# Re-conceptualizing Teachers' Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development

## Re-caracterización de la indagación narrativa de los docentes como desarrollo profesional

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We offer a more nuanced characterization of teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development (Johnson & Golombek, 2002) by grounding our definition of and empirical research on teachers' narrative inquiry from a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective. Our goal is to reaffirm our belief in the educational value of teachers' narrative inquiry as "systematic exploration that is conducted *by* teachers and *for* teachers through their own stories and language" (p. 6), while empirically documenting the crucial role of teacher educators in creating mediational spaces, dialogic interactions, and pedagogical tools for teachers' narrative inquiry to flourish as professional development. It is also our goal to re-conceptualize teachers' narrative inquiry as unbounded by time and place, and as a more fluid and emerging process.

*Key words*: Language teacher professional development, teachers' narrative inquiry, Vygotskian sociocultural theory.

Ofrecemos una caracterización más detallada del uso de las indagaciones narrativas de los docentes para su desarrollo profesional (Johnson y Golombek, 2002), para lo cual basamos nuestra definición de y la investigación empírica sobre la investigación narrativa de los docentes en la teoría sociocultural de Vygostky. Nuestro propósito consiste en reafirmar nuestra convicción acerca del valor educativo de la investigación narrativa de los docentes como una "exploración sistemática que es conducida *por* y *para* los docentes por medio de sus propios relatos y lenguaje" (p. 6). Asimismo, documentamos de manera empírica el papel crucial de los formadores de docentes para crear espacios mediacionales, las interacciones dialógicas y herramientas pedagógicas que promuevan la indagación narrativa de los docentes como forma de desarrollo profesional. También pretendemos re-conceptualizar la indagación narrativa de los docentes como un proceso sin limitantes de tiempo y espacio, y con una naturaleza fluida y emergente.

*Palabras clave*: desarrollo profesional de docentes de lenguas, indagación narrativa de los docentes, teoría sociocultural de Vygotsky.

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## Introduction

*PROFILE* has published language classroom research conducted by experienced and novice teachers, teacher educators, and teacher researchers over the last seventeen years. Their advocacy of teacher inquiry and professional development parallels support within language teacher education (LTE), in which teacher inquiry has been documented to be a resource through which language teachers can become cognizant of and develop their thinking about teaching, and how that thinking is materialized in instructional practices and interactions with students in specific settings (Barkhuizen, 2013; Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014; Freeman, 1998). Similarly, it has been 15 years since we published our book arguing for and exemplifying language teacher research, what we called *teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development* (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). We grounded our conceptualization of *narrative inquiry* in John Dewey's (1933) *theory of experience*. Dewey argued that for experience to become *educative* rather than *habit*, students needed to engage in a *reflective cycle*—a process of active, persistent, and careful observation, consideration, and reflection; thus, to engage in that cycle, students needed to adopt a mind-set exhibiting open-mindedness (seeking alternatives), responsibility (recognizing consequences), and wholeheartedness (continual self-examination). Using Dewey's theory and the examples of various language teachers' narrative inquiry, we argued for teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development because of the potential changes that self-examination can produce:

> inquiry into experience enables teachers to act with foresight. It gives them increasing control over their thoughts and actions; grants their experiences enriched, deepened meaning; and enables them to be more thoughtful and mindful of their work. (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, pp. 6-7)

The (re)constructive process (self-study and narrating) and product (enhanced knowledge and written/spoken narrative) of self-inquiry can enable teachers to (re)interpret their experiences as teachers and to build local knowledge situated in their classrooms and contexts, and with their students and communities. Knowledge generated as a result of teacher inquiry is characterized as constituent of *located* teacher education (Johnson, 2006) because it is socially, culturally, historically, and institutionally situated in and responsive to teachers' professional worlds and needs. At that time, questioning the predominance of researcher knowledge located outside the schools, teachers, and teaching that it was intended to shape, we argued that teacher research merited a place alongside researcher research. Although we still advocate for this position, in this article we intend to call attention to the pivotal role that expert mediation, by skilled teacher educators acting intentionally and systematically, plays in teacher development through narrative inquiry.

As an alternative to research done for teachers by researchers, we defined *teachers' narrative inquiry* as "systematic exploration that is conducted *by* teachers and *for* teachers through their own stories and language" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 6).[1] Because we focused our lens on the agency of and value for teachers inquiring into their own teaching, we downplayed two important issues. First, the teacher narratives we have published by themselves (Johnson & Golombek, 2002) or as data analyzed in our research (for example, Johnson & Golombek, 2016) were typically initiated as part of an institutional requirement, including projects for courses, MA research projects or theses, and research for promotion. We recognize that many teachers continually seek to improve their teaching. However, we question whether teachers actually engage in systematic self-inquiry if they have not been socialized into the cultural

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1   Our initial concept of teachers' narrative inquiry has typically been shorted to *narrative inquiry*. As a result, we are often grouped incorrectly with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who describe narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research that uses various tools that elicit and illustrate the storied lives of teachers and the way teachers use stories to make sense of their experiences.

practice of doing narrative inquiry, or initiate it on their own or with others due to factors such as lack of time, limited institutional resources, or no locally supportive communities. Second, as part of an institutional requirement, teachers conducting narrative inquiry generally experience different forms of mediation, e.g., reading an academic book or article and interacting with a peer or teacher educator, throughout the endeavor. In focusing on the agency that teachers' narrative inquiry energizes, we downplayed the instrumental role that expert mediation can play. Our more recent work, grounded in a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective on teacher learning (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2011a; Johnson & Golombek, 2016), has created a contradiction between our goal of having teachers take control over (and have the field recognize the legitimacy of) their own professional development and the fact that by doing so, we may have excluded or not fully acknowledged the critical role of expert mediation that occurs within most professional development contexts where teachers engage in narrative inquiry. Critiquing and re-conceptualizing these ideas through the lens of Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986, 1987), we hope to extend our argument about the educational value of teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development. We argue that teachers' narrative inquiry—if conducted under the guise of discovery learning or even Dewey's experiential learning—runs the risk of reinforcing what Vygotsky called *everyday concepts*, knowledge that is "unsystematic, empirical, not conscious, and often wrong" (Karpov, 2014, p. 94). For teachers' narrative inquiry to be professional development, that is for teachers to transform their thinking and doing of teaching through narrative inquiry, systematic and intentional mediation by teacher educators needs to be acknowledged and made explicit. By engaging, mediating, and socializing teachers in the cultural practice of narrative inquiry, they may gain understandings into the processes of professional development. In this way, we reiterate our

conviction that LTE matters (Johnson, 2015; Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

In this article, we offer a more nuanced characterization of the potential of teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development by grounding our definition of and empirical research on teachers' narrative inquiry from a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective. Our goal is to reaffirm our belief in the educational value of teachers' narrative inquiry as "systematic exploration that is conducted *by* teachers and *for* teachers through their own stories and language" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 6), but also to empirically document the crucial role of teacher educators in creating mediational spaces, dialogic interactions, and pedagogical tools for teacher narrative inquiry as professional development to flourish. Expert mediation is at the core of harnessing the transformative power of both written and oral narrative in ways that promote the development of teacher/teaching expertise. It is also our goal to re-conceptualize teachers' narrative inquiry as unbounded by time and place, and as a more fluid and emerging process.

## The Transformative Power of Narrative Activity

In our work characterizing the functional role of narrative, we argued that the transformative power of engagement in narrative activity lies in its ability to ignite cognitive processes that can foster second language (L2) teacher professional development (Johnson & Golombek, 2011b). We thus positioned narrative activity as a mediational means, arguing that:

> The act of narrating, as a cultural activity, influences how one comes to understand what one is narrating about. The telling or retelling (either oral or written) of an experience entails a complex combination of description, explanation, analysis, interpretation, and construal of one's private reality as it is brought into the public sphere. (p. 490)

We also argued that for narrative activity to function as a mediational means in fostering teacher professional

development, it entails three interrelated and often overlapping functions: narrative as externalization, narrative as verbalization, and narrative as systematic examination.

When narrative activity functions as externalization, it allows teachers to express their understandings and feelings by giving voice to their past, present, and even imagined future experiences. Narrative as externalization fosters introspection, explanation, and sense-making, while simultaneously opening teachers' thoughts and feelings to social influence. Teachers developing awareness of what they are experiencing, thinking, and feeling may represent an initial step in cognitive development. However, if it is not connected to a change in teaching activity, self-awareness can be cognitively and emotionally detrimental in that teachers are aware that they need to change their teaching activity but are unable to do so.

When engagement in narrative activity functions as verbalization, it assists teachers as they attempt to internalize the *academic concepts* that they are exposed to in their teacher education programs. Narrative as verbalization allows teachers to use *academic concepts* deliberately and systematically to reexamine, rename, and reorient their everyday experiences. If internalized, *academic concepts*, "have the potential to function as psychological tools, which enable teachers to have greater awareness and control over their cognitive processes, and in turn, enable them to engage in more informed ways of teaching in varied instructional contexts and circumstances" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011b, p. 493). For narrative activity to function as verbalization, the *academic concepts* must be situated within the settings and circumstances of teachers' professional worlds and realized through the concrete goal-directed activities of actual teaching. When engagement in narrative activity functions as verbalization, it becomes a potent mediational tool that supports teachers' *thinking in concepts* (Karpov, 2014) as they make sense of their

teaching experiences and begin to regulate both their thinking and teaching practices.

Narrative as systematic examination represents the procedures, or parameters, for how teachers engage in narrative activity. In describing narrative as systematic examination, we highlighted that when teachers use narrative as a vehicle for inquiry, *how* they engage in narrative activity will fundamentally shape *what* they learn. Therefore, different forms of narrative activity will entail different types of systematic examination, ultimately having different consequences for learning and development. For example, the parameters associated with writing a learning-to-teach history might focus the teacher's attention more on the (re)construction of self as a teacher, whereas the parameters of an action research project might focus the teacher's attention more on the specifics of classroom activity. These sorts of narrative activity and their parameters are cultural practices in language teacher education, so the process of inquiry is not something that teachers naturally do but are socialized into doing. If we carry out our logic about how what is learned is fundamentally shaped by how it is learned, then what teachers learn by being mediated solely by everyday concepts in the process of narrative inquiry is going to be markedly different than if mediated by *academic concepts* and expert mediation. And mediation by a teacher educator becomes paramount.

## Two Teacher Narrative Inquiry Projects

As concrete examples of how we have re-conceptualized teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development, we offer two distinct narrative inquiry projects that were recently completed by novice English as a second language (ESL) teachers enrolled in a Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language (MA TESL) Program and an Undergraduate Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Certificate Program. We have selected these

two projects because they highlight the unbounded nature of narrative inquiry when it takes place over time and place, they identify the various mediational spaces, dialogic interactions (written and spoken), and pedagogical tools that teacher educators utilize with teachers as they engage in various sorts of narrative activity, and they document the crucial role of teacher educators in providing teachers with mediational means and tools to support the development of novice teachers' teacher/teaching expertise.

### "Teach off your students, not at them": A Teacher's Narrative Inquiry Into Teacher Questioning Patterns

As an example of narrative inquiry as an unbounded activity that can span over time and place, Kong (2017) traced how her own teacher questioning patterns changed over the course of a two-year MA TESL program. The parameters of her narrative inquiry included three major teaching experiences that spanned the 1st, 2nd and 4th semesters of the program. The data sources she examined originated out of each of these teaching experiences: video recordings of her teaching, stimulated recall sessions about her teaching, written reflections, reflective teaching journal entries, lesson plans, and other field notes. The focus of her systematic examination was to trace how and why she shifted from simple knowledge-checking questions and clarification requests which elicited minimal student participation, to greater acknowledgment of student contributions and more genuine open-ended questions which fostered greater student engagement and increased opportunities for student language learning. In addition, her narrative inquiry highlights the various mediational spaces, dialogic interactions, and pedagogical tools that shaped the shifts that emerged in her questioning patterns over time. The final product of her narrative inquiry was a formal thesis (MA paper). It included an overview of a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective on teacher learning, a literature review on how teacher

questioning patterns have been conceptualized and empirically studied, methods of data collection and analysis, the overall findings, and implications for LTE pedagogy.

During the 1st semester of the program, Kong, a Chinese speaker of English, participated in an extended team teaching project that was embedded in a TESL Methods course. The project requires teams of teachers to observe one session of an ESL course they would eventually teach, collaboratively create a lesson plan to teach required course content, practice teaching their lesson in the Methods course (video-recorded), teaching the actual lesson in the ESL course (video-recorded), participate in a stimulated recall session with the Methods course instructor (audio-recorded), and write an individual reflection paper about the entire project. In Kong's narrative inquiry, she examined how each of these mediational spaces offered different forms of mediation that shaped her emerging understanding of her questioning patterns.

While analyzing transcripts of her actual teaching, Kong found that she relied heavily on pre-planned teacher questions and responded to students with the traditional three-part initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) interactional sequence (Mehan, 1985). As just one example, in Excerpt 1, the students are presenting oral summaries of a children's story they had just read. Their summaries were to include key elements of a summary: who, where, what, why, and when.

### Excerpt 1

1. S1: (presenting summary of story 1)
2. T: *so the question is where's the, did the story take, take place?* (1.8) Is that included in the summary? Is that? so (facing S1) do you know where is the story taken place? you can guess
3. S1: uh, (4.0) uhm…maybe in a farm?
4. T: *yeah, yeah, yes, it's fine, ok, let's welcome the next presenter.*
(Actual Teach Video 12:25 – 16:56)

Much to her dismay, her questioning patterns generated little or no response from the students. During the stimulated recall session, the teacher educator encouraged her to articulate her understanding of her own questioning patterns ("*now how did you decide what question to ask, did you have that pre-prepared? or did you listen and then decide*"). This interaction functions as a kind of narrative as externalization as the teacher educator encourages her to introspect and explain what happened, opening her up to social influence. After externalizing how her team had planned for this portion of the lesson ("*we planned our questions based on what we thought they would say*") and recognizing that her interactions with her students did not go as planned ("*yeah, but actually it turn out, uh, it not work well*"), the teacher educator then asked Kong to consider the pedagogical value of using more open-ended, genuine questions by encouraging her to take up and try out the teacher educator's repeated use of the pedagogical tool, "teach off your students, not at them". In her reflection paper, Kong wrote:

### Excerpt 2

After each student presented his or her summary, I asked questions to them, which are pre-designed and have a connection with the presentation part. However, *the actual situation was that only two students managed the time limits and provided the whole idea of the story…I should give another creative question based on what they have provided in their summary rather than follow the pre-designed routine…*to be *able to interact effectively with students*, [I need] *to connect what students provide to the current topic and to "teach off students but not teach at them."* (Extended Team Teaching Project - Reflection Paper 11/2015)

The extended team teaching project, by design, created multiple mediational spaces for Kong to externalize her understanding of her questioning patterns. During the stimulated recall session, as they watched the video recording of Kong teaching, the teacher

educator intentionally inserted the pedagogical tool, "teach off your students, not at them," to assist Kong in re-conceptualizing her epistemic stance as a teacher and develop a more conscious awareness of what constitutes interactive teaching. In Kong's reflection, we see the effect of narrative as verbalization, as she imagines what she could have done through the pedagogical tool "teach off your students, not at them."

Kong's developing awareness of the quality and character of her questioning patterns spilled over into the 2nd semester of the program, when she served as a volunteer teacher at a local non-profit adult literacy program. She collected 5 video-recorded lessons of her co-teaching a beginning-level oral communication skills course which became the basis of a research project she conducted for a graduate course (APLNG 587) she was taking on theory and research in L2 teacher education. When analyzing those transcripts, she found that some remnants of the IRE interactional sequence remained, however, she found herself becoming conscious of and was better able to engage in meaning-negotiations with these adult students. In fact, because the students had very limited English language proficiency she recalled feeling forced to ask for clarification, reformulate students' responses, and co-construct ideas with her students. In the research project that she completed for her graduate course, she wrote:

### Excerpt 3

This excerpt shows my awareness of students' needs and my emerging competence in providing feedback based on students' responses rather than follow a pre-prepared routine. I am better at able to "teach off students" …In short, I gained greater control over using questions to shape the overall learning environment. (Course Project for APLNG 587 5/2016)

Interestingly, by analyzing transcripts of her interactions with her students she claimed that it was her students' responses to her questions that pushed

her to use more interactive questioning patterns. Thus, in this second teaching experience, it was engagement in the actual activity of teaching and analyzing transcripts of her own teaching that mediated both her thinking and her emerging ability to alter the quality and character of her own questioning patterns.

During the 4th and final semester of the MA program she participated in a 15-week practicum with a mentor teacher in a freshman English composition course. She kept a weekly reflective teaching journal, observed and co-taught a range of pedagogical activities, and planned and taught three autonomous lessons. The practicum supervisor conducted three teaching observations, video recorded her teaching, and provided her with field notes. In addition, she discussed her teaching plans with her mentor teacher, wrote formal lesson plans, and reflected on her own teaching based on field notes. Her analysis of transcripts of her questioning patterns throughout the practicum identified shifts in how she responded to student contributions. Once again, she did find evidence that she continued to employ the IRE interactional sequence at times during instruction. She described these instances as:

### Excerpt 4

…initiating knowledge-checking questions in line 1-2 "*so can you give me: an example that is (.) kind of a piece of writing that is more casual,*" the students responded to the questions accordingly in line 3 "*journal*" and I evaluated their answers using repetition in line 4 "*journal*" and acknowledgements such as "*uh…uhm*" in line 4, and "*ok*" in line 8. (Narrative Inquiry 5/2017)

However, later in this same lesson the turn taking pattern unfolds differently as her use of more genuine, open-ended questions created spaces for students to elaborate on their own and each other's contributions. She verbalized this shift through the academic concepts of IRE and IRF (initiation-response-feedback) interactional sequences, re-naming her teaching activity and seeing its

pedagogical value in supporting student understanding. As she reflected on this lesson she was able to articulate a sound pedagogical rationale for asking more open-ended questions and recognized that it was the students' responses that were mediating how she thought about and began to enact her questioning patterns.

### Excerpt 5

s3 comments by saying "*it depends*" in line 17 and then I follow up with another question to help students understand that a speech can be more casual or formal based on different audiences, in essence shifting the turn taking pattern from the IRE to the IRF sequence (Wells, 1986). I am providing more explicit and specific questions in lines 20, 21, and 25 trying to support students' understanding of the relationship between the audience and the writing/speech style and promote greater student participation. (Narrative Inquiry 5/2017)

Evidence of this was confirmed in an entry in her reflective teaching journal, where she had expressed her intention to teach in a more "interactive way" and had recognized an instance when she seized on an opportunity to encourage more student discussion.

### Excerpt 6

This week I had my first practice teaching in the class…*I wanted to practice the interactive way of teaching, encouraging more student-teacher interaction and students-students interaction*…I designed guiding questions to encourage more students' talk… While I was confirming their answer, *I was also seeking a point to expand the classroom interaction*. There was one student (s5) who gave me the answer of "a speech" when I asked for the example of formal writing. I made a quick decision that this could be a moment encouraging more discussion. (Practicum Reflective Teaching Journal, 2/2017)

She went on to explain that an assignment she had completed in a graduate class had also mediated her understanding of the IRE/IRF interactional sequence as well as allowed her to project how she might use

student contributions in the future to encourage more peer discussion.

### Excerpt 7

Coincidentally, *I had done a transcription analysis using IRE/IRF interactional sequence for APLNG 482* this week…Through the analysis of the interaction between the students and me…I realized that I handled well for students' answers…Although I provided the chance for other students to think of whether that example is good or not, it still became the interaction between that student (s3) who answered the question and me. *Now, I would think of using that as an opportunity to encourage peer discussion.* For example, let s2 to explain why a speech may or may not be the formal writing, or let students to have a short discussion with their partners and then get back together. There are different ways *to encourage more student-student interaction. That can guide the students to think independently instead of doing all the thinking work for them.* (Practicum Reflective Teaching Journal, 2/2017)

Analyzing her own question patterns for a graduate course (APLNG 482), engaging in actual teaching during the practicum, and writing a reflective teaching journal entry about both experiences worked in consort to mediate her emerging understandings of her questioning patterns. These mediational spaces, dialogic interactions, and reflective activities also allowed her to construct a rationale for her present and future teaching activities and consciously pay attention to how she might "teach off her students" in the future.

Overall, her narrative inquiry enabled her to trace how her conceptualization of interactive teaching emerged and to identify the mediational means that enabled her to enact questioning patterns that foster greater opportunities for student participation and engagement. In the conclusion of her narrative inquiry she wrote:

### Excerpt 8

Besides my development in better controlling classroom interaction, my conceptualization of teaching became more

complete and unique. Similar to what Vygotsky (1987) suggested that the internalization of academic concepts does not come easily or immediately but rather follows a "twisting path", *it took me over one year to gradually internalize the pedagogical tool "teach off your students, not at them" into a psychological tool that guided and regulated my conceptual thinking and teaching practices. Initially, I was just aware of the tool but not able to perform accordingly during my first teaching practice. Later, I became more consciously aware of this tool and gained a deeper understanding of interactive teaching which collectively formed my own conceptualization of teaching as using guiding questions to encourage students to think independently.* (Narrative Inquiry, 5/2017)

To echo Kong's point, Vygotsky's (1978) notion that the transformation from external forms of social interaction (*interpsychological*) to internalized psychological tools for thinking (*intrapsychological*) is not direct but mediated. As she became more consciously aware of this tool, she was not only able to use guiding questions to foster greater student engagement, she was also able to imagine her use of guiding questions in future instructional activities. Kong's narrative inquiry traces what this mediated process looks and feels like for a novice teacher. It also highlights the critical role that teacher educators and interactions with students play in mediating novice teacher thinking and doing. As she concludes, she appears highly aware of this developmental process:

### Excerpt 9

*I found that narrative activity such as writing down my thoughts in a reflection journal and verbalizing my ideas in a stimulated recall session, are mediational tools that function as externalization that allows me to connect the actual teaching practice with scientific concepts that I learned in other contexts*; on the other hand, *in-class interaction with students is another type of mediational means that promotes and facilitates the transformative process of internalization and the emergence of true concepts.* (Narrative Inquiry, 5/2017)

## From "Telling Students" to "Allowing a Better Co-construction of Language": Revising and Annotating Lesson Plans as a Form of Narrative Inquiry

A second example of narrative inquiry as an unbounded activity that can span over time and place is Herman's revision of a lesson plan he had taught during his 16-week teaching internship in the Undergraduate TESL Certificate Program. This was the final assignment of the internship in which interns were asked to "revise that lesson plan according to the range of mediational means (emphasis original) you experienced: what happened in class, what was discussed in your tiny talks, what my feedback was to your tiny talk, or any other feedback I gave you/interaction you had with me" (TSL 4940 Final Assignment). Teaching interns were to document the changes made, reasons for changes, and the mediational means that fostered those changes. In Herman's case, his narrative inquiry takes on a very different form from the traditional final written chronicle that Kong wrote. However, it still fits into our proposed re-conceptualization of narrative inquiry as professional development because in engaging in narrative activity and then reflecting on it in systematic and intentional ways while being mediated, Herman traces his development. The final product of Herman's narrative inquiry is a series of interconnected narrative annotations he writes in the margins of his revised lesson plan, the final requirement of the internship.

Herman was in his last semester as an undergraduate, and co-taught an advanced listening and speaking class for international Visiting Scholars. Though the lesson plan revision (future) centered on a previously taught lesson (past), the parameters of his narrative inquiry discussed in this section consist of three mediational spaces that were ongoing over the semester: "tiny talks" (Zoshak, 2016), or post-teaching de-briefing sessions, audiotaped after each class with his co-teacher;

interactions with the teacher educator; and his actual teaching of the lesson. In his systematic examination, he traced the revisions he made in his lesson plan as a result of teaching it and his pedagogical reasoning for doing so. He does this by re-voicing the pedagogical tool introduced by the teacher educator of "co-constructing student understandings through goal-oriented activities" as he attempts to move away from a teacher-fronted, transmission-style of teaching. His narrative inquiry highlights the various mediational spaces, dialogic interactions, and pedagogical tools that shaped how he systematically re-examined his original lesson plan. We present two of Herman's revisions, which are expressed as brief narrative annotations (margin comments) of re-storied pasts, his current pedagogical reasoning, and imagined futures.

In the original version of the lesson plan, Herman's first activity was intended to orient students to the instructional focus of the day—word-level stress—by connecting it to an instructional focus from one of his previous lessons—American English allophones of /t/. Though this seems as though it could be a constructive way to connect new with old information, the activity did not go well. He deleted this activity in his revised lesson plan and created a new one in its place:

**Excerpt 10**
**Conversation Model**
- Co-teacher and I have a conversation about a surprising experience one of us had, ask ss to listen for the words that we emphasize
- ss will have a handout of the conversation, and will circle the words that they hear that are stressed
- Ask ss what kind of words were stressed *verb/noun/adjective/preposition/content/function?*
- Discuss that this is called sentence level stress
- Ask ss where else stress occurs *where else is emphasis important besides in a sentence?*
(Revised Lesson Plan)

In his narrative annotations (margin comments) below, Herman re-stories how his actual teaching of the lesson (non-italicized) mediated his new understandings, his imagined activity (italicized), in a brief but pointed account.

### Excerpt 11

For the warm up I did, I tried leading a discussion relating the previous lesson, which was the sounds of T, to word level stress. While it has some application because the different sounds of t are affected by word level stress, it just confused ss and made them think that we were still talking about sounds of t. I loosely tied it to stress, but I feel that they were not very responsive to this type of discussion where I was more or less telling them what was important. It completely lacked discovery and critical thinking on the ss part. *This conversation modeling hopefully would get them thinking about stress at the sentence level or just in general, with the last part directing their attention to word level stress specifically, which is the main focus of the lesson. This is also a much more pointed warm-up, as it has a clear direction that the ss need to pay attention to and it allows them to form their own ideas of emphasis, and then going over it together allows for more co-construction.* (Revised Lesson Plan – Margin Comments)

Herman re-stories his lesson on word-level stress by describing how even though the allophones of /t/ (content of a previous lesson) are connected to word stress, his attempts to connect it to the new content left students "*confused*" and made them think the instructional focus was on the allophones of /t/. This narrative activity (margin comments on a revised lesson plan) acts as *externalization*, giving voice to his past, present, and imagined future, as he explains and makes sense of what happened in that lesson. Herman articulates that it was problematic that he was "*telling*" students why the topic was important rather than engaging them in activities in which they could construct and/or express what they understood about the topic ("*It completely lacked discovery and critical thinking on the ss part*"). Herman appropriates the teacher educator's

pedagogical tool ("co-constructing understandings rather than telling") thus, re-storying through this tool as *narrative as verbalization*. Herman then narrates an imagined future by explaining the pedagogical reasoning behind the revisions ("*much more pointed warm-up*", "*it has a clear direction*"). Moreover, he articulates that the activity would allow "*for more co-construction*" of meaning by students of the content focus. Herman's re-storying of his past activity as "telling" and imaging his future activity as "co-construction" indicates his taking up the teacher educator's mediation throughout the semester.

In the second revision we present, Herman introduces the tools he would use in an imagined future lesson: "Word Level Stress Guidelines" (wsg) and "Word Level Stress Pretest" (wsp). The wsg is a handout that conveyed information about some basic word-level stress patterns, for example, for two-syllable verbs and nouns; the second item, the wsp, is a brief diagnostic tool to ascertain students' knowledge about word-level stress patterns. Though he had lectured about the wsg and tried to gauge their understandings as a whole class by asking questions during his lecture, he had not formally assessed their individual understanding of word-level stress. In describing what happened in that class and what he could do differently, Herman is again re-storying the past (non-italicized) while detailing an imagined future (italicized) in his narrative annotations.

### Excerpt 12

I did these in class together, *but should have done them much like my ED Endings LP*. Going over them in class was an interactive way to lead and construct their ideas of stress, but did not allow for them to construct their ideas for themselves. *For the Pretest, instead of going over them in class together, a pretest activity would have allowed them to make the decisions on their own, showing me how they thought about word level stress, then I could have gone over their answers, allowing a better co-construction of language.* For the guideline, I spent a lot of time telling them about these "rules" to follow, *rather than just giving them a handout to look at later. If I*

*had done this, I could have spent more time honing in on the main focus of the lesson, which was word level stress on words that serve as both nouns and verbs.* In all, both the pretest and the guidelines portion was just me leading the group, making them do listen and repeat and asking them if they understood or like having them guess what the stress pattern was. *If I had spent more time just doing a diagnostic, I could have honed in more on the specific features I wanted them to pay attention to*, rather than have them play this guessing game throughout class which was ultimately a waste and did not actually show any assessment of their comprehension. (Revised Lesson Plan – Margin Comments)

In his comments in the margin of his revised lesson plan, Herman re-stories how he could have used the wsg differently and implemented the wsp as his first activity, describing what happened in that class (*I did these in class together*) juxtaposed with what he would do differently (*but should have done them much like my ED Endings LP*). In reimaging this lesson, he references his use of a diagnostic tool that he had used in a previous lesson on the phonetic realization of -ed endings, which serves as a kind of model for what he could do in the future. The use of assessment (or diagnostic) tools was a requirement whose purpose was explained on the internship syllabus: "This [the assessment tool you devise] will guide you as you create lesson plans based on what you perceive student understandings/needs to be" (TSL 4940 Syllabus, Spring 2017). Thus, from the beginning of the internship, the teacher educator had intentionally inserted the notion that interns should assess student understanding of instructional content before they taught it, so they could make their lesson content and activities more responsive to students.

In Excerpt 12, Herman also describes what he and the students did in class, as well as evaluates it, which supports how he revises the lesson. While the going over of the guidelines as a whole-class activity was "*interactive*", it did not enable students "*to construct their ideas for themselves*" because he was "*telling them the 'rules' to follow*", doing listen and repeat drills, doing

comprehension checks, and having students guess stress patterns. In re-storying this experience, he imagines what he could have done differently and identifies the pedagogical reasoning behind the changed activity. That is, giving them the pre-test activity ahead of time would have allowed Herman to *hone in* on students' understandings because it would show him *how they thought about word level stress*, and he could target their understandings: *then I could have gone over their answers, allowing a better co-construction of language*. Herman's successful use of an assessment tool in the previous -ed ending lesson and the teacher educator's emphasis on assessing students' pre-understandings mediate his understandings of what he did in the lesson, and what went awry, as well as what he could do and why in a future lesson to enhance his teaching of word-level stress.

While Herman mentions the pedagogical tool in his margin comments on his revised lesson plan, Herman and his teaching partner (TP) often use the pedagogical tool in the post-teaching reflections of their "tiny talks" (Zoshak, 2016). For example, in a lesson near the end of the semester, Herman and his teaching partner evaluate his instructional activity as being more in line with students co-constructing their understandings, described as "letting them grapple with it [the material]" more and identifying why, at some points, he needed to "tell" students for instructional reasons:

H: and there were some points where I like (2.0) just felt answering, (.5) the question, or *telling them*, (.5) *in terms of time sake*, t-to
TP: hm
H: *try to keep the lesson going*,
TP: hm
H: but I felt like I kinda like (1.) gave it to them more
(Tiny Talk 13 00:23 - 00:34)

Herman's revised lesson plan on word-level stress exemplifies teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development of a different form. His revising of the

lesson plan is a kind of systematic self-investigation in which he assesses his enactment of the lesson, evidencing different parameters of self-examination. He re-stories the past and imagines future activity through the various mediational spaces which the teacher educator had devised as part of the internship experience, expressing narrative as externalization and verbalization. Overall, Herman's narrative inquiry enabled him to trace how he could have shifted from "telling students" to engaging them in activities in which they "co-construct their understandings in goal-oriented activities" that foster greater opportunities for student participation and engagement.

### Summary

Though the final form of Kong's and Herman's narrative inquiries vary greatly, their narratives share the qualities of being emergent and unbounded by time and place. Their narrative activity occurs over time: in Kong's case, over two years; in Herman's, over sixteen weeks. Their narratives function as both externalization and verbalization as they try to make sense of what they experienced in their learning-to-teach experiences through engagement with the different pedagogical tools. Their narratives connect these distinct activities and moments in time, or mediational spaces, re-storying the past and imagining the future in what was then their present time. Nonetheless, their narrative activity entailed different types of systematic examination, ultimately having different consequences for learning and development. Notably, expert mediation can be identified as harnessing the transformative power of both written and oral narrative activity in ways that promote the development of teacher/teaching expertise. Kong begins "to teach off her students" as she uses questioning patterns that foster greater opportunities for student participation and engagement. Herman imagines instruction in which students are actively co-constructing their understandings of content through activity, rather than having him tell them the answers.

## Language Teachers' Narrative Activity Versus Narrative Inquiry

Language teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development takes time, envelops various people and places, takes place in particular institutional contexts and teacher education practices, and moves repeatedly between engagement in the activities of teaching and reflection on and expert-mediated reasoning about those activities. And this movement between activity and reflection/reasoning demarcates a critical feature of our re-conceptualization of teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development. As these teachers' narrative inquiry projects make clear, engagement in narrative activity, oral or written, with students or teacher educators, in graduate courses or reflective journals, influences how teachers come to understand themselves as teachers, their teaching, and their learning-to-teach experiences. The narrative activity that teachers engage in becomes the very entities they inquire into—for Kong, what kinds of questions do I ask? for Herman, how could I have taught this lesson differently? Engagement in narrative activity has the potential to ignite certain cognitive processes that can, with expert mediation, transform teachers' thinking and doing. On the other hand, engagement in narrative inquiry over time and place, enables teachers to trace their own development, as it is unfolding, and to highlight the mediational spaces, dialogic interactions, and pedagogical tools that foster it. As much as we still believe these narrative inquiry projects are done *for* teachers *by* teachers, our Vygotskian sociocultural epistemological stance requires that we position them as deeply embedded in institutional contexts and teacher education practices that mold both what and how teachers learn to teach. And what happens inside these contexts and practices matters. As we saw with both Kong's and Herman's narrative inquiry projects, we, as teacher educators, played a critical role in creating mediational spaces for them to engage in narrative activity. Practicing a

lesson, interacting during a stimulated recall session, re-envisioning a lesson plan, all constitute mediational spaces where we encouraged them to externalize their current understandings, to verbalize new ways of thinking and doing, to project what could be done in an imagined future, and to consider the consequences of their teaching practices on their students. Teachers may engage in narrative activity without engaging in narrative inquiry. However, engaging in narrative inquiry requires narrative activity, and within those spaces, we offered our expertise as teacher educators to help teachers critically analyze their teaching practices, to re-envision their future teacher selves, and to articulate theoretically and pedagogical sound reasons for their teaching practices. As Kong (2017) so aptly articulated: "*it took me over one year to gradually internalize the pedagogical tool 'teach off your students, not at them' into a psychological tool that guided and regulated my conceptual thinking and teaching practices.*" This process of gradual internalization is something that Herman also notes when he provides feedback to his co-teacher: "*I think it was still a little teacher fronted and I know it's just like something we both (laughs) have to work on*" (Tiny Talk #8 00:42-00:46).

As novice teachers, could Kong and Herman have reached these new levels of understanding without our assistance? Perhaps, but probably not. Internalizing pedagogical tools such as "teaching off your students" or "co-constructing with, rather than telling students" not only requires repeated and sustained attempts to enact them in instructional activity but mediation, such as providing alternative activities, voicing expert ways of saying things, and providing validation. Engaging with discovery learning can be a time consuming and misleading trial that reinforces a novice teacher's feeling of incompetence; moreover, the consequences for student learning are too important. As teacher educators, we have a responsibility to push our teachers' professional development within the brief time frame we have to work together to support the professional and emotional well-being of our teachers but also for their future students. We emphasize that narrative inquiry as professional development is a cultural practice, and as such, teachers need to be consciously aware of and immersed in the intentions, motives, and goals of this practice and the expert others' (probably teacher educators') mediation. And while we hope that experienced teachers continue to engage in narrative inquiry with expert others, including in collaboration with colleagues, we acutely recognize the conditions of the teaching profession that may be barriers.

## Concluding Remarks

How then do we best support teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development? By creating mediational spaces where teachers are supported by expert others as they engage in narrative activity. By providing systematic and intentional teacher educator mediation. By making explicit the intentions, motives, and goals of mediational spaces and offering mediation directed where individual teachers are at. By assisting teachers as they attempt to trace their own developing expertise in various ways. By recognizing that engagement in narrative inquiry is unbounded by time and place, is a fluid and emerging process, and shaped by expert mediation, the transformative power of narrative activity can help to promote teachers' professional development over time.

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