

## Dialogic Restorying: A Novel Methodology for Provoking Second Language Teacher Development Across the Career Span

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### Abstract

Grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, we propose a novel methodology for second language teacher cognition research called *dialogic restorying*. We exemplify this methodological innovation by presenting a qualitative longitudinal project in which we prompted L2 teachers to revisit and restory what Veresov (2017) calls “dramatic moments” extracted from reflections they wrote throughout their learning-to-teach experiences in a 2-year MA TESL program (see Johnson, Verity, & Childs, 2020; 2023). These practicing teachers engaged in *dialogic restorying* with the interviewer by reflecting on the importance of these dramatic moments and their continuing influence on how they orient to teaching in their current instructional contexts two to three years after graduation. Mutual engagement in *dialogic restorying* not only allowed access into these L2 teachers’ perceptions of the significance of their learning-to-teach experiences but also opened up the potential for these interviews to be meaningful encounters that continued to have developmental value for the teacher-participants. We contend that *dialogic restorying* yields important longitudinal insights into L2 teachers’ developmental trajectories while also bringing to the surface the importance of recognizing the mediational influence that research methodology can, and from our perspective, *should* have on participants in investigations of L2 teacher development across the career span.

**Keywords:** Dialogic Restorying, Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory, Second Language Teacher Cognition, Second Language Teacher Education

In *The Modern Language Journal* 99(3) special issue on L2 teacher cognition (SLTC), Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) contend that the field has yet to elaborate a coherent account of the developmental trajectory of L2 teacher expertise and how L2 teacher education (SLTE) can systematically and intentionally lead such development. Generating empirical evidence capable of addressing these issues is critical in substantiating the continued relevance and social utility of SLTC within both applied linguistics and teacher education more broadly. Concomitantly, there is a pressing need to engage in principled, longitudinal work that examines L2 teacher development across the career span (Crandall & Christison, 2016). Although there are a few notable examples of such work (cf. Tsui, 2007; Karimi & Norouzi, 2019; Webster, 2019; Burri & Baker, 2021), the bulk of these studies remain descriptive in terms of their research methodology and overlook the role that teacher-participant engagement in research activity can play in supporting L2 teacher development. In the current study, we take up and critique these two issues and offer a novel methodological alternative that simultaneously addresses the imperatives of elaborating the nature of the development of L2 teacher expertise and demonstrating the mediational potential of SLTC research to provoke L2 teacher development across the career span.

Standing in stark contrast to research that focuses solely on describing and documenting L2 teachers' cognitions, Vygotskian sociocultural theory (VSCT) turns our attention toward considering how research methodologies can be designed to intentionally *provoke* and *lead* L2 teacher cognitive development through purposefully organized interventions into teacher thinking and teaching activity (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2016, 2018). From a VSCT vantage point, we do not see the value of adhering to clear-cut distinctions between theory and practice as is often the case in SLTC work. Instead, we contend that the purposeful integration of theory and practice into a coherent, praxis-oriented vision grounded in VSCT offers the potential for SLTC research to be transformative for the development of L2 teacher expertise.

In what follows, we highlight recent SLTC research that examines language teacher development across the career span and point out avenues for moving beyond an emphasis on description and documentation in such work. Subsequently, we make explicit our understanding of Vygotsky's dialectical unity of theory/practice and demonstrate our VSCT orientation toward longitudinal research across L2 teachers' careers. We then introduce a novel research methodology, which we call *dialogic restorying*, and describe how we developed this approach to in-depth interviewing as a personalized, developmentally relevant experience for teacher-participants. We show how an emphasis on revisiting and restorying "dramatic moments" (Veresov, 2017) from teachers' written reflections about prior learning-to-teach experiences can enable such in-depth interviews to be meaningful and engaging experiences that hold developmental value for teacher-participants. We ultimately aim to demonstrate the power of dialogic restorying in yielding important longitudinal insights into L2 teachers' developmental trajectories. At the same time, we bring to the surface the importance of recognizing the mediational influence that engagement in research activity can, and, from our VSCT stance, *should* have on teacher-participants' development in SLTC research.

## Literature Review

Explicating the developmental trajectories of L2 teacher expertise arising from engagement in teacher education and professional development activities is paramount to the SLTC research agenda (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). To this end, recent work has documented the extent to which teachers apply the concepts and principles learned in teacher education programs in order to create productive learning environments for their students in post-graduation instructional contexts. Burri and Baker (2021) examine how a cohort of four L2 teachers' cognitions regarding

the teaching of pronunciation shifted over the course of six years. Their study is based on data collected during an initial university-based pronunciation course, narrative frames (Barkhuizen, 2015) (self-reported accounts of how they now teaching pronunciation) and interviews and observations in their subsequent post-graduation instructional contexts. They demonstrate how the teachers' cognitions influenced their delivery of and focus on pronunciation instruction and how these cognitions were shaped by their locally situated histories as language learners and language teachers, the pedagogical emphasis of their teacher preparation regarding pronunciation instruction (teacher-fronted, communicative, needs-based), and contextual factors, such as the needs and goals of their L2 learners and the curricular requirements of the institutions in which they were teaching. Similarly, Webster (2019) documents four early career teachers' lack of practical knowledge development in L2 speaking instruction with adult L2 immigrant learners. Conducted over the course of an academic year, the study found that the teachers' speaking instruction was largely atheoretical and that the potential for teacher development was stymied by a lack of appropriate institutional arrangements (i.e., professional isolation, institutional socialization, issues of classroom management, lack of professional satisfaction, etc.) to support teacher professional development.

Taken together, both the Burri and Baker (2021) and Webster (2019) studies sought to *document* and *describe* L2 teachers' cognitions in their respective instructional contexts. That is, they highlight what teachers think, know, feel, and do in terms of teaching pronunciation and speaking in their current L2 instructional contexts. Such description across different career phases is clearly worthwhile and necessary to further the SLTC research agenda. However, in adhering to qualitative research methodologies centered solely on description of teachers' cognitions, there is missed potential for orienting to engagement in research activity as being beneficial for L2 teacher development. For example, Webster (2019) reported that, despite the teacher-participants' persistent and explicit appeals for assistance in how to better enact and integrate the teaching of speaking, as the researcher, he maintained "the integrity of the research" (p.160) and chose to listen to and record their concerns rather than intervene into the teachers' cognitions and/or teaching activity. Such an orientation toward research may limit the possible developmental value that engagement in research activity could have for teacher-participants when confronting troubling endemic pedagogical issues in their current instructional contexts. Owing to our VSCT stance, which we flesh out in more depth in the next section, we offer an alternative orientation to research activity that moves beyond a singular focus on the description of teacher cognitions toward designing research activity that creates the potential to *provoke* and *lead* development for teacher-participants, even in post-graduation contexts.

### **Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory and Praxis-Oriented Research Methodology**

During his lifetime, Vygotsky sought to break down the sharp dualism between theory and practice in psychology. As he endeavored to explicate the fundamentally social origins of the human mind and the development of the higher forms of consciousness through engagement with social relations, activities, and concepts, Vygotsky also set out to deploy Marxist theory in practical research activity, forging the path for a psychology grounded in dialectical materialism (Vygotsky, 1981). Although Vygotsky did not explicitly, to our knowledge, use the term praxis to describe his approach to building a general Marxist psychology, he placed fundamental emphasis on the dialectic unity and purposeful synthesis of theory and practice:

*Previously theory was not dependent on practice; instead, practice was the conclusion, the application, an excursion beyond the boundaries of science, an operation which lay outside*

*science and came after science, which began after the scientific operation was considered completed. Success or failure had practically no effect on the fate of the theory . . . Now the situation is the opposite. Practice pervades the deepest foundations of the scientific operation and reforms it from beginning to end. Practice sets the tasks and serves as the supreme judge of theory, as its truth criterion. It dictates how to construct the concepts and how to formulate the laws. (1926/2004, p. 304)*

We view the unity of theory and practice espoused by Vygotsky as a call to engage in praxis, or in other words, to test “the power of the theory to make a difference in the practical behavior of a community” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. 27).

As Vygotskian scholars, we embrace a praxis orientation by intentionally deploying the principles of the theory in the practices of SLTE to support novice L2 teacher development. Vygotskian SLTE work has embraced the power of a praxis orientation in both tracing, and perhaps more importantly, leading and provoking teacher development through theorized, coherent, and goal-directed pedagogy (Johnson et al., 2020;2023). Paramount to this interventionist stance is the recognition that school learning, when properly organized and implemented, is unlike that in the world outside of school and has the potential to awaken developmental processes by restructuring learner thinking and activity (Vygotsky, 1935/1994). In Vygotskian SLTE, particular kinds of learning designed to provoke L2 teacher development are cultivated in *structured mediational spaces* (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). These spaces, such as dialogic reflective journal writing (Golombek, 2015), highly-mediated team microteaching (Rieker, 2022a), and L2 teacher concept-based instruction (Esteve, Fernández & Bes, 2018), are designed to accomplish specific instructional goals through creating opportunities for L2 teachers to function ahead of their current developmental levels with the dialogic, contingent, and responsive support of teacher educators.

While the concept of structured mediational spaces has been heretofore applied within the context of SLTE practices, we see untapped potential in synthesizing this concept and the commonly-used research SLTC practice of the in-depth interview. There exists a tendency in much SLTC research to orient to the interview as a research instrument as compared to a social practice (Talmy, 2010). When viewed as a research instrument, interviews assume an extraction role that take teacher-participants’ reports as products that can be mined for content and themes and are sanitized of interactional context. On the other hand, an interview as social practice perspective problematizes the interview itself as an object of investigation. The co-construction and negotiation of knowledge become critical in making sense of interviews as interactional, collective processes. A Vygotskian praxis-oriented approach takes the notion of the interview as a social practice a step further. From our theoretical stance, we view the in-depth interview as a social practice in which mediational value can be purposely found and cultivated to the benefit of teacher-participants. In this sense, we problematize the interview as a structured mediational space that has the potential to make a difference in L2 teachers’ cognition and activity. Moreover, we endeavor to show how in-depth interviews, when oriented to as sites for Vygotskian praxis, can advance the epistemological status of this research practice in SLTC research. We now describe how our novel methodology, dialogic restorying, emerged and how we intentionally designed this methodology as a structured mediational space with developmental potential for teacher-participants.

### **Dialogic Restorying as a Structured Mediational Space**

Dialogic restorying is inspired in part by Golombek and Johnson’s (2021) approach to L2 teacher narrative inquiry, *recurrent restorying*. Their methodology is based on the notion that teachers can

act as the discourse analysts of their own written reflections to “re-experience and reconceptualize their learning-to-teach experiences as a means of tracing the origins of their own professional development as teachers” (p.8). They contend that recurrent restorying is a tool-and-result activity (Newman & Holzman, 1993) that simultaneously functions as both the means for teachers to investigate their own development (tool), and in the process of engaging in this systematic examination of their learning-to-teach experiences (Johnson & Golombek, 2011), opens up the potential to provoke further development (result). The two case studies presented in Golombek and Johnson (2021) demonstrate how L2 teachers can set up the conditions to further catalyze their own development by engaging in intentional, goal-directed, tool-and-result narrative activity of their previously storied learning-to-teach experiences.

The methodology proposed in the current article, dialogic restorying, builds on the premise that continued and iterative narrative activity can hold developmental value for L2 teachers across the career span. While we view dialogic restorying activity as a tool-and-result methodology that creates the potential for L2 teacher development through engagement in research activity, there are two important elaborations offered by dialogic restorying: (1) the role of dialogic mediation and (2) an explicit emphasis on dramatic moments.

The first crucial elaboration in our methodology is that we place emphasis on the role of an external mediator in the analysis of the teacher-participant’s written reflections arising from their previous storied learning-to-teach experiences. In addition, the external mediator plays a critical role in facilitating and sustaining dialogic interaction with teacher-participants in an effort to prompt restorying activity. The collaboration and co-construction of meaning in dialogue can create potential for development as the mediator is able to offer insights and make connections as the interview unfolds that prompt recollection, and even in certain cases, reconceptualization of learning-to-teach experiences on the part of teacher-participants.

The second key elaboration is an explicit focus on dramatic moments (Veresov, 2017) as the basis of the in-depth interviews that are collaboratively restoried. Viewing development as drama captures Vygotsky’s conceptualization of development in a more complete fashion (Mok, 2017; Veresov, 2017). According to Vygotsky, the development of human consciousness unfolds situated in concrete social relations and is “most fully developed in the form of drama” (1989, p. 59). As people confront and work through tensions and contradictions in their environments (i.e., drama), qualitative transformations in thinking and activity can take place.

In the case of SLTC research, then, we see tremendous value in focusing on dramatic moments as “sites of development” (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011, p. viii). The process of the social becoming individual can be traced in teachers grappling with the demands of their learning-to-teach experiences as the objective conditions of SLTE programs refract through teachers’ personalities and histories (i.e., *perezhivanie*), yielding transformations in how they orient to and reason their teaching activity (Rieker, 2022b). Because of the deep cognitive and emotional weight that these dramatic moments, or turning points, hold for L2 teachers, we contend that working over dramatic moments in the structured mediational space of dialogic restorying can continue to yield developmental value for teachers as they revisit, reframe, and reconceptualize their previously storied learning-to-teach experiences. Moreover, this developmental potential can be amplified through dialogic mediation aimed at teachers-participants’ understandings of their experiences with the goal of deeply examining and collaboratively working over these experiences in light of their post-graduation trajectories and their current instructional contexts.

## **The Present Study**

We present data that is illustrative of how mutual engagement in dialogic restorying allows access into teacher-participant perceptions of the developmental significance of their learning-to-teach experiences and creates a structured mediational space that has the potential to provoke further teacher development. In this regard, the objectives of the current study are twofold: (1) to document how engagement in dialogic restorying of previously storied learning-to-teach experiences shapes how teacher-participants orient to teaching two-to-three years after completing the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language (MATESL) degree and (2) to capture the discursive and mediational features of the joint intellectual activity of dialogic restorying as a structured mediational space that offers developmental value for teacher-participants across the career span.

## **Methodology**

### **Description of Data Sources**

The current study draws on two data sources: (1) written reflections on past learning-to-teach/tutor experiences throughout a two-year MATESL program and (2) video recorded dialogic restorying interviews conducted two-to-three years post-graduation. The written reflection data come from a larger project that traced longitudinally the development of L2 novice teacher reasoning over a two-year period in an MATESL program at a large research university in the Mid-Atlantic United States (Johnson et al., 2020; 2023). The large database consists of 27 L2 novice teachers' written reflections, teaching observations, and other class assignments across three praxis-oriented courses (Teaching ESL, Tutoring Internship, Teaching Practicum) in the program. Throughout the courses, teachers were required to engage in reflective writing in each of the three courses in a variety of formats. The 'Teaching ESL' course featured a written final reflection paper on a highly mediated initial team-teaching experience and the 'Tutoring Internship' and 'Teaching Practicum' included regular weekly dialogic journal writing and final reflective papers. We analyzed the reflective journals and final reflection papers across the three courses as the basis for the dialogic restorying interviews. This was an intentional decision on our part as these data tended to feature dramatic moments most saliently in each teacher's learning-to-teach experiences as well as evidence of their attempts to work over these moments through written reflection with mediation from the teacher educators.

The interview data consist of nine approximately one-hour dialogic storying interviews led by the first author. The teacher-participants were recruited based on their participation in the original two-year project two-to-three years after completing the MATESL degree. The two-to-three-year period between the original project and the dialogic restorying interviews was based on the amount of time it took to engage with and make sense of the large database of 27 teachers' developmental trajectories. Also, this timeframe enabled the teacher-participants to reflect on their dramatic moments in relation to their post-graduation instructional experiences. Three days before the interview, each teacher-participant was sent a collection of excerpts from their reflective writings across the three praxis-oriented MATESL courses and invited to comment in the margins with their initial thoughts and prepare to discuss these excerpts with the first author. The choice of three days was made at our discretion to allow the participants ample time to digest the excerpts before discussing them with the interviewer.

The interviews consisted of referring to and discussing the selected dramatic moments in each teacher's dataset through the use of screensharing to facilitate restorying activity. This discussion

focused on prompting the teacher-participants to engage in retrospection into the dramatic events and to consider what lasting influence, if any, these moments had on their professional development, teacher identities, and career trajectories. The interviews were conducted and recorded via teleconferencing software and subsequently broadly transcribed. The recordings were also shared with the teacher-participants as artifacts that they could return to in making sense of their own professional development.

### **Orientation and Data Analysis**

The selection of excerpts encapsulating dramatic moments consisted of several iterative rounds of data analysis of each teacher-participant's written reflections. Our approach was grounded in the genetic method (Vygotsky, 1987) as we endeavored to trace the unfolding of teacher development through each teacher-participant's learning-to-teach experiences across the three praxis-oriented courses. First, each author individually analyzed each data set and came up with a collection of eight to ten excerpts that seemed to index the experiencing and working over of dramatic moments. For some teacher-participants, markers of cognitive/emotional dissonance were salient, while others focused on 'a-ha moments' and new realizations or critical incidents that seemed to push them to rethink or reimagine their identities and/or teaching activity. No matter what focus the dramatic moments took, our goal was to identify dramatic moments that seemed to have developmental value for the teacher-participants. After our individual data analysis, we compared which excerpts seeming to represent dramatic moments for each teacher-participant. During these sessions, we discovered considerable overlap and agreement, owing to our Vygotskian stance, familiarity with the praxis-oriented courses, and the data sets of the teacher-participants. We ultimately decided on five to seven focal excerpts to share with each teacher-participant and consequently serve as the foundation of the dialogic restorying interview.

Our objective was to make these research encounters dialogic in the sense that engagement in dialogic restorying was a joint intellectual endeavor, in which developmental value could be found and cultivated to the benefit of the teacher-participants. In analyzing the transcribed interview data, we conducted a qualitative content analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) in order to capture two *a priori* dimensions of the dialogic restorying interviews: (1) the responses and insights of the teacher-participants as they restoried dramatic moments from their prior learning-to-teach experiences and (2) the quality and character of mediation provided by the interviewer.

### **Participants**

The three teacher-participants Wei, Pedro, and Zhen (pseudonyms) all had different levels of teaching experience upon entering the MATESL program in a variety of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Wei taught for several years in China in different settings before deciding to move to the United States to obtain his MA in TESL. Pedro had more than 13 years of EFL teaching experience in his home country of Brazil prior to joining the program. Zhen, on the other hand, had brief teaching experience limited to a language camp context in China before she enrolled in the program. Wei's and Pedro's cases, comprising the bulk of the article, were chosen among the nine teachers interviewed due, in part, to space limitations but also as examples of very different developmental trajectories which in turn required very different responsive mediation from the interviewer. Such contrast, we hope, will offer readers a more in-depth understanding of the scope and nature of what the dialogic restorying interview can potentially reveal. A final brief exchange between Zhen and the interviewer, highlights her perspective on the developmental value of engagement in dialogic restorying.

The interviewer's (first author) positionality is also important to acknowledge. As a VSCT researcher and developing L2 teacher educator, he intentionally oriented to these interviews as opportunities to cultivate meaningful and potentially developmentally relevant experiences for the teacher-participants. He is also deeply familiar with the design features of the MATESL program that the teacher-participants experienced as well as with the coherent VSCT stance of the teacher educators who taught the three praxis-oriented courses from which the written reflective data emerge.

## Results

As will be shown, through a series of mediational moves responsive to the unfolding circumstances of each interview, the interviewer (Jacob) purposefully oriented to the developmental value of revisiting and restorying teacher-participants' dramatic moments in their learning-to-teach experiences. In terms of restorying, Jacob prompted the teacher-participants to not only reflect on their developmental significance but also to contemplate their possible influence on their own teaching activity in their current instructional context. In this sense, engagement in dialogic restorying served as guided 'togglng' between past and present, and in some cases, the future, that opened up the potential for the interviews to be of relevance for their current instructional and reasoning activity.

To differentiate the data highlighted in our analysis, data drawn from the excerpted previously storied written reflections (i.e., dramatic moments) are tagged in 'single quotes' while data from the dialogic restorying interviews (i.e., transcripts) appear in "double quotes." Additionally, bold faced data represent points of interest that are illustrative of our analysis.

### Wei – Shifting Instructional Stance on the Teaching Stage

In the following series of exchanges, Jacob and Wei work collaboratively to restory a noticeable shift in Wei's instructional stance over his experiences in the three praxis-oriented courses. Based on extracted dramatic moments from his reflective writings, there is evidence that Wei shifted his instructional stance from initially 'giving students answers directly' to recognizing the instructional value of 'asking questions,' and 'encouraging students to come up with their own ideas.'

Interestingly, they begin the process of dialogic restorying this shift in his instructional stance by focusing on its origins. In an excerpt from Wei's Teaching ESL final reflection paper, he recalls his initial fear of 'awkward silence' when students failed to participate in large group discussions. He initially conceptualized teaching as an 'on-stage performance,' which seemingly justified his compulsion to simply tell students the answers or move on to prepared lesson material. Also embedded in this extract, Wei recalls explicit mediation from the teacher educator suggesting that he increase his wait time to allow for more student participation. As Wei restoried this dramatic moment, he invoked the emotions he felt (nervous, worried, ruin my teaching, ruin my show) paraphrasing what he wrote in his reflection paper while acknowledging that in the 'real world' of teaching, his current instructional context, "to give more reaction time" [wait time] is essential for creating space for students to offer "insightful, very interesting ideas and responses." In fact, he is quite adamant that without increased reaction time, his students "will never do this."

*Wei: So really, I was nervous. What I was worried about, if giving more time to the students to wait would just ruin my teaching? Ruin my show, somehow like that. So sometimes it's better to just give the students directly my answers. I do not have to just ask them to react to give me their responses. So just like 1,2,3 seconds, and then I'll give them myself, the answers myself. And*



*actually, it was not like this, when I was really teaching here at the [Intensive English Program], I needed to give more reaction time to my students, because most of the time my students could come up with very insightful, very interesting ideas and responses. If I do not give them those chances, they will never do this. So, I think this is a must.*

Responding to Wei recollection of this shift in his instructional stance, Jacob reframed the pedagogical value of reaction time as giving students more “time to think” and “help them give better answers” but he also suggested that perhaps the origins of Wei’s initial conceptualization of teaching may have been grounded in his prior experience as a TV host, a part of Wei’s history that only emerged earlier in their interview. Thus, learning this detail about Wei’s prior experience prompted Jacob to speculate that there may be a link between the scripted nature of being a TV host and Wei’s recollection of his emotional reaction to wanting “instant responses from your students.”

*Jacob: So you're talking about when you're teaching at the [Intensive English Program], that, you know, giving them a little bit more reaction time, helps them think right, help them give better answers, right. Yeah. And something that I think is interesting that perhaps now in light of your, you know, your telling me that you were a TV host that, like, I think probably one of the differences between I might be going off on a limb here, but you tell me if I'm right or wrong, but one of the differences between TV hosting and the classroom is that the TV hosting is scripted. Alright, and you want to avoid awkward silences, but teaching, at least on the student side is unscripted. Right. So do you think that accounts for some of this, this feeling that you wanted it to have this like instant response from your students?*

While Wei clarified that hosting a TV show does require “some responses from your audience,” he confirmed Jacob’s speculation that this may be the origin of his concern “to avoid all those kinds of awkward silence.” Jacob then labeled this realization as having developmental value and reiterated the pedagogical value of increased reaction time as “giving them time to think and participate more fully.”

*Wei: So for doing a TV show, you don't have to really have responses from your audience, you do your solo thing, or usually with your partner or partners, not here on stage in their classrooms, that's a little bit different. If you want to make your show continue, to last, to go on smoothly, you need to have some responses from your audience. That's why I said I would like to avoid all those kinds of awkward silences. Silent moments. Yeah, so.*

*Jacob: But yeah, but what's really nice here is that it seems like you've, you've developed in that sense, right? That you're giving them more reaction time. And it's not just I'm giving them extra seconds, but rather you're giving them time to think right and because of that they're able to participate more fully in a second language.*

As the interview continued, Jacob and Wei restoried an entry from his Practicum reflective teaching journal in which he emphasized the value of asking questions, describing it as ‘not only an art but also a skill embedded in our soul.’ In the journal entry below, written during the final semester of the program, Wei was able to name different types of questions (probing, critical, factual, rhetorical) and articulated his belief that ‘a good teacher is also a good questioner.’

*Wei: Asking questions is an art. We all experienced times when we could not ask a question in a proper way nor timing, perhaps without realizing it at the moment, but regretting later. However, as a teacher, asking questions is not only an art, but also a skill embedded in our soul. I can use probing questions to clarify my students’ problems, increase critical awareness, and prompt their understanding; I can use factual questions to make my students recall specific information. I can use rhetorical*

*questions which do not require an answer to show my humor and to promote thought; I can... Anyway, it is a skill that I will never despise and will learn and practice more in my practicum. I believe, a good teacher is also a good questioner. (Reflective Teaching Journal)*

Responding to Wei's recognition of the pedagogical value of asking questions, Jacob made explicit connections between wait time, giving hints and clues, and asking different question types, and then pushed Wei to consider how he thinks about asking questions now, in his current instructional context.

***Jacob:*** *And so part of that is asking questions, right. So, we're thinking about wait time, right. But the thing that goes along with wait time and giving hints and clues is asking questions. And so one thing that stood out here in this fourth excerpt is that you said asking questions is an art, right? And not only in this excerpt, but in others, you, you reflect on the value of questions and the types of questions that you ask and all these different dynamics of asking questions. So yeah, so how do you view this now, thinking about asking questions?*

As Wei restoried this dramatic moment, he acknowledged that increased reaction time is insufficient on its own. He now claims that it must include "asking questions, giving hints, and some clues in order to boost their thinking." Affirming this notion, Jacob reused Wei's ideas of hints and clues and reiterated Wei's realization that increased reaction time supports student thinking. For Wei, what was once a simple teaching behavior, 'wait just like 1, 2, 3 seconds,' during his Practicum experience became an intentional pedagogical choice that continues to shape how he now thinks about teaching and learning.

***Wei:*** *And that also leads to another question another topic, asking questions, giving hints. So sometimes just as simply giving them reaction time is not enough is not sufficient. You also need to just give them some hints some clues. Like by asking some questions, you give them the idea as part of the idea for them to improve their, to boost their thinking that is very important. It's also what I learned, you know, from the practicum.*

***Jacob:*** *So it's not just wait time, but it's also like, how do you orient them to think about this? Right? What kind of hints, clues suggestions do you give them to help them think in a certain way that furthers your objectives?*

The importance of asking questions and additional evidence of a shift in Wei's instructional stance was also evident in a dramatic moment excerpted from his Tutoring Internship final reflection paper. Wei wrote that the Tutoring Supervisor explicitly told him that 'by questioning this tutee, you helped him clarify his thoughts, and by pushing him to read the assignment sheet more carefully, you helped him clarify the thoughts of his instructor... .' The Tutoring Supervisor invoked the term 'triangulator' to emphasize that tutors should 'function as a mediator between those other two people,' the course instructor, and the tutee. Both in his final reflection paper and in their interview, Wei takes up this term, however, it seems to hold a different meaning for him, which he described as a heightened awareness of the tutor's role as "not simply a person imparting knowledge anymore, but a promoter. My thoughts therefore began to further change." As he restoried this 'a-ha' moment, Jacob orients Wei to the developmental value of seeing himself as "a triangulator," that "it represents a different orientation towards teaching and learning."

***Jacob:*** *It seems like on the surface, that it's not that big of a change. But in reality, when you think about it, it is a really big change, I think I think it represents a different orientation towards teaching and learning than perhaps you might have come in with... the teacher has the knowledge and then the students don't, right? ... So it's not just I have the knowledge and I'm*

*going to give it to you, but rather, I'm going to meet you where you are and try and help you develop your own ways of thinking and using English, right? It's a different orientation to teaching and learning, I think.*

Wei's final 'a-ha' moment is evident in his Teaching Philosophy, in which he was able to trace his own development, as a teacher who no longer 'offers my students my answers directly' but instead taking the advice of his mentor teacher to 'encourage them to come up with their own.' Likewise, Wei's *perezhivanie* about this 'a-ha' moment seems to shift as he claimed during the interview that he "started to enjoy this feeling, the feeling of guiding students and then getting some ideas from them, either interesting or insightful." In response, Jacob once again oriented Wei to the developmental value of recognizing this shift [change] and emphasized again that "it's a fundamentally different orientation" to teaching and learning.

*Jacob: Absolutely. And that for me, that represents development, right? That represents change, like it's a fundamentally different orientation.*

Through their mutual engagement in dialogic restorying, Wei was able to both name and trace the shift in his instructional stance while at the same time reinforcing the connection between the activity of increased wait time and the pedagogical choices Wei now makes as he teaches in a new instructional context. Thus, engagement in dialogic restorying functioned as a tool-and-result activity as Wei was able to re-trace and, in a sense, re-experience his own professional development as it was unfolding over the three praxis-oriented courses; in VSCT terms, he came to recognize how external forms of social activity served as the sources of internalized psychological tools for thinking (Vygotsky, 1981). Additionally, Wei was able to, as a result of Jacob's mediational moves, recognize the origins of his initial conceptualization of what it means to be a language teacher ('on-stage performance') and trace how his previously storied experiences have become internalized psychological tools that shape his current pedagogical choices as a language teacher. Jacob, as the knowledgeable-other, was responsive to how Wei made sense of these dramatic moments, yet he explicitly and consistently oriented Wei to the developmental value of restorying his learning-to-teach experiences, bringing to the surface how Wei came to more fully understand a major shift in his instructional stance as a language teacher.

### **Pedro – Transformation in Writing Instruction**

Pedro was a very experienced L2 teacher (>13 years) although all of his teaching experience had been in EFL settings and much of it embedded in the test-prep industry (TOEFL, IELTS, college entrance exams). In this sense, the learning-to-teach experiences he had throughout the three praxis-oriented courses served as a vastly different social situation of development for him as a language teacher. During the interview, Pedro characterized himself as "a stickler for structure, tethered to his lesson plans, and I'm very type A." These personality traits, Pedro claimed, worked well in his former EFL settings where his instructional focus was on general conversational skills, grammatical accuracy, and test preparation.

However, when Pedro initially encountered the expectations of the Tutoring Internship, he wrote about his 'discontentment with the apparent lack of structure of the tutoring sessions.' Tutors are expected to negotiate session goals in dialogue with writers, listen carefully, develop and use questions strategically, and create safe spaces for writers to think through their ideas, not 'tell them what to write, correct grammar or fix the text.' As Pedro and Jacob began to restory this dramatic moment excerpted from his Tutoring Internship final reflection paper, Pedro recalled his sense of emotional turmoil – "I was dreading this moment." Without "a syllabus, a lesson plan, everything

figured out,” he recalled being at a loss to “come up with a structure for this tutoring” session. He also recalled worrying about having “to think on my feet,” and doubted his own expertise as a tutor: “Can I do this? Am I good enough?”

*Pedro: Oh, man, so I was dreading this moment, to be honest, ...okay, but how can I plan for this class? My whole concern was like, how can I come up with a structure for this tutoring, because if it's a class, I can, you know, I have a syllabus, I have a lesson plan, I have everything figured out. It's just like, you know, follow. Follow that. But when it comes to tutoring, somebody who, you know, I eventually follow the person ... When it comes to teaching and professional life. I'm very type A, I like structure ...*

*Jacob: Right.*

*Pedro: Right... It has some sort of, like accountability to, um, but yeah, I think I was like, sort of like, dreading that moment. Because like, Oh, my gosh, like, I don't know, like, he's going to come here and say, oh, here's what I have to do. And I'll have to think on my feet and come up with something. And I think there was a little bit of feelings of like self-inefficacy, can I do this? Am I good enough?*

Key to the responsiveness of Jacob's mediation in this exchange was the fact that he was familiar with the expectations of the Tutoring Internship, and earlier in the interview, had learned about the highly structured nature of Pedro's EFL teaching history. This enabled Jacob to acknowledge Pedro's emotional distress; distinguishing tutoring as “a different kind of instruction” and share Pedro's anxiety by suggesting he was “thrust into the situation.” Jacob affiliated with how Pedro was feeling and even characterized tutoring sessions as sort of a generic “gonna do something with this person, whatever, whatever, without planning it.”

*Jacob: And it's a different kind of instruction, right? Because you had all these years of teaching experience, but then you're thrust into the situation.*

*Pedro: Exactly. Exactly. Right.*

*Jacob: You're gonna do something with this person for 30 minutes or an hour or whatever, without planning it.*

Pedro agreed with Jacob's characterization, yet he recalled how he grappled with an uncomfortable sense of novicehood that arose, at least in part, due to the dramatic collision between his prior EFL teaching experiences, his professed teacher personality traits, and the instructional expectations of the Tutoring Internship. However, as he continued to restory this moment of initially feeling “insecure and nervous,” he notably marked the same experience as “transformative,” calling it “a water-shed moment.” His *perezhivanie* shifted from recalling feelings of dread and insecurity to re-seeing the experience as enabling him to take “on a more holistic approach,” one in which he encouraged his writers to think about: “Who's your audience? thinking about tone, Is it clear enough? Don't you think there's something missing here?”

*Pedro: Right, exactly. Right. And in in even though I've been as you know, I was no spring chicken, you know, when it came to teaching, but like, that was something that I was I was a novice again, you know, I was like, you know, doing this for the first time. So I was a little, like insecure and, and nervous about it, but then yeah. It took me a minute, you know, to get my footing. But once I did, that was like, very transformative, but it was like a watershed moment. You know, I started saying, Man, I'm good at this, you know?...*

*But then, you know, like, I think I started like, taking a more holistic approach, you know, like, hey, like, so who's your, you know, like, Who's your audience? Right. Do you think like, like,*

*thinking about tone or thinking about, like, you have an obviously more mechanical aspects of the text and like, Oh, do you think that this is clear enough? Like, don't you think there's something missing here?*

As the interview continued Jacob asked Pedro to reflect on an excerpt from his Teaching Practicum final reflection paper. Jacob, thoroughly knowledgeable about principles and concepts of VSCT, seems somewhat surprised and rather impressed that Pedro would use VSCT concepts and a scholarly citation in his final reflection paper. He therefore prompted Pedro to explain what he meant by 'two moments that gave rise to cognitive-emotional dissonance' and 'growth points' as they relate to how he has come to approach the teaching of L2 writing.

*Looking back at these two moments, I believe they were instances that gave rise to cognitive-emotional dissonance (Johnson and Worden, 2014). The paradoxicality of my understandings of the depth of analysis required for a freshman composition course clashed with the actualization of it and might have triggered the emergence of growth points. As I externalized this conflict through my RTJs [reflective teaching journals], and eventually reflected upon it, I began to approach the teaching of writing from another perspective. (Final Practicum Reflection Paper)*

In Pedro's response to re-reading this excerpt from his final Practicum reflection paper, he once again recalled his prior conception of teaching L2 writing, stating he focused mainly on "texts that are much shorter, much simpler, like textbook style, and preparation for like Cambridge examinations." He contrasted his prior conception of teaching L2 writing with what he observed his mentor teacher doing in his practicum placement, a first-year academic writing course, and recalled an 'a-ha' moment when he realized, "So, that's how you're supposed to teach."

*Pedro: I had like an idea of what teaching writing entailed. And then, as I observed, especially, [mentor teacher's] teaching and saying exactly how she was approaching, and the sort of things that she was, you know, touching upon and working on. I started to like, Oh my gosh, like, So, that's how you're supposed to teach. And these are the things that you're supposed to be focusing on.*

Pedro recalled this initial observation of his mentor teacher and practicum placement as leaving him "feeling overwhelmed," with a need "to step up my game," and "catch up, up to par to what was expected of me." Responding to these explicit expressions of emotion, Jacob suggested there may be a connection between Pedro's earlier reference to 'growth points' and his feeling that "he needs to catch up." Knowing that he and Pedro most likely share the same understanding of the VSCT concept of 'cognitive-emotional dissonance' and 'growth points' (based on required readings in a graduate seminar they both took), Jacob oriented Pedro to explore his own development by explicitly asking, "what would you say your growth points were during that semester?" This question created a space for Pedro to articulate how he has come to reconceptualize the teaching of L2 writing.

*Pedro: Sort of, like I said, like a different understanding of academic writing of the mechanics of academic writing. Making sure to you know, have like a thesis statement to like to make sure that references are in the order to make sure to check for audience, you know, this as you know, that was something that was like, oh, okay, I know what I'm writing for. ... I think it was like, noticing how all those all those aspects of like audience this and that, how they actualize in the text, and how they impact the text I would say, it's something that, you know, to this day, I'm very cognizant of, that has definitely impacted the way I write. Even, you know, in my, in my job now.*

In the following excerpt from Pedro's Teaching Philosophy, he wrote that 'the inefficacy of one-size-fits-all approaches to teaching has had a profound impact on how I teach.' He also wrote that

‘no classroom activity is good or bad in and of itself; its value is created by the purpose that the teacher has assigned it.’ In restorying this ‘a-ha’ moment, Pedro now described himself as a teacher and his teaching as “a lot more responsive.” Jacob expressed interest in Pedro’s current views on “classroom activity not being good or bad” by opening up a space for Pedro to further explore what he meant by this phrase.

*Pedro: So, what, what happened to me after this, you know, like, if **I look at the teacher was before the teacher I became after that was I became a lot more responsive**, I would say,*

*Jacob: That’s interesting ... The classroom activity not being good or bad in and of itself? How do you view that? That’s really interesting.*

*Pedro: As long as you’re teaching and students are learning, it is a matter of time. Sometimes activities are going to be more passive, less engaging, **but they’re trying to accomplish something**, you know, and **as long as you accomplish that**, and as soon as accomplish that, you’re good, right? Just vary the diet, right? Just don’t use the same thing over and over again. **But yeah, yeah, Nothing’s good or bad.***

*Jacob: Absolutely. I think that’s a really important insight.*

Through their mutual engagement in dialogic restorying, Jacob and Pedro were able to work over several instances in which Pedro experienced dramatic moments during his learning-to-teach experiences. As evident in the excerpts from his reflective writings Pedro was able to recognize his emotional struggles and even articulated their origins. Teaching/tutoring in this new instructional context with different instructional expectations created multiple instances in which Pedro recognized dramatic moments but also saw them as transformative in his development as a language teacher. Once again, engagement in dialogic restorying functioned as a tool-and-result activity as Pedro was able to recognize how his previously storied learning-to-teach experiences served as a source for his current understanding of teaching L2 writing. Throughout the interview, Jacob consistently affirmed Pedro’s expressions of emotions, offering both affiliation and support for what Pedro was experiencing. And finally, critical to the responsiveness of Jacob’s mediational moves was his knowledge of the expectations in the three praxis-oriented courses, the nature of Pedro’s EFL teaching history, and their shared understanding of specific VSCT concepts.

### **Zhen – Articulating the Value of Dialogic Restorying**

One teacher-participant explicitly mentioned the developmental value of engaging in dialogic restorying. In a brief exchange with Jacob, Zhen – a Chinese national with virtually no teaching experience prior to enrolling in the MA TESL program – complimented the selection of “important points” that are important to her now and in the future. Prompted by Jacob’s question of “what impact does it have to recall these moments?” Zhen indicated that the selected excerpts “helped me to recall some important moments,” reminding her of “some very original thoughts in my teaching experience,” and the importance of not forgetting what she learned from her previous experiences.

*Zhen: But I think you did a very good job on going through all my like reflections and records. And you really pick up some important points there. Because when I read these excerpts here, it also helped me to recall some important moments.*

*Jacob: Yeah, and yeah, just one more question. So, in recalling those important moments, why is that important to you? Like, what impact does it have to recall these moments?*

*Zhen: Um, because it reminds me of some very original thoughts, in my teaching experience, and until now I still think they are valuable to my future teaching. Um, yeah, um, because, you*

*know, if you do something for a long time, then it might become a habit. And people may not spend a lot of time to think about how can I improve it? Is there anything I can, like? I'm like, any change I can make, to, to like, to promote my, my teaching, and the understanding between me and my students? Um, yeah. Um, so going back to these records, reminds me that, don't forget this. Like amazing things I learned from my previous experience, and I think they are, they are still very helpful for me.*

In his response, Jacob reiterated the developmental value of engaging in dialogic restorying but also emphasized its dual contributions, as both a research methodology for gaining access to teacher cognitions as well as a tool for teachers to both work over and come to terms with, in concrete [physical] ways, the trajectory of their own professional development. After an hour of collaborative dialogue on Zhen's previously storied learning-to-teach experiences, Jacob articulated the value of dialogic restorying in revisiting and continuing to work over the dramatic turning points that shape the trajectory of Zhen's development.

*Jacob: Yeah, I think there's a lot of truth in what you just said, right? ...there's value to be found in going back to these critical moments, these kinds of dramatic moments because I think what it does is it makes it makes it apparent, right makes it physical, right in the case of this word doc it shows your development to where you are now, like, because a lot of times it's hard to feel development, right? Because we're always ourselves, right? We're, you know, we live moment to moment to moment. But having something like this allows you to go back and to realize how having these moments, this drama, I would call it, how this makes you the teacher that you are today.*

## Discussion

For teacher educators and researchers interested in creating structured mediational spaces that foster L2 teacher professional development over the career span, dialogic restorying, as a research methodology, offers tremendous potential to trace the developmental trajectory of teacher cognition over time, while simultaneously creating opportunities to provoke further development for teachers after they have left the confines of their professional degree program. While much continuing professional development for L2 teachers includes content-focused workshops, themed conferences, and/or in-service programming that focuses on the present or even the future, it is rare that L2 teachers would return to past learning-to-teach experiences for further reflection and contemplation. Yet, our VSCT stance compels us to include teachers' histories, and in particular dramatic moments from their learning-to-teach experiences, as being valuable sites for further teacher development. Additionally, as teacher educators, dialogic restorying with former teachers enabled us to better understand the concepts, experiences, and/or realizations that traveled with them from our coursework into their early professional years and potentially becoming important facets of their L2 pedagogy.

An overarching theme that ran through the written reflections of Wei and Pedro was confronting and grappling with a sense of novicehood throughout their learning-to-teach experiences. They experienced different tensions and contradictions resulting, in part, from entering an instructional context that had vastly different curricular expectation and pedagogical approaches to L2 teaching than their EFL settings. Yet, returning to these dramatic moments created a safe space for them to uncover the origins of their emotional responses to these experiences (*perezhivanie*), to re-trace their own developmental trajectory, and re-construct alternative understandings of those earlier learning-to-teach experiences in relation to the teachers they are today. For Wei and Pedro, recognizing their own personal histories and recalling their shifting conceptions of L2 teaching

continue to shape how they have come to understand themselves as teachers and their teaching activity in their present instructional contexts. Additionally, the quality and character of the responsive mediation offered by Jacob played a key role in ensuring that the interview had developmental value for these teachers. Asking probing but informed questions, making connections between concrete experience and theoretical concepts, indicating affiliation, and supporting expressions of emotion all contributed to the dialogic nature of the interview and the assurance of its developmental value for the teacher-participants involved.

## **Conclusion**

For those wanting to take up and adapt the methodology of dialogic restorying in their instructional contexts, there are essential design features that open up the potential for this novel research methodology to be developmentally relevant for teacher-participants and to yield rich insights into teacher cognitions and professional development over time. First, access to and deep familiarity with teacher-participants' written reflective records, which are commonly kept by teachers as a requirement of their professional coursework, are critical to creating structured mediational spaces in which teachers can engage in dialogic restorying. In this sense, dialogic restorying can be carried out with teachers across various stages of professionalism (i.e., pre-service and in-service teachers) provided that they have access to their reflection artifacts. The iterative process of data analysis conducted for each teacher across the two years of data helped ensure the selection of written reflection excerpts that represented turning points in each teacher's learning-to-teach experiences, thus providing the foundation for rich dialogue to unfold between the teacher-participant and interviewer. Moreover, being aware of the instructional design features and theoretical rationale of the professional coursework that the teachers experienced is paramount in sustaining the quality of dialogic restorying activity. Finally, informed by a coherent VSCT tool-and-result stance, dialogic restorying is not a research instrument designed to extract what teachers think, know, and feel but a site of collaborative intellectual activity in which developmental value can be found and cultivated to the benefit of both teacher-participants and teacher educators.

More generally, we contend that there is promise in considering how the VSCT stance undergirding dialogic restorying can be applied in SLTC research methodologies. When research encounters are viewed as opportunities to not only document and describe teachers' cognitions but also as structured mediational spaces with the potential to lead and provoke teacher development, we can come closer to embracing the power of a praxis orientation in SLTC. And as Vygotsky reminds us that there is no endpoint to human development, we too find that there is considerable scope to consider how the SLTC enterprise can innovate in its ongoing examination of L2 teacher cognitions, both inside the practices of language teacher education, and perhaps more urgently needed, across the careers of L2 teachers.

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