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Abstract: Teacher preparation programs in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) often require pre-service teachers to engage in some observations and teaching as part of their coursework or practicum. Some programs require their students to observe classrooms and record their thoughts in their observation journals. These observation journals could vary from being unguided with little or no support to being guided with specific directions or readings on what to observe. For practicum students, they may be asked to tutor one-on-one, work in small groups or teach the entire class, but what they are expected to learn from these experiences remains unclear. This article reports on a case study, documenting the learning of two candidates and myself, serving both as their mentor teacher and teacher educator, as we worked together to negotiate their learning tasks during their practicum experiences. Throughout the process beginning with unguided journals then transitioning to guided journals, and finally microteaching experiences, it was hoped that the dialogical learning spaces interwoven throughout these iterations would serve as a mediation tool to understand candidate learning from these experiences. As a mentor teacher seeking to provide optimal learning experiences for these candidates, it became clear that navigating teacher learning is indeed a challenging and complex task. Further research in this area may support mentor teachers in providing teacher candidates with the kinds of deliberate dialogues necessary to gain insight into candidate learning about teaching practice.

Keywords: Teacher preparation, teacher learning, practicum, TESOL, mediation tools, sociocultural theory

1. INTRODUCTION

There are numerous programs offering teacher preparation in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in both national and international arenas. These preparation programs vary from offering certifications to graduate level degrees. Though the core courses within the program are similar across programs, there is considerable difference in the fieldwork component associated with these programs. Some programs require their candidates to engage in tutoring, in small group, whole class instruction or a combination of these throughout their program of study or as part of a practicum course. Though the ways in which these fieldwork experiences are organized and how the candidates are guided in these experiences may also vary, the beliefs or assumptions surrounding these experiences remain the same – (1) "Exposure to examples of teaching creates learning opportunities for prospective teachers" and (2) "through field experiences pre-service teachers meld theory into practice" (Santanaga *et al.*, 2007, p. 124). Other researchers have also acknowledged the important role that fieldwork experiences play in teacher learning (i.e. Chiang, 2008; Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

In the field of TESOL, there is not only a diversity in terms of student populations, but there is a tremendous variety of possible placements and courses. Placements can include community colleges, adult community programs, language schools or language academies affiliated with universities. Courses can include a focus on specific skill areas (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing, integrated skills), test preparation (i.e. TOEFL, IELTS), content areas (i.e. Business English, English for Engineers, English for Law), differentiated by proficiency levels (i.e. beginning, intermediate, advanced) or student goals (i.e. vocational, academic,

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conversational). It would nearly be impossible for any TESOL program to have the capacity and resources to provide sustained experiences within all of the aforementioned contexts, therefore, it appears to be important that candidates be able to extrapolate conceptual learning through their limited fieldwork experiences and apply the principles to other contexts.

At the time of this study, I taught ESOL courses at several community colleges in the area and also served as an adjunct faculty member teaching foundational courses in a TESOL program. At the request of these two candidates, who wanted to gain some practical experiences in the classroom, I took on a third role as a mentor teacher, though I had no prior guidance as to how to meaningfully support these candidates through their practicum experiences. We began with unguided observation journals for the first portion of the semester, followed by guided observation journals through the use of a reading to support them with conducting ethnographic observations, and finally micro-teaching events, where they had opportunities to teach three lessons.

This study draws on sociocultural theory (SCT) and examines the ways in which candidates make sense of teaching practice through the mediation tools selected for this study. Using the SCT lens, I served as the "expert other," but also was cognizant of the fact that I, myself, was a learner in this process of navigating how to best support these practicum students in both processes of "teaching to learn" and "learning to teach."

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been critically examining the ways in which language teacher education has been traditionally approached and have called forth a reconceptualization of the field (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Kumaravadivelu (2012) postulates a cyclical, interactive, integrative model for language teacher education moving from the conventional transmission model to a model concerned with transformation. Of his five inter-connected perspectives on teacher education, two of them, namely the post-transmission and post-methods perspectives have relevance to this present study. He criticizes current teacher education practices where teacher candidates are seen as passive depositories and "conduits" of knowledge. Instead, he sees teachers as playing the role of "reflective practitioners who deeply think about the principles, practices, and process of classroom instruction with a considerable degree of creativity, artistry, and context sensitivity." (p. 9). In their book, *Second Language Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*, Richards & Lockhart (2012) define a reflective approach to teaching as "one in which teachers and student

teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use information obtained for critical reflection about teaching" (p.1). Crookes (2007) also recognizes the importance of the larger contextual dimensions (e.g. historical, political, social, cultural, institutional) in supporting candidate understanding of the factors that influence the practice of teaching. The post-method perspective calls for a movement from the concept of "methods," which again does not acknowledge the role of teacher candidates as having "the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves, a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 10).

While teacher educators may not necessarily agree on what comprises the canonical knowledge base for teacher education, they do agree on the value of fieldwork experiences for supporting pre-service teacher learning (Levine, 2006). Several studies have shown the value of having the opportunity to teach as part of their fieldwork experiences in increasing "teacher-efficacy" (Chiang, 2008), in shaping beliefs about themselves and their teaching practice (McIntyre & Byrd, 1996; Richards et *al.*, 1996), developing their own teaching styles and repertoire (Crookes, 2007; Sweitzer & King, 1999), engaging in creating their own philosophy of teaching through theorizing about and reflecting on teaching practice within their respective contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Velez-Rendon, 2002), acknowledging their strengths and limitations in teaching (Numrich, 1996) and developing classroom management techniques (Sweitzer & King, 1999). Fieldwork experiences also have been considered to have the potential for transformative value for teacher candidates (Freeman, 1996; Gutierrez, 1996).

Much work has been done in L2 teacher education using SCT as a theoretical framework (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Golombek & Duran, 2014). SCT has its roots in the work of Vygotsky (1978), who points out that all learning happens through social interaction. First the learning appears in the social realm or the interpsychological dimension where teachers or more capable peers (experts) can scaffold the learning process through the co-construction of meaning within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This learning then moves from the social level or the interpsychological dimension to the internal level known as the "intrapsychological category" (p. 128).

In this study, this social interaction took the form of interaction with text and interaction between the mentor teacher and teacher candidate. As the mentor teacher, I interacted with text, in this case, their journals, to make sense of candidate learning through their observations. The intention behind the journals was to have candidates *articulate* and document their learning from their

classroom observations. In the next iteration of this study, the candidates had a chance to interact with the reading to help guide their observations. Lastly, I had the opportunity to have three in-depth meetings, with each candidate to understand their learning and negotiate any issues, questions, or gaps that emerged through this process.

In the literature, these discussions might also be considered a process of dialogizing (Bakhtin, 1981). According to Johnson & Golombek (2011), dialogizing through social interaction requires mediation, where tensions (Engeström, 2001) can be uncovered within the learner whereby the learner may begin to challenge their assumptions, recognize gaps, and deepen their conceptual understanding. Johnson & Golombek (2011) assert that just observing teachers teach does not give us a sense of where they are at and affirm that "when we see/hear the same teacher interact with someone who is more capable while accomplishing a task that is beyond her capabilities, this creates a window through which we can see her potential for learning and her capabilities as they are emerging…mediation in this metaphoric space of potentiality is essential" (p. 6). In this study, Dialogical Learning Spaces (DLS) were embedded between each of the practicum tasks (e.g. journals, micro-teaching) which were mediated by one-on-one follow-up meetings between the mentor teacher and each candidate to discuss their learning from the unguided and guided journals and micro-teaching feedback sessions. I hoped that the meetings after each segment could serve as a DLS, where each candidate can share their learning and I can serve to mediate their understanding about teaching practice and in turn, understand how the practicum tasks support them in developing the kind of knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to engage in the process of theorizing about teaching practice that Kumaravadivelu (1994) alludes to above.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this case study was to closely examine the ways in which two teacher candidates engaged with the tasks assigned to them during their practicum experience, which included unguided observations journals, guided observation journals, microteaching events, and one-on-one follow-up discussions. Each of these tasks were negotiated with the candidates with the exception of the first unguided learning journals, which served as a form of baseline for understanding what they are able to "notice" about teaching practice and the context of teaching on their own. I hoped that through the follow-up discussions positioned between each of these tasks, I could gain better insight into how these candidates were making sense of their observations as well as consciously monitor

the way in which I served as their mentor teacher or "expert other" during these discussions.

Research Questions:
1) What are teacher candidates able to learn about teaching practice through practicum observations and teaching experiences?
2) In what ways, can I, as a mentor teacher, mediate teacher candidate learning about teaching practice?

4. METHOD

This case study employed a formative research design, which allowed me, as the researcher, to play an active role as both researcher and the mentor teacher and engage my two TESOL candidates in exploring their learning through the specific tasks embedded within their practicum experiences. It allowed me to adapt to the needs of these candidates through one-on-one follow-up discussions. The formative experiment was selected as a research design for this study "because of a desire to go beyond the typical qualitative research foci and observation, interviews, and document analysis, and to become actively involved with the participants in order to bring about change" (Jiménez, 1997, p. 228). In addition, according to Reinking & Bradley (2004), the purpose of the formative research design is to accomplish the pedagogical goal for the program, which in this case was to understand how these candidates learned through the various tasks used in their practicum experience to support deliberations on integrating meaningful practicum experiences and mentor teacher support in their graduate TESOL program. The process of engaging in this type of research involves the systematic and constant identification of the challenges in the implementation of various components of practicum experiences, while at the same time responding to those challenges as they are identified.

A. Participants

At the request of these two candidates, I opened up my academic reading and writing courses in the 2010-2011 school year. The two candidates had completed their coursework towards their master's degree in TESOL and were looking to gain some experience in the classroom before they graduated from the program, as their program did not include courses designated for student teaching at the time of this study. They were both female international students in their mid 20s. The first candidate had a TOEFL score of 95, and received a bachelor's degree in English. The second candidate had a TOELF score of 91, and received a degree in Business. Due to the small size of our program and the personal nature of this study, additional demographic information

has been purposely omitted to protect the identity of these candidates.

B. Practicum experience setting:The ESOL classroom context

There were a total of 19 students enrolled in this ESOL academic reading and writing class. These students were primarily from affluent homes and/or were sponsored by their governments to improve their English and attend an institute of higher education in the United States. The majority of the students were from Saudi Arabia, three were from Mexico, two were from Kuwait, two were from China, one was a Spanish student from Switzerland, and one was a Saudi Arabian student from Morocco. There were five females and 14 males and their ages ranged from 18 to 38. At the time of this study, I had fourteen years of experience as a practicing teacher of ESOL.

C. Summary of instantiations

The following diagram details the sequenced opportunities for supporting the teacher candidates through their practicum experiences.
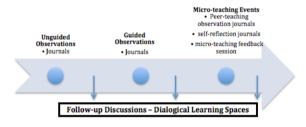

Figure 1. Adaptive instantiations of meditational tools

In the initial segment of their practicum experience, the candidates were not provided any guidance in terms of what and/or how to observe, but were simply asked to write about their observations after each session. These "unguided" observations served as a baseline to understand what candidates were noticing about teaching practice on their own.

The second segment included "guided" observations, where they were provided with a reading to serve as a lens through which to "see" teaching practice in their observations. During the final segment, candidates taught three lessons and continued to record their learning in their observation journals reflecting on their own as well as their peers' teaching. The value of videos in supporting teacher education (Allen, 1966; Allen et al., 1967) has been widely recognized for developing teacher's professional judgment (Satagata et al., 2007, p. 126) and "dialogic cooperation" (Golombek, 2011), where there is a continual opportunity to provide the

balanced use of support and challenge to scaffold teacher learning in a safe environment.

After each sequenced task, I met with each candidate individually to engage in a form of dialogizing about their learning, where we discussed their learning from their observations and I provided guidance, but also helped them to consider different aspects of teaching and connections they were not making on their own. It also gave me the opportunity to support them with their immediate needs as well as discuss the gaps and questions that emerged out of their journal entries and teaching segments. I remained cognizant of the limitations in serving both as their mentor teacher and teacher educator and the power differentials inherent within these discussions. However, I attempted to truly listen to the candidates and create a space for mutual, collaborative learning, where the candidates saw me not only as the "expert other," but also as a learner, learning alongside them.

5. DESCRIPTION OF INSTANTIATIONS, DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND EVOLUTION OF STUDY

In the following section each segment of the practicum experience is summarized in more detail, followed by the results and the learning that both the candidates and I derived that informed subsequent instantiations.

A. 1st Instantiation – unguided observations

During the first five weeks of this study, the two teacher candidates observed my ESOL reading and writing classes for about three hours each on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:00 to 12:00 p.m. According to Chiang (2008), journaling is considered a "source of empowerment for student teachers whose insider voices and views are genuinely consulted" (p. 1271) and was therefore considered as an important meditational tool for this study. After the fifth week, I collected their journals and met with the two candidates separately to discuss their learning and reflections over the first five weeks or 30 hours of the course. These discussions lasted between 50-60 minutes per candidate.

B. 2nd Instantiation – guided observations

Based on the learning derived from the observation journal entries and follow-up discussions, the candidates continued to observe what they felt was important in addition to some scaffolded or "guided" observations. During the next segment of the semester, both students read a chapter from *Through Ethnographic Eyes: A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Observations* by Carolyn Frank (1999) that I hoped would serve as a mediation tool to help guide their observations. The observation journals were collected after four weeks and analyzed.

1) Data Analysis Process

The "unguided" and "guided" observation journals were coded through an online coding program called Coding Analysis Toolkit. These themes revealed the areas that students noticed during their observations and their thoughts and understanding about these elements they selected to focus on. The journal entries were coded three times where initial codes were submerged into larger coding categories or removed when more suitable codes were able to capture the intent of the meanings within the journals. This closely followed the "emergent coding approach" as defined by Haney, Russell, Gluek, & Fierros (1998). Eleven themes were initially identified within the observation journals, which were later merged into six categories. This merging and refining process was accomplished by having an additional reviewer code 15 sentences through a randomized selection process from each candidate. Where discrepancies emerged, we engaged in a discussion about the meaning of the codes and the rationale for the assignment of particular codes. The codes were then adjusted for clarity in coding title and descriptions. Each sentence in their journal entries was coded as a meaning-bearing unit and then coded a priori (Weber, 1990) using these codes. See Table 1 for a list of the codes that were used for the analysis of the journal entries.

Table 1   Codes and Coding Descriptions

Code	Code description	No.
Teaching event	Teacher actions, strategies, lesson delivery, sequence, & group work	1
Teacher output	Transcript/summary of teacher talk - directions, comments, & questions	2
Context/Student background	Context of the school, culture of school, student background	3
Student participation	Transcript/summary of student output, questions, & actions	4
Critique of teaching	Purpose, theoretical foundation, assessment of teaching	5
Critique of student participation	Assessment of student behaviors, abilities, & production	6

Table 2   Distribution of Codes in the Observation Journals: Unguided and Guided

Candidates	1	2	3	4	5	6	No. of Sentences
Candidate 1							
Unguided (%)	28.17	18.31	3.76	16.43	23.94	9.39	151
Guided (%)	23.53	25.41	0.47	16.47	24.71	8.47	309
Candidate 2							
Unguided (%)	29.41	9.8	15.69	8.82	24.51	11.76	75
Guided (%)	36.55	7.24	5.52	12.07	24.48	14.14	195
Combined							
Unguided (%)	28.57	15.56	7.62	13.97	24.13	10.16	226
Guided (%)	28.81	18.04	2.52	14.69	24.62	10.77	504

Note: 1 – teaching event; 2 – teacher output; 3-context; 4-student participation; 5-critique of teaching; 6-critique of student participation

2) Results

In the following section, I present the results from both the unguided and guided journals. Table 2 summarizes the percentage of codes in each of the six categories between the guided and unguided observation journal tasks. The number of sentences coded and the total number of codes differ due to some sentences being assigned multiple codes. For example, there were instances where a candidate began a sentence with a description of a teaching event (e.g. strategy employed) and then followed it with a critique (e.g. advantages for language learners). In this case, the sentence received two codes (1, 5).

a) Unguided journals

Based on the 226 sentences analyzed for the unguided journal entries, both candidates focused most of their journal entries on a description of the teaching event followed by a critique of the lesson. For example, Candidate 1 described a teaching event in this case, "self-introductions" by an analysis or critique of its purpose where she wrote, "The teacher first asked the students to introduce themselves, which I interpret as a basic attempt to understand the students personal backgrounds, and an informal assessment to understand them at different stages within their proficiency levels."

The candidates diverged in their focus in the remaining areas. Candidate 1 summarized teacher output (e.g. comments, directions) followed by student participation (e.g. description of verbal output and

group work participatory structures), a critique of student participation (e.g. assessment of their proficiency levels and student engagement) and the context, which primarily included a description of the student backgrounds (e.g. L1 background, country). Candidate 2 wrote more on the context, providing general comments about teaching at the advanced level as well as specific student backgrounds that comprised the class, a critique of student participation, mainly their behavior and engagement, teacher output followed by a description of student participation. The difference between critique and description is that the prior code included evaluative comments about the observations, whereas the latter code included an objective description of the observation. Her focus was not on student participation in terms of the language they produced as was Candidate 1's focus (e.g. "I can tell Student 1(pseudonym) and Student 2 (pseudonym) have made tremendous progress. They used to read word-by-word last semester, but they are able to pause correctly, while they were reading."), but was more focused on their behavior (e.g. "chatting with friends on Facebook").

b) Follow-up discussions post unguided observations

After the unguided observations, I met with the candidates to understand their learning, respond to their questions and work together to improve their learning experiences. In the following section, I present the two themes that emerged from the interview transcripts following the unguided observations. Their focus during this time was mainly on the procedural aspects of teaching and attempts to bridge theory and practice.

Procedural aspects of teaching

For example, procedural aspects of teaching included segments in their journals where they addressed the specifics of how I delivered and "broke down" the lesson, "managed a huge class by using group discussions," and strategies such as "round robin," "quickwrite," "debate" and "jigsaw" that provided an alternative to "just giving the students readings from the textbook."

Theory and Practice

Both candidates also attempted to bridge theory with practice in their unguided journals. Candidate 1 stated, "I also tried to look at what I learned and read during the past year…some of the pedagogies, some activities you taught us [as an instructor in the TESOL program]. I was trying to [see] if you're using them in your [ESOL] class." While Candidate 1 was quite aware that she was analyzing the purpose of the strategies used, Candidate 2 did not notice that she was

actually doing so in her journals (e.g. "i+1," "lowers the affective filter," "comprehensible input"). The follow-up discussion process served as an opportunity to help her notice that she was, indeed, making these connections.

The mediation process also allowed me to address gaps in their understanding of areas where they did not make the connections and could have and areas where theories were inaccurately drawn upon to support their understanding.

Both candidates concluded that the unguided journals were helpful, but at times, they found the task to be "overwhelming" or "too broad" primarily because there was so much to observe and they were not sure whether or not they were observing the "right" thing. Candidate 1 stated "I'm thinking that maybe I might miss something, because it's from my perspective." Candidate 2 thought that having more "focus" would be beneficial. They both stated that they wanted some "structure" or "specific directions" for what they should observe each week. However, instead of removing the unguided observations altogether, Candidate 1 said, "…in addition to formal directions…we want to be able to [continue to] observe things for ourselves." Therefore in the second segment of the study, a reading about how to conduct ethnographic classroom observations was provided to support them with their observations, but they were also able to continue to write about what they found to be important.

c) Guided journals

Although not a significant finding, even with one less week of observation journal entries, which is equivalent to two journal entries, both candidates increased their writing as defined by the number of sentences (n=504). This may have been due to the support of the reading, but could also have been a result of other factors. One factor could be attributed to them perhaps gaining more confidence in writing their journals after having done it for some time. Another factor could be related to their ability to write about areas that emerged from the follow-up discussions, which may have also served as awareness-raising opportunities for them.

In reviewing the content of their guided observation journals, however, there were clearly some qualitative differences in the ways in which descriptions and critiques were noted, which was influenced by the reading assigned during this time. There was also less focus on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching itself, but more focus

on teaching as it related to student learning ("Some students are still struggling with using transitional words within sentences or between paragraphs.").

Withdrawing judgment from observations

Both candidates used time-stamped transcriptions (21 instances) of the teacher and student interactions using direct quotes as recommended by the readings and supported their evaluative comments with supporting evidence from the data they gathered. Candidates also described seating arrangements (4 instances), which was a direct transference from the reading ("Before the class started, the teacher arranged the chairs in a circle*"*). In this regard, concepts in the readings such as providing time stamped notations and direct quotes to support observations, also served as the "expert other" in mediating the ways in which the candidates began to approach their observations.

In the following excerpt, Candidate 1 described what she believed to be the theoretical underpinning of the teaching event, and supports her claim with examples and a direct quote.

> By utilizing a cognitive and a metacognitive approach, the teacher helped the students analyze their essays…Examples can be seen where she directly asks them about their hooks and thesis statements, introducing the concept of conceptualization, asking about how the thesis statements were developed ("where did you get these points?"), providing suggestions on consolidating [ideas]... (*Observation Journal, March 3rd, 2011, Candidate 1).*

In another excerpt, Candidate 2 noted how difficult it was to organize group activities, but supports this thought through her observations.

> [T]here were one or two students in each group who were really advanced, spoke a lot, provided many ideas and kept the discussion going. These students were not so patient and were not willing to wait for the other students to understand all of the ideas. They just kept going until they provided all their ideas and said, "We're done." (*Guided Observation Journal, March 24th, 2011,* Candidate 2)

Challenging assumptions

In addition, Candidate 1 challenged her own assumptions about student learning by providing data that showed her otherwise, "When it came to

their group [Student 3 and Student 4], to my surprise, they provided a very good summary." Here, her previous assumptions of what she perceived to be off-task behavior by speaking in their L1 was challenged and then revised. Candidate 2 focused more in her guided entries on an analysis of student abilities, which was a shift for her as she seldom commented on student learning in her unguided entries.

d)   *Follow-up discussions post guided discussions*

After four weeks of guided observations, I met with the candidates again to understand their learning through their guided observations and ways in which I could continue to support their practicum experiences.

In the following section, I present the themes that emerged from the meeting transcripts following the guided observations, which included two specific areas: the role that contextual factors play in teaching practice and considerations of how to manage the unpredictable nature of classroom teaching.

The role of context, student perspectives and needs

In her guided journal entries, Candidate 1 appeared to uncover the importance of context in deepening her understanding of teaching practice in both interviews. She said, "I think I learned to deal with specific problems within a specific context. If I didn't have this experience, I would not have had this understanding, but within this context, I know who the students are, their aims, their levels and their needs."

She explained how she learned about a variety of activities in the Methods course in her graduate program, but she was "curious" about how the students responded to these activities in her second interview after the guided observations.

> I learned what a real classroom was like and when I think, 'Oh, I want to do this' and 'Oh, I want to do that' – this was always from the perspective of the teacher, but in the real classroom, you will come to teach from the perspective of the student and you will think about what their needs are instead of what you think you want to do with them. I think this is very important (*Post-Guided Observation Transcript, April 4th, 2011, Candidate 1).*

Candidate 2 acknowledged the importance of also attending to student levels or needs, which she admittedly did not focus on as much in her unguided entries. Upon

further probing from me about her focus on methods and activities, she said, "I wanted to provide my students with many activities because I believe that learning from activities is more efficient, but it should depend on the students' level." This latter portion of her comment demonstrated to me the movement from teacher to student – in other words, a focus on methods and activities as something she would like to have in her toolkit when she leaves the program to understanding that methods, activities, and materials only have value if it meets student needs and if they have the proficiency levels to access the materials and tasks.

Teacher contingency plan for unanticipated situations

Both candidates believed that the observation experiences in general gave them some strategies on how to address unanticipated questions or behaviors. Candidate 1 said, "I think through this experience, I found that there were a lot of unanticipated responses from the students, not only [in terms of] language, but for behavior that I have never experienced before…I think this was beneficial for me." Candidate 2 stated "sometimes the lesson does not go as planned" and she learned about the importance of having contingency plans. Candidate 2 provided examples from the class that she found useful for a new teacher such as addressing unanticipated language questions by "facing it in a strategic way" and techniques on classroom management where she recalled that I talked to a student after class about particular behaviors observed, but not in a "yelling" tone.

3) *Differences between the "unguided" and "guided" journals*

The key difference between the unguided and guided journal entries in this study was a movement from judging to observing specific elements of instruction, which was learning specifically mediated by the text. It is important to note here that although it may seem obvious that they would approach the observations differently with the support of the readings, the ways in which they accessed the journals and the depth in which they described their observations differed. As I mentioned earlier, Candidate 1 came from a family of educators and had majored in English, and this understanding appeared to play a role in the kinds of questions she was interested in. Candidate 2 on the other hand, came from a business background and this was her first experience in the classroom, therefore, what she selected to observe was quite different. However, there were some similarities between the ways in which they approached these journal tasks.

In the unguided journals, there were many instances where the candidates wrote their observation of an event in the classroom, followed by a qualifying statement as to whether or not the event was effective. They also suggested ways in which instruction could be improved. However, in the reading, they were specifically asked to support their observations through recording of actual events with supporting evidence (as seen from the time stamped notations and direct quotes), rather than their personal evaluation of the event. This became clear when Candidate 1 described the learning she derived from the readings and shares her realization that she was "judging" rather than "thoroughly observing." The following excerpt captures this shift in thinking.

> I feel I made mistakes just as it was described in the article that I was too busy making judgments while I was observing rather than objectively noticing what was really happening in the classroom…it taught me how to conduct observations…without this guidance, somehow I would have overlooked what was really happening…Everything, even how the classroom is arranged, could imply different patterns…(*Post-guided observation follow-up discussion transcript, April 5th, 2011, Candidate 1*)

The problem, she noted with the unguided observations, was that she "took it for granted" and that the environment was "too familiar" to notice and "encounter different things." The articles helped her to "see" the classroom from a more "objective" perspective. When asked to elaborate her movement in thinking, she stated "the readings gave [her] some ideas as to what to observe" and acknowledged that she made many "assumptions" in the previous journal entries, but "after the reading" she realized that "you can't assume student reactions, you have to record what they said [and] what they did in order to know, not just assume."

An important consideration in understanding the shift in how the candidates were approaching their observation journal tasks between the guided and unguided journals is its positioning in the sequence as a second segment. Though the readings may have influenced their focus in their journal entries, it may also have been shifted due to the mentor teacher's repertoire reaching saturation levels, whereby, the styles and strategies the teacher used was similar after five weeks of instruction.

> In the beginning of the semester, I was really focused on the techniques the teacher implemented in the classroom, but later on I realized that the techniques were similar, so I started to observe students, or the classroom environment, or students' reactions in doing the group activities, [and] why some students were

really engaged in the activities and others were not…. (*Post-guided observation discussion transcript*, *April 7th, 2011, Candidate 2*)

In the discussion following the guided observations, both candidates no longer felt satisfied in the observer role and wanted the opportunity to practice teaching. Candidate 1 said, "Let us teach. Put us on the spot. When we're observing, we're not in charge of the classroom, we're not taking responsibility for everything, but when we actually do it, sometimes it might be very different from how we think its going to be." Candidate 2 also expressed that though she gathered a "basic ESL classroom model" from the observation experiences, she would like "some hands-on experiences." In the next section, I describe the third instantiation of this formative experiment, which included the teaching of three lessons.

C. *3rd instantiation - micro-teaching Events*

During the time of their observations, I consciously modeled the use of thematic units, where I spent three sessions guiding students from reading several short articles about a particular topic to writing a persuasive essay based on a prompt related to their learning from the topic. I shared each step in the teaching cycle with the teacher candidates, highlighting the rationale for each scaffolded activity within the cycle and the sequencing of each task to support them in the culminating writing project.

In the final segment of the semester, both candidates planned and delivered a thematic unit from the text *America Now* by Robert Atwan. Each unit included three lessons, which were 2 hours and 50 minutes in duration per lesson. The teacher candidate who was not teaching continued to observe and complete observation journals reflecting on their peer's teaching event. In addition, candidates were asked to reflect on their own teaching in their reflection journals. All lessons were videotaped for the purposes of the follow up video-feedback sessions and discussion.

After four weeks, we viewed segments of their teaching events on the computer together. The teaching segments we viewed were mutually decided upon, and included strengths that the candidates found in their teaching, questions candidates had about their lessons and teaching, and areas they wanted to elaborate on more in their teaching that did not come through in practice. The follow-up discussions on their micro-teaching events provided us with an opportunity to raise awareness and notice gaps between the ideal and reality and perception and occurrence.

1) *Data Analysis Process*

Because of the multi-dimensional components of microteaching, the data collected was likewise multifold. Table 3 below lists the data gathered to analyze the candidates' learning from the

Table 3   Microteaching Data

Data Collected	# of data collected
Observation journals on peer's teaching	3 journal entries per candidate
Self-reflection journals	3 journal entries on own teaching per candidate
Video-feedback session transcriptions of recorded Conversations	1 feedback session per candidate

microteaching events.

Video-feedback sessions lasted approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes for each candidate and the post discussions lasted for 1 hour and 5 minutes for Candidate 1 and 43 minutes for Candidate 2. Each data set was analyzed separately and then themes were analyzed across each data set to present a holistic understanding of the learning they derived through the microteaching component of the fieldwork experience.

2) *Results*

In this section, I highlight five interrelated themes that illustrate what the candidates were able to see and learn through their micro-teaching experiences: 1) the procedural aspects of teaching; 2) the gaps between ideal vs. reality and perceptions vs. occurrence; 3) the interactive nature of the classroom context (teacher-student and student-student interactions); 4) the sociocultural dimensions of teaching; and 5) the developing self as a teacher. Then, I present the primary area that emerged from the follow-up discussion post these micro-teaching events, that is, their developing identities as teachers.

Procedural aspects of teaching

In reflecting on their own and their peer's lessons, both candidates noted the strengths and weaknesses of their lessons. These included providing clear instructions ("The teacher also could have done more at the beginning of the class, by providing clear instructions, explaining the whole scope of the class, and making the class requirements clear"), time management ("The teacher didn't have good control of the time, and the class ended at 11:43"), and sequencing of the tasks within the lesson ("I feel [she] could put the negotiation activity before the news

activity, and use the news activity to explore the topic deeper later."). Another important finding the observation and reflection journals revealed was that candidates were focusing on aspects of their peer's teaching that they found to be their strength or they, themselves, were struggling with in their own teaching. Here, it appears that along with me, they mediated each other's learning through our written feedback on their lessons.

The gap between ideal vs. reality and perceptions vs. occurrence

Many researchers have noted the gap between theory and practice that teacher candidates perceive in their observations and teaching experiences (i.e. Chiang, 2008; Richards, 1998; Mok, 1994). In this study, the gap was noted in two areas: 1) the gap between the ideal lesson plan and classroom reality, and 2) the gap between their perceptions about what happened and what actually occurred. There is an important distinction between bridging theory and practice as it appeared in their journals and the theory and practice gap noted here. In their observation journals, the theory and practice gap was noted from the observer's perspective, but here, they had an opportunity to look at theory or the planned ideal that they had in their minds and the perceived gap when it was translated into classroom reality from a teacher's perspective.

The candidates recognized the gap between their expectations and the real classroom in terms of general planning ("When I was first planning the lesson plans, I wanted it to stay as I expected. It didn't work..."), and organizing group work activities, particularly in terms of time allotment or pacing, proficiency level differences and student absences. For example, Candidate 1 attempted to integrate peer review in her class, but the day she intended to do this, only a handful of students submitted their drafts. The follow-up discussion session provided an opportunity for us to consider this "problem" she experienced implementing peer review. Here, I urged her to consider the importance of having contingency plans when teaching, but also probed further to have her consider whether her plan worked with her students and what else she could have done when she faced this situation.

> MT= So you planned an activity based on the idea that students would turn in their first drafts. Right? What was your on-demand plan for the balance of the students?
>
> TC= Some of the students turned it in but others didn't show up so I just gave their essay [drafts] to them [from last week]. And that made the number even.

> MT= Oh so it worked out?
>
> TC= It didn't work out. The number was even but then came the issue that I didn't realize at first. It couldn't work out…So, for the students that were not there, no one would know what they were talking about. They weren't there to respond to or explain. So the student were saying "How can I proofread another student's essay when they don't care to show up?"
>
> MT= What else could you have done?

Note: MT – mentor teacher; TC – teacher candidate

Candidate 2 did not plan for groups that finished activities in a shorter time frame than she had allotted ("After ten minutes, one of the groups told me they finished the discussion, but the other two groups were still working…"), though she anticipated a longer discussion because "illegal immigration has been a big issue in many countries." In our discussions, I asked her to consider what activities the other students can engage in if they did finish early next time. She came up with some additional tasks, with some assistance from me, that she thought would be meaningful and engaging for the students should they finish early.

The discussion also provided me an opportunity to raise awareness of and notice events that could have been important learning moments for the candidates. Below is a transcript from the discussion session where Candidate 1 misunderstood her student's question about the advantages and disadvantages of a union. While the teacher candidate was expressing what she thought was a disadvantage, her student believed this to be an advantage.

> SV = A union would educate them right? That is an advantage. What about disadvantages?
>
> TV = I was talking about disadvantages
>
> SV = No, that's [an] advantage…you mean that
>
> TV = No
>
> MT = He thinks that educating them is an advantage
>
> TC = Oh, yeah…

Note: SV – student in the video; TV – teacher candidate in the video; MT – mentor teacher; TC- teacher candidate

From this excerpt, she did not recognize this discrepancy during class, but the video-feedback session allowed us an opportunity to explore this and reach an understanding about what really occurred.

The interactive nature of the classroom context

Classroom management was an issue for both candidates as noted areas in their own self-reflections, their peer's teaching, and the feedback sessions. For example, Candidate 1 wrote, "There were still behavior issues, such as students coming to the classroom late, phones ringing, and side conversations. The teacher (Candidate 2) still didn't address them much." Candidate 2 acknowledged her own issues with student behaviors and her lack of authority in the following, "I found out that one student dominated her group and was seldom considerate of her group members…This student, honestly, I really couldn't do anything with her. When I told her not to surf on the Internet or get on Facebook, she ignored me and kept chatting with her friends on Facebook*."* We discussed ways in which she could address behavior issues such as these in the classroom by considering ways in which she could engage that student more deeply in classroom tasks rather than using more short-term, punitive approaches, such as banning the computer.

Teacher feedback to students was a second area of important focus for these candidates where they described strengths ("The teacher gave positive feedback to the students, which lowered the affective filter.") and weaknesses ("Moreover, when the students were presenting, she didn't give instant and in-depth feedback either…").

The following illustrates the candidate-student interaction with regards to student questions.

> MT= [commenting on video where a student just asked a question and the teacher ignored him] You just completely ignored him.
> TC = I was focusing I think.
> MT= Did anyone respond to that question?
> TC = Uh, I don't remember.
> MT= Let's watch.
> TC = I think they just nodded.
> TC= It's like when the students stated their opinions and I was like "Oh, okay. I feel like I had no response. Based on their answers I couldn't ask them to go deeper. I feel if you asked interesting questions, they would all get engaged…"

Often, novice teachers are very focused on their lesson plan and getting through the lesson, that they miss opportunities to truly listen and engage with the students.

The third area was related to classroom presence including body language such as making "eye contact" and "really paying attention to what the students are presenting." Candidate 1 discussed some issues she experienced understanding the students and her coping strategy of "moving on" rather than attempting to negotiate meaning with her students.

> TC= Because students are from all over the world. Ahhh… sometimes I feel like I don't understand their accent.
> MT= Yes. I think one good strategy would be to ask them "You know, I'm having a difficult time understanding. Can you explain that again?" And then repeat what you think they said.
> TC= I'm curious…did that also happen to you before?
> MT= Oh yeah! It's better than letting it go…to say instead, "I'm really trying to understand you."

Here, I provide Candidate 1 with a strategy she can use to engage with students in the moment even though she might find this difficult and potentially taking her off-track from her lesson, which was what she feared.

Monitoring group work was a fourth area of focus. Candidate 1 wrote, "[Candidate 2] could have walked around the classroom while they were working to check their work and provide support rather than just sitting in front of the classroom." In discussing this with Candidate 2, she acknowledged that sitting behind the desk gave her some comfort and we recognized the intense nature of the practice of teaching, but that is it important to monitor student learning throughout the tasks assigned.

The sociocultural dimensions of teaching

The candidates were able to demonstrate learning in two areas within the sociocultural dimensions of teaching, mainly power and contextual understanding.
Both candidates noticed the power differentials in the classroom. Candidate 1 wrote, "The class didn't start on time and the teacher (Candidate 2) asked the students if they wanted to begin class. The teacher should use her authority as a teacher when she has to." However, in our discussion, we tackled this issue from the perspective of Roger's humanistic pedagogy and Freire's critical pedagogy and how a teacher, can collaboratively decide on how the class is structured. Candidate 2 acknowledged another dimension of power as it relates to age. She said, "I think as a teacher, if your age is really close to [those of] your students, I'm wondering how you make your students respect you." Here, we discussed notions of creating and sustaining mutual trust with the

students and to have them realize that the teacher's role is to help them achieve their goals.

With regards to power dimensions within students, she noted, "One of the students dominated the other's thoughts and directed her to accept the result that he had decided." She also indicated how more proficient students in the group would finish their readings quickly and resume chatting rather than scaffold the learning for others in their groups. Again, we went back to our previous discussion about providing additional engaging tasks for the students or roles that each student needs to play in order to collaboratively complete their tasks.

The following segment is from the follow-up discussion with Candidate 1 where I asked her to elaborate more on what she meant by teacher's authority and she recognized another layer of power in her teaching context, which was the presence of me, as the mentor teacher.

> TC = another thing is the teacher's language.
> The words…the strategy used is also very
> important.
> MT= can you talk more about that?
> TC= like how you persuade them to do what
> you want them to do. I think if you were
> there, they would do what you want them
> to do [as opposed to what the candidate
> wanted them to do].
> MT= I think in my situation, you know, I'm
> their teacher.
> TC= And also you have the power…

Through the process of teaching, Candidate 1 also noticed the particularities (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) of working with adults specifically. She said, "I think the key word is *adult*…They already have their own values, their own cultures, their own backgrounds. You have to take that into consideration…you have to know how to get across to them."

Though the concern about the backgrounds of students are also the same concerns that need to be addressed at any level, the adult population definitely has additional dimensions in terms of life, family and work experiences they bring into the classroom. Another area that has been addressed earlier, but has relevance to sociocultural context is the consideration of student perspectives and needs within their classroom. Candidate 2 said, "You have to think about the whole class, think about each student, what they can get from your lesson or what can they get from you…they have to understand the purpose." This understanding appeared to manifest after receiving constant feedback from me on their journals and teaching, where I asked the question, "What is the purpose?" and "How does the particular activity meet their needs?"

It is clear that though both candidates did not encompass the full spectrum of the sociocultural dimensions involved in teaching, they were able to gain some insight into some areas on their own and with some support from me in helping them to "see" the presence of power in the classroom.

Follow up discussion post micro-teaching events

In the follow-up discussions sessions following the micro-teaching events, the candidates were able to share with me their vulnerabilities and feelings about their own developing teacher identity.

Developing a sense of identity as a teacher is the undercurrent of teacher education. The microteaching events brought this to the forefront where the vulnerabilities of this developing identity were exposed. This vulnerability was expressed through emotive comments such as "showed anxiety" and "could have prepared [for this] psychologically and demonstrated calm and control." Golombek & Doran (2014) recognize the value of acknowledging emotions of teacher candidates as an opportunity for growth. Candidate 2 expressed her discomfort in the transition between being a student and a teacher where she expressed, "I feel I am not very comfortable as a teacher because we've always been a student." She also stated during our follow-up discussion session that she found the teaching at the advanced level as "threatening." She felt that she "lack[ed] professional writing and reading skills to instruct at an advanced level." However, she remarks, "[Teaching] prepared me not to be afraid in the classroom." I worked with her during the follow-up discussions to consider the strengths she might bring to her own teaching practice and that sharing vulnerabilities may actually have empowering prospects and may support the development of trust between herself and her students.

The microteaching events gave the candidates an opportunity to test out their teaching persona and theoretical understanding with their students in a real classroom context, and provided a window of opportunity to notice the gap between the conceptual and the particularities of the classroom. It also provided candidates an opportunity to consider notions of power and context in teaching and see teaching from both subjective and objective spaces. Candidate 1 concluded, "when we really teach, especially when I observe myself and reflect on myself….it's different. I see other things. I am subjective and objective."

In the micro-teaching segment of the semester, both the feedback sessions and the follow-up discussions provided the potential for mediation.

6. CONCLUSION

"Teach me, and I will forget, show me, and I may remember, involve me, and I will understand."

Several theories are in operation in this simple, but powerful proverb that can be applied as a lens for understanding teacher preparation. An overarching area of inquiry triggered by this proverb is the question about how one learns and what learning entails as teacher candidates move through the trajectory from pre-service to in-service teaching. When applied to teacher preparation, understanding how our teachers learn can be useful for interpreting coursework goals and objectives, and in understanding how programs scaffold teacher learning from canonical knowledge to conceptual understanding in practice.

Through this formative experiment and the students' understanding of and learning from each of the three iterations, we can conclude that the candidates were able to "notice" and "see" qualitatively different dimensions of teaching practice and were able to share their insights, concerns, and questions with me, as their mentor teacher.

The follow-up discussion sessions, in particular, provided candidates with opportunities to articulate and clarify their learning and reveal areas that were, as Johnson & Golombek (2011) describe, "ripe for mediation." As their mentor teacher, it allowed me to probe further and negotiate meaning, which served as a form of mediation where the candidates, for example, had an opportunity to review a discrepancy between their own perceptions of an event that occurred in the classroom and what actually occurred. In a way, these sessions provided an opportunity to engage in dialogical conversations about teaching practice, but also provided candidates with some insight, practical tools and strategies that could support them in the future from the lens of an expert other (Wertsch, 1985).

In this study, it seems that though there was evidence of some levels of learning about teaching practice, a part of me, as their mentor teacher, wonders if this was a missed opportunity in helping them to learn to the fullest potential that these practicum tasks may have allowed. In other words, I became painfully aware that being a veteran teacher of ESOL does not necessarily translate into expertise to competently and deliberately negotiate these dialogical conversations to support teacher learning.

Though we have some insight into the technical aspects of fieldwork experiences and the learning that candidates derive from some of the mediation tools, more research needs to be conducted on how to understand teacher learning, and the kinds of supports and challenges that would help them to negotiate their path from theoretical and technical ways of thinking to an internal, conceptual understanding of teaching practice that can "enable teachers to instantiate locally appropriate and theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices for the students they teach" (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p. 12).

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