

DIALOGIC REFLECTION AND CULTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER  
EDUCATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Linda Harklau)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation consisting of three independent articles examines second language teacher education (SLTE) over the topics of pedagogy, mentorship, non-native second language teacher identity, and heritage language education. Following an introduction of how I came to this topic and related literature reviews, Chapter Two discusses the theoretical and practical application of Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, especially his concept of *Bildung* (self-cultivation,) to current SLTE pedagogy in relation to reflective practice. In Chapter Three, through critical reflection on my own mentoring practice with one of the second language teacher candidates, I will argue how important it is for teacher educators to be aware and to make effort to develop the dialogic quality of mentoring. Chapter Four, attends to a second language teacher candidate's narratives on his practicum experience with heritage language learners to examine the struggles he encountered as a non-native Spanish teacher. Finally, I conclude this study with a discussion of limitations of these articles and with implications regarding SLTE research and practice.

INDEX WORDS: Second language teacher education, Reflective practice, Philosophical hermeneutics, Mentoring, Non-native second language teacher, Heritage language education

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to “緣 (*en*)” (wondrous encounters and connections in the world) that brought me to where I am now.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

This study, as a collection of three articles, explores current second language teacher education (SLTE), especially the roles of reflective practice in teacher candidates' practicum experience. It has been a few decades since SLTE experienced a major theoretical shift from behaviorist to constructivist approaches in the early 1990s (Crandall, 2000). In this shift, reflective practice, an experiential learning theory, became influential and has been employed widely in SLTE in the U.S. since (Farrell, 2016; Richards, 2008; Tedick, 2013). However, although many studies have promoted the employment of reflective practice while demonstrating its effectiveness, my review of these studies also reveals that contemporary reflective practice often appears to have become reduced to a mere pedagogical method within the context of SLTE rather than an autonomous professional development practice. In this sense, there is a need to re-assess and re-conceptualize reflective practice as a pedagogical approach in SLTE in the U.S.

Also, as a result of this shift toward a process-oriented constructivist approach, SLTE started to regard the practicum experience as an opportunity for teacher candidates not only to try out pedagogical theories and practices they have learned in coursework but also to transform their understanding about teaching and learning through meaning-making in authentic teaching experiences (Richards & Nunan, 1990; Gebhard, 2009). Previous studies on second language practicum experiences after the shift have revealed that the teaching practicum significantly transforms teacher candidates' teaching theories and practices (e.g., Çapan, 2014; Gan, 2013;

Ng, Nicholas and Williams, 2010). Moreover, many of these studies have also reported that teacher candidates cope with both positive and negative emotions due to psychological and environmental factors (Poulou, 2007; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). However, while many studies have examined the second language teaching practicum experience, there is still much to be explored regarding the meanings teacher candidates make during their practicum experiences.

Given the need for further exploration of the complexities of teacher preparation as it intersects with practicum experiences and reflective practice, this dissertation examines several aspects of SLTE through three different articles. Specifically, the articles presented in this dissertation respectively focus on the following questions:

- 1) How can reflective practice in SLTE become conceptualized as teachers' career-long autonomous and self-cultivative practice?
- 2) What gaps exist in my own practice as a teacher educator and practicum supervisor in guiding a teacher candidate in our reflective conversation?
- 3) What struggles does a non-native Spanish teacher candidate encounter in his teaching practicum experience with heritage language learners (HLLs)?

In this chapter, I first introduce how I came to this topic through my career as a second language teacher and teacher educator. I then provide an overview of reflective practice and a review of how reflective practice has been conceptualized and implemented in SLTE. At the end of this chapter, I also provide an overview of both Dewey and Gadamer's theories of aesthetic experience as crucial background information relating to Chapter Two.

In Chapter Two, an article published in the journal *Reflective Practice* in March, 2018, I examine theoretical and practical applications of philosophical hermeneutics to SLTE. In that paper, I explore how Gadamer's (1989/2004) concept of *Bildung* (education/self-cultivation) can

contribute to nurturing both teacher candidates' and teacher educators' open-mindedness toward otherness, which is one of the key concepts Dewey stressed in achieving effective reflective process. This paper also includes an historical and theoretical overview of philosophical hermeneutics.

The following two chapters (Chapters Three and Four) are research articles that respectively examine two widely implemented SLTE practices: supervision/mentorship and the teaching practicum experience. More specifically, Chapter Three, which was published in *Reflective Practice* in January, 2017, explores what constitutes authentic dialogic engagement in discussions between myself as university practicum supervisor and a pre-service Spanish teacher. In that article, I reflect on how I engaged in a post-teaching reflective session with one of my supervisees. Following my reflective process, I first describe my initial perceptions of the post-teaching session, and then I explore possible disconnections existing between us. Referring to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) concept of *dialogism* and Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1989/2004) of *genuine dialogue*, this paper reflects on the dispositions that foster a dialogic relationship between teacher educators and pre-service teachers.

Chapter Four investigates the struggles that one non-native Spanish pre-service teacher encountered in his teaching practicum experience in a HLL classroom. Attending to his narratives on the practicum experiences, this hermeneutic phenomenological study explores the interacting and overlapping struggles a Spanish teacher teaching Latinx HLLs encounters: being not as competent in spoken Spanish as his students, appearing inauthentic in the context of teaching HLLs, and feeling unethical to be in an authoritative position in the HLL classroom. Based on the findings, I suggest that that we, as second language teachers, teacher educators, and second language teacher education as a field, should take into account a broader view of the

complexities of the contextualized realities of teacher candidates and teachers we work with, and that we should continue exploring these issues relationally and holistically in our research and practice. In Chapter Five, I conclude this dissertation with a discussion that looks at these articles together. I discuss the limitations of each article, and I explore implications for SLTE and professional development in terms of pedagogy and research that might be gained from thinking about these three articles together.

### **My Journey to the Focal Topics**

In 2007, when I was a graduate student in a master's program in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) at the School for International Training (currently SIT Graduate Institute) in Vermont, I was continuously exposed to training in meaning making of my teaching and learning experiences. After every reading, class activity, micro-teaching activity and practicum teaching, I was assigned to engage in the process of reflection and to share my thoughts with my teachers, supervisor and classmates. For me, who experienced my initial teacher education in a knowledge-based program in Japan, this was not easy. While quite challenging, it was a fascinating experience. Through such daily engagements in conscious reflection on my lived experiences as a student and teacher, I could sense that I was developing not only second language teaching knowledge and skills but also my attitudes and awareness as an educator. Later, I found out that the teacher education curriculum was constructed based on the concept of reflective thinking by John Dewey (1933). I also learned that the concept has been further developed as reflective practice by Donald Schön (1983) and widely implemented in SLTE in the U.S. (Wright, 2010).

Even after graduating from the program, I continued to engage in reflective practice for my everyday professional development. Through my career as an English teacher in Costa Rica

and Japan, and as a Japanese language teacher at the University of Arizona, engagement in reflective practice has helped me humbly strive to become a more competent and effective language educator. However, as I explored reflective practice in SLTE through books and research journals, I noticed that most academic writings reduce reflective practice to a mere teacher education method or activity within the domain of teacher preparation. While most of these articles acknowledged the effectiveness of reflective practice in SLTE, few if any of them describe it as an autonomous professional practice, as was emphasized by Dewey and Schön. This disappointed me because I, as a teacher who has experienced the power of reflective practice, believe that reflective practice should be regarded as a daily self-cultivating practice rather than as a method or an activity used for limited time period during teacher preparation in SLTE. This disappointment, however, also made me curious about how reflective practice could be implemented in SLTE more effectively so that teachers might keep employing it as a career-long, self-cultivating practice. I started inquiring about what prompts reflection and what makes a teacher a reflective practitioner.

Such questions were always on my mind while I was in a master's program at the University of Arizona, and started seeking any possible clues that could help me come up with some answers. Fortunately I had opportunities to take coursework in a variety of fields including linguistics, education, anthropology, semiotics and religion. These courses provided me with many new ideas and concepts that contributed to my further professional development, not only as a teacher, but also as a scholar of reflective practice and SLTE. In particular, my attention was caught by an unfamiliar term that the professor of a religion and philosophy course introduced in the class, 'philosophical hermeneutics.' He explained the term in a context talking about how our prior experience and knowledge forms our way of being. When I heard this, I suddenly

experienced a breakthrough that this philosophy must be something to do with the process of reflection. As soon as the class ended, I walked up to the professor and asked him to tell me more about philosophical hermeneutics. He said that it is a theory of interpretation and understanding and suggested that I read Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1989/2004) *Truth and Method*. While it was (and still is) a tough read, and I admit that I could not understand at first most of what the dense book with complex, abstract expressions was saying, it confirmed and even strengthened my hunch that this idea can be applied to reflective practice. I decided to pursue this project in my doctoral studies.

In the doctoral program I deepened my understanding about philosophical hermeneutics, reflective practice and SLTE. Also, being an instructor and a university supervisor in a World Language Education SLTE program enabled me to put the ideas developed through the coursework into my teaching practice as a teacher educator. Through such dialogue between theory and practice, I recognized that experience, especially educative experience, might be one key to generating reflection. In order to think through this further, I decided to read and write my way through thinking with Gadamer and Dewey together. Through this process, I learned that Dewey and Gadamer shared significant differences in their theories of educative experience while they also shared some commonalities. However, the concept of *Bildung* from philosophical hermeneutics seemed especially important in thinking theoretically and practically with SLTE in relation to reflective practice.

The three articles included in this dissertation were all in some way inspired by my attempt to implement *Bildung* in my own practice as a second language teacher educator and a reflective practitioner. I first developed a theoretical and practical argument regarding how *Bildung* can be applied to the current SLTE in relation to reflective practice. Next, I paid

attention to and reflected on my own pedagogical practice focusing on my mentoring approach in a post-observation conversation with one of the second language teacher candidates under my supervision. Through my interactions with teacher candidates, I learned that they encounter many challenges and formative experiences in their practicums, and my third article is an exploration of one challenge and how SLTE as a field might grow to address it. While my journey as a teacher educator has just begun, this collection of three articles regarding SLTE demonstrates intellectual journey in the past few years as a doctoral student and my current understanding as a second language teacher educator.

## **Literature Review**

### **Reflective Practice**

The concept of reflective practice in education has almost a century-long history. Many scholars trace it to American educational philosopher John Dewey's (1933) notion about reflective thinking, which he defines as,

“Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought” (p.6).

Dewey (1938) emphasizes that experience is the essential factor for human intellectual development. For Dewey, experience involves the interaction between the individual and the world including other people, the material and natural environment, and ideas or concepts (Rogers, 2002). According to Dewey, learning is possible when people encounter an “educative experience”, an experience that allows them to broaden their horizons of experience and knowledge, and which offers constructive influence on later experiences (Dewey, 1944; Rogers, 2002). Therefore, an educative experience is often a problematic one at the time it is

encountered, as it involves what has not yet been experienced (e.g., ideas and perspectives). Dewey (1933) insists that when teachers encounter a difficult or troublesome experience the process of reflective thinking begins. A difficult experience may arise from classroom instruction or interactions with a particular student or students as a group. It is a challenge that teachers cannot solve in the immediate situation, and that requires conscious effort to be solved. For example, a miscommunication might occur in the classroom when a teacher gives directions for an activity, but the students engage in the activity in an unexpected way; the teacher then starts reflecting on this miscommunication. Here, reflective thinking is the key to creating learning from an educative experience. As Rogers (2002) explains,

“The function of reflection is to make meaning: to formulate the relationships and continuities among the elements of an experience, between that experience and other experience, between that experience and the knowledge produced by thinkers other than oneself” (p.848).

Reflection is seen as a process of meaning-making during which educators continually evaluate or assess their own beliefs, assumptions, and hypotheses about an experience (Dewey, 1933, 1938). Through reflective thinking, Larrivee (2000) contends that a teacher becomes an active inquirer who not only critically evaluates the current result of an experience but also generates a new hypothesis about it. Therefore, advocates cast reflective practice as a process for teachers to interpret and understand their classroom experiences with a critical attitude, through which they attempt to gain new insights or perspectives about their own teaching knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, value, and theories.

However, at the same time, reflection is not accomplished entirely by individuals. Instead, scholars see the act of reflection as undertaken collaboratively because dialogic

communication with others helps teachers to realize strengths and weaknesses in their thinking (Dewey, 1944). Reflection requires one to look at a lived experience from different perspectives, and insights from others contribute to successful reflection. Rogers (2002) sees three benefits of collaborative reflection: 1) affirmation of the value of one's experience, 2) seeing things newly, and 3) support in engaging in the process of inquiry. Rogers also suggests that it is favorable for the teacher to work with others, possibly engaging with someone who could supply a new perspective or insight about the focal experience. In other words, dialogic and collaborative reflection helps a teacher walk through the reflective process in an effective and efficient way.

Dewey also proposed three attitudes that a reflective teacher must demonstrate: open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility. With these attitudes, he felt that teachers can be open to others' perspectives, opinions, and beliefs regarding the focal phenomenon. Furthermore, he contended that these attitudes enable teachers to carefully and critically consider what they were doing, why they were doing it, what students were doing, and what was taken for granted in the rationales behind their actions (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). In sum, Dewey regarded educative experience, collaboration with others and the three components of attitudes mentioned above as essential factors to successful reflection.

Decades later, Dewey's concept of reflective thinking was further developed theoretically and empirically by Donald Schön (1983). He viewed reflection in two different time frames: *reflection-in-action*, which occurs while a teacher is actually teaching, and *reflection-on-action*, which occurs when the teacher is thinking about teaching before or after teaching. Using this dichotomy, he theorized that reflection is possible not only when we think about something that happens in the future or that happened in the past but also while we are actually doing it. Schön claims that these two frames of reflection can lead us to experiential learning and continuous

self-development. For example, while conducting a class, the teacher is continuously making decisions about what to say and how to act with consideration about the consequence of these actions. Also, after teaching and when planning a lesson, the teacher may also look back on those actions and how they functioned in the lesson, or imagine how they would shape a future lesson. Similar to Dewey, Schön regards experience as the starting point to achieving intellectual self-development in reflective practice. He emphasizes the importance of reflecting on problematic experiences resulting from a disconnection between teachers' expectations based on their actions in the classroom and the actual consequences of those actions (Schön, 1983). Noticing and describing the disconnection (problem setting) leads teachers to careful and conscious analysis of the possible cause of the disconnection, and from this reflective analysis the teacher gains new insights in their teaching actions and develop solutions. In other words, problem setting is the starting point of reflection, and problem solving is the goal. Thus, in Schön's view, problem setting and problem solving are essential catalysts to promote reflective thinking in the experiential learning process (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Another significant contribution that Schön made is shedding light on the practical aspects of reflective practice. Dewey regarded reflective thinking as "a holistic way of meeting and responding to problems, a way of being as a teacher" (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p.9) rather than a sequence of certain procedures, but Schön focused on reflection as a sequential cognitive process. In short, whereas reflective thinking was psychological for Dewey, Schön saw it as more practical and attempted to build theory from practice (Ryan, 2011). Reflective practice, according to Schön (1983, 1987, 1992), is a continuous cycle consisting of three stages: *appreciation*, *action*, and *re-appreciation*. In the reflective cycle, practitioners interpret and frame a problematic experience based on the synthesis of their values, knowledge, theories, and

practices cultivated through life experiences, which he called “*appreciative systems*.” Then, in an attempt to resolve the problematic experience, they reinterpret and reframe the experienced phenomenon during and/or after the action. As the result of the process of reinterpretation and reframing, they can gain a new perspective and see the phenomenon differently, leading them to more effective and productive future actions. To sum up, reflective practice is a process of making sense of a problematic experience that ends in obtaining a new perspective.

### **Reflective Practice in SLTE**

The history of reflective practice in SLTE begins in the mid 80s approximately when Schön (1983, 1987) developed and introduced the concept of the practice. "Educating the reflective practitioner" was a slogan of teacher education in general in the mid to late 1980s (Adler 1990). Teacher educators' interest in reflective practice further increased through the 1990s due to the theoretical and cognitive shifts in SLTE along with the emerging global view of English as a *lingua franca* in the current of globalization (Richards, 2008; Wright, 2010). Crandall (2000) offers four major shifts in teacher education in general including SLTE in the 1990s. First, she sees a theoretical shift from product-oriented behaviorism to process-oriented constructivism. As a result of this shift, teachers were no longer seen as passive recipients of knowledge, but rather as active inquirers who develop their own theories through their experiential knowledge. Second, she points to a growing recognition of a gap between what SLTE offered to pre-service teachers and what they really needed in the actual teaching settings. This understanding focused teacher education more on classroom-based experiential learning so that pre-service teachers could connect theory and practice more effectively. Third, Crandall sees increasing attention in SLTE to the impact of individual teachers' prior learning experience on the construction of their teaching beliefs, styles and practices. This also implies that the teaching

philosophy of teacher educators themselves is influenced by their prior teacher education experience. From these realizations, there emerged a growing emphasis on self-reflection in both teacher educators and teachers. And, fourth, Crandall identifies increasing recognition in SLTE of teaching as a profession in which teachers engage in long-term professional development. This recognition promoted teachers' continual effort to experiment and evaluate their teaching practices. These shifts consequently led to the pedagogical changes in SLTE. In order to produce reflective teachers, the focus of SLTE pedagogy shifted from transmission of linguistic and pedagogical knowledge and skills to more experiential and reflective activities in which pre-service teachers are also inquirers about teaching beliefs, theories, and practices (Wright, 2010).

Such a constructivist approach was welcomed by many teacher educators and has been a continuing theme in teacher education since then. From the 1990s until the present, a large number of studies have endorsed the value of reflective practice in SLTE (e.g., Crandall, 2000; Farrell, 2015, 2016; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen, & Lehtovaara, 2014; Lockhart & Richards, 1994; Richards, 2004; Tedick, 2013; Thompson & Erdil-Moody, 2015; Vélez-Rendón, 2002; Wallace, 1991, 1996; Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Zeichner & Liu, 2010). Meanwhile, action research examining the effectiveness of reflective practice began to emerge in the field. For example, Mok (1994) conducted a case study to investigate the change in ESL (English as a second language) teachers' (both experienced and inexperienced, native and nonnative speakers) perceptions about ESL teaching through reflective practice. Through interview data as well as 12 teachers' reflective journals and practicum reports, the findings showed that participants gained broader and more pragmatic insights about learning and teaching after experiencing their reflective practicum. Antonek, McCormick, and Donato (1997) examined how a reflective portfolio could be a valuable tool in fostering pre-service foreign

language teachers' construction of their teaching identities. Focusing on the portfolio created by two foreign language pre-service teachers, the research demonstrated that participants built their teaching identities through negotiating and assessing their understanding of teaching experiences. Also, Farrell (2006) investigated three pre-service ESL teachers' use of metaphors in their reflective journals during teaching practicum. Analyzing the metaphors the participants created to express what teaching is for them and conducting interviews to explore the meanings that participants made in the expressions, the study revealed that shifts in their perception of teaching were made explicit through metaphors. Moreover, the research emphasized that, through critically reflecting on these metaphors throughout the experience, pre-service teachers could encounter their previous beliefs and contrast or combine their newly gained belief with them. Through these studies and many similar ones (e.g., Abednia, 2012; Chick, 2015; Eröz-Tuğa, 2013; Farrell, 2011), the notion of a teacher as a reflective practitioner has been widely established in SLTE, and the practice has been applied to various forms of activities such as reflective writing, reflective sessions and discussions (Wright, 2010).

Nevertheless, at the same time, it should be also noted that there are significant gaps in the research. For one, the majority of studies have focused on TESOL, and only a few studies have examined other SLTE (e.g., Geyer, 2008; Lomicka & Lord, 2007; Lord & Lomicka, 2007; Watzke, 2007). The emergence and development of reflective practice in SLTE have been closely related to the on-going global notion of English as a *lingua franca*. Farrell (2016), for example, reviewed 116 studies conducted during 2009 to 2014 that examine the effectiveness of reflective practice in teacher education and professional development, and found that nearly the half of those studies were from Asian contexts. Of course, this may be due to the fact that all the literature he reviewed was in American, British and Canadian academic journals written in

English. Nevertheless, there seems to be no doubt that the history of reflective practice in SLTE has had its center in the field of TESOL, and such a tendency is still on-going.

Since the mid-2000s, technological developments have brought new forms of reflective activities. Research on SLTE has increasingly involved "online" reflective practice, employing various online technologies including e-mail, video chat, weblogs, and online discussion forums to promote the process of reflection (e.g., Geyer, 2008; Lee, 2007; Lomicka & Lord, 2007; Lord & Lomicka, 2007; Payant, 2014). Although research comparing the effectiveness of online reflective practice with traditional dialogic formats has not been conducted, such technological innovation certainly adds new possibilities for involving reflective practice in SLTE.

Whereas most research has demonstrated positive effects for reflective practice in SLTE, some researchers have also identified challenges and issues in the current implementation of reflective practice (Akbari, 2007; Luk, 2008; Moon 2004, 2008; Wright, 2010; Zeichner & Liu, 2010). For instance, Akbari (2007) while not denying the value of the practice, points out the lack of research tying reflective practice to increased student learning or teacher efficiency. Also, Luk (2008) as well as Akbari (2007) revealed that pre-service teachers' reflective writing skills can make a considerable difference in the effectiveness of reflective practice. This implies that it is a pre-requisite for teachers to have a certain level of writing skill in order to engage in an effective reflective process and to fairly assess their progress in the process. In addition to difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of reflective practice, Zeichner and Liu (2010) critiqued the way reflective practice is embedded in teacher education in general. They identify four common practices that they believe undermine the effectiveness of reflective practice: 1) a focus on replicating teaching practices suggested by previous research without regard to individual teachers' beliefs, knowledge and styles, 2) a focus on the micro-level of teaching (e.g.,

instruction, activity designs, classroom management) that neglects the macro-level (e.g., curriculum design, the ultimate goal of the course), 3) a focus on teaching that ignores the contextual and institutional situation/context, and 4) a tendency toward individual reflection, which prevents individual teachers from gaining new insights from others' perspectives.

In summary, reflective practice originally emerged in SLTE, especially in TESOL, in the 1980s as a result of theoretical and cognitive shifts in the field promoted by an increasing global need for teachers of English as a second/foreign language. The constructivist nature of reflective practice was welcomed and accepted by teacher educators, and the practice rapidly spread in SLTE. Researchers and teacher educators as well as technological innovation have further developed its methodological aspects, and even now, reflective practice is widely embedded in many SLTE programs. Whereas there have been many studies that demonstrate the positive effects of the reflective process on pre-service teachers, nevertheless some challenges and issues have been raised in the decades since the practice became standard. One of the issues pointed out by Zeichner and Liu (2010) is that the current implementation of reflective practice in teacher education does not necessarily meet teachers' professional needs. There is a gap between what reflective practice in teacher education hopes to offer and what pre-service teachers gain from the experience.

### **Aesthetic Experience: Comparisons between Dewey and Gadamer**

As in Rogers' (2002) quote earlier, reflective practice regards reflection as a process of meaning-making of a lived experience in order to gain a new insight or understanding. And in this process, an experience plays a crucial role as a catalyst. When an experience plays an essential role in the process of reflection, it is necessary to explore this concept and what constitutes educative quality in it. While Dewey himself offered some answers to this question, I

believe it will help us deepen the discussion to explore Hans-Georg Gadamer's notions about experience as well. Inheriting the line of thought from German phenomenology and hermeneutics, Gadamer established philosophical hermeneutics, in which he stressed that understanding always occurs through experience (Gadamer, 1989/2004). And he, like Dewey, offered considerable insights into the relationship between experience and understanding. Therefore, I expect that identifying the similarities and differences in the concept of experience between them will provide us with insights about what qualities an experience must possess to be an educative one, and how philosophical hermeneutics can complement reflective practice.

**Dewey's concept of educative experience.** Through his career, John Dewey, an American educational philosopher and theorist, developed influential insights and theories regarding education, teaching and learning, and human development. One of the main ideas he offers is exploring the relationship between experience, more specifically the quality of experience, and human intellectual growth. For Dewey, the goal of education is "the growth and enrichment of experienced meaning" (Hildebrand, 2016, p. 76), and experience is a fundamental factor for education: "education... must be based upon experience- which is always the actual life-experience of some individual" (Dewey, 1938, p. 89). Dewey (1938) regards that every experience involves "a moving force" (p.38). By saying so, he means that there is a principle of continuity attached to every experience that affects our attitude and decides the quality of future experience and the condition in which future experience will be had. However, while Dewey acknowledges such a principle, he rather emphasizes the quality of the present experience within the principle. That is because he asserts that the value of experience can "be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (Dewey, 1938, p.38). In this regard, Dewey (1916/1944, 1934, 1938) differentiates two types of experience in terms of the quality: one that

has a constructive influence on later experiences by providing new understanding or knowledge and developing awareness and attitudes, and one that prevents or twists intellectual growth through blind, insensitive routine actions. Through his publications, he employs several terms to differentiate these two kinds of experience: the former is described as ‘*an* experience’ (1934, italicized in original), ‘aesthetic experience’, or ‘educative experience’ (1938), whereas the latter is called simply ‘experience’, ‘anaesthetic experience’, or ‘mis-educative experience’ respectively.

For Dewey, educative experience involves aesthetic quality. In his idea, although experience occurs in continuity, the meanings of each phenomenon are often not consummated since one’s conscious engagement in each phenomenon tends to be distracted by external interruptions and internal apathy (Dewey, 1934). Dewey asserts that, in order for growth to occur, experience has to be aesthetic. Dewey (1934) explains,

“[W]e have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences... Such an experience is a whole and carries with its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an* experience” (pp. 36-37).

Stroud (2014) further offers a clarification on this concept. First, aesthetic experience is simultaneously integrated in and demarcated from surrounding experiences. This means that aesthetic experience is not only a part of surrounding experiences but also possesses a singular, unique, outstanding quality within the continuity of the lived experience. In other words, it is the experiential nature of the experience that provides an outstanding quality for the individual. In addition, the parts of aesthetic experience hold “a meaningful unity” (p.36) in the whole

experience. That is, in aesthetic experience we make meaning of the lived experience through dialogic negotiation and assimilate it into the whole life experience. *An* experience is an “integral or consummatory experience- it goes somewhere and is idealized with meaning” (Stroud, 2014, p.36). In short, *an* experience holds the individualizing quality as a coherent experience as well as a part of the whole life experience, and it enables one to engage in consummation of the meaning of the experience.

Aesthetic experience also involves one’s conscious engagement and effort in the experience. A critical factor of *an* experience is one’s “ability to perceive and then weave meaning among the threads of experience” (Rogers, 2002, p. 848). The metaphor of a rolling stone that Dewey (1934) employed offers a comprehensible illustration of this aspect of aesthetic experience:

“The stone starts from somewhere, and moves, as consistently as conditions permit, toward a place and state where it will be at rest- toward an end. Let us add, by imagination to these external facts, the ideas that it looks forward with desire to the final outcome; that it is interested in the things it meets on its way, conditions that accelerate and retard its movement with respect to their bearing on the end; that it acts and feels toward them according to the hindering or helping function it attributes to them; and that the final coming to rest is related to all that went before as the culmination of a continuous movement. Then the stone would have an experience, and one with [a]esthetic quality” (p.41).

This metaphor suggests that aesthetic experience also involves “internality of means and ends” (Stroud, 2014, p. 37). It is intention of those who go through the lived experience in their thoughts and actions toward the process and consequence of consummation. In other words,

during the continuity of aesthetic experience, one's thoughts and actions are always purposeful toward a fulfilling conclusion.

Therefore, in Dewey's idea, aesthetic experience is constituted not just of the quality that an immediate experience possesses but also of one's intention toward the meaning-making process of the experience. It involves conscious and continuous interactions between one's thoughts, actions and perceptions, and the surrounding world such as things, other persons, the environment, and the situation (Dewey, 1916/1944, 1934, 1938). That is, aesthetic experience always consists of both going (the action) and undergoing (consequence) in continuous relationship, and it is this experimental relationship that enables one to grasp meaning, which is "the objective of all intelligence" (Dewey, 1934, p. 46). In aesthetic experience, the experimental interaction between going and undergoing continues until the meaning of the experience is consummated with one's intention. Such interactions, in which one relates continuous turns of cause and effect, create practical knowledge that contributes to constructive and productive future action, and that makes an experience meaningful (Hildebrand, 2016). In other words, the meaning of an experience (knowledge) can be grasped through one's internal engagement or involvement in an event consisting of turns of cause and effect.

Also, as the interactive and experimental nature of aesthetic experience implies, Dewey (1934) asserts that aesthetics emerge in experience when one encounters and attempts to solve challenges or tasks: "Under conditions of resistance and conflict, aspects and elements of the self and the world that are implicated in this interaction qualify experience with emotions and ideas so that conscious intent emerges" (p. 36). In this sense, aesthetic experience is not simply a pleasant or comfortable event in which one reaches a consummated meaning of the experience through active engagement in the meaning-making process. While the process may be enjoyed,

aesthetic experience is accompanied by struggles, conflict and possibly pain that serve as catalysts to develop an experience in the process (Dewey, 1934). The closure of aesthetic experience is consummation of the meaning of experience through ‘taking-in’ from the process, which is to reach a new or renewed meaning (Stroud, 2014). It means to change, modify or even deny the knowledge or understanding that one has previously held. The process of consummation involves “reconstruction which may be painful” (Dewey, 1934, p.42). It is interactive negotiation between one’s knowledge, understanding and beliefs, and undergoing in the experience, the result of which may create a different worldview.

In this regard, Hinchliffe (2011) emphasizes the notion of ‘phases’ implied in Dewey’s concept of aesthetic experience. He explains that aesthetic experience consists of the phases of “emotions, thoughts and activities which have a connection and continuity” (p. 421) and the consummated meaning of an experience is obtained only when the experience goes through all these phases. The value or culmination of aesthetic experience is not merely judged upon its concluded outcome but also on its process of engagement toward consummation. As Dewey (1938) stressed, in aesthetic experience, the principles of continuity and interaction are inseparable. In other words, the temporal and interactive process toward consummation as well as the consummated meaning is an essential constituent of aesthetic experience. It always includes both the process and the conclusion. This whole process constitutes aesthetics of an experience.

In contrast to *an* experience, which possesses aesthetic quality, Dewey (1916/1944, 1934) contends that anaesthetic experience does not involve an educative aspect, and that no experience is a unit without aesthetic quality (Dewey, 1934). He describes the characteristics of anaesthetic experience as ‘humdrum’, ‘slackness of loose ends’, and blind conformity to ‘routine action’

since it neither has a particular beginning or end point nor develops the meaning of the experience outside of conventional norms. In this sense, anaesthetic experience is not perceived as *an* experience since it lacks detached, individualizing and experimental essences, which leads one to a dialogic meaning-making process. These ideas imply that experience without aesthetic quality hinders one not only from consummating the meaning of the experience but also even from having an opportunity to proceed to the meaning-making process. In this way, Dewey made a clear distinction between educative experience with aesthetic quality and non-educative experience lacking such aesthetics.

In sum, in Dewey's concept, educative experience is a temporal continuity in which the meaning of experience can be consummated through one's conscious and purposeful engagement in an interactive process. As Stroud (2014) describes, "[t]he aesthetic combines the future and the past in the present" (p. 44). Educative experience is where experimental negotiation occurs, for a certain purpose, between one's thoughts and actions constructed through previous experience and the results that those actions and thoughts bring in the context. Dewey contends that aesthetic experience needs to contain these elements. Without them, experience just leaves us as we are and does not allow us to engage in the dialogic negotiation with the surrounding world, from which new understanding or insights are generated. By clearly differentiating these two concepts, Dewey puts stress on the aesthetic quality that should be involved in our experience in educational settings.

**Gadamer's concepts of experience: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*.** Dewey's notion that educative experience is to make meaning of experience shares commonalities with Gadamer's ideas in his philosophical hermeneutics, which aims to reveal how understanding occurs (Gadamer, 1989/2004). For Gadamer, understanding is our

interpretation of the world, and interpretation is to obtain a new or different perspective by reinterpreting one's way of thinking (*horizon*) with others', which he called *a fusion of horizons* (Lavery, 2003). Here, "others" include what constitutes experience: other individuals, literature, environment and so on. Gadamer (1989/2004) insists that we do not recognize the limit of our horizon while we stay captive in our own prejudice, and that it is when we are exposed to others' horizons through dialogue that we become aware of our limits. According to Gadamer, when we experience something, we attempt to interpret the lived experience with our own prejudice informed by our tradition and situatedness. However, we often encounter an experience in which different ways of thinking exist. Such an encounter is an opportunity in which we are able to become aware of our own horizon and reach a new understanding (Gadamer, 1989/2004). Employing an example of interpreting a reading text, Gadamer (2000) explains the concept as follows: "the interpreter and the text each possess his, her, or its own horizon and every moment of understanding represents a fusion of these horizons" (p.45). Therefore, it is our encounter with others' ways of understanding that enables us to be aware of the limits of our own horizon (Binding & Tapp, 2008). Through such encounters, our prejudice, as the pre-conceptions or pre-judgments that construct our horizon, can be negotiated, transformed and reconstructed. Thus, in philosophical hermeneutics, reaching a new understanding is achieved through dialogue between a person and the surrounding world, in other words, what constitutes experience. Thus, it is plausible to say that educative experience, for Gadamer, is the experience in which one's understanding of the world is transformed through open dialogue with others.

Gadamer, like Dewey, explored the aesthetics of such experience. Gadamer differentiated two kinds of experience employing two German words: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, which are translated as ‘lived experience’ and ‘life experience’, respectively (van Manen, 1990). According to Gadamer (1989/2004), *Erlebnis* originates from a verb *Erleben*, which primarily means “to be still alive when something happens” (p. 56). It refers to an impactful and memorable singular experience that stands out from the usual and conventional flow of events (Solloway & Brooks, 2004). On the other hand, *Erfahrung*, which derived from *fahren* meaning “to travel” or “to journey” (Moules, McCaffrey, Field & Laing, 2015), has a more general sense of experience as a whole. It has the quality that accumulates *Erlebnis* including the understandings and insights constructed through the whole accumulation process (van Manen, 1990). Moules et al. (2015) clarifies these two concepts employing an example of a teacher’s experience of walking into the classroom. When the teacher enters into the classroom for the first time as a new teacher, the experience takes the form of *Erlebnis* as it is an intense and unforgettable moment. But, when the experience is reflected upon, consummated and assimilated into the teacher’s general understanding of the world, it now possesses the character of *Erfahrung*.

While Gadamer (1989/2004) acknowledges that both types of experience contribute to our understanding of the world due to their dialectical relationship, he especially emphasizes *Erfahrung* as genuine aesthetic experience. He asserts that *Erfahrung* has the quality that can transform our being, and hence, we can call someone ‘an experienced person’ because of his/her insights cultivated through the accumulation of experiences. However, this does not mean that Gadamer merely places significance in the outcome of assimilation of experiences. Rather, it is one’s disposition of continuous openness toward new experiences that Gadamer stressed as *Bildung*, which is often translated as education, self-cultivation or formation. With such

openness to new experience, our being is negotiated and revised, and our understanding of the world is continually reconstructed. The significance of *Erfahrung* belongs to such dispositions toward continuous consummation of lived experiences through the dialogic process.

Gadamer's priority of *Erfahrung* over *Erlebnis* seems to be also due to the senses of immediacy and detachedness that *Erlebnis* possesses. As mentioned above, for Gadamer, *Erlebnis* has a detached quality from the whole flow of experience while remaining a part of the whole life experience (Moules et al., 2015). Referring to Nietzsche's notion that assimilation of the meaning of experience requires a long process, Gadamer (1989/2004) regards that, when one is still in *Erlebnis*, the meaning of the experience cannot be fully consummated and assimilated into our being because of its nature of immediacy and detachedness. In other words, *Erlebnis* is too immediate to achieve a fusion of horizons, and the meaning of *Erlebnis* is consummated when it is assimilated into the whole life experience (*Erfahrung*), which also keeps being transformed.

Nevertheless, it is also true that, in Gadamer's idea, *Erlebnis* also possesses aesthetic significance in the process of shaping our being. That is because, while *Erlebnis* possesses a detached quality, these singular encounters have the possibility to affect and modify our understanding of the world. Gadamer (1989/2004) offers an explanation about this idea comparing *Erlebnis* with 'an adventure':

"An adventure... interrupts the customary course of events, but is positively and significantly related to the context which it interrupts. Thus, an adventure lets life be felt as a whole, in its breadth and in its strength. Here lies the fascination of an adventure. It removes the conditions and obligations of everyday life. It ventures out into the uncertain. But at the same time... it is exceptional and thus remains

related to the return of the everyday, into which the adventure cannot be taken.

Thus the adventure is ‘undergone,’ like a test or trial from which one emerges enriched and more mature.” (p. 63).

In short, the adventure element of *Erlebnis* contrasts with, and therefore brings to our attention our everyday way of being. This is the aesthetics of *Erlebnis* that Gadamer (1989/2004) recognizes. Such a feature of *Erlebnis* enables us to be aware of the limits of our own horizon. That is an essential part in the process of a fusion of horizons in that it triggers dialogue. The newly consummated and assimilated meaning of *Erlebnis* affects *Erfahrung* as accumulation of *Erlebnis*, and revises our horizons.

Thus, for Gadamer, both *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* possess aesthetic quality in different ways, and both play significant roles in the process of constructing our understanding of the world. For Gadamer, every experience contributes to our understanding of the world (van Manen, 1977). In an encounter with *Erlebnis*, our being is assessed and tested. And, when the meaning of each *Erlebnis* is consummated, it becomes a constituent of *Erfahrung*, which provides a new insight to our way of being. Such a dialectical process continually occurs and is never-ending since our understanding of the world is affected not only by our traditions but also our current situated context (Gadamer, 1989/2004). Therefore, the meaning of experience is never completely exhausted and it keeps being revised throughout life. That is, as long as we encounter and go through lived experiences, our life experience as our way of being is revised and transformed. The dialogic dynamics between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* add educative essence to experience.

**Commonalities and differences in the concept of aesthetic experience between Dewey and Gadamer.** Comparing their theories of educative experience, it is noticeable that

there is a fundamental difference between Dewey and Gadamer. A significant difference is that Gadamer differentiated two kinds of aesthetic experiences, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* while Dewey discriminated aesthetic experience from anaesthetic experience, with only the former having significance for human intellectual growth. In Dewey's idea, experience becomes aesthetic only when the meaning of the experience is negotiated with an intention and consummated within the continuity of lived experience. That is why Dewey (1934) explains that aesthetic experience (*an* experience) has to have a detached quality. However, the binary between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* that Gadamer described does not differentiate aesthetic from anaesthetic experiences. Although putting more value on *Erfahrung*, Gadamer (1989/2004) stressed that both *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* possess aesthetic qualities in different ways.

Gadamer's argument that *Erfahrung* possesses more aesthetic quality than *Erlebnis* further demonstrates a clear difference in the theories of educative experiences between Dewey and Gadamer. As Hinchliffe (2011) explained, Gadamer adds insights to Dewey's account of educative experience in two ways. First, Gadamer (1989/2004) theorized that meaning making of a lived experience (*Erlebnis*) cannot be consummated while one is still living in the experience while Dewey (1934) seems to propose that the meaning making has to be consummated within the lived experience with no interference. Second, Gadamer offers the insight that, after the meaning of a lived experience (*Erlebnis*) is assimilated into one's life experience (*Erfahrung*), it still continues to be revised or modified as one lives through more experiences. In his sense, *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* relate each other dialectically as parts and the whole.

On the other hand, Dewey may bring a new insight to Gadamer's concept of *Erlebnis*. In the meaning-making process of an experience Dewey (1916/1944) further emphasized one's intention toward future actions and those consequences in this process. Hildebrand (2016)

explained that, for Dewey, aesthetic experience is where one intentionally attempts to take control of the future by gaining insights from the interaction between going (one's actions) and undergoing (the results of the actions). In other words, as implied in the metaphor of a rolling stone, Dewey's aesthetic experience also involves one's purpose in the dialogic meaning-making of a lived experience. It is something one intends to achieve in the newness of experience such as problem solving and task-completion. For Dewey, one's intention in the meaning-making process plays an important role in deciding the direction one intends to move towards, and hence affects one's thoughts and actions in a lived experience, which also influences the experience itself. This concept of intention in a detached lived experience may add something to Gadamer's idea of dialogue as a meaning-making process.

Regardless of these differences, it appears that Dewey and Gadamer share commonalities especially in the quality of a lived experience (*Erlebnis*) and in the structure of its meaning-making process. First, for both Dewey and Gadamer, aesthetic experience contains some degree of newness that triggers a dialogic meaning-making process. In Dewey's (1916/1944, 1934, 1938) notion, the newness is a surprise, an encounter with a problem, task, conflict or resistance involved in the experience. For Gadamer (1989/2004, 2000), it is the different ways of understanding that is involved in the newness of an experience. These essences of newness are the catalysts of dialogue that make experience educative by providing opportunities in which one develops a new understanding and insight that contributes to the whole way of being.

Second, Dewey and Gadamer both contended that the meaning of a lived experience needs to be consummated in order for the experience to gain aesthetic quality. This is the intellectual outcome that one obtains from the lived experience: a lived experience produces an insight, knowledge or understanding, when its meaning is consummated, to be taken in and to

contribute to our whole understanding of the world. In this regard, they also emphasized that the consummated meaning of experience needs to be assimilated into our way of being. This aspect implies the essence of revision or modification of the self through the experience. When the consummated meaning of an experience is assimilated into our understanding of the world, it affects the whole of our way of being by adding new understanding about the subject matter.

Furthermore, for both of them, consummation of the meaning of a lived experience is a dialogic process that involves an experimental essence. For Gadamer (1989/2004), it is always achieved through a dialogue between one's horizon and others' (e.g., people, texts, environment), and for Dewey (1934), it occurs in the negotiation between 'going' (e.g., one's actions) and 'undergoing' (e.g., the results of the actions). In this sense, both agree that the meaning-making of an experience is not an individual process but involves interactions with the constituents involved in the experience. That is, the meaning of experience is negotiated and consummated through one's engagement with what comes through in the experience. Here, Dewey and Gadamer appear to commonly imply the experimental essence of aesthetic experience.

According to Dewey (1916/1944, 1934), in aesthetic experience, we are not merely passive or receptive to what comes through to us: we also deliberately take a certain action according to what we receive in the dialogic interactions. Likewise, Gadamer (1989/2004) described such an interaction as the structure of question and answer, which constitutes genuine dialogue. Such an experimental aspect provides dialogue with aesthetic quality in the meaning-making process.

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## CHAPTER 2

# BILDUNG AS AN ESSENTIAL DISPOSITION IN BECOMING A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER: PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS TO SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION <sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

For a few decades, reflective practice has been employed in second language teacher education (SLTE). Dewey, who initiated the concept of reflective thinking in teacher education, emphasized one's attitudes toward engagement in reflective process. One such disposition is open-mindedness. Regarding this concept of open-mindedness, Gadamer, who established philosophical hermeneutics, provided profound insights by using the German word *Bildung*, which is often translated as education, culture or self-cultivation. Through this concept, Gadamer not only emphasized one's open and introspective disposition toward new experience but also one's mode of being. This paper explores this notion of *Bildung* and examines its possible practical application to SLTE in combination with reflective practice. Referring to Grondin's (2011) notion that education is to raise true questions, I will argue for the importance of nurturing *Bildung* of pre-service second language teachers and of second language teacher educators.

Key words: reflective practice, philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer, open-mindedness, second language teacher education, *Bildung*

## Introduction

Rooted in John Dewey's concept of reflective thinking and introduced by Donald Schön as a pragmatic human development method, reflective practice has been employed widely in the curriculum of second language teacher education (SLTE). This experiential learning practice has been widely implemented in SLTE in the core curriculum due to its compatibility with the growing interest in a constructivist approach in SLTE since the mid 1980s (Crandall, 2000; Wright, 2010). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) defined reflective practice as 'a means by which practitioners can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for professional growth and development' (p.2). In SLTE, where it is generally recognized that individual pre-service teachers already possess an idea of second language teaching shaped by their own past second language learning experience (Johnson, 1994, Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996; Legutke & Schocker-v. Dittfurth, 2009), it is believed that their reflective process plays a significant role in developing teachers' awareness about their teaching practice through critical assessment of their actions and the results of these actions (Farrell, 2016; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Rogers, 2002; Tedick, 2013). In this regard, reflective practice in SLTE is regarded as teachers' conscious and continuous meaning-making process of a recently experienced teaching moment for the purpose of gaining new insights about teaching.

Regarding such reflective process, Dewey (1933) emphasized that individuals have to have certain attitudes as a prerequisite to the kind of reflection that enhance their potential of learning. One of the essential attitudes that Dewey stressed was open-mindedness. For Dewey, open-mindedness refers to 'a willingness to entertain different perspectives... and acknowledgement of the limitations of one's own perspectives' (Rogers, 2002, p.861). This does

not mean uncritical acceptance of others' perspectives and replacement of one's own perspective with theirs. It means to put both perspectives in play in relation to the current context that one is situated in and to recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of one's own perspective (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Considering that a primary goal of reflective practice in SLTE is to transform the educational and pedagogical beliefs that pre-service teachers possess through critical and introspective examination of a lived experience of teaching, the concept of open-mindedness seems to play a crucial role in their reflective process and should be nurtured in order to make their reflective process more effective. However, what does it mean to have open-mindedness, and how is it possible for second language teacher educators to help their students develop it? As a second language teacher educator, who engages in SLTE and who believes in the power of reflective practice, I believe it is worth exploring this concept and seeking a way to nurture individual pre-service teachers' open-mindedness in SLTE.

While Dewey himself has offered insights regarding this concept of open-mindedness, I find that the German concept of *Bildung*, which is often translated into English as education, culture, formation or self-cultivation, can contribute to expanding our understanding about open-mindedness. Among German philosophers such as Wilhelm Hegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Bildung* refers to one's introspective disposition toward self-formation or self-cultivation with openness to otherness (Mathias Simão, 2005). In his work *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (1989/2004) also emphasized that *Bildung* describes the result of the process of self-formation or of becoming. Connecting this concept to the process of reflection, van Manen (1990) stressed, 'In bringing to reflective awareness the nature of the events experienced in our natural attitude, we are able to transform or remake ourselves in the true sense of *Bildung*

(education)' (p.7), in which 'natural attitude' means our uncritical, everyday perception. In this sense, reflective practice and *Bildung* seem to be closely related to each other.

Furthermore, it is interesting that both Dewey and Gadamer, regardless of their quite different historical and philosophical backgrounds, shared a very similar view on the purpose of education. Dewey considered the goal of education as 'the growth and enrichment of experienced meaning' (Hildebrand, 2016, p. 76), and for Gadamer, education is about formation and transformation of self through new experience (Davey, 2006; Grondin, 2011). In other words, they would both agree that self-construction through experience is essential in education. Therefore, exploring Gadamer's notion of *Bildung* could offer insights regarding open-mindedness in reflective practice and provide implications for how to nurture it in SLTE. In this paper, I will explore open-mindedness referring to the concept of *Bildung* in the context of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and attempt to examine its possible practical application to reflective practice in SLTE.

### **Gadamer and Philosophical Hermeneutics**

Gadamer established philosophical hermeneutics as an interpretive theory of human understanding. In this philosophy, Gadamer brought together aspects of hermeneutics and phenomenology as a way to emphasize the experiential nature of learning and understanding. According to Moules (2002), the hermeneutic aspect is derived from the line of 19th-century hermeneutics, especially that of Friederich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey. Schleiermacher's contribution to later hermeneutics is his emphasis on the creativity in interpretation, the importance of language in interpretation, and the concept of the hermeneutic circle, 'the movement between part and whole in the process of interpretation' (Moules, 2002,

p.5). Also, what Gadamer inherited from Dilthey is the notion of understanding as a significant and fundamental constituent in our being-in-the-world (Grondin, 1994; Moules, 2002).

Regarding the phenomenological roots of hermeneutics, Gadamer was directly influenced by Martin Heidegger's phenomenology, which brought a so-called ontological turn in the history of western philosophy and challenged philosophy's emphasis on a detached human subject looking standing apart from an objective world (Lavery, 2003). According to Heidegger (1962), human beings are always in a world where language, culture, and a structure of life already exist, and, as such, are inevitably conditioned by their historical situatedness. In other words, Heidegger asserted that it is impossible to be entirely objective because we are continuously influenced by the historicity of our own prior life experience and the world around us. Therefore, he insisted that we need to focus on interpretation of our own facticity, which refers to *Dasein*, 'the human condition of being-in-the-world temporarily and historically' (Freeman, 2011, p.544).

Heidegger (1962) also claimed that interpretation is critical to understanding as every lived experience comes to understanding through interpretation. In the emergence of one's understanding, both Heidegger and Gadamer agreed that language and understanding are inseparable. According to Gadamer (1989/2004, 2000, 2006), understanding is universally mediated through language, and thus language is a fundamental medium of understanding and interpretation. As Freeman and Vagle (2013) explain in their argument of application of hermeneutics to human science research, 'using language is not just about our verbalness; it is about the way we structure our thinking about the world' (p.725). In sum, it is language that enables interpretation and makes understanding possible.

Inheriting such lines of thought from hermeneutics and phenomenology, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics focuses on how understanding occurs (Grondin, 1994; Moules, McCaffrey, Field, & Laing, 2015). Like Heidegger, Gadamer (1989/2004) asserted that our traditions and situatedness play a fundamental role in the construction of our interpretation and understanding of the world, and that in this sense we cannot detach our subjectivity from our interpretation and understanding. Gadamer (1989/2004) emphasized that it is important to recognize our own prejudices constructed through our traditions and situatedness as a preconception to understanding. In other words, he suggested that we need to 'understand understanding' (Freeman, 2014, p.832). Having prejudice does not necessarily hold a negative connotation. Indeed, for Gadamer, there is no better or worse binary in prejudice: 'prejudice does not necessarily mean a false judgment, but part of the idea is it can have either a positive or a negative value' (Gadamer, 1989/2004, p.283). In fact, prejudice is essential in the process of understanding, and without it we are not even able to identify any phenomena (Pascoe, 1996). Therefore, prejudice is all of our preconceptions, and it is a necessary condition for us to interpret the world.

For Gadamer, understanding is mediated through interpretation, and interpretation is to obtain a new or different perspective by fusing one's way of thinking with others', which he called *a fusion of horizons*. Here, 'others' refers to people, texts, environment and experience. Gadamer (1989/2004) insisted that we do not recognize the limits of our horizon while we stay captive in it, and that it is when we are exposed to others' horizons through dialogue that we become aware of our limits. When we experience something, we attempt to interpret the lived experience with our own prejudice informed by our tradition and situatedness. However, we often encounter an experience in which different ways of thinking exist, which Gadamer

(1989/2004) called 'the negativity of experience' (p. 362). Such an encounter is an opportunity in which we are able to become aware of our own horizon and reach a new understanding.

Gadamer (2000) explains, 'the interpreter and the text each possess his, her, or its own horizon and every moment of understanding represents a fusion of these horizons' (p.45). Therefore, it is our encounter with others' ways of understanding that enables us to be aware of the limits of our own horizon and for our prejudice to be put into play. Thus, understanding, for Gadamer, is a dialogic process between individuals and the world around them.

In this process, philosophical hermeneutics asserts that it is also important that dialogue contains a certain quality. Gadamer (1989/2004, 2000, 2006) offered the concept of genuine dialogue as the ideal quality of dialectic dialogue. He noted,

[A] conversation is not possible if one of the partners believes himself or herself to be in a clearly superior position in comparison with the other person, and assumes that he or she possesses a prior knowledge of the erroneous pre-judgments in which the other is entangled. But if one does this, one actually locks oneself into the circle of one's own prejudices. Reaching an understanding dialogically is impossible if in principle one of the partners in a dialogue does not allow himself or herself to enter into a real conversation (Gadamer, 2006, pp.51-52).

To ensure such genuine dialogue, Gadamer (1989/2004) emphasized the importance of the structure of questions and answers in dialogue because questioning helps us engage with others' horizons, and it enhances the possibilities of meaning that a certain experience brings out (Trede, Higgs, & Rothwell, 2009). By receiving answers to questions from others, our prejudice is negotiated and reconstructed. As a result, a new possibility of interpretation and understanding of

the world comes into our horizon. In this way, the structure of question and answer creates a dialectical cycle that renews and keeps transforming our horizons. In sum, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics describes how human understanding occurs in one's encounter with an experience where one's horizon is challenged and transformed by others' horizons through genuine conversation involving the structure of questions and answers.

In his argument of the event of understanding explained above, in which a fusion of horizons is achieved through genuine dialogue, Gadamer emphasized the concept of *Bildung*, our sensitive and open dispositions to other perspectives, as a core human essence in achieving understanding. In Gadamer's (1989/2004) notion, *Bildung* refers to a person's awareness and attitude for self-cultivation and self-development in which s/he attempts to reach new understanding by being open to dialogue with others. In the following section, I will explore this concept and attempt to explain why *Bildung* should be applied to the current reflective practice in SLTE.

### **The Concept of *Bildung***

Tracing the etymology of *Bildung*, Gadamer (1989/2004) explained that the word initially referred to external appearances and the way shapes formed naturally, but he also noted that it has grown to signify nuances such as 'image,' 'copy,' and 'model,' which ancient man associated with the image of God, 'after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in himself' (p.10). While the concept of *Bildung* was initially introduced by Immanuel Kant in his use of the word 'culture,' it was Wilhelm Hegel who started employing the word *Bildung* to imply the notion of self-formation as a part of the dialectical movement, and Wilhelm von Humboldt adapted and implemented the concept in German education (Mathias Simão, 2005). Appreciating Hegel and Humboldt's contribution to the development of the concept, Gadamer

admired *Bildung* as the greatest idea generated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Nicholson, 2011). In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer refers to von Humboldt's definition of *Bildung*: 'when in our language we say *Bildung*, we mean something both higher and inward, namely the disposition of mind which, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavor, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character' (von Humboldt, cited in Gadamer, 1989/2004, p.10). As mentioned above, *Bildung* involves different essences such as education, culture, formation, and self-cultivation. Davey (2006) states,

*Bildung* is not a distinct concept but an indistinct idea.... *Bildung* entails a sense of the other and different, of history and tradition, of ethical dependence, of the transcendent within both language and cultural formation as well as an acute experiential awareness of the finitude of one's hermeneutic horizons (p.38).

This connection to self-cultivation and formation is one reason I believe this concept is crucial to teacher education and reflective practice.

### **Bildung as Openness to Others' Perspectives**

The first aspect of *Bildung* that I would like to discuss in relation to reflective practice is indeed quite similar to what Dewey meant by open-mindedness, and Gadamer (1989/2004) attributed this aspect of *Bildung* to Hegel's argument about dialectics. Although Gadamer did not agree with Hegel's claim that *Bildung* is the way to absolute truth or absolute knowledge, Gadamer (1989/2004) acknowledged that he followed Hegel for what he generally meant by *Bildung*. Gadamer explained that the general characteristic of *Bildung* is 'keeping oneself open to what is other- to other, more universal points of view' (p.16). Universal points of view here do not mean Hegel's sense of absolute truth or absolute knowledge. Rather, they are the possible perspectives that the others may possess regarding a certain aspect of the world one is

encountering, and hence they do not have an end point. Our understanding of the world is continuously reconstructed through our encounter with new experience, and this process of reconstruction is never-ending. Therefore, we have to have openness in our hermeneutic encounter with new experience, which may further broaden our horizons. *Bildung*, in this sense, empathizes our openness to otherness with no absolute conclusion.

It is also true, however, that openness to others does not merely mean to respect and accept others' perspectives but also involves assessment of our own perspectives as well as those of others. Mathias Simão (2005) explains that seeking universal points of view with openness is an event of self-formation, and describes it as 'a process of rupture and reconstruction' (p.561), in which we need to acknowledge our limits so that we overcome ourselves. In order to overcome our limits, Gadamer argued, we have to bring our horizon and prejudices that construct our understanding of the world and to put them into play. Davey (2006) describes that this aspect of *Bildung* is 'both a formative and transformative (dialogical) *process* implicit within the dynamics of hermeneutical encounter' (p.41). It is transformative in that two parties engaging in dialogue reach a shared, albeit different, understanding as a result of the encounter. It is formative in that this dialogue brings a new understanding that forms their beings. When we encounter others' perspectives with openness, what happens is not that others' perspectives are replacing our perspectives. Instead, we engage in dialogue with them to reach new understanding, and this dialogue also entails our recognition of our current perspectives and to critically assess their validity in contrast to others' perspectives. Regarding this dialogic process Bohlin (2013) states,

*Bildung* can be conceived as a process of (i) reali[z]ing alternatives to one's habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting, thereby (ii) becoming able to

identify the presuppositions or assumptions underlying those ways of thinking, etc. which in turn leads to (iii) critical assessment of these presuppositions– and, we may add here, (iv) critical assessment of the alternatives. Entering into dialogue with others who think differently, we question the premises of our ordinary ways of thinking, feeling and acting, and our meaning perspectives change in response to the encounters with their alternatives. But obviously, the alternatives cannot be uncritically taken for granted either. Pulling ourselves by our own boot-straps, we must think critically and self-critically at the same time (p.398).

Therefore, *Bildung* as openness to others' perspectives involves our recognition of others' perspectives and our own perspectives and engaging in critical thinking with both of them. In emphasizing *Bildung*, Gadamer stressed the dialogic interaction between one's own perspective and new perspectives that others' bring in our encounter to new experience, and he noted that this process of rising to a more universal understanding is not something to be learned but a task for humans.

In SLTE, for example, a pre-service teacher may have preference in his/her teaching method based on his/her own experience of learning a second language. But, when the method is implemented in a lesson that s/he teaches, it may not be as effective and productive as it was supposed to be. Then, the teacher may attribute the ineffectiveness of the method simply to students' lack of motivation, energy or knowledge, or to the differences between his/her teaching style and the mentor teacher's style that the students are more used to, some or all of which may be true. But, here, it is important also to face and assess what s/he presupposed in the first interpretation of this hermeneutic encounter. The teacher might have presupposed that the

students would think the same way about the method as s/he does, and neglected to see the lesson from the perspective of the students' perspectives. If the teacher engages in dialogue with this experience with openness, s/he may realize both new understandings and his/her limitations about the choice of a teaching method in the teaching context. Through such dialogue, the teacher may still find his/her own opinion the most convincing in the immediate context. But, processing the negativity of experience by bringing his/her past experience to conscious awareness can give him/her new insights that could contribute to the future action. As Gadamer (1989/2004) mentioned, '[I]n *Bildung*, what is absorbed is not like a means that has lost its function. Rather, in acquired *Bildung* nothing disappears, but everything is preserved' (p.11). Rising to more universal points of view is to keep acquiring others' perspectives and to assimilate them into one's way of being. It is an endless process of intellectual growth.

### **Bildung as the Element in Which Gebildet Moves**

For Gadamer, *Bildung* is not just the process of self-formation involving openness, and critical and self-critical thinking. It also refers to one's mode of being. Gadamer (1989/2004) stressed, '*Bildung* is not to be understood only as the process of historically raising the mind to the universal; it is at the same time the element within which the educated man (*Gebildet*) moves' (p.14). Like the indistinctness of the concept of *Bildung*, *Gebildet*, too, is often described in multiple English expressions such as cultured man, educated man and experienced man. In his argument of aesthetic experience (*Erfahrung*), Gadamer (1989/2004) mentioned,

[E]xperience is experience of human finitude. The truly experienced person is one who has taken this to heart, who knows that he is master neither of time nor the future. The experienced man knows that all foresight is limited and all plans uncertain. In him is realized the truth value of experience. If it is characteristic of

every phase of the process of experience that the experienced person acquires a new openness to new experiences, this is certainly true of the idea of being perfectly experienced (p.365).

What we achieve through the self-formation process with *Bildung* is not only to reach shared understanding with others through openness but also to become *Gebildet*, who possesses awareness about the finitude of one's own knowledge and who is constantly and continually prepared to rise to more universal points of view in forthcoming hermeneutical encounters. In this regard, *Bildung* is not only what we should *possess* but also a state we should be *in*.

Gadamer (1989/2004) employed the word 'tact' to explain hermeneutically trained consciousness or mind that *Gebildet* possesses toward new experience: '[b]y tact we understand a special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them, for which knowledge from general principles does not suffice' (p. 15). One always has to have this tact in order to be sensitive to otherness in the encountering experience. In hermeneutic encounters, being in *Bildung* enables such otherness to show itself, and puts us in-between our horizon and other's horizon, in which our prejudices are assessed, questioned, examined and transformed through dialogue with otherness. Nurturing this consciousness of putting oneself in the space in-between is to be becoming *Gebildet* (Davey, 2006), which is a never-ending process. Thus, *Bildung* is always an on-going practice to become *Gebildet*: as Nicholson (2011) describes, 'the continuing.... *Bildung* is a *Sich-bilden*, a reflexive self-education that is likely to be life-long' (p. 67). To live in *Bildung* is 'a "moving," very human 'way' of being' (Davey, 2011, p. 51).

This aspect of *Bildung* can contribute to the development of reflective practice in SLTE in terms of adding more emphasis on teachers' disposition that promotes their reflective process. While Dewey acknowledged that open-mindedness is a pre-requisite attitude for a successful and

effective reflective process (Rogers, 2002), Gadamer's idea about *Bildung* as a process of becoming *Gebildet* also implies one's continuous endeavor to keep reflective and critical awareness as s/he encounters new experiences. Nicholson (2011) described *Bildung* as 'an education in *thinking*' (p. 62). In this sense, *Bildung* may inform and deepen teachers' mode of engaging in ongoing reflective practice.

The idea of becoming *Gebildet* aligns with the initial and ultimate goal of SLTE for employing reflective practice, which is 'educating the reflective practitioner' (Adler, 1991, p. 4). This slogan does not imply mere employment of reflective practice in SLTE as a means to promote teachers' reflection within the domain of teacher education. It is about cultivating teachers' independence as reflective practitioners. Experiencing reflective practice does not automatically make one a reflective practitioner. If teachers engage in reflective practice merely as a set of required course assignments without *Bildung* or being in *Bildung*, they may not actually be engaging in reflective practice but rather simply going through a process of reflection. Unless reflective practice is established as a sustainable, practical and autonomous practice in individual teachers, the ultimate goal of reflective practice will not be achieved. Therefore, in the employment of reflective practice, it is critically important for us, second language teacher educators, to explore how we can nurture pre-service teachers' *Bildung* in SLTE.

### **Nurturing *Bildung* in SLTE**

The question is whether or not *Bildung* can be nurtured through the curriculum of SLTE. If so, how is it possible? Indeed, as seen in von Humboldt's application to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century German education policy, *Bildung* has been implemented to public education. However, some previous studies have reported challenges in applying the concept to the actual school and

teaching contexts. For example, referring to a report from Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, Bohlin (2013) pointed out that, while *Bildung* is conceptually employed as an academic goal in higher education, it is hardly adapted to professors' instructional practice due to the numerous meanings *Bildung* possesses and the ambiguity of those meanings. Also, according to Davey (2011), '*Bildung* is not achieved by means of technical instruction but grows out of engagement with a set of concerns' (p. 46). Obviously, *Bildung* is not a kind of transmittable knowledge with a clear definition that can be taught through direct instruction. It is a kind of moral knowledge that pre-service teachers need to cultivate through the experience of continuous encounters and exposure to otherness, in which their own horizon is challenged and they engage in dialogue with otherness to acquire a new horizon. Then, the key to nurture teachers' *Bildung* lies in their encounters and exposure to otherness. As previously mentioned, philosophical hermeneutics asserts that genuine dialogue consists of the structure of questions and answers, and this aspect may offer a practical implication to the current reflective practice in SLTE, which encourages pre-service teachers to dialogically make meaning of the negativity of experience.

Referring to Gadamer's argument of genuine dialogue consisting of the structure of questions and answers, Grondin (2011) emphasized that education and *Bildung* share the idea of one's capacity to question his/her knowledge to broaden horizons. For Gadamer, Grondin states, to acquire a new horizon is to learn to raise true questions, 'to which one does not know the answer' (p. 14). This is how, I believe, philosophical hermeneutics and *Bildung* can make practical contribution to SLTE in combination with the current employment of reflective practice. Developing *Bildung* through learning to raise true questions has a potential to make reflective practice in SLTE more effective and meaningful and to promote teachers to remain reflective practitioners. Dewey (1934) asserted that, reflective process begins when one

encounters a challenge or conflict and tries to overcome it. In other words, encountering a true question is always the starting point of reflective process. Philosophical hermeneutics and the concept of *Bildung* could help reflective practice in SLTE by strengthening teachers' sense or tact of noticing the negativity of experience that leads them to the reflective process.

Encountering and being exposed to true questions gives teachers opportunities to engage in thinking, as Nicholson (2011) states,

This is an effect of the teacher's self-education: bumping again and again against the border between what is known and what is unknown. It is not merely that self-education will expand the teacher's body of knowledge. Thinking is the activity in which we can discourse both what we know and about what we do not know, that is, the activity of questioning (p. 71).

Without a doubt, it is important that, through such encounters and exposure to the dialogic activity of questioning, teachers are able to acquire many different horizons regarding second language teaching and learning, which may transform their beliefs and, eventually, their practice. However, more importantly, such engagement in the activity of questioning offers them opportunities to go through the reflective process: recognizing the negativity of experience that challenges their own prejudices, engaging in dialogue with openness to other perspectives, and realizing the finitude of their experience, all of which contribute to the promotion of their *Bildung*. And, continuous encounter and exposure to such activities is essential for them to remain in *Bildung*, to become *Gebildet*, and to become a reflective practitioner.

This suggests that it is another task for us, those who work with pre-services teachers in SLTE, to make sure to create an environment in which pre-service teachers are encouraged to engage in thinking with true questions. In order to lead and expose pre-service teachers to this

activity of dialogue, we need to provide true questions that do not possess either an expected or absolute answer. Through exposing pre-service teachers to critical and reflective engagement with such questions, we should draw them into a dialogue with their own historical horizons and others'. By doing so, their horizons of teaching and learning a second language can be broadened and transformed and, more importantly, they can realize and be aware of the finitude of their experience and knowledge.

Furthermore, we need to keep it in mind that those of us who are teacher educators also need to demonstrate our own *Bildung* in our interaction with the pre-service teachers we work with. In the process of our students' intellectual and professional development, our role should not be limited to be a mere provider of knowledge but should also include being a participant in the dialogic activity of questioning. Reflective practice has been regarded as 'a social practice' rather than individual teacher's private activity (Zeichner, 1993). In this sense, teacher educators are also collaborators in their students' reflective process, who seek for new understanding about the focal subject matter. Therefore, teacher educators need to take risks to ask questions to which they themselves do not know the answer (Nicholson, 2011). It is our task to possess *Bildung* and remain in *Bildung* in our interaction with pre-service teachers by acknowledging the limits of our knowledge and by expressing openness to individual teachers' perspectives. Grondin (2011) stressed, 'Self-education... starts with the pupil that we never cease to be' (p. 18). In this sense, teacher educators equally need to be pupils who aspire self-education (*Bildung*) in their dialogue with their students and to be aware that their own *Bildung* is also promoted through their dialogue with individual teachers. That is, pre-service teachers' *Bildung* needs to be nurtured with teacher educators' demonstration of their own *Bildung* with both participants helping each other promote their individual self-education through engaging in dialogue together.

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### CHAPTER 3

#### A FAILURE OF DIALOGUE? A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON A DISCUSSION BETWEEN A TEACHER TRAINER AND A PRE-SERVICE SECOND-LANGUAGE TEACHER<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Yagata, K. 2017. *Reflective Practice*. 18(3); 326-338.  
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## **Abstract**

Reflective practice in teacher education often involves dialogic communication between teacher educators and teachers. This essay asks what constitutes authentic dialogic engagement in discussions between a pre-service second-language (SL) teacher and her university supervisor. Written as a self-critical reflection, the paper first describes the author's thoughts and feelings about a post-teaching session he conducted with one of his supervisees and identifies possible disconnections existing between them. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and Hans-Georg Gadamer's of genuine dialogue, this paper reflects on the dispositions that foster a dialogic relationship between teacher educators and pre-service and in-service teachers.

Key words: teacher education, dialogue, reflective practice, Bakhtin, Gadamer

## Introduction

‘I think the, the biggest thing I would want to accomplish is to be able to just *teach*,’ Mary told me. I replied, ‘OK, then, let’s think about how *we* can do that.’ Mary heaved a deep sigh.

This paper is my critical reflection on a reflective session I experienced as a second-language (SL) teacher educator. Specifically, it reflects on the quality of the dialogue between one of my supervisees, Mary (pseudonym), and me during a post-lesson reflective session. This session has become for me what John Dewey (1944) called an *educative experience*. This term refers to an experience that ‘broadens the field of experience and knowledge, brings awareness to bear, and leads in a constructive direction, toward intelligent action’ (Rodgers, 2002, p. 847). This experience has provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my use of dialogue as a teacher trainer and more generally on the function of dialogue as a tool for scaffolding pre-service teachers’ reflective practice. While the bitterness of the experience belongs, no doubt, in part to my immaturity as a teacher educator, I also believe there is a lesson here worth sharing with other teacher educators engaged in teacher education, where the employment of RP has become standard (Rodgers, 2002; Wright, 2010; Zeichner & Liu, 2010). To be clear from the start, my argument is not that RP is invalid or ineffective. Indeed, I employ reflective practice both in my work with teachers and in my own ongoing professional growth as a SL teacher. My goal in this paper is to urge teacher educators to search for new ways to produce more authentic dialogue with the pre-service and in-service teachers with whom they work.

As this paper itself is an exercise in reflective practice, the writing style I employ here follows the sequence of my reflective process. While I acknowledge that it is an unconventional format for an academic paper, I believe that it conveys the process of implementing reflection in

daily practice as an educator. I begin with a narrative account of the experience that includes a description of the context in which our encounter occurred. I then move to a discourse analysis of our session to identify ways in which I fell short of producing a meaningful dialogue with Mary. The following section presents a discussion of the conceptions of dialogue of Bakhtin and Gadamer and of notions of mentoring in SL teacher education. I end with thoughts on how teacher educators can reflect on our own practice to produce more effective forms of dialogic reflection with our students.

### **My View of Mary and Her Class**

Mary was one of the pre-service SL teachers enrolled in my SL teaching methodology course in which I implemented reflective practice as a core activity. An active and enthusiastic learner, she was one of the leaders in our class discussions. In her practicum, she was in charge of teaching six periods a day at a high school. None of her classes consisted of gifted or honor students, and she considered her students to have low proficiency in Spanish, a subject she said they seemed to care little about. According to Mary, many of the students were struggling with serious issues in their lives outside of school, for which she emphasized they needed assistance. Mary appeared to care about her students very much. Before the class I observed started, she stood near the classroom door and welcomed her students, talking to them individually and joking about recent events. After the class, she reminded them about unfinished projects, encouraged them in their forthcoming sporting events, and listened to what was going on in their lives. In the middle of our reflective session, some students came to her classroom just to say hello and talk to her. When Mary introduced me as her supervisor, two students said in a serious tone of voice, ‘She is the best teacher I have ever had!’

It was my first observation of Mary's teaching in that school. She had been teaching there for about two months at the point I observed, and she said that she had become used to the school and had established a good rapport with her students. I encourage my supervisees to choose a challenging or difficult class for me to observe to make our reflective sessions optimally constructive. My purpose in such observations is not only to evaluate pre-service teachers' instructional skills and knowledge, but also to help them develop new insights in teaching and learning through critical and collaborative reflection on their teaching. Mary invited me to her late morning class, which she found to be the most challenging to teach. As I was sitting in the back of the classroom, students came in, and Mary talked to them warmly, one by one. When the class started, she called their attention to begin a routine warm-up activity in which students practiced the conjugation patterns of Spanish verbs that they had learned previously. In the lesson I observed, Mary developed a presentation activity in which students worked in pairs on a task-based interactive language activity and then gave a short individual presentation. Mary sometimes stopped in the middle of her instruction to manage students' behavior, such as their use of cell phones or chatting with friends. By the time the class ended, the students had completed the tasks that Mary had planned for the day, and each student had given a short presentation in Spanish. I was impressed by the way she had constructed the class activities so that all the students, who had little knowledge of Spanish, achieved the goals of the lesson.

After the students left the classroom, I took out a portable recorder from my bag and asked Mary if I could record our reflective session so that I could revisit the recording to help me write her evaluation. She agreed, and we started our reflective session. I first offered her some feedback regarding what I had found interesting and effective in her teaching. I told her that I liked the smooth sequence of class activities, the scaffolding she provided to students, and the

interactive class environment. I also mentioned that her students seemed to be making an effort to complete the tasks, regardless of their typical teenage misbehavior. When I engage in reflective practice as a teacher educator, I try to ask such questions as ‘What do you think was most challenging for you and for your students?’ and ‘What would you change if you taught the same class again?’ with the aim of helping the pre-service teachers learn to identify shortcomings in their teaching and areas they would like to work on. In my session with Mary, I first asked her what she would like to achieve in her teaching. Her answer, as quoted in the epigram at the beginning of this paper, was: ‘I think the, the biggest thing I would want to accomplish is to be able to just *teach*.’ Mary went on to describe her struggles with classroom management and student behavior. What she found particularly challenging was keeping students focused in the beginning of class and during interactive activities. She sounded frustrated and worn out from fussing at them. I replied by saying, ‘OK, then let’s think about how *we* can do that,’ and provided some practical instructional suggestions.

### **Encountering a Surprise through Peer Feedback**

Soon after the observation, in one of my doctoral seminars, it was my turn to bring a short text to class for discussion. Given my interest in exploring the effectiveness of reflective sessions in teacher education, I transcribed and shared with the class the session that I conducted with Mary, with her permission, and carefully obscuring information that could identify her or her school. When reading the transcription by myself at home, I felt like I had been successful in my role as her supervisor in this session helping her to develop new insights about her teaching. However, it took discussion with my classmates and professor about the transcript for me to read our discourse differently and critically evaluate my contributions to the reflective session. Their outsider perspectives allowed my colleagues to pay attention not only to the content of the

session but also to the quality of the interaction between Mary and me. Through this dialogue, I became aware of some blind spots and my perspective was transformed. This was an unexpected and, because the tables were suddenly turned, ironic experience of the power of reflective practice. Of all the insights my classmates provided, I was struck by my lack of awareness of the far from ideal role I played in the dialogue. When I re-read the transcript after discussing it in class, I felt guilty and ashamed.

### **Mary as Frustrated Practitioner and Me as The Voice of Wisdom**

Throughout the reflective session, Mary indicated in various ways the seriousness of the difficulties and challenges she was facing in her practicum. In the beginning of our session when I asked her what she would like to achieve in her teaching, Mary answered:

*Mary:* Umm, I think the, the biggest thing I would want to accomplish ... is to be able to just teach. Like [chuckles], I mean, I know that's huge, but to just, you know, not have to say, 'Hey be quiet, OK? Come on, let's do the warm up,' like, the warm up is five minutes or less, and sometimes takes fifteen minutes because it's like ... you know, 'Sit down!' 'Where's your folder?' you know, the sixth period is hard 'cause there are thirty of them. So, because I have this plenty, I usually put the folders on their desk. So when they walk in [Mary snaps her fingers three times in a row].

*Me:* OK.

*Mary:* Uh, but I think just getting them to stop talking.

I interpret the meaning of 'just teach' as: 'I would like to conduct my lesson smoothly, but I can't because I need to give too much of my attention to classroom management throughout the class.' She clarified what she meant by shifting her discourse style back and forth between

explanations and role-playing narratives. In the quoted parts of speech, she talked as if she were addressing her misbehaving students in class: ‘Hey, be quiet, OK?’ The implication here is that students being quiet, sitting down, and putting their folders on their desks are pre-requisites to beginning the warm-up activity, in other words, for Mary to start teaching. Mary was expecting, or hoping, for these not very motivated high school students to behave more like motivated adults, but the reality was different. She needed extra effort, time, and care to deal with their rowdy behavior, during which her Spanish teaching was suspended. Her frustration came from the gap between her wishes and reality.

I also find interesting Mary’s use of the phrase ‘thirty of them.’ There is no clear antecedent for the pronoun ‘them’ here. In the class discussion, some of my classmates interpreted the phrase as something like having to battle single-handedly against 30 enemy combatants. However, as I re-read the transcription repeatedly and took the context of her narrative into consideration, the phrase refers less to her students’ being antagonistic than to their immaturity. I interpret the phrase to mean that, like the proverbial woman who lived in the shoe, that she has to care for more children than she knows what to do, or to put it in more familiar teacher discourse: ‘The class size is too big.’ What Mary conveys here is that she sees herself as a caretaker who has to get immature students ready to learn before she can actually start teaching Spanish, which is her field of specialization.

I saw my role as an active listener who makes an effort to empathize and understand what my advisee was telling me. However, while I was a listener here, I failed to be an active one. My response to her opening statement was to say: ‘You want more focus.’ This comment suggests that I wanted to remain in the role of the supervisor who summarizes what Mary was saying in order to quickly identify the core problem and solve it practically by coming up with new

instructional strategies. In retrospect, I regret that I did not really *listen* to Mary so that I could truly understand her emotional struggles and the situation she was in. If I had paid more attention to the affective aspect of her utterance, I could have taken a different approach to this reflective session.

Speeding up the pace of her speech, Mary responded to my summary statement by contrasting her ideal classroom and her current one:

*Mary:* Yeah, just to be like, I would like to be able to say, ‘OK. Good job with your warm-up! All right, this is our next activity. Boom boom boom! Let’s do it!’ Today it was okay, but it seems like every day it’s ‘Put your phones away! Get your ear buds out! Stop talking! Listen!’ you know, umm ... you know, ‘I have to take points off ‘cause you were talking while she was presenting! I have to give you detention because I asked you to stop!’ and, and ‘You are not even trying to hide it,’ you know. So, um, I think that’s ... that’s my goal and that’s my goal in all of my classes. That’s a battle. The bell rings, and they’re not at their desk. They are talking and they coming to ... My situation is different, too, because I don’t, some of them come from far. So getting to my classroom takes time, so...

*Me:* Right. OK, then let’s think about how we can do that.

*Mary:* [Deep sigh]

Mary began this conversational turn by describing her ideal class, where her students would transition smoothly from the warm up to the heart of the lesson. Her onomatopoeic ‘Boom boom boom!’ expresses a smooth, masterful control of the flow of the lesson that Mary wishes she had with her students in her class. Mary proceeds to contrast this ideal by performing how

she feels compelled to behave in reality, as she struggles with misbehavior of her students including using cell phones, using ear buds, and openly chatting. By performing rather than just describing her frustrated reactions to her students' misbehavior, she makes her frustration more present and real.

Mary then summarizes these frustrations with the metaphor 'That's a battle.' At this point, for her, the classroom is a battlefield. However, what she conveys is that her enemies are not her students themselves but rather their immaturity. Based on my observation of her class, I am confident that Mary cares about these students. She chatted warmly with her students before and after class not only about study-related topics but also about their lives outside of school. She frequently complemented her students for their class performance and encouraged them to realize their potential. She said she does not expect them to be great, but she hopes for them to at least try their best. Her frustration comes when their immaturity and misbehavior undermine what she hopes to accomplish each day with them in class.

Mary's deep sigh at the end of this exchange encapsulates and performs her feelings of powerlessness, pressure, frustration, anger, and sadness. I can see that my response: 'Let's think about how we can do that' was not helpful. My lame attempt to rush her into identifying solutions was a way of avoiding really listening to and acknowledging her frustration and pain. I should have given her more time and space to work through her intense emotions. My response suggests that I was seeing her as a teacher and teaching as a technical task, and not as a person who has complex emotions about her students and what she has to offer them as their teacher. I failed to attend and respond to what she was communicating with that long, deep sigh.

My eagerness to help Mary find technical solutions to her classroom management problems kept me from hearing that her deeper anxiety grew out of her awareness of the

challenges her students face outside of school. She mentioned that many of her students come from difficult backgrounds and that they often share their serious and sad stories with her. Caring about her students and sharing the weight of their negative emotions exhaust her, as she told me later in the session:

*Mary:* I really do enjoy teaching. I mean, you probably, after watching me a while, I mean, I do. I do love it. I love teaching and I love being with the kids. But it's, it's pulling teeth, man. Well, I should be paid like a dentist to be a teacher. [chuckle] Because it's harder, I mean, it's like, 'Come on, you can do it, you can do it' and, and it's, you never know what mood they are gonna be in. They come in every day. You have one crying or one who's been extra loud and is very happy, and then one that's like ... you know, so it's, it's dealing with emotions.

Mary repeatedly emphasized how much she loves teaching and working with her students. But her use of emphasis and repetition here ('I really do ... I do. I do love it. I love teaching. And I love being with kids') hint that her feelings toward her students and her teaching are more complex and nuanced than straightforward love and sympathy. To stress the difficulty she was facing, Mary compares her task to 'pulling teeth.' Her metaphor suggests that it is as difficult to teach her students as it is for a dentist to extract a tooth and that her students are as resistant to her instruction as are scared dental patients to the dental care they need. But, while dental problems are painful, they are not as intractable as the combination of immaturity and social disadvantages facing Mary's students. Technological developments in dentistry have made it much easier to pull teeth, but there are no pedagogical advances that have made it any easier for teachers to deal with students' misbehavior and social disadvantage. Battling the capricious

moods of teenagers every day, Mary was trying to tell me that she needed something more than help with her practical skills; she needed a way to keep from being overwhelmed by her situation.

How did I miss hearing her suffering? What prevented me from keeping up my responsibility as a partner in her reflective dialogue? I know what I was thinking. I was thinking about ways she could keep her students focused on her instructions and class tasks. Too eager to be helpful and to appear to Mary and to myself to be a capable teacher trainer, I did not hear or respond to the import of what Mary was sharing with me.

Even after Mary's deep sigh, I continued with this single-minded purpose:

*Me:* Right. OK, then let's think about how we can do that.

*Mary:* [Deep sigh] *Me:* I mean little by little. So, the preparation for the presentation, it was pretty normal. I mean, if students are put in groups, they talk. I mean that's pretty natural.

*Mary:* Right. That's why I fuss at them talking during the group.

*Me:* That's pretty natural, and...

*Mary:* But I was fussing more on that they weren't talking about the project or they were on the phones, not using Google translate.

*Me:* I thought that, um, that would be good if you could tell them, like, less time, like, 'You have 10 minutes to finish this project.'

*Mary:* Okay.

*Me:* And then later you can add, 'OK, I'll give five more minutes, so practice it.'

*Mary:* Right.

*Me:* So, they think they have 15 minutes. So, they feel like, ‘Oh now still we have, like, 12 minutes, we can talk.’

*Mary:* But 10 minutes. ‘Oh oh we gotta get it done.’

*Me:* Yeah, ‘We have 10 minutes, we don’t have much time to complete all these things.’

*Mary:* Right. OK. I got it. OK. Less time and always add extra time. [Mary writes down what she says]

*Me:* And then, you see how they are working and say like ‘OK, I’ll give you five more minutes. But make sure to practice it at least three times with your partner, and correct your pronunciation.’

The bits of instructional advice I offered here were small but, I hoped, effective changes in how she managed the amount of time she gave students for their group work. With students’ immaturity and propensity to misbehave foremost in my mind, I presented practical solutions, solutions that were not wrong, but inadequate. I focused on instructional techniques that could make the class run more smoothly and ignored the core of the problem Mary was trying to get me to see. Mary’s use of the phrase ‘fuss at them’ suggests that she feels her actions toward students’ misbehavior are no longer helpful, and indicates more her loss of patience than effective, professional intervention. While I was aware of her struggles with classroom management and students’ misbehavior, I did not truly understand how deeply such struggles exhausted her mentally and emotionally.

In this session, I neglected to *listen* generously to Mary. I missed so many distress signals from Mary – ‘thirty of them,’ ‘that’s a battle,’ ‘pulling teeth,’ ‘fussing at them’ and her 1.5-second-long sigh – as I remained focused on instruction, pedagogy, and the sequence and

constructions of the activities. While I performed my role of the helpful, knowledgeable, pragmatic teacher trainer, I did not pay enough attention to her emotions hidden behind her discourse.

### **The Power Gap**

Another mistake I find I made in the session was being insufficiently aware of the power differences between Mary and me that come from our roles and status in this interaction of supervisee and supervisor. Class observations were mandatory for practicum students, and Mary was aware that I would write an evaluation of her teaching and of her ability to engage in reflective practice. I had also been the instructor for one of her required courses. These factors made my voice authoritative, and made it difficult for Mary to offer counterarguments to my suggestions.

In the previous excerpt, we can see that Mary affirmed or repeated everything I suggested. Indeed, throughout the whole session, she never reacted negatively to any of my suggestions or opinions. Perhaps she thought that my suggestions were good ideas; perhaps she was too polite or deferential to tell me otherwise. I gave no thought at the time to the possibility that she was anything but appreciative of my advice. I provided suggestions and advice that I thought would be beneficial for her based on my own past teaching experience and my knowledge of second-language teaching research. I knew very little about her teaching context, her students, and the class dynamics. I had only observed one of her classes. How and why was I so sure that my suggestions would work in this context? Why did I not ask her some questions like, ‘Do you think this might work in your class?’; I was supposed to help her recognize her blind spots and to develop a new understanding of teaching and learning. What I was doing instead was pushing my theories, practices, and beliefs.

My self-centeredness did not stop there. Later in the session, we discussed how to keep students engaged in listening to presentations as audience members:

*Me:* And during the presentation, probably you wanted them to focus on the presentation, like, listen and see how they are going.

*Mary:* Yes.

*Me:* If I would do that activity, I may ask a particular student to be a master of the ceremony.

*Mary:* Ohhhh.

*Me:* Like, some talkative students. 'I know you are funny. I know you can talk.'

*Mary:* Oh, introduce the next group.

*Me:* Yeah.

*Mary:* Ohhhh. Good idea.

*Me:* So, just like, 'Come here' and 'Stand here.'

*Mary:* Master of the ceremony, I like that. (Mary writes down what she says.)

*Me:* 'Welcome to this event' and 'The first group is... him and him. Please come here,' kind of introduction.

*Mary:* Uh huh. And I think the other thing I would do, too, is write down who is gonna go when.

*Me:* Right.

*Mary:* While they are working, say, you know, 'You guys are number one, you are number two, number three.'

*Me:* Ah huh. You could decide the order before you start the presentations, or like you did in the fall, like a snowball? Those who finish the presentation

can choose the next one.

*Mary:* Oh, perfect.

*Me:* So, like, 'Next, you do it' and then the master of the ceremony says, 'Alright, the next group is that group. Come here!'

*Mary:* Oh OK, yeah, that's a good idea.

*Me:* And also, the other students could be judges although you may not take their judgments into consideration in grading.

*Mary:* Ohhhh.

Again, Mary did not give any counterarguments to my suggestions, but rather she affirmed or complemented my ideas. However, this time, she offered an idea of her own: 'And I think the other thing I would do, too, is write down who is gonna go when.' My response was immediately to offer what I thought was a better idea (that the student who finished their presentation would choose the next presenter). In fact, this is a practice Mary was using when I had previously observed her teaching in another context. The problem is not that I mentioned the idea, but that in this conversation I countered her one attempt to offer her own idea that she thought would be effective. The session should have been a sharing of ideas, but it instead was one dominated by my ideas. I was giving my opinions as her supervisor without giving her many chances to bring her own theories and beliefs to the discussion, and my suggestions overrode her ideas due to the power relation between us.

Thus, again, I did not listen generously to Mary. If I had held back more from being so aggressively helpful and knowledgeable, she may have come up with more ideas that may have worked in her classroom. I should have given her space to express and develop her own implicit theories, practice, and beliefs through her daily teaching experience at the school. She very well

may have had ideas that were better than mine. She understood her teaching context and her students far better than I did, but my desire to be a competent supervisor urged me to push my ideas. My role as a university supervisor not only contributed to a hierarchical relationship between us but also placed pressure on me to offer insights or advice even in this situation in which I did not know what could really help her. I thought we were having dialogue in which both of us were open, equal to each other and able to develop a new understanding together. In reality, my lack of awareness of my power as a supervisor and my own desire to be helpful regardless of my actual ability to provide constructive advice prevented me from being an equal conversation partner for Mary.

### **Re-conceptualizing Dialogue and Mentoring**

Reflective practice has been employed and valued in SL teacher education for about 30 years (e.g. Farrell, 2016; Wright, 2010). While it has become a standard method in the field, researchers have also identified its misuses and challenges (e.g. Asención Delaney, 2012; Wright, 2010; Zeichner & Liu, 2010). Zeichner and Liu (2010) argue that reflective practice too often (1) values the replication of teaching practice that researchers found effective ignoring individual teacher's creativity and contextual knowledge; (2) focuses on the micro-level of teaching (e.g. instruction, activity designs, classroom management) that neglects the macro-level (e.g. curriculum design, the ultimate goal of the course); and (3) isolates the teaching from the class and institutional situation/context. These notions indicate that, as observed in my reflective session with Mary, the individuality of teachers and their situated contexts too often are dismissed or ignored in the process of reflection. In the next section, I turn to how ideas about dialogue of Dewey, Bakhtin, and Gadamer have useful implications for how reflective mentoring can be employed in teacher education.

## Dialogue

Dewey (1933, 1938), an early proponent of reflective practice, emphasized three attitudes that the practitioners need to hold in the dialogic reflective process: open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility. It is the keeping of these qualities that makes reflective sessions dialogic. But what exactly is dialogue? And what are the characteristics of reflective dialogues that include these attitudes? A critical reflection on my session with Mary helps me see where I fell short in ‘being dialogic.’ Mikhail Bakhtin’s and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s writings on dialogue provide a conceptual framework for understanding these shortcomings and imagining how I can improve future reflective encounters with the teachers I supervise.

Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and scholar in the early twentieth century, developed theories on language, literacy, and ethics; his concept of ‘dialogism’ (Bakhtin, 1981) is one of them. According to Clark and Holquist (1984), for Bakhtin dialogism is an endless struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces; between difference and diversity; and between what he calls heteroglossia, which arises organically from the interaction of interlocutors, and forces of sameness, what he calls monologism, which reflects hegemony and authoritarianism. Social life arises out of the negotiation of language and meaning between authors and readers, and speakers and listeners in specific contexts (which Bakhtin calls chronotopes). Holquist further explains Bakhtin’s dialogism as follows:

[W]hat gives dialogue its central place in dialogism is precisely the kind of relation conversations manifest, the conditions that must be met if any exchange between different speakers is to occur at all. That relation is most economically defined as one in which differences – while still remaining different – serve as the building blocks of simultaneity. In a conversation, both speakers are different

from each other and the utterance each makes is always different from the other's (even when one appears to repeat the "same" word as the other); and yet all these differences – and many more – are held together in the relation of dialogue (p. 39).

As Holquist suggests, individuals share difference in ways of speaking, points of view, and meaning they make of the world, differences which produce social heteroglossia and ideological contestation. As Nesari (2015, p. 644) writes: 'Heteroglossia exists in a world of interactions in which a set of different voices create not only harmony but also disharmony.' Dialogue also offers a way forward to new understandings and meanings. In dialogue, two different subjectivities meet, transform each other, and co-construct a new understanding of the world, while remaining different. The outcome of authentic dialogue is neither unity nor divergence but rather, the co-construction of new points of view.

Gadamer, a German philosopher and the founder of philosophical hermeneutics, shares with Bakhtin the idea that individuals have different points of view and that dialogue is a way to reach new understanding. For Gadamer, each of our understandings of the world are prejudiced by our cultural, historical, and linguistic traditions and situatedness, and reaching a new understanding comes from a fusion of horizons, meaning that we negotiate our prejudices (horizon) through dialogue with others (Gadamer, 1989). Like Dewey, Gadamer (1989, 2006) asserts that dialogue needs to be genuine in order for a new understanding to occur. He emphasizes that, in genuine dialogue, participants not only take the other person's context into consideration but also listen to each other's values with open-mindedness (Gadamer, 1989). He asserts that genuine dialogue follows a pattern of questions and answers. When different values meet in communication, our presuppositions come into question. In such moments, we come to

question our presuppositions and open ourselves to the possibility of transforming or renewing our views. As Freeman (2011, p. 547) explains, ‘It is in dialogue, in this encounter between question and answer, that a hermeneutics of facticity, of our state of being, acting, and meaning from within a historically and linguistically effected world, takes place.’ It is when ‘one brings one’s own presupposition into play’ (Gadamer, 2006, p. 45) that understanding occurs.

Therefore, for Gadamer, dialogue has to be open-minded and reflective. It is not something that occurs naturally without participants’ conscious effort. It is something that the participants *create* through careful and critical consideration of each other’s values. Employing a German word *Bildung*, meaning ‘self-formation,’ ‘education,’ or ‘cultivation,’ Gadamer (1989) emphasized one’s disposition of openness toward new and different perspectives in dialogue.

### **The Previous Notions of Reflective Mentoring in SL Teacher Education**

According to Asención Delaney (2012), mentorship is now regarded as both a personal and a professional relationship within which the mentor and the mentee engage in the co-construction of professional identities. In this constructivist view, mentors communicate with their mentees without considering themselves as supervisors, trainers, or evaluators (Malderez, 2009). To achieve the co-construction process, it is crucial for those who engage in mentoring to try applying the various factors suggested by previous notions to their practice. While it is not possible to eliminate entirely the power difference existing between the mentor and the mentee, it is necessary that both the mentor and the mentee make an effort to establish a dialogic and constructive relationship that is as non-hierarchical as possible.

In this regard, previous studies have pointed out the challenging aspects of mentoring in SL teacher education. Some authors argue that the mentor should provide psychological and emotional support as well as technical and pragmatic feedback on teaching practice (Malderez &

Bódoczy, 1999). Hyland and Lo (2006) explored the post-observation interactions between ESL (English as a second language) pre-service teachers in Hong Kong and their university supervisors, and found that the pre-service teachers expected their supervisors to provide both affective support and constructive feedback in a friendly manner. In fact, Brannan and Bleistein's (2012) perception study revealed that novice ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers perceived that the affective support had more positive impact on their teaching efficacy than did pragmatic support. These studies suggest that technical and practical knowledge about teaching is not enough to make the reflective session successful.

To simultaneously provide emotional support and practical advice, the mentor needs both self-awareness and strategies for promoting non-hierarchical dialogue. Farr (2003) investigated the linguistic characteristics of interactions between pre-service English teachers and their tutors in an Irish university. She found that pre-service teachers' self-reflection increased when the tutors employed minimal response tokens (e.g. 'mm,' 'OK,' 'yes,' 'no'), which suggest a supportive attitude without interrupting their talk. On the other hand, Vásquez's (2004) study examining the post-observation session between TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) graduate teaching assistants (TAs) and their mentors revealed that the TAs preferred explicit and critical feedback to implicit and indirect critiques and advice. Taken together, these studies suggest that in order to most effectively prompt teacher's self-reflection, teacher educators have to respond to both the affective and practical dimensions of their mentees' utterances. The art of such mentoring is knowing when to respond empathetically and when to offer practical advice.

## **Failure as a Way of Learning**

Bakhtin and Gadamer's concepts of dialogue and the findings from previous studies on mentoring in SL teacher education suggest that dialogic mentoring requires the mentor to be reflectively aware of both the expected role and the technical strategies that prompt and promote the mentee's reflective process. Reflecting again on the post-observation session between Mary and me, it is clear that I did not attend to the qualities of meaningful dialogue emphasized by Bakhtin and Gadamer. I was offering my authoritative voice to Mary and not listening to her generously. I was not appreciative of her standpoint nor did I question my presuppositions about teaching and mentoring or the limitations inherent in my knowledge of her teaching context and her students. These factors all contributed to my lack of attention and awareness and contributed to what I now see as the shortcomings of this dialogue.

As a teacher educator who values the power of reflective practice, this experience feels like a personal failure. At the same time, it is also an educative experience. This failure is helping me critically question and transform my presuppositions about reflective dialogue in SL teacher education. A co-constructive dialogic reflective session requires teacher educators to build relationships with our supervisees that are both professional and personal. Teacher educators need to attend to the affective dimensions of our supervisees' utterances and to consider the situated contexts in which they are teaching as well as offering technical advice. Moreover, to promote supervisees' self-reflection, it is necessary for teacher educators to pay attention to the way we engage in the dialogue. Such a process involves continuous reflective and critical assessment of our own values, motivations, and roles in the dialogue. It is not only supervisees who can gain new understanding from reflective practice. We, teacher educators, can also be humble learners who strive to take from each of our dialogues with our mentees new insights that

can transform our understanding of the world. I admit that my shortcomings described in this paper were caused in large part by my immaturity and lack of experience as a teacher educator, but my hope is that sharing my experience will provide an opportunity for us as a field to continue to re-conceptualize mentoring and the quality of dialogue between teacher educators and teachers.

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## CHAPTER 4

### DILEMMAS IN TEACHING HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS: THE VOICE OF A NON-NATIVE SPANISH TEACHER CANDIDATE <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Yagata, K. Submitted to International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, October 2018.

## **Abstract**

Attending to a non-native Spanish teacher candidate's narrative regarding his practicum experience with heritage language learners (HLLs), this hermeneutic phenomenological case study describes the identity struggles he encountered during the experience. Findings show that his struggles resulted not only from a perceived lack of pedagogical knowledge or skill, but also from intersecting issues as a White, non-native speaking Spanish teacher teaching Latinx HLLs: being not as competent in Spanish language as his students, appearing inauthentic in the context of teaching HLLs, and feeling unethical to be in an authoritative position in the HLL classroom. Discussion and implications suggest that we, as second language teachers, teacher educators, and second language teacher education as a field, should take into account a broader view of the complexities of the contextualized realities of teachers we work with, and that we should continue exploring these issues relationally and holistically in our research and practice.

Key words: non-native second language teachers, heritage language learners, hermeneutic phenomenology, second language teacher education

## Introduction

This paper describes one non-native Spanish teacher candidate's (TC) struggles with heritage language teaching during his practicum experience. This case study is part of a larger body of data I collected to explore how second language TCs make meaning of their practicum experiences. Among several cases, this TC's case stood out among the data as worthy of a deeper look as he was the only non-native speaking TC to have had practicum experiences in both second language and heritage language classrooms.

### Research on Non-Native Second Language Teachers and Heritage Language Classrooms

In second language teacher education (SLTE) in the U.S., issues of non-native second language teachers (NNSLTs) and heritage language education (HLE) have attracted particular attention in the last few decades. However most has been from the field of teaching English to Speakers of other languages (TESOL). Research on NNSLTs emerged in early 1990s as the field of TESOL grew, and since then the number of non-native English teachers has continued to increase due to the spread of English as an international/global *lingua franca* (Moussu & Llorca, 2008). Non-native English teachers are common globally (Canagarajah, 2005), even in countries where English is the national language (Liu, 1999). However, there is much less research on non-native speaking teachers of other world languages, which I will briefly address below in my discussion of the case of non-native speaking Spanish teachers.

Heritage language learners (HLLs) refer to those who have prior exposure to the target language at home and/or in the language community (Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010; Valdés, 2005). In particular, Spanish is a major language spoken in many communities across the U.S., and has therefore been a central focus in HLE research. The number of Spanish language users in the U.S. has been increasing rapidly in the last few decades (Torres, Pascual & Beusterien,

2018). According to the U.S. Census Report (2017), nearly 18% of the current U.S. population identifies as Hispanic or Latinx, and it is estimated that the number will grow to 27.5% by 2060. This suggests that there will be a growing need for high quality HLE as the Spanish language plays an increasingly significant role in American society.

**The need for a holistic approach.** NNSLTs and HLE have typically been examined separately (NNSLTs: e.g., Ghanem, 2015; Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Reynolds-Case, 2012; Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013, HLE: e.g., Bowles, Toth, & Adams, 2014; Fairclough, 2006; O'Rourke & Zhou, 2016; Torres & Turner, 2017). At the same time, however, some researchers have examined them as interrelated issues (e.g., Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010; Harklau, 2009; Randolph, 2017; Russell & Kuriscak, 2015). Following this notion, in this paper I will consider these issues as intersecting as I explore the challenges one non-native Spanish TC encountered. I will attend to how he discussed his teaching practicum experience in an HLL classroom in one of our post-observation conversations.

### **NNSLTs in Spanish as a Second and Heritage Language Education in the U.S.**

Although much less research on NNSLTs pertains to languages other than English, in recent years it has increased especially in Spanish language education (e.g., Ghanem, 2015; Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Reynolds-Case, 2012; Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013). Many studies have investigated the challenges that NNSLTs encounter in the classroom as well as in their professional identity development through classroom experiences. For example, Ghanem (2015) examined how native versus non-native identities of German teachers in a U.S. college context influenced their self-perception of teaching the target language and culture. Ghanam found that the non-native identity negatively affected teachers' confidence and comfort in the classroom. Also, in a study of college-level non-native Spanish teachers, Thompson and

Fioramonte (2013) showed that participants found teaching pronunciation to be challenging, and, in fact, in their own experience as Spanish learners they preferred native Spanish speaking teachers to non-native ones.

On the other hand, studies have also identified several advantages that NNSLTs can bring to the second language learner classroom. Through analyzing the discourses of Spanish classes conducted by three native and non-native Spanish teachers in a U.S. college, Reynolds-Case (2012) found that the non-native teachers possessed a stronger ability to assess students' learning process, to provide grammar learning strategies, and to offer personal advice on how to learn the target language compared to their native speaker counterparts. The study also reported that non-native teachers attribute their success to the fact that they share the same first language with the students and that they have experienced learning Spanish language in foreign language classroom settings.

Recently, many studies of NNSLTs have been connected to HLE (e.g., Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010; Harklau, 2009; Randolph, 2017). These studies almost exclusively focus on Spanish language learning due to the rapid increase in the number of heritage learners of Spanish language in the U.S. over the last few decades (Torres, Pascual & Beusterien, 2018). They have commonly suggested that U.S. Spanish language teachers are not well prepared to offer effective instruction and materials for the unique linguistic and cultural background of HLLs (e.g., Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010; Russell & Kuriscak, 2015; Torres et al., 2018). For example, Russell and Kuriscak (2015) surveyed 10 pre-service (8 non-native and 2 heritage speakers) and 20 in-service (17 non-native and 3 heritage speakers) Spanish teachers in Indiana secondary schools about their awareness and practice regarding HLLs and class instruction. Results showed that although teachers, especially in-service teachers, differentiated instruction in their

classrooms with awareness of HLLs' needs compared to SLLs, they struggled to individualize instructions and materials for individual HLLs from diverse national, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study also noted that some of the participants conflated heritage learners with native speakers of the language. Furthermore, Bateman and Wilkinson (2010) conducted a quantitative and qualitative survey study with 183 Spanish teachers (non-native speakers: 84%, native speakers 13% and other 3%) in Utah secondary schools. They found that 1) the majority of the teachers felt that they were not prepared to teach HLLs, 2) 50% had no specific preparation for heritage language instruction, and 3) 40% felt that their classes met HLLs' needs 'poorly' or 'very poorly.' This study did not specifically mention the rate of non-native and native speaker teachers in the analysis.

Currently researchers see such challenges as described in the studies above as resulting not only from a lack of sufficient teacher education and professional development opportunities, but also from current sociopolitical views toward HLLs and Spanish as a heritage language in American institutions and society (Harklau, 2009; Randolph, 2017; Torres et al., 2018). Randolph (2017) examined high school non-native Spanish teachers' sociolinguistic views of HLLs and SLLs, which showed that the teachers, despite their positive perceptions of pluralistic notions of culture, possessed certain prejudices about students based on their linguistic identity and tended to stick to so-called standard Spanish instruction, dismissing dialectical variations that HLLs bring to the classroom. Also, Harklau's (2009) longitudinal qualitative case study with two HLLs of Spanish in a secondary school in Georgia elucidated sociopolitical issues surrounding HLLs in the Spanish language classroom, school, and the broader community. This study showed not only that the curriculum and teachers' pedagogical practices devalued HLLs' cultural and linguistic diversity, but also that broader power relations existing locally (the school,

community, and region) and nationally (linguistic ideology) led to a vulnerable status of HLLs in the classroom. Furthermore, Torres et al. (2018) questioned traditional and ideological U.S. views toward Spanish as a foreign language, stressing that current U.S. socio-political ideology favors Spanish variations spoken in foreign countries without placing value on Spanish language variations used domestically by millions of people.

In all, previous studies of NNSLTs and Spanish HLE have illuminated a number of possible intersections and tensions. While some of these studies identified strengths that NNSLTs can bring to second language classrooms, the majority of the studies demonstrated that NNSLTs encounter significant challenges in their teaching. Especially studies of Spanish HLE suggest that both pre-service and in-service teachers (many of whom are NNSLTs) tend to struggle with assessing individual HLLs' needs and developing effective teaching materials and strategies. In other words, these studies have identified challenges for language teachers working with HLEs in terms of teaching competence, which have offered many insights to SLTE. However, there is still relatively little literature specific to the intersection of NNSLTs and Spanish HLE in the U.S. that attends to issues beyond that of pedagogical competence. While some studies have suggested complex issues related to NNSLT's identities in the language classroom (e.g., Ghanem, 2015; Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013), there is a need for greater attention to how identities and competence interact and intersect.

### **Contextualizing this Case Study**

The participant featured here is Eric (pseudonym), who was a non-native Spanish as a foreign/world language TC enrolled in an SLTE program at a public university in the U.S. in fall 2016. He later took a position at a public high school teaching beginning-level Spanish to second language learners (SLLs). He is a native English speaker from the U.S., and learned Spanish as a

second language. The students in this SLTE program are eligible for P-12 teaching certification upon completion of the program. A year-long teaching practicum is one of the requirements of the program. All students are assigned to a public middle school or high school for fall semester, which they visit weekly throughout the semester. They also complete a two-week, full-time practicum at the site toward the end of the semester. In spring, TCs typically continue at the same site for a 14-week full-time practicum.

In Eric's case, however, personnel changes at his fall practicum site made it necessary for him to change sites for his spring practicum. He relocated from a high school where he had been teaching HLLs to a middle school where he taught beginning-level Spanish to SLLs. In his fall placement, his cooperating teacher was a native Spanish speaker who primarily taught HLLs, whereas the spring cooperating teacher was a non-native Spanish speaker with a linguistic and cultural background similar to Eric's.

### **Theoretical perspective**

This interpretive case study reports on the challenges that Eric encountered in his teaching practicum in an HLL classroom. The theoretical perspective of this study is van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology (1990), which he defined as aiming "to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal" (p. 18). Phenomenology in qualitative human science research attempts to systematically "uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 10), and hermeneutics focuses on finding essential yet unnoticed and unexplained aspects of a certain lived experience (Crowther, Ironside, Spence & Smythe, 2017). One practical implication of hermeneutic phenomenology in qualitative research is the notion that "questions always bring

out the undetermined possibilities of a thing” (Gadamer, 1989/2004, p. 383). Therefore, the aim of hermeneutic phenomenological research is not to close the question with a conclusion, but to open the possibilities of the research question, keep them open and send them forward (Moules, McCaffrey, Field, and Laing, 2015).

Another implication is that our way of understanding of the world is constructed by our prejudices (pre-understandings) coming from our historical traditions and our situatedness (Gadamer, 1989/2004). Therefore, hermeneutic phenomenology does not suggest that the researcher’s knowledge on the focal phenomenon should be excluded from the research process. Instead, it employs ‘bridling’ (Dahlberg, 2006; Vagle, 2009), with which the researcher makes use of his/her knowledge to interpret and understand the focal phenomenon simultaneously while critically reflecting on his/her own prejudices with openness to other perspectives (van Manen, 1990). Referring to Dahlberg (2006), Vagle (2009) explained that bridling contributes to interpretive qualitative research in two ways: 1) it restrains the researcher’s pre-understandings in a way the openness of the research is not limited, and 2) it is “an active project in which one continually tends to the understanding of the phenomenon as a whole throughout the study” (p. 591). Following these notions, I employed this approach of bridling in this study, and the research process as a whole was guided by van Manen’s (1990) idea of six interacting research activities:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptuali[s]e it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characteri[s]e the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;

- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (p. 30-31).

As mentioned above, previous studies of non-native Spanish teachers in the context of HLE suggest that lack of teaching competence is a major struggle in teaching HLLs. However, when I was analyzing the transcript of my conversation with this participant for the larger study on NNSLT candidates' practicum experiences, I noticed that a lack of teaching competence did not seem to fully explain the challenges Eric experienced in his teaching practicum in a HLL classroom. At the same time I had a hunch that the struggles that emerged in our conversation were relevant to other cases, considering that previous research indicates there are many other non-native Spanish teachers who teach in HLL or mixed HLL/SLL classrooms nationwide. While Eric's case is particular to his specific context, identities, and background, I sensed the complexities of the challenges in his narratives may resonate with other NNSLTs and teacher educators of NNSLTs who work in HLL or mixed HLL/SLL classrooms. Therefore, carefully attending to the case of this participant, I explore the following question: *What struggles does a non-native Spanish TC encounter in his teaching practicum experience with HLLs?*

### **Data generation and analysis**

Van Manen's (1990) perspective on researching lived experience as an active sensitive pedagogy guided the data collection and analysis for this study. Data was generated in the context of a hermeneutic interview where the interviewee is encouraged to reflect on the focal topic as experienced in lived practice (van Manen, 1990). The primary data source for this study was collected through a reflective session that Eric and I engaged in during his teaching practicum. The main purpose of the session was to promote Eric's critical reflection on his lived experiences during the teaching practicum and to help him assess his current theories and beliefs

regarding teaching and learning Spanish. Hence, my role in the session was not to give evaluative comments or suggestions on his teaching performance. Instead, it was to provide questions to prompt reflection and lead him to engage in the meaning-making process of his lived experiences during the practicum in relation to thinking about his future teaching (Nicholson, 2011). This session was conducted face-to-face for about an hour at his practicum site without his cooperating teacher's presence towards the end of Eric's 14-week spring practicum. At this point, Eric had already accepted a job offer from a public high school for the next fall.

I transcribed the entire conversation and then analyzed the narrative, focusing on the parts most closely related to the focal topics: namely, Eric's understandings about HLE arising from his experiences. In this process, I referred to van Manen's (1990) three-step approach: the *wholistic* approach, the selective approach, and line-by-line approach. I first read through the entire transcript several times to grasp a sense of the whole story and to seek the parts that included significant meanings. Then, I read and re-read the text to find statements and expressions that seemed to contain an essence of the focal phenomenon. Finally, I paid attention to each sentence or phrase to reveal meanings in relation to the phenomenon. Hermeneutic analysis involves "an interaction between the general and the particular that renders simultaneously a nuanced understanding of the concrete situation, a set of questions and possibilities for seeing, thinking, and acting in the future" (Moules et al., 2015, p. 60). Therefore, in this case study, I will develop my discussion putting Eric's case in dialogue with the broader social and educational context.

## **My orientation to the study**

As mentioned above, bridling allows me to bring my own prior experience and knowledge to the interpretation of data while it also requires me to be critical of my own assumptions regarding the focal phenomenon. In order to make my data analysis process transparent, it is important to mention my relationship with Eric and my experience as a NNSLT.

I was Eric's instructor for one of his fall 2016 courses, in which I taught high/middle school second language teaching methodology. I was also his instructor in a field-based practicum course in spring 2017, in which TCs in the cohort met once a week and discussed the issues they encountered in their practicum. In addition, I also engaged with Eric as his university supervisor throughout the year. I visited his practicum sites several times to observe his classes and conduct post-lesson reflective sessions. I am myself a NNSLT of English in the U.S. currently as well as being a second language teacher educator working with U.S. P-12 second language teacher candidates. I have also previously taught as a native speaking Japanese instructor in the U.S. and as a non-native English teacher in Costa Rica and my home country. In Costa Rica, I was co-teaching several English classes with native English speakers, and one of the classes consisted of advanced-level students who I found possessed more English proficiency in some aspects of the language than mine at that time. As such, Eric's experiences are both of personal and professional interest to me as a fellow NNSLT, as a second language teacher educator, and as a researcher of SLTE.

## **Findings**

Attending to Eric's statements regarding his lived experience of teaching HLLs, I found there seemed to be three mixed and interacting challenges which he encountered: being not as competent in Spanish language as his students, appearing inauthentic in the context of teaching

HLLs, and feeling unethical being in an authoritative position in the HLL classroom as a non-native Spanish teacher. In this section I will discuss each of these challenges as they emerge and interact in our conversation.

At the beginning of our reflective session, I asked Eric what he liked about the school from which he had accepted the job offer. He explained with excitement that he would be expected to teach Spanish using only Spanish to beginning-level SLLs there. He especially expressed excitement about the foreseen challenges of this new job referring to the teaching contexts he experienced in his practicum.

Eric: It's a good situation. From Spanish 1, they teach 100% target language, which I think is wonderful. And, it will be fascinating to see how they do that and... difficult 'cause I haven't been able to necessarily do that from the ground up. So, that'll be cool and I was really excited about that. The classroom that I did most Spanish speaking in was a heritage speaker class, different stuff. Then, with those who are just learning, it's been a lot of English. So, having heritage speakers in one place and ground zero at the other was definitely an interesting contrast.

When I had observed his class at the high school, where his students were all HLLs who were fluent in spoken Spanish, Eric used only Spanish in his interactions with students. On the other hand, at the middle school his students were all SLLs with little Spanish language background. There, he ended up using English extensively during instruction. Through these experiences, Eric thought it would be both challenging and meaningful to teach Spanish in Spanish to SLLs. Being aware that he used English frequently in his middle school teaching, he found that the

expectation from the new school would provide him with opportunities to develop his capability as a Spanish teacher.

However, when I delved a little more deeply into his decision-making regarding the job offer, specifically in relation to his teaching experience with HLLs and SLLs, Eric's narrative started demonstrating a complex interrelation between his own theories of teacher-setting and teacher-learner compatibility, and his ambivalence regarding his identities as a non-native Spanish speaker and as a professional Spanish teacher. I asked him if he would have taken his new job if the school had asked him to teach their HLL class, and his answer was not straightforward.

Eric: I'm not sure. I think, I think so. Knowing that there was a native speaker already as a teacher [at the school I applied to], I knew that they wouldn't ask me that. But, if they had before I interviewed, I think I... It's a good question. (Chuckles) It's a good question. Because I also don't want to... I don't know. I wanna make sure that the students have the best possible situation for their learning. Since I'm not a native speaker, I would definitely need to be able to reconcile the fact that I would have different things to offer. And I would have to make up for that in some way because certainly some of them speak more fluently than I do 'cause they grew up speaking it. So, it would just be... it would be different. I'm not sure what I would say. But, I have to be able to justify that decision by knowing that I would still have enough to offer them so that they would be getting good native speaker education.

The hedging and ambivalence of his answers ('I'm not sure,' 'I think so,' 'It's a good question,' 'I don't know,' and 'I'm not sure what I would say') suggest that my hypothetical question may

have sparked an internal dialogue between two different identities: a professional Spanish teacher, who should be capable of offering effective, differentiated Spanish education to any type of student, and a non-native Spanish speaker, who has learned Spanish as a second language in a different environment from HLLs. Three circuitous expressions ('I wanna make sure that the students have the best possible situation for their learning,' 'I would definitely need to be able to reconcile the fact that I would have different things to offer,' and 'I have to be able to justify that decision by knowing that I would still have enough to offer them so that they would be getting good native speaker education') suggest that he takes his students' education seriously and that he would like to be assured that students would benefit from his teaching. At the same time, those expressions may also imply that he did not think he would be able to offer the best possible education for HLLs and that he was not sure what exactly he could offer to them. The expression 'I would have to make up for that in some way' implicates the gaps in his competence between what he is expected to offer as their Spanish teacher and what he can actually offer. Also, the following statement 'because certainly some of them speak more fluently than I do 'cause they grew up speaking it' highlights a gap between Eric's Spanish proficiency and the proficiency level necessary to meet HLLs' learning needs.

Here, Eric seems to propose a personal theory that there is certain compatibility between teachers and students depending on their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Referring to his own background as a SLL of Spanish whose first language is English, he proceeded to explain why he does not think he would be able to teach HLLs as effectively as native Spanish speaking teachers.

Eric: I think it would be difficult for a heritage Spanish speaker to learn grammar structures from a native English speaker. I can teach a native English speaker

[Spanish] grammar because I know how I learned it, and I know how friends of mine learned it. And, I know how I was taught and which things work the best. I know how to compare it to English, and draw on my knowledge of the English language to help them understand Spanish, which is really helpful for them. But, for these other students, it's different. Being the in-between thing of English at school and Spanish at home, 'I don't really know how to read in either language,' and that sort of thing, I think it's good to have a teacher who has had similar experiences.

The first half of the narrative above contains the nuance that he thinks his experience as a SLL of Spanish is one of the strengths he can bring to the classroom. His rationale behind this understanding is that he would be able to draw on SLLs' knowledge of the English language to help them learn and understand Spanish linguistic concepts. Indeed, in his middle school practicum, I observed Eric explaining various Spanish linguistic concepts via comparison to English to students who were all native English speakers with little or no Spanish background. Both his narrative and teaching practice suggest that it is a significant and even a critical factor for Eric that he and his students share similar linguistic backgrounds so that he can provide them with the best possible Spanish education.

On the other hand, the second half of the narrative points out the complexities of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds HLLs bring to the classroom that Eric seems to find difficult to support given his own assessment of his strengths and weaknesses as a Spanish teacher. HLLs, in Eric's view, have acquired and engaged with Spanish in very different ways than he has. Often they have been raised in environments where both Spanish and English are used naturally at home and in their community, and they have not necessarily used English as a means to learn

Spanish. On the other hand, Eric probably would have not encountered a challenge like ‘*I don’t really know how to read in either language*’ in his experience of learning Spanish, and he struggled with developing pedagogical strategies to meet this particular need. In short, Eric felt his experience of learning Spanish as a second language would not necessarily help him identify with and meet the needs of HLLs learning Spanish.

However, what Eric seemed to find challenging about the idea of teaching HLLs was not just a lack of competence in providing effective instruction to HLLs. It appears that his HLL classroom experiences during the practicum brought forth affective challenges as well. He recounted that his students in his high school practicum were all Latinx. Eric expressed his struggle in this environment:

Eric: ‘Cause that was tough.... being in a high school where I’m not really being able to, you know, I’m the one White guy in the classroom, and I’m supposed to be their teacher, right? So, there’s that dynamic.

Although it is left unsaid what exactly Eric thought he was ‘*not able to*’ do in the high school practicum classroom, his following statement (‘I’m the one White guy in the classroom, and I’m supposed to be their teacher, right? So, there’s that dynamic’) suggests that he felt a sense of inauthenticity being seen as the expert/teacher to students who embodied the very language he was meant to teach them in the HLL classroom because of the clear ethnic/racial and sociolinguistic differences between him and his students. Here, his self-deprecating use of ‘one White guy’ suggests his uneasiness and even a sense of ridiculousness in being a White person positioned as the expert and teacher in a classroom full of Latinx students who are more expert in the spoken (if not written) language and culture than he is. His vagueness in describing the situation as ‘that dynamic’ also suggests that his experienced linguistic and cultural differences

from the HLL community generate some sort of discomfort for Eric – something he is not able or willing to name explicitly in our conversation. Experiencing these affective challenges in a HLL classroom may have led Eric to developing a personal theory of teacher-learner compatibility. Talking about his practicum experience with HLLs seemed to bring forward an awareness that teaching HLLs was currently outside of his comfort zone, and that this discomfort stemmed at least partly from experienced differences in his and his HLL students’ linguistic and cultural identities. Potentially, however, this was more than a simple issue of relative comfort or discomfort. It also seems that he may be suggesting feeling stuck in an ethical dilemma – the tension in feeling pulled between two competing ethical imperatives – being qualified and competent to serve the needs of his students and also being a teacher who serves all students equitably.

Another way that the ethical tension between Eric’s identities as a professional Spanish teacher and a non-native Spanish speaker manifested was in talk about instructional strategies. For example, Eric mentioned that his instructional strategies for SLLs could work in mixed or HLL classroom contexts as well, but he also stressed that they would not be the *best* instruction for HLLs.

Eric: I [would] probably get [heritage language] students involved who are already good at the grammar, and say, “Hey, this is how I learned it basically. I think this is very helpful. What do you think?” and that kind of thing. And as they explain it, and the other half of the class was like, “Ah!” Then, great. So, everybody got two different things they can look at and grab whichever one helped. So, I think that I could make it work certainly. But I just would have to make sure that I felt good about it. So, again, it’s not about me and how easy it

would be for me to explain things. I wanna make sure that they [the heritage language students] would understand it and wouldn't suffer from some White dude teaching them Spanish.

Eric's narrative here again demonstrates his internal dialogue between his identities. Although he finds it not difficult, on a technical level, to provide instructional strategies that he thinks would work well in a mixed HLL/SLL classroom context, he also appears to feel uncomfortable with it on an ethical level. Eric demonstrates his professionalism as a teacher in his dissatisfaction with the instructional model he previously detailed: 'it's not about me and how easy it would be for me to explain things. I wanna make sure that they would understand it and wouldn't suffer from some White dude teaching them Spanish.' This implies that Eric, as a professional educator, takes HLLs' successful learning seriously, and he sees learning as dialogic process between teachers and students in which learners' strengths and needs should be taken into account, and in which experiences and subjectivities of both teacher and learners matter. At the same time, his statements also suggest that Eric perceives that he does not currently possess the knowledge and skills to differentiate effectively enough to do this. In this sense, Eric's professionalism seems ambiguous: while it might be seen as unprofessional to abdicate his responsibility to teach HLLs effectively due to his perceived lack of pedagogical capability, we might also interpret his choices as a responsible professional decision not to teach HLLs because he cares about their language learning success and he finds it unethical to position himself as an authority taking responsibility for their HLE.

His self-deprecating 'some White dude' emphasizes that Eric attributes his pedagogical weaknesses not only to a lack of instructional strategies. He also seems to feel a sense of inauthenticity in being outsider to the linguistic and cultural community of his Latinx HLLs –

and not just any outsider, but being an outsider in a position of power as a teacher and as being a ‘White dude’ teaching minority students within the larger socio-political and educational context of the U.S. While Eric could have blamed his weaknesses on a simple lack of HLE instructional strategies in his teacher education coursework, his practicum experience with HLLs and SLLs seemed to bring forward more complex and intersecting issues of pedagogy and identities for Eric.

### **Discussion and Implications**

Close analysis of Eric’s narratives provides us with insights about the struggles he encountered as a non-native Spanish speaker in teaching in an HLL classroom. His struggles seem to be the result of interactions between his conflicting senses of professionalism, his identities as a NNSLT, and his HLL students’ cultural/linguistic/ethnic backgrounds. More specifically, from the findings it seems that Eric suffers particularly from three mixed and interacting problems as a non-native Spanish teacher teaching Latinx HLLs: being not as competent in the target language as his students, appearing inauthentic in the context of teaching Latinx HLLs of Spanish, and feeling unethical in positioning himself as an authority who is responsible for their HLE.

While current research on NNSLTs and HLE has mainly focused on teachers’ pedagogical competence, what this case study suggests is that it is also important to take into account a broader view of the complexities of the contextualized teaching realities of the TCs and teacher we work with in SLTE. What is discussed in this paper is just one example of such complexities. As mentioned above, hermeneutic phenomenological research does not aim to develop a conclusion that involves some sort of solution, but to keep the possibilities of the question open and forward them (Moules et al., 2015). Thus, I conclude this paper with a

suggestion that we as second language teachers, teacher educators, and SLTE as a field need to keep exploring these complexities relationally and holistically as we move forward in our practice and our research. One way we might do this is thinking with experiences like Eric's in the context of teaching and teacher education more broadly.

Eric seems to think that it is a challenge to offer effective differentiated pedagogical strategies and teaching materials to HLLs, which seems a common position in previous research (Bateman & Wilkinson, 2010; Russell & Kuriscak, 2015). However, his narratives seem to demonstrate that his struggles with professional competence also stems from the gaps between his own and his students' linguistic and cultural proficiency in Spanish language. Eric does not seem sure that as a White NNSLT that he has something to offer to HLLs, and is suffering from an awkward and unethical sense of being not the best teacher for these students and yet, at least in the context of his practicum, being placed in a position in which abdicating his role as their teacher is not possible. This feeling of incompetence seems to be combined with a sense of it being odd or even ludicrous for the teacher to be less fluent in the target language than the students. The general assumption is that a second language teacher should possess native-like proficiency in the language they are teaching. But, as demonstrated by the current literature on second language education in the U.S., currently it is a very different reality: there are many students who *are* more fluent in the target language than their teachers. Although I could not find any official report on the ratio of non-native Spanish teachers in the U.S., previous studies indicate that most Spanish teachers in P-12 institutions in the U.S. are non-native speakers: 84% of 371 participants in Bateman and Wilkinson (2010), 83% of 30 participants in Russell and Kuriscak (2015), and all five participants constituting the whole Spanish faculty in a school in Randolph (2017) identified themselves as non-native speakers.

In this sense, Eric’s case is not exceptional, but rather one TC’s experience of what may be a widely experienced phenomenon – that of an unethical feeling of inauthenticity and incompetence in being placed in a position of authority as a teacher in a classroom of students who have more authentic experiences with the content. This issue of inauthenticity and the mismatch in teachers’ and students’ socio-cultural and linguistic identities is likely shared not only by other foreign language educators but also beyond the boundaries of the field of second language teaching to the field of education more broadly – like a White history teacher teaching about slavery to African American students or even a technology teacher feeling like she is struggling to keep up with her students who are already fluent in emergent technologies. In other words, the struggles Eric encountered in the HLL classroom could be an example of what many teachers encounter across numerous fields in education as they wrestle with considerations of equity, competency, differentiation, authenticity, identity, and ethics in their teaching. Clearly, there is more here to consider in relation to “competence” and “feeling competent” than pedagogical and/or content knowledge. These are deeply ethical and affective struggles with no clear answers for the teachers involved nor for us teacher educators who are supposed to be guiding our TCs and teachers through the process of thinking through these dilemmas. Instead, in the spirit of hermeneutics, I send this recondite question forward to the field: *What new understandings and possibilities might arise from dwelling with these complex and intersecting pedagogical, affective, and ethical tensions in our research and practice?*

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Through the collection of three articles presented in this dissertation, I explored SLTE from several perspectives and offered implications regarding its further development in terms of pedagogy and research. In Chapter Two, I developed an argument regarding how Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics can be applied both theoretically and practically to SLTE pedagogy in relation to reflective practice. I first claimed that reflective practice is supposed to be a career-long autonomous professional development practice, although most previous studies suggest that it has been employed as a mere teaching method in the domain of SLTE or professional development programs. Here, I referred specifically to the concept of *Bildung* as one's open disposition to otherness, and stressed that teachers, including teacher educators, should nurture this disposition in their daily teaching and learning practice. Based on Gadamer's idea of genuine dialogue consisting of the structure of questions and answers, I finally offered a theoretical and practical implication that SLTE should provide true (answerless) questions on which both teacher educators and teachers engage in open dialogue so that we can be exposed to encounters with different perspectives and cultivate our openness to otherness as an ongoing practice. At the same time, my argument in this paper is still theoretical, and as such I plan to engage in empirical action research guided by the thoughts explored in this article. Also, attending to the current and future socio-political issues in SLTE, I hope to engage with research that provides implications regarding language education and teacher education policies.

Chapter Three was a research article, in which I attended to a conversation I engaged in with one of my teacher candidate supervisees. In that article, I critically assessed my own mentoring practice as I engaged in the conversation with her. As the result of collaborative discourse analysis, this study identified possible disconnections in a reflective conversation between my supervisee and me as her mentor. The findings specifically showed that I inflexibly focused on instructional and technical aspects of her teaching, and that I was not aware enough of the power gap between us in the reflective conversation. In order to resolve such disconnections in my future teaching practice and to develop implications regarding mentoring, I drew on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism* and Hans-George Gadamer's of *genuine dialogue* as well as on previous studies of mentoring in teacher education. Through this study I suggested that successful dialogic mentoring involves the mentor's awareness and balance of both affective and technical/instructional support that accounts for context, professional roles, and needs of the mentee. That being said, in future research, I plan to continue assessing mentoring practices in terms of how teachers benefit from such mentorship and what aspects of mentorship contribute to their professional growth.

In Chapter Four, I explored the struggles that a non-native Spanish teacher candidate encountered in his practicum teaching experience with heritage language learners (HLLs). While most of the previous research on this topic utilized survey studies, my study interpretively analyzed the participant's narratives regarding his practicum experiences of teaching in an HLL classroom. The findings of this study suggest that he struggled with three intersecting problems: being not as competent in spoken Spanish as his students, appearing inauthentic in the context of teaching HLLs, and feeling unethical to be in an authoritative position in the HLL classroom. While the majority of previous studies have identified gaps in pedagogical competence (e.g.,

assessing HLLs' needs, providing effective and meaningful materials, instruction, and differentiation) as a major problem that non-native Spanish teachers face in heritage language education, the findings of this study added a more complex perspective regarding this topic. Given these insights, I suggested that there is a need for teacher educators and SLTE as a field to more holistically investigate the complexities of the contextualized realities of the teacher candidates and the teachers with whom we work.

Each of articles focused on different topics related to SLTE. In order to improve current pedagogical theories and practices of SLTE (both my own and that of the whole field), it is necessary to assess and identify what is working and what is not working. Through the three articles, I problematized the taken-for-granted pedagogical practice of SLTE in regard to reflective practice, teacher educators' non-dialogic and authoritative awareness and attitude toward teacher candidates, and the struggles of a non-native second language teacher experiencing teaching in heritage language education. While each of the articles respectively discussed implications, these articles as a whole would also offer some implications regarding SLTE research and practice.

One common theme across these three articles is that SLTE is a site where teacher candidates interact with and are affected by various experiential (e.g., native/non-native identity, second language learning experiences), human-relational (e.g., teacher educators, mentor teachers, students) and environmental factors (e.g., SLTE curriculum, practicum context, broader political and social discourses). This suggests that teacher candidates are not independent agents who have complete control over their individual learning and professional growth. Rather, their learning and professional growth are always situated in and negotiated through complex interactions of intersecting factors. Taking these notions into consideration, future SLTE

research might further attend to the complexities of these interactions and to explore them more interrelationally and holistically.

Also, as mentioned in the introduction, philosophical hermeneutics has guided each of the three articles in different ways, although there have been few studies in SLTE that have applied philosophical hermeneutics practically or theoretically. In Chapter Two and Three, Gadamer's concepts of *Bildung* and *genuine dialogue* respectively provided both theoretical and practical implications regarding further development of teacher education pedagogy and practices in relation to reflective practice. This implies that philosophical hermeneutics can both theoretically and practically complement reflective practice, which is widely employed in the current SLTE. At the same time, as in Chapter Four, hermeneutics along with phenomenology guided the research on one teacher's lived experience as the theoretical and methodological perspective, and helped reveal deep meanings behind his narratives about his experience regarding heritage language education. In other words, this dissertation demonstrates an implication that there is a potential that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics can make theoretical and practical contributions to the development of both pedagogy and research of second language teacher education, and teacher education in general.

Finally, taken as a whole, these articles suggest that teacher educators need to be aware of the complex and often indirect impacts of their pedagogical practices and curriculum design on teacher candidates' professional growth and on their understandings about teaching, learning and education. The results of each chapter imply that I personally, as a teacher educator, and the teacher education field more broadly should engage in reflection about our pedagogical theories, practices, and the curriculum we present to teacher candidates so that candidates might build further understandings from their experiences in SLTE. In this regard, teacher educators cannot

ever be merely practitioners of teacher education but are always simultaneously also inquirers and researchers of the education we are offering. I therefore propose that we continue to strive to integrate all of these roles in our personal practice as well as in our cultivation as a field.