Making Sense of Theory:
A Doctoral Student's Narrative of Conceptualizing a Theoretical Framework

Michael Burri
University of Wollongong

Abstract

Making sense of theory plays an essential role in the life of a doctoral student. This autoethnographic study explores how I made sense of educational theory while conceptualizing the theoretical framework for my PhD proposal. A diary that I kept while designing the proposal serves as the data source to examine how my thinking about theory evolved. Findings demonstrate that the development of my thinking was a complex and circular process that progressed through nine phases. A particular challenge of conceptualizing a theoretical framework was the tight timeframe in which the proposal needed to be completed in order to start collecting data for my doctoral research. The paper concludes with a discussion about implications for language teacher educators and PhD supervisors.

Introduction and Purpose of Paper

Educational theory has always fascinated me. During my graduate studies at Trinity Western University (TWU) (2004–2008) in Langley, British Columbia, I enjoyed pondering over theory while attempting to connect it to second language (L2) and English as an additional language (EAL) pedagogy. Once I completed my MA in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and worked in the International Student Entry Program at the British Columbia Institute of Technology, theory was something that teachers discussed in the staff room, sometimes quite passionately. Many of us felt strongly about justifying theories that informed our classroom practices. When I moved to Australia to commence my doctoral studies at University of Wollongong (UOW) in February 2013, the focus shifted from justifying theory in terms of pedagogical practices to viewing theory as the foundation of research. In the School of Education at UOW, PhD students are required to design a research proposal that is around 20 double-spaced pages in length and consists of an introduction, research questions, literature review, a theoretical framework, a research timeline, and projected budget. The proposal needs to be presented to a panel of 3–4 faculty members within 12 months of the commencement of PhD studies. The presentation is open to the public and doctoral students are encouraged to attend. Presenting the proposal is a critical stage in the PhD program at UOW because a successful presentation enables a student to advance to his or her candidacy and carry out the research project.

A substantial part of this research proposal consists of a theoretical framework. Having a strong theoretical framework is seen as essential because it identifies theoretical principles and philosophical assumptions that underpin the doctoral research. As the research proposal template for my PhD program at UOW states, the theoretical framework "provide[s] an indication of the ways in which the research and writing about research have framed the problem-setting, research design, the interpretations and explanations of the information collected." The expectation is that the framework is about 3–5 pages long. The majority of doctoral students find the design of this

theoretical framework the most challenging part of the proposal. Some of them have never considered the possibility of theory underpinning research and so they struggle to identify a relevant theoretical construct that informs their research.

My initial admission statement to the PhD program at UOW proposed a classroom-based pronunciation study. I had read several peer-reviewed papers and books on English pronunciation pedagogy prior to commencing my doctoral studies, but what I somehow neglected was to identify the theoretical principles that were embedded (often implicitly) in these articles. Subsequently, I soon realized the formidable challenge that designing a theoretical framework entailed. Adding to this challenge was the fact that in the first meeting with my two supervisors, it became apparent that my initially proposed mixed method, quasi-experimental classroom-based study exploring the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction in relation to teacher learning was interesting but not feasible due to the challenge of accessing suitable L2 classrooms at UOW. Instead of the proposed research, the three of us decided that I should focus on pronunciation teacher preparation, an area that up to that point, besides Golombeck and Jordan's (2005) study, had received little empirical attention. And so the aim of my doctoral research changed to an examination of the development of postgraduate student teachers' beliefs, attitudes, perception, and knowledge (i.e., cognition) about pronunciation. UOW offered a pronunciation pedagogy course, but it was scheduled to start at the end of July and offered only once a year. This meant that I had to get my research proposal done within five months—and not the usual 12 months PhD students are given—in order to start collecting data. This added considerable time pressure and made the proposal development even more challenging. One of the most difficult aspects was choosing an appropriate theory, formulating, and then justifying its use in the research proposal.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to explore how my own process of making sense of educational theory developed while designing the theoretical framework of my proposal. The decision to reflect on and write about this process was inspired by Canagarajah's (2012) autoethnography in which he skillfully narrates his lived experiences of becoming a TESOL professional. Autoethnography is a newly emerging research approach in TESOL (Mirhosseini, 2016). It diverges from other forms of empirical inquiry in that the researcher plays the dual role of researcher and sole participant in the study (Hughes & Pennington, 2017). Autoethnography, therefore, provides unique and compelling insights into personal accounts of how individuals comprehend themselves and how they perceive, experience, and live through events in particular social contexts. Following Struthers' (2014) proposition, I foreground the use of first person singular throughout this paper to examine and narrate my journey of making sense of theory in the first few months of being a PhD student. This narrative is, of course, situated within an Australian context; however, the paper should also be of relevance to the BC TEAL community because theory is an essential part in the various graduate and doctoral programs offered in British Columbia. In the doctoral program in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University (SFU), for example, theory plays a prominent role. At SFU, the foundational courses cover theory historically, but then subsequent courses approach theory through different lenses (personal communication with Karen Densky, September 12, 2017). In the MA TESOL at TWU, theory is embedded throughout the program and students must be able to articulate theory and connect it to practice (personal communication with Bill Acton, September 21, 2017). In the Language and Literacy Education (LLED) program at UBC, theory is incorporated into various

courses and seminars and not dealt with in isolation (personal communication with Mi-Young Kim, September 20, 2017). It is, therefore, my hope that this narrative paper is of value to the BC TEAL membership, particularly to members thinking about graduate studies, L2 teacher educators, current graduate students seeking guidance to better understand the theories they are learning, and faculty members that are currently supervising PhD students. The two questions that guide my exploration of theory are as follows:

- How did my thinking about educational theory develop while designing the theoretical framework of my proposal?
- What challenges did I encounter while designing my theoretical framework?

Methodology

An electronic diary (in MS Word format) that I kept while working on my research proposal is the data source for this paper. During the process of designing my theoretical framework, I decided to follow Mertens' (2010) advice and keep a diary to record my thoughts about theory. I hoped that putting down my thoughts on a piece of paper facilitated my understanding of theory that could potentially underpin my doctoral research.[1] Every time I read a publication (e.g., a journal article, book, or book chapter) that I thought was relevant to my research I composed a diary entry. The diary was also used to record some of the frustrations I experienced during this process of making sense of theory. Recording such emotions was a means to cope with stress, and, at the same time, leave some of the negative feelings at the office rather than carrying them home and letting them spill into my family life. Writing these diary entries occurred fairly regularly with each entry being about a paragraph in length. The first entry was made on April 8, 2013, and the last one was recorded on May 30, 2013. In the end, the diary contained a total of 27 entries.
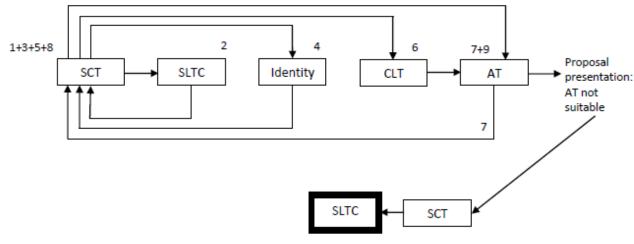
To answer the two guiding questions above, the entries were analyzed thematically in that I examined them for theory-related areas (e.g., sociocultural theory, second language teacher cognition), insights, tensions, and justifications for including a particular theory in my framework. Identified themes were then categorized, amalgamated, and arranged in a table to help me understand the process of how I conceptualized theory while designing the theoretical framework of my proposal (the table is included in Appendix A). Compartmentalizing themes also allowed me to identify some of the key moments and challenges I experienced while working on the theoretical framework. Lastly, with the help of the table, I designed a figure (Figure 1) that reflected my own personal process of making sense of theory. This figure is discussed in the following section of this paper.

Findings

The language teacher education literature and research suggest that teacher learning is a complex and non-linear undertaking (e.g., Burri, Baker, & Chen, 2017; Burri, Chen, & Baker, 2017; Aslan, 2015; Feryok, 2010; Kiss, 2012; Svalberg, 2015). The analysis of my diary data by and large confirmed this. As Figure 1 shows, the process of making sense of theory was circular in

---

[1] Using this diary to write this article was not the intention at that time.

nature, with sociocultural theory (SCT) forming the point of departure as well as the centrepiece to which I returned three times (see phases 3, 5, and 8 described below) while designing my theoretical framework. The figure also shows that even though I revisited SCT three times, I explored various other theoretical constructs over a period of seven and a half weeks (April 8–May 30, 2013).

Legend: SCT = sociocultural theory; SLTC = second language teacher cognition;
CLT = cognitive load theory; AT = activity theory

Figure 1. Conceptualization of educational theory.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the development of my thinking about and identification of appropriate theory progressed through nine phases, with the arrows and numbers representing this progression. The entire process began with a recommendation of my two supervisors to start reading about SCT. Consequently, my inquiry began by looking into SCT (phase 1) in that I read several papers discussing the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (e.g., Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995; Ohta, 2005; Warford, 2011). SCT views learning as a social process, emphasizing that the prior experiences and history of an individual directly contribute to the learning process and to the development of the mind. The ZPD is a concept that highlights the difference between independent and guided task performance (Vygotsky, 1978). For a study exploring teacher learning, I considered the ZPD to be relevant because the construct implies that an expert (e.g., a teacher educator) facilitates a novice's (e.g., a student teacher's) learning process.

After 10 days of reading about SCT, I then explored Borg's (2003, 2006) notion of second language teacher cognition (SLTC) (phase 2). According to Borg, beliefs, knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes are all part of teacher cognition, and so I thought that cognition needed to be taken into account in my research. Up to that point I had only skimmed Baker's (2011) dissertation, in which she used Borg's framework to explore L2 instructors' cognition about pronunciation teaching. For this reason, I was rather unfamiliar with SLTC and so I embarked on reading Borg's (2006) book *Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice* to gain a better understanding of teacher cognition. I began to see that drawing on Borg's work would help me examine the unobservable aspects of learning (i.e., participants' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge) in my research. Four days later, however, I put Borg's book aside and returned

to SCT-related issues (phase 3). This time I focused on non-verbal communication, such as gestures and imitation (Harris, 2003; McCafferty, 2008). Non-verbal communication plays an important role in meaning making and language learning. Therefore, my thinking was that a study examining pronunciation teacher preparation would likely need to account for these aspects. What I did not expect was that through these readings I became more aware of the importance of identity in teacher learning. My diary entry on April 29, 2013, read: "I guess I will need to look into aspects of identity." Subsequently, I began to read Norton (1997), Morita (2004), and Kurihara's (2013) work on L2 learner and teacher identity (phase 4).

Two days later, I once again returned to SCT (phase 5), but this time the focus was on a Vygotskian perspective on feedback provision to facilitate learning (Nassaji & Swain, 2000). Feedback is an important part of pronunciation teaching, and so I felt compelled to attain a better understanding about feedback in relation to the theory my supervisors encouraged me to read about (i.e., SCT). Shortly afterwards, a seminar I attended at UOW on cognitive load theory (CLT), in which working- and long-term memory were discussed, led me to briefly explore CLT (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011) (phase 6). CLT refers to the amount of effort required to store information in the working memory. I thought memory was an essential part of teacher learning, and therefore CLT could be a potentially useful construct to underpin my research. After a day of reading, however, I was uncertain about the application of CLT to my study. I was unsure how CLT would help me examine my participants' beliefs and knowledge about pronunciation. I also felt that obtaining an-depth understanding of this theory would require substantial reading and time. Hence, given that I was already facing considerable time pressure, I chose to abandon the idea of including this theory in my framework and move on. Although not selecting CLT was to some extent an epistemological decision (i.e., my lack of knowledge about the theory), the lack of time to read extensively about CLT ultimately prevented me from further exploring it.

The next step in my thinking was that learning to teach pronunciation could be seen as an activity. Thus, the following day I began to explore activity theory (AT) (phase 7). Thorne (2004) suggested that "[t]he goal of activity theory is to define and analyse a given activity system, to diagnose possible problems, and to provide a framework for implementing innovations" (p. 65). Given Thorne's proposition, the next five days were spent with reading several key pieces discussing AT (e.g., Engeström, 1999; Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). I was particularly interested in the appropriation (i.e., adoption) of tools in teacher development, because it could perhaps help me analyze my participants' process of learning to teach pronunciation. Put differently, AT looked interesting because it could possibly be used as an analytic lens to examine student teachers' uptake of course content (i.e., the adoption of pronunciation teaching techniques). At the same time I came to realize that AT was situated within the broader construct of SCT, and so I returned to SCT once again (phase 8).

I read Chaiklin's (2003) paper in which Vygotsky's original formulation of the ZPD was discussed. This was a complex paper to digest, and I felt that my understanding of the ZPD was marginal at best. The question of how I could analyze and track the development of my student teachers' learning to teach pronunciation remained. As a result, I began to look into literature discussing SCT positioned within the context of second language teacher education (SLTE). Johnson and Golombek's (2011) book proved to be helpful as it included several SLTE studies encapsulating an SCT perspective. Kim's (2011) and Ahn's (2011) chapters caught my attention

because these two researchers used AT (which I explored in phase 7) to examine teacher learning. By now I was quite certain that AT was a useful theoretical construct that would help me explore how my participants learned to teach English pronunciation, and so I made the decision for Activity Theory to form the theoretical framework of my research proposal (phase 9).

The next four weeks were spent on finalizing the entire proposal, and on July 23, 2013, I presented it to a committee and a handful of doctoral students and lecturers that were interested in the topic. In the meeting following the presentation, the committee suggested that AT was not a particularly suitable construct for my study, because AT was mostly applied in the agency of innovation and not in the examination of teacher learning. The committee advised me to consider using Grounded Theory (GT) (e.g., Bryant & Charmaz, 2010) instead. GT is a systematic research approach that leads to generating theory. At first I disagreed with their suggestion, especially since Ahn's (2011), Kim's (2011), and Grossman et al.'s (1999) research all drew on AT to explore the process of L2 instructors learning to teach English. A subsequent meeting with my supervisors provided some much needed clarity in this regard, and we made the collective decision for my theoretical framework to be informed by SCT, rather than AT or GT. I purchased Lantolf and Thorne's (2006) book *Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development* in an attempt to continue expanding my understanding of SCT.

I spent the next 10 months with further reading, obtaining ethics approval, and collecting and analyzing data. The analysis of my qualitative data, as well as several discussions with my supervisors, gradually developed in me the belief that obtaining an in-depth understanding of pronunciation teacher preparation can only be achieved by having SLTC underpin my research. Reading Borg's (2006) book and Baker's (2011) dissertation in more depth also provided clarity and contributed to my decision of selecting SLTC. My standpoint now was that student teachers' thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge (i.e., cognition) were vital components in language teacher preparation, and therefore I decided to draw on Borg's (2006) work of language teacher cognition to inform my research. Settling with SLTC also enabled me to build my research on Baker's (2011) dissertation exploring L2 instructors' practices and cognition about pronunciation, and use her coding framework as a point of departure for my data analysis. Choosing SLTC as the main theory for my research is interesting because I considered using SLTC relatively early on in my journey of designing the theoretical framework (see Figure 1); yet, I took a significant detour and explored several other constructs before eventually returning to SLTC. The data clearly showed that the development of my thinking about theory was a circular process.

What Figure 1 fails to display are the challenges I experienced while trying to make sense of theory and grappling with all the various theoretical constructs. The analysis of the diary data revealed that tension began to arise as the proposal presentation date (July 23, 2013) approached. For example, having worked on my theoretical framework for a month, my diary entry on May 7, 2013 suggested that I was questioning my understanding of SCT, the ZPD, and the purpose of these two constructs: "The problem is that I feel that I really don't understand the ZPD and its purpose." The time pressure of having to submit the proposal in early July was increasingly becoming a concern. I felt quite reluctant to work with all these theories: "The time pressure is enormous. I have two months left to get my proposal ready, but there is so much left to do. I'm

feeling rather overwhelmed" (May 11, 2013). I saw myself as a practitioner rather than a theorist. Nevertheless, a few days later I felt "that my understanding [of activity theory] is gradually emerging and improving" (May 14, 2013) in spite of my tiredness. Yet, two weeks later (May 27) I noted that AT was anything but clear to me. I felt exhausted and expressed little desire to work on any kind of theory. I was in need of a holiday, but that was not an option because I was scheduled to submit my proposal in six weeks. The end of the diary entry on May 27, 2013 read: "I need to persevere and pull through this." Three days later I seemed to feel much more positive. The post on May 30 showed that I favored the idea of using AT as an analytical tool because it allowed me to take the history of an individual student teacher into account and analyze my study participants' reaction to and uptake of course content. Nonetheless, the diary data also highlighted that I continued to feel uncertain about the various elements of AT and the overall purpose of this theory.

Discussion and Implications

Trying to make sense of theory while developing a theoretical framework under time pressure may appear to be a rather agonizing experience. Why I did not select SLTC right away (see phase 1) and stick with it is a legitimate question. Having analyzed the diary entries and drawn up Figure 1, I feel that exploring these different theories over a period of several weeks was a necessary and formative experience that allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of a variety of theoretical constructs that can inform L2 teacher preparation. As such, the challenging journey of making sense of theory and developing a theoretical framework within a tight timeframe shaped me profoundly. From an educator's perspective, I believe that I am now able to better empathize with the struggles and potential frustrations of my graduate students as well as the PhD students I supervise. The insights gained from this small-scale study allow me to assist my doctoral students in their quest to make sense of theory and to design a theoretical framework underpinning their research. From a doctoral student's perspective, the findings suggest that PhD students need to understand that making sense of theory and conceptualizing a theoretical framework is a lengthy process that requires patience and hard work. It might be a good idea to form a study group in which doctoral students are able to discuss theory, ask questions, and share insights they gained from their readings. I discussed theory with my fellow doctoral students on several occasions, but getting together more regularly would have perhaps minimized some of the struggles and frustrations I experienced.

PhD supervisors, on the other hand, may want to guide their doctoral students' exploration of theory within defined boundaries. In light of the circular nature of Figure 1, it is easy to imagine how exploring theory can spin out of control and become an overwhelming undertaking that impedes understanding and learning. I was fortunate to have been guided by two knowledgeable supervisors that had the ability to reign me in and occasionally remind me of the focus of my research. These regular meetings were essential in helping me conceptualize my theoretical framework, and, ultimately, in completing my research proposal.

The findings generated by this inquiry have also implications for L2 teacher educators working in graduate programs. As illustrated in Figure 1 and in the ensuing discussion, L2 teacher educators need to be aware that their students' attempts to understand and to make sense of educational theory can be a multifaceted and lengthy process. Thus, having graduate students

keep some form of a logbook to record their thoughts about theory may enhance student teachers' uptake of course content, and, at the same time, provide an outlet for students to put down on a piece of paper some of the frustrations they experience while trying to understand theoretical constructs. Using a reflective diary in SLTE programs could also facilitate students' attempts to connect theory with classroom practice. Keeping a diary to facilitate learning is not a new concept in TESOL (Curtis & Bailey, 2009); however, reflecting on theory while documenting their thoughts (and their frustrations) about how to connect a particular theoretical construct to classroom teaching may broaden graduate students' knowledge-base.

Conclusion

This narrative paper supports the notion that teacher learning is a complex endeavour. It should be noted, however, that the nine phases discussed in this short article were not as clear cut as Figure 1 suggests. Some of these phases were intertwined, in part due to considerable overlap that existed between the various theories I explored. Also, as most PhD students do, I read a significant number of other papers that contained aspects of theoretical constructs that are not discussed in this paper. The word count of this brief report does not allow me to discuss these papers in detail. It is also worth mentioning that there were days when I was unable to devote time to critically explore any theoretical constructs due to additional teaching and research assistant commitments. On the one hand, these breaks might have affected my understanding of theory somewhat negatively. On the other hand, they might have helped me process some of the theories in greater depth. The effects these breaks had on my understanding of theory are, of course, purely speculative, but it would be interesting for someone to replicate this study. Figure 1 reflects my own, personal process of making sense of theory. The findings discussed in this paper are not necessarily a reflection on the quality of the study, but rather a reflection of the dialogic nature of narrative inquiry. That is, I interacted with the narrative data and came up with my own conclusion. Thus, were this small-scale study to be replicated by another doctoral or graduate student studying in a different context (e.g., in the Faculty of Education at SFU, the MA TESOL at TWU, or the LLED program at UBC), the model would most likely look different. That is because learning is, after all, an individual process (Burri, Baker, & Chen, 2017).

Acknowledgments

References

Burri, M., Baker, A., & Chen, H. (2017). "I feel like having a nervous breakdown": Pre-service and in-service teachers' developing beliefs and knowledge about pronunciation instruction. *Journal of Second Language Pronunciation, 3*(1), 109-135. doi:10.1075/jslp.3.1.05bur

Burri, M., Chen, H., & Baker, A. (2017). Joint development of teacher cognition and identity through learning to teach L2 pronunciation. *The Modern Language Journal, 101*(1), 128-142. doi:10.1111/modl.12388

Ahn, K. (2011). Learning to teach under curricular reform: The practicum experience in South Korea. In K. E. Johnson & P. R. Golombek (Eds.), *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development* (pp. 239-253). London: Routledge.

Aslan, E. (2015). When the native is also a non-native: "Retrodicting" the complexity of language teacher cognition. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 71*(3), 244-269. doi:10.3138/cmlr.2575

Baker, A. A. (2011). *Pronunciation pedagogy: Second language teacher cognition and practice*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Georgia State University, GA.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching, 36*(2), 81-109. doi:10.1017/S0261444803001903

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum.

Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2010). *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Canagarajah, S. A. (2012). Teacher development in a global profession: An autoethnography. *TESOL Quarterly, 46*(2), 258-279. doi:10.1002/tesq.18

Chaiklin, S. (2003). The zone of proximal development in Vygotsky's analysis of learning and instruction. In A. Kozulin, B. Gindis, V. S. Ageyev, & S. M. Miller (Eds.), *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context* (pp. 39-64). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Curtis, A., & Bailey, K. M. (2009). Diary studies. *On Cue Journal, 3*(1), 67-85.

Engeström, Y. (1999). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, & R. Punamäki (Eds.), *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 19-38). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Feryok, A. (2010). Language teacher cognitions: Complex dynamic systems? *System, 38*(2), 272-279. doi:10.1016/j.system.2010.02.001

Golombek, P. R., & Jordan, S. R. (2005). Becoming "black lambs" not "parrots": A poststructuralist orientation to intelligibility and identity. *TESOL Quarterly, 39*(3), 513-533. doi:10.2307/3588492

Grossman, P. L., Smagorinsky, P., & Valencia, S. (1999). Appropriating tools for teaching English: A theoretical framework for research on learning to teach. *American Journal of Education, 108*(1), 1-29. doi: 10.1086/444230

Harris, T. (2003). Listening with your eyes: The importance of speech-related gestures in the language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals, 36*(2), 180-187. doi: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.2003.tb01468.x

Hughes, S. A., & Pennington, J. L. (2017). *Autoethnography: Process, product, and possibility for critical social research*. SAGE Publications, In.

Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (Eds.). (2011). *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development*. London: Routledge.

Kim, E. J. (2011). Ten years of CLT curricular reform efforts in South Korea: An activity theory analysis of a teachers' experience. In K. E. Johnson & P. R. Golombek (Eds.), *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development* (pp. 225-238). London: Routledge.

Kiss, T. (2012). The complexity of teacher learning: Reflection as a complex dynamic system. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Education, 2*(1), 17-35.

Kubanyiova, M., & Feryok, A. (2015). Language teacher cognition in applied linguistics research: Revisiting the territory, redrawing the boundaries, reclaiming the relevance. *The Modern Language Journal, 99*(3), 435-449. doi:10.1111/modl.12239

Kurihara, Y. (2013). EFL teachers' learning: Transitional experiences from an overseas teacher education program to Japanese school settings. *JALT Journal, 35*(1), 51-72.

Lantolf, J. P., & Aljaafreh, A. (1995). Second language learning in the zone of proximal development: A revolutionary experience. *International Journal of Educational Research, 23*(7), 619-632. doi: 10.1016/0883-0355(96)80441-1

Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McCafferty, S. G. (2008). Mimesis and second language acquisition: A sociocultural perspective. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 30*(2), 147-167. doi: 10.1017/S0272263108080297

Mertens, D. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mirhosseini, S. (2016). An invitation to the less-treaded path of autoethnography in TESOL research. *TESOL Journal*. doi: 10.1002/tesj.305

Morita, N. (2004). Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities. *TESOL Quarterly, 38*(4), 573-603. doi:10.2307/3588281

Nassaji, H., & Swain, M. (2000). A Vygotskian perspective on corrective feedback in L2: The effect of random versus negotiated help on the learning of English articles. *Language Awareness, 9*(1), 34-51. doi: 10.1080/09658410008667135

Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*(3), 409-429. doi: 10.2307/3587831

Ohta, A. S. (2005). Interlanguage pragmatics in the zone of proximal development. *System, 33*(3), 503-517. doi: 10.1016/j.system.2005.06.001

Struthers, J. (2014). Analytic autoethnography: One story of the method. In J. Huisman & M. Tight (Eds.), *Theory and method in higher education research II* (pp. 183-202). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Svalberg, A. M.-L. (2015). Understanding the complex processes in developing student teachers' knowledge about grammar. *The Modern Language Journal, 99*(3), 529-545. doi:10.1111/modl.12241

Sweller, J., Ayres, P., & Kalyuga, S. (2011). *Cognitive load theory*. New York, NY: Springer

Thorne, S. L. (2004). Cultural historical activity theory and the object of innovation. In K. van Esch & O. St. John (Eds.), *New insight into foreign language learning and teaching* (pp. 51-70). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Warford, M. K. (2011). The zone of proximal teacher development. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(2), 252-258.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Appendix A

Overview of Conceptualizing Educational Theory

Dates (2013)	Phases	Theories/Theoretical Constructs & References	Summaries of Key Points in Diary Entries
April 8-18	1	Zone of proximal development (Lantolf & Aljaafrsh, 1995; Ohta, 2005; Warford, 2011)	The ZPD could perhaps be used to examine or characterize the effectiveness of teacher education
April 19-20	2	Second language teacher cognition (Borg, 2003)	Beliefs and knowledge (i.e., cognition) are unobservable aspects that occur in a practitioner's mind
April 22-24	3	Non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures and imitation) (Harris, 2003; McCafferty, 2008)	This plays an important role in meaning making and language learning
April 29	4	Identity in L2 learning and teaching (Kurihara; 2013; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997)	Identity needs to be considered in teacher learning
April 30	5	Feedback provision in ZPD (Nassaji & Swain, 2000)	Form is essential in L2 learning
May 2	6	Cognitive load theory (CLT) (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011)	CLT's central concepts of working memory and long-term memory might be relevant to SLTE
May 3, 2013	7	Activity theory(AT) (Engeström, 1999, 2001); an appropriation of tools in teacher development (Grossman et al, 1999)	A teaching technique could be classified as a tool, and an activity as a process of learning to teach pronunciation. AT could be used to examine participants' perception and adoption of teaching techniques
May 7-13	8	Vygotsky's original formulation of ZPD (Chaiklin, 2003); SCT in second language teacher education (SLTE) (Johnson & Golombek, 2011)	Simplify theoretical framework and roll ZPD and gestures into SCT. How do I analyze and track the development of teachers' cognition?
May 14-30	9	Kim (2011) and Ahn's (2011) application of AT to examine teacher learning	AT appears to be a useful construct to explore contradictions and conflict within participants' activity system/cognition development (i.e., learning to teach pronunciation)
July 23		Proposal presentation	