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Mentoring Language Student-Teachers: A Narrative Perspective to Mentors' Experiences From Borders and Cracks

Tutoría de estudiantes-profesores de idiomas: una perspectiva narrativa de experiencias de mentores desde fronteras y grietas

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This narrative study analyzes two mentors' experiences in their mentoring practices with language student-teachers in a private university in Bogotá (Colombia). Employing life-story interviews and drawing on ways of thinking and theorizing from praxis as a standpoint to enact decoloniality, we approach mentors' narratives from the notion of *crack*. Findings reveal that, for mentors, mentoring practices represent a space for knowledge reconfiguration, a locus of collective knowledge construction, and territories where student-teachers can mobilize and exercise their agency. Overall, when making meaning of clashing experiences in mentoring, mentors have constructed ways to fracture traditional and hegemonic logics of seeing knowledge and the self in teacher education.

Keywords: decolonization, mentoring, personal narratives, student-teachers, teacher education

Este estudio narrativo analiza las experiencias de dos educadores en sus tutorías con futuros docentes de lenguas de una universidad en Bogotá (Colombia). Utilizando entrevistas y adoptando formas de pensar y teorizar la praxis como una postura para representar la descolonización, nos aproximamos a las narrativas de los tutores desde la noción de *grieta*. Los hallazgos revelan que las tutorías representan un espacio de reconfiguración y construcción colectiva de saberes y territorios donde los estudiantes-profesores pueden ejercer su agencia. En general, al dar sentido a experiencias conflictivas en la tutoría, los mentores han encontrado maneras de fracturar las lógicas tradicionales y hegemónicas de ver los saberes y a sí mismos en la formación docente.

Palabras clave: descolonización, estudiante-profesor, formación de docentes, narrativas, tutoría

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Introduction

Teacher mentoring is a prominent complement scenario in teacher education programs (TEPs) for furthering student-teachers' experiences in practicum settings (Bullough & Draper, 2004). As an education practice, mentoring has described different approaches in teacher education literature. Some views comprise mentoring to develop knowledge and skills for future teachers (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Walkington, 2004) or build their teaching profession (Hudson, 2013b; Parker, 2010). Other more critical postures view mentoring as a process of assisting student-teachers to "enter the profession as critical inquirers and knowledgeable practitioners" (Edwards-Groves, 2014, p. 151).

Regardless of the perspective, the variety of studies on mentoring acknowledges the importance of the teaching practice (field experience, practicum) in the educative process of future teachers (Liu, 2014; Mena et al., 2017). Arguably, this influence of practicum in learning is believed to contribute to student-teachers' understanding of their roles as teachers and their ability to learn from field experiences (Graham, 2006). Moreover, additional literature has brought forward the importance of teacher educators (mentors) in developing knowledge and expertise about student-teachers' teaching (McIntyre et al., 2005; Mena et al., 2017). Notwithstanding, a few studies propose to re-think the linearity of accepted visions in mentoring that continue to suggest "hierarchical relationships between mentors and mentees" in which "the mentor has or can provide knowledge and skills that the mentee wants or needs" (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010, p. 43). Relatedly, in this paper, we find the opportunity to broaden the understandings of mentoring as a realization instilled by the dialogical nature of relationships between student-teachers and educators and the potential reconfigurations of notions about teaching, language, and the selves that can emerge for participants in teacher mentoring practices (TMPs).

We shared the idea that essential logics that naturalize hierarchical roles and verticalize knowledge constructions in mentoring are rooted in patterns of epistemic domination, power, and powerlessness reproduced in education. In this regard, some Colombian studies have questioned the colonial foundations that prevail in teacher education (Fandiño-Parra, 2013; Granados-Beltrán, 2018). Consequently, the decolonial option to approach how both mentors and student-teachers co-construct and negotiate their systems of beliefs concerning where they exist, think, and do, is another valid standpoint of thought. This implies engaging in a praxis of exposing the universal signifier in teacher education and "disturb the totality from which the universal and the global are most often perceived" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, approaching teacher education from the mentors' and mentees' perspectives would help restore teachers' agency and disrupt naturalized beliefs in TEPs that dislocate pedagogical realities.

This study explores mentors' situated experiences in mentoring as dialogical pedagogic territories by unveiling more textured understandings of mentors, mentoring, and teaching and learning English. To that end, we approximate mentors' experiences and discourses from the notion of *crack*. According to Mignolo and Walsh (2018), "cracks enable us to re-configure ourselves as subjects outside [the] us/them binary . . . to construct alternative roads, create new topographies and geographies . . . to look at the world with new eyes, use competing systems of knowledge, and rewrite identities" (p. 83). Thus, we intend to find ruptures in mentors' experiences to navigate into their epistemological and ontological conceptions and construct an alternative notion of teacher education from mentoring.

Theoretical Framework

Mentoring in Teaching Education

Literature about language teacher mentoring has substantially addressed the potential to foster prospective teachers' learning in teacher education.

Some scholars have problematized mentoring as a social practice (Kemmis et al., 2014) that empowers "prospective teachers to think about expanded ways of engaging [in curricula and] in pedagogy" (Campbell & Brummett, 2007, p. 50). In the same vein, Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) conceive mentoring as a cornerstone in preservice teacher education since it encompasses teaching experiences for preparing new teachers for ever-changing educative contexts. Others have defined mentoring as "both a relationship and a process" (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005, p. 276), or as "a particular mode of learning wherein the mentor not only supports the mentee but also challenges them productively so that progress is made" (Smith, 2007, p. 277). From a more dialogical viewpoint, though, Fairbanks et al. (2000) assume mentoring as "complex social interactions that mentor teachers and student teachers construct and negotiate for a variety of professional purposes and in response to the contextual factors they encounter" (p. 103).

While literature about definitions and approaches on mentoring abounds, most of those constructions respond to traditional archetypes of mentors, mentees, and knowledge. In echoing this posture, Mena et al. (2017) contend that "many teacher education programs (whether knowingly or otherwise) are criticized for reproducing unidirectional views of mentoring that are more aligned to traditional approaches in which validated knowledge from research in teacher education is conveyed (transmitted) to pre-service teachers" (p. 48). On the one hand, mentors (teacher educators) are still assigned roles of experts and transmitters of Western knowledge that the mentees (student-teachers) need to know (see, for example, Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010), epitomizing the positionings of colonial selves over subaltern others (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). On the other hand, knowledge is fragmented and simplified under transmissible categories such as "skills" and "strategies" where the construct *pedagogical knowledge* is still used as a unitary facet of teacher knowledge (Shulman, 1986). According to Castañeda-Londoño (2019), this episteme "stems from the European modernity," hence "does not leave room for other forms of knowledge" (p. 226).

Indeed, this juncture has called for situated studies of mentoring in teacher education. Darwin (2000), for instance, critiqued arbitrary "expert and learner" portrayals in mentoring and explored more democratic practices that engender "opportunities for dialogue" (p. 206). Khoja-Moolji (2017) proposed a type of pedagogical encounters to subvert colonial ways of knowledge production in teacher education. Furthermore, Wetzel et al. (2017) worked on mentoring from the basis of struggling against notions that perpetuate mentors' roles as trainers who install in student-teachers an array of discrete competencies to teach. At the local level, Lucero (2015) reflected on what mentors need to know for pedagogical practicum mentoring.

In more recent research, Pattisson (2020) found out how practitioners' agency was hindered due to cultural assumptions that both mentors and mentees bring to mentoring. On a different note, studies that focus on mentors' construction of identities (Lammert et al., 2020; Smit & du Toit, 2021), professional growth (Walters et al., 2020), and dialogic reflective practice for the construction of mutual knowledge (Hall, 2020) are bringing in valuable discussions to the field. Nevertheless, there is still a necessity to research on unveiling how the diversity of subjectivities, visions, and experiences struggle to emerge in *borders* and *cracks* within and across mentoring practices.

Language Teacher Practicum

Teacher practicum is a type of social practice that turns into a pedagogical praxis when reflections are individual and collective between teacher educators and student-teachers. Vásquez (2006) contends that in the teaching practicum, educative and academic dynamics converge. In this way, the practicum turns into territories where commitments with being, doing, and knowing about pedagogy emerge. These perspectives

align with most recent local studies that problematize teacher practicum and make efforts to delink it from the theoretical tenets and conceptual instruments of Western thought. In this regard, concerning the teacher education field, some Colombian authors, such as Fandiño-Parra and Bermúdez-Jiménez (2015), claim that teacher practicum cannot be reduced to the mere practice of teaching English and its technical processes in the classroom. Beyond that, it is fundamental to open dialogic spaces that broaden the understandings of practicum to see its real scope and nature (Fandiño-Parra & Bermúdez-Jiménez, 2015).

Lucero and Roncancio-Castellanos (2019) carried out a study to discuss English language student-teachers' pedagogical practicum experiences. They studied how student-teachers envisioned themselves as English language teachers during the pedagogical practicum. The authors found out that BA programs in language teaching concentrate on theory instruction and disregard emotional dimensions when becoming teachers. As regards this perspective, it has been documented that the teaching practicum is "believed to be an important stage . . . helping [student-teachers] reinforce, expand and improve what they have learned in the pedagogical institutions" (Nguyen, 2014, p. 47). Nevertheless, it is also a moment when acquired knowledge is contested or developed. Then, it becomes a critical moment in student-teachers' careers to question the idea of competence (Biesta, 2012).

Bearing this in mind, there seems to be an evident instrumentalization at the time of accompanying student-teachers in their teaching practicum. Ubaque-Casallas and Aguirre-Garzón (2020) found that, after analyzing lesson planning events, student-teachers tend to base their practices on all theoretical knowledge instructed by the mentors or the acquired beliefs on how English should be taught. Looking critically at this, it results from an evident hegemonic dominance over English language teacher education maintained through the instruction on language teaching method(s). According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), this is a "colonial construct of marginality" (p. 541) that has perpetuated epistemological and ontological control over mentors and student-teachers' practices and discourses.

Our Thinking on Decoloniality

Decoloniality is "the disengagement of the logic of modernity and an alternative epistemic other" (Rincón et al., 2015, p. 75). This assumption recognizes that knowledge and practices outside the bounds of Western modernity are often ignored, marginalized, or repressed; a decolonial approach would signify decoloniality as an option to construct in mentoring from and within the cracks. This means understanding mentoring from "the place of our location, agency, and everyday struggle" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 82).

By the same token, our understanding of decoloniality is simple. It is a way of thinking and being installed "in the postures, processes, and practices that disrupt, transgress, intervene and in-surge in, and that mobilize, propose, provoke, activate, and construct an otherwise, that decoloniality is signified and given substance, meaning, and form" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 34). In this sense, decoloniality emerges as an option to think of possibilities of knowing and being otherwise. According to Andreotti (2011), there should be some emphasis on inquiring colonial relations within a "discursive orientation, learning toward poststructuralism, focusing on contestation and complicity in the relationship between colonizers and colonized and on the possibility of imagining relationships beyond coercion, subjugation, and epistemic violences" (p. 17). Despite the advances of TEPs towards more liberatory and situated educative practices, there are still, conscious or unconscious, coercive and repressive belief systems that disable the transformation of the discourse and relationships of inequality in educational contexts.

Therefore, we agree with McEwan (2019), who claims that to decolonize traditional spaces of education, it is paramount "to create different educational

establishments in which . . . subaltern ways of knowing form the basis of scholarly and pedagogical practices" (p. 364). One way to think differently about educating teachers is to disclose and disrupt how mentoring may work as the means for the de/colonization in teacher education.

Method

Narrative Inquiry as Research Path

This study takes on narrative inquiry as a research path. We see this approach as "a means to develop and value knowledge that had not always been valued in teacher education, one rooted in experience rather than research" (McAlpine, 2016, p. 34). For Barkhuizen et al. (2014) "narrative inquiry can help us to understand how language teachers [and mentor teachers] and learners organize their experiences . . . and represent them to themselves and to others" (p. 5). Arguably, narrative inquiry becomes a pathway to embracing contradictions and multiple possibilities within stories rather than seeking coherence (White & Epston, 1990).

Additionally, we believe narrative inquiry helps this study document mentors' experiences from borders and cracks. These experiences are narratives that bring numerous overlapped and interrelated (Berbary, 2011) meanings about mentoring. We see such meanings as "the meaning-making, learning, or knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/watching/listening to research reports" (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 395).

Further, since narratives offer influence—the narrator views themselves and makes decisions to act (Holley & Colyar, 2009), we believe they become a sort of "pedagogy of narrating life" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002, p. 408) that encourages teacher's agency, (re)signifying and legitimizing stories that have been commonly marginalized.

Context and Participants

The study took place in a private university in Bogotá, Colombia, within a language education program frame. As part of their practicum process in schools, student-teachers complement their teaching practice with mentoring sessions led by a teacher educator (mentor) in the university, who accompanies them in their teaching practicum. Mentoring practices are a complementary component of the course "Teaching Practicum." Mentors hold these encounters every other week during one semester with groups of maximum four students assigned by the program. In those sessions, both mentors and student-teachers get together more informally, in a less structured way than a standard class, and dialogue and reflect upon the practicum and pedagogical situations emerging from it. Two male mentors, Edward and Dimitri (pseudonyms), participated in this study. Due to the accessibility of the teacher educators, convenience sampling was employed to select the participants. Both participants hold MA degrees, and their trajectories (i.e., their time at the university in the teaching practicum) were relevant to explore their situated experiences in mentoring.

Before partaking in the study, the participants received information about its objective and scope, and the procedure to share their experiences. They signed consent forms that evidenced agreement and willingness to participate.

Data Analysis and Exploration of Experiences

The study employed *life story interview* as a tool to gather mentors' experiences. Therefore, we adopted a holistic approach of analysis in which the complete account of experiences was separated into sections and analyzed; each section being constantly contrasted with the rest of the whole story (Lieblich et al., 1998). Through this approach, we acknowledged that although life stories can be composed of sequences of events, their complexity is greater as a story is each person's representation of

his or her experience (Atkinson, 1998). Moreover, we aimed to establish a horizontal conversation from the experiences inspected by avoiding scientific hierarchies (Ortiz-Ocaña et al., 2018) in the analysis. We chose to conduct interviews in Spanish and then translated them into English to be further transcribed. As such, since "it is impossible to anticipate what a life story interview [would] be like, not so much for how to do it, but for the power of the experience itself" (Atkinson, 2012, p. 119); we did not focus on structuring the interviews. In fact, "the *less structure a life story interview has, the more effective it will be* in achieving the person's own story in the way, form and style that the individual wants to tell it in" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 41, emphasis in the original).

Accordingly, in the analysis of experiences, we did not consider either "coding for themes, [or] categorizing these and looking for patterns of association among them" (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 11) to present them as data. Instead, we aimed to guarantee voices' subjective essence (Atkinson, 1998) by setting eyes on personal thoughts, perceptions, and interactions (Barkhuizen, 2014) as relevant aspects of understanding mentors' experiences. Moreover, we can say that in both the analysis and in the findings report, we drew on the notion of *crack* to configure a body of research "toward the edges and borders" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 82). From this perspective, we attempted to provide an alternative notion of teacher education by tailoring the analysis of experiences with theory and starting a discussion about the epistemological configurations that mentors install, guide, co-construct, or configure in or with student-teachers.

Experiences About Mentoring

Our Conversation With Edward

This conversation departs from the recognition of two important concepts. First, "mentoring makes public the knowledge necessary for good practice in the form of symbolic representations (e.g., language statements) within the immediacy of action setting" (Mena et al., 2016, p. 54); and second, that teacher practicum is a critical component of teacher preparation (Zeichner, 2010). As teacher practicum has been fundamental in teacher education (Trent, 2013), it is essential to pinpoint that it encapsulates feelings, beliefs, and background experiences in which mentor teachers and student-teachers engage in a mutual construction of the teaching experience (Lucero, 2015). Therefore, revealing the intimacy of our conversations with Edward attempts to delink (Mignolo, 2007) from fixed notions of mentoring.

Although teacher practicum enables "pre-service EFL teachers to have a better understanding of being a teacher" (Tüfekçi-Can & Baştürk, 2018, p. 189), it is relevant as well for mentor teachers who seem to co-construct and negotiate with student-teachers their systems of beliefs. Take, for example, Edward's construction in which mentor teachers can mold student-teachers' beliefs about teaching. The excerpt below opens the room to inspect deeper this assumption.

> In the university, it is precisely about accompanying students to schools, observing their sessions, and guiding them in the methodological and didactic designs they will implement in schools. One tries to guide them in one way or another. However, I discovered a fine line between what it is to show and, let us say, how to open the way for the student-teachers to find those ideologies, those teaching philosophies, language philosophies, philosophies of learning. These are built in their practice sites, and what the teacher shows can influence, maybe, in modeling those philosophies.

Edward makes evident that, although mentor teachers have to accompany student-teachers in the teacher practicum by observing and guiding them in the disciplinary/instrumental dimension of teaching, mentor teachers play a role in the epistemological construction of student-teachers. For instance, the literature available still builds teacher education as "the sum of experiences and activities through

which individuals learn to be language teachers" (Freeman, 2001, p. 72). This has meant for student-teachers and mentors to "keep aligned to that imposed knowledge and practices, [in which] there is no space for a pre-service language teacher to explore different alternatives" (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018, p. 159).

Traditionally, language teaching ideologies and philosophies have been rooted in what Pennycook (1998) defines as the imperialistic nature of English language teaching (ELT). For instance, the teacher practicum has been an instrumentalized space for student-teachers to use methods and approaches learned in their TEPs. Nevertheless, Edward's narrative reveals that mentor teachers play a role in offering a choice between just guiding in the implementation of what has been learned and guiding student-teachers in the discovery of the teaching practice. Being the former the act of maintaining rationality over teaching by having student-teachers "adapt [a method] to their learners, or their learners to it" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 20), and the latter an attempt to delink from the subaltern condition (Mignolo, 2010) imposed on English language teachers.

Such an attempt can be a path Edward builds upon. In the following excerpt, we aim to connect to Edward's agency as a mentor teacher.

> There are readings by different authors in a course. [Student-teachers] read them and think, perhaps at some point, that this literature is part of a system of knowledge that they should apply in practice when they reach a school. So, there is that verticality. They somehow translate it when they come to college as interns. They hope that both the professor at university and the mentor give them guidelines or instructions to follow in the classroom. I try to avoid that because what I believe is that they should base their teaching philosophy, establish it or adapt it, from which the teacher has already denounced; I mean, how am I going to do the same thing that he is doing? So, we open a way for them to start reflecting.

Edward denounces the vertical knowledge construction student-teachers are exposed to in the TEPs. Such a construction is part of a sign and value system that student-teachers believe needs to be applied. Nonetheless, his doing as a mentor teacher goes beyond this positivist paradigm. Instead, he engages in a more liberatory role in which "student teachers can claim ownership of their teaching practices to delink from fixed, universal, and Cartesian notions of conceiving teaching and being a teacher" (Ubaque-Casallas & Aguirre-Garzón, 2020, p. 140). Importantly, Edward seems to look for a path toward reflection. Such a path is geared towards delinking from the verticality in knowledge construction.

In the TEPs, it cannot be disregarded that knowledge production has been tied to the form, use, and content of the target language as the unique angle from where teachers understand their practice. In this respect, mentoring seems to embrace a different dimension in which it moves away from the idea of mentoring to "make teachers perfect in all aspects of teaching" (Aman, 2019, p. 243). Instead, Edward constructs mentoring as a space where student-teachers can make their own decisions informed by practical and theoretical knowledge. This breaks the traditional yet oppressive top-down perspective in which mentor teachers are seen as knowledge holders due to their experience. Such a construction advocates for the conception of alternative knowledges with different enunciative strategies in which mentor teachers' abilities dislocate the asymmetric relationship between mentors and mentees.

However, Edward's decision to open a path for reflection is also opening a way to disrupt the relational ontologies (Escobar, 2007) that have prevailed in the ELT field. The following excerpt allows a more in-depth inspection of the path above.

> I like to think precisely about constructing the knowledge that emerges from where they are doing the practice. Within the mentor's work, there is a particular inevitable accompaniment to processes that are already specific

> and, let's say, more operational in the class, right? The lesson plan is an example that the student comes with a concern about whether this activity works, or not. Instead of telling them what they should do, we propose a dialogic process because they know more about the field than I do as a mentor. They know the students more than I do as a mentor because of a dialogical process of questioning them. They make those decisions together with the mentor; it is like co-construction, more or less. However, what I was referring to more than anything, was like a general teaching philosophy. They begin to create a more informed philosophy in what they live and what they mean, than in what the mentor tells them. That allows them to make sense of the knowledge they obtain and build in their practice and with me.

Edward proposes a dialogical construction of the TMPs. This proposal encourages student-teachers to create and mobilize knowledge based on their experience as student-teachers and on the dialogue with their mentors. As a matter of fact, Johnson and Golombek (2002) argue that:

> When theoretical knowledge is situated within the social contexts where it is to be used, when the interconnectedness of that knowledge is made apparent, and when language teachers have multiple opportunities to use that knowledge in interpretative ways, then theoretical knowledge has relevance for practice. (p. 8)

Nevertheless, Edward also seems to posit a framework towards a re-significance of the teacher mentoring process, in which students can mobilize and exercise their agency. In this respect, "agency appears as a key factor in reducing inequalities" (Archanjo et al., 2019, p. 73), a factor that has been continuously reduced and made invisible by frames of disciplinary knowledge imposed on student-teachers.

In closing this analysis, mentors and student-teachers' possibilities to exercise their agency and disrupt the monolithic and fixed roles assigned in education are enacted in TMPs. Edward has empowered them to focus on constructing and identifying ways of knowing (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) and being. Hopefully, those will shed light on distinctive ways to understand language, teaching, and learning from mentoring as praxis' pedagogical territories.

Our Conversation With Dimitri

Dimitri has mentored prospective language teachers for two years, accompanying student-teachers in local private schools. There, factors and practices can be demanding from pedagogical, institutional, and population points of view. Considering this, he has constructed a vision of teacher mentoring as a practice that suggests horizontal dialogues between alternative human configurations and academic narratives existing in TEPs.

> My involvement always starts from the institutional perspective. The mentor is the one who accompanies the practitioner in their pre-professional training. Therefore, the concepts we use are always from a traditional view, such as in-service teachers, preservice teachers.

Dimitri acknowledges there is an institutional narrative that underpins the TMPs in the university. This narrative shapes roles, functions, and practices that the practice of mentoring entails. Additionally, TEPs can converge specific value systems and ideologies with mentors' epistemologies of teacher education in mentoring spaces. In this sense, Dimitri argues that, in the mentoring practice, certain enunciations, roles, and positionings available for students-teachers (and mentors) from traditional logics of teacher development prevail. In echoing this posture, Hudson (2013a) argues that teacher education departments should invest more in preparing teacher educators "to become well-informed mentors" since they "must be prepared in their *roles* [emphasis added] by having *particular knowledge* [emphasis added] to take deliberate action in their mentoring" (p. 781). This might suggest ready-

made versions of unitary knowledge and assigned roles mentors need to assume to be "well-informed" to do their task.

As mentioned earlier, the previous discussion fits within the strategies of reproduction of the colonial matrix as it continues to privilege the "paradigm of the expert" discourse over the knowing-other. The process of pedagogical mentoring from this perspective stands over this basis of knowing and being. Nevertheless, although Dimitri addresses those logics as substantiating factors in initial language teacher mentoring, recognizing these traditional bases is a departure point to configure a more relational and dialogic outlook of his TMP.

> We, the ones who accompany student-teachers, are the ones who have some knowledge of the context in the central pedagogical practice, since we have already spent a few more years teaching. The accompaniment is precisely aimed at the practitioner, who comes with knowledge from her or his curricular program, from the pedagogical practice, and the understanding of the context, also from conversations with their mentor. They somehow build their vision or version of what language teaching should be. Here I withdraw a bit from what I was saying before, which is very different in the pedagogical practice.

Dimitri discloses an understanding of mentoring as an epistemological locus of collective construction where we recognize a triad of converging sources. One is the disciplinary and pedagogical *knowledges* prospective teachers obtain from the TEPs at the university. Another one is the *knowledges* they re-configure at the teaching practicum in the school. The other is the *knowledges* emerging from pedagogical conversations in the mentoring process. These three sources of *knowledges* interweave to shape different forms of knowing about teaching languages. We propose to analyze Dimitri's configuration of pedagogical knowledges in the TMPs under the metaphor of ecology. This helps to understand the circulations and spatial properties of knowledge (Akera, 2007). Under this perspective, *knowledges* emerge from and across different geographical contexts and are interrelated, just like ecological systems in nature. TMPs from Dimitri's experience can be seen as a system where the plural complexity of knowledge production is valued (Akera, 2007) and legitimated as a source for student-teachers' knowledge reconfigurations.

Seemingly, this analysis of language teacher mentoring resounds in praxis from a decolonial gaze, which withdraws from the modern belief that we first theorize and then apply, as denounced by Mignolo and Walsh (2018). Dimitri's theorization emerges from a dynamic of living, thinking, and doing across his experience in TMPs, and conceives student-teachers' re-construction of teaching knowledge in the same vein. It is in the "praxis of living and the idea of theory-and-as-praxis and praxis-and-as-theory, and in the interdependence and continuous flow of movement of both" where "decoloniality is enacted and, at the same time, rendered possible" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 7).

This decolonial outlook of praxis emerging from TMPs imagines prospective teachers as knowledge generators (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Hence, it "undertakes both resistive and reparative work" (Khoja-Moolji, 2017, p. 146) in teacher education. It removes academia as a universal source of teaching knowledge and restores agency for language teachers (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) while seeking to decenter dominant forms of intellectual productions (Mignolo, 2000). Therefore, mentoring, referred to as a locus of collective knowledge construction, is an ecological system fueled by clashing experiences that constitute epistemological cracks in Dimitri's experience. In the following excerpts, there is a realization of the role of disruptive phenomena emerging in prospective teachers' practicum topographies as a source for knowledge configurations in mentoring:

> In a school, this girl [a student-teacher] somehow was in a tough context. There were 60 students in a classroom; we had Afro students, students with disabilities, who

> came from very vulnerable strata or socioeconomic conditions. Hence, it was a rich teaching environment in terms of the texture it had. However, at the same time, it was a very challenging environment for the pedagogical practice since this practitioner's lesson planning was always somewhat thought in linguistic terms, understood as what is taught. Language was not maybe considered from another perspective. . . . However, it was a context in which I believe that those who carry out pedagogical practice often start with that vision; with a version, or an incomplete image of what teaching is likely to be.

Dimitri retrieves this example to problematize a dislocated and essential teaching perspective that prospective teachers bring from teacher training scenarios into the practicum. In this regard, we have argued elsewhere that "student teachers' epistemologies include a view of acquired fixed knowledge that is learned during teaching preparation courses" (Ubaque-Casallas & Aguirre-Garzón, 2020, p. 133), and that sometimes, unwittingly or not, emerge in mentoring (Mena et al., 2017). This logic is referred to as rationalist teacher education, which evolves from a construct of coloniality in ELT education. In this vein, Granados-Beltrán (2016) argues that it is likely that coloniality sways student-teachers' beliefs, behaviors, and expectations related to their teaching practice. Language teaching imaginaries that are principled, mystified, and idealized versions shaped by TEPs are fractured in conflicting teaching settings and re-dimensioned through dialogue in teacher mentoring.

> The girl I have told you about, in the beginning, her pedagogical practices were based on handouts which sought that the students learned, for example, the use of modal verbs. In the reflections, we managed to locate a behavioral problem that arose, given the problematic relationships that her students had with each other. In the mentoring that we had with this student-teacher, what we achieved was to have a look a bit more from the ethnographic point of view, in terms of understanding how our students relate to each other. . . . Also, I remember a lot that she, without my intervention, managed to find a mechanism to reconcile both voices, meaning, the first reading she made of reality and what emerged from conversations.

In mentoring, Dimitri has achieved a vision of himself as a mediator of prospective teacher's analytical praxis and mentoring itself as a site of *re-orienting-pedagogical encounters* where practitioners' language teaching visions are co-delineated and re-dimensioned by the agents in the process. In such *re-orienting-pedagogical encounters*, the student-teacher found an opportunity to look inward and backward and orient her teaching practices towards a more context-sensitive one (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) by making sense, along with the mentor, of conflictive experiences or *cracks* in her teaching practice. Seemingly, in this process, we argue that both the prospective teacher and Dimitri himself have committed to engaging in action toward anti-rational and decolonial ends (Khoja-Moolji, 2017) in language teaching. That discussion takes place also in dialogue as a path to democratize thought in TMPs.

> I believe that from the moment we sat down and asked a practitioner why she did or didn't do something, why she kept quiet, why she didn't, why he stood up, why he sat down. This implies leading in some way to the first meetings of reflection, to a kind of intervention that is a bit more critical in terms of why things are done in the classroom.

Dimitri resorts to dialogical practices and pedagogical questioning to guide prospective teachers to navigate their own language teaching experiences. In doing so, it seems that both re-establish their subjectivities and their knowledges about teaching. On the one hand, Dimitri configures his mentoring process towards an epistemological and ontological (re)shaping practice. On the other, the student-teacher sets on to devise different ways of sensing, being, thinking, and know-

ing about teaching. A pedagogical orientation aimed towards constructing democratic options for dialogue (Darwin, 2000), like the ones observed in Dimitri's TMPs, connects with a decolonial pedagogical praxis as much as it does not position teacher practitioners as subaltern others nor drags them to the periphery (Ortiz-Ocaña et al., 2018).

Finally, since we explored shades of decolonial thought emerging in the TMPs situated experiences in this paper, we open the discussion towards the plural value of Latin American thought (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). With this caveat in mind, alternative visions of language teaching co-delineated and re-configured in TMPs bring together a linguistic analysis of language teaching with more textured, local, and disruptive ways of doing foreign language pedagogy. Thus, avoiding a rejection or erasure of Western thought, as "Western thought is also part of the pluriversal" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 3). The aforementioned is portrayed in Dimitris' voice as follows:

> I think that this pedagogical practice served two purposes. She established a language teaching in terms of the instrumentalization of what the kids had to learn according to what the course syllabus offered them. However, she also managed to find in that class something more socially, critically oriented.

In Dimitri's experience we could envision a rich theorization of how subjectivities and epistemologies are collectively shaped for both student-teachers and teacher mentors, from a perspective of mentoring as a locus of collective knowledge construction. With this, we have attempted to extend the fixed conversation of mentoring for only enhancing prospective teachers' educational practices and building their level of expertise (Hudson, 2013a). This alternative construction of TMPs flows through a path of resisting static and hegemonic logics in teacher education that, according to Walsh (2015), is achieved by displacing and subverting inherited concepts and practices.

Conclusions and Implications

Mentoring continues to be a contested site where knowledge, practices, and subjectivities are shaped in pedagogical key. We demonstrated, by exploring Edward and Dimitri's life stories, how those constructions are still permeated by colonial ways of knowing, being, and doing that prevail in language teacher education. Nevertheless, we also showed that in the interrelation of mentoring practices and clashing experiences, Edward and Dimitri constructed alternative ways to see themselves as teacher educators and see knowledge as plural accounts of the epistemic fabric of teaching.

Despite the realization that mentoring hides a colonial logic in its rhetoric, not only did we see various cracks that can contest epistemic postulates in crisis, but also we observed in the mentors' narratives a more ecological notion of knowledges as they emerged from and across different topographies and dialogue with traditional, disciplinary knowledge. We conclude that this epistemic interrelation is also part of the *actionings* of decoloniality in pedagogy, since "decoloniality does not imply the absence of coloniality but rather the ongoing serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 81).

Both Edward and Dimitri's experiences become a fertile ground to encourage more in-depth conversations about teaching experiences in TEPs and mentoring. Although findings reported here cannot become a universal guide to explore mentors' experiences elsewhere, nor should they be, it seems relevant for mentors in other TEPs to capitalize mentoring practices as a locus to question personal conceptions and the givens in teacher education. Also, these findings can trigger a more textured conversation around the need for more horizontal and dialogical options in mentoring.

Similarly, the localized epistemological ground established in this paper can inform TEPs to think of student-teachers' experiences in teacher practicum as the basis of the mentoring process and as a pedagogical

option to promote more ecological possibilities for *knowledges* (re)constructed in TMPs. Again, these thoughts are not to be seen as definite but as initiators of broader discussions in research around mentoring and teacher education in other periphery contexts.

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