mediated activities to internal mediation controlled by the individual teacher" (p. 17).

The second type of tools that mediate language teacher learning, which is tied up with *social activities* mentioned above, is *social relations* (Johnson, 2009). Mediation in L2 teacher learning is often carried out through the interaction and collaboration between teacher candidates and teacher educators or peers using a range of culturally developed tools and artefacts. Some examples of mediating tools in the forms of *social relations* between teacher educators and teacher candidates include mentoring feedback (Contijoch, Burns, & Candlin, 2012; Dang, 2013; McNeil, 2018) and mentoring discourse and questions (Harvey, 2011; Newell & Connors, 2011). Similarly, Golombek and Doran (2014) provide an insightful example of how teacher educators' mediation is performed in response to teacher candidates' emotions. The teacher educators first validated the emotions experienced by the teacher candidates then analysed the emotions to identify growth points before mediating teacher learning responsively.

The mediating role of *social relations* can manifest in the form of *contradictions* between the teacher–learner and the community in which they work or learn (Dang, 2017; Nguyen, 2017). The concept of *contradictions* has gained great attention in educational research and has become a useful concept for understanding L2 teacher learning through the mediation of social relations (e.g., Ahn, 2011; Beatty & Feldman, 2012; Cross, 2011; Dang, 2013; Kim, 2011; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). From an activity theory perspective, a descendent theory of sociocultural theory, Engeström (1987) emphasises the central role of contradictions inherent in human activity in shaping the activity. In the present book, contradictions specific to the social relations between preservice teachers and their mentors are analysed to shed light on mentoring relationship and its effect on the preservice teachers' emotion during the professional experience.

In addition, the second language teacher learning seen through a sociocultural theoretical lens is also mediated by *concepts*. *Everyday concepts* are teachers' "deeply rooted tacit notions about language and language learning and teaching that grow out of their own L2 instructional histories and lived experiences" (Johnson & Golombek, 2018b, p. 444). Teacher education is designed with activities and tools to "engage teachers through relevant *academic concepts* and facilitate teachers' sense-making of the dialectic between *academic* and *everyday concepts*" with a goal to develop *true concepts* and the capacity to *think in concepts* in relation to enactment of teaching (Johnson & Golombek, 2018b, p. 444). Conceptual pedagogical tools are typical examples of scientific concepts that mediate L2 teacher learning (Arshavskaya, 2014; Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013; Kaur, 2015; Tajeddin & Aryaeian, 2017). In relation to the mediational role of concepts in L2 teacher learning, a sociocultural perspective also considers teachers' appropriation of such pedagogical tools (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). This refers to the process whereby "a person adopts the pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments (e.g., schools, preservice programmes) and through this internalises the ways of thinking endemic to specific cultural practices (e.g., using phonics to teach reading)" (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 15). This is in line with Vygot-

sky's argument that individuals transform what they appropriate for their own use in a particular context and for particular purposes (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a). In light of a sociocultural perspective on mediated teacher learning, I argue here that it is essential for the research on English language teachers' professional learning to account for the mediation of *social activities*, *social relations*, and *concepts*.

3.2.5 Genetic Method as an Analytical Approach to Examining Teacher Learning

A sociocultural perspective on SLTE considers Vygotsky's genetic method a powerful theoretical lens to 'see' teacher learning. Genetic method is an analytic approach which is grounded in the argument that the only way to fully understand many facets of human higher mental functioning is to trace their origins (Vygotsky, 1978), that is:

> To encompass in research the process of a given thing's development in all its phases and changes – from birth to death – fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for "it is only in movement that a body shows what it is". Thus, the historical study of behaviour is not an auxiliary aspect of theoretical study, but rather forms its very base. As P.P. Blonsky has stated, "Behaviour can only be understood as the history of behaviour." (p. 65)

By giving empirical examples from his research on young children's development of speech, Vygotsky argues that externally two processes can be identically manifested, but they may be profoundly different in nature. He adds that it is fundamental to have a special analytical method to scientifically examine the internal distinctiveness under the superficial sameness. Therefore, Vygotsky proposes genetic method as an analytical lens to focus on analysing *process* rather than *objects* and differentiates his genetic method from one that analyses mental processes without accounting for their context and historicity of development:

> Following Lewin, we can apply this distinction between the phenotypic (descriptive) and genotypic (explanatory) viewpoints to psychology. By a development study of a problem, I mean the disclosure of its genesis, its causal dynamic basis. By phenotypic I mean the analysis that begins directly with an object's current features and manifestations. It is possible to furnish many examples from psychology where serious errors have been committed because these viewpoints have been confused. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 62)

With this view, Vygotsky argues that "mere description does not reveal the actual causal-dynamic relations that underlie phenomena" (1978, p. 62), and "everyday human behaviour can be understood only by disclosing the presence of four general fundamental genetic stages through which behavioural development passes" (1981a, p. 156).

Vygotsky's genetic method involves four genetic domains, namely *phylogenetic domain* (physical development), *cultural–historical domain* (the sociocultural context of human activity), *ontogenetic domain* (the individual's personal life span), and

microgenetic domain (the immediate event under analysis). These four domains correspond to four levels of analysis according to their relationship with physical time. Sociocultural research in social sciences in general and education in particular have mostly focused on the microgenetic, ontogenetic, and cultural–historic domains. The fourth domain, phylogenetic domain, which is concerned with the physical evolution of humankind as a species, is largely the focus of bio-anthropology, and therefore not considered in social sciences. In analysing any event, it is fundamental to consider "the nested and interrelated nature of all four domains at any one point in time" (Cross, 2010, p. 438). Although Vygotsky conducted most of his empirical research on higher mental functioning in the ontogenetic domain, he argues that the only way to understand ontogenesis properly is to put it in a larger, integrated picture involving the other genetic domains (Wertsch, 1985).

Genetic method also views historicity as a core dimension in the overall methodological design of research into humans' everyday behaviour (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a). In that sense, it takes into account the historical developments of the context of human activity (cultural–historical domain) and personal histories (ontogenetic domain) in order to understand why and how the focal event (microgenetic domain) has come to its current shape.

What genetic method offers in terms of understanding second language teacher cognition is the capacity to explain why teachers do what they do. It allows for consideration of all the themes above, that is, teachers as learners of teaching, the social origins of teacher learning, and mediated teacher learning in efforts to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of teacher learning. Therefore, I use a genetic method as a broad framework to underlie the research in this book.

3.3 Implications for the Study of L2 Teachers' Learning During the Professional Experience

The central aim of the research reported in this book is to examine the professional learning experience of preservice EAL teachers in Victorian secondary schools, which a sociocultural perspective on SLTE views as teacher learning that originates in teachers' participation in the sociocultural contexts and practices of learning and teaching (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the calls in the literature for a broad, consistent theoretical framework to underpin research on SLTE (Barkhuizen & Borg, 2010; Borg, 2006; Borko et al., 2007; Burton, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Sociocultural theory with its key tenets examined in Sect. 3.2 appears to provide such a framework that facilitates this understanding of preservice EAL teacher learning. This section discusses the implications that a sociocultural theoretical framework, especially its key concepts discussed above, has for this research.

3.3.1 A Broad Theoretical Framework for Research on L2 Teacher Learning

Genetic method, which demands the central role of historicity in the overall methodological and analytical design of research into everyday human behaviour (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a), supports an explanatory approach to research that goes beyond simply describing the immediate aspects of the present teacher learning experience. In other words, "it seeks to explain the situation by tracing its origins and evolution" (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7).

Although genetic method has been well received as having explanatory power, not all analysis that seeks to explain a situation fits within the Vygotskian genetic approach. Engeström and Sannino (2010) elaborate on two different types of explanatory analysis:

> Analysis involves mental, discursive or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms. Analysis evokes "why?" questions and explanatory principles. One type of analysis is *historical-genetic*; it seeks to explain the situation by tracing its origins and evolution. Another type of analysis is *actual-empirical*; it seeks to explain the situation by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations. (p. 7, original emphasis)

Therefore, researchers who use genetic method must be cautious in defining the explanatory principles, which should give priority to tracing the origins and evolution of a phenomenon based on the genetic domains. Genetic method requires the preservice EAL teachers' learning experience under research to be analysed in relation to its origins within and across the genetic domains. Specifically, the study of preservice teachers' EAL teaching experience during the professional experience in Victorian secondary schools requires an understanding of the preservice teachers' immediate professional learning experiences during the EAL practicum (i.e., microgenetic domain) on the basis of an understanding of their antecedents, which include the participants' personal backgrounds and prior experiences in relation to EAL teaching (i.e., ontogenetic domain) and the broader social, cultural, political, and historic context (i.e., cultural–historic domain) from which the EAL practicum experience has emerged. This analytical approach is instrumental in the explanation of why the preservice teachers do what they do in their teaching context (Johnson, 2009). For the reasons above, I argue here that genetic method is a useful broad theoretical framework for understanding English language teachers' learning during the professional experience in relation to personal histories and sociocultural contexts of this learning. Such a broad framework might be useful to a wider audience, irrespective of the different contexts in which they might be working or researching. Another benefit of using such a broad and coherent conceptual framework is that it allows for findings across different settings to be systematically aggregated and compared, making it possible to generate implications for both the local research contexts and the international field of TESOL at large.

3.3.2 Issues in L2 Teachers' Learning in Professional Experience

In this section, I identify and justify some of the major themes that the present research focuses on in its attempt to seek a comprehensive understanding of preservice teachers' learning during the EAL professional experience in the light of a sociocultural perspective. I acknowledge that the themes outlined here are by no means exhaustive. Rather, additional important themes have been documented in the literature. In this book, however, the themes are identified based on both the literature and the specific research context. In this part of the book, the justification for the focus on these themes is made based on the theoretical framework and research context. Further justification based on the empirical literature is provided in the subsequent empirical chapters (Chaps. 4–8).

3.3.2.1 Curriculum Design and Partnerships in Professional Experience

One focus of the research in this book is curriculum design and partnerships in the EAL professional experience under research (Chap. 4). A sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning emphasises the influential role of sociocultural relationships and practices in which the teacher–learner participates. The design of the professional experience, embedded within the broader teacher education curriculum, has significant implications in terms of determining the types of sociocultural partnerships and practices that preservice teachers engage in and consequently shape their professional learning. For example, sometimes the professional experience is designed so that preservice teachers need to reflect on their learning as they go, participate in lectures and tutorials, report to professional experience advisors, or research their own practices.

Different professional designs also specify different types of relationships in which professional learning occurs. For instance, a mentoring model of professional experience will entail that partnerships and growth in interaction with school mentors constitute a major part of the preservice learning experience (Ambrosetti, 2014). A supervisory model, on the other hand, denotes a focus on developmental concerns and assessment of the preservice teachers' learning (Ambrosetti, 2014). Further, a learning communities model of professional experience implies that professional learning originates in collegial interactions with multiple parties such as peer preservice teachers, school mentors, and university supervisors (Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White, Bloomfield, & Le Cornu, 2010; White & Forgasz, 2016).

These social relations, interactions, and activities, as part of the teacher education and professional experience curriculum, all contribute to how the preservice teachers navigate their professional learning experience and why they do it a particular way. Johnson (2015) argues that for many L2 teachers, "teacher education, whether preservice or in-service, may be the only occasion when the learning of teaching is the

result of systematic, intentional, well-organized instruction" (p. 517). Well-organised teacher education curriculum and instruction embody a range of *academic concepts* and opportunities for teachers to internalise and appropriate them and then later be able to think in and use them in response to individual and contextual needs (Johnson & Golombek, 2018b). Therefore, the issues of curriculum design and partnerships in the EAL professional experience are essential in the present study of preservice teacher learning from a Vygotskian sociocultural perspective.

3.3.2.2 Mentoring by School-Based Teacher Educators

From a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning, teachers' interaction with the community of practice plays a highly influential role in their professional learning (Johnson, 2006, 2009). One of the most common designs of the school-based professional experience is one in which preservice teachers interact with their school mentors to learn to socialise into the teaching role. In the context of this book, preservice teachers are placed in a secondary school to teach EAL in a practicum period, under the mentoring and assessment of a mentor who is an EAL teacher based at that school. In this context, mentoring by a school-based teacher is the only source of formal mentoring for most preservice teachers because university-based teacher educators are only involved in a small number of cases (see Chap. 4). Therefore, examining this mentoring relationship means scrutinising one of the major sources of influence on learning for preservice teachers during the practicum, hence generating implications for developing productive practicum experiences. For the above reasons, this book focuses on the positive and negative impacts of mentoring on preservice teachers' professional learning experience, which are reported in Chaps. 5 and 6, respectively.

3.3.2.3 Teacher Emotions

Sociocultural research has recognised a strong emotion–cognition relationship since Vygotsky's work. For Vygotsky, the separation between emotion and cognition is "one of the most basic defects of traditional approaches" to research on mental processes. He proposed that "there exists a dynamic meaningful system that constitutes *a unity of affective and intellectual processes*" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 50, original emphasis). Vygotsky further maintains that the cognitive and affective processes must not be segregated from each other. He puts forward the concept of 'perezhivanie', which broadly means 'emotional experience' (Vygotsky, 1994) or "the emotional and visceral impact of lived experiences on the prism through which all future experiences are refracted" (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991, p. 339). Drawing on Vygotsky's work, Holzman (2008) argues that classrooms and student relationships must be structured in ways in which emotional processes are respected and recognised in association with cognitive processes. In SLTE, conceptualisations of teacher cognition have been broadened beyond "what teachers think, know, and believe, and how these relate to

what teachers do" (Borg, 2011, p. 218) to encompass teachers' mental lives, including emotions as a major dimension (Johnson & Golombek, 2018b; Nguyen, 2018). For L2 teacher educators, understanding teachers' perezhivanie is fundamental. Such understanding provides insights into teachers' experiences and apprenticeship of observation in the current teacher education programme, which help teacher educators to provide mediation that is contingent on teachers' professional learning needs (Johnson, 2015).

Although emotions have been found to emerge from multiple sources (Nguyen, 2018), mentoring relationships have by far been the most significant source of emotions that have a strong impact on preservice teachers' professional learning (Nguyen, 2014, 2018). With that in mind, in Chap. 6 of this book, I focus on examining preservice teachers' emotions that emerged from tensions in their mentoring relationships. A review of the literature on emotions associated with mentoring relationships is included in the respective chapter of the book.

3.3.2.4 Teacher Identity

The present book, drawing on a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning, views teacher identity as one of the key issues in English language teacher learning, hence the focus of Chap. 7 on this issue. From a sociocultural perspective on SLTE, teachers are viewed as learners of teaching and understanding the sociocognitive processes, including identity development, through which they learn to become teachers is fundamental to SLTE practice and research (Johnson, 2009, 2015). In the same vein, Mockler (2011) argues that "an understanding of the processes by which teacher professional identity is formed and mediated is central to understanding the professional learning and development needs of teachers and advancing a richer, more transformative vision for education" (p. 517). In an extensive survey of the body of scholarship on preservice and beginning teachers' professional development, Kagan (1992) highlights the prime importance of understanding teachers' self-image and how this is confirmed, validated, modified, and questioned as teachers are engaged in different stages of teacher education, including the teaching practicum, to acquire instructional practices. As Cross (2018) puts it, "After Vygotsky, it is a future-oriented understanding of teacher development where identity is central" (p. 10).

3.3.2.5 Pedagogical Learning

From a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a, 1987), human higher mental activity is mediated by cultural tools and artefacts. In teacher learning situations, the intended outcome of the mediation process is the teacher's internalisation of the mediational means. Internalisation is an individual's process of appropriating external stimuli in the form of mediational tools. Appropriated tools then become the teacher's uniquely owned knowledge that later regulates teaching practices.

In learning to teach, teachers use pedagogical tools such as pedagogical content knowledge, subject matter knowledge, instructional activities, and teaching materials to mediate their teaching work. A sociocultural perspective on SLTE considers pedagogical tools as having mediational role in learning to teach. Therefore, amidst complex and multidimensional processes involved in teacher learning, learning conceptual pedagogical tools and how to use them in practical teaching contexts remains in the heart of teacher learning (Davin & Troyan, 2015; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2015; Newell & Connors, 2011). The professional experience is considered a way to bridge the theory and practice divide in teacher education. During the professional experience, preservice teachers are expected to apply what they have learned in the coursework to the real-life classroom, develop their teaching competency, and transition to the profession (Chiang, 2008; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Farrell, 2008; Graves, 2009). In other words, they learn to use the pedagogical tools they might have previously learned in teacher education coursework and professional experiences in practical settings. For the reasons above, Chap. 8 of this book focuses on preservice EAL teachers' pedagogical learning during the professional experience as one of the core issues from a sociocultural perspective on language teacher learning.

3.3.3 Methodological Approach in the Light of a Sociocultural Perspective

This section presents the methodological approach used to achieve the research aims in the light of the theoretical framework discussed in Sect. 3.2. I begin with a statement of the epistemological framework which informs and determines the methodology of the study. In the subsequent parts, I describe the overall research design and my position as a researcher. Specific information about the research settings, participants, data collection, and analysis methods are presented in Chaps. 4–8, as each of these chapters has methodological specifics particular to its focus.

3.3.3.1 Interpretive Research Paradigm

There are three major epistemological approaches to research in social sciences, namely positivism, critical research, and interpretivism (Neuman, 2011). Neuman notes that positivist social science is based on precise, objective observation of individual behaviour in order to establish probabilistic casual relationships between variables that can be used to predict human activity patterns. Critical research aims at criticising the social injustice placed on individuals and empowering them (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2011). Interpretive research assumes that knowledge is socially constructed meaning in natural contexts (Andrade, 2009; Cross, 2006b; Johnson, 2006, 2009; Neuman, 2011). Interpretive researchers aim to investigate "meaningful social

action, not just people's visible, external behavior" (Neuman, 2011, p. 102). Borko et al. (2007, p. 4) provide an overview of interpretive research as follows:

> Interpretive research is, at its core, a search for local meanings…. It seeks to describe, analyze, and interpret features of a specific situation, preserving its complexity and communicating the perspectives of participants. Interpretive research attempts to capture local variation through fine-grained descriptions of settings and actions, and through interpretations of how actors make sense of their sociocultural contexts and activities. (p. 4)

Among the three approaches, interpretivism appears to be best suited for the sociocultural study of preservice English language teachers' learning during the professional experience in this book. Since the purpose of this study is not to gain objective observation of the action or criticise social inequalities, positivism and critical research are less relevant. This research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of meaningful social action within natural and complex social settings through participants' subjective interpretations. I agree with the comparison between the positivistic paradigm and interpretative research in researching teacher learning by Johnson (2006) below:

> an interpretative or situated paradigm, largely drawn from ethnographic research in sociology and anthropology, came to be seen as better suited to explaining the complexities of teachers' mental lives and the various dimensions of teachers' professional worlds (see Elbaz, 1991). (p. 236)

Moreover, interpretivism is also synonymous with the tenet of the sociocultural theory that individuals make sense of the world by engaging in sociocultural activities and with other people and/or sociocultural tools.

At this point, it is necessary to make a distinction between 'interpretive research' and 'qualitative research'. The two terms are not synonymous and interchangeable (Andrade, 2009; Klein & Myers, 1999). By claiming to use interpretive research, researchers convey their ontological and epistemological beliefs. Qualitative research, however, often refers to a study process or how the research is conducted in terms of data collection and data analysis rather than the theoretical orientations that inform this process (Andrade, 2009; Cross, 2006b; Ellis, 2010). Therefore, "qualitative research may or may not be interpretive depending upon the philosophical assumptions of the researcher" (Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 69). That said, the present research is interpretive and qualitative in nature. My interpretive epistemological stance informs and determines the qualitative design of this research that I now elaborate on.

3.3.3.2 Qualitative Research Design

Since the aim of this research is to gain in-depth understandings of preservice teachers' professional learning situated in the natural EAL practicum context in Australia, a qualitative study design appears to be appropriate for at least four reasons. First, it enables the use of multiple methods to collect rich data from a small number of

participants for an in-depth interpretive understanding of their professional learning experience in a real-life setting. Second, it allows for an interpretation of "the complexity and dynamic nature of the particular entity, and to discover systematic connections among experiences, behaviours, and relevant features of the context" (Johnson, 1992, p. 84). Third, it takes into account the researcher's and participants' perspectives in interpreting the activity and its sociocultural context. Finally, qualitative research aligns with the assumptions of the interpretive research approach and sociocultural theory adopted in this study.

I am aware of the frequent critique that qualitative research is subjective. However, I am of the view that "subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 45), "an inevitable engagement with the world in which meanings and realities are constructed (not just discovered) and in which the researcher is very much present" (Duff, 2008, p. 56). In addition, Duff (2008) notes that many interpretive qualitative researchers wonder whether it is possible for social research to be ever truly objective. Therefore, I consider the qualitative research design used in this book appropriate for achieving the research goals.

3.3.3.3 The Researcher's Role

One of the characteristics of interpretive, qualitative research is that the researcher can become highly involved in the research. According to Andrade (2009), "interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed" and that the construction of social phenomena is "characterized by the interaction between the researcher and the participants" (p. 43). From an interpretive perspective, the researcher becomes "the vehicle by which the reality is revealed" (Andrade, 2009, p. 43) and the "key instrument" (Creswell, 2009, p. 179) of data collection and analysis.

Advocating the researcher as a part of the social construction of data, Smagorinsky (1995) notes, "from a neo-Vygotskian perspective, data are social constructs developed through the relationship of researcher, research participants, research context (including its historical antecedents), and the means of data collection" (p. 192). Smagorinsky (1995) further emphasises the intersubjectivity between researcher and participant as follows:

> Intersubjectivity between researcher and participant appears to be a crucial factor in the social construction of data. It contributes to the degree to which researcher and participant grasp and build on one another's articulated thinking, share a sense of telos, and value the meditational means that enable people to achieve that sense of telos. (p. 208)

My interpretive stance and sociocultural perspective on SLTE and research have a great influence on the position I take as the researcher in this study. In this research, I consider myself a part of the research process and context. During the research process, I engaged in extensive interaction with my participants through interviews, stimulated recalls, and email communication. Adopting the role of an investigator grounded in naturalistic inquiry (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010), I entered the field being

open-minded to experience and develop an insider's perspective while using my prior knowledge with an outsider perspective to make sense of and contextualise the participants' experiences within a wider cultural–historic context and become able to report the experiences.

This position is then linked to who I am and what I bring to this process. I believe that my experiences in English language learning and teaching, SLTE and research contributed to how I collected and interpreted the data. I had been a learner of English language for many years, then a preservice English language teacher for four years, next an English language educator and L2 teacher educator for 15 years as well as an SLTE researcher. My understanding of the field of applied linguistics, particularly my insights into English language education and English language teacher education in Australia and neo-liberal contexts, makes it legitimate for me to consider myself an insider in this study. This insider position allowed me to understand the participants' perspectives in greater depth, be responsive to the data, and elicit rich data that meet the aims of this research.

However, in this particular research, I was not involved in teaching or supervising the preservice teacher participants, nor did I have any professional and personal relationships with them. At the time of this research, I was also not involved in the particular teacher education programme and its professional experience units under investigation. In addition, much of my education and professional experiences prior to the research are based outside Australia. My understandings of the specific context of preservice EAL teaching in Australian secondary schools are therefore largely from an outsider perspective. This position presented me with some advantages because, together with the assurance of the human research ethics process, it allowed the participants to feel more secure and comfortable in interacting with me and in providing the data.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have engaged with the literature on Vygotskian sociocultural theory and its implications for the field of SLTE with an aim to conceptualise a theoretical framework to support the study of preservice English language teachers' professional learning during the professional experience in Victorian secondary schools. Through this theoretical engagement, I have found that sociocultural theory with its philosophical underpinning that learning and development have origins in sociocultural relations, practices, and contexts is a powerful broad theoretical framework for the current study because it allows for a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the preservice teachers' learning and development. Moreover, the sociocultural framework enhances an increasingly common interpretive qualitative approach to research on SLTE.

That said, it should be noted at this point that I have stated that the sociocultural perspective offers a *broad* theoretical framework to construct preservice EAL teacher learning during the professional experience in this book. Therefore, the framework by

no mean constrains what the study should look for in constructing the professional learning experience. Instead, the research is data-driven, which means the PSTs' learning experience is constructed based on the data collected from multiple sources and through multiple methods. With the support of a sociocultural perspective on SLTE, the study is able to comprehensively and systematically address emerging issues in SLTE, namely teacher education curriculum and partnerships (Chap. 4), mentoring (Chaps. 5 and 6), teacher emotions (Chap. 6), teacher identity (Chap. 7), and pedagogical learning (Chap. 8). These issues will now be examined in detail in the chapters that follow.

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Chapter 4
Curriculum Design and Partnerships in Professional Experience



Abstract This chapter introduces the use of a school-based model of English language teaching professional experience in Australia. It presents a case study on the design and delivery of the English language teaching professional experience at a major Australian university. The chapter offers insights into how the professional experience is structured and implemented and how preservice teachers are supported by the university and schools involved. It then discusses implications for developing professional experience and partnerships that foster professional growth for preservice English language teachers and teacher educators.

Keywords TESOL · Practicum · Professional experience · Second language · Teacher education · Curriculum design

4.1 The Need to Study the Design and Delivery of the Professional Experience

The importance of professional experience in English language teacher education (ELTE) has been widely recognised. Professional experience allows preservice English language teachers to engage in classroom practice and participate in communities of practice to learn to become teachers (Graves, 2009). Through this process, preservice teachers have the opportunity to observe others doing the job, be involved in planning and teaching lessons, learn to position themselves in the complexities of the professional context, and negotiate to be part of the context and practices (Graves, 2009). They develop contextualised pedagogical understandings and skills (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), reflective skills (Faez & Valeo, 2012), and understanding of culturally responsive teaching (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Given its influential role, professional experience has been the focus of interest in two major strands of research studies in ELTE. The first strand examines preservice teachers as learners of teaching in relation to their professional experience. Some researchers investigate the backgrounds of preservice teachers, such as non-native English-speaking (NNES) background and teacher education experience (Nguyen, 2014, 2017b), prior teaching experience (de Courcy, 2011), and how these interplay with their professional experience. Other periodical topics include preservice teach-

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ers' beliefs (Yuan & Lee, 2014), emotions (Nguyen, 2014), and professional identity (Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2017b; Nguyen & Loughland, 2017; Trent, 2013) during the English language teaching (ELT) professional experience.

The second research strand investigates the relationship between context and preservice teachers' ELT professional experience. Most studies in this strand focus on the relationship between preservice teachers and their mentors and how the relationships influence professional experience (Gan, 2014; Riesky, 2013; Trent, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014). A number of studies investigate English language learners (de Courcy, 2011; Riesky, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014), peer preservice teachers (Dang, 2013; Gan, 2014; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012), and university supervisors (Gan, 2014) as members of the influential professional experience community. Moreover, a small number of studies examine policies (Engin, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012) and pedagogical tools (de Courcy, 2011) mediating professional experience.

The second strand aforementioned touches upon some areas related to the design and delivery of the professional experience in ELTE, such as mentoring, supervision, and policies governing professional experience. Mentoring by school teachers is characteristic of most professional experience models documented in the ELTE literature (Nguyen, 2017a), and mentors exert strong positive/negative influence on preservice teachers' professional learning (Gan, 2014; Riesky, 2013; Trent, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014). Another common theme is mentoring by peer preservice teachers, which predominantly benefits professional learning during the ELT professional experience (Dang, 2013; Gan, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012; Nguyen, 2013). However, university lecturers' supervision during the ELT professional experience has been sparingly researched (Gan, 2014). A small number of studies in the second strand also examine the policy dimension of professional experience, which offers further insights into how ELT professional experience is organised. Nevertheless, the studies focus on policies enacted at school and class levels (Engin, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012) while university policies remain under-explored.

The relevant literature shows that the ELTE field has made remarkable progress in the past ten years with regard to empirical research on the ELT professional experience. The studies offer rich insights into preservice teachers' professional experience in relation to several important aspects of the ELT professional experience curriculum, including mentoring, supervision, and policies. However, none has accounted for these aspects accumulatively from curriculum development and implementation perspectives. Such holistic views can only be seen in conceptual discussions on models of professional experience (Le Cornu, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008) and remain absent in empirical research on ELT professional experience.

Despite the empirical and theoretical discussions mentioned above, there remains a dearth of empirical research on the design and delivery of the ELT professional experience. This resonates with what The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (2007) identified a decade ago that one of the key steps towards identifying best practices in professional experience is through research that assesses its nature and length. Understanding the 'nature' of professional experience is a complex and challenging task that the field is yet to accomplish. The present study aims to address

some of the key questions that could potentially contribute to understanding the 'nature' of ELT professional experience, including:

1. How is the ELT professional experience designed?
2. In what way are preservice teachers supported during the ELT professional experience?

This chapter is positioned as a study on the cultural–historical domain within the larger research project reported in this book on preservice teachers' learning during the ELT professional experience. The chapter addresses the contextual dimension of ELTE in an Australian context, Greystone University, with a view to supporting the development of an ELTE curriculum that takes into account the complex nature of the professional experience and optimises the opportunity for professional learning in this context. Note that in the Australian teacher education context and school system, English as an additional language (EAL) is a common term. Therefore, in this study, EAL is used interchangeably with ELT since the former is more context-specific.

4.2 The Preservice Programme at Greystone University

Although the focus of this study is on the design and delivery of the EAL professional experience, I asked the academic participants (please see description in Sect. 4.3) additional questions in the interview to elicit more information about the preservice programme at large. Ethics approval and consent were obtained for this purpose. In this section, I present analysis of relevant information from the public domain and interviews to describe the preservice EAL programme at Greystone University within which the professional experience under research is embedded.

Greystone University has established programmes of initial secondary EAL teacher education. The university offers two types of such programmes, including the Bachelor of Education and the Graduate Diploma of Education, both including secondary EAL specialism. This study is concerned with the Graduate Diploma of Education. Although the Graduate Diploma programme has now been offered in its new format called the Master of Teaching, it was the programme in which participants in the study were enrolled. Despite changes in the preservice programme offered by Greystone University, the practicum component of the programme remains.

The university's *Handbooks* provide the following description of the programme:

> This program of studies is designed for graduates who wish to become secondary school teachers. The course combines academic studies of the foundations of education with curriculum teaching units appropriate to the student's first degree and their chosen areas of teaching specialisation. Students will engage in a range of teaching and learning approaches, in university and fieldwork settings. (*Handbooks*)

The above reference to the student's first degree indicates that teacher candidates in this programme have completed a first degree. The area of studies in their first

degree forms one of their two teaching specialisations. They have a choice of a second teaching specialisation from a range of methods offered by the university. The preservice teachers participating in this research have EAL as one of their two teaching methods. Upon successful completion of this programme of studies, it is expected that preservice teachers will:

- have consolidated their theoretical knowledge of teaching and learning and the culture and contexts of schooling
- have developed a high level of competence as knowledgeable, reflective, research oriented and articulate practitioners
- be self-sufficient and independent as beginning teachers in a secondary context
- have adopted a professional orientation to all aspects of their work in schools and classrooms. (*Handbooks*)

The Graduate Diploma of Education (with EAL) at Greystone University is structured around two three-month semesters with four units in general education, two units related to teaching EAL and two units related to teaching the other specialism, and two rounds of five-week teaching practicum for both specialisms. The programme as a whole is organised around 12 hours of class contact a week over a 12-week semester, including lectures and tutorials. According to Angela (pseudonym), an academic participant in this study, over the years the programme had undergone changes in terms of structure:

> So every year for nine years and the program obviously changed a bit, and it underwent restructuring about four years ago and became really a six-month program with the generic front end to do with second language pedagogy. And a lot of us view that as a diminished kind of training for students. (Angela)

The comment above reveals that the teacher education programme is restricted in terms of time. This, together with the double foci, offers limited training to student teachers in their specialisations including EAL. The academic participant further commented on the lack of content depth due to the double foci:

> You have to make sure that you're catering to LOTE teachers and EAL teachers. So you tend to speak in generalised terms like second language acquisition and then show examples from either LOTE or EAL. So clearly you'll get more if a hundred percent of the material relates to EAL classroom. We've definitely lost in the depth of content and the students' experience. (Angela)

Angela also mentioned the lack of focus on language diversity within the course, despite the immense diversity among EAL learners in schools as discussed in Chap. 1:

> I think that it's only one year and given that, you know, [about] 30% of the students are from diverse language backgrounds in Australia and that's much higher in some schools, there is no specific content that I know of in that course Schooling and Diversity that deals with language diversity. It covers a whole range of […] gender and gifted and talented and disabled and it may cover a bit about multicultural, […] but it's probably not targeted enough. (Angela)

From the data about EAL students in Victoria discussed in Chap. 1, it is apparent that a large proportion of the students are from diverse language backgrounds, which has important implications for teacher education in preparing preservice teachers for working with this diversity. Nevertheless, as the academic's comment above reveals, this aspect of the context is not adequately targeted within the teacher education programme in preparing teachers to work with the challenges associated with diverse learners and contexts in the age of neoliberalism.

However, Angela also acknowledged that there is a strong link between the coursework and the practicum in the Graduate Diploma:

> The initial assignment, although it's not about the practicum, the initial assignment requires the students to trawl through the Department's website so that they know the curriculum documents and policy documents and the assessment continuum, and so […] they can't walk into the school and not know what VELS is or how VCE works or what the ESL continuum looks like. So that is linked to the practicum in a teacher knowledge sense. (Angela)

In this excerpt, it appears that the preservice teachers have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the different policy and curriculum documents relevant to their EAL teaching in Victorian secondary schools. This helps to develop their contextual knowledge before immersing themselves in the teaching context as well as to familiarise themselves with the rules and tools that underlie EAL teaching practice. In addition, the assignment also requires preservice teachers to look for teaching resources for the practicum and compile them in the form of an annotated bibliography of resources so they can refer to during their preservice teaching:

> Another part of that assignment is an annotated bibliography of resources for the EAL classroom. So it's meant to stimulate a sort of treasure seeking pattern in students to find the materials for the practicum, even though I know sometimes the students are told what they are teaching and they don't have a lot of discretion around materials but it's aimed at setting up that idea that, you know, that fantastic stuff is out there you just need to hunt. (Angela)

The comment about preservice teachers being told what they are teaching presents a common example of preservice teaching where student teachers do not have control over the materials and method of their teaching. In many cases, the school mentor and the school programme determine these issues. Despite this, the academic's comment shows that the teacher education programme creates opportunities for the preservice teachers to develop the awareness and skills they need in searching for EAL teaching resources, which will benefit them as they begin their teaching.

After the practicum, preservice teachers complete another assignment based on a unit of work that they teach during the practicum, which they can share with other preservice teachers or they can reuse when they start teaching:

> And the final 50% assignment is based specifically on the practicum, or it's supposed to be, and that's the unit of work, a very well-developed unit of work, that is based on what they taught and they're allowed to enhance that, with all of the lesson plans, all of the materials, critical evaluation, clear profile and descriptions of the students. So […] it is supposed to be presented in a very polished manner as a document they could take next year and share or use again. (Angela)

The extracts above show that although the Graduate Diploma of Education programme has some limitations such as length and depth of content for EAL teaching, it offers opportunities for preservice teachers to develop the knowledge and skills in preparation for their teaching. There is also a strong connection between the coursework and the teaching practicum. The following section, which focuses on the EAL practicum, sheds more light on this connection.

4.3 Methods

Two lecturers from Greystone University, Angela and Joanne, who were directly involved in the focal professional experience participated in the study. Angela had over 20 years of experience as a TESOL educator, with nine years at Greystone University. At Greystone University, Angela was involved in several ELTE curriculum innovations and directly taught in the ELTE programme. Joanne had been lecturing in teacher education at Greystone University for over three years and concurrently managing professional experiences for two years. She oversaw the design and delivery of professional experiences across teacher education courses, including ELTE. The partnership schools offer placements for English language preservice teachers from the university. Libby, a music teacher at one of the partnership schools, acted as an organiser of teaching practice (OTP). Libby was selected because she has four years of experience in organising professional experiences and was involved in the professional experience investigated. Angela, Joanne, and Libby (pseudonyms) participated in this study on the basis of voluntary informed consent and human research ethics approval.

The research methods include document analysis and interviews. There are several approaches to the study of documents, such as the content of documents, the archaeology of documentation, documents in use, and documents as actors (Prior, 2012). This study views documents as actors that function in and impact on social interaction and organisation. Data from documents often provide contextual information that helps to explain, complement, and verify data obtained through other methods such as interviews and observations (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In this study, I analysed the university's *Placement Manual* which includes all the information related to the professional experience concerned. In addition to document analysis, I conducted individual interviews with the participants to collect information about their background, perceptions, and involvement in the ELT professional experience. Each interview lasted 30–40 min and was conducted shortly after the professional experience in the lecturers' offices at Greystone University and an empty classroom at the OTP's school. During the interviews, I used the results of document analysis and the analysed documents as stimulus materials. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Qualitative content analysis was used, which focused on how the ELT professional experience is designed and delivered at Greystone University in connection with its partnerships schools. Four major themes were identified, including the professional

experience units, organisation of professional experience, tertiary support, and school support for preservice teachers during the professional experience, which are reported and discussed below.

4.4 Findings and Discussion

4.4.1 Professional Experience Units

Data show that the professional experience includes four units organised into two rounds. Apart from school-based teaching, preservice teachers attend two lectures and one tutorial before professional experience and another tutorial after. Specifically, the first lecture has a theoretical focus:

> So, in the first semester, the first lecture sort of introduces them to the kinds of things that we know about the professional experience and the kinds of problems and tensions within it. And it's kind of, you know, drawn on a research base to suggest to them some of the things to watch out for. So, for example, the mentor is also their assessor, and the kind of tensions that that creates. And that provides practical advice about what to do about that. We talk about things like, you know, Lortie's the apprenticeship of observation and the danger of just falling into the habit of teaching the way that you were taught. And the first lecture in semester two is about reflective practice and different ways to engage in reflection. (Joanne)

The second lecture has a more practical focus, where a mentor, an OTP, a school student, and a recent teacher graduate talk to preservice teachers about the professional experience from the varied perspectives:

> And they all speak to students about the practicum and their experience of student teachers from their own expertise. And that's wonderful because what happens is invariably they're here coming out of all these different stakeholders, exactly the kinds of things that they've been talking about but not necessarily believing. (Joanne)

The first tutorial focuses on "all the requirements and opportunities to talk to each other about their fears and their anxieties and their hopes and whatever else, and to look at the assessment tasks" (Joanne). The second tutorial is an opportunity for preservice teachers to debrief, peer review, and focus on their assessment tasks and reflective tasks.

Analysis of documents shows that during the professional experience, preservice teachers are required to complete a number of tasks, including planning lessons, teaching lessons, keeping attendance records, and completing reflective tasks, which are outlined in the *Placement Manual*. Evidence of preservice teachers' completion of these tasks forms the Practicum Folder, including:

- a record of the number of lessons taught and observed during the round,
- a photocopy of the signed report from the mentor teacher(s),
- a copy of a lesson plan for every lesson taught, and
- a reflection on each lesson taught. (*Placement Manual)*

The data above show that the lectures, tutorials, and the activities within the professional experience units appear to cover a comprehensive range of issues related to professional experience, including theoretical understandings, practical perspectives from different stakeholders, hands-on teaching and observation tasks, reflections, and assessments. These seem to accumulatively provide well-rounded professional experience units for preservice teachers in general. The first lecture discusses a number of theoretical issues, which constitute the theoretical knowledge domain for language teaching (Richards, 1998). Although less documented in the literature, pre-placement tutorials have been found to benefit preservice teachers greatly (Sim, 2006). The emphasis of the second lecture on reflective practice and the required reflective entries as part of the Practicum Folder is supported by the conclusion that reflection is a key element in the success of the learning communities model of professional experience (Le Cornu, 2016). In addition, the second lecture is an example of partnerships the university had with school partners including OTPs, mentors, and school students, as well as with its alumni. As Joanne noted in the interview above, the lecture, co-delivered by these stakeholders, provides preservice teachers with useful insights into what happens in the real classroom contexts which they are soon entering.

However, the data also show that the lectures and tutorials are generic, and no elements specific to EAL method is incorporated. This lack of method-specific induction could be seen as a shortcoming of the units. Given that EAL teaching is considered challenging due to the unique nature of learners' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (ACARA, 2014), method-specific induction would strengthen preservice teachers' preparedness for EAL teaching.

4.4.2 Organisation of Professional Experience

According to the *Placement Manual*, preservice teachers normally take professional experience units while they are doing other coursework units. In each round, they start professional experience after three weeks of coursework and come back for another four weeks of coursework after the placement. Although this resonates with TEMAG's (2014) recommendation that preservice teachers be placed early so they can assess the suitability for teaching, it also indicates that preservice teachers may not be academically well prepared when they start professional experience, especially in the first semester. Joanne said:

> As they go out too early, you feel like, particularly the methods person, 'I haven't had the time to prepare them, there's no way that they will be able to cope on their own.' (Joanne)

In relation to this excerpt, the literature shows that low preparedness is linked to preservice teachers' negative experience. For example, Premier and Miller (2010) found that upon entering professional experience, many preservice teachers feel that they are under-prepared for the complexities of teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms in Australia. This consequently causes frustration among

the preservice teachers and undermines their sense of confidence and efficacy. Faez and Valeo (2012) also report that English language preservice teachers struggle to adjust to the requirements of the field due to low preparedness.

However, as Angela noted below, there is little flexibility with the timing of professional experience, making it challenging to address the preparedness issue above:

> Allowing for school holidays sometimes and then public holidays and the academic year and so on is a bit of a nightmare and again there's very little flexibility. Schools don't want students at the end of the year when they're getting ready for a series of exams. […] They don't want them in the very beginning of the year because either the students don't know enough or they're just setting up their system and getting control of their own classrooms. (Angela)

This excerpt echoes the concern of many Australian institutions about the pressure to find enough placements and the need to have greater flexibility with professional experience to resolve this (TEMAG, 2014).

The data also show that sometimes preservice teachers have split placements, which means they spend the first half of the time in one school and the second half in another. The study found a number of factors contributing to the prevalence of split placements, including unavailability of certain subject areas in schools and schools' unwillingness to take on preservice teachers:

> It seems to be getting harder and harder to place our students just generally. It's taking us longer. The Placement Office was under a lot of strain this year. They were finding it even harder than ever before. Traditionally split placements are a product of students having an odd subject combination, so they find it really hard to place the students in single schools and also in subject areas where there are not a lot of placements. But it seems like now there's just less and less willingness to take on student teachers across the board and so we're having to be less picky. (Joanne)

An interview with the OTP, Libby, supports Joanne's points above that split placements are the result of schools unable to meet the demands of professional experience due to unmatched subject areas and mentors unwilling or unqualified to take up mentoring:

> Overall, it's a matter of managing the demands. I'm very conscious of the demands on the staff here, and we try and accommodate but it doesn't always work. Or sometimes the subject areas just don't match what we have to offer here. […] So, there are some subject areas that we have trouble helping out with. And then also some staff who just are unwilling to. We have many staff who are willing, but we have some staff who are unwilling to take on student teachers as well. And knowing […] not everybody makes a good mentor, so learning who is a good mentor, from my point of view, is not always easy. (Libby)

The two reasons for split placements mentioned above support the findings of TEMAG (2014) (see also Ingvarson et al., 2014; Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006) that Australian schools are facing challenges in meeting the placement demands, and most teachers are not experienced or formally trained in mentoring.

The difficulties in finding placements for preservice teachers seem to link to a loss of connection between the university and schools as a result of fewer school visits by university staff, as suggested by Angela below:

> So, it means Greystone staff have lost their connection to schools and the presence, you know, the continuous presence of academics walking in and out and knowing the teachers. And bit by bit I think it might become exacerbated and more problematic because if you don't have relationships with schools then it gets harder and harder to find placements and that in fact is what's happening. (Angela)

Angela's comment above on reduced opportunities for partnerships between teacher educators from schools and the university confirms one of the key concerns regarding professional experience (Le Cornu, 2016; TEMAG, 2014). This sense of a lost connection between the university and schools and the reduced number of school visits by lecturers are revisited in the following subsection.

4.4.3 University's Support for Preservice Teachers

The *Placement Manual* specifies the ways the university's staff support preservice teachers on professional experience as follows:

Academic staff can be called on to:

- answer any queries regarding course information.
- clarify placement expectations.
- provide advice and, in some situations, a visit, if there are concerns about the progress of a pre-service teacher.

The Placements Office is available to:

- answer queries regarding the administrative side of placements.
- act as a liaison between schools, pre-service teachers and academic staff.
- contact pre-service teachers on behalf of OTPs if required.
- provide all necessary paperwork for each placement. (*Placement Manual*)

Here, the Placement Office mainly provides administrative support while lecturers have very limited capacity designed in for supporting preservice teachers. Administratively, the university has protocols around communication with preservice teachers while they are on professional experience, which emphasise the need to communicate with every preservice teacher every week. Each professional experience tutor is in charge of 20–25 preservice teachers and is responsible for maintaining consistent contact with them over the placement weeks:

> So a bulk email goes out to all the students in the first week. Every student has to reply individually to that email and the tutor is required to reply individually to each of those replies. In the second week a bulk email goes out, it's up to the students whether or not they reply. In the second week the tutor also reaches out to the OTP […] and says "This is who I am, this is the student who I'm working with, if there is any concerns, please let me know." In week three the students have to complete a mid-placement self-evaluation. […] So students evaluate their own progress and that's sent back to the tutor and the tutor has to comment on every student's evaluation. Week four is another bulk email and week five is an email reminding people of their responsibilities, you know, in the last instance. (Joanne)

According to Joanne, in addition to ongoing email communication, each tutor also has four school visits built into their workload, which means 4 out of 20–25 preservice teachers are visited. Angela noted that the visits are "always to people who are struggling or at-risk or failing." If the preservice teachers have no problem at schools, it is up to the tutor who they visit and why:

> In some cases, the tutors choose to visit students who are high performing just to provide additional encouragement. Sometimes, it might be because of the research interest in the school. Sometimes, it's because even though the school hasn't notified that there's a problem, the students are inclined to seem shaky or lacking in confidence. (Joanne)

The excerpts above reveal several losses as a result of this change in school visit policy. In comparison with the past when all preservice teachers were visited on professional experience, there is now much less connection between lecturers and preservice teachers:

> In the past when we visited, I would fill out very detailed observation notes. You know I could write three or four pages of notes in a 45-minute lesson. And the students were immensely grateful, not always totally pleased with what I wrote, but it was a very good analysis of what I was watching. And I think they were also pleased that, you know, you'd taken a time that you introduced yourself to the mentor, you know the children, you know their classrooms. So, there's really connection to the students. You've seen them in their context. Now I feel far less connection to the students. They come back and I basically say, you know, "How was the prac[ticum]?" and we do a feedback session on it and we make the best of that in terms of what worked well for them and what didn't work, what the challenges were and so on. We make a good session out of that for about an hour, but it's not the same as if I've actually seen them and can connect with their experiences. (Angela)

> I think the ideal would be for the professional experience units to actually be more closely aligned with the methods. In an ideal world it would actually be specialists in the subject areas that the students are actually teaching who would be supporting students, and in the current model it's not. […] The big loss […] is the connection to methods. So the person you're communicating with might have nothing to do with the subject area that you teach, and they just provide general support. (Joanne)

It can be inferred from the data excerpts above that there is limited opportunity for developing partnerships between preservice teachers and TESOL lecturers for professional experience, which is considered one of the key relationships in the learning partnerships model (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). Firstly, preservice teachers miss out not only on detailed TESOL specialist feedback on their EAL teaching, but also on the feeling of support by TESOL lecturers. Fayne's (2007) survey among 222 preservice teachers confirms that feedback on performance and efforts to understand the preservice teachers and the teaching context are very important types of supervisory support, and both are missing from the current professional experience model. Such a professional experience curriculum unfortunately broadens the theory–practice divide, which has been found a major concern in preservice teacher education (White & Forgasz, 2016). Joanne noted:

> Possibly some of them may be feeling the disconnect between school experience and the university education, and perhaps in the subliminal way that separation is unfortunately confirmed because we're not physically crossing the boundaries into those spaces. (Joanne)

Secondly, TESOL lecturers miss out on professional development opportunities as a result of weaker connection with schools and preservice teachers during the professional experience:

> And possibly the other big loss for us as academics is those visits were the way that we really kept in touch with schools and kept a feel for the nature of schools. So, in the absence of doing 20 or so visits a semester, I think it's very easy for us to lose touch with the changes that are happening in schools. (Joanne)

As the excerpt shows, with such limited visiting capacity, it has become challenging for lecturers to keep up with ELT in contexts and develop professional partnerships with TESOL practitioners in schools. While contextual knowledge constitutes one of the key domains of the knowledge base of language teaching (Richards, 1998), lecturers' weak connection with schools may weaken the ability of coursework to be optimally relevant to school contexts, which may further broaden the theory–practice divide mentioned above (White & Forgasz, 2016). The lack of university academics' involvement in professional experience also means there is limited mutual communication and learning that would potentially benefit the learning experience of preservice teachers as well as teacher educators.

However, the data above also show that the reflection feature of the learning communities model (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008) is strongly present in the professional experience concerned. In addition to the required reflective entries of the Practicum Folder mentioned in the previous section, the opportunity to reflect back after the professional experience, although not part of the professional experience, adds some learning value to the learning experience (Le Cornu, 2016).

4.4.4 Schools' Support for Preservice Teachers

In the current professional experience model, the role of schools includes:

- Being committed to the concept of placement programs and valuing the contributions that pre-service teachers make to the teaching profession.
- Providing support and working collegially with each pre-service teacher.
- Engendering a school philosophy which welcomes pre-service teachers into the profession, making them a part of the school community. (*Placement Manual*)

While the manual specifies the school's general support in providing the space and structure needed for preservice teachers to complete their professional experience, such support is mainly conducted through the roles of mentors and OPTs. The data reveal the role of a mentor as follows:

- Providing an induction for your pre-service teacher into your classes and/or subjects.
- Working with the pre-service teacher to ensure they have a correct timetable during their placement.
- Assisting the pre-service teacher to prepare appropriate lessons for their classes.

- Being available to review lesson plans and providing timely feedback on the plans and the lesson.
- Being present in the classroom/field where the pre-service teacher has responsibilities.
- Familiarising yourself with the course and placement information section of this manual.
- Reviewing the mentor checklist provided in this manual.
- Notifying the OTP of any concerns you have for the pre-service teacher's progress as soon as they arise.
- Alerting the pre-service teacher to upcoming extra-curricular activities they can participate in (e.g. carnivals, sports days, meetings etc.).
- Completing the assessment report at the conclusion of the placement and providing it to the school's OTP. (*Placement Manual*)

In the professional experience model concerned, mentors are responsible for supporting preservice teachers in administration and EAL teaching and assessing preservice teachers. Such a mentoring arrangement is common in the literature (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). However, it is interesting that there is no mentioning in the *Placement Manual* about the necessity for mentors to partner with lecturers in supporting preservice teachers. This, together with the finding about the lack of TESOL lecturers' support, means that the teacher education responsibility during the professional experience is placed almost entirely on an EAL mentor. As a result, the opportunity for preservice teachers to learn from different perspectives on EAL teaching is missing. The literature shows that some mentors are not sufficiently trained (TEMAG, 2014), not supportive enough, authoritarian (Farrell, 2008; Trent, 2013), or holding conflicting views with preservice teachers (Nguyen, 2014, 2017b; Patrick, 2013). If preservice teachers have such a mentoring relationship and no other sources of academic support, their professional experience may turn into struggles rather than a learning site (Farrell, 2008; Trent, 2013). Moreover, from the perspective of a learning partnerships professional experience model (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008), the opportunity for mutual learning between mentors and lecturers, the two EAL expert groups, is also missing in the professional experience concerned.

At the school, the OTP plays an important role as the initial contact for preservice teachers and an important liaison between all stakeholders. Libby, the OTP participant, elaborated below:

> So initially I give them information about the school, about dress code, about parking and what time they're to arrive and their contact with their mentor […] then they're given, you know, a map of the school and all that sort of stuff. They generally meet with their mentor. […] So, basically their mentor is the first point of call, but if there is a situation that involves their mentor and that they are not happy with that, so they need to come to me. So, I don't see myself as someone who checks up on them unless I'm alerted by either the mentors or the student teachers. (Libby)

The OTP plays a key role in introducing the preservice teacher to the school and mentor and overseeing the professional experience. Having a third person who can step in to deal with issues between the preservice teacher and mentor can be seen as a strong point of the model, especially given the high possibility of conflicts between the mentor and preservice teacher (Farrell, 2008; Patrick, 2013; Trent, 2013).

4.5 Implications

This study gained insights into the design and implementation of the professional experience within the EAL teacher education course. It revealed the roles of different parties including (1) university placement officers, course leaders, and professional experience tutors; and (2) mentors and OTPs from schools in supporting preservice teachers. The findings highlighted the roles of the Placements Office and OTPs in providing a link between the preservice teachers, schools/centres, and the lecturers at the university, and such roles should be reinforced. The Placements Office provided comprehensive orientation and support for preservice teachers and administrative support for partnerships between the university and schools. In addition to connecting different parties, OTPs' role in mediating mentoring relationships is particularly important.

However, the support from the Placements Office and OTPs for preservice teachers was not related to their EAL method, and academic staff were mostly called on only when preservice teachers were 'at-risk.' It is the academic side of partnerships that the study found weak in the model of professional experience under research. Academically, during the professional experience, preservice teachers were placed in unfamiliar school contexts, and the teacher education responsibility was largely on mentors. In line with the literature (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White, Bloomfield, & Le Cornu, 2010), the study suggests that the roles of other participants of the professional experience, including TESOL lecturers and preservice teachers, need to be consolidated to allow for the development of meaningful professional learning communities and thus more productive ELT professional experiences. This recommendation is supported by the learning communities model of professional experience (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008) and in line with the view of TEMAG (2014) that mutually beneficial partnerships between providers and schools are the key to achieving high quality of professional experience in teacher education.

The recommendations made in this section are based on research findings from one English language teacher education programme in Australia and its associated school-based professional experience. However, the principles related to the roles of members of the learning communities can be considered for similar contexts of English language teaching professional experience where the professional experience learning community needs to be strengthened. These similar contexts may include university-based professional experience and school-based professional experience in ELTE courses in Australia and other neoliberal settings.

Firstly, school visits by lecturers with expertise on TESOL should be brought back within the ELT professional experience. TESOL lecturers' visits benefit the preservice teachers greatly, as shown through the data of this study and the literature. As previously mentioned, the professional experience is a critical transition period for preservice teachers. To ensure smooth transition, the role of TESOL lecturers, especially in providing EAL expert advice and feedback, should not be withdrawn completely during the professional experience to avoid the theory–practice divide (White et al., 2010). Moreover, TESOL lecturers' visits increased their own sense

of connection with schools and preservice teachers. They mediated the relationship between preservice teachers and mentors and the school community and helped to strengthen partnerships between university and schools. In addition, according to Tsui and Law (2007), as lecturers, mentors, and preservice teachers engaged in learning partnerships, they collaboratively resolved contradictions within their joint activity, negotiated mediating tools and transformed the activity from professional learning for preservice teachers to professional development for all involved.

Secondly, the present study shows that within the model of professional experience under research, peer preservice teachers played some role in the campus-based pre-placement and post-placement sessions, but no formal peer learning was incorporated into the professional experience curriculum. Studies have found that interaction with peers during the professional experience can create valuable learning conditions that facilitate English language preservice teachers' professional learning (Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012). Furthermore, peer learning is well supported by a sociocultural perspective on language teacher learning (Johnson, 2009). The study, therefore, recommends that the university provides opportunities and procedures for incorporating peer learning into the ELT professional experience. The literature offers strategies for organising peer learning during the professional experience, such as peer mentoring, co-teaching, and learning circles (Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2013; White et al., 2010). Peer learning during the professional experience would encourage preservice teachers' reflection and collaboration, which are indispensable skills for continuing professional development (Le Cornu, 2016).

Finally, in framing the professional experience as reciprocal learning communities, it is essential to consider the explicit curriculum of the professional experience and the roles of the participants within the curriculum (White et al., 2010). The structure of the professional experience needs to allow for time and space for learning communities as suggested above. Training in partnership needs to be provided for professional experience participants (Nguyen, 2013), especially lecturers, mentors, and peer preservice teachers. Hudson, Spooner-Lane, and Murray (2012) show that training for mentors contributes positively to their mentoring practices, which in turn enhances preservice teachers' practices. Training university supervisors and mentors could be a worthwhile avenue for building a teacher education team that works in favour of the learning communities model of professional experience (Cartaut & Bertone, 2009). Cartaut and Bertone (2009) demonstrate that joint training activities of a mentor and a lecturer during a school visit inform reorganisation of subsequent mentoring activities and create conditions that foster preservice teachers' professional development. White and Forgasz (2016) argue that this triad model works best when the lecturer is positioned as the third learner. Similarly, in order for peer learning to be effective, there needs to be explicit pre-professional experience training on productive peer-learning attitudes, attributes, procedures, and practices (Nguyen & Hudson, 2012; White et al., 2010).

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Chapter 5
Mentoring in Professional Experience: A Source of Support



Abstract This chapter provides an Australia-based research example that examined the mentoring relations between school-based teacher educators and preservice teachers of English language in different school contexts. With the support of rich qualitative data from interviews, stimulated recall, and reflections, the chapter argues that mentoring by school-based mentor teachers is a key source of support to foster productive professional experience. It specifically reveals personal and contextual factors shaping the nature of the mentoring relations and how these relations facilitated professional experience. The chapter discusses implications for teacher educators, institutions, and schools in creating a supportive professional learning environment for both mentor teachers and preservice teachers.

Keywords Mentoring · Professional experience · Second language · Teacher education · Professional learning

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5.1 Mentoring, Emotions, and Professional Learning

An overarching theoretical perspective in this book is that a sociocultural perspective sees teacher learning as originating in teachers' participation in sociocultural contexts and practices, and in this process their interaction with the community of practice plays an influential role (Johnson, 2006, 2009, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2018a, 2018b). A common design of the school-based practicum is one in which preservice teachers interact with their mentors to learn to socialise into the teaching role. In the context of this book, preservice teachers are placed in secondary schools to teach EAL under the mentoring and assessment of mentors who are EAL teachers based in the schools. In this context, mentoring by a school-based teacher is the only source of formal mentoring for most preservice teachers as university-based teacher educators are only involved in a small number of cases (see

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Chap. 4). Therefore, turning the spotlight onto this mentoring relationship means scrutinising one of the major sources of learning for preservice teachers during the practicum, hence generating implications for developing productive practicum experiences. Chapters 5 and 6 of this book consequently focus on the role of this mentoring in the cognition of preservice English language teachers in the school-based professional experience. As the first in this duo of chapters, this chapter focuses upon the mentoring relationships of three pairs of preservice teacher–mentor teacher during the professional experiences in Australian secondary schools. I argue in this chapter that mentoring provided by school-based mentor teachers can be an essential source of support for preservice teachers' learning. It generates positive emotions conducive to teacher learning through encouraging risk-taking and agency, providing constructive advice and feedback, and creating productive conditions for professional learning. Such support can help preservice teachers to resolve tensions inherent in their placement and achieve positive learning outcomes. The other side of the coin, which is the influence of mentoring as a source of unresolved tensions and negative emotions, is presented in the next chapter.

5.2 Conceptualising Mentoring

Conceptualisations of mentoring in the teacher education literature seek to generate definitions which will apply across institutional and disciplinary contexts. 'Mentoring' has become a predominant term in the international literature on teacher education to describe a wide range of practices and relationships in teacher education (Ambrosetti, 2014; Heikkinen, Wilkinson, Aspfors, & Bristol, 2018; Kent, Feldman, & Hayes, 2009; Nguyen, 2017a, b). However, some convergence can be found in conceptualising mentoring as the interpersonal relationship where professional and emotional support is provided to preservice, beginning, and veteran teachers by their colleagues/peers and more senior teachers (Ambler, Harvey, & Cahir, 2016; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017; M. H. Nguyen, 2017). The person providing such support has been widely referred to as 'mentor' or 'mentor teacher', while other alternative terms include 'cooperating teacher', 'school-based teacher educator', 'school associate', and 'practicum supervisor' (Ambrosetti, 2014, p. 31).

Australian teacher education has seen a shift from a 'supervisory' model to a 'mentoring' model of professional experience, and 'mentoring' has been distinguished from 'supervision' to denote a difference in the role of the mentor/supervisor (Ambrosetti, 2014). According to Ambrosetti, a 'mentoring' model focuses on relationships and growth while a 'supervisory' model focuses solely on developmental concerns and therefore involves the assessment of preservice teachers' development. In the present study, 'mentoring' is used by both the teacher education institution and the partnership schools to refer specifically to the professional relationship between classroom-based teachers and preservice teachers during their practicum in Australian secondary schools. Mentoring in the context of this study involves both mentors' support for preservice teachers' transition to teaching and their assessment of

the mentees' development, so the mentors are required to draw on both mentoring and supervisory skills. Ambrosetti (2014) suggests that since assessment is traditionally a supervisor's role and has the potential to cause unwanted relational difficulties, it is essential that in a mentoring relationship where both mentoring and assessment are inherent, the mentor and mentee develop a shared understanding of assessment tools and practices to avoid role conflicts.

Another shift in mentoring practices in the Australian teacher education context concerns the move from 'transfer' mentoring approaches towards 'transformative' mentoring practices. From an English language teacher education perspective, Brandt (2006) argues that 'transfer' mentoring, which is "expert-directed, subordinating, replicating, dependent, and rational" (Brandt, 2006, p. 362), does not create rich opportunities for preservice teachers to develop their professional and personal selves through meaningful and purposeful teaching practice. A transformative mentoring approach, on the other hand, allows preservice teachers to draw on their experiences, existing knowledge, and individual learning styles. It creates spaces for reflective practice, autonomy, and problem-solving, and generates opportunities for authentic and developmental practices (Brandt, 2006).

Australian professional experience scholars have advocated a learning community or learning partnership model of professional experience (Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White, Bloomfield & Le Cornu, 2010; White & Forgasz, 2016). In such a model, preservice teachers are more likely to experience reciprocal learning with other members of the professional experience, including their mentor teachers (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). Mentoring from this perspective becomes "a collegial learning relationship instead of an expert, hierarchical one-way view" (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008, p. 1803). This learning community view is underpinned by a social constructivist perspective which sees teacher learning as socioculturally constructed and originating in participation in sociocultural contexts and practices (Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). The aforementioned 'mentoring' model, as opposed to the 'supervisory' model (Ambrosetti, 2014), and the 'transformative' mentoring approaches, as opposed to 'transfer' mentoring approaches (Brandt, 2006), are more likely to be reciprocal and best fit within the learning partnership model of professional experience. Transformative mentoring is more likely to make spaces for preservice teachers to exercise agency (Lasky, 2005; Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom, 1993; Yang, 2015), autonomy, problem-solving and reflective practice (Brandt, 2006) in their professional learning through interaction with mentors, and the mediation of sociocultural contexts and tools.

The literature on mentoring reviewed above is largely conceptual discussions and generic practices that apply across disciplinary and institutional contexts, although some efforts have been made to situate mentoring within English language teacher education field. In the subsequent section, I turn to the literature on mentoring by classroom-based teachers in the English language teaching practicum.

5.3 Mentors' Support During the ELT Professional Experience

School mentors are the principal point of contact for preservice teachers within most school-based TESOL practicum models and, in most cases, the main source of support for preservice teachers. Mentoring support and its influence on preservice teachers' professional learning during the practicum are manifested in several ways as demonstrated below.

Firstly, feedback by mentor teachers has been found to be highly valued by preservice teachers and contribute positively to their learning during the English language teaching practicum. For example, Atay (2007) found that preservice teachers with a high level of efficacy in Turkey reportedly learned much from the mentor teachers' feedback on their own teaching. Similarly, mentors' feedback is reported by about 50% of the participating preservice teachers in Vietnam as a positive contribution to their professional development during the practicum (Nguyen, 2010). In a study based in Spain, Martínez Agudo (2016) found that from the perspective of preservice teachers, mentors' feedback is appreciated for its supportive and affective nature, but more ongoing and detailed feedback is expected. This kind of research seems to report general positive influence of mentors' feedback on preservice teachers' professional experiences. Other studies examine more specifically how feedback is provided. For example, Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) found that post-observation meetings between preservice ESL teachers and mentors in the USA created discursive spaces for preservice teachers to receive mentors' input while verbalising their plans, anticipating outcomes and possibilities, and reflecting on their practice. Engin (2013, 2014) demonstrates that feedback is a joint process where mentors and preservice teachers actively participate in. Through both Turkey-based studies, Engin shows that mentors' strategic questioning is an effective tool to provide feedback, which scaffolds and encourages preservice teachers to reflect on their teaching and respond to prompts by mentors. Feedback conventions are found in the studies to be of great importance in guiding preservice teachers' participation in feedback sessions. In addition, some preservice teachers in Hong Kong are found to proactively consult their mentor teachers, hence gaining feedback for identifying and solving teaching problems (Gan, 2014).

Secondly, a series of Hong Kong-based studies found that observation of and by mentors is also an important source of support for preservice teachers' learning. A mixture of observing and being observed has been found to help preservice teachers understand more clearly the role of an English language teacher and develop better knowledge for teaching the language (Gan, 2014). Even when preservice teachers are critical of their mentors' teaching practices when they observe the mentors' lessons, such observation is a source of learning as they become more aware of effective and ineffective teaching methods, which informs their practicum or future teaching decisions (Gan, 2014; Trent, 2011; Yuan, 2016). Mentors' presence in preservice teachers' classroom and high involvement in the lesson have also been reported as a source of support for preservice teachers to deal with 'unruly pupils' (Gao & Benson,

2012). In addition, the combination of observing and being observed by mentors serves as the main stimuli for ongoing dialogic conversations between mentors and preservice teachers, where professional learning opportunities emerge (Gan, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012; Yuan, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2015).

In some other Asia-based studies, mentors' support during the English language teaching practicum has also been reportedly provided outside of their main interaction with preservice teachers such as feedback sessions and classroom observations. For instance, dialogues with the mentor when attending an extracurricular activity such as a book club helped a preservice teacher develop a new understanding of the role of corrective feedback in fostering students' learning autonomy and critical thinking (Yuan & Lee, 2014). Mentors' role in the establishment of a welcoming and friendly environment in the host school is also important in helping preservice teachers to develop a sense of belonging and positive emotions which are conducive to learning (Gan, 2014; Nguyen, 2010).

The theoretical and research scholarship on mentoring reviewed above demonstrates that interactions with mentor teachers play an essential role in the professional learning experiences of preservice English language teachers during the practicum. It is in line with the sociocultural perspective on teacher learning, which sees teacher learning as originating in social interactions with the community (Johnson, 2006, 2009). The literature presents some beneficial ways in which mentoring is provided, such as through mutual class observation, feedback, and interactions in other activities. However, there are gaps that are inherent in the literature above. First, while much of the theoretical discussion is written by Australian scholars, none of the research studies reviewed is based in Australia. Most of the existing research is based in Asia, mostly Hong Kong, and other contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, with the exception of a US study by Urzúa and Vásquez (2008). As discussed in Chap. 1, the context of English language teaching in Australia differs itself considerably from Asian contexts due to the role of the English language in the Australian society and schooling systems, and the English language learners' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. More Australian-based research into preservice English language teachers' practicum experiences and mentoring is needed in order to generate implications for TESOL education in Australia and comparable contexts. Second, the role of mentoring by classroom-based teachers is widely implemented in the Australian teacher education context, but recent reports from the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG, 2014) show that "[t]he role of mentoring teachers is largely an unrecognised and untrained one, with little support provided for developing the requisite mentoring skills" (p. 35). Therefore, mentoring by Australian classroom-based English language teachers deserves more attention in research with a view to generating insights to inform professional development for mentor teachers. Moreover, while valuable, the research literature above lacks a comprehensive, systematic view on mentoring, one that addresses mentoring in relation to its origins and subsequent impact on preservice teachers' learning.

The study reported in this chapter seeks to address the gaps above by examining the support provided by school-based mentors to three preservice EAL teachers during the secondary EAL placements in Australia. Specifically, it focuses on the

types of support afforded by mentoring, the factors influencing this support, and how this support influences the preservice teachers' learning during the professional experiences.

5.4 Methods

In order to investigate the issues above, the research used a qualitative research design. With ethics approvals and voluntary written informed consent, the study involved three preservice teachers who were enrolled in an EAL preservice programme at Greystone University. Frank, a Singaporean in his early 30s, had rich and diverse working experiences, a Bachelor of Business Management, and some vocational certificates. Kate, a British national in her late 20s, had rich language learning experience, a Bachelor of Japanese Language, and some experience as an EAL aide before attending the programme. Jane, an Australian in her 50s, had a BA in Japanese and lived in Japan with her family for a number of years before coming back to Australia. She started the EAL teacher education programme with a view to teaching English language in Australia, Japan, or any other countries that her family may later move to. The three preservice teachers were placed in three different secondary schools in Melbourne to do a two-week EAL teaching practicum during which data collection took place. As Chaps. 5–8 unfold, Frank and Kate are illustrative cases of agentive, confident, and competent preservice teachers having supportive mentor teachers and productive professional experiences. In contrast, Jane had a mixture of positive and negative experiences during her placement but in the end failed to pass the placement assessment. Due to her previous teaching experiences over many years, Jane was expected by her mentors to demonstrate a high level of experience and expertise, and therefore she was offered little mentoring support. Together with the three preservice teachers, the mentors of Kate and Frank also participated in the study. Jane had two mentors, but they were not involved in the research due to the lack of timely principal's permission.

Each preservice teacher participated in two semi-structured individual interviews, one before the practicum and the other after, each lasting approximately 60 min. Each preservice teacher also participated in a 60-min stimulated recall session with the use of lesson plans, audio recordings of lessons, and teaching resources as stimuli. In addition, the preservice teachers' written reflections, which were a required component of their practicum, were also analysed for relevant excerpts. Each participating mentor teacher was interviewed individually once towards the end of the practicum. The methodology itself, which involved multiple interviews, stimulated recall sessions, and reflective journals, created conditions for the participating preservice teachers to externalise their thinking and verbalise their emerging understandings of the professional experience. In that sense, the methodology served as intervention that created mediational spaces for understanding how the preservice teachers may or may not have developed professionally.

The data were first transcribed and then analysed using qualitative content analysis, which focused on (1) the types of mentoring support, (2) factors influencing that support, and (3) how the support shaped preservice teachers' learning.

It should be noted at this point in the first chapter using data from preservice teachers that although no data of mentor–preservice teacher interaction were collected for this project, there are data that represent the preservice teachers' actual experiences in the practicum. For example, there are excerpts from lesson recordings used in the book (see Chaps. 5–8). In addition, all actual lesson recordings and teaching materials were also analysed for instances of practice relevant to the study, which were then used as stimuli for stimulated recall sessions with the preservice teachers. In that sense, together with other sources of data, the data reported in the book include both the participants' natural experiences and their interpretation of the experiences. This is in line with the interpretive epistemological stance adopted in this research, which emphasises the participants' voices in constructing their experiences as discussed in Chap. 3.

5.5 Findings and Discussion

Analysis of data shows rich evidence to demonstrate that mentoring by a school-based EAL teacher provides support that is essential in the preservice EAL teachers' professional learning experience. Although the mentoring support can be roughly classified into three types, including encouraging risk-taking and agency, providing constructive advice and feedback, and creating productive opportunities for professional learning, the specific support varies across the cases. The following subsections elaborate on the findings in terms of support types, its sources, and consequences.

5.5.1 Encouraging Risk-Taking and Agency

All the three preservice teachers in this study were encouraged by their mentors to take risks and exercise agency in their professional learning. Kate, for example, entered the practicum with a goal to experiment with the activities she had learned at university, especially activities that she did not feel confident with so that she could learn from this experience and enhance her teaching skills. The following quote provides an ample example of this experimental and agentive learning spirit:

> I also wanted to try and incorporate activities that we'd learned at university that I thought maybe […] a bit more experimental or maybe […] things that I maybe didn't feel confident with, so I'd get the chance to do them, so I could see if I could learn more and improve. […] And I also wanted to see […] if I could manage it. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

In the excerpt above, Kate reveals a contradiction between the pedagogical tools (i.e., activities) she had learned at university and her confidence in using them. In

the same interview, Kate reflected on how her agency and desire to experiment with her professional learning were supported by her mentor teacher. She was highly encouraged by Ms. Weston to be experimental in her teaching because the mentor thought Kate had the opportunity to receive mentoring support and feedback during the practicum. Kate recalled:

> My mentor said […], you know, 'You should take risks now because this is the time when you can take risks; you've got someone else in the room.' So, I tried to do that as well. So, that was one point why I did the *Running Dictation*. [….] I think because my mentor was very supportive and encouraged me to take risks. That also helped me to do that. I think if I'd had a mentor who was, had a different attitude, I might have played safe to just try and pass the practicum. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

It becomes clear from this excerpt that thanks to the mentor's support, Kate was encouraged to trial new and challenging ideas such as the *Running Dictation* activity. She felt safe and supported enough to make challenging choices as opposed to being constrained by the mentor's supervision and assessment. The mentor teacher's support for Kate to experiment with new strategies is also evident in Ms. Weston's comments below:

> But at the same time, I think it's kind of fun as well because you know it's more 'OK, you design it and I'll mentor it and moderate it and help you. We'll talk about it. But what do you want to do? What's going to improve your teaching and what have you done at other places? If you've already done it, don't do it. Do something else. Yep, and then challenge yourself. You know and then I can, 'Do that' or 'Don't do that,' and then modify, depending on how the class responds as well. (Ms. Weston)

In these comments, the mentor teacher appeared to be open-minded and supportive in giving Kate the freedom to choose what and how to teach while still moderating her teaching closely and offering support and guidance when necessary. She also encouraged Kate to take risks in doing what the preservice teacher wanted to do but had not done before. In particular, the mentor teacher appeared to recognise the personal resources that Kate brought with her to the placement and allow her to capitalise on these. This is an important feature of ELTE pedagogy in the time of neoliberalism as identified in Chap. 1. Kate appeared to appreciate the freedom to design her own unit of work to experiment with her learning as she reflected on this:

> I got a lot of support from my mentor. Yeah, she was really really good. One thing that she did that was great was that she let me design my own unit of work, which I think was excellent. [….] She said you know, "This is an opportunity for you to really design your own unit of work and see what works and what doesn't work." (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

It is evident from the data presented above that the mentor's support enabled Kate to resolve the contradiction between the unfamiliar pedagogical tools and her confidence in using them. This support corresponds to the neoliberal challenge that teacher educators need to acknowledge and prepare teachers for addressing potential contradictions that may emerge within located teacher learning in ways that transform teachers professionally (Johnson & Golombek, 2018a).

Similar to Kate, Jane had much freedom to design lessons that are personally meaningful to her thanks to her mentors' guidelines that were broad enough not to constrain her practice.

> There's a lot of freedom [….]. One class I did on the reader and one class I did on the biography. So, the one with the reader that was kind of like a frame for me to base the lessons on the reader and I knew the level of the students […]. And the same with the higher level. I knew what level they were on the learning continuum. And the teacher said 'Biography', so I kind of had a framework with which to go. And not having a specific curriculum was really good, you know, because I could create lessons which were kind of personally meaningful to me. So, I think I was good. (Jane, Interview 2)

Jane's comment above shows that she appreciated the given freedom to design her teaching around the suggested reader in the lower-level class and the broad task of writing biographies in the higher-level class. With such freedom, Jane was encouraged to generate teaching ideas and forms of implementation based on the given broad guidelines, which shows her agency in teaching and professional learning (Lasky, 2005; Yang, 2015). She also benefited from the mentor's support as through the suggested material and tasks, she learned about the levels of ability the students were at, which helped to shape her lessons. The reader and biography frameworks, therefore, served as mediational means for Jane to exercise mediated agency (Lasky, 2005; Wertsch et al., 1993) in learning to teach.

Also offered freedom through a broad curriculum guideline, Frank was able to be agentive in his professional learning and come up with and implement a range of innovative activities for teaching writing, as in the mentor's comment below:

> We also have a curriculum that I've only broadly told Frank about and said that I just want them to learn writing, so he's come up with a number of really innovative activities to teach them writing. (Mr. Scott)

Mr. Scott's encouragement for agency in the preservice teacher's learning can also be seen through his positioning, where he sees the mentoring relationship as a reciprocal learning partnership (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). In this relationship, the mentor is also learning from the preservice teacher as much as the vice versa. Mr. Scott says:

> So, it's good watching Frank and I can see myself, you know, 'Oh, I have to go back and do that, or I should've approached this way when we were doing this topic.' So, it's really good to sit back and reflect on what I'm seeing. (Mr. Scott)

The above data excerpts on all the three mentoring relationships show that the preservice teachers all appreciated the mentors' support for risk-taking and agentive professional learning. Such support allowed the preservice teachers to experiment with their learning, trial, reflect, and be mentored. This type of mentoring relationship has been found to be immeasurably beneficial to not only the preservice teachers but also other members of the community involved (Brandt, 2006; Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White et al., 2010; White & Forgasz, 2016). Kate's reflections above on her mentor's encouragement for risk-taking and agency also point to a contrasting situation widely reported in the literature where much of what

preservice teachers do during professional experience is dictated by their mentor teachers because of their authoritarian mentoring approach (Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2014; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017; M. H. Nguyen, 2017; Trent, 2013) or the mentors' fixed teaching styles (Atay, 2007; Brandt, 2006; Trent, 2013). While this literature reports that such 'transfer' mentoring approaches and relationships (Brandt, 2006) hinder preservice teachers' professional learning, the preservice teachers in this study enjoyed their transformative mentoring experience (Brandt, 2006) as a great source of support for professional learning. The findings lend further support to the view that teacher agency is socioculturally mediated with the professional community, in this case the mentors, and mediating artefacts playing an influential role in teacher learning (Edwards & D'arcya, 2004; Lasky, 2005; Yang, 2015).

5.5.2 Providing Constructive Advice and Feedback

One of the most frequently cited types of mentoring support in the literature is providing feedback and guidance (Engin, 2013, 2014; Martínez Agudo, 2016; Nguyen, 2010; Nguyen & Brown, 2016; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008). In the current study, all the three preservice teachers received frequent and rich constructive advice and feedback on their professional experience learning and practice, which is in line with much of the relevant literature. The mentors' feedback and advice in this study were shaped by the specific learning needs of the preservice teachers and the mentors' knowledge and skills.

In the case of Jane, based on her personal characteristic of being a quiet person, her mentor offered advice to help with student management. Jane narrated:

> One of my mentors told me, because it's hard to get everyone's attention, and I'm a fairly quiet person, and he suggested get anything, get a bell, get a little anything to… So, I got myself a little bell. [….] And you don't have to yell, just 'Ting, ting, ting' and everyone looks up, it's so easy. I couldn't be without it. SO handy! I just like writing a letter and saying thank you to them. (Jane, Interview 2)

The excerpt above gives a sense of how appreciative Jane was to the mentor for his useful suggestion to use a tool to gather students' attention, which successfully resolved the contradiction between being a quiet person and the need to gather students' attention in the classroom. The mentor also provided advice about the characteristics of the students Jane was teaching and how to manage them effectively:

> The lower level [mentor], yeah, he was good. […] He gave me very constructive advice in terms of just students – the low-level class is a little bit rowdier – and just you know, "don't let them get away with this and make sure that they were doing this" and it was more, more on students management that he was giving me advice on, which is good. And I think, you know, in the end I swapped kids around they're more likely to work and I was very happy with that class […]. So, and he was happy with me too, and yeah, he was very encouraging. We were getting on fine. […]. I could see no problem with him. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

Rowdy students are a common challenge for preservice teachers, who are usually new to the class, lack experience dealing with students, or lack the power to manage

students due to their preservice teacher status (Benson, 2012; Gao & Benson, 2012; Le, 2014; Nguyen, 2014; Riesky, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014). Without appropriate support from mentors for dealing with learner issues, the professional experience can turn into a negative experience that hinders professional learning (Benson, 2012; Le, 2014). However, in the present study, through the mentor's support, Jane learned about the possible challenges associated with the learners as well as the mentor's suggestions for how to manage them. Thanks to this, Jane was able to use class management strategies that worked. Similar influence of mentoring support on preservice teachers' management of challenging students has been reported in Gao and Benson (2012) as a factor fostering productive professional learning. The excerpt above also shows that Jane was very content with the supportive mentor she had, which is an indicator of a positive mentoring relationship and practicum.

In addition to receiving advice on class management, Jane was also well supported in selecting material for her teaching:

> And the lower class, he was far more helpful. He gave me a reader and he said base your lessons on this reader and that sort of gave me, you know, an idea of their level straight away from the reader he selected. And I felt, I know that this is one area that I didn't do well. [….] He just said "Why don't you…", he just wanted to give me some sort of guidelines and he just suggested I use that reader. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

Here, Jane confesses that there was a tension between the task of assessing students' level and her current ability to do this. However, thanks to the mentor's guidelines, Jane became confident as she was able to identify the students' ability level based on the level of the reader her mentor recommended, which was helpful in designing her lessons. This is in line with the findings of Yuan and Lee (2014) that an understanding of learners' English proficiency levels guided preservice teachers to scaffold learning for the different levels. Such differentiated scaffolding has been claimed an important aspect in the development of EAL teaching expertise (Gibbons, 2009; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Nguyen & Penry Williams, forthcoming; Riazi & Rezaii, 2011; Walqui, 2006).

Similar to Jane, Kate also received constructive guidance from her mentor teacher as she needed. Kate recounted:

> I'd say "Okay I've come up with this idea. What do you think?" and we discussed it and she had suggestions about what directions I could take it in and she had resources that I could possibly use. She said "Okay, if you think you will be teaching that I've got this book which has all this stuff". So, she was really useful. She let me come up with my own ideas, but she also supported me and giving me suggestions and materials. And she also gave me a lot of feedback at the end of my lesson as well. That was really good. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

As discussed earlier, Kate's mentor was highly encouraging of risk-taking and supportive of innovative teaching ideas. Here, Kate refers to a situation where she was able to exercise agency in her learning by coming up with her own teaching ideas and seeking her mentor's advice on these ideas. In response to her request for guidance, the mentor offered Kate suggestions in the form of both teaching strategies and resources, which Kate highly valued as she planned her lessons. The excerpt also shows mentor support through post-lesson feedback, which is another common type

of effective mentor support documented in the literature (Golombek & Doran, 2014; Martínez Agudo, 2016; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008).

Like Kate, Jane and Frank also refer to feedback as support that they received from their mentors:

> I guess the support is that they gave me very detailed feedback here. Every lesson they've given me feedback. That's her writing over it, [because] it's a copy you can't see which is which, but they always gave me very detailed feedback on everything. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

> At the beginning of the lesson, I introduced the children's author on the board, as [my mentor] suggested I should have shown each book I had prepared. [….] I was a bit rushed/panicked as I knew I was behind schedule and I didn't allow the students to ask me the questions when I modelled one of the aboriginals. Actually, I hadn't realised that and my mentor pointed it out for me. (Jane, Reflection)

> My mentor did quite a lot of the work as well. I mean I consulted him regarding a lot of ideas that I had. We also reviewed the lessons every day. So, like what happened, what can be done to improve, why has it happened like this and stuff like that. (Frank, Stimulated Recall)

Feedback from mentors appears to have great influence on the preservice teachers' practice during the professional experience. The following extract from an interview with Frank's mentor teacher exemplifies this:

> We have a number of students in the class that Frank's taking who are from refugee backgrounds. So, seven of the 18 students in the class are from refugee backgrounds. They've had interrupted schooling. They've been dislocated. I think four or five of them are Korean from Burma. So, during our plenary evaluation sessions, I need to remind him to repeat, rephrase, ask checking questions. He tends…, this is no criticism of Frank because I think he's a very competent teacher, he tends to rush, you know, do everything at high speed. […] I noticed that he takes that on board and he really tries. Yesterday's lesson for example he was going very carefully through the article he was reading with the students and asking them questions. (Mr. Scott)

This extract shows Mr. Scott's specific feedback and guidance, grounded in his insider understanding of the school context and the students' background and ability, as well as his extensive experience teaching in such a context. The mentor's feedback played an influential role in shaping Frank's teaching as shown in the last comment in the quote above. This type of mentoring support helped Frank to develop his ability to address the challenges associated with EAL learners' cultural and linguistic diversities, which have been discussed in Chap. 1 as a consequence of neoliberalism. Following is another extract from the interview with Mr. Scott that shows his specific feedback for Frank in developing his ability to cater for students' individual differences:

> Again, the really good kids tend to dominate. They shoot their hands up and Frank goes to them rather than, you know, some of the girls who are sitting quietly at the corner and really struggle with the concepts and the new language that's coming up. Towards the end of a lesson, again he starts to rush. [….] I think Frank has got to pitch his lesson to meet those wide range of abilities I assume that would be true in every school [….]. So yeah, I'm talking to Frank constantly about doing those very basic things. (Mr. Scott)

It can be inferred from the mentor teacher's comment above that at the beginning of the practicum, Frank tended to call upon more active students rather than quiet

ones. He often rushed through the lesson, which he also notes for himself as an area needing improvement, "I think the first time that I did the Olympics story, I think I went a little too fast" (Frank, Reflection). The mentor understands that student diversity is a feature of every Australian school and catering for individual needs is an area that Frank needs to develop as an EAL teacher in this context. Therefore, his feedback was detailed and specific to these areas. This context induction is of importance for preservice teachers, who often lack experience in teaching and are unfamiliar with the teaching context, especially for those like Frank who come from an international background and seek to teach EAL in neoliberal contexts.

5.5.3 Creating Productive Opportunities for Professional Learning

The data show that creating productive opportunities for professional learning is a powerful mentoring strategy. To illustrate this, during the practicum, Kate was assigned to teach the same content and materials to two EAL classes, one beginners and one advanced. This variation in levels was purposefully selected by Ms. Weston to give Kate an opportunity to learn to differentiate her instruction, as the mentor noted:

> I thought I'd give her the opposite ends of the spectrum [….]. So, I thought it'd be better for her to have same age groups […] who are going to the same place next year. They're all going to Year 10 or VCE [….]. I think it's really good for her to see…. I asked her to do pretty much the same materials. Well, she chose what she wants to teach the writing skills, and so I wanted her to do that with both classes so that she would have to learn how to adapt. (Ms. Weston)

This shows that Ms. Weston's mentoring strategy created the need for Kate to differentiate her teaching to suit two groups of different English proficiency levels. Differentiation is theoretically supported by Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the sociocultural concept of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Differentiation recognises that learners are different in terms of their individual levels of development and needs, and teaching should therefore be adapted to provide differentiated scaffolding that suits these individual differences. In an ideal situation, learners should be challenged to work beyond their current level of development and receive differentiated scaffolding support to achieve their level of potential development (Gibbons, 2009; Mariani, 1997). In this study, both Ms. Weston and Kate appear to be well aware of the importance of differentiated instruction and the need for the preservice teacher to develop these skills. This can be seen in the mentor's comment above and what Kate said below when asked about her view on this teaching assignment:

> I thought it was really good actually [….]. I think it's good having two different classes because it stops you making assumptions about what the students can and can't do. You sort of may be a bit more open-minded because their ability's so varied […]. And that was really

> interesting to just show how much you had to adapt it, how different it had to be the two groups. That was really eye-opening, and I think it was a really good thing to exercise. I think in a real teaching situation I could see you have to do it all the time. So, I thought that it was really good that I got the opportunity to do that. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

This excerpt shows that Kate also considers the mentor's deliberate teaching assignment above a very good opportunity for her to develop her teaching skills. Analysis of further data indicates that, as a result of this mentoring strategy, Kate reportedly provided much more scaffolding for the beginning class than the advanced class. She summarised her scaffolding approach as follows:

> I had to really change the way that I taught the different topics and scaffolded much more for the beginning students. So, I had a lot of matching exercises and gap-fill exercises and pre-reading activities and pre-listening activities for them and lots more visuals as well to try and get them to connect with the materials more. (Kate, Reflection)

Kate's reflection above reveals that thanks to the opportunity for teaching the two groups, she learned to differentiate her instruction in a number of areas including content, goals, teaching methods, materials, and quantity of tasks (Roiha, 2014). The mentoring strategy has clearly contributed to Kate's development of responsive teaching, an emerging demand of EAL teaching in the age of neoliberalism, where learners may come with a broad range of abilities and personal needs.

Observing mentors in action is another productive learning opportunity for the preservice teachers. This belongs to the 'way in' phase in the process of seniors working with junior associates, which is an important foundation for the later 'practice' phase (Lave, 1997) where preservice teachers implement their teaching. For example, Jane had many opportunities for observing her mentors and thanks to this she learned to teach aspects of the curriculum that she was not confident in teaching:

> The observing of lessons was great. [….] As I said I wasn't sure how to [teach] a writing assignment, and when I made that clear, after that they put me in writing class to observe, which is SO useful. So, I could actually see how other teachers were teaching students how to write. That was really useful. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

Jane really valued the opportunities to observe her mentors also because she learned new ideas that she could incorporate into her teaching:

> And I think I've sort of always looked to others to get ideas from other teachers. I'm really really like keeping a file of 'Uh, this is this and this and this worked'. You know, you got to observe quite a lot of classes which were really really good and I saw some brilliant teachers and sort of trying to incorporate the way they teach into my teaching, so I think that was good. (Jane, Interview 2)

Here, the quote demonstrates a later stage of the 'way in' phase (Lave, 1997) where the preservice teacher makes initial efforts to implement the good teaching ideas she learned from observing other teachers into her teaching. Clearly, observations constitute an important part of preservice teacher learning, which is, in turn, an essential premise of enhanced teaching practice. Similar to this finding, observing mentors has been documented as a productive source of learning for preservice teachers (Gan, 2014; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008).

The following quotes by Ms. Weston and Mr. Scott add further insights into the productive learning opportunities they offered to their preservice teachers:

> I'm there and observing, but I tried to stay out of her face and things like that. […] I wanted her to feel as much as possible the classroom is her classroom, and not my own classroom. And that's really important for them to become natural, more engaged with the kids. So, I was just like, you know, my ears are open and doing something whatever. (Ms. Weston)

> [I told] the students, you know, '[Frank] is your teacher. I'm not your teacher. Stop asking me questions.' […] I notice they'll come to me if they need to get their computer fixed or if they want to go to the toilet or the locker, and so I don't think they should be coming to me. I think they should be going to Frank a little bit more. (Mr. Scott)

It becomes clear here that the mentor teachers position the preservice teachers as the teachers in charge and themselves as having only a supporting role to assist the preservice teachers in their learning. As noted in Ms. Weston's comment above, this positioning allows the preservice teachers to 'become natural, more engaged with the kids', a necessary opportunity for preservice teachers to learn to navigate themselves through the complexities of the practicum context, and negotiate these complexities to be part of the context and practices (Graves, 2009). This positioning is aligned with the transformative mentoring principles (Brandt, 2006), where preservice teachers have the opportunity to experiment with their role as teachers in order to socialise into the teaching profession. It is also theoretically supported by a sociocultural perspective on teacher learning where the learning experience is co-constructed and two-way and the community plays an important role in the learning process (Johnson, 2009; Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White et al., 2010; White & Forgasz, 2016). Such a mentoring approach is in sharp contrast to the findings of some research studies in the literature where preservice teachers experience challenges during the practicum because the way they position themselves as a teacher is in conflict with how they are positioned by their mentor teachers. This literature shows that preservice teachers encounter disturbing challenges in learning to play their teacher role (Nguyen, 2014; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017; M. H. Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen & Parr, 2018; Trent, 2013), which resonates with the 'transfer' mentoring approach that is often criticised (Brandt, 2006).

5.6 Implications

The study reported in this chapter investigated the mentoring practices provided to Frank, Kate, and Jane as a source of support for professional learning during the teaching practicum in Australian secondary schools. In general, analysis of the data sources has shown that three major types of mentoring support were manifested, namely encouragement of risk-taking and agency, provision of constructive advice and feedback, and provision of productive opportunities for professional learning. Closer examination of these mentoring practices has shown that they were largely shaped by the preservice teachers' individual learning needs and the mentors' prior experience and knowledge in relation to English language teaching.

Such mentoring practices had strong impact on the cognition of the preservice teachers in ways that allowed for experimental learning to take place. Overall, the mentoring support enabled the preservice teachers to productively resolve tensions in their professional experiences, generated positive emotional responses, and fostered positive professional learning outcomes. The support provided by the mentors also contributed to preparing the preservice teachers for addressing the challenges of teaching EAL in neoliberal contexts characterised by EAL learners' diversities.

The first type of support, encouraging risk-taking and agency, is powerful in that it gives the preservice teachers the freedom and safe and supported space to trial their implementation of theoretical knowledge into a real-life classroom context and to be agentive in developing teaching plans that suit their learners as well as their own resources. This transformative mentoring approach has been claimed to be the most productive form of mentoring relations (Brandt, 2006; Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White et al., 2010; White & Forgasz, 2016) and to help bridge the theory–practice divide in teacher education (White & Forgasz, 2016). The second type of support, constructive feedback and advice, provided opportunities for the preservice teachers to learn about the context of teaching including the learners' characteristics and levels of abilities, and devised teaching plans that helped to manage challenging learners and scaffolded learning. This support also provided specific directions for the preservice teachers in exercising teacher agency in situations when their own resources alone were not adequate to deal with an unfamiliar teaching context. The third type of mentoring support, creating productive opportunities for professional learning, was instrumental in that it created the opportunity and need for the preservice teachers to differentiate their teaching to suit different learner ability levels, to observe and learn new effective teaching ideas, and especially to learn to assume the teacher role and be part of the teaching context rather than taking a marginal role under the mentor's supervision.

The findings, therefore, lend support to the relevant literature (e.g., Gan, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012; Nguyen & Parr, 2018; Nguyen & Penry Williams, forthcoming; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008; Yuan & Lee, 2014) in claiming that mentoring by school-based teachers if strategically and effectively implemented is an essential source of learning for preservice teachers as they transition to the teaching profession. The study also confirms the role of community, in this case the mentor teachers, in preservice teachers' process of learning to teach English language. It is an example to demonstrate that teacher learning is socioculturally constructed and occurs through participation in sociocultural interactions and contexts (Johnson, 2006, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978, 1981). With reference to the literature on ineffective mentoring relationships (e.g., Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2014; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2017; M. H. Nguyen, 2017; Trent, 2013; Yuan, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2014), the study highlights the importance of developing mentorship that fosters reciprocal learning communities where preservice teachers learn from mentors and mentors learn from preservice teachers (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008).

While the present study and the relevant literature (e.g., Gan, 2014; Gao & Benson, 2012; Nguyen & Parr, 2018; Nguyen & Penry Williams, forthcoming; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008; Yuan & Lee, 2014) suggest that support from men-

tors is key in preservice professional learning, it is no less important for preservice teachers to exercise and further develop agency in their work. This is because it allows them to access the resources they bring into the practicum, which may include their prior professional and life experiences, the knowledge and understandings they gained during teacher education course work, their cultural values and especially their professional identity (Miller, 2007, 2009) in developing their teaching expertise. While most preservice teachers still need support in their transition during the practicum due to the complexities of the unfamiliar teaching contexts and perhaps their lack of classroom experience, they should be trusted to bring on these resources, yet supported when necessary to help make this transition smooth, formative, and rewarding. There are ways, as demonstrated in this study and the relevant literature, in which mentors can be influential without being controlling, and this resonates well with the 'high challenge–high support' zone where optimal learning occurs (Mariani, 1997) and the concept of mediated agency in teacher work (Lasky, 2005; Wertsch et al., 1993; Yang, 2015).

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Chapter 6
Mentoring in Professional Experience: A Source of Tensions and Emotions



Abstract While mentoring can be an essential source of support for teacher learning during the professional experience (Chap. 5), this chapter presents another research example to demonstrate that it can be a source of tensions and negative emotions that have strong influence on preservice teachers' learning. Qualitative data from interviews, stimulated recall, and reflections show that some tensions and emotions motivate change to satisfy the professional experience requirements while others inhibit productive learning. With insights into personal and contextual sources of such tensions and emotions, the chapter discusses implications for research and practice with a view to developing productive professional experience in English language teacher education in Australia and other neoliberal contexts.

Keywords Mentoring · Professional experience · Tensions · Contradiction · Emotions · Sociocultural perspective

Some narratives about Maria, one of the two participants in this study have appeared in Nguyen and Brown (2016) with permission from Australian Journal of Teacher Education and Nguyen and Parr (2018) with permission from Springer Nature. The 2016 paper focuses on factors influencing writing instruction by three preservice teachers including Maria. The 2018 chapter contains some findings about mentoring practices experienced by Maria. The current chapter incorporates more insights about Maria's mentoring relationship and adds new findings about another preservice teacher based in a different school context. The current chapter makes new contributions by focusing exclusively on mentoring, providing richer empirical evidence, and offering insights gained through a sociocultural perspective on mentoring.

6.1 Tensions in Mentoring Relationships

The research reported in this book is underpinned by a sociocultural perspective on second language teacher learning. Activity theory as a descendent theory of sociocultural theory offers the concept of contradictions (Engeström, 1987, 2001), which is influential and useful for the study on mentoring relations in this chapter. Contradic-

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tions, defined as "historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems", are seen as the driving force behind transformational and innovative developments (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). They may cause tensions and impede development but can also trigger transformations through the process of resolving the tensions (e.g., Dang, 2013; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). Understanding tensions in mentoring relationships and how participants resolve them can, therefore, offer insights into teacher cognition (Ahn, 2011; Dang, 2013; Golombek & Klager, 2015; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) influential genetic method, which argues that the only method to fully understand human higher mental development is to trace its origins. In the current study, tensions between preservice EAL teachers as learners of teaching and their mentors as members of the practicum community are focused on in the analysis.

There has been considerable scholarship on the tensions that occur in the relationship between school mentors and preservice language teachers. The first common type of tension is between the two parties' views and practices of teaching. For example, in observing their mentors' lessons, the preservice teachers in Trent (2011) were sometimes very critical of the mentors' practices, which they described as 'unfair' and 'unreasonable' towards students (Trent, 2011, p. 537) or 'boring' and 'outdated' pedagogies that failed to interest and engage students (p. 539). The preservice teachers sought to establish their 'modern' and 'inspiring' teaching approaches in contrast with what they observed. Similarly, Atay (2007) found that preservice teachers were in tension with their mentors' use of traditional exams and teaching methods, controlling role, and ineffective classroom management. Brandt (2006) also reports similar tensions when preservice teachers saw that the ways their mentors taught were in contrast with what they had learned at university, and they found it difficult to conform to the mentors' expectation that they teach in similar ways. In some other studies (e.g., Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2010; Riesky, 2013; Trent, 2013; Yuan, 2016), tensions related to teaching methods are often coupled with mentors' assessment authority and a 'being told'/'transfer' mentoring approach (Brandt, 2006), which demands that preservice teachers teach in ways insisted on by mentors and inconsistent with their desired methods such as communicative language teaching, interactive language teaching, and student-centred language teaching.

The second type of tensions in mentoring relationships is between what preservice teachers' need or expect and how support is provided by their mentors. For instance, Atay (2007) found that preservice teachers who reported low self-efficacy attributed their limited ability to improve teaching to the mentors' lack of interaction. Farrell's (2008) also demonstrates that the majority of the 55 preservice teachers who participated in the study considered their mentor unhelpful, and this made them feel abandoned and uncomfortable in the schools. Mentors' rare observations and poor quality feedback were also criticised by preservice teachers in Nguyen's (2010) study. Similarly, the lack of guidance from mentors was a frequent issue in a study by Riesky (2013). A preservice teacher in Yuan's (2016) study did not receive the support she needed from her mentor for integrating into the school community and became an outsider, rejected, and distant from the community.

Tensions in mentoring relationships often lead to intense emotional experiences for preservice teachers. Section 6.3 below elaborates on this link and the consequence it has on preservice teachers' professional learning.

6.2 Emotion in Mentoring Relationships

Teacher emotion is seen as an essential part of teacher cognition and therefore has received increasing attention in English language teacher education. From a sociocultural perspective on learning, Vygotsky argues that "there exists a dynamic meaningful system that constitutes *a unity of affective and intellectual processes*" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 50, original emphasis). Empirically, there is a substantial body of research on preservice English language teachers' school-based practicums that sheds light on the emotional dimension of teacher learning. While a small body of literature in the TESOL field documents some positive emotions in mentoring relationships (Gao & Benson, 2012; Nguyen, 2010; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008), the majority of current relevant studies in the field of TESOL report negative emotions, often associated with tensions in mentoring relationships. Among the causes of negative emotions, the difference between preservice teachers' expectations and the realities in schools, including mentors' disposition, is a common issue (Atay, 2007; Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2010; Trent, 2013; Yuan, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2015). An issue often highlighted in this literature as influential on preservice teachers' negative emotions is the power relationships they have with their mentors.

Insights into preservice English language teachers' emotions have contributed to understandings of their professional learning. Positive emotions have been found to contribute to stimulate better problem-solving and coping skills (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Sometimes, negative emotions can be productive to preservice teachers' learning. For example, some preservice teachers are found to respond productively to their negative emotions by obtaining support from their mentors, other teachers, or peers and working to resolve issues causing their emotions (Dang, 2013; Gao & Benson, 2012; Riesky, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2015). Yet more often than not, preservice teachers are found to compromise with the existing rules in schools and power relations with their mentors and give up on applying their existing knowledge into the practice lessons (Atay, 2007; Brandt, 2006; Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2010; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013; Trent, 2013). Sometimes, preservice teachers respond so negatively to negative emotions to the point that they consider the practicum a failure and doubt their prospect and suitability as an English language teacher (Benson, 2012; Farrell, 2008). However, teacher educators' validation of preservice teachers' emotions, including negative ones, can lead to rich learning opportunities and productive growth points (Golombek & Doran, 2014). Researchers have also found strong two-way relationships between preservice teachers' emotions and professional identity development, with emotions fostering, impeding, or having a mixed influence on identity development and identity informing or shaping emotional responses (Dang, 2013; Golombek & Klager, 2015; Yuan & Lee, 2015).

The literature has contributed significantly to the current understandings of school-based mentoring in the English language teaching professional experience. In addition to being an important source of support for preservice teachers' learning (Chap. 5), the literature review in this chapter has demonstrated that mentoring can be a source of tensions and emotions which can sometimes drive professional development but more often have a negative impact on preservice English language teachers' learning. Although the studies reviewed cumulatively address a range of tensions and emotions experienced by preservice English language teachers on practicums and their influence on teacher learning, there is a shortage of research that holistically and systematically examines all the interrelated issues namely tensions in mentoring relationships, emotional responses, and teacher learning and the intertwined relationships among them. This chapter attempts to address this gap by using sociocultural theory, especially the concept of contradictions in social relationships, as an analytical lens to investigate the issues and their links. More specifically, the chapter examines the tensions in mentoring relationships experienced by two preservice EAL teachers during their secondary EAL placements in Australia. It explores the emotions that the preservice teachers developed as a result of such tensions. Finally, the chapter seeks to understand how the tensions and emotions impacted on the preservice teachers' learning during the EAL professional experience.

6.3 Methods

In order to achieve the research objectives above, a qualitative study design was used in this study. The research reported in this chapter involved two preservice teachers enrolled in an EAL preservice teacher education programme at Greystone University. Ethics approvals and voluntary written informed consent were obtained from institutions and participants, respectively. Jane, an Australian in her 50s, had a B.A. in Japanese and lived in Japan with her family for a number of years before returning to Australia. She started the EAL teacher education programme with a view to teaching English language in Australia, Japan, or any other countries that her family might later move to. Maria, in her late 20s, is from Russia. She had learned English for about 20 years, mostly at school and university in Russia. Maria obtained a Bachelor of Teaching Histories from a Russian university. She taught English in China for two years without a relevant teaching qualification before she came to Australia and enrolled in the teacher education programme at Greystone University. Jane and Maria were placed in two different secondary schools in Melbourne to do a two-week EAL teaching practicum during which data collection took place. As previously mentioned, Jane failed the placement despite her relevant teaching experiences. This was largely due to the tensions that are unpacked in this chapter. Maria is an illustrative case of an international preservice teacher who struggled with the demands of the placement and received minimal support from her mentor but eventually passed. Together with Jane and Maria, Ms. Davies, who was Maria's

mentor, also participated in the research. Jane had two mentors, but they were not involved in the study due to the lack of timely principal's permission.

Each preservice teacher participated in two semi-structured individual interviews, one before the placement and the other after. Each interview was approximately 60 min long. Each preservice teacher also participated in a stimulated recall session with the use of lesson plans, audio recordings of lessons, and teaching resources as stimuli. In addition, the preservice teachers' written reflections, which were a required component of their practicum, were also analysed for relevant excerpts. The participating mentor teacher was interviewed individually once towards the end of the practicum. The verbal data were first transcribed, and then all data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. Underpinned by the core sociocultural principles discussed in Chap. 3, namely social origins of learning, teachers as learners of teaching, and contradictions in social relations, the analysis focused on identifying the tensions between preservice teachers and their mentor teachers and how such tensions shaped their emotional responses and cognition.

6.4 Findings

Three types of tensions were found in the data, namely contradictions between (1) the preservice teachers' needs/expectations and the mentors' inadequate support, (2) perceptions by the two parties in terms of preservice teacher learning, and (3) the two parties' perceptions and practices of teaching. These tensions induced a number of emotions, mostly negative, for the preservice teachers, and these together had a strong impact on the preservice teachers' learning experiences. The findings on tensions, emotions, and their impact on the preservice teachers' professional learning are discussed in more detail below.

6.4.1 Contradictions Between Preservice Teachers' Learning Needs and Mentors' Support

There is rich evidence in the data to demonstrate that Jane and Maria experienced tensions in the relationships with their mentors as a result of the contradictions between their expectations or needs and the mentors' inadequate support. Both Jane and Maria's experiences resonate well with Jane's comment, "I had to work it out like a puzzle" because their expectations/needs were not met by the mentors and they struggled to navigate the professional experience. These tensions caused the preservice teachers to feel negatively about their mentoring relationships and the professional experience as a whole.

For Jane, the following excerpt provides some background information for understanding her overall practicum experience:

> I was kind of feeling like it's the feeling that you've done the wrong thing and you know 'Oh, I'm not good enough. Maybe I shouldn't be a teacher.' And that's how I was made to feel after that, you know, when they gave me my report and you know just Fail, Fail, Fail, Fail [….]. It's a huge hit in the face, you know what I mean. [….] And you know I just thought it was a shame that […] everything had to fall apart because of this really bad lesson. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

The quote shows strong emotions that Jane experienced as she received a Fail for her practicum due to an unsuccessful lesson. This is clearly evident through the highly emotive phrase "a huge hit in the face" and her loss of self-confidence and efficacy as she recounted, "Oh, I'm not good enough. Maybe I shouldn't be a teacher". Such a response is relevant to what Benson (2012) describes as emotional crises that made preservice teachers feel convinced that the professional experience was a failure and that teaching would not be a suitable career for them. In the interview, Jane mostly attributed her unsuccessful lesson and practicum and intense emotions to mentorship. Here is an example:

> It came out as my bad lesson; I'm inexperienced. But, you know, if the mentor, if she insisted […] that we prepare the writing task right at the beginning before we do all the lessons, this whole thing never happened. You know, I would have had a better idea from the beginning. [….] Well, I knew that […], she said, you know, 'You're going do whatever you like really, biography, lessons on biography, and then in the end they'll have to write a biography themselves.' I knew that. But in retrospect, if I were the mentor, and without Fail, I would've had the student teacher give me the work on the writing exercise first and I think if that had happened, the whole thing would've been alright. (Jane, Interview 2)

Here, Jane seems to acknowledge her lack of experience in teaching writing, which contributed to her unsuccessful lesson, but she also mentioned her need for mentoring support in this very area. The excerpt above sheds further light on the contradiction between Jane's need as a preservice teacher and mentoring. This contradiction contributed to Jane's failed lesson, which led to her failed practicum, and that was the main cause of her intense emotions described above.

The data also reveal Jane's emotion of disappointment at the lack of mentoring support in terms of teaching resources:

> One thing which I found disappointing at the school too is they didn't give me any resources or show me any resources. […] You know, I spent huge amount of time just searching for and creating resources and that sort of thing. And towards the end I was starting to think, 'Oh, this little thing at the bottom of the sheet! Um Okay, so that's the resource they use.' [….] Like, I had to work it out like a puzzle. I didn't get much assistance in terms of what's available to, you know, teach the subject. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

In this excerpt, Jane reveals that she did not receive support in terms of the resources she could use for her assigned teaching, or resources the mentor was using at the very least. In other parts of the interviews, Jane says that she was expected to teach students how to write a biography, and that guidance was broad and was the only guidance she received. This left the preservice teacher inadequately guided and she had to search for and create resources herself. It is not known from the data whether that was an intentional mentoring strategy so that the preservice teacher would have the opportunity to develop their expertise in material development. However, from

Jane's comment above, there is a clear sign of disappointment on Jane's part and the mismatch between Jane's needs and mentoring support. It also suggests that there might be an issue with communication between the two parties resulting in the preservice teacher's needs not clearly known to the mentor and the mentor's expectation unclear to the preservice teacher.

Similar to Jane's story, there were several contradictions between Maria and her mentor teacher with regard to mentoring support. First, Maria expected Ms. Davies to provide her with clear guidelines to follow during her placement and a curriculum document which specified the requirements she needed to meet, the students' EAL proficiency level, and the expected learning outcomes for the students. She said:

> I would love to see, like, if I could see any curriculum documents to see what is required from me and in terms of assessment outcomes, it would be really helpful. And if I would see what the students' work is leading to. (Maria, Stimulated Recall)

However, when Maria started the placement, her mentor did not provide any school curriculum document for EAL. Maria recalled:

> I asked my mentor if they had some sort of curriculum documents or any sort of requirements. And she was like 'Yeah, for Year 10, we're doing *Jane Eyre*,' and I'm like 'Oh! It didn't feel like any sort of curriculum document for me and I didn't quite see it.' So there were no strict criteria. Basically, there were no guidelines that I could follow. And I asked about their [EAL Developmental Continuum] levels, she was like, 'Oh yeah approximately this and this.' So, there was no actual assessment of students as such. (Maria, Stimulated Recall, see also Nguyen (2014, p. 74))

Secondly, Maria expressed an expectation for more affective support from the mentor teacher. She said, "In other situations I would get that supportive feeling and my mentor sort of tells me that, you know, it's okay to make mistakes, and they wouldn't actually tell me that I made all the mistakes, so that was good for confidence" (Maria, Interview 2). Maria recounted her experience with Ms. Davies, "I didn't feel quite supported in that sense. I didn't get that supportive feeling from my mentor" (Maria, Interview 2). She further elaborated in the stimulated recall session that she felt the lack of affective support from her mentor because she was under constant surveillance and the mentor was giving her feedback which focused on her mistakes.

Thirdly, Maria also expected that Ms. Davies would provide her with more guidance on content knowledge to teach EAL through a literary text. This expectation was not met by her mentor. Maria commented on this tension in the following excerpt:

> Because I lacked the content knowledge, […] and I didn't have time to read the whole *Jane Eyre* thing, […] if my mentor could let me, just say, focus on something or just clarify some content knowledge, [but] she mentioned to me that it is my second placement so I should know all these things. (Maria, Stimulated Recall)

Maria was aware of her limited knowledge of the text and how to teach it, but she could not resolve the issue herself during the placement due to limited time and multiple tasks. That is, as soon as Maria finished her SOSE[1] placement, she

[1] SOSE (Study of Society and Environment) is Maria's other specialism.

began her EAL teaching straight away, and the EAL practicum was announced on the weekend between the SOSE and EAL placements, only one day before it started, which did not give her time to meet with her EAL mentor in advance in order to get an outline of what she would be teaching and the guidelines and resources that she could use. In addition, once she started teaching, she had three different level groups to teach, which required much lesson planning and put a lot of pressure on her. Under the circumstances, she expected the mentor to provide more support in terms of materials and guidance on content. However, this expectation was not met by Ms. Davies because the mentor had a contradictory expectation, as the mentor confirmed below:

> I expect that they would […], you know, have all of the academic thinking side of it and all the lesson plans. I expect that they'd already had that and that at this stage they would've been able to go up in front of the class and actually teach and say, 'OK, this is the things that I wanted them to do'. (Ms. Davies)

Given the lack of both academic and affective support, Maria experienced intense emotion of frustration, as she narrated:

> I found it really really frustrating because I didn't know where to start, and I had to, like, fill in and start it from the beginning. [….] I felt frustrated for the first week. I just didn't know what is required from me. And not only I was not familiar with the content, my mentor teacher kept saying that I need to focus on learning outcome that I had no idea where I should get them from. I didn't have any documents, and I didn't get the definition of learning outcomes. (Maria, Stimulated Recall, see also Nguyen (2014, p. 75))

Maria's narratives show that the tensions experienced in her mentoring relationship were mainly caused by the contradictions between her needs and expectations and the mentor's guidance. Through emotive language, Maria reported that she did not receive useful guidance, either in the form of a curriculum document, guidelines, requirements, criteria, learning outcomes, or assessment of students' proficiency levels.

The lack of a mentor's guidance and negative emotional experiences reported above had a severe impact on Jane and Maria's professional learning experiences. For both preservice teachers, this means they had to navigate the professional experience mostly on their own based on their limited teaching experience and familiarity with the teaching contexts, especially the curriculum, materials, and students. For Jane, the outcome was a fail on the practicum, which led to severe damage in her self-confidence and self-efficacy to the point that she doubted her ability to become an EAL teacher. For Maria, although in the end she passed the practicum, the whole experience was a stressful and frustrating one rather than one that focused on her learning and growth.

6.4.2 Contradictions Between Preservice Teachers and Mentors' Expectations

Jane and Maria perceived themselves as preservice teachers in the process of learning to teach EAL. However, that was in tension with their mentors' expectations of them, leading to negative emotions that the preservice teachers went through. The tensions and their subsequent emotions contributed to the preservice teachers' unproductive practicum experiences.

Jane recounted her surprise and disappointment at her mentor's expectation that she should be an experienced preservice teacher to teach at the school:

> They told me, 'We were told by the placement officer that you were an experienced teacher and […] we don't take student teachers in the first round because we need experienced people.' And I even said 'Look, I'm a student teacher. I'm here to learn. You can't expect me to be perfect […]', but they do. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

This excerpt sheds some light on the communication between the university's placement officer and the school when placing Jane. Because of Jane's profile as an English language teacher in Japan for a number of years, both parties might have come to the conclusion that she was an experienced EAL teacher. While such experience is truly valuable for preservice teachers to draw on in their learning, the mentor here seemed to forget that Jane was undergoing her formal EAL teacher education course and that the focus of this course is on teaching EAL in Australian secondary schools, which is different from the Japanese English language teaching context in terms of teacher registration requirements, students, and curriculum. Jane appears to be surprised and disappointed at the mentor's expectation and the emotions got stronger as the interview continued:

> I was told, 'We've decided not to let you teach any further because the students are only here for 2 terms and […] we don't want the students to waste their time with a student teacher. We were of the understanding that you are an experienced teacher, just getting your paper qualification and da da da da'. And I'm like, 'What?' [….] 'What do you mean? You've been so encouraging up until this point.' Anyway, after we talked a bit, they said 'Okay, you can continue teaching next week.' (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

In both excerpts above, through Jane's eyes, her mentor also seems to view the preservice teacher's role in the practicum as someone to fill the job of a graduate teacher. This led to their disappointment when they did not see such an expected level of experience in Jane's performance, as Jane narrated. The words used by the mentor as Jane recalled also show some degree of unfriendliness to the preservice teacher, hinting an unfriendly and unhelpful mentoring relationship that Jane was going through. The following quote adds further insights into the contrastive views on preservice teacher learning between Jane and her mentor:

> I just thought it was a shame that […] everything had to fall apart because of this really bad lesson, and I knew it was bad. But and at the same time I thought it was good, it's good that I showed them a bad lesson so that I can learn how to do it, because I need to learn how to do this particular part of the course. Um but that was… (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

Here, Jane sees the practicum as an opportunity for her to learn to teach, especially in areas where she is not confident such as teaching biography writing. This is because she believes that the mentor with experience and expertise would provide her with feedback on her practice so that she could improve it. However, Jane was disappointed that instead of receiving such expected support, she failed the whole practicum because of a bad lesson. The mentor's unreasonable expectation of a preservice teacher could have been the cause of their above-mentioned oversight of their role as a school-based teacher educator, who is expected to mentor and guide the preservice teacher in their learning rather than just assessing her. As a result of this, Jane lost the opportunity to learn from her mentor and develop her teaching skills based on mentoring.

Similar to Jane, Maria experienced a number of tensions with her mentor due to contradictions relating to views on preservice learning and mentoring. Firstly, Ms. Davies stated her expectation that all EAL preservice teachers need to have a really good knowledge of grammar and an ability to teach it well in a way for grammar "to be part of something else in order for those kids to get it" (Ms. Davies). She further explained the need for a good knowledge of grammar:

> They need a hold onto the language and if you don't feel very confident with grammar, it's very hard to say, 'Oh, that's how it is.' So for me, I find that […] the one thing that I expect my student teachers to have is a really good grasp of grammar because […] those are the bits where the extra learning comes in into every class. (Ms. Davies, see also Nguyen (2017, p. 410))

However, in the beginning, Maria struggled with this requirement. She admitted having difficulties while she was explaining grammar to her students. Maria recounted, "It was a bit hard to explain 'get married' though, I need to work on explanations a bit more" (Maria, Reflection). From this experience, Maria learned that, "sometimes it's better not to overcomplicate things and just tell students to remember that structure" (Maria, Reflection). However, this approach conflicted with Ms. Davies' view that, "if you don't feel very confident with grammar, it's very hard to say, 'Oh, that's how it is'" (Ms. Davies).

Another type of contradiction was identified between Maria's use of a pedagogical tool called TEEL framework (Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence, and Link) and Ms. Davies' expectation that preservice teachers should "check every single aspect" (Ms. Davies) of the material before teaching it. While Maria believed that TEEL was a "really helpful" and "really structured" (Maria, Stimulated Recall) tool for teaching paragraph writing, she was not successful in making it useful for her class. Note the excerpts below:

> It seems that girls don't quite get the TEEL structure and that it could be different and I didn't quite explain it well, so we would need to work on it again. (Maria, Reflection)

> There was a sheet that [Maria] brought into explain how to do TEEL, for example, and she said, 'OK guys, let's go through the vocabulary,' and some of the kids didn't know some of the words and I don't know if she actually knows what the words were. So at that point, you know, I had to like, I actually say, 'That's what it means,' and that's not good. (Ms. Davies, see also Nguyen (2017, pp. 410-411))

This lack of success was, according to Maria, due to the fact that she had only encountered this approach just before her placement and lacked experience in using it for teaching EAL. She recalled:

> Well actually, I had never heard of TEEL before I spoke to one of my colleagues, like, a student from Greystone, who used to be a student teacher with the same mentor. So I called her just before my placement and spoke to her, like, for ideas and hints for me or what to do. She mentioned TEEL. I'm like 'No idea what TEEL is,' but anyway I Googled it up. And yeah, actually, there are not many resources online on TEEL, so I had to come up with some of my own, and so I just got it from her. (Maria, Stimulated Recall)

Ms. Davies was apparently not impressed with the use of TEEL because Maria failed to adhere to the rule of knowing well what she taught. Ms. Davies said:

> You know, you need to be prepared for eventualities like that. If you're going to give kids an activity, you need to be two steps in front of them. You can't actually say, 'I don't know what it is' or 'I'll get back to you' because you lose face in front of them, [….] or [you] won't give them an activity that [you haven't] really checked every single aspect of it before. (Ms. Davies)

The contradictions mentioned above put Maria under much pressure and made her feel anxious in the mentoring relationship.

> I feel that I was just not confident in my strengths, so I felt that I should stick to the safer ground and pass. […] I also had a person watching me so I didn't want to lose my confidence totally that I already felt that I didn't have. (Maria, Interview 2, see also Nguyen (2014, p. 76))

In both Jane and Maria's stories, it was clear that while the preservice teachers were of the view that they were preservice teachers placed in a school to learn to teach, and the mentors were expected to mentor them in the learning experience. On the other hand, the mentors held a contrasting view that the preservice teachers should be able to teach independently as experienced and even expert teachers. These conflicting views caused the preservice teachers to feel negatively about their mentoring relationships and learning experiences. Such relationships hindered the opportunities for the preservice teachers to learn from the mentors and develop their teaching expertise.

6.4.3 Contradictions Between Preservice Teachers and Mentors' Views and Practices of Teaching

The third type of tension in the mentoring relationships that the data reveal is in terms of instructional views and practices. Similar to the two types of tensions presented above, this third type of tension induced emotional responses and impacted on the preservice teachers' professional learning experiences during the practicum.

Jane recounted a contradiction between her and her mentor's views on selecting materials for EAL students:

> Well, right from the start, we've kind of had different views about what was important. For example, like she gave me the broad thing, biographies, who you do that's up to you. You know, you choose whichever famous Australians you want. [….] And then just that one thing I suggested to her is […] one author who I thought was very good and was very popular amongst primary children and, you know, he's popular because he gets kids who don't like to read to read. And I just thought this is the interesting thing for the ESL students who might want to read but need texts that are a little, you know, easier to read than the normal stuff and I just thought it would be […] a useful thing for them. But she said 'No, no, no! That's looking down on them. That's too easy for them. I don't mind if you do lots of children authors and look at that from that point of view.' And I thought, 'Okay, that's fine.' So, I picked out several children authors. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

In this excerpt, Jane appears to have a justifiable view on what material is suitable for her EAL students to read. She wanted to choose texts that are slightly lower than the students' proficiency level and popular among primary students so that they would be interested in reading. This view is well supported by the literature on teaching reading and extensive reading (Macalister, 2011; Nation, 2000, 2007, 2009), which argues that the text should be interesting to the learners and most of the knowledge required to understand the text should be within the previous experience of the learners in order for the intended learning outcome to be achieved. However, the mentor seemed to disagree with Jane on this and strongly suggested Jane choose texts from multiple authors to increase the difficulty level. In this tension and power relationship, Jane had to abandon her choice of texts from a single author to follow the mentor's suggestion. It is interesting to note in the following extract how Jane's view was confirmed by the students' response to the reading text she initially chose for them.

> But just like in the class, I noticed, you know'cause I got them to do written homework, and they just confirmed what I thought: 'Oh, he started reading this book.' 'I was so interested in this book because I knew this is a book that Australian kids who don't like reading like to read. So I want to read a book that those kids [read].' And they said they really are reading it and just I thought 'Yeah, that's right. Who cares if it's lower level if it gets kids to read? It's improving their ability, you know. And the ESL students, any students need to read to improve their ability.' (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

Here, Jane appears to feel pleasure in knowing that the students responded well to her selected text. This also had a positive impact on her sense of self as a teacher who could make an effective decision in her teaching despite the conflicting view held by her mentor. The statement, "Who cares if it's lower level if it gets kids to read? It's improving their ability", also reveals another strong emotion she felt about the mentor's suggestion. Being confirmed by the students' response, Jane was more determined to continue with what she considered effective:

> And I thought, 'Okay, let's do another lesson on this and actually let them read extracts from each author and give a presentation.' And I thought it was really good and they were interested and they read the excerpts and they had an extra feel for what the author… and they gave a presentation and I thought, you know, everything was good. (Jane, Stimulated Recall)

In the mentoring relationship between Maria and Ms. Davies, several contradictions were also identified in relation to conceptions and practices of teaching. Firstly,

there was a tension between Ms. Davies and Maria's view of EAL learning outcomes. Maria said:

> My mentor teacher kept saying that I need to focus on learning outcomes, and I had no idea where I should get them from. I didn't have any documents, and I didn't get the definition of learning outcomes. [….] But later on, I sort of clarified it with her and I understood that learning outcomes in her understanding was the one that like students will…what the students will learn, while in my understanding learning outcome would be based on the curriculum documents and what students need to get to. So, it was a bit different and yeah but anyway, I figured out in the end. (Maria, Stimulated Recall, see also Nguyen (2014, p. 75))

The comments show Maria's impression that while Ms. Davies conceptualised learning outcomes as what the students will achieve, Maria understood the term as the prescribed learning goals that the students need to attain. In the beginning, Maria was confused by this lack of shared understanding of learning goals, and she did not have any documents which defined learning outcomes for her to resort to. It took some time after Maria had discussed the issue with Ms. Davies for the contradiction to be resolved.

The second contradiction of this type was found between Maria and Ms. Davies' different views on the relationship between the teacher and students. While Maria wanted to be friendly to her students, Ms. Davies had a conflicting view and professional style.

> Students were quite interested, especially Year 9s because I taught them [SOSE] before and I would love to talk to them more and, like, to tell them more about myself, but I think my mentor didn't quite want me to do so because she didn't quite want me to be their friend [….]. I was like, 'Okay, but I would not see any problem at all. Why not? That was just a friendly thing to do.' (Maria, Interview 2)

> She's fairly strict with students. […] She can joke around a little bit, but does still have a professional level, and she has said, 'It's not about being a friend of the students, it's just like being professional and teaching them.' So sometimes I felt that she's a bit overly strict. (Maria, Stimulated Recall)

Maria confirmed that the conflicting viewpoints in terms of teacher–student relationship were restricting her practice. She had to adapt to her mentor's style to be safe, as she said:

> So, I was like 'Oh OK.' So, it's just restricted me already and I felt a sort of constant observation, so I had to sort of play [by] the rules. (Maria, Interview 2)

Through the data, a third contradiction was revealed between Maria's preferred teaching approach and her mentor's teaching style. In Maria's view, students learned best when they were engaged in collaborative communicative activities, guessing, and independent thinking. However, she also acknowledged the need to have a good combination of student-centred and teacher-centred approaches in catering for the different abilities and needs of students. She elaborated on her conceptions of effective EAL teaching when asked to describe her ideal EAL classroom in terms of teacher and student roles:

> Communicative classroom ideally, but I think it's just a combination of different activities like student-oriented, teacher-directed or like teacher and students working together. I think you

> can introduce a lot of different ways of communicative in an ideal classroom, and different methods. But I think you just don't want to get distracted by this one sort of area. Like you know I think communicative classrooms are really good, but sometimes […] you would need to pay attention to some, like, self-study or self-learning because communicative it could sometimes […] get really distracting. So, students do need to learn how to study on their own as well. But while even group work […] is great in terms of language practice, sharing your ideas or like in the area that you can't really do at home, for example. But you still need to focus on different aspects as well. It just really depends on the level of the students and for what […] purpose you're teaching and what criteria or what the requirements are. I guess balance of everything. (Maria, Interview 1)

While Maria confirmed her preference for a balanced teaching approach, she noticed that her mentor had a contradictory teaching style, which was, in her words, "traditional" and "teacher-centred":

> I felt that it is too much teacher-centred lessons. While I like students to do a bit of [guessing] and independent thinking, she would […] just tell the answer, wouldn't make students think. So, she said, like, 'Oh we don't have time, just tell them the answer.' So, I didn't quite feel comfortable with that, but it's just different approaches, I guess. (Maria, Stimulated Recall, see also Nguyen (2014, pp. 73–74))

> I would want my students to think first and question them and make them think, while in the placement it was mostly about giving answers; they were writing and like passive receivers, and I would not want that to happen. (Maria, Interview 2)

Maria later noted that despite her strong teaching approach preference, the contradiction she perceived between her and the mentor's preferred teaching approaches influenced her teaching during the placement. She said:

> If I was about to teach, I would incorporate more sort of group work and stuff, but like, I had to adjust to what my mentor wanted from me, so like, it's just the way I had to do it, […] I had to suck it up (laugh). (Maria, Stimulated Recall)

> I had to adjust to her teaching style […] and I think we were just talking in different languages, and I just had to give up all my sort of ideas and themes that I wanted to do and to adjust to my mentor teacher because I needed to get a good report. So in that sense like yeah it was a bit frustrating because I had hoped that I would get a chance to do, like, experiments. […] I felt …, I don't know, just really bad falling through whatever I'm doing. Like, she was watching me very closely and giving me a lot of feedback (Maria, Stimulated Recall, see also Nguyen (2014, p. 75) and Nguyen (2017, p. 408))

The stimulated recall extracts above reveal that the contradiction was quite intense for Maria, and she had to adjust to her mentor's teaching style as a strategy to temporarily resolve the contradiction, in hopes of getting a good placement report. This contradiction shows the power relationships within the context of school-based placement. Because of the power relationships, there was little opportunity for Maria to construct her personal teaching style during the placement. However, she consistently confirmed her teaching style as more 'learner-centred'. Yet, adopting the mentor's teaching approach caused another contradiction to occur, as Maria revealed, "It was traditional and I could feel conflicts happening inside me because it would not be the way I would be teaching" (Maria, Stimulated Recall, see also Nguyen (2017, p. 409)). The extract also revealed the emotion of frustration that Maria experienced as a result of the tension between her pedagogical orientation and that of her mentor

teacher and the fact that she had to abandon her plan to implement her teaching plans to conform to her mentor's preference in order to get by the mentor's surveillance and obtain a good practicum report.

Amidst the tension and frustration, Maria was reportedly successful in addressing the contradiction involving conflicts with her mentor's teaching approach. She said:

> When I was starting to do what she wanted me to do, she was like…, she didn't give me any feedback except that everything was good, yeah, because I was doing what she wanted me to. (Maria, Stimulated Recall, see also Nguyen (2017, p. 409))

This compliance helped Maria resolve the contradiction and satisfy the requirements of the practicum. However, it might also lead to another contradiction between the course content and Maria's preservice teaching practice in that she was not able to implement what she learned from coursework into her practice teaching. This contributes to furthering the gap between theory and practice in teacher education.

6.5 Discussion

In Chap. 5, I reported a number of positive influences that mentoring by school-based teachers exerted on the professional learning of three preservice EAL teachers. In the current chapter, I focus on the negative side of mentoring where unresolved tensions, negative emotions, and their impact on Jane and Maria's cognition during the practicum are unpacked. The findings confirm the influential role of mentors and mentoring relationships on the practicum experiences of preservice teachers.

The first type of tension identified in this study is between the preservice teachers' needs/expectations and the inadequate support provided by their mentors. Such a tension caused the preservice teachers to feel they were left with disappointment and frustration to navigate the practicum on their own, and the outcomes for both was undesirable, with Maria struggling to pass and Jane failing the practicum. The findings align with a number of studies that are reviewed earlier in this chapter (e.g., Atay, 2007; Farrell, 2007, 2008; Nguyen, 2010; Trent, 2013). The negative impact of mentoring in this study can be partly attributed to the mentoring approach used where mentors adopted a 'transfer' approach to mentoring (Brandt, 2006) and did not take into consideration the needs and expectations of their mentees and provide scaffolding support based on these expectations and needs. Another major cause of the issue might be the lack of effective communication between mentors and mentees (Heikkinen, Wilkinson, Aspfors, & Bristol, 2018). As supervisory talk is essential in scaffolding preservice teachers' learning (Engin, 2013), the ineffective communication in the mentoring relationships means a lack of opportunities for preservice teachers to receive scaffolding by their mentors. Weak communication between the two parties could also lead to misunderstandings of expectations in terms of accepted practices and feedback (Engin, 2014).

The second tension is between the two parties' perceptions of preservice learning/teaching and level of experience/expertise. As a result of this tension, Jane

and Maria felt surprised, disappointed, and stressed when their mentors expected them to be 'experienced' and 'expert' and did not offer the needed support. Mentors' unreasonable expectations of their mentees have been reported in the literature as having an adverse effect on preservice teachers' learning (Hudson, 2012; Kent, Feldman, & Hayes, 2009; Sanford & Hopper, 2000), although in the field of TESOL, such a finding is less common. Hudson (2012) argues, "It would be unrealistic to expect preservice teachers to graduate with these experiences that require contextually-specific knowledge and skills without further assistance and guidance from schools" (p. 81). Clearly, the preservice teachers in this study were placed within the 'high challenge–low support' zone, which is considered less conducive to learning (Mariani, 1997).

The last tension is between the two parties' conceptions and practices of teaching, causing high level of frustration for the preservice teachers and impacting negatively on their learning. The data suggest that both preservice teachers, especially Maria, appear to have brought good theoretical and pedagogical knowledge into their practicums. They had conceptualised their EAL teaching in ways that would benefit EAL learning, and they took into consideration the learners' needs. However, because of the power relations with their mentors, the preservice teachers had to abandon their preferred teaching ideas to follow the mentors' preferences in frustration. This finding aligns with much of the literature on English language preservice teachers' learning during the placement (Atay, 2007; Brandt, 2006; Farrell, 2008; Nguyen, 2010; Riesky, 2013; Trent, 2011, 2013; Yuan, 2016). The misalignment between what is taught at university and what is exercised and expected in schools created conflicting demands for the preservice teachers and had a negative impact on their application of newly learned knowledge in the practice classroom and the development of their 'ideal' teaching identity (Trent, 2010; Yuan, 2016). The mismatch between EAL teacher education at university and EAL teaching at school might well contribute to a broadened theory–practice divide in teacher education (Chong, Low, & Goh, 2011; Grimmett, Forgasz, Williams, & White, 2018; White & Forgasz, 2016).

With all findings taken into account, while much of the sociocultural literature on teacher learning claims that contradictions can trigger growth and development (Dang, 2013; Engeström, 1987; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009), this is evidently not always the case for the preservice teachers in this study. On a positive note, in Chap. 5, the preservice teachers were supported to resolve contradictions and achieve positive learning outcomes, and in this chapter, some of the contradictions made the preservice teachers feel more convinced about their teaching preferences, such as Jane's choice of reading material and Maria's preferred communicative teaching approach. However, most of the tensions reported in this chapter caused emotional responses that were too strong and negative to the point that they negatively influenced the preservice teachers' overall professional experiences. For Maria, a range of negative emotions such as frustration, disappointment, and anxiety in the relationship with her mentor made her vulnerable and choose to completely follow the mentor's 'traditional' teaching approach and requirements in order to pass the practicum. This means abandoning opportunities for experimental learning (Brandt,

2006; Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White, Bloomfield, & Le Cornu, 2010) where she could trial newly learned knowledge and skills in the practice classroom. For Jane, the outcome of the practicum was the least favourable. She failed the practicum due to an unsuccessful lesson, which she could have learned to teach better had it been a more effective mentoring relationship. Factors contributing to this outcome include the mentor's inadequate support and unreasonable expectations, and the contrasting views that were unreconciled due to the lack of effective conversations. The limited learning and development can be attributed to the short time on placement (two weeks) together with the lack of measures in place to deal with the negative consequences of the experiences. For example, if the preservice teachers' negative emotions had been validated by teacher educators, they would have been growth points for them (Golombek & Doran, 2014). Similarly, if a more effective configuration of placements had been used, such as a triad partnerships model with involvement of university lecturers (Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White et al., 2010), many of the tensions could have been mediated and turned into learning points.

6.6 Implications

This final section of the chapter highlights some of the major issues causing Jane and Maria's negative professional experiences and offer implications that might help other mentors and mentees to reflect on their practice and avoid similar issues in their own experience with EAL practicums and practicum curriculum developers to revisit the design of the practicum.

Firstly, the findings reported here highlight the importance of communication between mentors and preservice teachers. The findings show that inadequate and ineffective communication between mentors and preservice teachers might have been the major cause of most of the issues that Jane and Maria experienced. Research has shown that communication is the key to good mentoring (Heikkinen et al., 2018; Trent, 2013). Conversations before and during the early days of the practicum would help to build shared understandings of the school's EAL programme, practices and resources, as well as preservice teachers' learning needs. Mentor–mentee dialogues would also enhance shared understandings of expectations vis-à-vis the two parties in terms of mentoring support, roles and responsibilities, and practices for preservice teachers at their level of experience and expertise (Engin, 2014). Conversations throughout the practicum would create an opportunity for mentors and mentees to share their mutual feedback and negotiate tensions in the mentoring relationship to foster professional development. This could help to validate and address emotional experiences that hinder professional learning and nurture those that are beneficial (Golombek & Doran, 2014). Conversations should be initiated by either party when there is a need, with preservice teachers being proactive in leading their learning. The mentor teacher as the person holding "the balance of power in the relationship" (Hudson, 2013a, p. 1) is the key to maintaining a successful mentoring relationship.

Secondly, the chapter recommends an alternative effective approach to mentoring. The findings show that both Jane and Maria were given broad guidelines on what to teach and limited help from their mentors with how to teach. They both reported struggles with designing and delivering their lessons in ways that took into account the school's current practices and their own preferences. A more effective mentoring approach, such as lesson study, where the mentor and mentee work together to develop lesson plans and resources and implement lessons (Cajkler & Wood, 2016a, 2016b; Cajkler, Wood, Norton, & Pedder, 2013), would create valuable learning opportunities for both the preservice teacher and mentor as well as benefit the learners. With input and feedback from their experienced mentors, preservice teachers would have enriching learning experiences and a feeling of validation when making pedagogical decisions. Mentor teachers would similarly learn a new perspective and fulfil their mentoring role more successfully. These lesson study conversations would also create opportunities for the mentor and mentee to negotiate and resolve tensions related to their teaching views and practices. Important in the collaboration between mentors and mentees is the establishment of "safe, risk-taking environments to trial and evaluate newly learnt teaching practices" (Hudson, 2013a, p. 1) and the use of a strength-based approach to mentoring (He, 2009). Such a collaborative mentoring approach has strong theoretical ground in a sociocultural theory of learning (Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978), the learning partnerships model of professional experience (Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White et al., 2010), and a transformative approach to mentoring, which "builds on existing knowledge, allows for different learning styles, provides opportunities for problem-solving, encourages autonomy, and is reflective" (Brandt, 2006, p. 362; also see Tusting & Barton, 2003).

Moreover, while the focus of this chapter is on school-based mentoring and its impact, the role of university teacher educators in the professional experience is relevant here. Due to the lack of effective mentoring relationships, Jane and Maria would benefit from the involvement of their university lecturers with expertise in EAL education, which was not inherent in their professional experiences. As the findings in Chap. 4 suggest, university academics' school visits while their preservice teachers are on placement would help to mediate the mentoring relationships, provide preservice teachers with an additional source of academic and affective support, and strengthen partnerships with the schools. Preservice teachers often appreciate academics' expert feedback on their practicum performance and efforts to understand them and their practicum contexts (Fayne, 2007). Tsui and Law (2007) found that when preservice teachers, university lecturers, and school mentors were engaged in learning partnerships, they collaboratively resolved tensions within the professional experiences, negotiated mediational tools, and transformed the practicum experiences from learning for only preservice teachers to professional development for all three parties. In addition, Grimmett et al. (2018) offer strong evidence to demonstrate that collaboration between university-based teacher educators and mentors in schools enhances professional learning for the mentors, which in turn contributes to building more supportive and nurturing environments for preservice teachers to learn to teach. Furthermore, the lecturer–mentor–preservice teacher relationship is considered key in the learning partnerships model of professional experience (Le

Cornu & Ewing, 2008). Therefore, the chapter recommends that the school-based professional experience incorporate support by university academics with expertise in English language teaching.

It has been argued in Chap. 1 that SLTE pedagogy in the age of neoliberalism must recognise that L2 teachers have diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds that affect their learning. In this chapter, Jane is a typical case of neoliberal transnational mobility as she had lived in different parts of the world and now returned to Australia to seek an EAL teaching qualification. Maria is a typical international preservice teacher who had come to Australian teacher education with little knowledge about the Australian EAL teaching context. Preservice teachers like Jane and Maria constitute a significant part of the preservice teacher population in Australia, and they would benefit from SLTE pedagogy that recognises their individual backgrounds and needs.

Finally, mentor teachers are largely placed to do their mentoring work without completing formal professional development programmes on mentoring and they might be left alone to work with their preservice teachers (Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006; TEMAG, 2014). When the mentoring relationships are not successful, they lack effective strategies to respond to the situations and support to resort to (Valenčič & Vogrinc, 2007). Therefore, professional development and support for mentor teachers are essential in developing productive mentoring relationships (Ambrosetti, 2014; Hudson, 2013b). Ambrosetti (2014) has demonstrated that mentor preparation contributed positively to the enhancement of mentors' understanding of the complex mentoring role and subsequent mentoring practices. The participating mentors also reportedly developed more supportive professional and personal relationships with their preservice teachers, and the relationships were reciprocal, an important feature of the learning partnerships model of professional experiences widely advocated (Le Cornu, 2010, 2016; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White et al., 2010; White & Forgasz, 2016). This recommendation about professional development for mentors encompasses all the recommendations made above, including professional development in effective communications and productive mentoring approaches, and involvement of university-based teacher educators to support the mentoring role.

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Chapter 7
Identity Development in Professional Experience



Abstract This chapter reports case studies on the professional identity development of three preservice teachers of English language during the professional experience in Australian secondary schools. This chapter reveals the support and challenges inherent in the professional experiences and examines how such support and challenges inhibit and/or facilitate identity development among the preservice teachers. It also shows how personal histories of preservice teachers such as their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and prior experiences contribute to their different identity development trajectories. The findings provide implications for researching teacher identity and supporting preservice English language teachers in developing productive teacher identities during the professional experience.

Keywords Identity development · Teacher cognition · Professional experience · Second language · Teacher education · Positioning theory

7.1 Teacher Identity and the ELT Professional Experience

Teacher professional identity has been variedly conceptualised in the literature, but there seems to be widespread agreement on three main issues. First, researchers agree that it is significant to understand teacher identity development in efforts to understand and support teachers' professional learning. For example, a popular sociocultural perspective on second language teacher education views teachers as learners of teaching, and understanding the sociocognitive processes, including identity development, through which they learn to teach, is fundamental to second language teacher education practice and research (Johnson, 2009). In the same vein, Mockler (2011) argues that "an understanding of the processes by which teacher professional identity is formed and mediated is central to understanding the professional learning and development needs of teachers and advancing a richer, more transformative vision for education" (p. 517). In an extensive review of the literature on professional growth among preservice and beginning teachers, Kagan (1992) highlights the prime importance of focusing on teachers' self-image as a teacher and how this is confirmed, validated, modified, and questioned as the teachers are engaged in different stages

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of teacher education, including the teaching practicum, to acquire instructional practices. The present book views teacher identity as one of the key issues in English language teacher learning, hence the focus of this chapter on this issue.

Second, it is agreed that teacher identity is a fluid, dynamic, multidimensional, and ongoing developmental process which shapes and is shaped by the complexities of personal and contextual issues (Anspal, Eisenschmidt, & Löfström, 2012; Cross & Gearon, 2007; Mockler, 2011; Xu & Connelly, 2009). Within the preservice English language teacher education context, there has been research that seeks to understand identity in relation to the preservice teachers' personal background. For example, in an Australia-based study, Miller (2007) investigated the interplay between preservice English language teachers' non-native English-speaking background and their identity during a practicum. Drawing on data from an open-ended questionnaire and email exchanges, the study found that such a background could strengthen the preservice teachers' sense of competence and confidence in terms of grammar knowledge and empathy with learners, but it also posed challenge for them in socialising into the teaching context due to self-perceived inadequacies in pedagogical competence or pronunciation and fluency in English. In an American study, Haniford (2010) analysed a preservice English language teacher's portfolio including reflective entries and interviews and demonstrated the discursive process of identity development in which the preservice teacher's self-positioning differed across different stages of teacher education including the practicum under the influence of the discourses available to her through teacher education.

Among contextual issues, interaction with others during the professional experience, including mentors, has been identified as a strong influence on preservice English language teachers' identity development. For instance, Trent (2011) found that in observing and evaluating their mentors' practices, preservice ESL teachers formed their own ideas of what they would and would not do as ESL teachers. In another study, Trent (2013) identified the internal and interpersonal identity conflicts in the ways preservice ESL teachers positioned themselves and were positioned by others in the practice teaching context. Typically, the ESL preservice teachers in Trent (2013) saw themselves as teachers following a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, but due to the power relation with their mentors they had to use more traditional methods of teaching.

While each of the studies reviewed above only focuses on one or several aspects of the complex, multidimensional processes of teacher identity development, other researchers use broader and more comprehensive theoretical lenses to examine preservice English language teachers' identity. For example, Yuan and Lee (2015) used the concept of 'identities-in-practice' (Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005) to examine identity by analysing the preservice teachers' engagement in cognitive learning; social interaction with their mentor teachers, English language learners, other school teachers and peers; and their emotional experiences within teacher education, especially in the placements. Underpinned by a sociocultural perspective on second language teacher learning, especially the identity-in-activity concept (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007; Johnson, 2009), Dang (2013) investigates preservice EFL teachers' professional identity development

in a university-based pair placement. Dang (2013) accounts for the contradictions between factors inherent in the practicum context, the preservice teachers' emotions emerging from the contradictions, and how such contradictions motivated the preservice teachers to collaboratively resolve the conflicts and form their professional identity. The approach taken by Yuan and Lee (2015) has been critiqued for failing to unify different aspects of the identity development process (Cross, 2006). It also falls short of attention to the interplay between different personal and contextual factors shaping this process. The identity-in-activity approach used by Dang (2013) can address this concern and is to date considered a more comprehensive approach to the study of teacher identity (Golombek & Klager, 2015; Nguyen, 2017).

Another common issue identified in the literature is that teacher identity is often revealed through personal narratives. This lends support to the view held by Anspal et al. (2012) that "through writing or talking about oneself, the 'self' is shaped" (p. 198). Personal narratives allow teachers to tell stories about themselves and their relationships with others within their work settings and play an important role in shaping their professional identity construction and professional development (Golombek & Johnson, 2017; Nguyen, 2016). The literature indicates a lack of a coherent theoretical framework which is broad enough to capture the complexity of teacher professional identity. The present study seeks to address these gaps by using a more comprehensive theoretical framework that draws on positioning theory, the notion of self and sociocultural theory to analyse preservice teachers' professional identity. It seeks to analyse three preservice EAL teachers' construction of professional identity through examining their self-perceived images, self-representation in relationships with others, and the social and personal factors shaping these.

7.2 Theoretical Framework

The research presented in this chapter uses a combination of positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990), the notion of self (Anspal et al., 2012; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Lasky, 2005), and a sociocultural perspective on teacher identity (Cross, 2006; Cross & Gearon, 2007) as an underpinning theoretical framework. More detailed elaborations on these theories and explanation of why they are used together in this study are presented below.

Positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) offers elements that can support the analysis of the preservice teachers' professional identity in the current study. Davies and Harré (1990) argue that "the use of 'role' serves to highlight static, formal and ritualistic aspects" of the self, which is limited and limiting, and propose the use of 'positioning' to account for the discursive practices that give rise to such positioning. According to Davies and Harré (1990), there can be reflexive positioning and interactive positioning in conversations. Reflexive positioning occurs when a person positions himself/herself, while in interactive positioning one positions another. The current study draws on the principles of reflexive positioning to uncover the participants' positioning of themselves, which offers insights into their identity.

The notion of self is considered one of the most important and complex elements of teacher identity (Anspal et al., 2012) and can complement the idea of reflexive positioning by Davies and Harré (1990) in the analysis of teacher identity. In broad terms, Beijaard et al. (2004) define the notion of self as "an organized representation of our theories, attitudes, and beliefs about ourselves" (p. 108). It involves "how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others" (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). Lasky's conceptualisation of self provides a broad framework for understanding teachers' self as comprising of two parts: (1) how teachers define themselves to themselves and (2) how teachers define themselves in relationships with others. On a more specific level, how teachers define themselves to themselves can be linked to self-image (i.e., how teachers describe themselves as teachers) and self-esteem (i.e., how teachers value and evaluate themselves as teachers) (Kelchtermans, 1993). How teachers define themselves to others can be related to task perception (i.e., how teachers define their work in relation to students, colleagues, and the classroom contexts) (Kelchtermans, 1993).

From a comprehensive, systematic view based on sociocultural activity theory, Cross and Gearon (2007) argue that how teachers as the subjects of their teaching activity systems make sense of their roles in relationships within their systems is a crucial aspect of teacher identity. Although sociocultural theory as first conceptualised by Vygotsky was not concerned with identity, he approached research on human mental functioning from a perspective that views human mental development as originating from participation in sociocultural processes (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981a, 1981b). Identity development, considered as "a particular domain of the development of mental functioning" (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995, p. 87), fits well into sociocultural theory. Sociocultural research in second language teacher education views identity development as situated, originating in sociocultural contexts and practices and shaped by a multitude of contextual and personal factors (Cross & Gearon, 2007; Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2017). Therefore, analysis of teacher identity needs to trace back such origins. Such a view supports positioning theory proposed by Davies and Harré (1990) in that it takes into account the recursive practices in which positioning occurs.

In this chapter, a combination of the three theories above, namely positioning theory, the notion of self, and sociocultural theory, offers a useful theoretical lens for analysing teacher identity. The reflexive aspect of positioning theory is used to guide the analysis of the preservice teachers' professional identity through how they position themselves to themselves and to others. The theory of self provides a lens to zoom into the preservice teachers' reflexive positioning for analysis of more specific theories, attitudes, and beliefs about self. Although the notion of self and positioning theory have the capacity to support identification and description of teacher identities, they do not focus on explaining why the teachers have developed such identities. In criticising descriptive research, Vygotsky argues, "mere description does not reveal the actual causal-dynamic relations that underlie phenomena" (1978, p. 62). The current study aims to both describe and explain the teachers' professional identities. It aims for analysis that "evokes 'why?' questions and explanatory principles" (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7). A sociocultural perspective on teacher identity

has the capacity to analyse the factors influencing the participants' notion of self and positioning and therefore is an overarching underpinning theoretical framework for the study.

7.3 Methods

Using a qualitative case study design, the research reported in this chapter involved three preservice teacher participants, namely Frank, Kate, and Maria, who were enrolled in an EAL preservice teacher education programme at Greystone University. Participation was on the basis of human research ethics approvals and voluntary written informed consent. The participants' profiles have been described in Chaps. 5 and 6. Frank, Kate, and Maria were placed in three different secondary schools in Melbourne to do a two-week EAL teaching practicum during which data collection took place.

Each preservice teacher participated in two semi-structured individual interviews, one before and one after the practicum. Each of the preservice teachers also participated in a stimulated recall session with the use of lesson plans, audio recordings of lessons, and teaching resources as stimuli. The data were first transcribed verbatim and then analysed using qualitative content analysis, which was guided by the research objectives and theoretical framework.

7.4 Findings and Discussion

7.4.1 Self-images

7.4.1.1 Frank

Frank's professional identity is shown in the way he represented the self to himself (Beijaard et al., 2004; Lasky, 2005). Firstly, he positioned himself as a competent and confident teacher within the context of EAL teaching practice at Redwood Secondary College. This can be summarised by the following comment:

> I think I'm ready to teach. It's just the phase that I have to go through. I'm just doing it, tick the boxes really. I'm pretty confident of standing in front of class and taking classes. (Frank, Stimulated Recall)

Although Frank was still a preservice teacher on practicum, he defined himself as being ready to take on the full responsibility of a teacher. This sense of professional identity was shaped by a number of key factors, including his rich life experience, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge learned from teacher education and previous teaching experience, support from the mentor teacher, and the flexibility he was given in his practicum teaching.

Secondly, Frank's notion of self was also revealed through the way he described his qualities as a teacher. Before the practicum, Frank provided his self-image as a teacher as follows:

> As a teacher, I think I'm approachable, I am creative, and I like to think out of the box. I've been told that I have flair with language, so it's good that I'm able to apply that into teaching students how to learn. I have a lot of life experience. (Frank, Interview 1)

The data on Frank's instructional practices show that Frank exhibited all of these qualities during his practicum. He established a very good rapport with the students. His creativity was confirmed through a range of innovative teaching activities and by the mentor teacher. Especially, he was able to utilise his prior lived, educational, and professional experiences to enrich his teaching. During the post-practicum interview, Frank's sense of himself as a teacher was once again represented:

> I'm personable, I guess. I can empathise with the students. I know what they are about. I know how to react to them properly I guess (laugh). (Frank, Interview 2)

In this excerpt, Frank considers himself as having qualities that helped him develop and maintain rapport with his students. These qualities include a friendly and nice nature, empathy, understanding of students' needs, and an ability to respond to their needs accordingly.

7.4.1.2 Kate

The study found that Kate represents herself as a preservice teacher who has strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, her image of self as a teacher is depicted in the extract below:

> I think at the school I was very friendly and enthusiastic. [….]. I was quite funny [….]. And I think, yeah, my strengths are probably being enthusiastic and forming good relationships with the classes. (Kate, Interview 2)

In this comment, Kate viewed herself as a friendly, funny, and enthusiastic EAL teacher. This teacher self-image was found to have influenced the way she chose to act in the preservice teaching activity. Below is what Kate said about how she exercised her idea of being a friendly teacher:

> I think I was definitely trying to be friendly and approachable. That's something that I'm quite good at [….]. I think sometimes if something happens in the class that's funny and the kids laugh and it's something that's appropriate, you know, nothing rude, I'll laugh along with them. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

However, as it is discussed earlier, teacher professional identity is shaped by multiple factors in the teaching context (Cross & Gearon, 2007; Lasky, 2005; Miller, 2009; Varghese, 2006; Wenger, 1998; Xu, 2013). In Kate's case, her students' behaviour was the key factor that allowed her to project her friendly and approachable self:

> It was very easy to be friendly and approachable and relaxed to the students because they were very well-behaved students. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

With regard to teaching, Kate thought of herself as being good at adapting her lesson plans to include emergent themes in the lessons:

> I think I'm also quite good at when something comes up, just running with it. You know, if something that is completely off topic but is relevant to English and English language learning comes up in class, I'm quite good at […] changing the plan and saying, 'Okay, I'm going to cut that out from the lesson because this point has come up now.' So, that's sort of teaching on the spot, and I think that's another strength of mine. (Kate, Interview 2)

The other sources of data (lesson recordings, lesson plans, and teaching materials) on Kate's EAL teaching activity confirmed her ability to adapt to different teaching situations. The comment in this excerpt is her own reflection on her practice, made during the post-practicum interview. In other words, Kate appeared to see this strength in herself after she had seen herself being able to do that in the real classroom context. This, therefore, illustrates the view that teacher professional identity is formed through practice and in relation to the context of that practice (e.g., Abednia, 2012; Beijaard et al., 2004; Cross & Gearon, 2007; Dang, 2013; Lee & Yin, 2011).

Besides her strengths, Kate also realises her shortcomings as a preservice EAL teacher, and this also reflects how she defined herself. Firstly, she acknowledged that as a preservice teacher, she lacked the knowledge and experience of an experienced teacher, as she noted:

> Because I'm a preservice teacher, I know I don't have, you know, the knowledge and experience of a teacher. I sort of was very very keen to not mess anything up. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

This excerpt shows that during the practicum Kate chose to act more cautiously because of her understanding of her limitations as a preservice teacher. This exemplifies professional identity development where a preservice teacher makes sense of herself and the context of teaching and chooses to act accordingly within that context (Cross & Gearon, 2007).

Another weakness that Kate saw in herself through her practicum experience was her lack of ability to time her teaching accurately. She said:

> I think one of my weaknesses can be timing. I think I still need to work on that timing and getting my timing a bit more accurate. (Kate, Interview 2)

The comment above was made after Kate had experienced difficulties in anticipating how much longer she needed to teach her lower-level students the same content as with her advanced students. Therefore, it illustrates how Kate's image of self as an EAL preservice teacher was formed in relation to her practice and its context.

7.4.1.3 Maria

The data reveal that Maria represented herself as a non-native English speaker and an insider of the language learning experience. Similar to Kate, Maria described herself as having both strong and weak points that might help or hinder her EAL teaching. The following exchange illustrates Maria's perception of her strengths:

> I think as an ESL teacher it helps me a lot. For example, I can relate to a lot of the stuff that I'm teaching because I am sort of still obviously working on my own development and I can also relate to some of the experiences I had as an English language learner through the different stages. [….] I could understand a lot of the issues learners have because […] I just had similar experiences so I think maybe sometimes some native English speakers they just don't know what areas could cause potential trouble, but for me I can sort of predict it and I know what I need to emphasise on, what I need to explain a bit more [….]. It sure did help me a lot in that sense. […] Like I said, I can just see as an insider. (Maria, Interview 1, see also Nguyen (2017, p. 406))

> The fact that I have some understanding of grammar structures that and sometimes native English speakers they have it because they know it, their language. And I know the language from a different perspective so I know from its grammar perspective, how things [are] joined together, so that helps me a lot as well […]. (Maria, Interview 1)

With about 20 years of ongoing English language learning experience, Maria appeared confident about her strengths as a non-native speaker and learner of English language. Her self-perceived strengths include some explicit knowledge of grammar, an ability to explain it, and a good understanding of how the language is learned, which she found most native speakers of English did not have. With the self-perceived advantages as a non-native preservice teacher of English language, Maria considered herself an insider of the language learning experience, which she believed was empowering for her own teaching of the language.

However, as a non-native speaker of English, Maria was also conscious of her shortcomings that could potentially cause her difficulties in teaching the language, as shown in the following excerpts:

> I'm quite conscious about my English language skills and that I do have […] some sort of conflicts, some sort of issues that I am not as good as some of English native speakers, that I could do some mistakes. But on the other hand, I try to monitor myself and try to work on the way I'm speaking in the classroom, speak more clear, pronounce words correctly […]. So, I think in that sense, I sometimes get a bit conscious. (Maria, Interview 1)

> I see that English native English speakers they just know the right words […]. Like, it comes naturally. Yeah, it comes naturally to them and I was, like, I wish I could do the same. (Maria, Interview 2)

In the quotes above, Maria seemed to sketch another image of her non-native speaker self, a less confident one that is contrasting to the empowering self-perceptions above. She acknowledged that she might make mistakes in using the language in communication due to issues with areas such as pronunciation or vocabulary knowledge, and she looked to native speakers as models in these areas. The findings of Maria's professional identity reveal the influential role of her cultural and linguistic background as a non-native English-speaking preservice teacher and her rich experience of English language learning. It is interesting to note that prevalent in Maria's self-image perceptions is her comparison of herself to native speakers' abilities. This type of native/non-native dichotomy, despite meeting severe criticisms, "lives on in the minds of teachers, learners, and directors of language programs worldwide" (Ellis, 2016, p. 597). Maria's native/non-native distinction might have been engrained as a result of her previous language learning, teacher education, and teaching experiences in market-driven educational systems where native speaker

teachers are favoured (Tatar & Yildiz, 2010). It hinders her from recognising her multicompetent self as a teacher, which is much more complex than the simplistic and unhelpful native/non-native dichotomy (Ellis, 2013, 2016).

7.4.2 Positioning of Self in Relation to Others in the Professional Experience

7.4.2.1 Frank

Positioning in relation to EAL students and mentor teacher

Frank's view of his role as a teacher is another dimension of his professional identity. Frank believed that one important role of an EAL teacher was to engage EAL students in learning. This perspective is grounded in his understanding of EAL students' characteristics within a government school context. He notes:

> For a government school where funding is not as great and the students are a bit more rowdy, you have to have other methods of engaging them. Otherwise you know they will be just not interested. They won't come to class, or they'll just stand around and disrupt the class which is worse. (Frank, Interview 2)

With this belief, throughout the practicum Frank consistently showed efforts in making learning fun and engaging by such means as various social activities, games, and scaffolding. The following extract exemplifies Frank's efforts in engaging the students:

> I've been using a lot of games. [….] So far, it's been going on really well. Students have been interacting with each other […] in a social setting rather than in a classroom setting. Even though it was held in a classroom with the teacher involved but it's basically […] a social activity rather than an academic sort of activity. Well, it's an academic activity disguised as a social activity, so that's why I think it works. And currently the students are responding to it very well. (Frank, Stimulated Recall)

Because of the students' backgrounds and characteristics, some discipline challenges arose, which presented an opportunity for Frank to assume the role of an authoritarian teacher to maintain engagement level:

> Well, a bit of some discipline challenges. [….] I do give them a chance, but just have to scare them a bit, make sure that they know that the boss is not going to accept any fooling around. There's a time and place for everything. So, you know, when we do like a class discussion then […] we'll have fun. We'll talk about things. But when we're doing work, probably a bit more serious. (Frank, Stimulated Recall)

Frank's positioning in relation to EAL students was afforded by the contextual features of his practice classes, as Mr. Scott commented below:

> I think it's great for EAL teachers to come into this situation because there is a large cohort of ESL students from a range of backgrounds, from migrants and PRs, who have been here a short time, to recent arrivals. So, it provides extensive training and challenges. It extends their skills and knowledge in their profession, I suppose. (Mr. Scott)

In this comment, Mr. Scott points to the vast diversities of learners as both challenges and an opportunity for Frank to practice managing these diversities in his teaching. Frank's positioning above was also enabled by Mr. Scott's support, as in the following excerpt:

> [I told] the students, you know, '[Frank] is your teacher. I'm not your teacher. Stop asking me questions.' [….] I think they should be going to Frank a little bit more. (Mr. Scott)

Mr. Scott's comment above shows that in order to support Frank's optimal professional positioning in relation to EAL learners, the mentor created classroom relationships which allowed Frank to act as the teacher with full responsibility and power while he was there only to observe and offer mentoring.

7.4.2.2 Kate

Positioning in relation to EAL students

With regard to EAL students, although Kate described herself as a friendly teacher, who aimed to form good relationships with her students, she appeared to affirm her position as a teacher at the same time. She said:

> The whole point is you have to be friendly but you can't be their friend. And these kids they understood that. They understood that I was being friendly, but I was still the teacher with the authority of the teacher. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

Kate elaborated more on this positioning in the following exchange:

> Minh Hue: So why do you think it is necessary to be more authoritarian?
>
> Kate: Because you just, I think, you just have to be. Well, I don't really like authoritarian ways of doing things, but there are just times when, you know, […] you have to establish that you are in control ultimately. Generally, the students should feel like they share control, like, I'm not the one that dictating the lesson and we're discovering the lesson together. But there are times when their behaviour is disruptive, at those times they have to realise that ultimately the teacher is in control; the teacher sets the agenda so that everyone has the opportunity to learn. And I think that you have to make clear that that's why you've got rules and expectations. It's not because you're mean or because you want to be in charge, it's because otherwise people won't learn. (Kate, Interview 2)

In this excerpt, Kate reasoned her authoritarian positioning. She was generally happy with the students sharing control of the classroom, a view supported by many learner autonomy researchers who argue that the ability to share control enables students to be more engaged in class affairs and become more independent learners (Little, 2007; Nguyen, 2009; Rubin, 2005). However, Kate also clearly positioned herself as the teacher in control in situations where rules and regulations are not observed. By holding this authoritarian positioning at these times, Kate wanted to make sure that every student had the opportunity to learn and was not disrupted by the behaviour of others.

With regard to how teachers as learners of teaching make sense of their roles within their activity (Cross & Gearon, 2007), in the present study, Kate positioned

herself as manager of learning, facilitator of learning, and provider of knowledge in her relation with students. First, believing that the main purpose of EAL teaching is to help students "be successful, be happier" (Kate, Interview 1), Kate considered one of her main roles as managing the learning experience so that students feel comfortable and confident. She noted:

> I think with EAL…, I think with language as well, a lot of it is about confidence. So I think you have to be really trying to make your students feel comfortable and confident, and I think you need to do that by being friendly and approachable. (Kate, Interview 1)

In this comment, Kate pointed to one aspect of managing learning, that is, being friendly and approachable to make her students feel comfortable and confident. She further commented on how she had chosen to act in this role of learning manager:

> I often found myself emphasising that, you know, to students who were talking, I sort of said, 'You've been very rude and disrespectful to me, but you're also rude and disrespectful to your friends.' And I found that they tend to respond to that much more. They don't mind the idea of, really, of being rude to the teacher, but the idea that they're being rude to their own friends, they don't like that idea. So, that's something that I sort of mentioned a fair bit. (Kate, Interview 2)

Here, Kate appeared to emphasise that maintaining a polite and respectful attitude among the students was an important aspect of her class management to ensure a pleasant and engaging learning atmosphere in her class.

Second, Kate also talked about her facilitator role in students' learning. She mentioned that in order to help students "achieve the goals they want to achieve" (Kate, Interview 1), the teacher needed to use a variety of visuals, resources, activities, and scaffolding strategies. Kate provided an example of how she exercised her facilitator role in the following excerpt:

> I think what I tried to do was walk around and first of all see, do they know what they're doing? First of all, are they doing the work or just sitting there? Are they doing it? If they're not doing it, why aren't they doing it? Do they understand or not? You know, checking their understanding. If they're doing it, are they on the right path? Are they doing the right thing? If they're doing it and they're doing a really good job, I tend to praise them and also point to the rest of the class. And I do that a few times in there because […] the last lesson which I finished with a diagram, yeah because they weren't sure at the beginning how to go about that task. So once students had started doing it quite well, I'd say, 'Oh look guys! You know [Alice's] done a really great diagram with blah blah blah.' So yeah, I think you just need to check their understanding. If there're any things that look like they're not sure what they're doing, help them out. It depends on the task how much correction you do. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

In this quote, Kate appeared to be a very active facilitator of learning through a range of techniques, including observing her students, assessing their needs, checking their progress, encouraging them, and providing feedback and assistance to help them achieve their tasks.

Further, a central role that Kate took for herself is that of a knowledge provider. For example, she said:

> And also teaching them about different academic registers. You know a lot of students come out and they can speak and write in informal register but not in a formal register. So even though they can communicate very well, when they get to high schools and they get to do things in this kind of using academic English, that's a real struggle. So sort of explicitly teaching, you know, academic English that kind of thing. (Kate, Interview 1)

Here, Kate demonstrates an understanding that the students needed to do much academic writing in different genres in the coming years. Therefore, Kate believes that her major role should be teaching them how to write in these genres to meet their needs in studying the secondary curriculum. In addition, believing that "vocabulary is everything" (Kate, Interview 1), Kate found it necessary to build the students' vocabulary:

> Definitely vocabulary building, vocabulary learning is really important. And there are some ways you just explicitly teach vocabulary. (Kate, Interview 1)

Kate not only acknowledges the central role of vocabulary learning in EAL studies but also provides hints about vocabulary teaching strategies she can use as an EAL teacher in order to address the needs of her students.

Positioning in relation to mentor and other teachers

In relation to Ms. Weston, although the mentor teacher gave Kate freedom to choose what she taught and how she taught it, Kate considered herself a preservice teacher, who was learning to teach and being mentored. With this self-positioning, Kate took the opportunity to learn from Ms. Weston as much as she could:

> She said, you know, 'This is an opportunity for you to really design your own unit of work and see what works and what doesn't work.' But then rather than just, you know, leaving me to do it, I'd say 'Okay I've come up with this idea. What do you think?' and we discussed it and she had suggestions about what directions I could take it in, and she had resources that I could possibly use. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

Here is a preservice teacher who proactively sought guidance, advice, and resources from the mentor teacher in learning to teach EAL. Kate also saw the mentor as someone in the power position, there to mentor her, but also to assess her. However, she thought she was fortunate to have a mentor teacher who gave her autonomy and support in her teaching. She emphasised that:

> I think if I'd had a mentor who […] had a different attitude, I might have played safe to just try and pass the practicum. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

With other teachers at the school, Kate had more relaxed relationships. She viewed herself more as a colleague than a preservice teacher in her interactions with them. In seeing herself as a colleague to the other teachers, she positioned herself as part of the professional community, whose members would share resources and ideas for teaching. Kate noted:

> I found that I found so many resources just through talking to other teachers who aren't even my mentor, because teachers tend to be really good at sharing and really interested in sharing things. (Kate, Interview 2)

> And I used a lot of resources that were introduced to me by the school, by my mentor and also by other teachers at the school, who I'd say, 'Oh, I'm going to teach such and such,' and they'd say, 'Oh, I've got this.' So yeah, the internet thing, websites, a bit of like audio-visual stuff, and a lot of stuff from actual educational resources like textbooks or that sort of thing. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

In the excerpts above, Kate appears to be active in seeking advice and resources from the community of teachers at the school in learning to teach. The teachers at the school also reportedly regard her as a member of the community through creation of a welcoming and supportive environment for Kate to teach in. This was probably the main factor that contributed to Kate's sense of membership discussed above.

In addition, although Kate seems to feel a sense of belonging to the community of teachers, she still considers herself a novice teacher, who lacked experience in teaching EAL through the content of other subjects:

> All the teachers that I spoke to are EAL teachers. [….]. I was doing EAL–English. I spent quite a lot of time talking to the teachers who were doing EAL–IT, EAL–Science, EAL–Maths. That's something I don't have experience doing, so I really wanted to try and find out how they do that, and I observed a few of their classes. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

Taking a novice teacher positioning in relationships with other teachers in the school, Kate sought opportunities to talk to the other teachers and observe their classes to learn about their ways of teaching EAL in conjunction with content areas. Teaching EAL through content areas is what Kate did not have experience doing. It is also an area that has been identified in Chap. 1 as a challenge in neoliberal English language teaching and teacher education (Johnson & Golombek, 2018; Lightbown, 2014), but one that the EAL teacher education programme under research does not focus on in its curriculum. Kate's positioning in relation to teaching EAL through content shows that it is shaped by the community of practice at the school and the sociocultural practices of the community.

7.4.2.3 Maria

Positioning in relation to EAL students

In relation to EAL students, Maria saw herself as a communicative language teacher who focused on their interaction and engagement. Reflecting on her practicum experience, Maria commented on the need for her as a teacher to create opportunities for students to interact and communicate in order to learn English:

> I definitely would get more interactive learning, and like, I just I can't see the point of old traditional way of studying where students are sitting and writing down. And as I know based on my own experience […] that would be helpful for test and short term memory, but you would not actually understand the content on the deeper level. So, I would definitely do group work even in terms of reading texts. Of course, it requires more time and a lot of teachers would not have that time and would not want to invest in that, but I think that's the best way to do the teaching. (Maria, Interview 2)

Maria took the positioning with a responsibility to create learning environment where students would be active participants in the learning process as opposed to a passive, 'old traditional way of studying'. It is clear from the quote above that Maria's own experience of learning English language contributed to shaping this positioning as she was able to see the advantages and disadvantages of the learning approaches concerned. She viewed students' interaction as an important indication of their engagement, and therefore her role as a teacher was to use relevant, meaningful learning activities that would encourage them to interact in the language:

> My ideal moment would be when students are engaged and working, preferably in groups on something that they found they can relate to, and it is relevant to their life and […] just some activities that they would use not only on the language skills, but also like other skills, and so it's some sort of, like, whole skill approach. (Maria, Interview 2)
>
> And just the way if they sit quietly, it's not a good indicator of the engagement level at all. And for me as a teacher I need to see engagement to feel that I'm doing a good job. [….] They were writing and like passive receivers and I would not want that to happen. (Maria, Interview 2)

The second excerpt above is a strong statement of Maria's sense of responsibility as a teacher to engage students in active learning. This strong sense of responsibility could be linked to her belief that students have what it takes to learn the language and the role of teaching is to motivate them to work to their best potential and believe in themselves:

> In an ideal scenario, like I would expect students to work to their best, to the best of their abilities and I hope I can motivate them to do so and to believe in themselves and to like to be prepared to do hard work and not to be scared of that. Well, main thing is just to, I guess, to be aware that they have what it takes to learn the language; it's not as complicated as it could sound…. It's just the matter of hard work and dedication so I expect that. (Maria, Interview 1)

Maria also assumed a role in differentiating instruction to suit the diverse backgrounds and needs of EAL students:

> EAL classroom is quite different in terms of abilities and needs of students I think it's much more diverse than standard secondary classrooms, I mean in terms of students' backgrounds, students' prior knowledge, and so you would have to know different strategies for how to work with different students and how to put them in groups. (Maria, Interview 1)

The data about Maria's positioning in relation to her EAL students presented above show that Maria had conceptualised her EAL teaching in ways that are well supported by the prominent trends in language teaching (e.g., Ellis, 2009; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Spada, 2007; Waters, 2012). That shows Maria's emerging identity as an EAL teacher as she was transitioning from initial teacher education into the teaching profession.

Positioning in relation to mentor teacher

In the mentoring relationship, Maria positioned herself as an inferior to the mentor teacher in terms of both expertise and power. In terms of expertise, in Maria's view the mentor teacher was very knowledgeable and passionate and had rich experience.

Interacting with her mentor teacher, Maria felt that her own knowledge of the English language and the literature was not good enough and there was an overwhelming amount that she needed to learn as an EAL teacher.

> And my mentor was like, she was really good in terms of, you know, literature analysis, and like a bit of psychology and all of that. So, she can really have the vocabulary, she has the knowledge, she understands, and she can explain it really well. [….] She had a long…, I think 15 years teaching experience, even more, and she had a fairly set-up teaching style. [….] She is really knowledgeable. (Maria, Stimulated Recall)

> When speaking to my mentor, I felt that my English is not good enough. Oh my God, because she's really passionate about English, and I'm not that passionate about English in that sense. [….]. And […] sometimes […] in that way, I was intimidated I would say. I felt rich vocabulary and everything, and I felt that, 'Oh I'm not *nearly* good.' And also, the fact that I'm not a native English speaker also contributed a lot. [….] Now I know how much I need to learn [….]. Yeah, it's like lists of books that I need to read, all the text books that I need to read. (Maria, Interview 2, see also Nguyen (2014, p. 77))

In terms of power, Maria felt inferior to Ms. Davies due to the mentor's controlling mentoring style and power position to observe and assess Maria's performance. As can be seen from the previous subsection, Maria strongly believed in the usefulness of interactional activities in fostering language learning and the role of active engagement in learning the language. However, in the context of the practicum, it appeared from Maria's perception that Ms. Davies mostly followed a teacher-centred approach, which Maria thought "wouldn't make students think" (Maria, Stimulated Recall) and would make them "passive receivers" (Maria, Interview 2). The mentor teacher appeared to be "overly strict" (Maria, Stimulated Recall) and opposed Maria's friendliness to the students. In addition, the mentor teacher exercised power over Maria by controlling what and how Maria taught and would not approve Maria's preference for group work. Maria recounted:

> And I also learnt that unfortunately sometimes you're restricted as a preservice teacher to introduce those ideas in the classroom because you might get a bit of resistance from your … mentor yeah and also a bit of resistance from actual students because they are not used to that new thing. So, that could be frustrating but I think that you follow that frustration path, and for example [...] I wanted to introduce more group work but it didn't work, not at all. Like students wouldn't talk. They wouldn't do anything. They would just sit there quietly. So, that's a bit disappointing. (Maria, Interview 1)

The contradictions (Engeström, 1987) in the mentoring relationship and the mentor teacher's constant surveillance (Sinner, 2012) had strong influence on Maria's identity formation. They had the power to modify Maria's activities to satisfy the particular practicum requirements. Specifically, she had to compromise in the power relationship with her mentor teacher to temporarily resolve the conflicts and get by. Regarding her preferred teaching approach, Maria said, "I could feel that my mentor wouldn't approve it, so I would have to go to traditional limits sometimes because […] I needed constant approval" (Maria, Stimulated Recall). She further recalled, "I felt a sort of constant observation, so I had to sort of play [by] the rules" (Maria, Interview 2). Miller (2009) argues that mainstream discourses around languages, teachers, and teaching place all language teachers in the midst of power relationships. As a

learner of EAL teaching, Maria also showed her professional identity development through her agency in negotiating the power relationships (Sinner, 2012) in order to successfully complete her practicum. Maria's situation seems to reflect the stories of many other non-native English-speaking TESOL teachers striving for legitimacy in the complexities of their teaching contexts (Miller, 2009). It is consistent with the interpersonal and intrapersonal identity conflicts reported by Trent (2013).

7.5 Discussion and Implications

The present study set out to examine the professional identity development of three preservice EAL teachers while on practicum in Australian secondary schools. It draws on the theory of self, positioning theory, and sociocultural theory as a theoretical framework. The study found that under the influence of the interplay between enabling and challenging personal and contextual factors, teacher identity developed and was manifest in the EAL practicum experience of each preservice teacher in a unique way. The findings of the three preservice teachers' professional identity development in the current study support the sociocultural conceptualisation of identity (Cross, 2006; Dang, 2013; Nguyen, 2017), which sees teacher identity development as being inseparable from other aspects of language teacher cognition.

The representation of self, defined as "an organized representation of our theories, attitudes, and beliefs about ourselves" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 108), is an essential part of the preservice teachers' professional identity, which involves "how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others" (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). The first aspect, how teachers define themselves to themselves, was manifest in relation to other personal and contextual factors in shaping the preservice teachers' practicum experience. With the influence of his rich life experiences, preparedness for EAL teaching, support from the mentor teacher, and the flexibility given in his practicum teaching, Frank positioned himself in the practicum as a competent and ready-to-teach teacher. He saw himself as a teacher who possessed favourable qualities such as being approachable, empathetic, and creative and having life stories that would make teaching interesting, all of which underpinned his classroom practices. Kate defined herself as a preservice teacher who had strong and weak points. Her self-perceived strengths as a friendly, funny, and enthusiastic EAL teacher were influential in shaping her teaching, and her application of these strengths was influenced by contextual features such as the students' good behaviour and manners. Another self-perceived strength, her ability to adapt to different teaching situations, was constructed during the practicum after Kate saw herself able to adapt to real classroom situations. On the other hand, Kate's self-perceived lack of knowledge and experience as a novice teacher made her cautious in teaching so that she would not make mistakes. Similarly, Maria defined herself as a non-native English speaker, a position that was shaped by her cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. Such a position carried both advantages and disadvantages for Maria as a preservice teacher. Drawing on her own language learning experience and teacher education experience, Maria also repre-

sented herself as a preservice teacher committed to communicative, interactive, and engaging EAL teaching and learning.

The second aspect of teacher identity, which refers to the positioning of self in relation to others (Lasky, 2005), was found to emerge under the influence of the intertwined personal and contextual factors. In the relationship with the mentor teacher, Kate positioned herself as a learner of teaching and mentee who had the opportunity to have the mentor in the class to give her feedback and advice. Therefore, she proactively took the opportunity to learn from the mentor as much as possible. This positioning was reinforced by her mentor's encouragement for risk-taking and experimental learning. Maria, however, positioned herself as an inferior to the mentor teacher in terms of both power and expertise due to her self-perceived shortcomings in knowledge and experience and her mentor's controlling mentoring approach. As a result, she lost her confidence and developed negative emotions that triggered her alignment to the mentor's teaching approach even though it was not the one she had learned and advocated.

The preservice teachers' positioning in relationships with EAL students provided a lens to see how the preservice teachers made sense of their role, which is another crucial aspect of teacher identity (Cross & Gearon, 2007). Kate exercised her friendly teacher self who valued students' share of control, but she was also ready to be authoritarian in order to take control and maintain conducive learning conditions when classroom rules were not observed by students. Kate viewed her teacher self as having several key roles. Specifically, as a manager of learning, Kate strived to make students feel comfortable and confident in the learning process; as a facilitator of learning, she used a variety of learning activities and materials to make learning opportunities accessible to all students, and as a provider of knowledge, she understood the gaps in her students' knowledge and made efforts to fill these. Frank held a strong conception of his teacher role in engaging EAL learners in the learning process and facilitating that process rather than spoon-feeding it. Maria's ideal identity was a communicative language teacher, who would actively foster student interaction and engagement. However, that contradicted with her lived identity as a 'traditional' teacher, who had to abandon her ideal teacher self to follow her mentor's preferences. This identity battle resulted in Maria's frustration and disappointment as she navigated the practicum. Maria also lost the opportunity to draw on her previous experiences and resources to experiment with her learning.

Frank, Kate, and Mara's professional identity formation during the practicum provided contrasting case studies which might offer implications for mentoring structures and practices. Kate and Frank had the opportunity to draw on their previous knowledge and experiences, experiment with their learning, and receive rich mentoring support in the construction of their ideal teacher identities. In contrast, Maria was constrained by the power relation with her mentor that further intensified her self-perception of own weaknesses as a non-native speaker of English. As a result, Kate and Frank had much more productive and positive identity development experiences while Maria had a frustrating and disappointing one even though she started out with innovative teaching ideas and self-confidence in her strengths and ability to make positive contributions to EAL learning.

Such contrasting experiences could be largely attributed to the differing mentoring approaches taken by the mentors. The finding suggests that mentoring if appropriately structured could enhance preservice professional learning but otherwise could be a source of challenges that hinder productive professional identity development for preservice teachers. This finding highlights the essential role of mentor teachers as part of the practicum sociocultural contexts and practices in shaping the preservice teachers' professional experiences overall and identity development in particular. This is especially relevant to settings like the ones under study, where school-based mentors are the only source of formal disciplinary support that the participating preservice teachers received during the practicum. The study, therefore, recommends that mentor teachers adopt transformative mentoring (Brandt, 2006) and strength-based mentoring (He, 2009) to enable development of productive professional identities for preservice teachers. Such approaches require structuring of the mentoring relationships and positioning by the mentors in ways that build on individual knowledge, experiences, learning styles, and encourage problem-solving, agency, and reflective practice (Brandt, 2006; He, 2009; Tusting & Barton, 2003). The study especially recommends mentorship that empowers non-native preservice teachers by validating their developed perceptions of strengths and allowing them to capitalise on these strengths (Reis, 2011) and provides support in areas of perceived shortcomings (Cruickshank, Newell, & Cole, 2003; Fan & Le, 2010; Miller, 2007; Nallaya, 2016). Ellis (2016) recommends that TESOL teacher education recognises "plurilingual multicompetencies of *all* TESOL teachers" (p. 597, italics added) in supporting their identities in the TESOL classroom, where English language learners are also becoming multilingual.

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Chapter 8
Pedagogical Learning in Professional Experience



Abstract This chapter reports a study on the pedagogical learning experience of preservice English language teachers during their Australian professional experiences. Drawing on a sociocultural perspective, the study examines the personal and contextual factors that shape the preservice teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools. Analysis of interviews, audio-recorded lessons, lesson plans, teaching materials, and self-reflection reveals appropriation of a number of pedagogical tools including instructional activities, means of scaffolding, lesson plans, games, and theoretical knowledge about EAL teaching. Influential personal and contextual factors include personal motivation, prior professional and educational experiences, and mentoring support. The study generates implications for supporting preservice teachers in effectively transforming theoretical knowledge into practical skills and understandings.

Keywords Pedagogical learning · Pedagogical tools · Sociocultural perspective · Professional experience · Practicum

Some findings reported in this chapter were included in Nguyen and Brown (2016) with permission from Australian Journal of Teacher Education.

8.1 Pedagogical Tools and Pedagogical Learning

Pedagogical learning involves learning of pedagogical tools. Teachers use pedagogical tools such as subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, instructional activities, and teaching materials in doing their teaching work. Therefore, learning to use pedagogical tools is an essential aspect of teacher learning. As it has been argued previously, the teaching practicum is considered a way to bridge the theory and practice divide in teacher education. During the practicum, preservice teachers (PSTs) are expected to apply what they have learned in the coursework and other contexts into the real-life classroom, develop their teaching competency, and transition to the profession (Chiang, 2008; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Farrell, 2008; Graves, 2009). In other words, they learn to use the pedagogical tools they might have

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previously learned in teacher education coursework and professional experiences in practical settings.

Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999) classify pedagogical tools into conceptual tools and practical tools. Conceptual tools include "principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and English/language arts acquisition that teachers use as heuristics to guide decisions about teaching and learning", and practical tools refer to "classroom practices, strategies, and resources that do not serve as broad conceptions to guide an array of decisions but, instead, have more local and immediate utility" (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 14). While learning to teach is sociocultural, complex and multidimensional processes, learning such conceptual tools and how to use them in practical teaching contexts remains in the heart of teacher learning (Davin & Troyan, 2015; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2015; Newell & Connors, 2011).

There has been periodic research that explores preservice language teachers' pedagogical learning in their preservice teaching. For example, Johnson and Dellagnelo (2013) examine the mediational role of activities embedded in an US teacher education programme in preservice teachers' learning of pedagogical tools such as instructional paraphrasing, orienting, and predictability. These are devised to support them in fostering students' engagement and participation in their preservice ESL microteaching simulation. The study found that, with strategic mediation from their teacher educator and through using the pedagogical tools in their preservice teaching, the preservice teachers achieved a full understanding of the meanings and functional uses of the pedagogical tools. In another US study, Davin and Troyan (2015) investigate preservice foreign language teachers' ability to implement practical pedagogical tools in their placement teaching. The pedagogical tools, classified into two high-leverage teaching practices, namely *increasing interaction and target language comprehensibility* and *questioning to build and assess student understanding*, had been taught during a methodology unit. The study found that the participants scored better on the tools that they were able to plan and practice, but they had difficulties using the tools that required them to divert from their lesson plans and make decisions on the spot.

In the Australian context, de Courcy (2011) analysed novice ESL teachers' reflection on their pedagogical experiences in the practicum and found that the teachers were faced with challenges in using a number of pedagogical tools. For example, they struggled to understand the terms used in language proficiency assessment and reporting tools and to use them for differentiating their learners' proficiency levels. Other tools they had difficulties with include giving instructions, using silence/wait time, and organising group work. However, the study found that the teachers became more aware of the importance of using visuals in English language teaching and more comfortable with group work towards the end of their practicum.

Some gaps can be observed from the literature reviewed above. Although Johnson and Dellagnelo (2013) consider pedagogical tools used by preservice teachers in their preservice ESL teaching, the study focuses on how the teacher educator strategically mediated their use rather than how the pedagogical tools themselves were used to mediate preservice teaching and how the preservice teachers appropriated the tools through their preservice teaching. In addition, the study is based on an ESL

micro-teaching simulation rather than a school-based practicum, the latter of which is a more authentic context and may influence the preservice teachers' pedagogical learning differently. The second study, Davin and Troyan (2015), reports quantitative results about four preservice teachers' varied ability to use the focal pedagogical tools, but the authors' efforts to explain their findings are not grounded in the data collected. Finally, de Courcy (2011) is a pilot study based on data in the form of short reflective entries written by novice ESL teachers who are experienced teachers of content areas. The author acknowledges that due to the limited data set that is comprised of reflective journals from five past preservice teachers, the study only provides the participants' self-perceptions on their pedagogical learning experiences. Moreover, as the participants were experienced in teaching content subjects, their ESL pedagogical learning might be different to the pedagogical learning of preservice teachers with no or little experience in schools.

In conclusion, it can be observed from the literature reviewed above that an insightful understanding of preservice English language teachers' learning of pedagogical tools and personal and contextual factors shaping this learning remains a gap. In the subsequent section, I argue that such a contextualised understanding is significant and research that provides such insights is needed to support productive pedagogical learning for preservice English language teachers.

8.2 Appropriation of Pedagogical Tools

A sociocultural perspective on second language teacher education considers pedagogical tools as having mediational role in learning to teach. A broad tenet shared by many sociocultural theorists is that human consciousness develops within sociocultural contexts of activity in which the relationship between the human subject and the object of activity is mediated by tools and artefacts (e.g., Engeström, 1987, 2001, 2008; Newell & Connors, 2011; Newell, Gingrich, & Johnson, 2001; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). As such, the teacher's instructional activity is mediated principally by pedagogical tools (Ahn, 2011; Dang, 2013; Dang, Nguyen, & Le, 2013; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013). Appropriation of mediational tools is one of the key concepts of sociocultural theory (Grossman et al., 1999; Leontiev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). In teaching, this refers to the process whereby "a person adopts the pedagogical tools available for use in particular social environments (e.g., schools, preservice programs) and through this process internalises ways of thinking endemic to specific cultural practices (e.g., using phonics to teach reading)" (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 15). According to Grossman et al. (1999), appropriation of pedagogical tools can occur at different levels, including lack of appropriation, appropriation of a label, appropriation of surface features, appropriation of conceptual underpinnings, and achievement of mastery.

There have been a small number of studies on preservice English language teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools in the professional experience. Nearly two decades ago in the USA, Newell et al. (2001) investigated nine preservice English

teachers' appropriation of theoretical tools related to instructional scaffolding during their school-based student teaching. Underpinned by activity theory, the study found that a range of personal and contextual factors shaped the process. These factors include the participants' beliefs about English as a subject, their undergraduate experiences with the language, prior fieldwork experiences, the teacher education coursework, and the classroom contexts. Based on the findings, Newell et al. (2001) suggest that it is important to understand how preservice teachers negotiate these factors in developing relationships and professional identities. Although Newell et al. (2001) provide an in-depth examination of the preservice teachers' appropriation of one set of pedagogical tools namely instructional scaffolding, the findings are dated and might not have high relevance to the contemporary contexts of English language teaching.

In a more recent study, Newell and Connors (2011) investigated a preservice English language teacher's transfer and appropriation of instructional scaffolding from university course room into two different placement sites in relation to the mentoring support provided by university-based and school-based mentors. The authors provide a rich case study on the role of mentoring in the preservice teacher's pedagogical learning concerning instructional scaffolding. Yet, apart from mentoring, little is known about the influence of other factors inherent in the placement contexts. Also based in the USA, Davin, Herazo, and Sagre (2017) examine how four second-language teachers (including two preservice teachers) appropriated dynamic assessment as a pedagogical tool. The data show varying degrees of appropriation among the four teachers at different stages: before, during, and after a series of professional development workshops on using dynamic assessment. While the insights offered by Davin et al. (2017) are valuable in evaluating the impact of the professional development workshops on the teachers' appropriation of dynamic assessment, similar to Newell and Connors (2011), the study focuses exclusively on one source of influence, and there is a lack of insights into the role of other personal and contextual factors in the teachers' appropriation of the pedagogical tool.

In a Vietnam-based study, Dang (2013) investigates the professional learning experiences of Vietnamese preservice English language teachers in a paired placement. The data from interviews and classroom observations show the participants' appropriation of pedagogical tools such as jokes, video clips, and lesson planning at different levels. The dissimilar levels of appropriation were attributed to the different identities and emotional experiences they bought into and developed in the placement, especially "their different cognitive and affective response to the same experience" (Dang, 2013, p. 56). In another paper in the same line of inquiry, Dang (2017) similarly reports that preservice teachers appropriated scaffolding as a pedagogical tool at different levels due to the influence of a range of factors including their diverse prior teaching experiences and their positioning in relation to their mentors and peers. Although Dang (2013, 2017) systematically analysed the preservice teachers' professional learning experience, their appropriation of pedagogical tools is only a minor focus among other investigated issues such as identity, contradictions, and emotions. In addition, these studies are based in a university-based preservice

teaching setting, which differs significantly from the Australian secondary practicum context and the majority of practicum settings in initial teacher education.

From the literature reviewed above, it is found that research that seeks to understand preservice English language teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools in the practicum in Australia and the factors shaping this appropriation is much needed. The relevant studies reviewed above (Dang, 2013, 2017; Davin et al., 2017; Newell & Connors, 2011; Newell et al., 2001) are either based in the USA or Vietnam, and appropriating pedagogical tools in these country contexts might require different types of localisations, adaptations, and modifications of the tools. As mentioned before, appropriation of tools is not simply internalisation of the tools, but involves localisations, adaptations, and modifications of the tools (Grossman et al., 1999; Newell et al., 2001). Therefore, such Australia-based research would offer contextualised insights into pedagogical learning and subsequently have context-relevant implications for practice in Australia and similar contexts of English language teaching and teacher education. This is particularly meaningful in the neoliberal and post-methods era where developing contextually appropriate pedagogies is essential in learning to teach a second language (Le, 2018; Sanchez, Kuchah, Rodrigues, & de Pietri, 2018). Moreover, due to the little body of research into this area and the variations in research focus among the studies, there is inconsistency in the examined types of factors shaping preservice English language teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools. Therefore, this line of inquiry would make meaningful contribution to the database and move the field forward.

The present chapter ties together the themes reviewed above and aims to address some of the gaps identified. It is guided by the following research questions:

1. What pedagogical tools did the preservice English language teachers appropriate in their professional experience in Australian secondary schools, and to what extent?
2. What personal and contextual factors shaped their appropriation of these tools?

8.3 Methods

The research reported in this chapter uses a qualitative case study design with the participation of two preservice teachers, Frank and Kate, and their EAL mentors, Mr. Scott and Ms. Weston, respectively. The participants' profiles, recruitment procedures, research contexts, and data collection and analysis methods have been presented in previous chapters (see Chaps. 5–7). The data used in this chapter include two individual interviews and one stimulated recall session with each preservice teacher, one individual interview with their mentor, the preservice teachers' personal reflections, and self-recorded audios of lessons.

8.4 Findings and Discussion

8.4.1 Frank's Appropriation of Pedagogical Tools

8.4.1.1 Writing Activities and Diagnostic Assessment

Sociocultural analysis of the data indicates that a number of factors contributed to Frank's professional development in terms of his appropriation of the writing activities and diagnostic assessment. At the school level, this development was mediated by the school's broad curriculum, as the mentor teacher noted:

> We also have a curriculum that I've only broadly told Frank about and said that I just want them to learn writing, so he's come up with a number of really innovative activities to teach them writing. (Mr. Scott)

According to this excerpt, the broad school curriculum placed a focus on writing; therefore, the school expected Frank to mainly teach writing during his practicum. At the class level, Frank's two weeks on practicum needed to fit into the class's programme for the term, where the students had been scheduled to go to the Art Gallery and write a description of a painting. This explains why Frank spent time preparing the students for this task through the descriptive writing activities mentioned above. He recounted:

> Right now, he's told me that they're going to go to the Art Gallery and they're supposed to write a descriptive piece about a painting. So, that's why I'm doing a lot of description writing and descriptive activities, creative activities, so that they can get used to writing stuff. […] They'll go like, 'Oh, so writing about a piece of painting is not as hard as describing what my friend looks like.' (Frank, Reflection)

At a personal level, Frank's appropriation of such pedagogical tools was shaped by his mediated agency (Lasky, 2005; Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom, 1993). Mediated by the broad guidelines from the mentor, he agentively came up with the innovative teaching activities and evidently modified and localised the tools to suit the teaching content and context. He also drew on his knowledge about the students in designing activities that suited their backgrounds and interests.

Under the influence of these sociocultural factors mentioned above, during the practicum, Frank mainly taught writing, and he employed a variety of writing activities. Firstly, he conducted several writing activities to establish rapport with the students and to diagnose the students' writing ability. In one activity during the very first lesson, Frank asked each of his students to write one question to find out about him. He told the students, "I know that I am a new teacher here, and you might have some questions about me or anything about me that you might want to know" (Frank, Lesson recording 1). This shows that one of the aims of this activity was to make Frank, a new teacher, more personable to the students so they could relate to him better. A second aim was to draw the students' interest and attention. To achieve this aim, Frank did not answer all the questions in one lesson, but spread them over all the lessons. In addition, Frank also mentioned a diagnostic purpose of this activity:

> The aim of that exercise is also to see how well they can structure a sentence. The instruction was to put the question in a sentence, in one sentence, and from there, I can see how their sentence structure is, how well they're able to write a sentence and their chain of thought. [….] Then I know where to gear the lesson towards. [….] It was mainly for me to see where they are. So, that helps me measure up where the class is in general and […] where all the different students are on the scale. (Frank, Stimulated Recall)

In this excerpt, Frank clearly indicates his intention of using this writing activity to understand the students' sentence/question writing ability and to use this information in making his lessons suitable to the students' needs and levels. To find out the students' level of writing proficiency and background, Frank also asked them to discuss in groups the challenges they faced when they first came to Australia and then individually write one sentence about their biggest challenge. Frank reasoned his use of this activity:

> It's something that they know and it should be very familiar for them. A lot of them have only recently come here, so it's still pretty fresh. And I told them that I faced the same problems when I came here. I had problems with the food. I, you know, didn't like the public transport. I had to deal with a lot of things. [….] So, they feel the same. […] And that activity basically helped me see whether they can express their thoughts onto paper. [….] I did a few different activities to gauge accurately where the students are on the curriculum. (Frank, Stimulated Recall)

Similarly, Frank asked the students to write about where they came from and their plans when they finished school as a way to get to know the students and where they were on the assessment scale.

> What I would like you to do is to write about one paragraph and you tell me where you are from and what you would like to do when you finish school. Could be anything, anything you like to do when you finish school. (Frank, Lesson recording 1)

Frank's initial diagnostic assessment performed through the learning activities above shows his appropriation of both diagnostic assessment and writing activities as two types of pedagogical tools. Frank reportedly localised the diagnostic assessment tasks and modified the writing activities to suit both the teaching focus assigned by the mentor and the students' learning needs and other characteristics. This demonstrates a high level of appropriation of these pedagogical tools. Frank's modification of the writing tasks and diagnostic assessment tasks demonstrated his cognitive development since he was able to flexibly and suitably apply theoretical concepts in unfamiliar teaching contexts.

Secondly, during the professional experience, Frank was instructed to teach any of the genres including descriptive, creative, personal, expository, and argumentative writing. He chose to focus on descriptive writing and organised an activity involving describing the mentor teacher. Frank reflected on this activity:

> And then we did another activity, we had to describe somebody. So, I said, 'Okay. Why don't you describe Mr Scott?' I divided the class into three groups and I said, 'Okay the group that describes Mr Scott the best gets a point.' So, you know they were describing all the good things about Mr Scott. They say, 'Oh you know, he's pretty tall. He has white hair. He has brown eyes.' And I said, 'Oh these are very good descriptors. You know you can use

> them next time.' They go, 'Oh yes yes. He has nice personality. He's…' You know, and then Mr Scott was just, like, feeling very good about himself, which is very good. Yeah. So, you know that's an activity I felt went very well. First the kids they picked it up and then ran with it. So, and everybody was contributing something to the list. So, that's good. (Frank, Reflection)

According to Frank's reflection and the lesson recording, this activity went well. There were several factors contributing to the success of this activity. First, by choosing the mentor teacher as the person to be described, Frank was able to make the activity compelling to both the students and the mentor, who was observing the lesson. Second, the students knew Mr. Scott very well as their teacher, and with his presence, some of the learning burden was lifted. This enabled the students to focus on their language use, and they were able to use a range of vocabulary in their description. Moreover, by organising it as a group work activity and incorporating a competition element into it, Frank made the activity fun and engaging, and the students were motivated to contribute to their group project. The activity is a good example of Frank's development in pedagogical knowledge and skills because it shows how Frank localised and modified a descriptive writing activity so that it met the curriculum requirement and at the same time interested the parties involved. Mr. Scott considered the writing activities and assessment tools Frank used as 'very innovative', 'very great ideas' in teaching writing (Mr. Scott), which indicates that Frank had achieved a high level in appropriating this pedagogical tool.

8.4.1.2 Instructional Scaffolding

Several key factors were revealed through the sociocultural analysis of data as having strong influence on Frank's scaffolding practice for his EAL students. The first factor identified was the pedagogical content knowledge that he learned during the coursework at Greystone University:

> The pedagogy is good. Telling us how to scaffold, telling us how students learn is important. (Frank, Interview 1, see also Nguyen and Penry Williams (forthcoming))

After this unit, Frank also had an opportunity to employ the scaffolding strategies during his first Business practicum and found that they were helpful. He commented on this:

> In my previous [Business] placement, I had a couple of students whose main language was not English. They came from China. And although their command of English was not great, they knew the concept, but they were not able to express as much and not confident in expressing themselves. So, learning about the techniques and how to scaffold students was helpful. (Frank, Interview 1)

The extracts show that, by the time Frank entered the second practicum, he had developed some scaffolding techniques through coursework and positive experience using them in the first practicum. This can be seen as the basis he needed to continue scaffolding practice in the second teaching round under research.

The following extract from an interview with the mentor teacher shows that Mr. Scott's feedback and guidance, grounded in his insider understanding of the school context and the students' background and ability, as well as his extensive experience teaching in such a context, played an influential role in shaping Frank's appropriation of instructional scaffolding:

> We have a number of students in the class that Frank's taking who are from refugee backgrounds. So, seven of the 18 students in the class are from refugee backgrounds. They've had interrupted schooling. They've been dislocated. I think four or five of them are Korean from Burma. So, during our plenary evaluation sessions, I need to remind him to repeat, rephrase, ask checking questions. He tends…, this is no criticism of Frank because I think he's a very competent teacher, he tends to rush, you know, do everything at high speed. (Mr. Scott)

Not only learning from university units, his previous experience, and the mentor teacher's guidance, Frank also learned from his own practice during the teaching round with regard to scaffolding EAL learning. When asked to reflect on the main things he had learned during the practicum, he recounted:

> Well, [I'm] a bit more aware of, like, in EAL there're a lot of things that you cannot, like, talk about, depending on where the students come from. Some of them are, like, refugees, so you don't want to talk about like their home countries. […] Some of them are refugees and are, like, orphans, so they don't have their parents. So, you don't want to talk about, like, 'What does your mum or dad do?', that kind of thing. They've got nothing to say about that. You know, some of them have not, like, picked up story books to read, so they don't know what's in a story book. Things like that I have to learn how to give them good scaffolding. Otherwise they can't pick it up. (Frank, Interview 2, see also Nguyen and Penry Williams (forthcoming))

Apparently, Frank had learned a great deal about his students' social, economic, and academic background on the job. This understanding assisted him in providing instructional scaffolding that matched their needs and circumstances.

Analysis of data from the ontogenetic and cultural–historic domains shows that under the influence of the sociocultural factors mentioned above, Frank demonstrated a growing understanding of how to provide effective scaffolding support for EAL learning as he transitioned from coursework at university to the EAL practicum.

> The Pedagogy [unit] is good, telling us how to scaffold, telling us how students learn is important. […] In my previous placement, I had a couple of students whose main language was not English. They came from China. And although their command of English was not great, they knew the concept, but they were not able to express as much and not confident in expressing themselves. So, learning about the techniques and how to scaffold students was helpful. (Frank, Interview 1, see also Nguyen and Penry Williams (forthcoming))

Frank had learned about the theoretical concept and practical strategies for scaffolding in his coursework, applied the strategies in his previous practicum, and further appropriated this tool in the current practicum. At the beginning of the second practicum, Frank appears to have appropriated the label, surface features, and theoretical underpinnings of instructional scaffolding, but at times he was not able to modify it to suit the local setting, as noted by his mentor:

> Some of the girls who are sitting quietly at the corner really struggle with the concepts and the new language that's coming up. Towards the end of a lesson, again he [Frank] starts to rush. [….] I think Frank has got to pitch his lesson to meet those wide range of abilities I assume that would be true in every school, while particularly our school where we do have that range. Even though some students have been here nearly two years, they still remain very weak especially in writing and reading. So yeah, I'm talking to Frank constantly about doing those very basic things. (Mr. Scott)

However, as he continued developing his understanding of the students' characteristics and needs and with the mentor teacher's feedback, towards the end of the practicum the preservice teacher had appropriated scaffolding as a tool and successfully embarked on meeting the needs of the students. His mentor commented:

> I noticed that he takes that [my feedback] on board and he really tries. Yesterday's lesson for example he was going very carefully through the article he was reading with the students and asking them questions. (Mr. Scott)

The mentor's comments above indicate that Frank was undertaking cognitive development, which was manifested in this change of thinking and activity in relation to instructional scaffolding. This development was enabled by a number of personal and contextual factors as discussed so far in this section.

8.4.1.3 Games

The microgenetic analysis of data shows that during the professional experience, Frank frequently used games as pedagogical tools in teaching EAL, and this appears to be shaped by a number of ontogenetic factors. First, the data reveal the influence of the preservice teacher's prior experience with games and his developed understanding of the benefits of using games in EAL teaching. Frank had prior experience testing games for a company and using games in teaching English language, so he had developed a good understanding of educational games and their benefits for language learning and teaching before he entered the practicum. He said:

> I used to test games for companies, so I heard about these and they're pretty good for learning. So, I bought them, they're pretty cheap. [….] It's easy to learn how to play a game. It's also distracting them from what learning has to be in their mind so that learning doesn't have to be open up a book and you read a book […]. It can be as simple as playing this game and talking to your friends and that's how you learn things. The brain is very active at this age and they want to get information. So, the more they use the language in a social setting, the more they will be interested in it, rather than 'Oh I have to do it for school.' (Frank, Stimulated Recall)

From this extract, it appears that Frank conceptualised games as a way to make learning less stressful and more enjoyable, to make learning a social activity rather than a mere academic activity. It also shows the preservice teacher's understanding of the students' characteristics as 'very active' and how they would want to learn at their age. Frank further elaborated on how games worked for language teaching and learning:

> You want the students to be able to see that they're making progress. You want them to feel a sense of achievement physically and then they get rewarded somehow and see that 'Hey, I've achieved this, I have something to be celebrated' […]. You know, it's like, 'Hey, you scored a B, you know that's three points.' [….] But in that sense as well, there's a lot of competition and in order to promote group activities, you go, 'Alright now here's the bonus. If you help somebody else score a B or you know, score something high then you get points as well.' So, then you have the stronger students wanting to help the weaker students simply because they go, 'I really want that cake. […] I will help my friend over there and make sure that he passes so that I can get a cake.' People have been selfish like that but you use that selfishness to a teaching advantage. (Frank, Interview 1)

The third major factor influencing Frank's use of games was his passion for using games as a teaching tool. He commented:

> In general, I expect to hopefully learn more about the classroom management and using games to teach language. Using different games to teach language […] is a part of my study as well. I'm putting that into my portfolio. That is what I'm passionate about. I'm passionate about games and how they affect people in different ways. So, if we can get students to learn from games and be able to speak English simply by playing different games with different people, then you know that might be a new way to teach language rather than, 'Here! Read this book! And you will learn all you need to know.' That's, you know, not everyone wants to read a book. (Frank, Interview 1)

Frank's passion for the use of games in EAL teaching seems to be grounded in his prior experience with games and understanding of the potential benefits of games for language learning. Therefore, he aimed to learn more about using games in EAL teaching. This motive appeared to be the major driving force behind his frequent use of games in his teaching, as he said during the pre-practicum interview cited above.

During the EAL teaching practicum under research, he further appropriated the tool through his use of a number of games which proved to work effectively in his classroom context.

> I've been using Royal Story Cubes. I've been using Once upon a Time, Fairy Tales, and […] I will be using Taboo. So, Taboo is an English synonym game. So, what's that you'll associate with, let's say a chair. You know you cannot say sit, you cannot say four legs. You know things like that. They have to describe a chair without saying all these words. (Frank, Interview 2)

> So far, it's been going on really well. Students have been interacting with each other a lot. [….] Even though it was held in a classroom with the teacher involved but it's basically because it's a social activity rather than an academic sort of activity. Well, it's an academic activity disguised as a social activity, so that's why I think it works. And currently the students are responding to it very well. (Frank, Reflection)

The data show that Frank did not simply conduct the games in their original form, but modified them to suit the students' interest, English proficiency levels, and the teaching and learning goals set by the school board curriculum. For example, Frank reportedly used a game that ran throughout the entire practicum period. In this game, he used a point system and a party at the end of his teaching period to motivate students to learn. Following is Frank's description of how he used this game:

> I told them that we're going to play this very big game. The class said they want to have a party because they didn't have a party last time. I said, 'Okay, sure. We'll have a party, but you need to get 50 points. You need to get 50 points each week.' They said, 'Oh, how do we get these points?' I said, 'Okay, so if you come on time, everybody comes on time, the whole class gets a point. Okay. If there's homework, if you do your homework you get one point. If the whole class does homework, everybody gets another point, so total for two points.' [….] Then I said, 'For every five words in your vocabulary book that you showed to me that you know how to use, you get a point.' (Frank, Reflection)

It also appears that Frank purposefully chose games that matched the learning outcomes that he wanted his students to achieve. He noted this point:

> First, I had an objective – what I wanted them to do, what I wanted them to learn or skills that I wanted them to pick up. Then what happened after that was that I would go into choosing an appropriate game that I had for them to interact with. (Frank, Interview 2)

The excerpts above reveal Frank's cognitive development through his advancing appropriation of games as a pedagogical tool as he moved through different activities. From his rich experiences with games and his subsequent high-level understanding of the benefits of games in teaching learning EAL, Frank had extended his skills by making the necessary changes in the game formats to suit his specific teaching context. All of this was afforded by his personal histories as seen from the ontogenetic data presented at the beginning of this section.

8.4.2 Kate's Appropriation of Pedagogical Tools

8.4.2.1 Theoretical Knowledge About EAL Teaching

Regarding theoretical knowledge, the data demonstrate that through the practicum, Kate continued to appropriate theoretical concepts about curriculum and assessment and theoretical understanding of the purpose of EAL teaching. Firstly, the following extract shows a good example of Kate's appropriation of the theoretical knowledge about curriculum and assessment that she learned at university coursework:

> When I did [the unit on curriculum and assessment], I think it's quite a hard unit because it's first up and you're still getting your head around all the terminology. And I think it's quite dense as well, and quite theoretical, like why you use different assessments, what they're for, what makes a well-designed assessment, a bad-designed assessment, and lots of new vocabulary as well. So, when I did it, I did well in that unit, but it didn't feel like I completely got to grips with what it meant in practice. It's actually until my second placement that I actually started more and more understanding, 'Oh OK, yep, so this is how you use it in context and this is why this is useful, why this isn't useful, and that's why I might use an essay task question or that's why I might use a multiple-choice question there.' (Kate, Interview 2)

In this excerpt, Kate admits that while she was doing the coursework unit, she did not fully understand what the theoretical concepts meant and how they could be used in practice. This indicates that she might have appropriated some of the theoretical

labels and surface features of the theoretical constructs during the coursework. However, not until she was engaged in teaching EAL during the practicum did she begin to understand the theoretical knowledge more deeply and be able to draw connection with her classroom practice. The findings show that the practicum experience with supportive mentoring as discussed above, afforded opportunities to implement the theoretical knowledge, and reflective learning helped Kate to achieve a higher level of appropriation of the tool. While it seems to fit the normal purpose of the practicum (Chiang, 2008; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Farrell, 2008; Graves, 2009), the literature has shown that it is not always the case that preservice teachers will appropriate the theoretical tools at a higher level (Nguyen, 2014, 2017; Yuan, 2016). Such appropriation depends on an array of personal and contextual factors as identified in this study.

Secondly, Kate reportedly appropriated a higher level of theoretical understanding of the purpose of EAL teaching. Before the practicum, when asked what her understanding of the main purpose of EAL teaching was, Kate said:

> It should be about giving students English skills so that they have more options. Definitely shouldn't be about getting rid of their own culture or their own language or their own identity, but it should be about helping them so that they can be successful themselves and so that they can, you know, integrate into society, not by forgetting their own language and culture, by having, you know an additional language and an additional cultural that they can use to interact with people. It just sounds stupid, but just to make them happy. (Kate, Interview 1)

According to this comment, Kate views the main purpose of EAL teaching as to help students to succeed and integrate into society while still being able to maintain their language, culture, and identity. After the practicum, I asked Kate to what extent she had been able to incorporate this idea into her preservice teaching. Here is her response:

> I think I often tried to ask the students in the class, […] 'What it's like in your country?' Or 'Do you have any examples of this?' And as I said, I allowed them to speak their own language. I thought that was important. I tried to mention examples that are related to their culture and their heritage. And also, I let them pick whatever they were interested into write their factual thing about. And I let them pick whatever they were interested into write their story about as well. So, I was trying to make sure that I linked in with their interests. And quite a few of them wrote about Korean boy bands and Chinese boy bands, and Japanese figures […]. I just wanted them to get the language of this genre, how to structure this genre. You can talk about whatever you like. And I'd often ask them, because I found it quite interesting as well, so 'I've not heard about this boy band, who are they and why are they so popular?' So just trying to show an interest, you know, making a space in the classroom where they discuss what they wanted to and they could, you know, use their interests and cultural background but […] within a level of appropriateness. You know, 'That's interesting. I don't know about that. What can you tell me about that?' So, that they felt like their culture was valued. And I do find it genuinely interesting. I'm genuinely quite curious about, you know, different cultures anyway. So, I try and, you know, you don't want to ask your students questions that they feel uncomfortable with or, you know, spend a lot of time on something. But you know, absolutely if they looked comfortable discussing the subject, I'd say, 'Okay, what can you tell me about that?' (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

Although this excerpt is lengthy, it provides rich information about Kate's appropriation of the theoretical understanding of the purpose of EAL teaching which she

applied in her preservice teaching. She reportedly encouraged her students to learn English through communicating about their culture, heritage, and personal interests, and sometimes through the use of their first language. Socioculturally, this approach realised the idea of allowing EAL students to preserve their language, culture, and identity while they immerse in the Australian multicultural society (Department of Education and Training, 2015). Pedagogically, it allowed the students to focus on the language aspects of the learning experience because the information is familiar to them.

8.4.2.2 Instructional Strategies

The sociocultural analysis of data reveals that Kate's appropriation of the theoretical knowledge about EAL teaching discussed in the previous section in turn contributed to her appropriation of a number of instructional strategies at a high level. Microgenetic analysis shows that during the practicum Kate appropriated a variety of learning activities, differentiation techniques, and instructional scaffolding. Data within ontogenetic and cultural–historic analysis domains show that her appropriation of the pedagogical tools was enabled by a range of factors. The first factor to account for is the mentor's transformative approach to mentoring (Brandt, 2006), which allowed Kate to take risks, draw on her resources and agency, and experiment with her learning:

> My mentor said […], you know, 'You should take risks now because this is the time when you can take risks; you've got someone else in the room.' (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

Another influential factor in conjunction with the supportive mentoring is Kate's agency in her learning and personal motivation to trial with application of her knowledge, as in the following extract:

> I also wanted to try and incorporate activities that we'd learned at university that I thought maybe […] a bit more experimental or maybe […] things that I maybe didn't feel confident with, so I'd get the chance to do them, so I could see if I could learn more and improve. […] And I also wanted to see […] if I could manage it. (Kate, Stimulated Recall)

Here, Kate agentively stated her intention of implementing her knowledge learned during coursework into her practicum teaching. She purposefully chose areas that she lacked confidence and experience in because she considered the practicum as an opportunity for her to develop these areas.

In an interview, Kate commented on her improvement in teaching towards the end of the practicum, which she attributed to her use of a broader range of instructional activities:

> I think I got a lot better. I felt like my teaching was maybe a bit boring at the start. I got much better at planning interesting lessons with much wider variety of activities. (Kate, Interview 2)

Kate elaborated on her appropriation of instructional activities as pedagogical tools:

> I remember when I spoke to you last time I was saying I was trying to make my teaching a bit more interesting, more exciting with some more activities. So, I've actually been able to experiment a lot more and sort of you know take risks with things, doing things that I haven't done before. Some examples of that would be *Running Dictation*. (Kate, Reflection)

> Well, I think I've learned how to do a lot more sort of interactive activities, things that involve group work and different sizes of groups as well; not just pair work or small group work, but a variety of group work. (Kate, Interview 2)

Interactive activities such as group work of different forms appear to be the pedagogical tools that Kate purposefully chose to use frequently in order to make her lessons more interesting and engaging. The preservice teacher not only used activities that she knew well, but also decided to experiment with activities that she had learned at university but never had an opportunity to use before such as *Running Dictation*. Kate's reflections show that she had started to achieve success in using these tools. She commented on the success of one of these activities:

> And the kids really loved that [group writing] activity. They really enjoyed that lesson. They wrote some great stories. And yeah, at the very end as well when they had to write a story on their own, it's like a final assessment task, they did a really good job on that, and I was really impressed about what they came up with. So, that was good. (Kate, Interview 2)

The data also show Kate's effective differentiation of learning activities to suit the advanced and beginning classes. In other words, she agentively modified and localised the activities to suit the different classes. Her differentiation was manifest in a number of ways. First of all, Kate reportedly provided much more scaffolding for the beginning class. She summarised her scaffolding approach as follows:

> I had a group that were quite advanced and a group that was really sort of beginners and I was teaching them both the same topic. So, I had to really change the way that I taught the different topics and scaffolded much more for the beginning students. So, I had a lot of matching exercises and gap-fill exercises and pre-reading activities and pre-listening activities for them and lots more visuals as well to try and get them to connect with the materials more. (Kate, Reflection)

This excerpt captures the main pedagogical tools and artefacts that mediated Kate's agentive adaptation of the same teaching material to suit both the advanced and the beginner students. Furthermore, in a matching exercise, Kate provided scaffolding in the form of linguistic clues to assist the lower level students:

> For [the beginners], one of my lessons I had a matching exercise where I had words that we'd already done a listening exercise with […]. And then I wanted them to match the words to the definitions, and what I discovered was that if I put whether the word was an adjective, or an adverb, or a noun, or a verb, and what tense it was in, they found it much easier to match [….]. So saying, you know, whether it was an adjective or an adverb or whatever really really helped them. (Kate, Interview 2)

This extract shows that Kate gave hints, one of the means of scaffolding identified by van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen (2010), to help the students proceed more easily with the task. This strategy seemed to work well for the beginning students since they had limited knowledge of the language, and without such support, they would have found it challenging to complete the task.

In teaching writing, Kate also reportedly differentiated her instruction to suit the two levels of ability:

> For the lower group, they just had to create an introduction. I didn't give them any specific things they had to do because they're real beginners and they're just getting to grips with the language. But for the more advanced group, I did the same activity but they had to pick a genre. I gave them three genres: adventure, horror and sci-fi. They had to pick a genre and they had to write the introduction to the story in that genre. And generally, with the high-level class, […] there were more criteria that they had to fulfil like, you know, you have to use an adverb, you have to use an adjective and that kind of thing. (Kate, Reflection)

The mentor teacher also acknowledged Kate's ability in this respect:

> I asked her to do pretty much the same materials. […] I wanted her to do that with both classes so that she would have to learn how to adapt […]. And she did it really well. (Ms. Weston)

The data presented so far in this section demonstrate Kate's cognitive development as she appropriated the pedagogical tools. This development spanned from her emerging theoretical knowledge about EAL teaching, application of such knowledge in practice, advancement of this knowledge within practice, and modification of instructional strategies to suit the needs of the learners and specific contexts. The growth in her theoretical understanding and practical teaching skills was shaped by a multitude of interrelated personal and contextual factors as the sociocultural analysis of data shows above.

8.5 Implications

This study found that under the influence of a range of personal and contextual factors, such as prior professional and educational experiences and mentoring support, and their nested relationships the preservice teachers successfully appropriated a number of pedagogical tools. There were differences in the types of mediational pedagogical tools that the preservice teachers appropriated and the factors influencing their appropriation. For Frank, these tools include writing activities and diagnostic assessment, instructional scaffolding and games. His high-level appropriation of these pedagogical tools was shaped by an accumulation of life experiences, teacher education experiences, prior teaching experiences, and mentoring support. He also used his contextual knowledge regarding the school's EAL programme and his EAL students' social, economic, and academic background, some of which he gained during the coursework but most during the practicum, to mediate his pedagogical learning. The data about Kate show her high-level appropriation of theoretical knowledge about EAL teaching and a wide range of instructional activities. Most of the pedagogical tools that Kate appropriated were originated from the EAL teacher education coursework, complemented by her previous education experience and the high level of autonomy and support given by her mentor teacher.

The study suggests that teacher agency plays an essential role in preservice teachers' pedagogical learning during the practicum. In order to foster teacher agency, teacher education needs to equip preservice teachers with a rich repertoire of pedagogical tools that can be used in a wide variety of teaching contexts and situations as well as conceptual understanding and practical knowledge of these tools (Yang, 2015). This would allow preservice teachers to be reflective, flexible, and supported in their instructional decision making once emerged in the teaching context. Effective mentoring plays an essential role in mediating preservice teachers' appropriation of pedagogical tools. As the stories about Frank and Kate's pedagogical learning show, afforded autonomy is one of the antecedents of preservice teachers' ability to initiate solutions to pedagogical issues. Equipped with pedagogical resources and provided with effective mentoring, preservice teachers themselves also need to be agentive enough to be experimental and self-directed in their learning, to access the personal resources they possess, and to make full use of the contextual resources afforded to them. Teacher agency, combined with effective mentoring and personal resources would allow for productive appropriation of pedagogical tools as the findings suggest.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that effective pedagogical learning is dependent upon the interplay of many influential personal and contextual factors. Therefore, the study recommends a well-planned professional experience that allows for transformative learning where preservice teachers can draw on their personal resources as well as resources afforded by the sociocultural context of their professional experience (Brandt, 2006). Preservice teachers enter teacher education with a broad range of personal and professional experiences, as well as beliefs, expectations, knowledge, and values formed as a result of these experiences. Teacher education coursework primes preservice teachers for a range of pedagogical knowledge and skills. However, it is the effective mentoring offered by mentors that plays an essential role in their implementation and appropriation of these tools. The important role of transformative mentoring in allowing for productive pedagogical learning is highlighted by past studies in which preservice teachers show advanced pedagogical understandings after coursework but are discouraged from applying their knowledge and skills in their practicum teaching (Nguyen, 2014, 2017; Nguyen & Parr, 2018; Yuan, 2016). Therefore, in designing the professional experience, it is important to take into account the interplay between these multiple variables.

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Chapter 9
Reflection on English Language Teacher Learning in Professional Experience



Abstract This final chapter reflects on the key themes of this book and offers recommendations for theory, practice, and research in English language teaching professional experience. From a sociocultural perspective, it highlights the importance of comprehensively and systematically taking into account the personal and social dimensions of professional experience and their nested relationships in research and practice. Implications are discussed in terms of developing an effective knowledge base for English language teaching and the conditions for more productive professional experiences. The chapter discusses the research contributions of the book along with research limitations. It ends with directions for future research on professional experience in English language teacher education.

Keywords Knowledge base · Second language · Teacher education · Professional experience · Learning communities

9.1 Summary of the Research

Drawing on Vygotskian sociocultural theory and using a qualitative design, the research in this book explored the professional experiences of four preservice English as an additional language (EAL) teachers in secondary schools in Victoria, Australia. Specifically, it sought to understand the preservice teachers as learners of EAL teaching, the contexts of that learning, and the preservice teachers' process of learning to teach EAL in relation to personal and contextual factors and the interrelationships between these factors. The research design, which involved multiple interviews, stimulated recall based on lesson recordings and teaching materials, and reflective entries, served as intervention that enabled the participants to externalise their thinking and emerging understandings as they navigated the professional experiences. This methodology, in line with an interpretive research stance (see Chap. 3), allowed the study to capture professional learning both through the participants' actual experiences in the placement and their interpretation of the experiences. The study found that the preservice teachers brought a range of personal factors to the professional experiences and these developed in interaction with various contextual factors inherent in the professional experience settings in shaping their learning experiences.

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Major personal factors include prior beliefs, educational experience, teaching experience, and linguistic and cultural background. Influential contextual factors included policies, curriculum design and implementation, mentoring relationships, and interaction with learners and other community members. Areas of professional learning reported in this book include mentor-mediated learning, emotional experiences, identity development, and pedagogical learning.

The findings highlight the importance of comprehensively and systematically taking into account the personal and social dimensions of professional experience and their nested relationships in research and practice. They extend the literature on the TESOL professional experience by providing comprehensive and systematic insights into preservice school-based EAL teaching. The insights gained shed light on how the preservice teachers learned to teach EAL and explain why their learning took particular shapes. Based on the findings, the book offers theoretical, practical, and research contributions, which are discussed in the subsequent sections. While some of the recommendations that follow can be applicable to neoliberal English language teacher education contexts beyond Australia, it is recommended that readers should consider their contexts and the context of this book carefully when applying the recommendations.

9.2 The Knowledge Base for English Language Teaching

Based on the findings reported in the previous chapters, this book generates a range of implications for English language teacher education for providing a knowledge base that is 'fit' for English language teaching in Australian secondary schools and similar neoliberal contexts. Firstly, the book has reported issues related to the curriculum of EAL teacher education. Chapters 6 and 7 show that Maria's self-perceived lack of content knowledge for EAL (i.e., English grammar and literature knowledge) and a discrepancy between the knowledge gained during coursework and the teaching requirements at the secondary school were major factors causing her negative professional experience. As Chap. 4 shows, the teacher education programme offers only two units related to EAL teaching. However, these units prepare preservice teachers for theories and skills in EAL and second language teaching, but not the content knowledge for EAL teaching, such as EAL curriculum and syllabus design, syntax, phonetics and phonology (Richards, 1998) and studies of literary texts for VCE (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2014). Such subject matter knowledge belongs to a core domain of the knowledge base for teaching EAL in Australia as specified in the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) and the *National Standards for Accreditations of Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Australia* (AITSL, 2018).

It is essential that the gaps in knowledge for EAL teaching mentioned above be addressed. This is particularly important in increasingly popular double-method teacher education programmes, where some preservice teachers might have only done a minor related to EAL. This is a possible situation in the Victorian accreditation

context where "[f]or secondary teaching this is at least a major study in at least one teaching area and preferably a second teaching area comprising at least a major or minor study" (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2015). The book suggests that EAL teacher education content and practices must pay due attention to the development of this subject matter knowledge. A strong subject matter knowledge is necessary for all teaching contexts, within and beyond Australia, because teachers need to know the content they teach (Richards, 1998). In support of this, Faez and Valeo's (2012) found that 66% of beginning English language teachers in Canada considered studies of grammar as one of the most important components of the TESOL education programme.

EAL teacher education in Australia and the broader neoliberal contexts should also take into consideration the EAL teaching requirements at schools and other teaching contexts in developing and delivering teacher education programmes. As mentioned in Chap. 1, in the age of neoliberalism, English language is increasingly taught in conjunction with content areas (Johnson & Golombek, 2018; Lightbown, 2014). Therefore, a knowledge base for teaching that draws connection between EAL method and content area methods would be productive. Previous research has shown that collaboration between preservice teachers of EAL and content areas within teacher education creates spaces for preservice teachers to prepare for meeting the teaching demands in schools (Fan, 2013; Turner, 2015). Apart from the theoretical and empirical bases of the knowledge base of EAL teaching mentioned above, EAL teacher education curriculum also needs to be consolidated according to the Australian *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) and the *National Standards for Accreditations of Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Australia* (AITSL, 2018) to promote the excellence in teaching to which AITSL (2011) aspires.

Secondly, NNES preservice teachers, despite bringing their own value to add to teacher education, encounter a range of challenges (Fan & Le, 2009b; Gan, 2013; Nallaya, 2016), some of which are illustrated in this book by Maria's story. Under the impact of neoliberalism, international students, the majority of whom are NNES, form an importance source of revenue in the business of universities in English-speaking countries including the UK, the USA, and Australia and continue to increase in number (Tran & Gribble, 2015; Tran & Vu, 2018). The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (2007) has been striving to enable universities to build capacity for attracting, encouraging, and supporting more under-represented people including NNES to study and succeed in their teacher education programmes. Richards (2010) strongly advocates the development of language proficiency for preservice teachers because it not only contributes to the development of teaching skills, but also promotes preservice teachers' confidence and sense of professional legitimacy, both of which were clearly lacking from Maria's professional experience. Language proficiency is also highly rated by ESL programme administrators as a major component of the knowledge base of NNES TESOL teachers (Zhang & Zhan, 2014).

Therefore, the book recommends that in addition to other domains of knowledge, EAL teacher education provide NNES preservice teachers with intensive language development incorporated into the teacher education curriculum (Gan, 2012, 2013) and further support for dealing with language-related issues (Cruickshank, Newell,

& Cole, 2003; Fan & Le, 2009a; Nallaya, 2016). This is relevant to both English-speaking contexts such as Australia, the UK, and the USA, and non-English-speaking contexts such as Chile, Indonesia, and Vietnam. For example, M. H. Nguyen (2013) found that ELTE curriculum development in the Vietnamese context places great emphasis on providing intensive English language development for preservice teachers to bridge the gap between their low proficiency entry levels and national expected graduate levels.

Besides, as the literature and findings of this study both show, NNES preservice TESOL teachers have strong points that can facilitate their teaching. Both teacher educators and preservice teachers should draw links between their backgrounds and the current context for teaching in order to optimise their knowledge base based on their strengths as NNES (Zhang & Zhan, 2014). In the same vein, Reis (2011) suggests that by engaging NNES ESL teachers in discussions of the NNES/NES dichotomy, a teacher education unit allows them to articulate their beliefs and opinions regarding ESL teaching and enhance their professional legitimacy awareness as NNES teachers, especially for those working in the inner circle contexts. Through this process, NNES ESL teachers develop conceptions of themselves, their students, and ESL teaching in more empowering ways. Last but not least, Chap. 1 highlights the moves towards plurilingualism, where languages teachers are expected to draw on the language resources of students and themselves in facilitating language development (Fielding, 2015; Freeman, 2018). Therefore, teacher education in plurilingual contexts such as Australia, the UK, and the USA needs to create opportunities for preservice teachers to develop plurilingual understandings of languages teaching and learning and raise awareness of using all available linguistic resources within the classroom.

Thirdly, the preservice teachers acknowledged the challenges of having no school-specific EAL curriculum to guide their teaching. In addition to that, as the data show, there was little commonality among the three schools' EAL programmes under research. Chapter 1 illustrates that there is a high level of cultural, linguistic, and academic diversities among the populations of Victorian EAL students, and EAL education programmes in the state have varied lengths and modes due to the different needs of the specific EAL cohorts in different schools and the funding available (DEECD, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Department of Education, 2007). This contextual feature may cause further confusion for preservice teachers. In this book, Frank and Kate quickly overcame the challenges thanks to their mentor's effective mentoring practices. However, Jane and Maria's inadequate understanding of the EAL programmes at their school and their mentors' expectations had negative effect on their practicum experiences and caused intense negative emotions and undesirable outcomes. EAL teacher education in any context would benefit from more attention to developing knowledge of context, particularly the types of EAL provision programmes that are enacted in different contexts and their major requirements in efforts to prepare preservice teachers for culturally, linguistically responsive teaching (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015; Kubanyiova, 2018; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). In line with Adoniou (2013), teacher education practices that consider in-depth the interplay between levels of context and focus on school context are fundamental for teacher candidates who

were not familiar with EAL education in specific settings due to their international backgrounds. This recommendation also applies to other neoliberal contexts because as shown in Chap. 1, the contexts of English language teaching have become very diverse and dynamic. The application of located English language teacher education (Johnson & Golombek, 2018) needs to start with the solid understanding of the context where teaching is located.

9.3 Conditions for Effective Professional Experiences

Based on the empirical findings reported in this book, a number of conditions which enable effective professional experiences in SLTE are discussed here. These can be implemented or adjusted for the immediate research context and other neoliberal contexts of SLTE. These implications take into account three domains of the sociocultural theoretical framework, namely the context of English language teaching, the teachers' personal factors, and the process of learning to teach in relation to the contextual and personal dimensions.

According to Le Cornu (2010), professional experiences in the initial teacher education contexts are undergoing "changes in how professional experiences are conceptualised, structured and supervised" (p. 195), which has implications for the changing roles of the professional experience participants. A learning communities model of professional experience is advocated since it offers preservice teachers opportunities to engage in shared teaching, risk-taking, peer mentoring, and reciprocal learning between preservice teachers, mentor teachers, and academic staff (Le Cornu, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). This model takes into account preservice teachers' contribution to the learning communities, creates a professional experience context where multiple parties are engaged in the learning activity, and allows for the professional experience to be shaped by all these contributions.

As shown in Chap. 4, Greystone University's *Placement Manual* specifies the roles of different parties involved in the professional experience, including (1) placement officers, course leaders, and student advisers from the university and (2) OTPs and mentor teachers from schools. The research recognises the role of the Placements Office in providing a link between the teacher candidates, schools/centres, and the academic staff at the university. The data show that the Placements Office provided comprehensive orientation and support for preservice teachers and administrative support for university–school partnerships. However, the support from the Placements Office for preservice teachers was not related to their specialist teaching areas, and the academic staff were mostly called on only when there were issues suggesting preservice teachers were 'at-risk'. It is the academic side of partnerships that the study found weak in the model of professional experience under research.

Academically, during the professional experience the preservice teachers were placed in unfamiliar school contexts, and the teacher education responsibility was largely on the school mentors. None of the participating preservice teachers was visited by a university supervisor during the professional experience. It might not be

easy to assess the loss in terms of academic support in the cases of Frank and Kate, as an academic participant said, "The students who don't have it [a visit] don't know any difference" (Angela, Interview) and because they received good support from their mentors. However, since support from the mentor teacher was lacking and other sources of support were not in place, Maria felt the loss deeply. The data also show that reciprocal learning relationships between preservice teachers were not built in as part of the professional experiences of the preservice teachers. Learning partnerships between the preservice teacher and mentor teacher appeared weak in Maria's case and were absent between university academics and the other two parties in all cases. This limited the opportunities for quality professional learning for the preservice teachers. In line with the Australian and international literature (e.g., Coskun & Daloglu, 2010; Gan, 2014; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White, Bloomfield, & Le Cornu, 2010), the book suggests that these learning partnerships be consolidated and strengthened for more productive EAL professional experiences. This approach is in line with the recommendation by The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (2007) that "[t]he key to achieving high quality practicum for all teacher education students is the establishment of strong authentic partnerships between all parties" (p. 75).

The research recognises the administrative support offered by the Placements Office in successful administration of the professional experience and the central role of the mentor teachers in supporting the preservice teachers. However, it recommends that the mentoring be consolidated and other participants of the professional experience play a more active role to allow for the development of meaningful professional learning communities. These recommendations are discussed below in relation to the immediate research context and other neoliberal contexts where relevant.

9.3.1 The Role of Academics

For effective professional experience to happen, one of the conditions is that the involvement of academic staff with expertise on EAL specialism is built into the professional experience curriculum and recognised and valued by their institutions. The professional experience is a critical transition period in which preservice teachers move from the known to the unknown, from the course room to real-life teaching contexts, from being a student to being a teacher, and between theoretical studies and practical application. To ensure smooth transition, the role of the university EAL lecturers, regardless of country contexts, should not be withdrawn completely during the professional experience to avoid placing preservice teacher learning at two distinct sites—theoretical understandings provided by the university and practitioner-based application in the school classroom (White et al., 2010). It is an enormously demanding expectation to leave the teacher education responsibility during the professional experience to one school mentor. A New Zealand study suggests that university lecturers are likely to have greater understanding of the preservice teachers' learning journey, so they are able to make a stable impact on the preservice teachers' professional development (Ussher & Carss, 2014).

Moreover, data from the current study and the international literature show multiple benefits of university lecturers' involvement in the professional experience. In the past when Greystone University's lecturers of EAL method visited all preservice teachers at their professional experience schools, they observed lessons and gave expert advice and feedback on the lessons. Their visits not only benefited the preservice teachers greatly but also increased their own sense of connection with the preservice teachers and schools. They also had mediating role in the relationships between the mentees and their mentors and between the preservice teachers and the school community; they also helped to strengthen partnerships between the university and schools. In addition, according to Tsui and Law (2007), as academics, school mentors, and preservice teachers in Hong Kong engaged in learning partnerships using the mediating tool of lesson study, they collaboratively resolved contradictions within their joint activity system, negotiated the mediational tool and transformed the practicum from professional learning for preservice teachers to professional development for all involved. Similarly, Cartaut and Bertone (2009) also found that joint professional development activities of a school mentor and a university academic during a school visit in France created conditions that foster preservice teachers' professional development and informed reorganisation of subsequent mentoring activities. Le Cornu (2016) argues that "[t]he role of the academic in professional experience has never been more important than within the current context" (p. 13).

9.3.2 The Role of Mentor Teachers

Another condition for an effective professional experience model is a reconceptualised role of mentor teachers. Arnold (2006) notes that the quality of the mentoring is important in teacher development. Chapter 6 shows that many of Jane and Maria's negative experiences originated in the tensions within their mentoring relationships. These contradictions, coupled with the mentor teacher's hesitance to allow the mentees to trial application of their existing theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in their lessons, were the main cause of their negative feelings and experiences. Although some of these emotions motivated change in their activity to meet the requirements of the professional experience, Jane and Maria did not achieve the intended outcome of the professional experience, which is applying the theoretical knowledge and skills learned at university into classroom teaching practice. On the other hand, Frank and Kate had more meaningful learning experiences during the practicum thanks to the 'exploratory' or 'transformative approach' to learning to teach allowed by their mentor teachers rather than a 'transfer approach' (Brandt, 2006) in which Jane and Maria were involved. Frank and Kate's mentor teachers also considered mentoring a preservice EAL teacher as an opportunity for them to reflect on their own teaching and stay up to date with contemporary teaching methods, which contributed to their productive professional experiences. This is in line with the core principle of a learning community's model that community members learn from one another rather than teacher educators transferring knowledge and

models of teaching to preservice teachers. The findings about mentoring relationships seem to resonate with many other contexts, as indicate in the review of literature on mentoring in Chaps. 2, 5, and 6. The recommendations made in this section may therefore be considered for use in these contexts to develop more productive mentoring relationships.

It is no longer appropriate to think of university-based studies and school-based teaching experience as exclusively the only places for teacher learning because, in addition to these, preservice teachers tend to draw on a multitude of resources such as their personal schooling and employment experiences, interactions with others, and self-research (Pridham, Deed, & Cox, 2013). The book, therefore, recommends that mentor teachers adopt the transformative approach to teacher learning (Brandt, 2006) to use preservice teachers' existing knowledge, learning styles, experiences as resources, and provide opportunities for autonomy, reflective practice, and problem-solving (Tusting & Barton, 2003; cited in Brandt, 2006; Doecke & Kostogriz, 2005). This approach would likely create more in-depth learning for both parties, which is supported empirically by the data about Frank and Kate and by previous studies (Hudson, 2013b; Pridham et al., 2013) and underpinned conceptually by the learning communities model of professional experience (Le Cornu, 2010; Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008). It is also recommended that conversations between mentors and mentees be enhanced, especially at the beginning of the professional experience, to avoid a mismatch in understandings of the EAL program, expectations, roles, and responsibilities of each party. This also helps to develop a shared understanding of practices accepted as 'good' in the professional experience context and the ways feedback is to be given (Engin, 2014).

In addition, the findings show that, although Maria experienced many intense emotions, this "motivated, structural component of teachers' processes of cognitive development" (Golombek & Doran, 2014) did not receive due attention by the mentor teacher in the course of her professional experience. Concurrent with past research (e.g., Golombek & Doran, 2014; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013; Poulou, 2007; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2012), the study suggests that preservice teachers' emotions be recognised and support be provided for coping with tensions associated with emotions. Understanding preservice teachers' emotions and how they develop has the power to guide the work of teacher educators in supporting preservice teachers' professional development responsively and more thoughtfully (Golombek & Doran, 2014).

Finally, developing and sustaining successful mentoring relationships should be prioritised in the design and delivery of the professional experience. As the findings about Frank and Kate' learning experiences illustrate, harmonious mentoring relations are conducive to preservice teachers' professional learning. On the other hand, the absence of positive affective and intellectual mutuality was the main cause of Maria's negative practicum experience. Hudson (2013a) argues that effort from both parties involved is required in building effective mentoring relationships, but the mentor, who holds "the balance of power in the relationship" (p. 1) is fundamental in this process. Hudson (2013a) adds that "support in providing information for planning, access to resources, two-way dialoguing with feedback and reflections,

and establishing safe, risk-taking environments to trial and evaluate newly learnt teaching practices" (p. 1) is key in developing and sustaining effective mentorship.

9.3.3 The Role of Preservice Teachers

Preservice teachers are the learners of teaching and play a fundamental part in the productivity of the professional learning experience. The learning community's model of professional experience is most effective when preservice teachers are positioned as both actively and agentively learning and contributing to the learning of others in the learning community.

As learners of teaching, preservice teachers' personal factors need to be recognised in teacher education curriculum and practices. Teacher educators need to understand and cater for the individual learning needs of their preservice teachers as well as validate and recognise the value each individual brings to the learning process (Cross, 2018; Johnson, 2009, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2018). In international contexts, there is increasing emphasis on their identity, reflective and interpersonal skills as well as their emotional responses in effective teacher learning (Dang, 2013; Le Cornu, 2010; Nguyen & Loughland, 2018; Nguyen, 2017).

In terms of preservice teachers' contribution to the learning of others, teacher education needs to provide opportunities and procedures for incorporating peer learning into the EAL professional experience programme to enhance their productive preservice teaching experiences. Peer preservice teachers often share commonalities in terms of coursework experiences and level of expertise and are normally positioned in equal power relations; therefore, they can provide each other support without encountering conflicts of interest (Nguyen & Hudson, 2012). In addition, studies of the TESOL professional experience in various countries have found that interaction with peers during the professional experience can create valuable learning conditions that facilitate preservice teachers' professional learning (e.g., Dang, 2013; Gao & Benson, 2012; H. T. M. Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Baldauf, 2010; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012). Furthermore, peer learning is well-supported by a sociocultural perspective on language teacher learning, which views language teacher learning as occurring through social interactions with other people within the sociocultural context and practices of learning to teach (e.g., Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

Peer learning can be organised in several different ways, such as peer mentoring, co-teaching, or learning circles. Based on empirical evidence, Nguyen et al. (Nguyen, 2010; Nguyen & Baldauf, 2010; Nguyen & Hudson, 2012) advocate a model of peer mentoring. In this model, after a training session on peer mentoring before the professional experience, preservice teachers placed at the same school form pairs or groups. They observe their peer's lessons and provide feedback during weekly post-lesson support meetings using agreed observation criteria. The intended purpose of the weekly meetings is for preservice teachers to discuss what they learn from their peers' lessons and suggest improvements. A model of co-teaching (Dang,

2013; Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, & Stevens, 2009) is also strongly recommended as a way to incorporate peer learning into the professional experience. Preservice teachers in a co-teaching model can be placed in pairs supervised by a mentor teacher, to collaborate with and support each other in co-planning and co-teaching lessons. A third model called learning circles (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; White et al., 2010) involves several preservice teachers placed at the same school, not necessarily co-teaching. They meet with each other regularly after school to share their classroom experiences, ask critical questions, and make contribution to their peers' learning. All three models of peer learning during the professional experience suggested above encourage preservice teachers' reflective practice and collaboration in communities of practice, which are indispensable skills for continuing teacher professional development.

9.3.4 Design, Implementation, and Research in Professional Experience

In framing the professional experience as reciprocal learning communities, it is vital to consider the way it is structured, the explicit curriculum of the professional experience, and the roles of the participants within the curriculum (White et al., 2010). The structure of the professional experience needs to allow for time and space to include elements of learning communities as suggested above. Professional development opportunities also need to be provided for the participants (Coskun & Daloglu, 2010), especially academics and mentor teachers, with an explicit focus on the importance of the professional experience for preservice teachers' professional development and their responsibilities in this learning context. There has been a growing emphasis on the pedagogical practices and professional learning of English language teacher educators in discourses around enhancing the quality of SLTE (Akbari, Moradkhani, Samar, & Kiany, 2013; Golombek, 2015; Trent, 2013; Vethamani, 2011; Yuan, 2015, 2016). In terms of mentor teachers, Hudson, Spooner-Lane, and Murray (2012) found that their participation in a professional development programme that is focused on mentoring contributed positively to the quality of their mentoring practice, which in turn enhanced preservice teachers' practices. Research shows that professional development for university supervisors and mentor teachers could be a worthwhile avenue for building a teacher education team that works in favour of the learning community's model of professional experience (Cartaut & Bertone, 2009).

Regarding peer learning during the professional experience in particular, Nguyen and Hudson (2012) argue that it should be balanced, informed, and methodical. Effective peer learning requires explicit pre-professional experience training on productive peer learning attitudes, attributes, procedures, and practices (Nguyen & Hudson, 2012; White et al., 2010). White et al. (2010) highlight the important role of reflective attitudes and practices and the need to emphasise "flexibility, reciprocity and highly developed interpersonal skills" (p. 190) related to peer learning in the

pre-professional experience training. In addition, in order to offer reliable support and advice to their peers, preservice teachers need to have a good knowledge of the school's syllabus requirements and policies (Nguyen & Hudson, 2012). This is in turn closely related to the role of coursework and mentoring in developing this contextual knowledge for preservice teachers. In line with Nguyen and Hudson (2012), preservice teachers should be able and encouraged to consult a university adviser and an OTP based at the school on these matters so that they can provide accurate advice to their peers.

In order to leverage the effective involvement of all members of the professional experience learning communities, institutional communication seems to be key. The research in this book has found that lack of effective communication between institutions was the genesis of a number of unproductive contradictions that Jane and Maria encountered. In order to resolve these contradictions more productively, on the one hand, the university through its Placement Office should communicate expectations of preservice teachers clearly to school staff. Academic staff who visit preservice teachers also need to mediate these tensions between institutions' expectations. On the other hand, schools/sites are the immediate context of preservice teaching, so management and school coordinators are in the best position to establish and maintain partnerships between different parties. As Le Cornu (2010) suggests, school coordinators share responsibility for supporting preservice teachers, bring about positive change in relationships, attitude and learning culture in the community, and mediate the relationship between the school and the university.

Research is also considered an important condition for effective professional experiences in SLTE. As argued from the beginning of the book, there has been a justified need for research into the professional experience in order to inform the policy, theory, and practice of SLTE, and the professional experience in particular (e.g., Cross, 2018; Freeman, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Johnson & Golombek, 2018; Kubanyiova, 2018). Le Cornu (2016) supports this view as she believes in the need for teacher education researchers to engage in conducting ongoing, large scale, and collaborative research and disseminating such research extensively "to maximise the impact on policy makers, teachers, leaders, and learners" (p. 15).

9.4 Research Contributions, Limitations, and Recommendations

As it has been presented in Sects. 9.2 and 9.3, this book makes theoretical and practical contributions in the areas of the knowledge base for English language teaching and the conditions for effective professional experience. In addition, this book has made some significant contributions in terms of research. As mentioned throughout the chapters, this book reports empirical studies which are among the first to use a sociocultural theoretical framework in exploring the school-based English language teaching professional experience. It is a timely response to the international

urges for a broad consistent theoretical framework to support research on second language teacher learning (see Chap. 3). With the support of the theoretical framework, the book as a whole offers comprehensive and systematic understandings of the preservice EAL teachers' professional experiences that enrich the research base on the TESOL professional experience. The personal and contextual factors and their nested relationships in shaping preservice teachers' learning in this book are specific to the Australian research site. However, the broad sociocultural theoretical framework applied in the research could be used in research in any other contexts to seek comprehensive and systematic understandings of teacher learning in TESOL. One of the major concerns in TESOL that has been identified in Chap. 3 is a missing link in research that serves as a shared reflective framework for researchers, teachers, and teacher educators to theorise and compare practice across contexts (Borg, 2006; Burton, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Research in different contexts using a broad and coherent theoretical framework such as a sociocultural lens allows for effective synthesis and comparison of research in different settings, and implications can be generated for the field at large.

The sociocultural theoretical framework and its implications for research methodology have enhanced the quality of the data in terms of both depth and breadth. Depth of data was obtained through a genetic approach to understanding preservice teacher learning, which focuses on the role of historicity in informing this understanding, and analysis of the nested relationships across the genetic domains concerning cultural–historic contexts, personal histories, and professional learning processes. The depth of data is further enhanced by the use of a qualitative design that allows the research to see the professional experiences in their natural settings and how they evolved to their current forms. These insights are impossible to gain with self-report methods such as interview or questionnaire alone. Breadth of data was achieved by using data from multiple sources that provide insights into multiple layers of contexts and areas of personal histories as well as the varied manifestations of the preservice teachers' professional experiences under the influence of distinctive personal and contextual factors.

Reflecting back on this research, I acknowledge several limitations and offer my responses to them. First, due to practical, ethical, and researcher presence issues, one limitation of this study is the lack of researcher's access to classrooms to conduct observation and video-recording of the preservice teachers' practices. However, this limitation was addressed by replacing researcher observation and video-recording with the use of preservice teachers' self-audio-recorded lessons, which are complemented by stimulated recall sessions and analysis of lesson plans and associated teaching artefacts. In this way, the research resolved these issues and at the same time gathered quality data on the preservice teachers' real-time teaching. Second, using a qualitative design with a small participant number, I am aware of the limitation regarding generalising the research findings to other contexts. However, in this study I have chosen the qualitative design over one that may offer more generalisability, such as a survey of a large number of preservice teachers, because of its ability to gain rich insights to shed light on the EAL professional experiences in their most natural settings. These insights are a worthwhile trade-off for generalisability since they

have the ability to offer systematic and context-based implications for EAL teacher education practices. I suggest that readers should carefully take into consideration the detailed accounts of the personal and contextual factors reported in determining the level of relevance to their contexts. As mentioned from the beginning of this book, it is hoped that the choice of the Australian research setting as a typical neoliberal context would make the findings relevant to many other neoliberal contexts of English language education and teacher education.

Finally, as one of the first studies in this area, the research in this book has only tapped into a moderate number of issues and there is a great deal left for future research to investigate. I wish to make several recommendations for future research in response to issues that the current study has not been able to address. First, all of the preservice teachers in this study attended the Graduate Diploma of Education with an EAL specialism at the same university. As I have argued in this book, university coursework plays an important role in how the professional experience unfolds. It would be interesting to see how preservice teachers from different initial EAL teacher education programmes at other institutions, such as the four-year Bachelor degrees in English language teaching, the postgraduate entry Master of Teaching (EAL) and the like, approach and construct their professional experiences. Second, in terms of personal histories, three of the preservice teachers in this study are 'international' students in a sense since they had all done their schooling and first degrees outside Australia. Although the book presents accounts of one domestic preservice teachers, it would be interesting to see more of how Australian domestic preservice teachers construct their EAL professional experiences in their home country. Third, research based on other Australian states and territories as well as in EFL contexts and other ESL contexts, where different contextual factors such as policies are in place, would presumably gain interesting new insights. More research into the EAL professional experience in different contexts would enrich the research base of the field and enable findings to be synthesised and compared across different settings. Last but not least, mentoring by school-based EAL teachers appeared in this research as an important source of influence on preservice teachers' learning. Future research could build on the studies reported here to examine EAL mentor teachers' understanding and practice of their role in greater depth. It would also be important to look into the professional learning of EAL mentor teachers as mentoring is often an untrained and unrecognised role (TEMAG, 2014).

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