

Agency and its connection to a sociocultural perspective on teachers' professional development:
The lived experiences of five EFL teachers

by

María Antonieta Morales Jaramillo

B.S., University of Técnica Particular de Loja, 2010
M.S., Kansas State University, 2014

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the influence that a professional development (PD) program in the United States grounded on a sociocultural theory had on teachers' professional activities as teachers back in their home country. The study shared teacher perceptions of how and why the professional development strategies and activities applied during the program influenced teachers' growth and changes. In this qualitative, phenomenological study the unit of analysis was the experience of five Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who were part of an international professional development program grounded in sociocultural theories.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis examined participants' experience emphasizing the interpretation of participants' views about what they experienced. Using this approach participants presented their perspectives of their experiences while the researcher interpreted those stories (Saldaña, 2016). This study included the suggested steps of Saldaña's (2016) approach to phenomenology: building data through focus groups, interviews, and a journal; creating a coding analysis; and formulating themes. The use of criterion sampling ensured the teachers had common experiences in the same professional development program. The data sources and criterion sampling provided a thick, rich description of information about the professional development experience. The essence of the phenomenon was structured (Creswell, 2007).

The overarching question that guided this research was: In what ways do Ecuadorian EFL teachers describe their practices applicable to agency as a result of their participation in a longitudinal program of PD grounded in tenets of Sociocultural theory?

Using the lens of the study's research question as a framework for reviewing the initial categories from focus group sessions, individual interviews, and a journal, the following themes emerged in the study: Strength in Teacher Collaboration, Factors that Motivate Teacher's Engagement in PD and Factors that Motivate Teacher's Changes. Themes were ordered in alignment with the study's research question. The data from this study found teachers perceived the PD program experience positive. The use of a sociocultural theory as base of the PD program enriched the program and made it significative for the participants by increasing a sense of confidence in their capabilities and enhancing changes in their attitudes, beliefs and philosophies that contributed to their growth and transformation in agent of change.

Keywords: ZPD, EFL teachers, teacher agency, sociocultural theory, teacher professional development

Agency and its connection to sociocultural perspective on teachers' professional development:
The lived experiences of five EFL teachers

by

María Antonieta Morales Jaramillo

B.S., University of Técnica Particular de Loja, 2010
M.S., Kansas State University, 2014

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

Approved by:

Major Professor
Socorro G. Herrera

Copyright

© Maria Jaramillo 2021.

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the influence that a U.S. professional development (PD) program grounded in sociocultural theory had on teachers' professional activities back in their home country. The study shared teacher perceptions of how and why the PD strategies and activities applied during the program influenced teachers' growth and changes. In this qualitative phenomenological study, the unit of analysis was the experience of five Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who were part of an international PD program grounded in sociocultural theory.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis examined participants' experience emphasizing the interpretation of their views about what they experienced. Using this approach, participants presented their perspectives of their experiences while the researcher interpreted those stories (Saldaña, 2016). This study included the suggested steps of Saldaña's (2016) approach to phenomenology: building data through focus groups, interviews, and a journal; creating a coding analysis; and formulating themes. The use of criterion sampling ensured the teachers had common experiences in the same PD program. The data sources and criterion sampling provided a thick, rich description of information about the PD experience. The essence of the phenomenon was structured (Creswell, 2007).

The overarching question that guided this research was: In what ways do Ecuadorian EFL teachers describe their practices applicable to agency as a result of their participation in a longitudinal program of PD grounded in tenets of sociocultural theory?

Using the lens of the study's research question as a framework for reviewing the initial categories from focus group sessions, individual interviews, and a journal, the following themes emerged in the study: Strength in Teacher Collaboration, Factors that Motivate Teacher

Engagement in PD and Factors that Motivate Teacher Changes. Themes were ordered in alignment with the study's research question. The data from this study found teachers perceived the PD program experience positively. The use of sociocultural theory as the base of the PD program enriched the program and increased participants' sense of confidence in their capabilities and promoted changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and philosophies that contributed to their growth and transformation as agents of change.

Keywords: ZPD, EFL teachers, teacher agency, sociocultural theory, teacher professional development

Table of Contents

List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii
Dedication	xvi
Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Research Purpose and Questions	3
Significance of the Study	3
Chapter Summary	4
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	5
Appropriate PD for Teachers	5
Theoretical Framework	8
Mediation	8
Zone of Proximal Development	10
Language for Mediation	12
Social Interaction	13
Teacher Agency	14
A Growth Mindset	15
Dialogic Pedagogy	16
Summary	16
Chapter 3 - Research Methodology	17
Rationale for a Qualitative Study	17
Subjectivity in Qualitative Research	18
Subjectivity Statement	19
Research Paradigm	22
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	23
Case Study	23
Phenomenological Case Study	24
Site and Sample	25

Participant Selection and Gaining Access	25
Data Collection	26
Data Collection Tools	29
Focus Group Interviews	30
Individual Interviews	31
Data Management	32
Data Analysis	32
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	33
Stage 1: Organizing and Familiarizing with the Data	34
Stage 2: Coding	34
Stage 3: Reviewing and Defining Themes	35
Stage 4: Producing the Report	35
Research Integrity and Ethics	36
Trustworthiness of the Study	37
Summary	38
Chapter 4 - Research Findings	39
Data Collection	39
Site Selection	40
Participant Selection	40
Findings	42
Initial Categories	43
Emergent Themes	44
Theme 1: Strengths from Teacher Collaboration	45
Teacher Effective Collaboration	45
Sharing Teaching Ideas and Strategies	46
The Importance of Teamwork	47
Theme 2: Factors that Motivate Teacher Engagement in PD	48
Cultural and Social Aspects of Collaborative Work	50
Theme 3: Factors That Motivate Teacher Agency	51
Need for Change	53
Curriculum Focused on the Learner	54

Reflection that Moved to Action.....	56
Analysis of Findings	56
Summary of Findings.....	58
Chapter 5 - Discussion	59
Comparison of Findings to the Current State of Knowledge.....	60
Implications of the Study	62
Teacher Collaboration Is Powerful	62
SCT PD Promotes More Engagement	64
SCT PD Awakens Agentive Power	64
Suggestions for Future Research, Policy, and Practice.....	65
Suggestions for School Administrators	67
Suggestions for Teachers	68
Conclusion	69
References.....	70

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 The Data Analysis Spiral.....	33
Figure 3.2 Ethical Considerations for Data Collection.....	36

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Overview of Participants	42
Table 4.2 Initial Categories and Number of References	44
Table 4.3 Themes	44

Acknowledgements

My PhD journey has been amazing since its beginning in many different ways, and I have come to realize the journey was manageable and workable because I received assistance from many people and significant others.

First of all, I would like to thank God for giving me the chance to pursue one of my dreams, studying for a PhD at Kansas State University, U.S.A.

My eternal gratitude goes to my main supervisor Dr. Socorro Herrera. Without her support and guidance, I would have never accomplished this important step in my professional life. She provided support and encouragement throughout my writing process and during my ups and downs. Her feedbacks and comments about the subjects I investigated, my writing style, the organization of the research, and life in academia have enriched my personal and professional development. She planted in me the seed of justice and advocacy for my students. Her positive outlook on life has helped and inspired many educators around the world. She does not know, but she touched not only my life but the lives of thousands of educators that she influenced with her philosophy of love.

I am very fortunate and grateful to the members of the committee: Dr. Tonnie Martinez, Dr. Vicki Sherbet, and Dr. Judy Hughey. I am truly fortunate for having them as my advisors throughout my writing process. I learned so much from them through their feedback and comments.

I also would like to thank the Dean of the College of Education, Dean Mercer, who gave all her support when I needed it. Words cannot express my gratitude to her.

My gratitude to all CIMA staff and instructors. I am truly fortunate for having them as my instructors and friends. I learned so much from them. Thank you for being very supportive of international students like me. I love being part of the CIMA family.

I would like to express my deepest feeling of gratitude to Drs. Kevin and Nancy Murry, who always were there for me giving me their support and advice. Thanks for those amazing moments that both of you shared with me.

My gratitude to Dr. Gilbert Davila, who has always been there, giving me support every time I needed it. I will never forget all the things you did for me.

My gratitude to Ec. Rafael Correa Delgado, former president of Ecuador. The scholarship program during his government enabled me to obtain my masters' degree here at KSU and started my dream to become a PhD. The scholarships allowed me to start my international studies, which made this doctorate possible.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my informants, who spent some of their precious time and shared their knowledge, experiences, and opinions in the study. I do hope that the results of this study will benefit individual and institutional professionalism of EFL teachers in Ecuador and other countries with similar settings.

Special thanks to my dearest friends, Eder and Paolo. Without you both, none of this would have been possible. You were there when I needed it, making me laugh, watching me cry, and giving me all your love and support when I needed it the most. You are not my friends, you are my family. I am going to miss you both so much.

I am also grateful that I am surrounded by beautiful, supportive, and helpful people: Melissa, Shabina, Mona, Andy, Victiana, Marisol, Fabiola, Isa, Jesse, and Gilbert H. It was great to know you all. Stay in touch!

My gratitude also goes to my family and relatives. I thank my mom because she was my inspiration and strength, to my Dad who is watching me up in heaven, proud of his China, my aunt Dalila, who is my angel, my sisters and brothers. I love you all!

Finally, I want to thank and dedicate this work to my treasures, my dearest ones. The loves of my life. Thanks for all your support, patience, and love through my PhD journey. I think you should receive a little piece of my title of PhD, too—the loved ones of a Doctor of Philosophy, PhD. What do you think? I love you all to the moon and back: Mario, María Belén, María Daniela, María Isabel, Alma María, Mario, y Nana. Gracias por toda su paciencia y amor. Este logro es de ustedes. Sin ustedes nada hubiera sido posible.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the love of my life, my five kids and Nana. Without your love and support I couldn't make anything. You are the strength I need to breath and live. Hours of work and distance now are becoming in a wonderful moment of joy for all of us. I love you all forever. Mario, Maria Belen, Maria Daniela, Maria Isabel, Alma María, Marito y Nana, thanks for been my force during this journey.

I also want to dedicate this study to my mom Noemi and dad Vicente. My mom, was my inspiration to become a teacher, she never told me what I have to do in my life, but she always taught me with her actions how to work hard, and mainly how to give love without limits. My dad +, he was my first love. He taught me to live without regrets trying to always be happy with a smile on my face. My sisters and brothers who always support and encourage me to be a better person. Vicente, Juan, Rocio +, Victoria, Chaby, Ileana, Irina, Rubén, Daniel, Patricio, Verónica y Pepe all of you are important part in my life. Roci I did it!!

My aunt Dalila and granny Beatriz they were and are my lovely angels forever. They taught me to prey and the love for Jesus and his holy mother. I know now they are very proud of me in heaven.

Finalmente dedico este trabajo a esa persona especial que me ha acompañado en los momentos buenos y en los momentos difíciles. Sin él, esta disertación no tendría sentido.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

English has undoubtedly become the lingua franca of the world. The spread and adoption of English can be traced back to British imperialism, and later, to the monetary and political influence of the United States (Graddol, 1997). Therefore, the English language has made a strong impact on globalization. Because of its affect on financial, political, social, and language measurements of social orders, globalization has for quite some time been a subject of extensive conversation (Graddol, 1997; Lim, 2008)

In Ecuador, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) was introduced in 1912 (Ministerio de Educación, 2011). The preparation of EFL teachers began in a teacher preparation program offered at Central University in 1928 (Ministerio de Educación, 2011). In 1993, the Curriculum Reform and Development for the Learning of English (CRADLE) project was introduced (Ministerio de Educación, 2011). It was promoted by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and the British Council (Cáneppa et al., 2018). The main purpose of the CRADLE project was to grant Ecuadorian English language students a solid basis for developing English language proficiency. In their analysis of educational political reforms, Calle et al. (2019) affirmed that the CRADLE project was the most impactful endeavor in the English proficiency of school learners nationwide during the period 1993-2000. However, in spite of these efforts and the advancements achieved by the CRADLE project, English proficiency of primary and secondary school students was found to be very deficient (Chicaiza, 2013; Ministerio de Educación, 2011).

In 2012, the Ecuadorian government inaugurated a teacher professional development (PD) program to prepare Ecuadorian teachers of English in the United States. This initiative began with a partnership between various U.S. universities, Ecuador's Ministry of Education,

and the Ecuadorian Secretary for Science and Technology (SENESCYT). This program began with a first cohort of 112 teachers who were part of an intensive PD process designed to increase their effectiveness as English educators. This program aimed to improve teachers' current English language level through a rigorous training program while also developing an organization of a permanent PD systems, which included scholarships for training in English-speaking countries (Educación, 2012). The SENESCYT executed this scholarship program in various English-speaking countries; teachers also learned teaching methodologies in some of the best universities of the United States. According to Peñafiel (2014), his program intended to improve the English language teaching and learning in Ecuadorian public and private schools and colleges, as a national project to improve education quality and generate a state of equity.

Statement of the Problem

EFL teachers around the world are encouraged to improve their professional and pedagogical competence (*Teaching Additional Languages - UNESCO Digital Library*, n.d.). Ecuadorian English teachers are no exception to that statement. In 2012, 5,000 EFL teachers were tested to determine their proficiency in English using internationally recognized standardized tests (Ministerio de Educación, 2011). As result of this massive testing, it was found that less than two percent of the test takers received a passing score. Because of these low scores, several teacher PD programs were launched by the Ecuadorian government (Ministerio de Educación, 2011).

In recent years, much has been written about constructivist learning theories and their application to outcomes-based teaching and learning (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Edwards, 2007; V. Pitsoe & Letseka, 2014). One constructivist perspective on appropriate professional learning for EFL teachers is guided by sociocultural theory (SCT). In summary, the main tenets of SCT

that are fundamental to learning include mediation, Zone of Proximal Development, language, and social interaction as the vehicle of thought (Vygotsky, 1978). These tenets are discussed more in Chapter Two.

Despite its utility for EFL teachers, little, if anything, has been written about the practical implications of SCT for teacher PD. In this study, it is argued teacher PD programs should be founded on and guided by principles that are compatible with the SCT perspective in order to contribute to the building of teacher identity.

Research Purpose and Questions

This research study aimed at exploring the lived experiences of a group of Ecuadorian EFL teachers after they participated in a teacher PD program at a U.S. university. The main purpose of the study was to inquire into how these teachers perceived themselves in terms of teacher agency in their current teaching scenarios. Additionally, it sought to gain a better understanding of the main components of the PD program that may have exerted this change.

The overarching question that guided this research was: In what ways do Ecuadorian EFL teachers describe their practices applicable to agency as a result of their participation in a longitudinal PD program grounded in tenets of sociocultural theory?

Significance of the Study

The application of SCT insights into practice in teacher PD programs represents an area of emerging research (Johnson & Golombek, 2011b; Mirzaee & Aliakbari, 2017a; Shabani, 2016; Shi, 2017). Ecuador began a series of scholarship programs between 2009 and 2017. Many scholarship recipients were English teachers who had completed their programs of study and returned to their country. This study adds to the existing literature on the complexities of English

teaching and English teacher preparation received abroad, from the perception of the recipients of these scholarships.

There is insufficient documentation of narratives and experiences of EFL Ecuadorian teachers who have returned to their home country. This study aimed to contribute to the literature and provide theoretical and practical implications associated with this lack of documentation of EFL teacher PD programs in Ecuador. The study explored how a SCT understanding of concepts could be used to mediate teacher PD in the design of PD programs and as a framework to examine teacher learning.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the author provided history relevant to the reality of teaching English in Ecuador and the limited English proficiency gained over time. Next, the problem of insufficient documentation of teacher PD outcomes was presented in relation to teachers who had participated in PD at a U.S. university where the teaching approach adhered to a method of instruction grounded in SCT principles. The specific research question was articulated with a phenomenological methodology. Finally, this introduction concluded with a rationale of the significance that this project may have for teachers and universities that provide teacher PD and preparation for EFL educators.

In Chapter Two, the researcher will analyze the literature related to teacher PD programs, the principles of SCT, and teacher agency. These theoretical foundations will be reviewed in detail and serve to orient the study design explained Chapter Three.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter offers an analysis of appropriate practices in the professional development (PD) programs for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Next, it offers associated narratives that assert and defend the claim that SCT is an applicable and robust framework for the PD of EFL teachers. The four tenets of SCT are explicated as the central components of the theoretical framework for this study. These components are mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), language, and social interaction. Teacher agency is presented as a possible mind shift resulting from preparation with these sociocultural components.

Appropriate PD for Teachers

Teachers are challenged and subtly invited to advance professionally as they walk the path of their careers (Guskey, 2002). They constantly face new requirements and demands as knowledge advances and new educational policies are put in place (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It becomes necessary to define what this teacher learning entails (Desimone, 2009; Edwards, 2007; Téllez et al., 2005). When referring to teacher learning, there has been some variation. For example, several terms used are teacher learning, professional learning, teacher development, and teacher training. Below, three distinctions between these terms are discussed: teacher learning versus professional learning, teacher learning versus teacher development, and teacher training versus teacher development. These three distinctions will provide a more comprehensive way of approaching teacher PD in this research (Strauss, 2014)

The first distinction—teacher learning versus professional learning—explores the quality of teacher learning. Teachers can learn from various sources, inside and outside a formal setting (e.g., the school). Bransford et al. (2000) highlighted teachers learn from their own practice, from interacting with other teachers, from their teacher educators (especially when they participate in

projects), when they enroll in graduate programs, and from engaging in acts of teaching outside their formal professional work. Not all these forms of learning, however, guarantee a high-quality experience that produces the characteristics of professional teaching. The term *professional*, according to Leung (2009), refers to “a trained and qualified specialist who displays a high standard of competent conduct in their practice” (p. 49). Although most teacher learning experiences provide teachers with an opportunity to grow, the growth teachers demonstrate should reflect some standards of performance, knowledge, and conduct (Hammerness et al., 2005).

The second distinction—teacher learning versus teacher development—brings attention to the process that teacher learning takes, in other words, how teachers develop as they learn (Hammerness et al., 2005). Burns and Richards (2009) painted this idea by stating, “Teacher learning is not viewed as translating knowledge and theories into practice but rather as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes” (p. 4). Avalos (2011) pointed out that although teacher learning is approached differently by scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers, it boils down to learning how to learn, and to transferring that learning to their classroom for the benefit of the learners. In line with teacher learning being a process, Hammerness et al. (2005) highlighted teachers do not start or end learning in graduate school; professional teachers continue to acquire bodies of knowledge, develop skills, and adopt beliefs about the profession throughout their teaching career, continuously adding to and reviewing their professional outlook. Teachers need to have regular and constant opportunities to bring themselves up to date and stay fresh and ready for the challenges of the profession (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

The last of the distinctions—teacher training versus teacher development—brings to light the difference between the two terms, training and development, which are often used interchangeably. According to Richards and Farrell (2005), training involves a focus on present needs and short-term immediate goals that are considered as such as by experts. Teacher development means serving “long-term goals and seeking to facilitate teachers’ growth of teacher understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers.” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 4). More recent views of teacher PD conceptualize teacher development as involving communities of learners, with key elements reflecting what the participants do; the conversations they produce and engage in; and the activities, objects, and things that are used as these actions take place (Burns & Richards, 2009).

In summary, teacher PD can be seen as engaging in formal and informal continuous learning experiences within authentic school settings that allow dialogue, collaboration, and reflection. Adding the term *ongoing* to the concept of professional development is appropriate (Guskey, 2002a). Looking at teacher PD from this angle allows educational administrators to take actions toward providing more precisely crafted teacher PD. Researchers present teacher PD as staff development, community learning, communities of practice, or coaching (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991; McCafferty et al., 2006; Miller, 2011). For instance, Lave and Wegner (1991) introduced the term communities of practice as a type of teacher PD. They defined these communities of practice “as a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do better as they interact regularly” (Lave & Wegner, 1991, p. 29). In the same way, McCaffery et al. (2006) suggested knowledge is acquired when learners engage in simple activities under the supervision and company of more

knowledgeable people until they gain experience and expertise to do more advanced tasks and activities.

In this research, teacher PD is defined as professional learning that is ongoing and actively engages the teacher in a dialogical interaction with other teachers or experts based on sociocultural tenets such as mediation, Zone of Proximal Development, language, and social interaction.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural theory is presented as the theoretical framework of this research because the contextual factors are of considerable importance in the lived experiences of teachers that receive PD. The four major components of this theoretical framework are mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), language, and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). These concepts are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Mediation

Mediation is an interactive process that relates mind, language, and society. Mediation involves the use of concrete and abstract tools (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Tools are artificial stimuli not given by nature but created by humans in the course of their social lives and can be concrete or abstract (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Social relationships are interactive, critical processes that shed light on how the structure of an individual's external social interactions mediate the transformative development of internalization (Childs, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). Internalization refers to a process of transformation that involves reflection and evolution of external events and actions into internal ones. This cognitive development occurs as a result of the individual's participation in social activities within clear purposes and specific contexts. For Vygotsky (1960), the process of internalization means incorporating cultural tools

into the individual's psychological processes. As a consequence of the incorporation of cultural mediation in the human interaction, the individual's mental activity becomes voluntary. These mental activities are not genetic, but rather they are the result of social and historical evolution (Vygotsky, 1978).

According to Rogoff (1994), learning is "a process of transformation of participation in which responsibility and autonomy are both desired" (p. 215). Both teachers and learners have an active role rather than a passive or dominant role. People learn as they collaborate with others to develop activities with objectives related with common practices of the community. Various studies have revealed that learning conditions appear when individuals are extended in their current level of development to solve problems with the help of a more competent peer or with the support of an instructor (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Mediation mainly occurs via three processes: through cultural artifacts and activities, through scientific concepts, and through social relations.

Culture is constructed by people; it exists in an environment in which people act. It takes into account time considerations as well as individuals' beliefs about things, themselves, and others. Culture is learned. It is not genetically transmitted like racial characteristics. Human beings learn to speak, think, and act the way they do because of the people and the culture that surround them. Some examples of cultural artifacts are norms, values, and behaviors (Huxley et al., 1952).

Mediation also manifests through everyday and scientific concepts. These mediate the transformative process of internalization. According to Lortie (1976), scientific concepts play a role in restructuring and transforming teachers' everyday concepts and the way they conceptualize reality. These scientific concepts allow teachers to be able to advance their

thinking process to problem solve throughout academic contexts and activities. Lantolf and Johnson (2007) challenged teachers to re-conceive everyday concepts related to instruction to unify curricula and give teachers coherent notions of teaching and learning. Conceptual tools mediate decision making for planning, instruction, and assessment and include theoretical principles and practical consequences (Grossman et al., 1999).

Mediation also occurs through social relationships. Social relationships are interactive, critical processes that help to reveal how the structure of an individual's external social interactions mediate the transformative development of internalization (Childs, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978).

Zone of Proximal Development

According to Vygotsky (1978), the ZPD is the primary activity space in which learning occurs. The ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Teachers may be assisted in their ZPD based on their previous knowledge through the support of colleagues, external teachers, or other more knowledgeable persons with higher qualification to improve their knowledge and skills (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). To target the ZPD, teachers or mentors are encouraged to consider: (a) social interactions with someone that possesses knowledge and skills beyond those of the learner, (b) social interactions with a skillful tutor that allows the learner to observe and practice her/his skills, or (c) scaffolding, or supportive activities provided by either an educator or a more capable peer (Silver, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). The last of these considerations has been the basis for increasing efforts in constructivist teaching to involve a variety of grouping variations through which students might

learn as much about certain concepts and relationships from peers as they do from the teacher. Additionally, Postholm (2012) has argued that cognition originates in the social collective mind and emerges in, and through, engaging in social activity. As a result, teacher PD programs are fundamental for teacher improvement because cognition is essentially constructed by interaction with educators who possess more expertise (De Costa, 2019; Grossman et al., 1999).

It has been argued newcomer students and students who face similar sociocultural, learning, and second language acquisition (SLA) challenges benefit from instruction that consistently targets the ZPD (Herrera, 2016; Herrera & Murry, 2014). Especially valuable for fostering work within the ZPD are learning opportunities that maximize both the teacher and more capable peers.

Vygotsky's conceptualization of the ZPD is consistent with the mediation and language as a vehicle of mediation components of SCT. ZPD refers to people who intentionally interject items between their environment and themselves, so that they are able to modify it and gain specific benefits. For example, a social group may decide drawing routes (i.e., a map) accelerates the group's capacity to travel in efficient ways. Further, the group may use a common or shared system of representation (i.e., language) to communicate what the map illustrates, how it might be used, and the advantages it offers group members.

Although there are few analyses for the proposition and less research to substantiate the assertion, it has been argued that Vygotsky's theoretical notions, as embodied in the SCT, are also applicable to adult learning (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) and even to teacher PD. For example, it has been asserted the *mentoring model* of teacher PD demonstrates strong parallels with Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD (Shabani, 2016). Of course, with adult mentees, it becomes difficult to claim that any other adult, regardless of qualification, could target the ZPD. Instead,

these arguments assert adult mentees could reach the ZPD under the guidance of more experienced or better trained educators (Shabani, 2016; Singh & Richards, 2006).

Nevertheless, Shabani (2016) observed that reaching the ZPD via such arrangements requires a range of conditions that may or may not come to fruition. These conditions are not guaranteed simply because, for example, a new teacher is assigned a more experienced instructional coach. Among these essential conditions are: (a) potential passivity on the part of the mentee; (b) the necessity for notable cooperation between the two; and (c) high level, social dialogue between the two (Shabani, 2016).

Teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). Development and social interaction are the cornerstones of professional change and growth (Vygotsky, 1978). In this sense, much of this work has focused on exploring effective teacher PD programs and the relationship between sociocultural perspectives and teachers' self-efficacy and agency.

Language for Mediation

According to Vygotsky (1986), language is the ultimate collection of symbols and tools that emerge within a culture. It is potentially the greatest tool at one's disposal, a form of symbolic mediation that plays two critical roles in teacher PD: to learn in collaboration with others and to construct meaning. In this sense, language has a strong role in the learning process. The use of language as semiotic mediation promotes the co-construction of knowledge and enables people to function socially and individually (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Nagao & Takeuchi, 2019; Wertsch et al., 1995).

Language is also considered a tool that mediates development of higher mental actions that emerge within a culture (Golombek & Doran, 2014). In this sense, language has a strong significance in the learning process. The symbolic mediation through language plays an important role in teacher development and learning through appropriation, a process by which an individual adopts these socially available psychological tools to facilitate future independent problem solving (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). In other words, learners need to be familiarized with the use of a particular tool. Then they can use it by themselves in other circumstances to solve new problems. In the same way, adult learners can learn from a more skilled person such as an instructor (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

Social Interaction

According to Wegerif et al. (1999), the basis of learning and development is social interaction. Learning is a process of apprenticeship and internalization in which skills and knowledge are transformed from the social into the cognitive plane (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) indicated the origin of the construction of knowledge should not be sought in the mind but in the co-constructed social interaction between two or more individuals who vary in depth of knowledge. Furthermore, the construction of knowledge is a socio-culturally mediated process affected by physical and psychological tools and artifacts (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Therefore, the sociocultural relationship between teachers and learners influences efficacy and achievement (Garrick, 2018).

Knowledge is seen as the construction of meaning and understanding within social interaction (Childs, 2011). From this perspective, the social environment is perceived as a critical factor in how the individual learns and develops. Therefore, most Vygostkian scholars argue that human cognition originates and emerges out of participation in social activities (Goodson &

Walker, 1991; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Shabani, 2016; Warford, 2011) and “any higher mental function was external and social before it was internal” (Vygotsky, 1960, p. 283). Therefore, it is not that social activity influences cognition, but that social relationships are the process through which human cognition is formed (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007).

According to Vygotsky (1978), development and social interaction are the base of professional change and growth. From this view, these changes give power to teachers when they perceive themselves as capable of creating the learning conditions needed to enable their students to meet the learning goals. These teacher changes are reflective of teacher agency (Fullan et al., 2018).

Teacher Agency

In general, agency is a person’s ability and initiative to engage in their professional growth and their colleagues’ growth (Fullan et al., 2018).

Teacher agency, specifically, is the intentionality of an action versus an expectation or prediction of action (Bandura, 2001). Bandura stated efficacy beliefs that teachers develop over time are the foundation of teacher agency, which functions within the socio-cultural context in which a person resides (Bandura, 2001).

The socio-cultural context that Bandura (2001) mentioned refers to the school where the teacher works, and more specifically in his or her classroom. The expectation of effective teaching in the 21st century presents more rapidly changing scenarios that require teachers to seek out learning opportunities, collaborate with other colleagues, and show initiative and competence (Allen, 2018). From this, teacher agency may better align with being able to intentionally engage in actions that contribute to teacher PD not only for oneself, but for one’s colleagues.

Teacher agency is also viewed as the power teachers bring to the classroom by which they perceive themselves as capable of creating the learning conditions needed to enable their students to meet the learning goals. These goals are set by the teacher and based upon the district, state, and federal standards. In creating the learning conditions for the classroom, the teacher is also influenced by each individual student's sense of efficacy and agency that they exhibit through behaviors and conversation. Two aspects are crucial in the development of teacher agency (a) a growth mindset and (b) a dialogic pedagogy. These concepts are expanded upon in more detail below.

A Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is a fundamental aspect of developing teacher agency. According to Dweck (2008), people who have a growth mindset believe learning and improvement lead to success. These individuals are always learning not only from others and their own success, but also from their mistakes. The implication of this for teacher PD is developing a growth mindset in teachers means establishing high expectations and helping them develop what is required to meet those expectations. It signifies valuing not only the outcome but also the process that led to the outcome, including the hardships and the moments of joy that were integral to it.

Teacher educators play an important role in modeling a growth mindset for the teachers that receive PD (Dweck, 2008). Teacher educators do so when they create an atmosphere in which setbacks, mistakes, obstacles, and difficulties are used as opportunities to grow and learn. When teacher educators apply a growth mindset to themselves, they show humility and reveal they, too, have gaps and lack knowledge even after many years of experience and preparation.

Dialogic Pedagogy

Dialogic pedagogy is widely viewed as an effective means of educating for civic participation in a deliberative democracy (Segal et al., 2017). Teacher agency finds fertile territory when the teachers have opportunities to engage in dialogic pedagogy. When teachers use dialogue as a tool for learning, they realize the importance of collaboration. According to Segal, Pollak, and Lefstein (2017), dialogic pedagogy increases self-esteem. For Fernández-Balboa and Marshall (1994), it also increases the chances of pursuing professional development.

Johnson (2015) provided a real example of dialogic pedagogy in a teacher education class. This study was based on the following premise:

Within the context of L2 teacher education, the learning of L2 teaching is no longer viewed as a matter of simply translating theories of linguistics and/or second language acquisition . . . into effective instructional practices, but as a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular sociocultural practices and contexts. (Johnson, 2015, p. 516)

Dialogic pedagogy is tied to language and social interaction, two concepts previously discussed in the theoretical framework. In the first case, scientific concepts are democratized by letting the teachers appropriate the concept and transform it based on their own experiences. In the second case, social interaction is valued and encouraged when learning invites each individual to participate in the negotiation of meaning rather than merely accepting the opinions and ideas of the teacher educators or PD providers.

Summary

In this chapter, the narratives centered around three sections. The first section examined what adequate preparation of teachers entails, in which teacher PD is defined as engaging in

ongoing formal and informal learning experiences. The second section of this chapter presented the theoretical framework of the research, which was structured around four main tenets of SCT: mediation, ZPD, language, and social interaction. The chapter concluded with an exploration of teacher agency, including the concepts of growth mindset and dialogical pedagogy, given that a mind shift of teachers was an anticipated outcome for teachers participating in PD that adhered to SCT.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

This chapter describes the steps of the qualitative case study that explored the lived experiences of five Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in-service teachers who participated in a teacher professional development (PD) program focused on the Biography-Driven Instruction (BDI) method at a major Midwest U.S. university. The narratives of these teachers were connected with teacher agency. A qualitative approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the experiences of the teachers who participated in the PD program. The suitability of phenomenological case study methodology is discussed in depth in this chapter.

The overarching research question for this study was the following: In what ways do Ecuadorian EFL teachers describe their practices applicable to agency as a result of their participation in a longitudinal PD program grounded in tenets of sociocultural theory?

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

A qualitative research study is most appropriate when the researcher's purpose is to explain a phenomenon by trusting the opinion of an individual's experience in a specific situation (Yin, 2018). Thus, a qualitative approach was chosen because this study sought to examine Ecuadorian EFL in-service teachers' lived experiences and their perceptions from having participated in a teacher PD program in the United States. This PD program adhered to

the tenets of the Biography-Driven Instruction method, which aligns with sociocultural theory (SCT), which constituted the theoretical framework (TF) of this study.

The nature of qualitative research is interpretative as it seeks to unpack human beings' understandings and perspectives of a phenomenon by collecting data from various sources in their natural and specific settings (Bhattacharya, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Lather (1991) stated that qualitative research seeks to understand, interrogate, and deconstruct reality. This understanding typically is obtained from conducting in-depth inquiries of a small sample of the situated population in the natural setting (Miles et al., 2014).

Qualitative research in education was chosen to explore the why and how of teachers' actions, opinions, and interpretations as influenced by experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Exploring and examining teachers' lived experiences and their beliefs about teacher self-efficacy and agency were best explored through a qualitative lens. Patton (2014) asserted the main objective of qualitative research in education is to deeply explore and understand experiences in order to then offer insights regarding the degree to which findings are transferable to other similar contexts. All these characteristics supported use of a qualitative approach for this research study.

Subjectivity in Qualitative Research

Subjectivity plays a key role in qualitative research; it refers to a person's opinions, feelings, and preferences (Siegesmund, 2008). Peshkin (1988) stated that subjectivity is an act of thinking that cannot be eliminated. It is present in all aspects of an individual's life, including the role of researcher. According to Bhattacharya (2017), subjectivity is an important aspect to be considered in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to explore how he or she conceptualizes, interprets, and achieves in-depth understanding of the data collected.

Bhattacharya pointed out that the data quality and how the researcher analyzes this data are influenced by aspects of positionality that are uncovered when one's subjectivity is explored. The assumptions, values, beliefs, and past experience of people influence their interpretation, discourse, and process of making meaning of what others say. According to DeMarrais (2004), there always are beliefs and assumptions that researchers inevitably bring to all phases of the research process.

The exercise of acknowledging subjectivity helped the researcher surface beliefs and assumptions held, as a student and as a teacher, which in turn supported transparency in the meaning-making process that involved interpretation and construction of the data collected. It was important for the researcher to be aware of motives, reasons, prejudices, and biases through all the different stages of the study. The author relied heavily on self-reflection to ensure her subjectivity was considered as she carried out the research process.

A subjectivity statement helps researchers realize and identify how their prior experiences may influence all stages of their current research process. Addressing the subjectivity statement with transparency promotes the trustworthiness and quality of the study (Callaway, 1992; Preissle, 2008). Thinking about subjectivity and presenting it here allowed the author to become more aware of the influences she could unintentionally and subconsciously exert on aspects of the research. This awareness helped her to minimize and account for her influence on the outcomes of the investigation.

Subjectivity Statement

I am a 49-years-old married female. I consider myself a Hispanic mestiza. I was born and raised in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and have lived my entire life there. Guayaquil is the main port of

Ecuador. It is a very busy city, and its main activity is related to commerce. It is situated on the west bank of the Guayas river, 45 miles upstream from the Pacific Ocean.

I come from a large family with 12 siblings including myself, 6 boys and 6 girls. My mother and aunts were public school teachers, so I grew up surrounded by teaching materials, observing lesson preparation and following the many rules of the home. My father was an architect. He designed and built our houses, one in the city and one on the beach. My family is very united and religious. We love to spend time together in familiar gatherings celebrating special moments such as birthdays, holidays, or any memorable occasion. Most of the time, all the family gatherings take place in my parents' house. I have five children, 4 girls and one boy. My oldest daughter just graduated from medical school, and the second one is completing her second semester of higher education as a communications major. My three other children are in high school. My youngest two children are twins, a boy and a girl.

My higher education academic background started when I finished high school and decided to go to medical school. However, I got married and had to abandon that dream. Three years later, I decided to continue with my studies and started a new program. Four years after I began, I earned a bachelor's degree in clinical laboratory. While I was completing this major, I was also working as an English language teacher at a private school. I took many courses to improve my classes with teaching strategies and methodologies. I took the teaching knowledge test (TKT) from Cambridge University. I also completed a course from Casa Grande University, and I became a certified Teacher of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). I always liked this profession, but I never thought it would be my primary activity. Suddenly, I found myself immersed in the world of education, like my mother and aunts. I decided to take the profession more seriously and began more formal studies. I earned a bachelor's degree in English language

teaching. One year later, I won a scholarship to attend a teaching PD program at a U.S. university. One condition of the scholarship stipulated that I needed to return to Ecuador to work in a public high school. Two years later, I won a second scholarship sponsored by the Ecuadorian government to participate in a master's degree program in the United States. When I returned to Ecuador after completing this program, I had the opportunity to work at a public university.

I started working at a public university in my hometown Guayaquil as a contract teacher, but a year later I received tenure. I was appointed director of the Language Department of the university from 2015 to 2019. During this time, I also worked as an English language instructor in the College of Education at the same university. I then decided to complete a doctoral program at a major U.S. university.

I strongly believe that cooperative learning provides the best way to learn. I also believe that without social justice, we cannot construct a better society. I acknowledge my beliefs come from the experiences I have accumulated my whole life, including those involving my mother and my aunt, who were passionate educators and spent most of their lives serving and supporting their students. This instilled in me a strong desire for social justice and love of neighbor. My mother and aunt taught me to love my culture and respect the cultures of others. Because of these two women, I want to know my students in order to understand their feelings and needs. I can then use this information to help them to achieve their goals, enhancing their intrinsic motivation. I plan lessons that engage learners through class activities that fulfill their needs.

My grandmother taught and advised me with much love, but above all with much patience. She taught me that you need to find the spark in life, create a dream, follow it, and make it come true. This motivation has become the engine and purpose of my life.

I strongly believe teachers need to be well prepared to motivate their students in the learning process. At the same time, teachers need to be motivated to advance their knowledge. They need to find their own reasons to teach what they teach. They need to activate their intrinsic motivation to foster real change and transformation. Teachers have the best opportunity to start this transformation through teacher PD programs. However, they need to be heard; they need to express what they want from this experience, as one size does not fit all. In this study, I sought to explore the experiences of five Ecuadorian EFL teachers to discover how their biographical aspects influenced their actions upon completion of the PD program and return to the classroom in their home country.

Research Paradigm

This study is grounded in the constructivism paradigm, which challenges an external objective reality as existing independently from a person whose knowledge can be externalized (Given, 2008). Reality exists in the minds of people when they use language to describe it, explain it, or understand it (Guba, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 2011). These individual realities indicate a phenomenon that can be observed and interpreted in different ways by different people (Crotty, 1998; Guba, 1990). Thus, this investigation focused on understanding Ecuadorian EFL teachers' beliefs of their efficacy and teacher agency after participating in a teacher PD program in the United States and returning to their country of origin to apply their newly gained knowledge and skills. In particular, the research focused on how they constructed their knowledge in their unique teaching contexts. Through this inquiry, the researcher sought to uncover knowledge and meaning by interacting with the participants and obtaining thick and rich descriptions of their experiences (Crotty, 1998).

Sociocultural theory suggests that learning and development are informed and transformed by experiences of individuals in the communities in which they work and live (Johnson, 2009; L. S. Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). From this theoretical perspective, five Ecuadorian EFL teachers became active constructors of their teaching knowledge. Their skills and new knowledge acquired and developed in the United States gave them new meaning in relationship to the sociocultural tools of classrooms in Ecuador.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The collected data was analyzed and interpreted through the lens of a phenomenological case study. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis allowed the researcher to understand participants' lived experiences represented in the themes that emerged from coding (Creswell, 2013; deMarrais, 2004). As Creswell (2013) and deMarrais (2004) note, phenomenology gives the researcher a strong description structure to examine human experience and capture those aspects that intervene in the construction of meaning and beliefs.

An interpretative phenomenological analysis aims at building an understanding of a phenomenon experienced by one or more people via thick descriptions obtained from participants that were bounded by contextual, social, economic, or cultural factors (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 2013). In this sense, the theoretical perspective offered by phenomenology provided the researcher with an appropriate lens for conducting the study.

Case Study

There are a variety of widely accepted designs of qualitative research (Yin, 2016). Among the most popular designs are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. This qualitative research was conducted using case study design. Case study was selected because researchers who use case study identify the questions of interest, decide how they will

represent the information, and based on an analysis of the sources of information, relate it to the “case.” Furthermore, this type of qualitative design allows for the analysis of an issue through one or more cases within a delimited system (e.g., a setting or a context).

Case study methodology typically is used for analyzing a system or an individual. The research process involves various steps that make it possible to deeply analyze the phenomenon under study. As for the collection of data, it can take the researcher a few hours, months, or more to define the case in a proper way. Finally, the report of the findings is essentially narrative, with explanatory descriptions of the case (Creswell, 2013; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2018).

DeMarrais (2004) and Bhattacharya (2017) have clarified that case studies seek to discover each case's uniqueness associated with a generalized concept, in contrast to generalizing from the results of one specific instance, as occurs in quantitative approaches. DeMarrais (2004) and Bhattacharya (2017) have also highlighted that case studies take a relatively short time to conduct, from a few weeks to a few months, but usually less than a year.

Because of the reasons expressed in the previous paragraphs, a phenomenological case study was conducted to explore the experiences of five Ecuadorian EFL teachers who participated in a teacher PD program focused on the Biography-Driven Instruction (BDI) method at a major Midwest U.S. university. The duration of this study was six weeks.

Phenomenological Case Study

Although this investigation focused on a particular phenomenon, this phenomenon took place within the context of a group with its own set of dynamics. These dynamics were better examined by adding a case study design to complement the phenomenological aspects (Van Manen, 2014). A phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to understand the essence of human experience and gain a rich understanding of a particular experience from the

perspective of the participants. These participants' personal, firsthand knowledge provided the researcher with descriptive data that allowed her to develop a deeper understanding of the "lived experience" of a particular event. A case study helped create a bounded system to present an in-depth understanding of the people and situations in this study (Yin, 2018). It was designed to explore specific characteristics or sites within a social context chosen by the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). The phenomenological approach, in combination with the case study design, allowed the researcher to make sense of intricate human experiences and understand the essence and underlying structure of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To thoroughly explore the lived experiences of these teachers, the researcher investigated diverse teaching settings so that relevant data could be gathered from a variety of contexts. The phenomenological approach was well-suited to study the particular teachers' lived experiences from their perspectives and provided a rich understanding of the phenomenon of applying new pedagogical knowledge in local contexts.

Site and Sample

This research was conducted in the College of Education of three public universities in Ecuador. These universities are located along the coast of Ecuador. The study included five faculty members from the English Language Teaching (ELT) department of each university.

Participant Selection and Gaining Access

The recruitment of participants was done through purposive sampling. According to Creswell (2013), purposive sampling is used to select the most convenient sample for a study, taking into account concrete characteristics that make the participants most appropriate for fully developing an understanding of the case, with emphasis on multiple perspectives.

The participant recruitment process began with a formal request to the IRB of the selected university. Once the approval was granted, all ELT teachers were informed via institutional email that provided a succinct explanation and invited them to participate in the study. The email described the purpose, timeline, activities, and documents to develop. It emphasized that any participant was free to leave the study at any moment if he or she felt emotionally or physiologically affected. Demographic and personal information was collected via a survey, which guided by the researcher to recruit the most convenient participants for the study, considering the criteria introduced later in this section.

Participants were informed that if they were interested in participating in the study, they needed to indicate their decision via email. The participants' profiles were organized and analyzed, and the five most convenient individuals were selected for the study. To be included in the purposive sample, the requirements included:

- Having attended a PD program at a U.S. university
- Being an Ecuadorian EFL faculty member teaching in the English language department
- Holding a master's degree in ELT or Bilingual Education and having been exposed to international formal education or teaching professional training programs

In the next section, all the steps related to the collection of data for this study are presented in full detail.

Data Collection

This phenomenological study required the researcher to collect data from five people that experienced the phenomenon of having participated in a teacher PD program in the United States that was centered around BDI. Yin (2018) stated that multiple sources of evidence are necessary

to be collected to make sure the phenomenon is the same. These sources often include documents, direct observation, and physical artifacts. When various sources are considered, the findings are more convincing and accurate. Because of this, the data included two focus group interviews, individual interviews, journal entries, e-mail exchanges, and other documents provided by the participants. The data summarized in Table 3.1 supported triangulation and served as the basis for analysis. Table 3.1 contains the number of pages for each data source that were generated as raw data.

Table 3.1 Data Inventory

Source of Data	Number of Pages	Total Number of Pages
1 demographic		
biographical initial survey	2 pages per participant	$2 \times 5 = 10$ pages
2 one-hour focus groups (5 participants) and interview notes	20 pages per one hour of transcription	$20 \times 2 \times 5 = 200$ pages
1 individual interview (5 participants)	2 pages per one hour of transcriptions	$2 \times 1 \times 5 = 10$ pages
1 reflection wheel journal (5 participants)	1 page for each participant	$1 \times 5 = 5$
	total pages	225 pages

The data collection process began with an initial demographic-biographical survey that supported the creation and documentation of all participants' biographical profiles. This profile aided in the process of selecting the most convenient sample for this study. Later, data were collected using a one-hour initial focus group with the five participants, guided by some open-ended prompts. All interviews were transcribed for thematic analysis.

After the initial focus group, a second focus group was conducted. This second focus group provided the opportunity for clarification or even capturing extra details about the phenomenon under study. The focus group was transcribed, and a new round of thematic analysis was conducted to present a more accurate picture of the participants' lived experiences.

The data for this study was collected over six weeks. The complete timeline of data collection shows in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Research Timeline of Data Collection

Time	Description of Activity	Participant's Role
Week 1	Identify Participants	None
	Contact Participants	Consent to an online meeting
	Bracketing	None
Week 2	Meet with potential participants online to explain the study and build rapport	Meet with researcher to become aware of and gain an understanding of the project
Week 3	Translate and transcribe interviews	None
	Meet with participants for first focus group interview and record the interview	Answer questions asked by the researcher
	Member check with participants	Respond to transcription
	Collect other data sources from participants (emails, chat communications, resources, participants' notes)	Provide data sources
Week 4	Confirm time for the individual interview	Confirm the time for the individual interview
	Do preliminary coding from first focus group interview	None

Time	Description of Activity	Participant's Role
	Confirm the time for the second focus group interview	Confirm the time for the second focus group interview
	Individual interview conducted and recorded	Answer questions asked by the researcher
	Meet with participants for second focus group interview and record the interview	Answer questions asked by the researcher
Week 5	Translate and transcribe the second focus group and personal interviews	None
	Do preliminary coding from second focus group and individual interviews	Respond to transcription
	Build rapport with participants	Get to know researcher more
	Write data analysis and finalize theory	None
Week 6	Final member check and peer debriefing	Respond to the review of analysis and theory
	Finalize write up of data	None

Data Collection Tools

The researcher collected data at different points throughout the course of this study using four different sources: (a) two focus group interviews, (b) individual interviews, and (c) a journal. These sources for data collection are typical of case studies according to Creswell (2013) and Yin (2018). Additional details regarding the purpose of each source of data are provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Description and Purpose of Data Sources

Source of Data	Description	Purpose
Focus Group	An initial focus group involving all participants	Documenting participants' voices and perspectives while describing their experiences, background knowledge, and current teaching beliefs
	A final focus group involving all participants	Documenting participants voices and perspectives while describing their current experiences back in their country, new perspectives, and beliefs
Individual Interviews	Personal interviews	Documenting individual participants' stories
Narrative	Reflection wheel journal	Documenting participants' voices and experiences related to the program

Focus Group Interviews

This study used focus group interviews as the primary qualitative data collection technique to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues (Moustakas, 1999). Through focus group discussions, the researcher gathered data from a purposefully selected group of individuals.

Focus group discussion is a technique frequently used as a qualitative approach in which the researcher meets with the participants to examine a specific topic with the objective of taking advantage of the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of the members of the study through balanced synergy (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Creswell, 2013; Morgan, 1995). A focus group is also a group discussion based on a question and answer format in which the researcher takes on the role of facilitator or moderator and is attentive and encourages group interaction at all times (Creswell, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2015).

In this study, the researcher utilized Kruger's categories of questions, which included opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, and ending questions (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The literature in the area of SCT in teacher PD programs guided the design of the questions for the focus group interviews.

Two focus group interviews were conducted. Due to COVID-19, the two focus groups were conducted remotely using ZOOM software in its most up-to-date version. Kruger's "rule of thumb" was applied; this rule states that a focus group should not comprise less than three respondents and should not include more than seven participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In this case, there were five participants. The interview sessions lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, and they were conducted in Spanish, audiotaped, translated to English language, and transcribed by the researcher at the end of the sessions to produce the data that was coded and analyzed thematically.

Individual Interviews

Data collection involved an interview protocol with a set of questions (Moustakas, 1999). This set of questions concerned background information of the participant, such as total years of experience, years at their current university, and post-graduate education level. The reason for these questions was to make transparent a variety of experience sets held by the teacher participants. Other questions pertained to participants' opinions, attitudes, and perceptions about PD and how it could be improved to encourage implementation. Collecting background data was justified given that it allowed the researcher to provide the reader with as accurate a picture of the participants as possible. Collecting data on the perceptions of PD programs supported realization of the study objectives (Moustakas, 1999). In addition, the questions were open-ended

to promote honesty and a more thorough response; opportunities to follow up were made possible with probes (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The length of individual interviews ranged from 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews took place outside of work hours and were audio recorded, upon participant consent, during the Zoom meeting. Additionally, notes were kept on participants' non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language, whenever it seemed pertinent. A clean copy of the interview questions was brought to individual sessions so that notes could be easily added to the questions that provoked reactions (Moustakas, 1999).

Data Management

Data management can be very complicated in qualitative research. Thus, the researcher included various strategies to address the proper collection and storage of data. To ensure the protection of the participants' privacy and confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym for data collection, analysis, and reporting (Richards, 1999). All copies of raw data were labeled with the corresponding pseudonym and date of the data collection and stored in locked files. All electronic communications were stored in an e-mail account accessible only by the researcher to ensure the protection of the data collected. Audio recordings and transcripts were kept in a password-protected computer file, with backup copies of the audio recordings stored in a locked, metal, fireproof file cabinet. These backup copies will be stored for seven years and then destroyed to protect the privacy of the research participants.

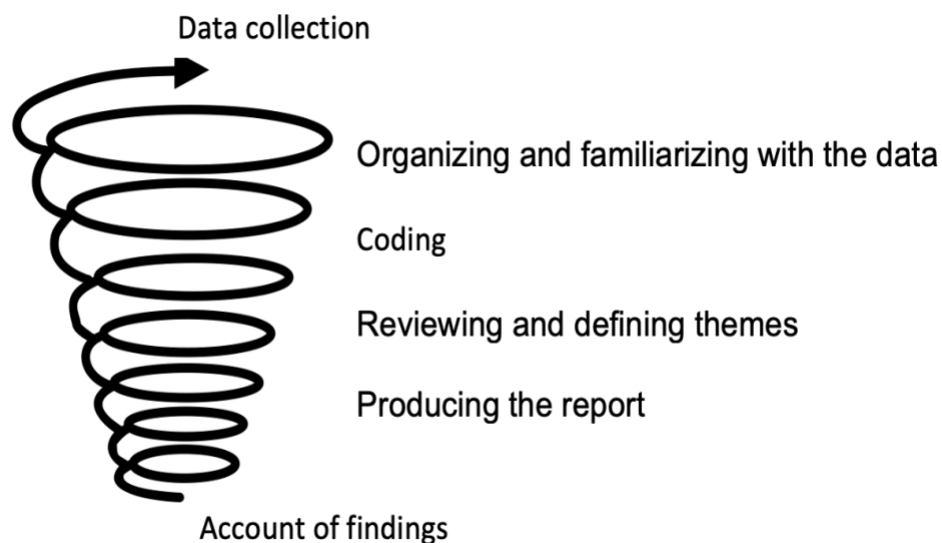
Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using an inductive analysis typically used in phenomenological research studies (Saldaña, 2013). By means of induction, the author was able to identify patterns, categories, and themes. This inductive process allowed the researcher to organize the information

obtained into individual pieces of data called codes, which made it possible to discover broader connections called categories; by grouping these categories, the researcher arrived at the themes (Bhattacharya, 2017; Moustakas, 1999; Saldaña, 2013).

The researcher took into account the concepts introduced in the TF of the study. She explored the participants' voices to find connections related to the concepts of mediation, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), use of the language as a vehicle of thought, and social interaction in their PD process. Ultimately, the researcher sought out connections that indicated such PD processes exerted an influence on the participants' perceptions of teacher agency. The concrete phases followed in this analysis were: (1) organizing and familiarizing with the data, (2) coding, (3) reviewing and defining themes, and (4) producing the report (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These phases are visually depicted in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 The Data Analysis Spiral



Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research emphasizes the interpretation of the participants' views about what they have experienced. Using this approach,

participants were able to present their perspectives of the experience while the researcher interpreted those details, including their history and circumstances. This required the researcher to search through the data collected (e.g., transcripts of interviews) to identify recurring patterns (Saldaña, 2013).

A theme is a group of linked categories that have a persistent pattern of meaning, as derived from finding relationships between codes that appear in the texts. The theme identifies and captures the participants' lived experience into a meaningful whole (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000). The process of interpretative phenomenological analysis was undertaken in four stages. It began with organization of the data followed by coding. The process continued with a revision of the preliminary categories to generate themes, and it concluded with reporting the content and meaning of patterns (themes) in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Stage 1: Organizing and Familiarizing with the Data

In this phase, the researcher read the transcripts of the focus groups to find a logical pattern to organize them. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), before the actual process of coding the transcripts starts, it is necessary that the information be read and organized. It should be noted that each data source was organized, coded, and analyzed separately. Within this stage, the data collected from the interviews and the journals were transcribed by the researcher before being organized.

The main steps to manually assigning codes to the data began with assigning labels to the research question, identifying relevant information in the data, creating codes for the relevant information identified, and finally conducting a manual coding analysis (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Moustakas, 1999; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

Stage 2: Coding

The coding strategy used by the researcher in this analysis was the interpretation-focused coding strategy (Adu, 2019; Moustakas, 1999; Saldaña, 2013), which includes five steps to code generation: identifying a potential empirical indicator with the research question in mind, determining the meaning of the indicator, providing an answer to the research question based on the interpretation of the indicator, creating a code based on the answer to the question, and developing a description of what the code represents.

Stage 3: Reviewing and Defining Themes

For this stage, two procedures suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used: review and refinement. The review portion of this stage involved reviewing the preliminary themes against the group of codes from which they derived to make sure there was coherence and consistency between the source codes and the produced themes. In the refinement portion, the researcher fine-tuned the entire data set, evaluating each theme to ensure it accurately evinced its meaning across the whole data. These two procedures made it possible for the researcher to clearly see the connections or disconnections between themes and create a detailed account of the characteristics and factors that affected the studied phenomenon.

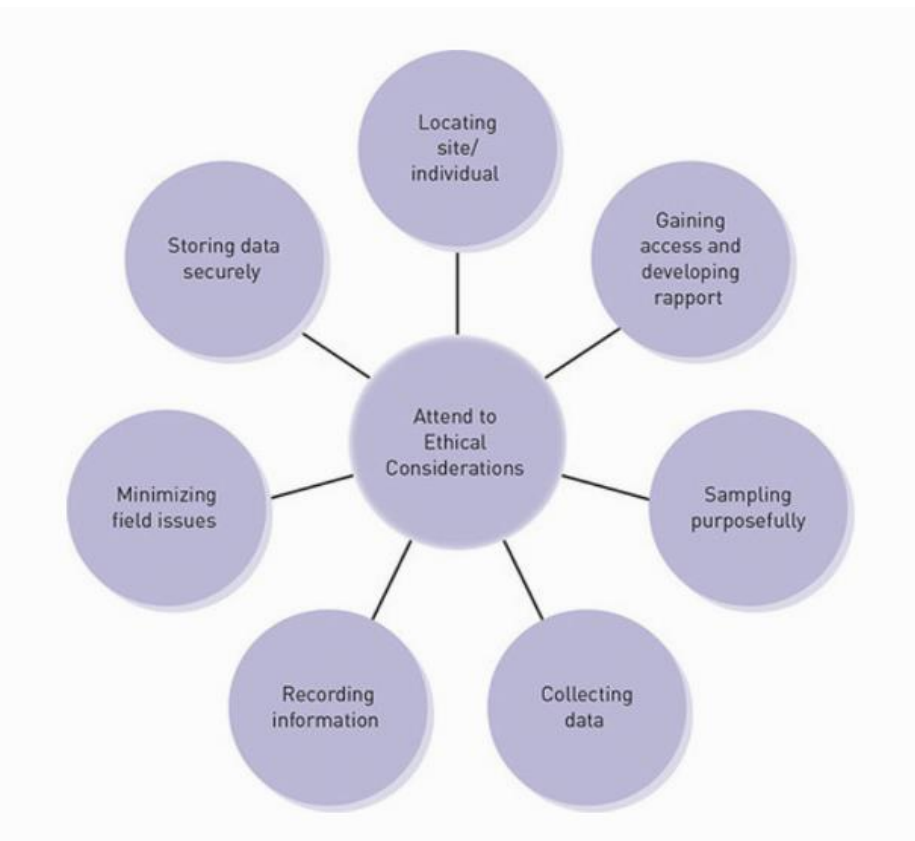
Stage 4: Producing the Report

To produce the final report, the researcher revisited the research question and purpose to create a complete description of the phenomenon studied (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell et al., 2007; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). All preliminary and final findings were validated and verified by the participants for accuracy and rigor (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1999).

Research Integrity and Ethics

Integrity and ethics are an integral part of the research process, and they were observed throughout the entire research process. Creswell (2013) stressed three important aspects of the participants' wellbeing: anonymity, confidentiality, and reciprocity. Qualitative research is characterized by showing a strong foundation of trustworthiness and rigor (Tracy, 2010). From the beginning, participants were informed of their voluntary decision to participate and of the possibility to withdraw from the study at any moment. The information the participants decided to share during the data collection was received with no sign of judgement or criticism (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Figure 3.2 Ethical Considerations for Data Collection



Sourced adapted from Creswell, 2018

In all instances, the participants' identity was protected by the use of pseudonyms. Participants were informed in advance of each focus group session conducted and the participants' consent was requested to authorize recording the sessions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness ensures the findings of a research study were taken into account (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Four trustworthiness criteria were taken into consideration: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Lincoln and Guba (2011) explained that the findings of research undertakings need to be credible or believable. To accomplish this, two processes are put in place, member checking and triangulation. Member checking is a measure of quality control done to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview with participants (Harvey, 2015). The researcher conducted member checking by allowing participants to review transcripts and notes of the interviews and focus groups. Trustworthiness strategies, such as this, were not part of the data analysis.

Triangulation is another way of achieving credibility. It involves obtaining data to answer the research question using various methods to corroborate the findings. In this study, triangulation was accomplished using focus group interviews, individual interviews, and reflective journals.

The second criterion to ensure trustworthiness is transferability, meaning that the findings can be applied or transferred to other contexts. In order to provide rich descriptions that apply to other contexts, researchers must be familiar with the context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Full descriptions with specific information about the phenomenon and the cases were provided. With

them, it was expected that the audience would make an informed judgment about whether the findings would transfer to their particular context.

Dependability involves transparency and helps answer the question, Can the study be reconstructed accurately? (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). In this sense, the researcher ensured that the research process was logical, traceable, and documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). These conditions put readers in a better position to conclude whether they can depend on the process and therefore trust the findings presented.

Finally, confirmability refers to the degree that results of the study could be corroborated by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). Confirmability for this study was enhanced via triangulation of data during the semi-structured interviews and use of a reflective journal throughout the study.

Summary

In this chapter, a thorough description of the steps and procedures was provided to frame this phenomenological case study. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of five Ecuadorian EFL teachers, who each participated in a teacher PD program focused on the BDI method at a major Midwest U.S. university, and their feelings of agency. The participants were recruited through convenient sampling procedures. Questionnaire, focus group interviews, individual interviews, and a reflection wheel journal were the methods of data collection. The analysis of the data was completed in four different stages that allowed the researcher to organize and familiarize herself with the data and ultimately produce a research report. Agency was used as the indicator to measure the impact of the phenomenon under study. Rigor and trustworthiness were ensured by establishing member checking, researcher subjectivity, and data triangulation. Lastly, the study design took into account measures to protect participants' identity at all times.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of a group of Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers after their having participated in a teacher professional development (PD) program in the United States. The main purpose of the study was to inquire into how these teachers perceived themselves in terms of teacher agency in their current teaching scenarios after they had participated in this PD program. Additionally, the researcher hoped to gain a better understanding of the main components of the PD program that may have exerted this change. Teachers' PD programs are fundamental in their growth. If teachers do not feel comfortable in a PD program, they may be less likely to be successful or improve their skills. Therefore, it is important to recognize that one size does not fit all in PD program design. Although there has been much research about PD programs for teachers, there is little research on how PD programs grounded in sociocultural theory (SCT) help teachers to transform into agents of change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Golombek & Doran, 2014).

The unit of analysis was teachers' experiences. The study focused on the lived experiences of five EFL teachers who participated in teacher PD at a major university located in the Midwest of the United States.

Data Collection

This research used qualitative analysis to explore the PD experiences of five EFL faculty members in a teacher PD program grounded in SCT. The overarching question that guided this research was: In what ways do Ecuadorian EFL teachers describe their practices applicable to agency as a result of their participation in a longitudinal PD program grounded in tenets of sociocultural theory?

The researcher examined each case and the features of the PD program that were relevant to the teachers, including their experiences and changes in their beliefs and attitudes toward students in their classrooms as a result of what they experienced. The researcher bracketed her own experiences and found fundamental essences in the experience of each teachers' case. Both textural and structural descriptions of these experiences helped the researcher convey the essence of the experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Focus group interviews, individual interviews, and reflection wheel journals were utilized as data sources in this study (Saldaña, 2013). The use of criterion sampling ensured that the participants had common experiences related to the same PD program. Both the data sources and criterion sampling provided a thick, rich description of information about the PD experience.

Site Selection

This phenomenological study included five teachers from public university settings. Three public universities were selected based on teachers' enrollment. This site was appropriate because its teachers were participants in the teacher PD program studied. Additionally, all three institutions have a College of Education in which the participants were faculty members. The logic behind the purposeful sampling of these sites was that each university supported at least one participant who could provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Patton & Schwandt, 2015).

Participant Selection

The potential pool for participants was 40 teachers from 10 public universities. The selection pool from the designated three public universities used in the study was 20 teachers, based on the criteria for selection. The first criterion for selection was that teachers needed to have attended a teacher PD program at a U.S. university. The second criterion for selection was

being an Ecuadorian EFL faculty member. The third criterion for selection was holding a master's degree in ELT, ESL, or Bilingual Education. The fourth criterion for selection was exposure to an international formal education or teaching professional training program. In total, five participants were selected for the study based on criterion sampling for participant eligibility.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, each participant was identified through a pseudonym: Ana, Polito, Carlos, Juan, or Luis. Each one of these faculty members was selected based on criterion sampling; they all met the criteria established. All participants agreed to and understood the implications of the research as sanctioned and approved by the IRB of the university. The selected faculty members completed the Kansas State University IRB consent forms to participate in this study.

The participant in Case 1 was Ana. She was a 47-year-old mestiza female with 15 years of teaching experience in public schools and universities. She was a faculty teacher with a Master of Science degree. The participant in Case 2 was Polito. He was a 38-year-old mestizo male with 15 years of teaching experience in public schools and universities. Polito had taught all of his years of university teaching at the same public institution. He was a faculty member with a Master of Science degree. The participant in Case 3 was Carlos. He was a 31-year-old mestizo male with 10 years of experience in public schools and universities. Carlos had a Master of Science degree. The participant in Case 4 was Juan. He was a 44-year-old mestizo male with 20 years of teaching experience in public schools and universities. Juan had a Master of Science degree. The participant in Case 5 was Luis. He was a 45-year-old mestizo male with 21 years of experience in public schools and universities. He had a Master of Science degree. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the characteristics of each participant.

Table 4.1 Overview of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Years in Public Schools	Years in Public Universities	Highest Degree Attained
Ana	47	Female	10	5	M.S.
Polito	38	Male	5	10	M.S.
Carlos	31	Male	6	4	M.S.
Juan	44	Male	15	5	M.S.
Luis	45	Male	15	6	M.S.

Findings

This research inquiry explored the lived experiences of a group of Ecuadorian EFL teachers after their participation in a longitudinal teacher PD program in the United States grounded in the tenets of SCT. This study inquired into how these teachers perceived themselves in terms of teacher agency in their current teaching scenarios. Additionally, the researcher sought to gain a better understanding of the main components of the PD program. This research is intended to support one's ability to: 1. Recognize six main factors of PD programs that contributed to change in teachers; 2. Identify ten distinct challenges that EFL teachers encountered when experiencing a PD program grounded in SCT; and 3. Understand six common attitudes that participants shared during their current instruction. The researcher described her background and biases as well as the measures she took to minimize their influence during the data analysis process. The researcher provided descriptions of the data sources, their characteristics and setting, and the situation at the time the data was collected. Finally, the researcher detailed the data analysis process that was used to determine the outcomes addressing the research question.

The findings were established through the use of interpretative analysis of the focus group sessions, interviews, and journals. Under the interpretation focused coding strategy, five steps guided the development and description of a suitable code. These five steps were identifying a potential empirical indicator, determining the meaning of the indicator, providing an answer to the research question based on the interpretation of the indicator, creating a code based on the answer to the question, and developing a description of what the code represented.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis emphasized the interpretation of participants' views about what they had experienced. Using this approach, participants presented their perspectives of their experiences while the researcher interpreted those stories (Saldaña, 2013). The overview of themes reflected the essence of the phenomenon using the data collected from interviews and journals, as revealed through the data analysis process. The following case analysis contains the presumption-focused categories: teacher collaboration, sharing ideas and strategies, the importance of teamwork, agent of change, work with cultural and social aspects, learning focused on the learner, confidence in knowledge, and influencer of other teachers. The themes originated from these categories and provided a structural and composite description for all cases.

Initial Categories

The initial categories that emerged after four rounds of coding are outlined in Table 4.2, along with the number of references coded to each category. Categories are presented in descending order, from the largest number of references to the smallest number of references.

Table 4.2 Initial Categories and Number of References

Category	Total Number of References	Number of Participants
Teacher Collaboration	100	5
Sharing Ideas and Strategies	85	5
The Importance of Teamwork	80	5
Agent of Change	75	5
Work with Cultural and Social Aspects	65	4
Learning Focused on the Learner	63	4
Confidence in Knowledge	60	4
Influencer of Other Teachers	43	4

Emergent Themes

Using the lens of the study's research question as a framework for reviewing the initial categories, the following themes emerged in the study: Strength in Teacher Collaboration, Factors that Motivate Teacher Engagement in PD, and Factors that Motivate Teacher Agency. Themes ordered in alignment with the study's research question are provided in Table 4.3. Each of these themes will be discussed and described using the voices of the participants framed around key aspects and concepts from the literature review.

Table 4.3 Themes

Themes
Strengths from Teacher Collaboration
Factors that Motivate Teacher Engagement in PD
Factors that Motivate Teacher Agency

Theme 1: Strengths from Teacher Collaboration

The main categories that led to this theme were teacher effective collaboration, sharing teaching ideas and strategies, and the importance of teamwork.

Teacher Effective Collaboration

This study revealed the importance of teacher collaboration as a critical component of teacher PD. In total, the participants referenced *collaboration* 80 times during the interviews. Participant indicated that having opportunities to collaborate with grade-level peers on a regular basis gave them a space to discuss, plan, and set goals as a team. Participants expressed a feeling of confidence when they received ongoing opportunities to collaborate with peers.

When sharing about experiences of effective collaboration, Carlos said, “Compartir nuestras experiencias, descubrir juntos nuevos conocimientos y compartirlos creo que fue grandioso.” (“Sharing our experiences, discovering new knowledge together and sharing it, I think it was great.”). During these collaborative activities, participants had the opportunity to share their background knowledge, learning strategies, and educational experiences, and they brainstormed ways to incorporate new learnings into routine classroom practices. The previous thought aligns with Rogoff’s (1994) view of learning as a process of transformation in which responsibility and autonomy are desired. Both teachers and learners have an active role rather than a passive or dominant role. People learn as they collaborate with others to develop activities with objectives related to common practices of the community.

The participants mentioned that when trust among team members was high, collaboration was more effective in meeting teachers’ learning goals. Polito shared, “Durante el programa tuvimos la oportunidad de colaborar con colegas de otras universidades con muchos conocimientos y ese intercambio de conocimientos y retroalimentación nos otorgó confianza

para luego poder replicar lo aprendido con mucha seguridad.” (“During the program we had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from other universities with a lot of knowledge and this exchange of knowledge and feedback gave us confidence so that later we could replicate what we learned with great confidence.”). This form of collaboration fits newer interpretations of the ZPD concept (Vygotsky, 1978), in which a more knowledgeable peer assisting another learner provides a space for uncovering the hidden potential that is only enhanced because of the other’s assistance.

Sharing Teaching Ideas and Strategies

Most participants remarked on the importance of sharing teaching ideas and strategies. Polito commented, “Tener tiempo para compartir ideas y estrategias con mi equipo nos dio confianza para intercambiar nuestros conocimientos y pensamientos sin miedo a equivocarnos o ser juzgados.” (“Having time to share ideas and strategies with my team gave us the confidence to exchange our knowledge and thoughts without fear of being wrong or being judged.”). This sharing of ideas is possible when teachers have the courage to express ideas from the security that others offer when they reveal that they, too, have gone through similar challenges and experiences. The participants’ perceptions indicated the teacher PD program was a powerful means for increasing confidence through the interchange of knowledge.

Ana and Luis touched on the topic of sharing learnings during group discussions. Ana approached the topic from a prospective angle, anticipating how to apply the content concepts and teaching strategies in their future classrooms: “La mejor parte de la experiencia en el programa ocurrió cuando intercambiamos nuestras ideas y experiencias y las relacionamos con lo aprendido durante el programa y pensamos como las íbamos a implementar de regreso en las aulas de nuestro país.” (“The best part of the experience during the program occurred when we

exchanged our ideas and experiences and related them to what we learned during the program and we thought about how we were going to implement them back in the classrooms of our country.”) Luis approached it as benefiting from the accumulated experience and knowledge of his classmates. When asked to share about his favorite teacher PD experience, he answered: “Realmente no puedo pensar en un momento específico, pero lo que pienso en mi corazón es que cuando escuché algo que le entusiasmó a un compañero, entonces estoy como, oh, espera, cuéntamelo. Quiero aprender sobre eso y hacer eso.” (“I can't really think of a specific moment, but what I think in my heart is that when I heard something that a colleague was excited about, then I'm like, oh wait, tell me. I want to learn about it and do that.”). Including space for the participants to share ideas and their best practices is an essential element of effective teacher PD. This confirms the power of social activities as expressed by Postholm (2012) when arguing that cognition originates in the social collective mind and emerges in, and through, engaging in social activity.

The Importance of Teamwork

All participants agreed that time was a critical factor in effective team collaboration. Participants shared that during the PD activities, they increased their interest in collaboration when time was allocated for discussions with peers. On the other hand, they shared frustration with instances when limited collaboration time was included, making it difficult to meet consistently with peers to refine skills and strategies.

The participants commented on the experience of operating with a compatible, effective team. This particular fact was key in enhancing team collaboration. Ana remarked, “Cuando el equipo es bueno lo adoro. Nuevamente, cuando tu estas trabajando cerca de personas y tu tienes ideas y estas ideas realmente motivan a todos, tu sabes que realmente han sido beneficiosas y

siempre encontraras un par de profesores que trabajen realmente bien juntos.” (“When the team is good, I love it. Again, when you’re working closer with people and you have ideas and these ideas really engage everyone, you know that has really been beneficial and you will always find a couple of us teachers that worked really well together.”). These findings are in line with mediation as explained by Kozulin (2018). When a more knowledgeable colleague is willing to share their knowledge, it is not a mere act of interaction but a collective desire with the power to cause the other participant to develop a positive emotional response to the experience.

Theme 2: Factors that Motivate Teacher Engagement in PD

All participants highlighted that teacher PD experiences related to hands-on experiential learning. Hands-on learning was mentioned 50 times as participants recalled having resources available for practice, opportunities to interact with colleagues, and time to reflect on how new learning might be implemented in their classrooms. The participants agreed that the implementation of learned skills and practices during the activities promoted teacher engagement.

Another component identified by the participants was the integration of their cultural and background knowledge in the activities. Juan shared, “El uso de información referente a nuestro conocimiento previo ya sea en lo social, cultural o académico le dio realce a las actividades que íbamos a desempeñar. Sentía que la actividad era real y significativa.” (“The use of information regarding our prior knowledge, whether social, cultural or academic, enhanced the activities that we were going to carry out. I felt the activity was real and meaningful.”) Luis added, “Cuando los instructores decían hoy vamos a aprender esto, tu sabes, los temas y en su mayoría eran temas que nosotros podíamos manejar eso eliminaba el estrés y nos ayudaba a poder concentrarnos en las estrategias que íbamos a aprender y a practicar.” (“When the instructors said, today we are

going to learn this, you know...., the topics were mostly topics that we could handle that eliminated stress and helped us to be able to focus on the strategies that we were going to learn and practice.”) The majority of participants in the PD program suggested the incorporation of their background knowledge, experiences, and learned skills during the activities promoted their engagement.

Four participants discussed the importance of having high-quality professors and participating in a program that takes social and cultural aspects into account. When a professor was perceived as an expert and he or she promoted humor and common sense when providing a presentation, the participants showed more enthusiasm and willingness to take part in the activities. In addition, participants indicated they were more engaged in learning when the activities in which they participated were based on identified needs and interests. Carlos said, “La Dra. Morales, nuestra instructora, fue asombrosa. Nosotros podíamos observar que ella sabía lo que hacía. No era solo los temas tratados sino la forma de presentarlos.” (“Dr. Morales, our instructor, was amazing. We could see that she knew what she was doing. It was not only the topics covered but the way to present them.”) When participants were sharing experiences about differentiated instruction opportunities for teachers, Luis said, “A los profesores nos enseñaron diferentes formas de enseñar. En este programa tuvimos la oportunidad de que alguien venga y nos escuche en como yo quiero enseñar, y cuales eran mis sentimientos y filosofías al respecto.” (“The teachers were taught different ways of teaching. In this program we had the opportunity for someone to come and listen to us on how we wanted to teach, and what my feelings and philosophies were about it.”) This attitude fostered teachers’ enthusiasm to participate in the designed activities. According to Guskey (2002b), teachers who participate in PD programs become open to change when they perceive the PD providers are good role models and display

mastery. This positive outlook fosters a sense of admiration among teachers that causes them to imitate valued teaching practices, as Luis and Carlos expressed.

Cultural and Social Aspects of Collaborative Work

The majority of participants in this study referenced the importance of using their background knowledge during class activities. Ana shared, “Cuando la instructora me preguntó cuál es la comida típica en mi país y como se prepara, automáticamente regrese a mi casa, a mi cultura, a mi familia. Me imaginaba a mi mamá preparando un rico ceviche de camarón.” (“When the instructor asked me what the typical food is in my country and how it is prepared, I automatically returned to my home, to my culture, to my family. I imagined my mother preparing a delicious shrimp ceviche.”) Luis shared, “Si, yo me acuerdo cuando el instructor me pidió que explique cuales eran las características de mi equipo de fútbol favorito, inmediatamente recordé las tardes de fútbol en casa con los amigos y familiares y tuve mucho material para desarrollar la tarea y disfrutarla mucho” (“Yes, I remember when the instructor asked me to explain what the characteristics of my favorite soccer team were, I immediately remembered the afternoons of soccer at home with friends and family and I had a lot of material to develop the task and enjoy it a lot.”). These insights from participants evidenced the relationship between social interaction and teachers’ engagement, especially when the social interaction was built around aspects of the teachers that considered their whole person, not only the professional side. Herrera (2016) has extensively explored the many advantages of getting to know the culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student holistically (e.g., biopsychosocial history) to unpack their learning power. The researcher asserts this unpacking power applies to adult teacher-learners as well because, in the end, according to Borrel-Carrió et al. (2004), the biopsychosocial history of a learner is a factor present at all ages.

Theme 3: Factors That Motivate Teacher Agency

Study participants shared factors that motivated them to change and implement learned skills and practices. All five participants were motivated to implement strategies that were perceived as easy to implement immediately because of the support of the instructor and colleagues. Juan shared about the importance of teacher PD skills that were easy to implement. He put it this way: “Es fantástico saber que hoy aprendes algo y ya estas pensando en como lo vas a implementar mañana en tu aula de clase, quieres que ya sea el momento para aplicar eso que tanto disfrutaste mientras lo aprendías.” (“It is fantastic to know that today you are learning something, and you are already thinking about how you are going to implement it tomorrow in your classroom. I couldn’t wait for the moment to apply what I enjoyed so much while learning it.”). Having the necessary resources available for practice during training increased their motivation to implement newly learned skills and practices.

The reality of having resources during her teacher PD was the cause of frustration for Ana. She perceived she was lucky to be part of this teacher PD because it gave the participants access to many resources; yet she lamented the lack of resources in public institutions in her country. She said, “Durante el programa nunca nos faltaron materiales ni recursos tecnológicos para trabajar y eso es algo realmente gratificante e importante porque nos permitió desarrollar las actividades con total plenitud y disfrutarlas. Creo que por eso empecé a pensar que lo mismo les ocurre a mis estudiantes. Eso me llevó a reflexionar en la manera de tratar de proveerles del material que la institución o sus padres no les pudieran dar para que de esa forma ellos puedan disfrutar de las actividades en clase... Pensé que podría hablar con amistades que tengan estos materiales en casa y no los estén usando para colectarlos y donarlos a mis alumnos. Pensé en otras ideas, desde las más simples hasta otras más complejas, pero esa sensación de buscar una

solución a un problema que no está relacionado directamente a la enseñanza era algo nuevo para mí y me gustó saber que lo podía hacer.” (“During the program we never lacked materials or technological resources to work with and that is something really rewarding and important because without them we will not be able to fully develop and enjoy the activities. I think that's why I started to think that the same thing might happen to my students. That impression led me to reflect on a way to try to provide them with the material that the institution or their parents cannot give them. In that way they can enjoy the activities in class. I thought I could ask some friends who have these materials at home, and they are not using them, to collect and donate them to my students. I thought about other ideas, from the simplest to the most complex ones, but that feeling of looking for a solution to a problem that is not directly related to teaching was something new for me, and I liked to know that I could do it.”) This hard and sad realization was expressed as a powerful motivator for not only wanting change but also seeking it. Juan put it this way, “Muchas veces al hablar del sistema de educación de nuestro país a nivel de educación pública y las diferencias con otros sistemas de educación como el de este país nos llevó a reflexionar que queremos cambios en el mismo y que debemos trabajar por ellos si queremos un mejor sistema de educación y una mejor sociedad.” (“Many times, when we talked about the higher education system of our country at the public education level and the differences with other educational systems such as the one in the U.S.A., it led us to reflect that we wanted changes in the educational system in our country and we must work for them if we want a better higher education system and a better society.”) This determination clearly showed in some of the participants’ willingness to implement learned skills and practices in their classrooms as a way of bringing about change and doing their part to achieve what they felt was missing and highly needed. This expressed willingness fits what Haneda et al. (2017) reported in their study of a

group of teachers in which the participants demonstrated willingness to change in important ways and apply the new learnings because the PD providers enacted dialogical practices that permitted a fertile terrain for free expression. This expressed feeling also evidenced teachers' growth mindset. According to Dweck (2008), people who have a growth mindset believe learning and improving lead to success.

Need for Change

The majority of participants commented on the experience of feeling motivated to improve education and fight for social justice. "Pienso que en muchas de las actividades que realizábamos durante el programa de desarrollo profesional nos llevaban siempre a una reflexión final a través del uso de un *reflection wheel journal* o un *golden nugget*, estrategias mediante las cuales pensábamos en aspectos que deberíamos cambiar en nosotros como educadores y en nuestro alrededor con nuestros colegas y estudiantes, antes nunca había llegado a estas reflexiones en ningún programa al que haya asistido." ("I think that many of the activities that we did during the professional development program always led us to a final reflection through a reflection wheel journal or a golden nugget, strategies by which we thought that we should change in ourselves as educators and in our own around with our colleagues and students, I have never reached these reflections before in any program I have attended."). These thoughts from the participants constitute evidence of teachers' growth mindset and the power of reflection and internalization as catalysts for change.

Carlos shared, "A través de las múltiples estrategias que utilizamos en las actividades que realizamos al final siempre pensaba como podría poner en práctica esto que aprendí. Pensaba en la manera como le ayudaría a un estudiante en especial o como lo voy a compartir con mis colegas en mi trabajo. Antes no me había dado el tiempo de reflexionar en que yo puedo hacer

un cambio y que siempre existe una forma de innovar algo, siempre hay una forma de cambiar el sistema si de verdad estas comprometido a hacerlo.” (“Through the multiple strategies that we use in the activities that we carry out, at the end I always thought about how I could put into practice what I learned. I was thinking about how I would help a special student or how I will share it with my colleagues in my work. Before, I had not given myself the time to reflect on that I can make a change and that there is always a way to innovate something, there is always a way to change the system if you are truly committed to doing so.”). These conclusions suggest that participants were encouraged to reflect on their future practice and how they could make an impact on their students.

Curriculum Focused on the Learner

The participants expressed one of the most interesting things in this PD program occurred when instructors invited them to talk about topics that were of personal interest for them. Carlos remarked, “Me sentí muy cómodo al poder hablar de temas que conocía como por ejemplo hablar de mi cultura y costumbres, eso sin duda aumento mi interés en participar en las actividades.” (“I felt very comfortable being able to talk about topics I knew, such as talking about my culture and customs, that undoubtedly increased my interest in participating in the activities.”). The importance of culture as a tool for mediation is evidenced in these thoughts. Mirzaee and Alikbari (2017) argued that teachers usually use social relations, cultural artifacts, and theoretical concepts to mediate their thinking and practice. As Carlos participated in conversations where he connected his social and cultural history to concepts and previous classroom practice, he had opportunities for advancing new insights with potential reverberation in his future lessons.

Juan shared what he valued in this PD program experience: “En mi opinión, yo disfruté mucho realizar actividades en las cuales me pedían que hable de mi familia o de alguna anécdota chistosa que me haya ocurrido, de la misma manera me divertí mucho escuchando las historias de mis colegas, esto permitió conocernos un poco más.” (“In my opinion, I really enjoyed doing activities in which they asked me to talk about my family or some funny anecdote that happened to me, in the same way I had a lot of fun listening to the stories of my colleagues, this allowed us to know a little more.”) “De igual manera me pareció súper interesante que nos permitieran escoger de que temas queríamos profundizar sean estas estrategias, metodologías, aplicaciones tecnológicas, etc, ya que en otros programas de desarrollo profesional los temas ya estaban preconcebidos y nunca se me había preguntado si había algún tema en el que quisiera profundizar más.” (“In the same way, it seemed very interesting to me that they allowed us to choose which topics we wanted to deepen, be it these strategies, methodologies, technological applications, etc., since in other professional development programs the topics were already preconceived, and I had never been asked before if I had any topic that I would like to delve deeper into.”) These anecdotes suggested that use of participants’ background knowledge gave them confidence to participate in the program activities. They provided evidence the EFL teachers encountered common meaningful points that brought them to the same learning space. Alongside this idea of commonality, Gutierrez (2008) explained that this is a space where teachers are the same, with positives and negatives, with knowledge in some areas but ignorance in others, but where in the end, they are learners alike. Juan clearly revealed that once his interests were acknowledged, he even had fun talking about them.

Reflection that Moved to Action

When sharing about teacher PD program experiences in which time was given for practice and reflection, teachers reported increased satisfaction with implementing new learning. According to participants, time for reflection and discussion with peers increased the likelihood of their implementation of learned skills and practices. Luis shared, “Cuando trabajábamos en equipo, podíamos hacernos comentarios y sugerencias, esto afianzaba nuestros conocimientos e incluso los mejoraba dándonos confianza luego para presentar nuestro trabajo... Esta práctica fue muy beneficiosa para mí como profesor, me volví más seguro en mis conocimientos.” (“When we worked as a team, we could make comments and suggestions, this strengthened our knowledge and even improved it, giving us confidence later to present our work. This practice was very beneficial for me as a teacher, I became more confident in my knowledge.”) The answers of participants in this study were aligned with the findings of many researchers that have found tremendous power in reflection activities for teachers (Alemi & Tajeddin, 2020; Avalos, 2011; 2017; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). The opportunity given to participants for reflection during the teacher PD was new, and it promoted a journey of discovery to know not only their growing self, but their hidden power for continuous renovation and improvement.

Analysis of Findings

After analyzing the data collected from focus groups, individual interviews, and journals, it became evident that each participant of this study experienced components of teacher cooperation. All five teachers mentioned the word trust as an essential element required for effective teacher collaboration. One participant shared that trust is necessary for sharing ideas and knowledge with peers and that without trust, he would not be willing to be vulnerable or transparent. Referring to group work, when trust was present, teachers experienced increased

satisfaction with collaboration efforts and their abilities to effect positive changes in instruction. These findings revealed the importance of mediation, and how the ZPD played an important role in developing activities led by someone who was perceived as an expert, and who injected humor and common sense into lessons.

The participants also mentioned hands-on learning as the most effective model for active learning. Hands-on learning was referenced 50 times as participants recalled having resources available for practice, opportunities to interact with colleagues, and time to reflect on how new learning might be implemented in their classrooms. Moreover, they mentioned the benefits of integrating the culture and background knowledge of participants in the developed activities. This theme is related to the role of mediation that occurred at the moment their background knowledge and experiences were used to develop the activities.

Participants referred to feeling enthusiastic to participate when they perceived the expertise of most instructors and the way they promoted humor and common sense in their class presentations. In addition, participants expressed that when the activities were based on their identified needs and interests, they felt increased engagement in learning. This is a fundamental characteristic of SCT and one of the tenets the ZPD.

Another teacher recalled that this PD experience provided ample planning and discussion time for teams as well as effective modeling of powerful teacher engagement strategies. She shared this experience was so engaging that upon return to her country, she believed that she could change the world. Other factors participants reported as enhancing their experience in this PD program included topics that were relevant to their culture, led by a quality presenter, in which a differentiated learning model was utilized to ensure teachers received appropriate instruction and support based on their identified needs.

Most participants mentioned that during the PD program, the instructors implemented strategies that were easy to implement. They also discussed the benefits of the availability of resources, time for reflection, practice, and feedback from instructors.

The majority of participants shared factors that motivated them to change and implement learned skills and practices. All participants were motivated to implement strategies learned in this PD program that were perceived as easy to implement right away. They also expressed that having necessary resources available for practice during training increased their motivation to implement newly learned skills and practices. Three of the participants referred to the benefits of including their background knowledge in-the-moment to develop activities and the satisfaction they felt when they were asked about their needs. One participant expressed feeling lucky during this PD program because of the access to lots of resources; she also shared her frustration that back in her country, most of those resources were not available in public institutions. She indicated she was going to look for a way to help her students obtain the necessary resources when they needed them. These manifestations of change relate to the participants' transformation as teachers.

Finally, a participant expressed that during the PD program, he had the opportunity to talk about the education system of his country, including at the public higher education level, and the differences among other higher education systems, such as those in the U.S.A.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the influence that a PD program grounded in SCT had on five EFL teachers' professional activities as educators back in their home country. The study shared teachers' perceptions of how and why the PD strategies and activities applied during the program influenced their growth and changes. The data analysis

included a phenomenological study of five participants. The unit of analysis was the experiences of EFL teachers who participated in an intentionally differentiated teacher PD program that featured the BDI method and strategies. The structural analysis of phenomenology included the suggested steps of the Saldaña (2013) approach: building data through focus groups, interviews, and a journal; creating a coding analysis; and formulating themes. The essence of the phenomenon was structured (Creswell et al., 2007). An examination of themes under the overarching research question presented the experience of five Ecuadorian EFL teachers who engaged in a PD program grounded in SCT.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This research examined the experiences of five Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers that participated in a teacher professional development (PD) program at a public university in the United States. A qualitative analysis provided practical guidance for the analysis of the data collected using focus groups, individual interviews, and journals, applying Saldaña's (2018) and framework analyses. The interpretative analysis of the qualitative data required the development of new skills, but also imagination, patience, time, and practice (Creswell, 2013).

This study presents a phenomenological description of five EFL teachers' experiences in a PD program grounded in sociocultural theory (SCT) through textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1999). In the next pages, the discussion of study findings is organized into four main sections: (a) comparison of findings to the current state of knowledge in the field, (b) implications for practice, (c) implications for further research, and (d) conclusion.

Comparison of Findings to the Current State of Knowledge

The findings of this study, detailed in Chapter Four, were presented around three themes: strengths of teacher collaboration, factors that motivate teacher engagement in PD, and factors that motivate teacher agency. Each of these themes is discussed in light of the theoretical components of this study.

One of the premises that gave birth to this study was that appropriate teacher PD involves “constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in social context and engaging in particular types of activities and processes” (Hammerness et al., 2005, p. 4). Extended a bit more, teacher PD can be defined as those continuous learning experiences that take place in settings where dialogue, collaboration, and reflection are the conduits for interactions between the PD providers and the teachers. The first theme that emerged emphasized the power of teacher collaboration (Fullan, 1993) and why, according to Wright (2009), it is seen as a more efficient way of reaching curriculum goals and solving classroom problems.

This collaboration among teachers was described by participants in the study as allowing them to share ideas, resources, and techniques. This finding connects with Vygotsky’s (L. Vygotsky, 1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which asserts that learners, with assistance of a more knowledgeable other, can demonstrate a future higher a level of performance. This was true and evident in the comments of participants regarding their experiences during the teacher PD; they received opportunities to develop capacities for future performance that were a step beyond what they believed they enacted at present in their classrooms. This powerful connection was articulated by Johnson and Golombek (2011), who noted the ZPD acts as an awakening catalyzer: the teacher assisted in the ZPD is allowed to see his or her future potential. There is power and hope in this.

As for the second theme related to factors that promoted teacher engagement, it was almost unanimous that cultural exploration and social interactions were at the center of the dynamics that took place in the PD classrooms among the teachers and the professional development providers. Huxley et al. (1952) indicated that culture exists and is co-constructed with others. By having a space where their culture was made explicit, the participants reached a higher level of engagement with each other and realized that their teaching realities were very similar. This increased engagement may have played a role in the transformation of participants to be more participative and agentive.

Vygotsky (1978) indicated that language is the most powerful tool humans have for thinking and for comprehending reality. The participants expressed that it was being able to express their assumptions, desires, and even fears that allowed a more fertile terrain for reflection. In teacher PD, Golombek and Doran (2014) expressed that language is what allows for the expression of culture, and language makes it easier to co-construct knowledge to function at individual and collective levels.

Descriptions of aspects that motivate teacher agency were amply expressed by the participants of the study, making it one of the three themes. Agency in this study has been described as the initiative to promote personal and professional growth in self and in others (Fullan, 1993). The participants expressed a desire for change not only in themselves but also at the education system level. Other teachers' potential for learning was seen as something key that needed to be sought by teachers and supported by policymakers and educational authorities. These expressed desires for change were evidence of teachers' growth mindset.

Implications of the Study

The primary overarching research question guiding this study asked: In what ways do Ecuadorian EFL teachers describe their practices applicable to agency as a result of their participation in a longitudinal PD program grounded in tenets of sociocultural theory?

The participating teachers in this study described their agency-related practices around the power of collaboration, factors that motivated them to get involved in the PD processes, and factors that prompted them to become agentive in their practice. In the subsequent sections, the researcher provides an interpretation of these three findings.

Teacher Collaboration Is Powerful

The essence of strengths in teacher collaboration was defined as responding to the needs and wants of teachers to learn new skills and strategies alongside trusted peers. Participants expressed a feeling of confidence when they received ongoing opportunities to collaborate with peers. During these activities, the participants expressed they had an opportunity to share their background knowledge, learning strategies, and educational experiences as well as brainstorm ways to incorporate new learning into routine classroom practices. When trust among team members was high, collaboration was more effective in meeting teachers' learning goals.

Mediation is an interactive process that relates mind, language, and society. This process involves the use of concrete and abstract tools (Vygotsky, 1978). It was evident when the participants mentioned they felt confidence at the moment they interacted with colleagues during practical exercises. It also was apparent when they expressed the importance of the time they received to reflect or internalize concepts or new topics, and the opportunities they had to share their reflections with peers.

Social relationships were critical to recognize how the structure of external social interactions mediated the transformative development of internalization (Childs, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Rogoff (1994), learning is “a process of transformation of participation in which responsibility and autonomy are both desired” (p. 215). People learn as they collaborate with others to develop activities with objectives related to common practices of the community. Various studies (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008) have revealed learning conditions appear when individuals are extended in their current level of development to solve problems with the help of a more competent peer or with the support of an instructor. This theme is aligned with the ZPD, the primary activity space in which learning occurs. Teachers may be assisted in their ZPD based on their previous knowledge by, for example, colleagues, external teachers, or other more knowledgeable persons with higher qualification to improve their knowledge and skills (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

Postholm (2012) had argued cognition originates in the social collective mind and emerges in, and through, engaging in social activity. As a result, teacher PD programs are fundamental for teacher improvement since cognition is essentially constructed by interaction with educators who possess more expertise (De Costa, 2019; Grossman et al., 1999). The ZPD is considered "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). To target the ZPD, teachers or mentors are encouraged to consider: (a) social interaction with someone who possesses knowledge and skills beyond those of the learner, (b) social interactions with a skillful tutor that allow the learner to observe and practice her/his skills, or (c) scaffolding,

or supportive activities provided by either an educator or a more capable peer (Silver, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). In this sense, this study revealed the strong impact and benefits that the ZPD provided teachers while they engaged in the PD program activities. The lived experience gave them a new perspective about their role as educators and promoted changes in their educational philosophies and teacher agency.

SCT PD Promotes More Engagement

The majority of PD program participants suggested that the incorporation of their background knowledge, experiences, and learned skills during the activities promote their engagement. All participants argued that PD experiences utilized hands-on active learning. Hands-on learning was referenced many times as participants recalled having resources available for practice, opportunities to interact with colleagues, and time to reflect on how new learning might be implemented in their classrooms. The majority of participants expressed that the use of dialogue and the time that instructors gave them to reflect on content either individually or in groups was enriching and supported their internalization of the process.

SCT PD Awakens Agentive Power

In the context of PD, teacher agency refers to the ability of teachers to act deliberately and constructively to guide their professional growth and also to contribute to the growth of their colleagues. Instead of responding passively to learning opportunities, teachers who have agency take action and make changes (Bandura, 2000). They are aware of their part in the teacher's growth mindset and professional growth, and they make learning choices to achieve their goals. In general, agency is a person's ability and initiative to foster their own professional growth and that of their colleagues (Quinn, 2017; Lewis et al., 2007).

The expectation of effective teaching in the 21st century presents more rapidly changing scenarios that require teachers to seek out learning opportunities, collaborate with other colleagues, and show initiative and competence (Allen, 2018). From this, teacher agency may reflect the ability to intentionally engage in actions that contribute to teacher PD not only for oneself, but for one's colleagues.

The majority of participants expressed that they felt highly motivated to participate actively in the PD program because of the support they received from instructors and the collaboration of their colleagues. Therefore, motivation to engage in PD is an important factor that influences the degree to which a teacher acts with agency during PD programs. Effective teachers understand the value of giving learners opportunities to construct knowledge, build on their prior knowledge, and undertake their own search for information and relationships. Participants of this PD program shared that they felt like their students, waiting for the opportunity to watch their colleagues teach and to choose for themselves the strategies they would adapt for their practices. They followed up with teachers they observed to talk about their practice and ask questions, instead of sitting in general PD sessions such as those they had attended in the past.

Suggestions for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

For the researcher, carrying out this study was a process of learning and discovery. As the categories gave way to salient themes, there were moments of realization about what could qualify as areas of research that might be explored by qualitative researchers.

In the first case, the first suggestion for research applies to stakeholders, educational administrators, and teachers regarding routes for teacher PD. Based on the evidence of this study, the researcher recommends that educational administrators and stakeholders ask teachers about

their needs, especially concerning professional development. This action would help create awareness and responsiveness among teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Participants in this phenomenological study expressed that teacher PD with SCT features was an effective approach to teacher learning. However, stakeholders need to have useful information as to whether PD programs are comparatively better than other programs. The call is for quantitative researchers to approach causal relationships of PD impact on skill transference, measured in terms of student achievement.

The dominant theme of strengths in teacher collaboration supports administrators in developing PD programs for EFL teachers grounded in the tenets of SCT to respond to teachers' needs. The participants in the study felt PD programs would be more relevant for teachers if they were motivated to be part of them. Furthermore, it would be meaningful if their voices were heard when PD programs were being designed.

An idea considered was surveying EFL teachers about their PD needs in contexts such as Ecuador, because although in this study it was shown that teachers perceived PD based on SCT beneficial for collaboration, teacher engagement, and teacher agency, listening from them might add specific contextual elements that would make PD a bottom-up initiative (Burns & Richards, 2009).

A third line of research that scholars are invited to consider relates to turning points that caused some of the same cohort teachers to believe that the PD program did not produce any extraordinary effect in them. There were various anecdotal references from a few of the study participants who expressed that several of their colleagues had poor views of the same teacher PD program. At this point, it can only be hypothesized that those teachers may not possess

sufficient agentive power, which leads them to believe the PD was not connected with change or improvement. However, this is speculation that would need to be explored and confirmed.

The following recommendations were generated through the phenomenological analysis. The recommendations are centered on the implications derived from the research. The following recommendations apply to educational administrators, stakeholders, and teachers regarding decisions about PD.

Suggestions for School Administrators

Based on the evidence of this study, the researcher recommends that educational administrators and stakeholders ask teachers about their needs, especially concerning PD. This action would help create awareness and responsiveness among teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Educational administrators and stakeholders are recommended to ask teachers their opinion regarding PD decisions in response to their needs by encouraging proactive participation in decisions about their learning. This would support teachers to bring that growth mindset back into the classroom setting. Teacher perception of administrators' support was a positive predictor of the use of PD initiatives in teaching practice.

The dominant theme of strengths in teacher collaboration supports administrators in developing PD programs for EFL teachers grounded in the tenets of SCT that responds to the needs of teachers. The participants in the study felt PD programs would be more relevant for teachers if they felt motivated to be part of them. Furthermore, they suggested it would be meaningful if their voices were heard when decisions about PD program design were being made.

Suggestions for Teachers

Educational administrators and stakeholders should move from their status of authorities to trust in order to promote change in the PD programs focusing on what teachers really need to reinforce or learn instead that what they think is best for them. The main role for teachers is to educate students who are situated in their care. Beyond that, teachers perform many other roles in the classroom. They have to create a safe and warm environment, nurture students, become role models to their students, and, like psychologists, listen and look for alert signals. In that sense, they need PD programs in which they have opportunities to reflect on the fact that, like them, students have needs and students want to be in a relaxed and safe place where they can contribute with their classmates and have fun using their background knowledge and experiences. Teachers need to reconnect with their own learning side in order to understand what the needs of their students are and to provide them with the necessary environment, strategies, and knowledge. They also need to work with the colleagues who teach with them, and with the organizational structure of the institution, to propose and work on the principal changes the institution needs.

The essence of the experience in this PD program was recognized in the engagement of the participants that was based on collaborative work, in which all the participants had the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences and find strength through teacher collaboration. This experience highlighted the value of collaborative work for the participants to learn and construct new knowledge based on their background knowledge and make learning choices to achieve their goals.

Conclusion

In this phenomenological study, participants indicated that teachers would like to attend PD programs based on practical experiences where they have the opportunity to have collaborative input on the experience. The participants also expressed they would like programs that provide opportunities to reflect on the purpose of activities in order to transform them into meaningful activities. In the same way, it was evident that, through the pedagogical dialogue with the instructors and social interaction with their peers, participants felt more confident and motivated to participate in the program activities.

The tenets of SCT were crucial in the participants' learning process and during their collaborative work. Mediation, the ZPD, and social interaction were related to the teachers' engagement with the program. These components also influenced the learning process and were fundamental to changes in their beliefs and thoughts after their lived experience with teacher PD grounded in SCT.

References

- Adu, P. (2019). *A step-by-step guide to qualitative data coding*. Routledge.
- Alemi, M., & Tajeddin, Z. (2020). Reflection and good language teachers. In C. Griffiths & Z. Tajeddin (Eds.), *Lessons from Good Language Teachers* (1st ed., pp. 41–53). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108774390.007>
- Allen, L. Q. (2018). Teacher leadership and the advancement of teacher agency. *Foreign Language Annals; Alexandria*, 51(1), 240–250. <http://dx.doi.org.er.lib.k-state.edu/10.1111/flan.12311>
- Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in teaching and teacher education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 10–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007>
- Bada, & Olusegun, S. (2015). *Constructivism Learning Theory: A Paradigm for Teaching and Learning*.
- Bandura, A. (2000). *Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective*. 28.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1>
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A Practical Guide*. Taylor & Francis. <https://books.google.com.ec/books?id=qRhDgAAQBAJ>
- Bhattacharya, Kakali. (2017). *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315231747>
- Borrell-Carrió, F., Suchman, A. L., & Epstein, R. M. (2004). The biopsychosocial model 25 years later: Principles, practice, and scientific inquiry. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 2(6), 576–582. <https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.245>

- Bransford, J., National Research Council (U.S.), Committee on developments in the science of learning, National Research Council (U.S.), & Committee on learning research and educational practice. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. National Academy Press. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10038789>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Burns, A., & Richards, J. C. (2009). Second language teacher education. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education* (pp. 1–8). Cambridge University Press.
- Callaway, H. (1992). Ethnography and experience: Gender implications in fieldwork and texts. In J. Okely (Ed.), *Anthropology and Autobiography* (pp. 29–49). Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203450536_chapter_2
- Calle, M. D., Calle, A. M., Heras, G. E., & León, V. (2019). Percepciones de los profesores de inglés sobre experiencias de capacitación: Un estudio de caso [Teachers' perceptions about their professional development experiences: A case study]. *PUCARA*, 1(30), 133–156. <https://doi.org/10.18537/puc.30.01.06>
- Cáneppa, C., Dahik, C., & Feijóo, K. (2018). *The history of English language teaching in Ecuador*. 7, 39–51. <http://revista-academica.utb.edu.ec/index.php/pertacade/article/view/122/83>
- Chicaiza, V. (2013). *Detección y análisis de necesidades de capacitación para el profesorado del idioma inglés en la Universidad Técnica de Ambato—Ecuador* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

- Childs, S. S. (2011). "Seeing" L2 Teacher Learning The Power of Context on Conceptualizing Teaching. In K. E. Johnson & P. Golombek (Eds.), *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development* (pp. 67–85). Routledge.
- Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). *What Is Participatory Research?* 14, 1667–1676.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Third). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative Research Designs: Selection and Implementation. *The Counseling psychologist*, 35(2), 236–264.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006287390>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Fourth edition). SAGE.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world And Education*. Teachers College Press.
http://bvbr.bibbv.de:8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&local_base=BVB01&doc_number=018926879&sequence=000001&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (1. ed). Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Learning Policy Institute.

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report>

Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (2011). Policies That Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 81–92.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109200622>

De Costa, P. I. (2019). Social Interaction and English Language Teacher Identity. *ELT Journal*, 73(2), 235–237. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccy052>

deMarrais, K. (2004a). *Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience* (K. de Marrais & S. Lapan, Eds.; pp. 51–68). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

deMarrais, K. (2004b). *Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience* (K. de Marrais & S. Lapan, Eds.; pp. 51–68). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (Fifth edition). SAGE.

DeSantis, L., & Ugarriza, D. N. (2000). The concept of theme as used in qualitative nursing research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22(3), 351–372.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/019394590002200308>

Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181–199. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140>

Dove, M. G., & Honigsfeld, A. (2018). *Co-teaching for English learners: A guide to collaborative planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection*. Corwin, A SAGE Publishing Company.

- Dweck, C. S. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success* (Ballantine Books trade pbk. ed). Ballantine Books.
- Educación, M. de. (2012). *Ministerio de Educación: Logros alcanzados e información transparente* (Vol. 2017). <https://educacion.gob.ec/ministerio-de-educacion-logros-alcanzados-e-informacion-transparente/>
- Edwards, S. (2007). From developmental-constructivism to socio-cultural theory and practice: An expansive analysis of teachers' professional learning in early childhood education. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 5(1), 83–106.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X07072155>
- Fernandez-Balboa, J.-M., & Marshall, J. P. (1994). Dialogical Pedagogy in Teacher Education: Toward an Education for Democracy. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(3), 172–182.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487194045003003>
- Fullan, M., Quinn, J., & McEachen, J. (2018). *Deep learning: Engage the world, change the world*. a Joint publication Corwin, A SAGE Publishing Company, Ontario Principals Council.
- Garrick, J. L. (2018). *An investigation of a social-emotional competency and culturally responsive teaching professional development: Examining changes in relationships, efficacy, and resilience*. 309.
- Given, L. (Ed.). (2008). Constructivism. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n64>
- Golombek, P., & Doran, M. (2014). Unifying cognition, emotion, and activity in language teacher professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 39, 102–111.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.01.002>

- Goodson, I., & Walker, R. (1991). *Biography, identity, and schooling: Episodes in educational research*. Falmer Press.
- Graddol, D. (1997). *The future of English? A guide to forecasting the popularity of the English language in the 21st century*. British Council.
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1086/444230>
- Guba, E. G. (Ed.). (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Sage Publications.
- Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching*, 8(3), 381–391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000512>
- Gutierrez, K. D. (2008). Developing a socio critical literacy in the third Space. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 43(2), 148–164. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.43.2.3>
- Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., Bransford, J., Berliner, B., David, Cochran-Smith, M., McDonald, M., & Zeichner, K. (2005). How teachers learn and develop. In *Preparing teachers for a changing world* (1st ed., pp. 1–39). Jossey-Bass.
- Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, R. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. Teachers College Press.
- Haneda, M., Teemant, A., & Sherman, B. (2017). Instructional coaching through dialogic interaction: Helping a teacher to become agentive in her practice. *Language & Education: An International Journal*, 31(1), 46–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1230127>

- Harvey, L. (2015). Beyond member-checking: A dialogic approach to the research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(1), 23–38.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487>
- Herrera, S. (2016). *Biography-driven culturally responsive teaching* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Herrera, S., & Murry, K. G. (2014). *Mastering ESL/EFL methods: Differentiated instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students* (Third Edition). Pearson.
- Huxley, J., Wild, J., & UNESCO. (1952). Freedom and Culture. *The Philosophical Review*, 61(2), 237. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2182917>
- Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective* (1st ed). Routledge.
- Johnson, K. E. (2015). Reclaiming the relevance of L2 teacher education. *The Modern Language Journal*, 99(3), 515–528. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12242>
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2011a). A sociocultural theoretical perspective on teacher professional development. In K. E. Johnson & P. R. Golombek (Eds.), *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development* (1st ed., pp. 1–12). Routledge.
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (Eds.). (2011b). *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development*. Routledge.
- John-Steiner, V., & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational Psychologist*, 31(3–4), 191–206.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1996.9653266>

- Kozulin, A. (2018). Mediation and internalization. In J. P. Lantolf, M. E. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Development* (1st ed., pp. 23–41). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315624747-2>
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th edition). SAGE.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Johnson, K. E. (2007). Extending Firth and Wagner's (1997) Ontological Perspective to L2 classroom praxis and teacher education. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91, 877–892. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00675.x>
- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. 25.
- Lantolf, & Pavlenko, A. (1995). Sociocultural Theory and second language acquisition. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 108–124. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500002646>
- Lantolf, & Poehner, M. (2008). *Dynamic Assessment* (N. Hornberger, Ed.; pp. 2406–2417). Springer US. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-30424-3_181
- Lather, P. (1991). Deconstructing/deconstructive inquiry: The politics of knowing and being known. *Educational Theory*, 41(2), 153–173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1991.00153.x>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815355>
- Leung, C. (2009). Second language teacher professionalism. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language teacher education*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, C., Enciso, P., & Moje, E. B. (Eds.). (2007). *Reframing sociocultural research on literacy: Identity, agency, and power*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Lim, C. P. (2008). Global citizenship education, school curriculum and games: Learning Mathematics, English and science as a global citizen. *Computers & Education*, 51, 1073–1093. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131507001327>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed). Sage.
- Lortie, D. C. (1976). Book Reviews: Review symposium Lortie, D. C. Schoolteacher: A sociological study. *American Educational Research Journal*, 13(2), 139–144. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312013002139>
- McCafferty, S. G., Jacobs, G. M., & DaSilva Iddings, A. C. (Eds.). (2006). *Cooperative learning and second language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed). Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (Second edition). Jossey-Bass, a Wiley brand.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (Fourth edition). John Wiley & Sons.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Third edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Miller, P. H. (2011). *Theories of developmental psychology* (5th ed). Worth Publishers.
- Ministerio de Educación. (2011). *Bases de postulación programa de becas para docentes de inglés*. Senescyt. <http://www.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/wp->

content/uploads/downloads/2012/07/BASES_PROFESORES_DE_INGLES_14-03-12_ultimas.pdf

- Mirzaee, A., & Aliakbari, M. (2017). The role of sociocultural mediational tools in EFL teachers' development: Insights from a life history approach. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 36(6), 644–661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2017.1373711>
- Morgan, D. L. (1995). Why Things (Sometimes) Go Wrong in Focus Groups. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5(4), 516–523. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239500500411>
- Moustakas, C. E. (1999). *Phenomenological research methods* (6. print.). Sage Publ.
- Nagao, K., & Takeuchi, A. (2019). *Social Interaction: Conversation with social Agents*. 7.
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*.
- Patton, M. Q., & Schwandt, T. A. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*.
- Penafiel, F. (2014). *La enseñanza en ingles se potencia en el sistema educativo*.
<http://goo.gl/xBaAKi>
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity. One's own. *Educational Researcher*, 17(7), 17.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1174381>
- Pitsoe, V. J. P., & Maila, W. (2012). *Towards Constructivist Teacher Professional Development* (Vol. 8).
- Pitsoe, V., & Letseka, M. (2014). Exploring teacher professional development (TPD) through Foucault and Freirean lenses. *Dept. of Leadership and Management College of Education, University of South Africa*, 76.

- Postholm, M. B. (2012). Teachers' professional development: A theoretical review. *Educational Research*, 54(4), 405–429. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2012.734725>
- Preissle, J. (2008). Subjectivity Statement. In L. Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n439>
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, L. (1999). *Using NVivo in qualitative research*. Sage Publications.
- Rogoff, B. (1994). Developing understanding of the idea of communities of learners. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 1(4), 209–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039409524673>
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2018). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life* (First Edition). SAGE.
- Segal, A., Pollak, I., & Lefstein, A. (2017). Democracy, voice and dialogic pedagogy: The struggle to be heard and heeded. *Language and Education*, 31(1), 6–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1230124>
- Shabani, K. (2016). Applications of Vygotsky's sociocultural approach for teachers' professional development. *Cogent Education*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1252177>
- Shi, H. (2017). The theoretical interpretation of EFL teacher's professional development from the perspective of sociocultural theory. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 7(11), 10591064. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0711.14>

- Siegesmund, R. (2008). Subjectivity. In L. Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n438>
- Silver, D. (2011). Using the ‘Zone’ help reach every learner. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 47(sup1), 28–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2011.10516721>
- Singh, G., & Richards, J. C. (2006). Teaching and learning in the language. Teacher education course room: A critical sociocultural perspective. *RELC Journal*, 37(2), 149–175.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688206067426>
- Smyth, J. (2000). Reclaiming social capital through critical teaching. *The Elementary School Journal*, 100(5), 491–511. <https://doi.org/10.1086/499652>
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage Publications.
- Strauss, V. (2014, September 6). The huge problem with professional development for teachers. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/06/the-huge-problem-with-professional-development-for-teachers/>
- Teaching additional languages—UNESCO Digital Library*. Retrieved March 28, 2021, from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000125455>
- Téllez, K., Cruz, S., & Waxman, H. C. (2005). Effective professional development programs for teachers of English language learners. *Center for Research in Human Development and Education*, 2.
- Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48(4), 388–396. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x>

- Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Left Coast Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and Language*. MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1960). Analysis of higher mental functions. In R. W. Rieber (Ed),. In *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky*. (Vol. 4, pp. 65–82). Plenum Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Warford, M. K. (2011). The zone of proximal teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 252–258.
- Wegerif, R., Mercer, N., & Dawes, L. (1999). From social interaction to individual reasoning: An empirical investigation of a possible socio-cultural model of cognitive development. *Learning and Instruction*, 9(6), 493–516. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752\(99\)00013-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752(99)00013-4)
- Wertsch, J. V., Rio, P. del, & Alvarez, A. (1995). *Sociocultural Studies of Mind*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (Sixth edition). SAGE.