
Reclaiming the Relevance of L2 Teacher Education

KAREN E. JOHNSON

*The Pennsylvania State University
302 Sparks Building
University Park, PA 16802-5203
Email: kej1@psu.edu*

This article lays out a theoretical argument for empirical research that focuses on what happens inside the practices of L2 teacher education. Central to this argument is that it is inside these practices—the dialogic interactions between teacher educators and teachers—where teacher educators can see, support, and enhance the professional development of L2 teachers. Grounded in a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective on teacher learning (Johnson, 2009), data from an innovative teacher education practice highlight the quality and character of the collaborative teaching–learning relationships (*obuchenie*) that unfold in this practice and the role of the teacher educator in providing expert mediation to support novice teachers’ emerging conceptualizations of, and initial attempts at, enacting L2 teaching. The article concludes with a call for empirical attention to the design, enactment, and outcomes of the practices of L2 teacher education as essential in order to reclaim the relevance of L2 teacher education in and for the professional development of L2 teachers.

Keywords: teacher cognition; sociocultural theory; L2 teacher education

IN THIS ARTICLE, I LAY OUT A THEORETICAL argument for empirical research that focuses on what happens inside the practices of second language (L2) teacher education. By practices, I mean the activities that teacher educators and teachers engage in within L2 teacher education programs. My interest is not so much with the practices themselves, but with what teacher educators are attempting to accomplish through them: the quality and character of their interactions as they engage in these practices; what teachers are learning as they participate in these practices; and, most importantly, how what they are learning shapes the language learning environments they attempt to create for their L2 students. In essence, such empirical work seeks to reclaim the relevance of L2 teacher education because it is founded on the notion that it is inside the practices of L2 teacher education, the dialogic in-

teractions between teacher educators and teachers, where teacher educators can see, support, and enhance the professional development of L2 teachers. Exploring these dialogic interactions, as they unfold and within the sociocultural contexts in which they occur, not only opens up the practices of L2 teacher education for closer scrutiny, but it also holds teacher educators accountable to the L2 teachers with whom they work and, of course, the L2 students their teachers teach.

While the responsibility for preparing teachers in the North American context moved from normal schools to and within universities in the mid-20th century (Labaree, 2004), published volumes of empirical research on the practices of teacher education only began to emerge in the late 1980s (Houston, 1990). Since then numerous handbooks (i.e., Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyre, 2008) and commissioned reports (i.e., Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) have helped to consolidate the most up-to-date research on teacher education. At times overshadowed by research on teaching rather than teacher education (Grossman & McDonald,

2008), more than three decades of research on teacher cognition in general teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005) and in L2 teacher education (Borg, 2006; Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006) has come to characterize teacher learning as normative and lifelong; it is built through experiences in multiple social contexts and is based on the assumption that knowing, thinking, and doing come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations. Within the context of L2 teacher education, the learning of L2 teaching is no longer viewed as a matter of simply translating theories of linguistics and/or second language acquisition (SLA) into effective instructional practices, but as a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular sociocultural practices and contexts (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2009). This suggests that the normative ways of acting and interacting and the values, assumptions, and attitudes that are embedded in the classrooms where teachers were once students, in the teacher education programs where they receive their professional credentialing, and in the schools where they work, shape the complex ways in which they come to think about themselves, their students, the activities of L2 teaching, and the processes of L2 teaching-learning (Johnson, 2009). Yet, while this conceptualization of teacher learning is prominent in the current research literature on L2 teacher cognition (see Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015), the extent to which this conceptualization has shaped what happens inside the practices of L2 teacher education remains an empirical question. Until an empirical basis that justifies the practices of L2 teacher education is established, the relevance of L2 teacher education will remain in doubt.

To establish this theoretical argument, I first articulate the contributions that a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective offers to our understanding of teacher learning within the context of teacher education. I then use this theoretical perspective to examine data from an innovative teacher education practice in order to highlight the quality and character of the collaborative teaching-learning relationships (*obuchenie*) that unfold in this practice and the emergent, contingent, and responsive nature of teacher educator mediation that supports a team of novice L2 teachers as they come to understand and attempt to enact L2 teaching. I conclude with a call for empirical attention to the design, enactment, and outcomes of the practices of L2 teacher education in order to reclaim the

relevance of L2 teacher education in and for the professional development of L2 teachers.

A VYGOTSKIAN SOCIOCULTURAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHER EDUCATION

There is a growing body of research that embraces Vygotskian sociocultural theory¹ as a powerful *theory of mind* through which to analyze and conceptualize teacher cognition within the context of teacher education (Edwards, Gilroy, & Hartley, 2002; Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010; Feryok, 2012; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003; van Huizen, van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005). Despite subtle differences in how these researchers position the Vygotskian theoretical lens,² there is fundamental agreement that teacher cognition originates in and is fundamentally shaped by the specific social activities in which teachers engage. Fundamental to this theoretical perspective is the notion that changes in social activity effect changes in individual cognition. Within the context of teacher education, therefore, teacher cognition emerges out of participation in external forms of social interaction (*interpsychological*) that eventually become internalized psychological tools for teacher thinking (*intrapsychological*). Thus, the dialogic interactions that unfold in the practices of teacher education represent the external forms of social interaction that teacher educators hope will become internalized psychological tools for teacher thinking. Once internalized, these psychological tools form the basis upon which teachers materialize and enact theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices within the instructional contexts in which they work (see Ellis, 2007, 2008; Engeström, 2007).

Yet, this transformation, from external to internal, does not happen automatically or independently. Instead, it takes prolonged and sustained participation in the activities of both becoming and being a teacher. It requires that teacher educators establish locally appropriate professional development goals that fulfill teachers' needs in the particular instructional contexts in which they are teaching or will eventually teach. It hinges on the quality and character of teacher educator mediation that emerges through dialogic interactions with teachers as they are learning to teach. And it necessitates that teachers have multiple and varied expert-guided opportunities to engage in teaching activities that are situated in authentic instructional contexts.

An additional contribution of Vygotskian socio-cultural theory is the fundamental notion that formal education (school learning) is the ideal venue for systematic learning through intentional, well-organized instruction. Unlike learning in the everyday world, which emerges out of common, concrete activities and immediate social interaction, school learning—or what Vygotsky called *academic* (scientific) concepts—enables learners to think in ways that transcend their everyday experiences. Obvious parallels can be made between Lortie's (1975) *apprenticeship of observation* as learning about teaching in the everyday world and formal education as instantiated in the content and processes of teacher education. In essence, teacher education is designed to enable teachers to overcome their everyday notions of what it means to be a teacher, how to teach, and how to support student learning. Moreover, teacher education, whether pre-service or in-service, may be the only occasion when the learning of teaching is the result of systematic, intentional, well-organized instruction. And while development is not guaranteed, the quality and character of the mediation that emerges in formal schooling explicates the essential role that teacher education plays in the dialectic between everyday and academic concepts that work in consort to foster the development of teaching expertise.

THE TEACHING/LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS: VYGOTSKY'S *OBUCHENIE*

The genesis of all learning, according to Vygotsky, occurs in collaborative relationships with others. In essence, "through others, we become ourselves" (1930–1931/1997, p. 105); however, because individuals transform what is appropriated, it is at the same time both socially derived and individually unique. Intentional, well-organized instruction, captured in the Russian word *obuchenie*, connotes the collaborative teaching–learning relationships that recognize the actions and intentions of both teaching and learning, rather than a teacher who provides instruction to a learner who learns (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). Thus, teaching and learning are not to be treated as separate activities but as a unified process that paves the way for learners' conceptual development. *Obuchenie*, according to Vygotsky, entails high-quality teacher–learner dialectics in which learners interact with experts who offer pedagogically designed psychological tools and semantic–pragmatic explanations of those tools to promote conscious awareness and a functional understanding of academic

(scientific) concepts in ways that facilitate the reorganization of the learner's mental structures. Examining *obuchenie* as it plays out in the practices of teacher education exposes: (a) teacher learning as it is unfolding, (b) the quality and character of the mediation that emerges in the collaborative relationships between teacher educators and teachers, and (c) the development of the internal psychological structures (*thinking in concepts*) that support teachers as they come to understand and attempt to enact theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices for the students they teach.

However, enacting *obuchenie*, as Vygotsky intended, requires a lot from teacher educators. First, it demands that teacher educators recognize what teachers bring to their learning-to-teach experiences. This is critical because such *pre-understandings*, or the competence learners bring to bear on a novel event or experience can, in some cases, "facilitate the learning of new understandings but in others it can interfere with or even block cognitive development" (Miller, 2011, p. 377). L2 teachers typically enter the profession with largely unarticulated, yet deeply ingrained, everyday concepts about language, language learning, and language teaching based on their own L2 instructional histories and lived experiences. Therefore, L2 teacher education programs are faced with the task of overcoming the inertia of teachers' everyday concepts, and this in itself is no easy task given the limited duration of most pre-service and in-service L2 teacher education programs.

Second, enacting *obuchenie* requires that teacher educators establish a sense of how teachers are experiencing what they are doing or learning. Vygotsky captured the subjective significance of lived experiences with the Russian word *perezhivanie*, which denotes, in particular, "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). Since individuals will certainly experience the same event differently, one's *perezhivanie* is not the experience itself, but how that experience is interpreted and understood by the individual. For teacher educators, establishing a sense of teachers' *perezhivanie*, both past (e.g., apprenticeship of observation) and present (e.g., how they are experiencing the practices of teacher education) is essential in order to provide mediation that is responsive to teachers' emergent and immediate needs as they are learning to teach. This poses unique challenges for teacher educators as, more often

than not, teachers' maturing capabilities are expressed as intensely emotional highs and lows that emerge from being asked to perform as self-directed teachers before having the necessary competence to do so. Learning to teach, regardless of the instructional context, is about trying on and taking up new identities (Clarke, 2008); it is a deeply personal matter, and often emotionally charged in ways that are rarely recognized in formal teacher education programs (Golombek & Doran, 2014). Yet, emotional and cognitive dissonance can act as a catalyst that, with the right mediation, can support cognitive development (Golombek & Johnson, 2004). In enacting *obuchenie* in the practices of teacher education, it is this cognitive and emotional struggle to which teacher educators must be attuned.

Further complicating the process of offering mediation that is responsive to teachers' maturing capabilities is that teacher educators must be able to ascertain what those maturing capabilities are. This requires recognizing that it is inside the practices of teacher education where, more often than not, Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) is enacted. Defined as a metaphoric arena of potentiality where, during co-constructed activity, one can see what an individual might be able to do with assistance—in other words, one's maturing capabilities—it is during the ZPD that the quality and character of teacher educator mediation must take shape. Such mediation is typically negotiated through dialogue, cannot be predicted beforehand, and is dependent on the teacher educator's ability to recognize and target teachers' emergent needs as well as utilize their responses to that mediation and requests for additional support. Thus, to enact *obuchenie*, the teacher educator's mediation cannot be predetermined or remain static; it must be emergent, contingent, and responsive to his or her moment-to-moment interactions with teachers.

While expressions of emotion may mark critical junctures in teacher learning, engagement in the actual activities of teaching is absolutely critical for the development of teaching expertise. For teachers, the consequences of performing the actions of a teacher, while emotionally charged, can foster the development of a deeper understanding of those actions. Thus, there is developmental value in *performance preceding competence* (Cazden, 1981), as it is precisely through engaging in the activities of teaching and the dialogic interactions (spoken and written) about those activities, that will enable teachers to become what Vygotsky termed *consciously aware*, a

necessary competence model for designing and carrying out future actions. This being the case, enabling teachers to become consciously aware of the academic concepts and pedagogical resources that form the basis of their instructional decisions and activities is an essential element of the development of teaching expertise. Such conscious awareness entails recognizing when pre-understandings are inadequate to accomplish a teaching-learning task while forging new understandings that become the basis upon which teachers are able to materialize and enact theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices.

Yet for teachers to materialize and enact such practices before they have the necessary competence to do so, they must have access to an expert's understanding of the subject matter content being taught and the instructional resources to teach it. This requires that they not only have a deep conceptual understanding of the subject matter content they are expected to teach, but they also have conscious knowledge of the academic concepts that represent the scientific foundation of that content. For example, most L2 teachers know, from their everyday experience, that the present progressive tense in English is marked for regular verbs with the suffix -ing. Yet few may be consciously aware of the complex relationship between tense (location of time), aspect (flow of time), and mood (degree of necessity, obligation, probability, ability) that work in concert to trigger language users to make certain choices about how to denote actions in time and space or "the construal of a situation based on the viewer's perspective" (Langacker, 2001, p. 16). In most L2 teacher education programs, teachers do have opportunities to learn the academic concepts that represent the scientific foundation of their subject matter content (i.e., knowledge about language, second language acquisition, etc.); however, more often than not these academic concepts are not linked to the day-to-day activities of teaching-learning in L2 classrooms. Moreover, disciplinary agreement over what constitutes language and second language acquisition remains contested among the so-called cognitive versus social perspectives in the field of applied linguistics (Atkinson, 2011). Yet, as noted by Freeman (2004), regardless of how particular disciplinary knowledge defines what language is, how it is used, and how it is acquired that have emerged out of the fields of linguistics and SLA, such disciplinary knowledge is not the same knowledge that teachers use to teach language and, in turn, not the same knowledge that L2

students need in order to learn language. In fact, general educational research has made a distinction between the accepted disciplinary knowledge of a particular field and the *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman, 1987) that teachers use to make the content of their instruction relevant and accessible to students (Ball, 2000).

Equally important is having access to an expert's understanding of the pedagogical resources that are available to teachers as they attempt to make the content of their instruction relevant and accessible to students. Therefore, pedagogical content knowledge is neither fixed nor stable, but instead emergent, dynamic, and contingent on teachers' knowledge of particular students, in particular contexts, who are learning particular content, for particular purposes. As a result, the development of pedagogical content knowledge emerges out of engagement in the activities of teaching since its very nature constitutes the interconnectedness of content, context, students, and pedagogical purpose. Therefore, gaining access, even partially, to an expert's understanding of the subject matter content to be taught and the appropriate pedagogical resources to teach it, is most likely to emerge out of engagement with teacher educators in the practices of L2 teacher education.

Finally, the extent to which engagement in the practices of L2 teacher education will become internalized psychological tools for teacher thinking depends, in large part, on teacher agency and the affordances and constraints embedded within teachers' professional worlds. Thus, the dialogic interactions that emerge in the practices of teacher education cannot be understood apart from the sociocultural environments in which they take place and the processes of establishing and navigating social values in which these practices are embedded (Edwards, 2010). To understand the learning of L2 teaching as it takes place in formal education, it is imperative to examine the dialogic interactions that unfold in the practices of L2 teacher education.

THE EXTENDED TEAM-TEACHING PROJECT, PARTICIPANTS, AND DATA

To explore the teaching–learning relationships (*obuchenie*) that unfold in the practices of L2 teacher education, data extracts are presented from an extended team-teaching project that was embedded in a 15-week TESOL methodology course (Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013; Johnson & Worden, 2014). The

project required a team of four novice teachers to engage in a series of activities designed to prepare them to teach a single lesson in an actual English as a second language (ESL) class. The various stages of the project were designed to create structured mediational spaces that exposed novice teachers' potentiality while also fostering collaborative dialogue and engagement in the joint activity of planning, practice teaching, actual teaching, and reflecting on a team-taught lesson.

Initially, the team observed a session of the ESL class they would eventually teach in order to develop an understanding of the instructional setting and the students' L2 proficiency. During the lesson planning stage, the team had both face-to-face and virtual meetings with each other, the instructor of the ESL class, and the teacher educator as they co-constructed a lesson plan. The content of the lesson reflected content that was listed on the course syllabus for the day the team was scheduled to teach. This required that the team negotiate their collective understanding of that content and then materialize it in the form of a lesson plan. The team then participated in a one-hour video-recorded *practice teach* in which they taught their lesson in the TESOL methodology course. Throughout the practice teach, the teacher educator and fellow classmates regularly halted instruction in order to ask questions, provide feedback, and make suggestions. A week later the team taught the redesigned lesson plan in the ESL class. The teacher educator attended and video-recorded the lesson but did not intervene. Within 48 hours, the team participated in an audio-recorded stimulated recall session in which they watched and discussed the video-recorded *actual teach* with the teacher educator. Team members were encouraged to stop the recording whenever they wanted to comment on the lesson. The teacher educator also stopped the recording to ask questions, to allow the team to reflect on critical moments in the lesson, and to offer suggestions. Finally, after receiving digital copies of the practice teach, the actual teach, and the stimulated recall session, each team member was required to write a 5–7-page reflection paper about the project, paying particular attention to what they had learned about themselves as teachers, about the activity of L2 teaching, and about this series of initial learning-to-teach experiences.

The team of four teachers, all American undergraduate students enrolled in a TESOL minor—Deb (elementary education), Annie (international studies), Josh (Italian literature), and Ryan (English)—were taking the TESOL

methodology course as a requirement of their program of study.³ The team was assigned to teach a 75-minute lesson in a freshman ESL composition course that focused on the use of parallelism in academic writing. Data from the team's extended team-teaching project⁴ included broad transcriptions of (a) the video-recorded practice teach, (b) the video-recorded actual teach, (c) the audio-recorded stimulated recall session, and (d) the final reflection papers.

The data extracts selected for inclusion highlight the quality and character of the collaborative teaching-learning relationships (*obuchenie*) that unfolded throughout this project and the role of the teacher educator in providing expert mediation that supported the novice teachers' emerging conceptualizations of and initial attempts at enacting L2 teaching. Analyzed from an emic perspective using the inductive discourse analytic techniques of grounded content analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Spradley, 1979), the data extracts highlight (marked in bold font) the linguistic instantiation of how engagement in the project exposed what these teachers brought to this learning-to-teach experience (pre-understandings) as well as how they were experiencing what they were learning (*perezhivanie*). In addition, the data extracts highlight the emergent, contingent, and responsive nature of the teacher educator's mediation as she encouraged new understandings in situations where the teachers' pre-understandings were inadequate and assisted them in gaining an expert's understanding of the subject matter content being taught and available pedagogical resources to teach it.

ENACTING TEACHING-LEARNING (*OBUCHENIE*) IN THE PRACTICES OF L2 TEACHER EDUCATION: STRUCTURED MEDIATIONAL SPACES AND RESPONSIVE MEDIATION

The Team's Pre-Understandings

All four teachers admitted in their reflection papers that initially they did not know what parallelism was or how to teach it. Their reflections expose their *perezhivanie* about having to teach unfamiliar content that, as native speakers of English, they had an intuitive (everyday) understanding of but lacked any sort of academic (scientific) knowledge about or pedagogical expertise to teach it. This quandary is captured in the opening paragraph of Annie's reflection paper (for transcription conventions, see Appendix).

EXCERPT 1

Annie: When I first got the email saying we'd be teaching parallelisms, half of me **groaned** and the other half breathed **a sigh of relief**. On one hand, I was **happy** to be teaching something with substance and something that mattered and would be new to the students, but on the other hand, **teaching parallelism was new to me**. When I looked up parallelisms, **I realized it was something I'd grown up using, and although I was never formally taught about them, I use them all the time just naturally**. This brought up the challenge of **"how do I teach something I myself don't fully grasp."** Until we sat down to plan our lessons, parallelisms were one of those **"I'll know it if I see it" type of things**.

The Practice Teach: Meditational Means Emerge

As they planned the lesson, the team admitted they relied heavily on open access Web sites, such as the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL), for formal definitions and examples of sentences with parallel structure. In fact, at the start of the practice teach, Josh essentially read a definition of parallelism taken directly from the Purdue OWL.

EXCERPT 2

Josh: Great. So, what is parallelism? U:m basically parallel structure is using the same pattern or words or similar **grammatical structures** to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance and this could happen in three ways, it could happen at u:m with **words, phrases, or clauses**. U:m the easiest and most frequent way to join parallel structures is with the use of **coordinating conjunctions** such as and (.) or or. (.) **That's from Purdue OWL our savior**. So, (.) just kidding ((laughs)).

Josh's characterization of parallelism as grammatical structures as defined by the Purdue OWL Web site served as the conceptual frame through which the team proceeded to teach the concept of parallelism. In fact, the introductory portion of their practice teach lesson entailed presenting examples of sentences with parallel structure and highlighting the different grammatical forms they may take (i.e., use of gerunds, infinitives, prepositional phrases, etc.). In the following excerpt, Annie, Josh, and Deb each present an example sentence by foregrounding its

grammatical structure and offering rather vague (everyday) explanations for its parallel structure.

EXCERPT 3

- Annie: So you can see here we've used **prepositional phrases** to create (.) a **syncopated rhythm** that you know adds to the flow of the sentence and (.) it it just makes it a more balanced sentence and you know **i-it just it flows a lot better.** (.)
- Josh: Right. (.) U(h)m a:nd you can also **use it in a clause** "The GPS told us that we should make a right, that we should get on to I-84, and that we should drive for a 199 miles." Um, an incorrect form would be "The GPS told us that we should make a right, that we should get onto I-84, and to drive for 199 miles." So once again **it just doesn't flow as well.**
- Deb: Basically **consistency is key** and like you were mentioning earlier like going from -ing to like the **infinitive** like driving to drive you have to **make sure it's consistent** throughout the entire sentence.

However, neither their intuitive pre-understandings of parallelism nor information gleaned from the Purdue OWL Web site prove to be adequate during an application activity in which they asked small groups of their classmates to correct a series of sentences that contained inappropriate and missing parallel structure. In the following exchange, the teacher educator prompts the team to discuss the corrected sentences, indicating that there might be multiple right answers:

EXCERPT 4

- Annie: Okay. I mean do you guys want to actually go over them?
- TE: → Maybe one or two because I think there are (.) **more than one right answer?**
- Annie: [Sure. And you can direct your answers to our error master, Mr. Ryan. (.)
- Josh: [Yeah.
- TE: What did you guys think of (.) number one, your group?
- CM1: Uh, (.) says that, "The runner says that his new shoes are lighter, faster, and more comfortable"
- Ryan: → Yes.
- TE: [((laughter))
- Annie: [Good
- TE: → Yes.
- Ryan: → [Good [job. (.) It flows beautifully.
- Annie: [Sounds g[ood.

- Deb: [That's one way-
- TE: → [(h)(.) And will you ask- **will you ask them (.) why?**
- Ryan: Yeah, why? Why d- **Why do you think-**
- Class: ((laughter))
- Ryan: I could do that. **Why do you think it sounds best?**

In this exchange, Ryan's emphatic single word response [Y:es.] to his classmate garners a good deal of laughter but it is challenged by the teacher educator, who prompts him to explore the reasoning behind his classmate's choice. When a second classmate offers an alternative, Ryan struggles to articulate any sort of academic explanation of what parallelism is or why writers might use it.

EXCERPT 5

- CM3: I also thought, maybe it "feels better." (.)
- TE: Ah, whatdya think Ryan?
- Ryan: What's that?
- CM3: What if the last one (.) "feels better" rather than "more comfortable"?
- Ryan: → "Feels better?" I mean **I guess that-that works with it.**
- CM3: I'm trying to keep- trying to keep the -er **rhythm.**
- Ryan: → Yeah [it's like- it's
- TE: [Oh, better. Mmm?
- Ryan: → I mean, it- **it keeps the ending going (.) all the way throughout, (.) that's-that's a parallelism.**

As the interaction continues, the teacher educator builds on Annie's earlier reference to syncopated rhythm and CM3's reference to trying to keep the rhythm by modeling a pedagogical strategy that assists the team in determining if the corrected sentence has an appropriate parallel structure.

EXCERPT 6

- TE: → **Well let's- lets try it.** (.) "The runner says that his new shoes are lighter, faster, → and feel better." **How's the rhythm?**
- CM4: Or just "better." ((short laugh)) Cause I-
- TE: Better? (.)
- Josh: Yeah, cause I (think)-
- TE: Oh, how about that, "lighter, faster, and better." (.)

Then Annie, addressing the class as if they were actual ESL students, connects the teacher educator's references to multiple right answers to the notion of conveying one's message. The teacher educator builds on this connection, emphasizing again that the team is likely to

get multiple right answers and then reframes parallelism as a rhetorical strategy for conveying a writer's message (effect on the reader). The teacher educator does this in three ways: (a) by revoicing how a teacher might ask questions to get at the rhetorical effect of parallel structure, (b) by providing a rationale for why writers choose to use parallel structure, and (c) by inserting the academic definition that parallel structures in academic writing function as a rhetorical strategy.

EXCERPT 7

- Annie: → So we see, there's lots of **different ways to answer** this. That's one of the beauties with this, is that there is **no exact right way**, it can really come down to, **what message you most strongly want to convey**.
- TE: → So that's another suggestion. (.) Cause I suspect you'll get **different answers**, so: you could ask the class, "**So, when I say it this way, what's the impression you get? When I say it another way, what's the impression you get?**" Because all:: of this has to do with the **effect** this has on the reader. Right? What- as a writer, what **effect** do I want this to have on my reader? And that's when you're trying to figure out (.) how to use this as a **rhetorical strategy**, that's what you want your writers to focus on. So that you can ask, if they give you **different answers**, "**Well, so, how did, what's the effect of that on the reader?**" (.)

Through this series of dialogic interactions, a more robust understanding of parallelism begins to take shape. This is accomplished as they build this understanding together, simultaneously engaging in the activity of teaching while consciously analyzing that activity. The emergent nature of their understanding is striking. They pick up on each other's incidental references to critical notions that begin to reframe the concept of parallelism as much more than grammatical structures. This is clearly led by the teacher educator whose repeated emphasis on asking why, acknowledging multiple right answers, and considering effects on the reader functions as mediational means throughout the practice teach and, as is evident in the actual teach, becomes not only a broader conceptual frame through which the team comes to understand parallelism, but is also taken up as a pedagogical strategy for teaching parallelism to the ESL students.

The Actual Teach: Mediational Means Enacted as Pedagogical Strategies

While the content and structure of the team's initial lesson plan did not change significantly from the practice teach to the actual teach, how they carried out each segment of the lesson and how they talked about the concept of parallelism did. While all four teachers continued to make references to grammatical structures throughout the actual teaching, these were supplemented with instances where the team took up the mediational means of multiple right answers and asking 'why' as pedagogical strategies.

In the following excerpt, Deb, Annie, and Ryan all ask whether other groups had alternative answers, in essence, signaling to the ESL students that more than one right answer is desirable.

EXCERPT 8

- Deb: Could you read the whole sentence please? (h)sorry.
- S2: "The runner says that his shoes are lighter, faster, and more comfortable."
- Deb: → Great. Now, that is one way you could do it. **Is there another way** that you think- I mean, most of these, you can do in a **multitude of ways**, so does any other group have **something other than that?** (4) Anyone?
- S7: They use- (.) Or, they like what-
- Ryan: They said "lighter, faster, and more comfortable."
- S7: Ah, okay.
- Annie: → Which, they got it right, but we were [just curious **if there's any other** (.)
- Ryan: → [Yeah, it's like I told you guys, there's a → **couple different ways** you can write these.
- S7: We- we said, "The runner says that his shoes are light, fast, and feel more comfortable." Or just "comfortable."
- Ryan: Comfortable, yeah.

This pedagogical strategy opened up spaces for the ESL students to participate, by both contributing alternative answers and asking questions about the appropriateness of their choices. This happened most often when the team used the pedagogical strategy of asking 'why,' as is evidenced in a later section where the ESL students elaborate on their choices and demonstrate their understanding of parallelism. Thus, an important instructional consequence of the shift in the team's conceptual understanding of parallelism

from focusing on grammatical structure to allowing for multiple right answers is greater levels of ESL student participation and engagement in the lesson.

EXCERPT 9

- Deb: U:h, ((*pointing to S7 and S8*)) boys in the back, could you do the next one?
 S8: Yeah. (.) U:h "So we ran to my car, sat in our seats, and drove away?"
 Deb: → Okay, **why did you choose** "sat"?
 S8: → Uh, it sounded like (.) the proper thing.
 S7: → The proper tense.
 S8: → Yeah.
 S7: → Cause it's past.
 Deb: Past? "Ran" and "drove," exactly. (.) A:nd ((*pointing to S9 and S10*)).
 S9: → "We were just riding along at a safe, responsible, and controlled speed."
 Uh, this → word describes the speed and they are adjectives.
 Deb: Perfect.

Interestingly, the mediational means that emerged in the practice teach did not simply operate as isolated pedagogical strategies in the actual teach but instead were sometimes combined and expressed uniquely by individual teachers. In the following excerpt, the ESL students had just listened to the American president John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address and were asked to use the transcript to identify instances of parallelism. Annie's framing of parallelism contains hints of rhythm (natural pausing) which she links to effect on the reader (let the message sink in) as a rationale for why parallelism is used as a rhetorical strategy (another reason why we use parallelisms).

EXCERPT 10

- Annie: All right so that one was chock full of parallelisms and another thing you'll notice you're looking at a written version of it but you can even hear them as he speaks there's **natural pauses** in his in his speaking and that's another (.) really big clue and that's **another reason why we use parallelisms** because by using them it gives you a place to **naturally pause** and **let the message sink in**.

Ryan also demonstrates a more nuanced understanding of parallelism during a segment of the actual teach in which he uses the example of resume writing as a real-life context in which appropriate use of parallelism can affect how an employer might perceive an applicant.

EXCERPT 11

- Ryan: And uh **a practical way to use this where you're actually uh gonna need it in real life one day down the road is a resume** ... So uh a wrong way to make a list of your accomplishments would say "Responsible for editing copy, supervised layout, three years experience as a news writer" (.) Uh, that's switching tenses back and forth (.) it doesn't look good (.) it doesn't sound right. The correct way to say it would be uh "edited copy 1 year, supervised layout for two years, wrote news for three years." (.) **They're all in the same tense, it looks good, and you (.) you've shortened it up enough that they can read it briefly and give them a good idea of what you know how to do.** (2.0) Parallelisms.

The Stimulated Recall Session: Conscious Awareness Develops

The stimulated recall session functioned as a structured mediational space for the team to become consciously aware of their emerging understanding of parallelism as well as various pedagogical strategies to teach it. In the following excerpt, the teacher educator prompts the team to reflect, once again, on the notion of multiple right answers.

EXCERPT 12

- TE: One of the questions I wanted to ask you- This could have been done in **multiple ways**, right? I mean, they could have **corrected it differently**.
 Josh: → Oh sure. I mean, **there wasn't (.) just one right answer**.
 TE: But did they pretty much all do them the same?
 Deb: I'm trying to remember.
 Josh: → Um, well I know **a couple people had different ones** because I think- (.) I think we said, "**Does anyone else have anything?**" I mean, we might've [said "**Does anyone else have anything?**"]
 Deb: → [Um, (.) like we went around. Um, Annie said the back group had some- I think it was (.) **They had something different**. So what um what we did is we called on someone else, but when we asked "**Does anyone else have anything?**" they were a little timid but we **knew that they had something different, and that it wasn't wrong**, so we felt okay to like- I think- I think we called on them or they felt confident enough to do that, but um I think walking around we kind of saw where

everyone was at and kind of **saw differences** and then we wanted to **make sure we highlighted that it could all be different.**

Josh: → Yeah, cause people in the back had- cause **we had our own answer sheet with just one answer on it** and I think that's why Annie wanted to call on them because **they had something different than our answer.** (.) **And it was pretty unique.**

[BREAK]
TE: **Do you remember what they- what they were struggling with?**

Ryan: Uh, they uh- it was the one about the shoes that were "lighter, faster, and felt comfortable." They said "Would more comfortable work here?" or "felt better." → [Yeah. It was- **it was (.) interesting cause it was one that, like, I didn't have written down on like the answer sheet, like one of the possible ones but it worked.**

TE: Yeah, yeah. Which is good. I mean that shows them that- And I think (.) either Deb or Annie or maybe both of them said, "There's **multiple ways** you can do this. **There's not a right answer, but there is a right pattern.**" And that, I think- I think they got that. I think that was pretty clear.

For Deb, the notion of multiple right answers becomes a motivating factor for choosing to call on other groups, thus opening up the floor for greater levels of student participation. For both Josh and Ryan, an unexpected answer (not on the answer sheet) is portrayed as desirable. Throughout this interaction, the teacher educator repeatedly focuses the team's attention on multiple right answers, allowing them to externalize not only how they asked questions during the lesson, but also why they chose to encourage multiple right answers. The teacher educator's targeted yet open-ended questions create mediational spaces for conscious awareness to develop.

In another instance, Annie praises her teammate's consistent use of "asking why," which allows the teacher educator to make explicit the pedagogical reasoning behind this particular pedagogical strategy.

EXCERPT 13

Annie: And she did a good job of (.) pulling apart each of them and **asking why they got it.** I think (.) if I had been leading this I would have just been so caught

up in getting through the activity that **I would have forgotten to ask why** but she did a good job of remembering for everyone.

TE: Because **the more you ask them to explain why they made the choice the more conscious they get of the concept.** So.

Overall, the team's conscious awareness of this concept and how to teach it emerges as the teacher educator probes the team's new understandings by grounding it in the activity of teaching they just experienced and then emphasizing its pedagogical appropriateness.

Reflection Papers: New Realizations About Teaching ESL

The team's reflection papers provide rich evidence that they had begun to make broader connections between teaching the lesson on parallelism and the teaching of ESL in general. Each acknowledged a gap between their intuitive knowledge of English and inadequate knowledge of how to teach it. They also expressed an emerging view that teaching is contingent on understanding content, students, context, and purpose. More importantly, each attributed the process of collectively planning, practicing, enacting, and reflecting on the lesson as enabling them to reach these new realizations. As just one example, Ryan sums up this new realization in his final reflection paper.

EXCERPT 14

One of the main factors I learned about ESL teaching through this assignment was that we as native English speakers use these language techniques on a daily basis and **do not realize the difficulty level** that nonnative speakers are faced with when we go to teach them something. As I mentioned in the recall **I was not really sure what the function of parallel structure was**, but after a brief review of it, I realized that I use it on a daily basis. And although the concept and the use of the literary element seemed simple and logical to me, it was **not until we as a group were deciding how to explain it to the students that [we realized] the students might have trouble understanding what it is and why they should use it.**

Obuchenie, Responsive Mediation, and the Team's Emerging Development

Considering the dialogic interactions that emerged throughout the various stages of the

extended team-teaching project in terms of *obuchenie*, the actions and intentions of the teacher educator were predicated on recognizing the team's pre-understandings of the concept of parallelism and how they were attempting to teach it. As the teacher educator became attuned to this, she worked dialogically to insert specific mediational means that pushed the team to consider a broader understanding of the concept. Yet, her mediation was contingent and dynamic: It built off of the team's attempts to enact the lesson while simultaneously pushing them to broaden their understanding of the concept, with an emphasis on its pedagogical value and explicit modeling of how this can be accomplished instructionally. When the team enacted the actual teach, these mediational means became the very pedagogical strategies that the team used to talk about and teach the concept of parallelism. Through guided reflection on the activity of teaching, the team became consciously aware of these new understandings and to some extent were able to articulate a more nuanced understanding of the unique nature of teaching ESL. Over the long term, of course, such new understandings would need to be repeatedly materialized in the activities of being and becoming a teacher in order for these externalized dialogic interactions with this teacher educator to become internalized psychological tools that support these novice teachers' developing teaching expertise.

CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING THE RELEVANCE OF L2 TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher learning neither begins nor ends within a teacher education program. In fact, the duration of the typical teacher education program, whether pre-service or in-service, pales in comparison to teachers' schooling histories, life experiences, and the accumulation of teaching experience. Yet, because time is short, teacher educators must make the most of the little time they have. If, as Vygotsky claims, the genesis of all learning occurs in collaborative relationships with others, then empirical attention to the teaching-learning relationships (*obuchenie*) that unfold in the practices of teacher education is essential. Such empirical work has the potential to document the various ways in which the mediational means that emerge in these relationships assist teachers as they work to reconceptualize how they think about and attempt to enact theoretically and pedagogically

sound instructional practices. Empirical research that opens up the practices of teacher education for closer scrutiny and empirically documents the complexities of the teaching-learning relationships (*obuchenie*) that emerge there will no doubt serve to reclaim the relevance of teacher education.

By implication then, Vygotskian sociocultural theory functions as a powerful theoretical stance through which to both conceptualize and analyze the design, enactment, and outcomes of the practices of L2 teacher education. Writing from a Vygotskian theoretical stance on teacher development, Ellis et al. (2010) argue that "human development relies on the appropriation of pre-existing cultural tools, that this appropriation occurs through social interchange, and that as a consequence of these dynamics, people grow into the frameworks for thinking afforded by the cultural practices and tools made available to them in the social settings of their development" (p. 4). In teacher education programs, the appropriation of pre-existing cultural tools and frameworks for thinking occur in the practices used to prepare teachers. Traditionally, such practices have responded to the "perennial problems of learning to teach" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005, p. 407), namely overcoming the apprenticeship of observation, the theory-practice gap, the enactment of teaching, and managing the complexities of teaching. *Clinical experiences*, such as early field experiences, extended internship or practicum placements, and mentoring programs; *performance tasks*, such as case methods, microteaching, or curriculum development; and even *reflective activities*, such as reflective journals, teaching portfolios, or inquiry projects, all seek to support the learning of teaching in and from practice. While no single practice, or even combination of these practices, offers a panacea for teacher education, key to their potential for teacher development is structured mediational spaces where intentional, well-organized teaching-learning relationships (*obuchenie*) between teacher educators and teachers are enacted and sustained. Empirical research that documents what unfolds in these spaces can expose how *obuchenie* is enacted, focusing specifically on what teachers bring to their learning-to-teach experiences (pre-understandings); how they are experiencing what they are learning (*perezhivanie*); the emergent, contingent, and responsive nature of teacher educator mediation; the development of new understandings in situations where teachers' pre-understandings are inadequate; and the means through which teachers begin to gain

an expert's understanding of the subject matter content and the pedagogical resources at hand.

From a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective, the learning of teaching is not a matter of discovery learning or learning by doing, but learning that is intentional, deliberate, and goal directed by experts (teacher educators) who are skilled at moving teachers toward more theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices and greater levels of professional expertise. While *obuchenie* will most certainly be enacted and negotiated through dialogue (written or oral), dialogue and mediation, according to Miller (2011), are not the same thing. In dialogue, meanings and understanding are exchanged, whereas mediation "is concerned with the learning and teaching of new understanding in situations where prior or pre-understanding is inadequate" (p. 380). Empirical research that examines what happens inside the practices of teacher education can uncover the specific professional development goals that teacher educators have in mind as they interact with their teachers. For example, they may be attempting to dislodge everyday notions about content, teaching, and learning that are inadequate for how teachers think about and carry out the activities of L2 teaching. They may be working to concretize the academic concepts that teachers are exposed to in their coursework so as to overcome their everyday concepts about what constitutes L2 teaching and learning. They may be helping teachers gain an expert's perspective on the subject matter they are expected to teach or the instructional practices they are attempting to carry out. Accomplishing any one of these goals will be mediated through the dialogic interactions within the structured mediational spaces where *obuchenie* takes place. This must be the focus of attention in the design and enactment of the practices of L2 teacher education.

Finally, the outcomes of these practices must not rest solely on what teachers come to know about L2 teaching, but on the extent to which engagement in these practices becomes internalized psychological tools for teacher thinking. Empirical work that traces the trajectory of teacher development as it unfolds in the practices of L2 teacher education is likely to uncover steps backward as well as leaps forward rather than a steady path toward greater levels of teaching expertise. Indeed, it is precisely these upheavals that can be most informative in terms of identifying factors that support teacher development, while the absence of such upheavals can help

teacher educators understand factors that inhibit it. Such empirical work will continue to inform the design, enactment, and outcomes of the practices of L2 teacher education.

Teachers do not enter teacher education programs to mirror the experiences they have in the everyday world. Instead, they expect to engage in practices that will, by design, enable them to materialize and enact theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices that support productive language learning within the contexts in which they teach. Empirical attention to the design, enactment, and outcomes of the practices of L2 teacher education is essential if we are to reclaim the relevance of L2 teacher education in and for the professional development of L2 teachers.

NOTES

¹ Seminal work: Vygotsky (1930–1931/1997, 1986, 1987, 1930–1931/1998), Leont'ev (1981). Extensions of Vygotsky's work: Cole (1996), Kozulin (1998), Wertsch (1991). In SLA: Lantolf & Poehner (2014), Lantolf & Thorne (2006).

² See Moll (1990) for a discussion of sign mediation versus socially mediated activity and Edwards and Daniels (2004) for a discussion of sociocultural theory versus cultural–historical activity theory.

³ Deb, Annie, Josh, and Ryan are all pseudonyms. All four teachers and the teacher educator voluntarily agreed to give the researcher access to data from the extended team-teaching project.

⁴ Some data extracts were presented in Worden & Johnson (2014).

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APPENDIX

Transcription System

T:	teacher
S:	student (not identified)
S1, S2, etc.:	identified student
Ss:	several students at once or the whole class [do you understand?]
[I see]	overlap between teacher and student, student and student
=	turn continues, or one turn follows another without any pause
(.)	a dot indicates a just noticeable pause
(2)	a number indicates a timed pause, e.g., 2 seconds
?	rising intonation indicates question or other
—	emphatic speech, usually on a word
wo(h)rd	(h) to indicate the word is expressed with laughter
wor-	a dash indicates a word that has been cut off
wo:rd	colons indicate elongation of a sound
(word)	a guess at unclear or unintelligible talk
()	talk occurs but unintelligible
((laughter))	indicates paralinguistic sounds like laughter, crying, etc.
((italics))	notes on gestures, actions, eye gaze, etc.
[[]]	corrected translation: used to mark a learner error [[die – FEM]]