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**Developing the robustness of an EFL teacher's reasoning with an eye on
pedagogical decisions: A sociocultural perspective on teacher education**

Florianópolis
2025

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Orientadora: Professora Dra. Adriana de Carvalho Kuerten Dellagnelo.

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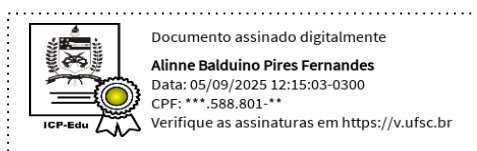
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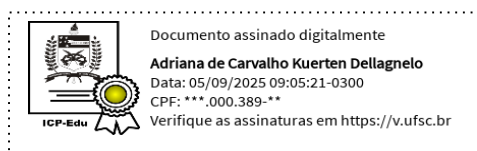
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RESUMO

No contexto da formação de professores, compreender como práticas pedagógicas podem ser transformadas por meio de abordagens reflexivas e fundamentadas teoricamente é essencial para promover o desenvolvimento profissional. Este estudo investiga o desenvolvimento da robustez do raciocínio pedagógico de uma professora de inglês como língua estrangeira por meio de uma investigação orientada por mentoria e mediação responsiva, com base nos princípios da teoria sociocultural de Vygotsky e da abordagem pós-método. O principal objetivo foi analisar como a compreensão da professora sobre os três parâmetros da abordagem pós-método – particularidade, praticidade e possibilidade – e suas práticas em sala de aula se modificaram ao longo das sessões de mediação. A pesquisa seguiu uma abordagem qualitativa e microgenética, com coleta e análise de dados de 10 sessões de mediação responsiva realizadas após observações de aula. As mediações tiveram como finalidade promover a reflexão crítica da professora sobre suas decisões pedagógicas, por meio do questionamento de suas escolhas de planejamento e execução, conectando-as aos parâmetros da abordagem pós-método. Inicialmente, a professora demonstrava uma compreensão superficial desses parâmetros, com práticas predominantemente intuitivas. No entanto, as sessões de mediação estimularam reflexões profundas, resultando em uma prática docente mais consciente e fundamentada. Os resultados indicam que, ao final do projeto, o raciocínio pedagógico da professora estava em processo de se tornar mais robusto, à medida que ela passou a integrar os três parâmetros com mais autonomia, capacidade de nomear conceitos teóricos-chave e justificar suas decisões pedagógicas. Este trabalho oferece contribuições teóricas e práticas para a formação de professores, destacando o papel da mediação responsiva na transformação do raciocínio pedagógico.

Palavras-chave: formação de professores; Teoria Sociocultural Vygotskiana; mediação responsiva; pós-método.

ABSTRACT

In the context of teacher education, understanding how pedagogical practices can be transformed through reflective and theoretically grounded approaches is essential to promoting professional development. This study investigates the development of the robustness of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher's reasoning teaching through mentor guided-inquiry and responsive mediation, based on the principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the postmethod approach. The primary objective was to analyze how her understanding of the three parameter of the postmethod approach – particularity, practicality, and possibility – and her classroom practices change along the mediation sessions. The research followed a qualitative and microgenetic approach, collecting and analyzing data from 10 responsive mediation sessions conducted after classroom observations. The mediation aimed to foster the teacher's critical reflection on her pedagogical decisions by questioning her planning and in-class choices and connecting them to the postmethod parameters. Initially, the teacher demonstrated a superficial understanding of these parameters, with predominantly intuitive practices. However, the mediation sessions fostered deep reflections, resulting in a more conscious and grounded teaching practice. The results indicate that, by the end of the project, the teacher's reasoning was in the process of becoming more robust as she was able to integrate the three parameters with more autonomy and the ability to name key theoretical concepts and justify her pedagogical decisions. This work offers theoretical and practical contributions to teacher education, highlighting the role of responsive mediation in transforming pedagogical reasoning.

Keywords: teacher education; Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory; responsive mediation; postmethod.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A	Alice (fictitious name for the EFL teacher participant of this study)
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
FL	Foreign Language
L2	Second Language
M	Mentor
MS	Mediation Sessions
RQ	Research Questions
RM	Responsive Mediation
RMS	Responsive Mediation Session
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TE	Teacher Educator
VSCT	Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF INVESTIGATION

Since the emergence of Applied Linguistics in 1904 and the subsequent development of various language teaching approaches, the field of English as a Foreign Language¹ (EFL) instruction has undergone significant transformations. There is plenty of knowledge, fads, trends and numerous ‘dos and don’ts’ when it comes to language teaching.

While this diversity provides learners with a wide range of linguistic resources, it can also create challenges for teachers. The multitude of approaches, methods and procedures available may lead to uncertainty regarding which ones to adopt in one case or another, potentially causing inconsistencies in instruction. This highlights the importance of continued education for language teachers, ensuring they are well-prepared to make informed pedagogical decisions and use appropriate teaching strategies effectively.

To date, foreign language (FL) teachers often base their pedagogical choices on the social experiences they have witnessed as language learners themselves, participants in teacher education programs and members of professional communities (Johnson; Dellagnelo, 2013). In other words, much of a teacher’s knowledge is rooted in everyday experiences across various educational scenarios – from being language students to gaining practical teaching experience in classrooms, where they can learn from both successes and challenges.

This often results in teachers with good performance, but lack of competence (i.e. the scientific understanding of one’s actions during performance), a phenomenon which Cazden (1981) refers to as “performance preceding competence”. The problem lies in the difficulty for teachers to deeply understand what they are doing. This might impact their ability to explain the basis of their practices and cause trouble whenever they deal with pedagogical challenges, as they will not be able to go through informed reasoning while facing new situations.

¹ Second language, additional language and foreign language are used interchangeably in this work.

In the field of teacher education, Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory (VSCT) offers an alternative for teachers to move beyond their everyday knowledge, develop sound instructional practices, and engage in meaningful social interactions that foster their growth.

According to VSCT, cognitive development is inherently social and influenced by interactions with more knowledgeable others, which in the case of teaching and learning involves the interaction between teachers, students, and their broader educational communities.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of social interactions in the development of higher mental functions. These functions refer to cognitive abilities that go beyond basic, instinctive behaviors and include complex processes such as abstract thinking, problem-solving, voluntary memory and attention, planning and reasoning. These are cognitive processes which distinctly differentiate us humans from animals. Unlike elementary functions, which are shared with other species and are more automatic and biological in nature, higher mental functions are culturally constructed and emerge through social interaction.

In teacher education, this suggests that teachers do not develop their understanding of concepts by themselves. Instead, they engage in collaborative learning experiences where knowledge – comprising everyday and scientific concepts – is co-constructed during interaction with others.

Everyday concepts are closely tied to what Cazden (1981) describes as performance. These concepts emerge informally through lived experiences and practical engagement in everyday life, much like the intuitive, practice-based knowledge that teachers accumulate as language learners and classroom practitioners. Everyday concepts also enable teachers to perform effectively by drawing on familiar routines and social experiences but often lack the depth and structure necessary for systematic analysis and reasoning in unfamiliar or challenging situations.

On the other hand, scientific concepts relate to what Cazden (1981) describes as competence. Scientific concepts develop through deliberate, theoretical study and formal instruction, providing a structured and explicit understanding of complex ideas. When teachers develop competence, they gain the ability to articulate the rationale behind their practices, engage in informed decision-making, and adapt their teaching to new and varied contexts.

Johnson (2009) elaborates that the key goal of teacher education from a sociocultural perspective is to bridge the gap between these two forms of knowledge by merging everyday concepts with scientific ones. When these two meet, teachers are better able to internalize theoretical insights and use them effectively, thus promoting the dialectical unity between performance and competence.

This process of internalization is crucial in connecting theory to practice. According to Johnson and Golombek (2003), internalization refers to the way an individual's activities, initially mediated by others or cultural artifacts, gradually become self-regulated as they appropriate the resources necessary to control their own actions and thinking. In the area of teacher development, internalization involves transforming intuitive, practice-based knowledge (everyday concepts) into deliberate, theoretically grounded practices. Through this process, teachers gain the ability to independently connect theoretical principles to their classroom decisions, enabling them to confidently respond to new pedagogical challenges through informed reasoning.

This ability to merge theory and practice is crucial for reasoning teaching, which can be defined as the

[...] complex ways in which teachers conceptualize, construct explanations for, and respond to [...] how to teach a particular topic, with a particular group of students, at a particular time, in a particular classroom, within a particular school (Johnson, 1999, p. 1).

Reasoning teaching allows teachers to reflect on their actions (performance) and align them with their understanding of teaching and the outcomes they aim to achieve.

According to Nisbett *et al.* (1987), reasoning involves the capacity to generalize knowledge across domains, recognize patterns and apply theoretical principles to practical situations. Teachers rely on reasoning when planning lessons, interpreting students' behavior, diagnosing learning difficulties and assessing the effectiveness of instructional strategies. It is not merely about reacting to events but about engaging in reflective practice that connects educational theories to the realities of teaching.

In this vein, Johnson (1999) proposes the concept of robust reasoning, which is a more advanced form of reasoning that is resilient, well-founded, and adaptable to a variety of contexts and challenges. The author views robust reasoning as involving the integration of scientific knowledge with practical, everyday knowledge, which thus

allows teachers to use both pedagogical theories and practical classroom experiences to make more informed and effective decisions in flexible and adaptable ways, depending on the teaching situations they face.

The central idea is that robust reasoning arises not from theoretical or practical knowledge alone, but involves a combination of both to enhance teaching practice.

In parallel with Vygotskian perspectives on teacher development, the postmethod pedagogy proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2003, 2006) has challenged the dominance of prescriptive teaching methods and encouraged teachers to act as autonomous, reflective practitioners. Rather than following a single “best” method, the postmethod view emphasizes the teacher’s ability to design and adapt instructional strategies according to the specific needs of learners, the sociocultural context, and the goals of the educational setting. This stance resonates with the notion of reasoning teaching, as it calls for teachers to make thoughtful, context-sensitive pedagogical decisions instead of relying on rigid methodological prescriptions.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) outlines three key parameters of postmethod pedagogy – particularity, practicality, and possibility – which align closely with the sociocultural emphasis on the interplay between theory and practice. The parameter of particularity highlights the importance of tailoring teaching practices to local and contextual realities, while practicality stresses the teacher’s role in generating knowledge from classroom experiences, bridging the gap between everyday and scientific concepts. Finally, the parameter of possibility addresses the transformative potential of education, urging teachers to critically reflect on issues of identity, power, and social change. In this sense, postmethod pedagogy empowers teachers to exercise professional reasoning, combining theoretical principles with lived experiences to create more dynamic, responsive, and meaningful learning environments.

Building on this, the present study investigates how an EFL teacher develops the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation as regards the use of the postmethod approach. In line with Vygotskian principles, such a change is shaped through interactions with a mentor, who provides mediation in a dynamic and responsive manner.

Johnson and Golombek (2016) propose the notion of responsive mediation – the idea that mentor-mentee interactions should be negotiated, spontaneous, and tailored to the teacher’s specific needs. This form of mediation creates opportunities

for the teacher/mentee to actively reason upon her practices, leading to a deeper understanding of her pedagogical decisions and the theoretical underpinnings that inform them. As a result, she becomes better equipped to apply these insights flexibly in diverse teaching contexts, developing higher levels of professional expertise over time.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The present research focuses on exploring how an EFL teacher develops the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation as regards the use of the postmethod approach. Particularly, the focus lies in ways that support her in integrating theoretical insights with pedagogical decision-making in the classroom, ultimately enhancing her performance and fostering her development toward competence.

As a study grounded in VSCT, emphasis is placed on the role that peer interaction plays in fostering teacher development. Following Cazden's (1981, p.7) notion that "assisted performance is not just performance without competence, but performance before competence" and that "assisted performance does indeed contribute to subsequent development", this research involves one EFL teacher (mentee) and a more experienced peer (mentor).

The study is set in a private language institute that implements a pedagogy grounded in the principles of the postmethod approach. By challenging traditional methods of language teaching, this pedagogy supports professional autonomy, encourages situated practices adapted to diverse teaching contexts, and promotes the integration of theory and practice through reflective pedagogical reasoning.

The motivation for this study emerged from the need for greater professionalization within the language institute that I co-own with a colleague. As the institute grew and the demand for our services exceeded what the two of us could manage alone, we decided to hire additional teachers to support our business. However, upon observing questionable teaching practices among some of the new colleagues – who had been hired based on their claimed adherence to the postmethod approach –, I decided to engage them in informal conversations to assess their understanding of the theoretical foundations underlying this approach. Upon identifying conceptual gaps in their knowledge, I decided to conduct this study.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the stated objectives, the main research question that guides this study is the following:

RQ – How does an EFL teacher develop the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation as regards the use of the postmethod approach?

In order to carry out this investigation, the study is guided by the following specific research questions:

1. To what extent does an EFL teacher initially understand the postmethod approach and teach in accordance with it?
2. How does her understanding of the postmethod approach and her classroom practice change as her pedagogical choices are inquired into and responsive mediation is offered?
3. In what ways can the changes in her understanding and classroom practice be attributed to the mentor's inquiry and mediation?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

In light of the challenges EFL teachers face in bridging the gap between performance and competence, this study explores ways to strengthen their pedagogical reasoning and professional growth. Adopting a sociocultural perspective to teacher education, it investigates how an EFL teacher develop the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation as regards the use of the postmethod approach.

The findings of this study have the potential to enhance language teacher education by identifying strategies that effectively connect theory with practice, ultimately improving teachers' pedagogical reasoning and classroom performance. More specifically, the study sheds light on how intentional and responsive mediation can support teachers in transforming their intuitive, experiential knowledge into theoretically informed practices. Responsive mediation operates by attuning to the teacher's developmental needs in real time, offering tailored support that evolves

throughout the learning process. Rather than delivering pre-determined solutions, the mentor co-constructs meaning with the teacher through dialogic interaction, posing questions, offering theoretical insights, and encouraging reflection on practice. This process not only develops the teacher's ability to articulate the rationale behind her actions but also creates a space where everyday and scientific concepts can be integrated. Through sustained, intentional mediation, the teacher might gradually internalize new conceptual tools, leading to a restructuring of her pedagogical thinking and enabling more robust, context-sensitive reasoning.

VSCT-informed studies emphasize that teacher learning is not a solitary endeavor, but a socially situated process in which language plays a mediating role in restructuring teachers' thinking and conceptual understanding. By highlighting the dialectical relationship between social interaction and cognitive development, this study contributes to the growing body of research that views teacher education as a dynamic, dialogic, and transformative practice. In doing so, it provides valuable insights for teacher education programs and mentorship initiatives, offering both theoretical and practical guidance for designing professional development experiences that are context-sensitive, interaction-driven, and oriented towards robust pedagogical reasoning. Ultimately, this research supports the advancement of EFL teacher education by promoting a deeper understanding of how reasoning, mediation, and social context intersect to shape more effective and reflective teaching practices.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This study is organized into five chapters, each serving a specific purpose in addressing the research objectives. Chapter 1, the present Introduction, sets the stage by introducing the prevailing challenge of teachers relying on performance rather than competence and the relevance of developing teachers' competence through responsive mediation leading to pedagogical reasoning. Chapter 2 presents the most important literature and theoretical concepts that will be relevant to this study: Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory (VSCT) and its interface with Teacher Education, and the postmethod approach along with its three parameters: particularity, practicality and possibility. In Chapter 3, the methodological aspects of this research will be presented, as well as the relevance of the study and a more detailed description of the context in

which the research takes place and the participants involved. Following that, Chapter 4 discusses what has been observed throughout data collection and the results of the study. Finally, in Chapter 5, there will be some considerations of the findings of this study as well as possible limitations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents the rationale that guided the present study. It outlines the theoretical foundations, key concepts, and research perspectives that frame the investigation. Additionally, it highlights previous studies that inform the research questions and methodology. To do so, the chapter is divided into 2 sections: the first one discusses how VSCT connects to L2 education from a developmental perspective. The second section explores the educational theory of the postmethod approach proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2001). By establishing this foundation, the chapter provides a clear context for understanding the study's objectives and its contribution to the field.

2.1 SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY IN L2 EDUCATION: A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Understanding how people learn and develop is essential for education and when it comes to Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory (VSCT), a *theory of mind* (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), human learning is analyzed, explained and perceived through the social relations people have and cultural artifacts they engage with (Vygotsky, 1986). In other words, cognitive development is fostered as individuals participate in various social contexts, culturally constructed tools and establish relations with the world around them (Dall'Igna, 2018).

Just like any other context, these socially constructed meanings are present in L2 teacher education, as learning how to teach is, according to Johnson (2009), “based on the assumption that knowing, thinking, and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations” (p. 13).

It is important to note that Vygotsky (1986) makes a clear distinction between learning and development, framing them as two interrelated but distinct processes. For the author, *learning* refers to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, typically influenced by external social interactions and mediated by cultural tools, such as language, symbols and technology. *Development*, on the other hand, is the process

through which a learner internalizes these external influences and incorporates them into their own cognitive structure, leading to higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1986).

In the last few decades, there has been a growing number of studies focused on EFL teachers' development following a sociocultural perspective (Berger, 2002; Biehl, 2016; DallaCosta, 2018; Dall'Igna, 2018; Dellagnelo, 2007; Rosa, 2016; Tasker, Johnson & Davis, 2010). This body of work reflects an increasing interest in how teachers learn, evolve, and construct their professional identities within a sociocultural perspective. As an example, Dall'Igna (2018) traced the development of an EFL teacher mediated by a more experienced other through responsive mediation and pedagogical conferences. In order to do so, the teacher presented his class plans in the conferences and had the opportunity to reason upon his choices with the help of a more experienced other. The findings reveal meaningful changes in the teacher's discourse, classroom practices, and self-analysis, reinforcing the role of responsive mediation in promoting teacher development as an ongoing, socially situated process.

According to Vygotsky, higher mental functions refer to more complex cognitive abilities that are uniquely human and develop through social-cultural interactions and mediation. They include abstract thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, planning, and voluntary memory and attention. Higher mental functions are significantly different from elementary mental functions. Elementary mental functions are the basic, innate cognitive abilities that humans share with other animals. These include processes such as perception, sensation, involuntary memory and attention. They are biologically determined and automatic, operating largely outside of conscious control. These functions enable individuals to react to immediate environmental stimuli and perform basic tasks. Therefore, unlike elementary functions, higher mental functions are not automatic but are the result of learning and internalization of cultural tools, primarily language.

EFL teachers develop their knowledge of teaching from participating in educational contexts and interactions with others, from academic settings to their professional institutions. This knowledge, as mentioned in the Introduction, can be distinguished in two types, namely everyday concepts and scientific concepts.

Everyday concepts can be understood as informal knowledge developed from daily participation in social activities and interactions. They can be either spontaneous or non-spontaneous, depending on their origins and contexts. Spontaneous everyday concepts arise naturally from personal experiences and practical engagements with

the world (Vygotsky, 1978). This type of knowledge is spontaneous because it emerges without formal instruction or deliberate study.

In contrast, non-spontaneous everyday concepts arise in situations where an individual is guided or directed by external influences, such as cultural tools, artifacts or interactions with more knowledgeable others. These concepts are still “everyday” in nature because they are tied to practical, context-specific experiences rather than structured theoretical understanding. However, they are non-spontaneous because they require mediation or intervention from external sources (Vygotsky, 1978).

In general, everyday concepts are empirical, and in the context of EFL teaching, the teacher might not be able to precisely explain the theoretical frameworks of their practices. Scientific concepts, on the other hand, are acquired formally, through deliberate instruction (for instance, in institutions), are based on scientific principles and are “systematic, coherent, and generalizable” (Johnson, 2009, p. 14).

In the field of education, scientific concepts are, undoubtedly, highly important, as they allow teachers to go beyond their everyday empirical knowledge to deeper levels of thinking (Johnson, 2009). However, it is essential to avoid misconceptions that everyday concepts are irrelevant or that scientific concepts are superior due to their theoretical foundations.

According to Vygotsky (1986), there is a dialectical relationship between the two types of concepts, where each concept supports and enriches the other. This is due to the fact that, while theory alone might be a case of empty verbalism (Vygotsky, 1986), which is based on using concepts learned in formal environments without thoroughly understanding them, practice alone is mindless behavior – an unguided set of actions, without deeply measuring the consequences of one’s acts, which end up being confined to the very specific contexts where they were learned.

The interplay between everyday and scientific concepts has significant practical implications for teachers. Everyday concepts allow for pedagogical practices that are responsive to the immediate classroom context (Johnson, 2009). Teachers draw on their everyday concepts to create authentic and engaging learning experiences that resonate with students' cultural backgrounds and interests. For example, teachers may intuitively incorporate games or role-plays into the lesson, believing that these interactive tasks engage students and create a lively learning environment. While this approach may not be explicitly rooted in formal theories or

research, it reflects the teacher's perspective of what constitutes effective language learning and teaching and it takes into account the teaching-learning context.

On the other hand, scientific concepts offer a deeper understanding of language learning processes, pedagogical techniques, and FL acquisition theories. This knowledge empowers teachers to make informed decisions about curriculum design, lesson planning, and assessment practices (Johnson, 2009), as well as frees them from the immediate context they are in, allowing for abstraction. For instance, EFL teachers can intentionally design activities that prioritize authentic communication and meaningful language use in the classroom.

Teachers may find it challenging to shift from familiar, everyday teaching methods to more theoretically grounded approaches. They may encounter conflicts between their intuitive beliefs about language learning and the principles of certain scientific knowledge. Also, they may question the relevance or applicability of scientific concepts to their specific teaching context or doubt their own ability to implement them effectively.

In that scenery, EFL teacher education supports teachers in addressing the challenges and gaps they encounter in their practice. VSCT-informed teacher education offer teachers the tools and resources necessary to navigate the complexities of language teaching, equipping them to bridge the divide between their current methods and more effective, research-informed strategies. By fostering a supportive environment, EFL teacher education empowers teachers to grow in confidence, overcome obstacles, and refine their pedagogical approaches to better meet the needs of their learners.

According to Johnson (2009), EFL teacher education is a process of developing teachers' everyday concepts about "language, language learning, and language teaching to enable them to understand the scientific concepts about language, SLA, learning, and L2 teaching that are produced, accepted, and adapted in the profession" (p.14). This way, everyday and scientific knowledge will likely "meet and merge, and consequently be internalized" (Agnoletto; Dellagnelo; Moritz, 2020 p. 5).

Robbins (2003) claims that the extent to which teachers can connect everyday and scientific concepts is crucial for concept development. The development process in VSCT involves a movement from external and social activities to internal processes, as explained by Johnson (2009). Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that "every function in

the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57).

In this thesis, the cognitive development process described by Vygotsky (1978) is connected to Cazden's (1981) 'performance before competence' claim. In the context of L2 teacher education, this suggests that teachers can sometimes deliver good *performance* even without fully understanding the underlying concept(s) behind it. For instance, a teacher might be able to teach according to the postmethod theory before having fully developed a robust understanding of its principles.

Building on this perspective, the role of mediation becomes fundamental in the process of concept development. Biehl (2016) claims that it is through the "mediation of a more experienced other that one can attain new knowledge, that otherwise would be too challenging to be understood" (p. 3). In other words, through mediation from a mentor - or more experienced other - teachers engage in dialogic exchanges that help them move beyond their current level of understanding.

Several studies have examined how mediation impacts teaching practices (Agnolotto, 2019, 2024; Biehl, 2016, 2020; Rosa, 2016; Carvalho, 2018; Lima Júnior, 2024). In Biehl's (2020) study, it was investigated how a teacher educator's mediational strategies influenced a novice teacher's development of pedagogical concepts. The research categorized strategies according to their level of explicitness - ranging from implicit elicitation of reasoning to direct instruction and clarification - and analyzed their relation to the teacher's progress in developing four key pedagogical concepts: contextualization, links, instructions, and modeling. Findings revealed that implicit strategies were sufficient and effective for concepts that developed more easily, while more explicit mediation was used for concepts requiring greater support to be understood.

As mentioned in the previous example, mediation can be categorized as explicit or implicit, depending on the degree of intentionality and awareness with which the mediating guidance is presented. According to Wertsch (2007), explicit mediation involves deliberate and purposeful intervention by a more experienced individual. In this form of mediation, the expert consciously introduces a tool – whether physical, symbolic or conceptual – with the aim of guiding the learner's thought process or actions toward specific goals. For example, a teacher might explicitly explain how language is structured differently in various contexts, such as essays, conversations,

or presentations, or a mentor might clarify the theoretical foundation of a teaching strategy to a mentee.

Conversely, implicit mediation occurs in a more subtle and indirect manner, often without the learner being fully aware of it. While Wertsch (2007) emphasizes the unconscious nature of implicit mediation, it may still promote insights and connections for the learner. For instance, when a teacher deliberately incorporates advanced vocabulary into a discussion with the intention of teaching it, this can naturally expand a student's lexicon, even without explicitly directing attention to the teaching of that specific vocabulary. The student, through this guided exposure, may develop awareness and internalize the new terms over time.

Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1994) explored how different levels of mediation – ranging from explicit (direct guidance) to implicit (subtle hints) – can support second language learners in developing self-regulation and linguistic competence. Their research introduced a regulatory scale, which outlines a continuum of mediation strategies. At one end, explicit mediation involves clear, direct instructions or corrections, while implicit mediation relies on more subtle cues, such as asking guiding questions or providing prompts. The goal is to gradually reduce the level of mediation as learners become more independent and capable of self-correcting. A key finding in their work is that the type and level of mediation required by a learner can vary depending on the task and the learner's current stage of development. They emphasized that mediation should be dynamic and responsive, tailored to the learner's needs at a given moment. This approach aligns with Vygotsky's idea that development is not linear but involves progress and occasional backtracking.

Both forms of mediation contribute to learning but serve different purposes within the Vygotskian framework. Together, they lead learners to move from reliance on external guidance to independent regulation of their actions and thoughts. This process, referred to by Vygotsky (1986) as 'internalization', highlights the transition from external social interactions and cultural tools to independent psychological functions.

To illustrate the internalization process, Johnson (2009) provides an example of teachers initially relying heavily on the teacher's manual for classroom activities. Internalization occurs when teachers start to "reorder, drop, and/or supplement the activities outlined in a teacher's manual, to better meet the particular needs of her students..." (p. 19), which means that they do not simply reproduce what is being

suggested in the teacher's manual, but have enough expertise to select and adapt it according to classroom needs. Once concepts are internalized, they shift from a previous potentiality state to an actual development state.

It is important to highlight that internalization does not necessarily result from all types of mediation. It is imperative that the mentor provides mediation that is addressed to the mentee's potential level of understanding. As discussed by Agnoletto, Dellagnelo and Moritz (2020), the mediation provided by a more expert other needs to be attuned to the less experienced peer's "readiness" to grasp the aspect(s) being addressed during interaction, in other words, to one's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The ZPD, a concept traditionally highly used in Vygotsky's work, refers to a particular metaphorical space – that is created during social interaction – between what a person can already do by themselves (developmental zone) and what they have the potential to develop through external help (potential developmental zone). Mediation plays a crucial role to create and maintain ZPDs, enabling learners to bridge the gap between their current abilities and what they can achieve through assistance. Vygotsky (1978) claims that development can only take place when learning is fostered on the external plane through social interaction that creates and capitalizes on learners' ZPDs.

Following those lines, some studies have been exploring the concept of ZPD (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Carvalho, 2018; Cazden, 1981; Lima, 2022; Verenikina, 2003). A relevant example of this can be found in Lima's (2022) study, which explored the development of the scientific concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) among five public school teachers participating in an in-service course. Initially, participants shared a similar Zone of Actual Development, as they did not recognize the concept of ELF. However, throughout the course, teachers displayed varying trajectories of conceptual development depending on the different ZPDs created and the quality of mediation they received. The findings demonstrate that both group and individual mediation was crucial in supporting these teachers' progress, emphasizing the need for professional development opportunities that build upon the participants' specific developmental stages. In this sense, the study exemplifies how the ZPD can serve as a guiding principle for designing teacher education that promotes deeper and more autonomous professional learning.

More recently, Lois Holzman (2018) has expanded the concept of the ZPD beyond its traditional interpretation, proposing a more dynamic and collective perspective. Rather than viewing the ZPD as a fixed space where an individual progresses with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other, Holzman emphasizes its performative and social nature. She argues that the ZPD is not merely a tool for guiding individual learning but an activity created through collective engagement, where people develop together as they shape their learning environments. This perspective shifts the focus from individual cognitive development to the broader social-cultural practice of learning, highlighting the unity between learning and development rather than treating them as separate processes. Holzman's approach challenges conventional applications of the ZPD in educational settings, advocating for a more fluid and interactive understanding that fosters creativity, collaboration, and shared meaning-making. By framing the ZPD as an evolving space of collective activity, she underscores the importance of social interaction not just as a means of support but as the very foundation of development itself.

A recent study that adopts this new perspective is Agnoletto's (2024). His research builds on teacher development as a continuous, collaborative, and dialogic process. In his study, Agnoletto investigates how a teacher educator's mediation and novice teachers' reflections shape the social situation of development, fostering robust pedagogical thinking and practice. His findings highlight the role of responsive mediation and teachers' *perezhivanie* in creating ZPD activities, cognitive and emotional dissonance, and higher levels of intersubjectivity, all of which contribute to teachers' evolving understanding of their profession.

In order for mediation to be responsive and attuned to a possible joint meaning-making ZPD, it is necessary for the less experienced participant to externalize their thinking during interaction with an expert other, enabling collaborative reflection and co-construction of knowledge. As Agnoletto, Dellagnelo and Moritz (2020) suggest, if the mentee does not do so, their understandings cannot be accessed, thus hindering opportunities for responsive mediation. In addition, Johnson and Golombek (2016) claim that for mediation to be effective, it must be systematic, intentional, informed, dialogic, goal-directed and responsive to the learner's needs.

That being said, Johnson and Golombek (2016) developed the concept of responsive mediation (RM). The authors define RM as a psychological tool with dialogic principles that support the development of language teachers. To ensure

effective communication and alignment, the teacher educator (TE) must first reflect on and clarify their motives and intentions regarding EFL teacher education. By externalizing these thoughts and sharing them openly with their learners, the TE provides clarity and sets expectations, fostering a transparent and productive mentoring relationship. In addition, the TE should understand who their learners are, how they have reached where they are today and what they want to achieve in terms of EFL teaching, so that the TE can guide and adapt the way they conduct the RM sessions. Finally, the TE should also understand their learners' contexts in order to perceive their needs, challenges and particularities and, thus, fine-tune the responsive mediation and access the learners' potentials.

Agnoletto's (2019) study offers an example of this process within EFL teacher education. The research followed a novice teacher's development through a series of observed classes and follow-up interactions with a more experienced other who provided mediation tailored to the teacher's specific challenges, particularly regarding the use of the textbook and teacher's manual. As the teacher grew in her practice and understanding, the mediation also changed to match her necessities, helping her rethink her teaching. This responsive approach helped the teacher move from a grammar-focused way of teaching to one that was more communicative and focused on meaning. The study highlights how mediation that is both dialogic and sensitive to the teacher's ZPD can lead to significant conceptual transformation.

The dialogic nature of RM is closely related to another important concept of this research, namely *reasoning teaching*. This notion is defined by Johnson (1999) as the cognitive activity teachers engage in to conceptualize and explain their teaching practices. It includes their ability to justify their methods and decisions based on their knowledge, beliefs, and experiences, aspects that are formed through their own trajectory as school learners, learners of teaching and also practitioners working in specific educational contexts (Johnson, 1999). This concept focuses on the foundational reasoning behind teaching actions.

The connection between responsive mediation (RM) and reasoning teaching lies in the essential role RM plays in fostering and triggering robust reasoning teaching in educators. When teachers struggle to justify or critically analyze their own practices, TEs provide responsive mediation to support them. This mediation acts as a catalyst, enabling teachers to begin understanding and articulating their practices through

theoretically grounded justifications, therefore, making their reasoning process more robust.

Responsive mediation requires the teacher educator to dynamically adjust mediation to the specific needs of the teacher, thus providing the necessary support to help them reflect on and interpret their teaching experiences. This creates a pathway for teachers to develop reasoning teaching, as they start forming connections between their actions, beliefs, and theoretical frameworks. RM not only supports but actively drives this process of reflection and conceptual understanding, making it a powerful tool in professional development.

A clear example of how responsive mediation can foster reasoning teaching is once again found in Agnoletto's (2024) doctoral study, which investigated the development of two English teachers' professional knowledge through dialogic activities. The study analyzed how the mediation offered by a TE - which was deliberately tailored to the teachers' emergent needs - was reinterpreted by each teachers' *perezhivanie* (an individual's emotional and cognitive experiences in a situation), shaping a social situation of development that enabled the reconstruction of their pedagogical reasoning. Throughout eight cycles of collaborative work, including narrative writing, class recordings, and reflective discussions, the teachers were encouraged to revisit their practices through theoretical concepts and ideal forms. As a result, both participants developed more robust understandings of their instructional choices, articulating well-founded justifications for their actions and resolving previous concerns.

Johnson (1999) also argues for the importance of going a step further and developing the robustness of teachers' reasoning. The author defines robustness as the teachers' understanding of

[...] themselves, their students, and the classrooms and schools where they work, the flexibility with which they make use of these understandings, the complexity of their reasoning and the range of instructional considerations they use as they carry out their professional activities (p. 2).

It involves a deeper, more comprehensive reflection on teaching practices, integrating theoretical frameworks and critical analysis. Teachers who develop robust reasoning teaching not only justify their practices but also critically evaluate and adapt them to align with broader educational goals and learner needs. This approach is

shaped by their experiences as learners, educators, and practitioners in specific contexts, emphasizing continuous growth and adaptability.

Teachers' reasoning becomes accessible when they articulate their understanding of what lays behind their classroom actions (Johnson, 2009). For that to happen, RM should provide opportunities for them to articulate and examine their pedagogical choices. Johnson (2009) emphasizes that this process requires intentional interactions in which a TE/mentor prompts teachers to critically analyze their experiences, thus raising teachers' awareness and, with the introduction of scientific concepts, bridging their everyday concepts with theoretical knowledge of the profession.

In sum, "creating opportunities for teachers to reflect on and re-conceptualize how they might enact their teaching practices in varied instructional contexts will no doubt be part of the life-long professional development of all L2 teachers" (Johnson, Golombek, 2020, p. 6). This flexibility allows teachers to respond to the dynamic nature of classroom interactions, ensuring that their teaching remains contextually relevant and responsive to the varying needs of their students.

Building on these discussions, it is also important to consider that teachers are life-long learners of teaching, going through a *twisting path* (Smagorinsky, 2003), where cognitive development is dynamic, complex and non-linear. This non-linear process has been explored in several studies on teacher professional development (Biehl, 2016; Costa, 2019; Dall'Igna, 2018). In her study, Biehl (2016) followed the developmental path of a novice English teacher through mediated interactions with a more experienced teacher educator. She demonstrated how intentional and responsive mediation supported the teacher's movement through the twisting path of learning by encouraging reflective practice, transforming discourse, and fostering greater confidence in her professional identity. The findings highlight the reverberations of mediation on both pedagogical practice and teacher reasoning and also illustrate how the novice teacher's evolving conceptual understanding was marked by moments of advancement, hesitation, and restructuring - which are all characteristics of a twisting developmental trajectory.

In conclusion, embracing a Vygotskian sociocultural perspective to L2 teacher education represents more than a methodological framework; it embodies a mindset that nurtures teaching development. Rather than adhering to rigid guidelines or prescriptive rules, this perspective views teacher education as an evolving process of

reconstructing and transforming teaching practices. As highlighted by Johnson (2009), such an approach involves recognizing the essential role of social interactions, mediation, and the dynamic interplay between everyday and scientific concepts in fostering teacher development. Moreover, it is a perspective that acknowledges the non-linear and intricate path of cognitive growth, emphasizing that effective teacher education must be responsive to individual needs and contexts while promoting critical reflection and meaningful internalization. By doing so, it enables teachers to continuously refine their practices and adapt to the diverse and evolving demands of language classrooms.

The next section explores an innovative approach to L2 education, which also challenges traditional methods of teaching: the postmethod approach. This section presents the key principles of the postmethod approach and its potential impact on L2 education.

2.2 POSTMETHOD PEDAGOGY: RETHINKING APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

In the domains of foreign language teaching, the concept of 'method' has been a topic of varied interpretations and discussions. As Zeng (2018) points out, there is no uniform definition for 'method' in the field, and it is often used interchangeably with terms like 'approach' or 'technique.' Traditionally, a method has been perceived as an overall plan or set of procedural steps for language instruction that follows a specific theoretical framework (Zeng, 2018).

However, criticisms of the concept of 'method' have emerged, questioning the effectiveness and suitability of rigid, one-size-fits-all approaches to language teaching. Prabhu (1990) challenges the exhaustive pursuit of the 'best method', indicating that it does not even exist. The scholar argues that the efficacy of a method depends on various contextual factors, such as the characteristics of the learners, the teaching environment, and the purpose of language instruction. He emphasizes the importance of teachers' involvement and understanding in the teaching process. According to Prabhu (1990), when teachers mechanically adhere to a method without a sense of involvement or understanding, their teaching may prove ineffective or fail to meet the diverse needs of learners.

In other words, Prabhu (1990) emphasizes that effective teaching transcends the rigid application of prescribed methods. Instead, it relies on the teacher's personal connection to the teaching process, namely sense of involvement. This estate of involvement reflects three main pillars: engagement, understanding and intentionality of how and what is being taught. Teachers who follow methods mechanically, without genuine understanding or identification, risk delivering instruction that fails to resonate with learners or meet their needs. Dellagnelo and Moritz (2009) point out that such uncritical adherence to pedagogical practices characterizes *mindless behavior*, which are teaching strategies employed without specific purpose or awareness of their relevance to the moment and context.

Building on this concept, Prabhu (1990) introduces the term plausibility, which he defines as the teacher's subjective understanding of how their teaching leads to learning. This sense of plausibility is rooted in the teacher's internalized conceptualization of causation in pedagogy, providing a foundation for their instructional decisions. The author notes, "It is when a teacher's sense of plausibility is engaged in the teaching operation that the teacher can be said to be involved, and the teaching not to be mechanical" (p. 172). Thus, plausibility acts as a compass, guiding teachers in their choice of strategies and their adaptation to the unique contexts of their classrooms.

The relationship between plausibility and involvement is pivotal. When a teacher's sense of plausibility is active and engaged, it foments a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each teaching situation, allowing for reflective practice. These reflections, in turn, contribute to the growth and evolution of the teacher's sense of plausibility. Prabhu (1990) further argues that this engagement is critical for promoting rapport between teachers and learners, a dynamic that significantly enhances classroom experiences: "The greater the teacher's involvement in teaching in this sense, the more likely it is that the sense of involvement will convey itself to learners, getting them involved as well" (Prabhu, 1990, p. 173).

However, the activation of plausibility is not automatic and faces challenges such as routinization, a phenomenon where teaching becomes overly repetitive and disconnected from thoughtful engagement. Routinization, described by Prabhu (1990) as "the enemy of good teaching," can diminish the sense of plausibility, reducing teaching to mere performance of tasks. To counter this, the author highlights the

importance of interaction with other teachers' pedagogical perceptions, professional reading, and reflective dialogue.

In this light, the notion of plausibility shifts away the focus from debates over "good" or "bad" methods to a deeper question about whether the teaching process is "real" or mechanical. Real teaching, grounded by an engaged sense of plausibility, allows for ongoing adaptation and growth, in line with Prabhu's assertion that "the distinction between 'real' and mechanical teaching is more significant for pedagogy than any distinction between good and bad methods" (1990, p. 174).

In order to provide an alternative to method - not an *alternative method* - at the end of the 1980's, Kumaradivelu (1994) introduced the notion of postmethod, seeking to move beyond the limitations of a single, universally applicable method. It is important to reinforce that postmethod is not an alternative method itself, but rather a pedagogy that encompasses a range of teaching strategies, materials, and contextual factors influencing FL learning (Zeng, 2018).

Postmethod pedagogy opened space for a shift from rigid methods to principles that guide instructional decision-making. It recognizes the significance of context and individual learners' needs and encourages teachers to adapt their approaches accordingly. In postmethod pedagogy, the emphasis lies in encouraging teachers' active involvement, understanding, and a sense of plausibility about teaching (Prabhu, 1990).

In this perspective, postmethod pedagogy recognizes that teaching is both shaped by and contributes to the ongoing development of a teacher's sense of plausibility. It acknowledges that since the routine demands of the classroom can sometimes diminish creativity and engagement, encouraging teachers should stay intellectually active by engaging in professional discussions, collaborative reflection, and ongoing exploration of pedagogical literature.

To gain a broad comprehension of postmethod pedagogy, it is necessary to examine the three key parameters that form its theoretical foundation: particularity, practicality, and possibility.

The parameter of particularity is the first pillar of postmethod pedagogy. It consists in emphasizing the need for language pedagogy to be sensitive to the specific contexts in which it takes place. It recognizes that each group of teachers, learners, and institutions is unique, associated with a specific sociocultural ambience. To be

relevant and effective, pedagogy must take into account the local demands and the backgrounds of the participants (Kumaradivelu, 2001).

Ortale (2021) expands on the parameter of particularity, stating that it is the most important aspect of postmethod pedagogy. She argues that pedagogy, like politics, is inherently local, and ignoring local exigencies means disregarding lived experiences. Kumaradivelu (2003) asserts that “language teaching must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers who teach a particular group of students pursuing a particular set of goals within a specific institutional context within a particular location” (p.34).

As Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out, teachers must adapt their methods, emphasizing teacher autonomy and flexibility in choosing appropriate strategies based on the specific needs of their students. A practical example of the parameter of particularity in action might involve a teacher adapting activities of English language materials to fit the profile and/or learning objectives of the student(s).

To make it feasible, Kumaradivelu (2001, p. 540) asserts, “the particular is deeply embedded in practice and cannot be achieved or understood outside of it”. This illustrates the importance of practice in realizing the particularity of teaching, while also linking this parameter to the second parameter of the postmethod approach, called *practicality*. Through practical application, teachers can realize the contextual factors of their teaching environments and make decisions based on those insights.

Additionally, the parameter of particularity also marks the importance of cultural sensitivity. Teachers are encouraged to consider the cultural and social backgrounds of their students, designing lessons that are not only educational but also culturally responsive. For example, in multicultural classrooms, teachers may integrate students' experiences into lesson content, creating a more inclusive and engaging learning environment (Kumaradivelu, 2001).

Despite the importance of the parameter of particularity for L2 education, it undergoes a few challenges. Richards and Rodgers (2001) highlight the tension between teacher autonomy and institutional constraints, in which strict curricula and testing demands often limit the flexibility needed to address local contexts. Besides, Golombek and Doran (2014) emphasize the emotional and cognitive demands of reflective pedagogy, which requires teachers to experience unpredictable classroom dynamics while reconciling theory and practice.

Additionally, Ortale (2021) warns against oversimplifying the application of particularity, stressing that contextual adaptation is not always straightforward. The author also cautions that unpredictable circumstances can prevent teachers from implementing practices aligned with particularity, often leaving them feeling unsupported or unprepared.

Finally, Kumaravadivelu (2003) acknowledges that particularity demands a high degree of teacher agency and critical awareness, which is often underdeveloped in traditional teacher education programs. Together, these challenges stress the need for systemic changes in teacher education and institutional policies to better support the implementation of postmethod pedagogies.

The second parameter of the postmethod pedagogy is named *practicality*. It goes beyond the everyday practice of classroom teaching. Practicality emphasizes the connection between theory and practice, seeking to bridge the gap between them. Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues against the dichotomy of theorists' theories versus teachers' theories, which limits teachers to being mere implementers of professional theories. Instead, a pedagogy of practicality encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching methods and experiences and construct their personal theories of practice. It promotes the self-conceptualization and self-construction of pedagogic knowledge, empowering teachers to become active participants in constructing knowledge rather than merely implementing predefined methods (Kumaradivelu, 2001).

This matches with the reflective practices emphasized by Schön (1994), who introduced the idea of the "reflective practitioner" as someone who connects theory and practice through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The first refers to the notion of thinking and adapting *while* in practice, making decisions and adjustments in real time. The latter is the act of looking back *after* an event in order to analyze what happened, why it happened and how things could be improved.

In this sense, teachers become active agents in their professional development, continuously reflecting on their teaching practices and modifying their approaches in response to the challenges and needs that arise in the classroom. For instance, a teacher who notices that their students struggle with reading comprehension might begin experimenting with different reading strategies (e.g., guided reading, vocabulary pre-teaching, or reciprocal teaching) and then analyze the outcomes to build a personalized theory of reading instruction.

Ortale (2021) corresponds to Kumaravadivelu (2021) regarding the need to break away from the notion that experts are producers and teachers are consumers of theories. Teachers can be seen as active participants when they create hypotheses and test them in their classes. Another example could be a teacher who tries various approaches to language teaching, such as task-based or communicative language teaching, and reflects on which aspects work best with their students. This reflection becomes a basis for formulating a personalized theory that aligns with their teaching context, students' needs, and the challenges they encounter. The theory generated is not static but continuously revised based on ongoing practice (Richards; Farrell, 2005).

Nonetheless, just like the first parameter, there might be challenges for implementing practicality. Teachers often face restrictions such as limited time, rigid curricula, and insufficient training in reflective practices. As Richards and Farrell (2005) point out, institutional demands and lack of structured support often make it difficult for teachers to adopt reflective practices consistently.

Additionally, the process of theorizing from practice can be cognitively demanding, requiring teachers to balance immediate classroom responsibilities with deeper reflection. Schön (1994) emphasizes that reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action require time and mental effort, which are often scarce resources for educators. Collaboration with colleagues and peer learning can be crucial in overcoming these barriers, as sharing experiences and strategies can enhance the reflective process and lead to more robust theories (Burns, 2010).

Finally, the last parameter of the postmethod is possibility, which is deeply inspired by the works of Paulo Freire. It recognizes that pedagogy is entangled in relations of power and dominance and can perpetuate social inequalities. A pedagogy of possibility aims to sensitize itself to the sociopolitical realities and challenges prevalent in the teaching and learning context.

The parameter of possibility highlights the importance of understanding how many variables influence the content, character, and interaction within the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). As Kumaravadivelu (2001) claims "there are numerous instances when race, gender, class, and other variables directly or indirectly influence the content and character of classroom input and interaction" (p. 543).

Moreover, this parameter emphasizes that education has the potential to be transformational. Therefore, it encourages pedagogical practices that promote critical consciousness and social change. Ortale (2021) refers to possibility as being a

commitment to understanding and addressing the sociopolitical realities surrounding learners and teachers. It involves the “denunciation and announcement” of oppressive structures and the illusion of an equitable and inclusive educational future (Ortale, 2021).

A pedagogy of possibility also gives great importance to individual identity, especially in FL education, where languages and cultures intersect. According to Kumaravadivelu (2001), FL education offers unique opportunities for a continual exploration of subjectivity and self-identity, as learners navigate and negotiate between their native and target languages and cultures (p. 543). This intersection of language and identity creates space for learners to challenge stereotypes, question power dynamics, and redefine their roles in a globalized world. This goes along with Freire (1970), who reminds us that education must not merely reflect existing social realities but should actively strive to transform them.

In this perspective, language teachers are called upon to balance their pedagogical obligations with their social responsibilities. Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues that “language teachers cannot hope to fully satisfy their pedagogic obligations without at the same time satisfying their social obligations” (p. 544). This requires teachers to acknowledge their roles as agents of change who can empower learners to address social injustices.

Other scholars, such as Norton (2013), contribute to this discussion by exploring how language learning can serve as a site of identity negotiation. Norton argues that learners bring their unique histories, aspirations, and social affiliations to the classroom, making it essential for educators to recognize and validate these experiences. When doing so, educators can help learners see language education as a means of not only acquiring linguistic competence but also advocating for their voices and stories.

An example of the parameter of possibility in an EFL classroom could be a teacher going beyond the linguistic goals of a determined class and exploring possible social impacts of the class topic. This could be seen in everyday topics such as public transportation or clothing, to more specific ones such as national laws or medical issues. By incorporating these topics into lessons, the teacher not only facilitates language acquisition but also empowers students to explore language as a tool for social and cultural negotiation.

Teacher education programs should also be in accordance with the pedagogy of possibility, equipping educators with tools to critically evaluate their classroom practices and sociopolitical influences. Strategies such as critical discourse analysis, intercultural training, and, once more, reflective teaching practices can prepare teachers to approach power dynamics and encourage social transformation.

Ultimately, the parameter of possibility serves as a reminder that education is not neutral but a powerful force for shaping societies. Integrating sociopolitical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to equity through this parameter, reinforces the idea that language education can be a transformative and empowering experience for both teachers and learners (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

With the aforementioned discussions, it is possible to see that embracing all the parameters of the postmethod pedagogy - particularity, practicality, and possibility - can be powerful to education. This pedagogy enables language educators to create meaningful learning experiences that go beyond the borders of traditional methods and are highly adaptable and flexible.

Having established the theoretical foundations of the study in the literature review, which encompasses a sociocultural perspective to L2 teacher education and key concepts related to postmethod pedagogy, to the following chapter outlines the methodological framework employed in the research by presenting the methods used to achieve the aims of the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter presents a detailed description of the study's methodology, outlining the principles, intervention design, and implementation. It is divided into five sections, each addressing specific aspects of the research process. Section 3.1 revisits the research objectives and the study's nature. Section 3.2 provides an overview of the research context and highlights the study objectives and theoretical frameworks that ground the investigation. Additionally, it presents information about the participants involved in the study.

To ensure the ethical integrity of the research, Section 3.3 outlines the ethical procedures and considerations that guided the study. This includes obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and complying with relevant ethical guidelines and regulations.

Section 3.4 examines the data collection procedures and instruments employed in the study. It explains how data was gathered, including the selection of appropriate tools, such as interviews, surveys, observations, or other methods. This section also emphasizes specific protocols or procedures followed during data collection.

Finally, Section 3.5 elucidates the data analysis process and its particularities. It outlines the techniques and approaches that were employed to analyze the collected data.

3.1 THE STUDY

In a way that supports an EFL teacher in integrating theoretical insights with pedagogical decision-making and thus enhancing her performance and fostering her development toward competence, this study aims at tracing the development of the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation centered on the postmethod approach.

The study consisted of an initial discussion (semi-structured interview) of pedagogical concepts, related to postmethod pedagogy, recently introduced to an EFL teacher, followed by the recording and observation of her classes. The primary goal was to identify to what extent an EFL teacher initially understands the postmethod

approach and teaches in accordance with it. The subsequent step in data collection involved inquiring into the teacher's pedagogical practices and connect these practices with the postmethod pedagogy. The objective at this stage was to assess how her understanding of the postmethod approach and her classroom practice change as her pedagogical choices are inquired into and she receives responsive mediation and in what ways the changes in her understanding and classroom practice can be attributed to the mentor's inquiry and mediation. Whenever the mentor identified gaps between performance (practice) and competence (theory), responsive mediation was provided.

In order to cater for this, the present study followed a qualitative approach, defined as an "ethnographic description based on observation, description, and interviews with teachers about why they do what they do" (Johnson, 2009, p. 9). Thus, it is highly interpretative, as it seeks to understand what teachers already know and do and their interpretations of what happens in the context in which they teach. Interpretative research such as the present one helps to "capture the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts throughout their careers." (Johnson, 2009, p. 10).

Building on the ideas discussed above, this study aligns with Vygotsky's genetic method, a research approach designed to examine how higher mental functions develop as they gradually emerge. The relevance of the genetic method when studying human mental processes is explained by Wertsch (1985) as the attempt to understand how such processes originate and transform over time, focusing on the gradual changes that contribute to their ongoing development. Grounded in this, the present research is considered a microgenetic study (Wertsch, 1985), which consists of documenting the short-term development of very specific mental functions through observation and analysis of one's cognitive and behavioral changes.

Microgenetic studies are aimed at understanding the processes of change in individuals over a relatively short period, examining how people move through different stages of development and handle new challenges. These studies particularly focus on the *process* of development, rather than merely the *product* or outcome, allowing for a detailed exploration of the mechanisms underlying cognitive and behavioral change (Wertsch, 1985). Specifically, microgenetic studies investigate moment-to-moment shifts in thinking, problem-solving and learning, often through repeated observations over a series of interactions or tasks (Johnson; Dellagnelo, 2013).

In line with Vygotsky's (1997) distinction between *phenotypic* and *genotypic* analyses of psychological processes, the microgenetic method allows the researcher to go beyond merely describing observable manifestations (phenotypes) of teacher reasoning. Instead, it seeks to uncover the genesis of these processes, that is, the conditions and mediational dynamics through which they emerge and develop. From this perspective, what becomes visible in teachers' discourse during the mediation sessions is not taken as a fixed product, but as the realization of a circle of possibilities shaped by social, cultural, and historical conditions. This orientation is consistent with Wertsch's (1985) emphasis on studying moment-to-moment transformations to capture the actual mechanisms of change. In this research, the microgenetic perspective is realized through the close examination of the teacher's reasoning as it unfolds across successive mediation sessions. By tracing these transformations, the study captures how pedagogical reasoning emerges in interaction and develops through the dynamic interplay of social and cognitive processes.

3.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The research took place at a private Language Institute located in Balneário Camboriú, Santa Catarina, Brazil. The institute was founded in 2019 by two English teachers, one of whom is the mentor and researcher of the present study. The institute also counts on six in-service EFL teachers who collaborate with its mission. The target public of the referred school is adults from approximately 25 to 60 years old who study English individually or in small groups (up to five students). The pedagogical design of these classes is customized and targeted to the students' profiles, needs and objectives. The classes offered cover a wide range of topics, including General English, English for Specific Purposes (e.g., English for Traveling, Business English, Academic English), and specialized vocabulary for specific job-related purposes. As such, the teachers have the flexibility to select and adapt materials that they believe are suitable for each group and context.

The institute follows the principles derived from the postmethod approach, as the founders align with Kumaravadivelu's (2006) perspective that traditional methods often limit the potential of language learning and teaching. Instead of relying on fixed methodology, teachers are encouraged to explore alternative and flexible strategies that consider the unique needs of students, the learning environment, and the

resources available. This adaptability stimulates the creation of student-centered activities, such as collaborative projects, problem-solving tasks, and real-world language use, enabling more relevant and effective learning experiences and moving beyond one-size-fits-all methods.

The understanding that languages change over time and, thus, language learning and teaching needs, contexts and characteristics also need to change, led to the adoption of the postmethod approach (Kumaravadivelu, 1992, 2006) as one of the principles guiding the institute. According to Kumaravadivelu (1992)

We cannot prepare teachers to tackle so many unpredictable needs, wants and situations; we can only help them develop a capacity to generate varied and situation-specific ideas within a general framework that makes sense in terms of current pedagogical and theoretical knowledge (p. 41).

The institute's focus on postmethod principles provides a rich environment for examining the development of teacher reasoning within a responsive and adaptive teaching framework. This philosophy roots the mediation sessions explored in this study, aligning with the goal of fostering teacher autonomy, context-sensitive teaching practices and the integration of theory and practice.

The participants in this research include me, the mentor, and one in-service EFL teacher, the mentee. As regards me, I was 27 years old by the time data was collected, and have been studying English since the age of 5. I began my teaching career at 17, when I was mentored by my former English teacher. This mentorship laid groundwork for my teaching philosophy, which lines up with the postmethod principles currently applied at the institute. I further developed my teaching skills at an academic level by obtaining a degree in Language and Literature Teaching from Universidade do Vale do Itajaí in 2019. Following my graduation, my former English teacher and I co-founded our own language institute to implement our teaching philosophy and collaborate with teachers who would follow similar guidelines. To date, I am enrolled in an MA program in Linguistics and Literary Studies at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), with a focus on foreign language teacher education from a sociocultural perspective, of which this study forms an integral part.

The in-service teacher, referred to as Alice, was 36 years old when the study was conducted, and has held a degree in Language Teaching since 2011. She is an experienced English teacher, with over five years of experience teaching in various institutions. She has collaborated with the present language institute for one year. Her

classes follow the customized format previously described and are conducted either online or in person. When I invited her to take part in this study, she readily accepted, noting that it was a valuable opportunity to refine and update her teaching practices.

With the research context and participants established, it is essential to ensure that the study adheres to ethical principles. The following section outlines the ethical considerations that guided the research, emphasizing the measures taken to protect the participants' rights, ensure transparency, and uphold academic integrity.

3.3 ETHICS BOARD REVIEW

Before commencing data collection, this study underwent a comprehensive ethics review by the Ethics Committee at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, following the guidelines of Brazilian Resolution no. 510, issued on April 7, 2016. This resolution establishes regulations for the ethical treatment of human participants in research.

The research team adhered strictly to the ethical principles and guidelines of the resolution, prioritizing participant's welfare, privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent. Researchers obtained the necessary Ethics Committee approvals - under number 68514223.6.0000.0121 - by submitting a detailed proposal outlining the study's objectives, procedures, data collection methods, and safeguards for the participant. After approval, the participant received a consent form explaining the study's aims, procedures, potential risks, and ethical safeguards and signed it before participating in the study. These forms were also approved by the Committee.

To protect participant's privacy and confidentiality, all data collected will be anonymized and securely stored. Access to the data will be restricted to the research team, with personal identifiers replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect individuals' identities.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

With the aim of tracing the development of the robustness of Alice's reasoning teaching, data collection lasted one academic semester, approximately four months, and consisted of three main phases: a semi-structured interview, 12 classroom observations and 10 mediation sessions. The teacher's classes have been video

recorded, while the semi-structured interview and mediation sessions were audio recorded.

The first phase of data collection began with a semi-structured interview in which I aimed to identify the teacher's initial understanding of the postmethod approach principles. I asked questions such as:

1. What do you know about the postmethod approach in the context of EFL classes?
2. How do you think that classes based on this approach should be structured?
3. Do you think you adopt the principles of the postmethod approach in your classes? How?
4. Do you think you could/should get closer to this approach? Why? If yes, how do you think you could make this approach feasible?

As the interview was semi-structured, the conversation was not rigidly confined to these questions. Also, since Alice displayed feelings of anxiety in the initial phase of the study, I chose to conduct the interview in Portuguese to ensure that the teacher could express her ideas comfortably and openly, thus eliminating potential language barriers.

The second phase involved classroom observations. During this period, I observed a total of 12 classes – usually one class per week – and conducted 10 mediation sessions following these observations. The difference between the 12 classes and the 10 sessions is due to the fact that I attended two classes in the same week on two occasions. Recognizing conceptual gaps in Alice's understanding of the postmethod theory before the beginning of the study, I required the teacher participant to read an academic article on the subject prior to the start of data collection (Ortale, *et al.*, 2021)².

In order to ensure consistency and alignment with the principles of the postmethod approach, I observed Alice's different classes and groups. Some of these classes followed a standard English textbook, while most were themed lessons, in which the teacher herself selected the contents. For themed lessons, I carefully reviewed the material beforehand to familiarize myself with the content and to guide my observations according to the analytical lens adopted in this study.

² ORTALE, Fernanda Landucci et al. **A Pedagogia Pós-Método: o ensino de línguas como compromisso político para além da sala de aula.** Revista de Italianística, n. 42, p. 176-189, 2021

I analyzed the video recordings independently to assess the alignment between Alice's teaching practices and her understanding of the postmethod approach. Using this analysis, I could investigate whether the EFL teacher initially taught in accordance with the postmethod approach, track her progress, and also prepare questions and comments for the upcoming mediation sessions.

The third phase consisted of mediation sessions, held 2 or 3 days after the classroom observations. During these audio-recorded sessions, Alice and I discussed the class(es) observed that week. The sessions served the dual purpose of i) inquiring into the teacher's practices, so as to lead her to reflect and consciously reason upon them, and ii) providing responsive mediation, so as to deepen her knowledge about the postmethod and help her align her teaching with it while assisting her in bridging theory and practice. Each mediation session began with me asking the teacher to state the purpose, objective, or topic of the observed class. This initial step not only oriented the discussion, but also helped establish a clear connection between the observed practices and the subsequent reflections during the sessions.

Before the start of the mediation sessions, I explained my intentions and objectives, ensuring that Alice understood the goals of the interactions. The ultimate aim was to continuously assess if her understanding of the postmethod approach and her classroom practice changed over time. Initially, the mediation sessions were structured more like dialogic lectures, where I explicitly modeled the connections between scientific concepts and concrete practical classroom applications by highlighting parts of her class and connecting them to theory. This explicit approach acknowledged that a single reading of an academic article on postmethod theory was insufficient for a structured understanding of such complex topics. From the fourth session onward, the interactions shifted to a more dialogic and implicit nature. I engaged Alice in discussions about her pedagogical decisions, encouraging her to reflect on and reason about her choices. The main goals of these mediation sessions were to verify if the teacher's reflections were mirrored in her practice and to ensure she became consciously aware of the reasoning behind her actions.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

For this study, the interactions between the mentor (me) and the mentee (Alice) were transcribed immediately following the semi-structured interview and each

mediation session. This was due to my concern with being consistent in my mediation; I wanted to make sure that I would keep track of Alice's recurring needs and my mediation focus. Given the extensive amount of data collected, I prioritized analyzing the most relevant aspects that directly aligned with the study's objective.

The analysis was conducted in three stages, each addressing a specific research question (SRQ):

SRQ1 – To what extent does an EFL teacher initially understand the postmethod approach and teach in accordance with it?

To address SRQ1, I firstly analyzed the data collected from the semi-structured interview conducted with Alice following her reading of the academic article previously mentioned, which focuses on the postmethod theory. Secondly, I examined the first three video-recorded classroom observations and mediation sessions in order to investigate the extent to which the teacher's stated views were reflected in her actual teaching practices at the initial stage of the study. Thus, stage aimed to explore Alice's initial understanding of the postmethod approach and how she saw it, together with its principles, incorporated into her teaching practice.

To organize the data, I conducted a thematic analysis by categorizing Alice's responses based on the three parameters of the postmethod approach: particularity, practicality, and possibility. During this process, I examined how she perceived each parameter and identified instances where she demonstrated their integration into her teaching practices. This approach allowed for a structured exploration of her understanding and application of postmethod principles in her classroom.

SRQ2 – How does her understanding of the postmethod approach and her classroom practice change as her pedagogical choices are inquired into and responsive mediation is offered?

To address SRQ2, I analyzed the video-recorded classroom observations to identify the extent to which the teacher's actions reflected her understanding of the postmethod approach and whether her stated ideas were translated into practice. By examining what actually occurred in the classroom, I mapped areas to inquire into her practice and prepared myself for the mediation sessions, which means that the insights gained from the classroom observations directly informed the design of the mediation

sessions, creating an interactive process in which reflective practice and classroom choices evolved together.

Following these observations, I organized the mediation sessions based on the three parameters of the postmethod pedagogy, allowing for a focused analysis of Alice's progression regarding each of these dimensions over the course of the 10 mediation sessions. Basically, I sought to evaluate the process of mediation in light of her ability to connect theoretical principles with her teaching practices over time. My main concern was determining i) how Alice's reflections evolved throughout the sessions, ii) whether the reflective insights gained during the mediation sessions were subsequently mirrored in her classroom performance and iii) the extent to which she developed conscious awareness of the reasoning behind her pedagogical actions.

Next, I conducted a comparative analysis between the themes discussed during the mediation sessions and the observations of her classroom practices. This step allowed for the identification of connections between Alice's reflective insights gained during mediation and her subsequent classroom practices. By systematically tracking these interactions across the 10 mediation sessions, I documented changes in her reasoning and teaching methodology. These changes were evaluated in terms of their alignment with the principles of postmethod pedagogy and the extent to which they demonstrated growth in her pedagogical understanding.

SRQ 3 – In what ways can the changes in her understanding and classroom practice be attributed to the mentor's inquiry and mediation?

To address SRQ3, I focused on analyzing the data collected from classroom observations and mediation sessions to examine the relationship between the changes in Alice's understanding and teaching practices and the mentor's inquiry and mediation. The analysis began with the categorization of Alice's reflections and classroom practices according to the three parameters of the postmethod pedagogy. This categorization provided a structured framework for exploring how her thinking and practices evolved throughout the study.

Additionally, the role of the mediation sessions was assessed to determine how their structure and content influenced Alice's development. This involved examining the relevance and impact of specific interventions made during the sessions, as well as their contribution to enhancing Alice's awareness of the reasoning behind her pedagogical decisions.

Through these procedures – and the belief that the interactive and collaborative nature of the mediation process was particularly significant to provide Alice with opportunities to refine her practices, challenge assumptions, and integrate theoretical principles into her teaching – I aimed to establish a clear link between the inquiry and mediation and the observed changes in Alice’s pedagogical understanding and classroom practices, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of their relationship.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study’s findings, data triangulation was employed by systematically comparing and integrating insights from the three phases of data collection: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and mediation sessions. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis by cross-referencing different perspectives and sources of evidence.

Discrepancies between data sources were carefully examined to uncover potential misalignments or contradictions. For instance, if the interview data suggested a strong theoretical understanding of the postmethod approach, but classroom observations revealed limited practical application, the analysis explored contextual factors or possible gaps in teacher cognition. If MS interactions indicated progress in reasoning but this progress was not reflected in subsequent classroom practices, further reflection on possible constraints (e.g., institutional challenges or time limitations) were conducted.

Having outlined the methodology of this study, I now turn to the presentation and analysis of the results. This section will examine the key findings, highlighting their implications and connections to the broader research context. By interpreting the data collected, I aim to demonstrate how the study’s approach has contributed to addressing the research questions and advancing understanding in the field.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The amount of data collected for this study – approximately 12 hours of classroom observations, 10 hours of mediation sessions and 2 hours of structured interviews – is too extensive for a comprehensive analysis within the scope of a master's thesis. Therefore, as previously stated, the analysis prioritizes the most pertinent aspects aligned with the study's objectives, focusing on tracing the development of an EFL teacher's reasoning robustness as mediated by a mentor.

The research question guiding this study is "How does an EFL teacher develop the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation?".

To answer this overarching question, the analysis addresses the following specific research questions: (i) To what extent does an EFL teacher initially understand the postmethod approach and teach in accordance with it?; (ii) How does her understanding of the postmethod approach and her classroom practice change as her pedagogical choices are inquired into and responsive mediation is offered?; (iii) In what ways can the changes in her understanding and classroom practice be attributed to the mentor's inquiry and mediation?

The phases of data collection and the stages of analysis were carefully designed to address the study's objectives and research questions in a structured and systematic way. Each piece builds upon the previous one, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the mentee's reasoning development, classroom performance, and the impact of mediation sessions on her ability to align theory with practice. By adopting this approach, the study provides meaningful insights into the interplay between pedagogical reasoning and mediation within the postmethod framework.

4.1 ALICE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE POSTMETHOD

For the discussion of Alice's understanding of the postmethod, the analysis focused on her initial understanding of the theory as discussed in an interview with me. This interview primarily aimed to assess the teacher's interpretation of the three parameters of the postmethod approach: particularity, practicality, and possibility, and how she perceives her own practice in relation to these concepts.

When being inquired into what she understood by the postmethod approach, Alice hesitated and answered that it is a theory that helps to create a proper lesson plan, taking into consideration the student's English level, preferences and objectives. As she stated:

[...] uma **teoria** que vai te ajudar, vai te estimular pra fazer um planejamento ãh bom, um **planejamento de acordo com o nível do teu aluno, de acordo com as preferências do teu aluno, mas que você tenha essa autonomia**, né? Pra sentir momentos de **reflexão durante a tua aula**, pra sentir que pode ter algumas mudanças na tua aula, né? E que nem sempre o teu planejamento vai ser totalmente igual. Eu acho que também ele tá muito voltado a um porquê, né? Eu acho que é uma **razão pelo qual eu tô fazendo isso com esse aluno**, o meu objetivo [...] o que eu quero que meu aluno aprenda?³ (Excerpt 1 - Semi-structured interview)⁴

In this excerpt, Alice's understanding of the postmethod approach reflects some aspects of Kumaravadivelu's framework. First, she referred to the postmethod as being a theory instead of a method, which is an important aspect of this framework.

She also focused on the importance of lesson planning, considering the student's level, preferences, and learning objectives, as well as the need for teacher autonomy and reflection. These elements can be connected to the postmethod parameters of *particularity*, *practicality*, and *possibility*, although she did not deliberately connect her ideas to the parameters.

This finding can be related to Vygotsky's notion of *everyday concepts*, as Alice's understanding seems to come from her practical experiences in the classroom rather than a formalized theoretical framework. As mentioned in the review of literature, according to Vygotsky (1978), everyday concepts are formed through daily experiences and interactions, and while they guide practice effectively, they lack the structure of scientific concepts, which are developed through formal learning and reflection. Alice's response reflects this distinction, as her comprehension of tailoring lessons to student needs and reflecting on her teaching aligns with postmethod principles, but without explicit theoretical grounding. This suggests that her knowledge

³ The original text appears in the main body of the study, while the English version is provided in a footnote.

⁴ [...] a theory that will help you, that will encourage you to make a good lesson plan, a plan according to your student's level, according to your student's preferences, but one where you have that autonomy, right? To feel moments of reflection during your lesson, to feel that there might be some changes in your lesson, right? And that your plan won't always be exactly the same. I think it's also very much focused on a 'why,' right? I think it's a reason why I'm doing this with this student, my objective [...] what do I want my student to learn?

is still in the process of being formalized and could benefit from deeper engagement with theoretical frameworks to move from intuitive practice to a more deliberate, theory-informed approach.

Moving forward during the conversation, Alice was asked direct questions on (i) each of the three parameters; (ii) what she thinks that classes based on this approach should be like; and (iii) if she adopts the principles of the postmethod approach in her classes. The first parameter - *particularity* - which proposes a context-sensitive kind of teaching, focusing on the specific sociocultural and linguistic needs of the students, was summarized by Alice as

Uma prática pedagógica que não é uma linha reta, e sim você está oscilando de acordo com o contexto. (Excerpt 2 - Semi-structured interview)⁵

Here, Alice's description of particularity as "oscillating according to the context" reflects an awareness that teaching is not a rigid, one-size-fits-all process, but a flexible practice that must adapt to the unique characteristics of each student and learning environment. She continues, claiming that

É importante **conhecer o aluno**, é importante sentir, ter essa confiança de que você vai conseguir **escolher algo que vai fazer mais sentido**.⁶ (Excerpt 3 - Semi-structured interview)

When asked to illustrate this idea with a concrete example, she replied:

Talvez pra um aluno eu vou mostrar algumas palavras chaves antes de começar um pequeno texto. Ah, pro outro eu já vou pedir pra que ele realize uma leitura porque ele já tem essa habilidade, ele tem bastante vocabulário, a pronúncia dele já é legal, né? Ah não, mas talvez para um outro aluno eu vou precisar ler junto com ele, fazer a pronúncia pra que ele repita. Eu acho que **a gente vai adaptando**, né? (Excerpt 4 - Semi-structured interview)⁷

This aligns well with Kumaravadivelu's notion of particularity, considering the local, social, cultural, and institutional specificities of their students when designing their lessons. Alice's practical examples highlight her awareness of how the same

⁵ "A pedagogical practice that is not a straight line, but rather you are oscillating according to the context."

⁶ "It's important to know the student, it's important to feel, to have that confidence that you will be able to choose something that will make more sense."

⁷ Maybe for one student, I will show some key words before starting a short text. Oh, for another one, I'll ask them to read it because they already have that skill, they have a good vocabulary, their pronunciation is already good, right? Oh no, but maybe for another student, I will need to read along with them, do the pronunciation so they can repeat it. I think we adapt, right?

activity may need to be adapted based on the specific needs and abilities of individual students. This awareness of what is best for each teaching situation also indicates Alice's great sense of involvement with her practice, a characteristic set by Prabhu (1990) as one of the most important indicators of "good" or "bad" teaching.

This reflects an understanding of particularity that aligns with practical classroom realities yet, again, lacks deeper engagement with the theory that could further inform her practice.

Moving on to the second parameter, her thoughts on practicality were the following:

Sobre o parâmetro da **praticidade**, eu anotei aqui que achei interessante a gente **gerar teorias** e eu gosto muito de ler teorias... [...] É muito baseada na nossa **reflexão**, né? Então a partir do momento que você está planejando, você já está **pensando no seu aluno quando você está fazendo o seu planejamento antes da aula**, né? E aí a partir dessa reflexão, acho que ali você já vai escolhendo quais **atividades seriam melhores** pra este aluno, de que forma você vai **chegar naquele objetivo**. (Excerpt 5 - Semi-structured interview)⁸

Alice acknowledges the importance of planning to achieve objectives, although she does not provide concrete examples of how to connect classroom practices with theoretical foundations. Though she refers to the need for reflection and adapting activities during lessons, the explanation lacks specifics on how this reflection draws from or integrates theory into practice. For example, Alice says:

Às vezes a gente está no momento da aula que [a gente] planejou, mas **existem situações que você vai mudar o direcionamento da aula**, talvez eu perceba que o aluno não tá conseguindo nessa estratégia que eu pensei. (Excerpt 6 - Semi-structured interview)⁹

This reinforces her awareness of the need for flexibility. Then I asked her to illustrate with a practical example of adjusting her lesson to the student's context:

Se durante a aula, por exemplo, eu estava colocando pra ele algumas frases. Ah, e se eu trocar essas frases vou tentar buscar uns exemplos da vida dele

⁸ About the parameter of practicality, I wrote down here that I find it interesting for us to generate theories, and I really enjoy reading theories... [...] It's very much based on our reflection, right? So from the moment you are planning, you're already thinking about your student when you're making your plan before the lesson, right? And then from this reflection, I think that's when you start choosing which activities would be best for that student, how you're going to reach that objective.

⁹ Sometimes we're in the moment of the lesson that we planned, but there are situations where you'll change the direction of the lesson, maybe I'll realize that the student isn't managing with this strategy I thought of.

pra ver se vai ser mais fácil então. Talvez eu deixe de lado essas frases prontas que eu trouxe e começo a trazer exemplos mais próximos da realidade desse aluno, do lado profissional ou enfim do lado da família. (Excerpt 7 - Semi-structured interview)¹⁰

Alice provided an example that, rather than reflecting this parameter, aligns more closely with the principle of particularity. This overlap suggests that she may have conflated the first two parameters. Such a response revealed the need for mediation to help her distinguish more clearly between the notions of particularity and practicality, and to understand how each parameter uniquely informs classroom practice. Finally, Alice's reflection on the third parameter, possibility, does not address the critical facet that the parameter of possibility advocates for. She states:

É possibilitar o nosso objetivo, a comunicação, [...] acho que trazendo também a experiência de cada um daqueles parâmetros, essa junção desse meu aluno e por esse caminho eu vou conseguir chegar ao meu objetivo. Não é algo estático em que eu tenho que seguir por esse caminho e ponto, as possibilidades são infinitas. (Excerpt 9 - Semi-structured interview)¹¹

Alice mistakenly said that the parameter of possibility seeks to allow communication. However, Kumaravadivelu's (2003) concept of the parameter of possibility embraces the idea of empowering students to question and challenge social and educational norms, encouraging critical thinking and transformation. In Alice's comments, this critical dimension is absent, and her focus remains on adapting teaching methods rather than using education as a tool for broader social change. In that sense, her understanding of possibility lacks the critical engagement that the theory aims to promote. To ensure Alice's understanding of the postmethod framework - particularly the parameter of possibility - was not compromised, I provided a more in-depth explanation following her response. I clarified the parameter's critical orientation, emphasizing how it encourages language education to move beyond linguistic aspects and engage with its broader social and transformative potential.

In light of this initial conversation, containing Phase 1 of the study, the findings suggest that the theory of the postmethod is not part of her conceptual thinking, which

¹⁰ If during the lesson, for example, I was giving him some sentences. Oh, and if I change these sentences, I'll try to find examples from his life to see if it's easier then. Maybe I'll set aside these ready-made sentences I brought and start bringing examples that are closer to this student's reality, from the professional side or maybe from the family side.

¹¹ It's about making our objective possible - communication. [...] I think that by also bringing in the experience of each of those parameters, this combination of my student and this path will allow me to reach my objective. It's not something static where I have to follow this one path and that's it - the possibilities are endless.

implies that the parameters do not consciously inform or shape her thinking or decision-making in her pedagogical practice. While Alice might intuitively incorporate aspects of these parameters in her teaching, this integration happens without her explicitly recognizing or articulating their theoretical underpinnings, which signals a somewhat superficial understanding of the postmethod.

At this stage, it becomes clear that the future mediation sessions should aim to deepen the mentee's theoretical understanding of the parameters she appears to have difficulty grasping. Additionally, these sessions should provide structured opportunities for her to connect the theoretical principles underlying the postmethod approach to her day-to-day classroom practices, fostering a more intentional and informed teaching methodology.

This initial phase of the study reveals that the teacher's current understanding of the postmethod approach and its practical implications already influence the creation of zones of proximal development. However, for Alice to consistently make informed pedagogical decisions and enhance her reasoning, these zones must be capitalized on and expanded, via responsive mediation, so as to deepen her theoretical knowledge of the three parameters of the postmethod pedagogy. Strengthening this foundation will enable her to connect abstract theories with her daily classroom practices more effectively (VYGOTSKY, 1978).

The next section presents the mediation sessions (MS), during which I mediated Alice towards connecting her classroom teaching practices to the pedagogical theory adopted by her institution - the postmethod approach.

4.2 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION, PEDAGOGICAL CHOICES AND RESPONSIVE MEDIATION: CONNECTING THE DOTS

This section aims to analyze the dual aspects of Alice's development: changes in her understanding of the postmethod approach and shifts in her classroom practices as a result of the inquiry into her pedagogical choices and the responsive mediation provided.

Before going into the analysis, it is essential to review what a class designed around the postmethod pedagogy might look like, as this provides a foundation for understanding how theoretical principles translate into practical teaching methods.

As mentioned before, a class guided by the postmethod approach requires an active role of the teacher as a reflective practitioner while designing a lesson that does not rely on rigid, predetermined methodologies. Instead, this kind of class emphasizes flexibility and contextual relevance.

In this setting, the teacher carefully tailors their lessons to address the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students - as regards the parameter of particularity. This means, for instance, that instead of following a textbook sequence rigidly, the teacher might design a lesson using topics that are significant to the students' lives, such as local community issues or cultural celebrations they are passionate about. This approach brings considerable benefits to the language learning experience, from making the content more engaging and meaningful to promoting a deeper connection between learning and the students' real-world experiences.

In the initial interview session, Alice demonstrated having this adaptability quality, stating that she believes it is essential to first get to know the students so as to better tailor activities to their needs. Alice's statement reflects a core principle of learner-centered teaching, emphasizing the importance of understanding students' individual backgrounds, preferences, and learning needs. Her adaptability suggests that she recognizes teaching as a dynamic and responsive practice, rather than a rigid application of methods. By prioritizing student knowledge, she positions herself to make pedagogical decisions that resonate with her learners and foster engagement.

Moving to the parameter of practicality, it emphasizes the teacher's ability to test pedagogical theories within practice in context-specific ways. In a postmethod classroom, the teacher might conduct continuous assessments to observe which strategies are effective and adjust their approach accordingly. For example, if a vocabulary game proves highly engaging and improves retention in a determined classroom setting, the teacher might suppose that active learning fosters better language acquisition and then starts to incorporate more such activities into future lessons. It is a cyclical process of reflection and adaptation to ensure that the teaching strategies are grounded in real classroom experiences rather than external prescriptions.

During the semi-structured interview, Alice's reflections on practicality emphasized its reflexive nature and its essential role in planning both the content and structure of classroom activities to support students in achieving learning objectives. She also expressed a genuine interest in exploring different pedagogical theories - a

key trait connected to this parameter, as it values teachers' continued interest in theory to help guide and improve their teaching.

Finally, the parameter of possibility encourages the teacher to consider the broader sociopolitical impact of education. A postmethod teacher might use language lessons as opportunities to promote critical thinking and social awareness, encouraging discussions about issues that are relevant to the students, such as gender equality or environmental concerns. In a postmethod classroom for adult English learners, for example, this could take the form of a lesson focused on workplace communication rights. The teacher could organize a unit in which students learn language skills by discussing topics such as fair labor practices, employee rights, or navigating conversations with employers. This way, the lesson would equip learners with practical language tools and also foster critical thinking about the socio-economic structures that affect their daily lives.

With this foundation established, we shall explore how Alice's teaching strategies reflect - or diverge from - the principles of the postmethod approach. It is expected that, by the end of the mediation sessions, not only these postmethod elements are present in her teaching, but the teacher should also be aware of them, explicitly verbalizing how they inform her instructional decisions.

The following excerpt is taken from the first mediation session (MS). It is important to highlight that I observed Alice's different classes/groups. Some of these classes follow a standard English textbook, but most of them are themed, which means that the contents are selected by the teacher herself. For themed lessons, I always reviewed the material beforehand to familiarize myself with the content and align my observations with the principles of the postmethod approach.

This first MS comes from a private class with themed lessons. The topic of this lesson was strange dreams and sleeping, with a grammar section on the simple past. From a postmethod perspective, I expect the teacher to prioritize the topic first and present grammar as a secondary element, integrated with the topic.

EXCERPT 1 (MS 1)

1	M: The topic of last week's class was <i>strange dreams and sleeping</i> , remember?
2	A: OK.
3	M: What was the purpose of the lesson?

4	A: I was thinking about the simple past . I was thinking that for her, it's important.
5	M: So the objective of the class was to practice the simple past? There was no
6	other purpose for the topic you chose? According to the postmethod approach ,
7	lessons should be meaningful to the students, with a topic that is relevant to
8	them.
9	A: Hmmm, oh, thinking about it now, the class before, we were talking about a
10	dream and she mentioned "Oh teacher, I love to sleep", and "I spend a lot of
11	time doing this" and I thought, oh, maybe vocabulary about sleep is good for her
12	and I decided to do this.
13	M: Oh, that's nice. You can relate that to the first parameter of the postmethod
14	approach, particularity . You remembered that your student had mentioned she
15	likes this topic, and then you brought that to class. A class about dreams and
16	sleeping can also be related to the possibility parameter of the postmethod
17	approach, by discussing the importance of sleep for mental health or making the
18	students reflect about their own experiences for example. And for the student to
19	be able to talk about her past dreams, she needs to use the past tense, which
20	is also one of the objectives of the class.
21	A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

The conversation highlights that Alice's teaching practices partially reflect the principles of the postmethod approach, particularly the parameter of particularity. The selection of the topic, 'sleep', stems from the student's expressed interest, aligning with the idea of tailoring teaching to the learner's context. Additionally, the topic holds potential relevance to the parameter of possibility, given its connection to broader themes such as health and well-being. However, Alice did not initially articulate this connection (line 4). It was only after further inquiry into the additional objectives of the class and a reminder of the importance of meaningful lessons under the postmethod framework that she attributed her choice of topic to the student's interests and comments about enjoying sleep (lines 8-11). This indicates that while Alice intuitively adapts her lessons to resonate with the learners' context, she does so without fully integrating the theoretical principles that underpin such practices. In other words, her pedagogical reasoning relies predominantly on experiential, everyday knowledge,

lacking the scientific counterpart necessary to deepen her understanding and enable more principled, theory-informed decision-making.

Moreover, Alice's initial focus on teaching grammar – specifically the simple past tense – overlooked the potential of the topic to facilitate deeper engagement or reflection. Her approach prioritized structural linguistic goals rather than taking advantage of the topic's broader relevance to fostering critical thinking or connections to personal experiences. This suggests a limited understanding or application of the postmethod pedagogy's principles. Alice's focus on grammar illustrates a gap in her pedagogical reasoning, as her lesson objectives did not fully align with the postmethod framework's emphasis on meaningful, student-centered, and context-sensitive education.

This observation once again brings to the fore Vygotsky's (1986) distinction between scientific concepts (theoretical knowledge) and everyday concepts (intuitive, practical knowledge). Alice's reflection on her teaching reveals an understanding predominantly rooted in everyday concepts – intuitive and automatic practices – rather than in deliberate, reflective pedagogical strategies. While her action demonstrates alignment with the spirit of postmethod teaching, it lacks a theoretical foundation, underscoring the need for her to integrate these principles into her reasoning and conscious practice.

Another noteworthy aspect is the quality of the mediation provided, which was explicit in nature. I deliberately explained and defined teaching concepts to ensure that Alice grasped the intended message (lines 12-19). This explicit mediation aimed to illuminate how her teaching practices, though reflecting certain principles of the postmethod approach such as particularity and possibility, fall short of demonstrating a theoretical understanding of these principles. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the mediation seeks to support Alice in developing a more cohesive and theoretically informed pedagogical understanding of the framework. As outlined earlier in Method, this decision was informed by the limited opportunities Alice encountered in her educational and professional journey in the institute. These constraints have shaped her current practices and highlight the importance of targeted support to foster her theoretical understanding and pedagogical growth.

This raises the question of whether the mediation provided was indeed responsive. My answer is yes – it was meant to be responsive and intentional. Although I recognize that I could have first asked Alice whether the simple past was the only

objective of the class before explicitly pointing out what would be expected from a postmethod teaching perspective (lines 5-8), she was visibly showing signs of anxiety and nervousness. This was possibly due to the fact it was our very first mediation session and she was still trying to understand what the process would be like - even though I had made it clear that the purpose of those interactions was to pose questions that would encourage reflection on teaching aspects, rather than to point out existing “errors”. Recognizing that Alice required the most direct and structured guidance at that particular moment, I adopted a deliberate approach. By clearly defining these concepts and making them more accessible to her, my guidance aimed to orient her reflections toward bridging the gap between theory and practice, or more specifically, between everyday and scientific concepts. As Johnson (2016) highlights, the strategic introduction of scientific concepts within mediated interactions is a key mechanism through which teachers can restructure their thinking, leading to expert-like reasoning and more intentional, informed pedagogical activity.

The following excerpt is still from the same MS (and same class) and it illustrates how I encouraged Alice to reflect on theory in order to guide her practices, specifically by referencing the postmethod parameter of practicality.

EXCERPT 2 (MS 1)

1	M: I also noticed that you asked her to read the text out loud . Why did you ask
2	her to read it out loud?
3	A: I think it's important because if she's reading out loud, I can hear the
4	pronunciation of the verbs, of all the sentences and I don't know, I like to make
5	some corrections during the process .
6	M: OK, but don't you think that correcting her in the middle of her reading affects
7	the reading comprehension ?
8	A: Depends on the student, I think.
9	M: OK, bringing theory now and reflecting on our practice. There are two
10	different types of activity involving texts. One is reading comprehension and the
11	other one is pronunciation practice. And they are different things, right? So when
12	you tell me that you like to listen to her and see how her pronunciation is, that's
13	great in terms of checking if the student is speaking in a way that other people
14	can understand. OK, but this is different from a reading comprehension activity.

15	When we ask the student to read out loud, we are focusing on his or her
16	pronunciation, not reading itself.
17	A: Yeah, right. And sometimes it's not a good strategy. Sometimes the activity
18	is to explore the comprehension of the facts, but after the student finishes
19	reading a text, he/she does not remember or understand what they read.
20	M: [...] when we have a reading comprehension activity, and we ask the students
21	to read out loud, we are overloading the students' working memory. So the
22	working memory will be focused on pronunciation, not on retaining the text.
23	A: Mmhmm. Alright. Very good. Maybe I could do this first, give her the text and
24	she will read the text in silence and then discuss a little about the idea, the
25	strange dream. And then practice the pronunciation reading out loud, as it is a
26	short text.
27	M: Exactly. This has to do with the second parameter of the postmethod
28	approach, practicality . About us theorizing our practice and understanding why
29	we do the things we do in the classroom.
30	A: Mmhmm, I understand.

Alice's teaching practice reflects a lack of knowledge regarding the most effective way to conduct the proposed activity, namely a reading comprehension activity. When asked about her decision to have the student read out loud, Alice highlights her intention to focus on pronunciation, instead of reading comprehension (lines 1-5).

Analyzing the teacher's guidelines, we notice that the activity does not include a suggestion for the student to read the text out loud, indicating that Alice tried to adapt the activity in a way she perceived as more meaningful. Alice appears not to differentiate between the distinct purposes of reading comprehension and pronunciation practice, which might signal a limited consideration of the theoretical basis behind the activities she designs and implements.

Regarding the mediation provided, I tried to be less explicit by asking her a question (lines 6-7), but her answer (line 8) led me to maintain an explicit approach to my mediation (lines 9-16). I intended to guide Alice's reflection on the theoretical foundations of her practical activities and encourage her to consider teaching goals when selecting activities. The reason why I kept adopting a 'teaching' stance was again

intentional, as Alice still required a solid theoretical understanding of the key concepts explored in this research and their connection to teaching practices. She appeared to agree with my intervention and even acknowledged that, in some instances, students struggle to answer comprehension questions, either due to difficulties recalling the information or gaps in understanding (lines 17-19), which is a clear example of ZPD activity in action.

I then referenced the postmethod parameter of practicality to emphasize the importance to reflect on and adapt teaching strategies with a solid grounding in theoretical understanding (lines 27-29).

In the following part of the MS, still from the first class, I once again adopted a more implicit tone in my mediation. This time, I deliberately maintained this approach to assess whether Alice was ready to take a more independent role. By this stage, I had already modeled the type of interaction I was aiming for, and my intention was to determine if I could begin to gradually reduce my direct guidance while still supporting her reflections. Yet, I concluded our interaction with a more explicit approach while linking the discussion to postmethod pedagogy, which acknowledges that each student has unique learning needs. By explicitly connecting Alice's observations to an established theoretical framework, I meant to strengthen her reasoning teaching, helping her ground her reflections in pedagogical theory.

EXCERPT 3 (MS 1)

1	M: So, you asked the student to do two vocabulary activities . One about
2	unscrambling the words and another about matching vocabulary. For her to fit
3	the words in the correct sentences. Why did you bring these two activities?
4	A: Because I wanted to see if she remembered vocabulary from last class and
5	to put them in phrases to apply them, you know?
6	M: Do you think the student reached your goal?
7	A: She could review the words and complete the second part of the activity even
8	with certain difficulty, but she was not very engaged ...
9	M: Do you think you could have conducted the activity differently to try to engage
10	the student?
11	A: Creating new sentences about her?
12	M: OK, maybe if you had brought sentences using those target words for her to

13	say if they are true or not about her, don't you think you would have reached the
14	same objective but probably with more efficacy?
15	A: Mmhmm. Yeah, if I bring something that connects them with the topic , they
16	are much more engaged. I remember in the beginning of the class I discussed
17	the topic of nightmares with her. She was motivated to talk about her
18	experiences in English about the topic.
19	M: So, thinking about the first parameter, particularity , that parameter says that
20	every student is different, has their needs. So, [you already knew that] she has
21	some difficulty in engaging with the activities.
22	A: Right. Yeah. When preparing the class, I should have thought about activities
23	that were more engaging. With her, a matching activity was not the best
24	strategy.

I employed a mix of implicit and explicit mediation to encourage Alice to reflect on her teaching choices and identify areas for improvement. This combination was intentional, as different levels of explicitness are necessary to support teachers depending on their current level of conceptual development and their ability to regulate their own thinking. According to Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), effective mediation must be *graduated*, *contingent*, and *dialogic*, adapting to the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in a way that provides just enough support to promote internalization. This alternation between more implicit and more explicit forms of support — always based on the teacher's moment-to-moment needs — is also a core feature of *responsive mediation*, which underpins the interactions developed throughout this study. In this instance, I gave her the opportunity to recognize and articulate potential issues in her class on her own. Alice was able to identify a lack of student engagement as a challenge and proactively suggest a solution herself centered on the student (lines 7, 8 and 11), which shows the creation of ZPD activity.

Although Alice successfully recognized the issue and proposed a practical solution, I deliberately extended the discussion to connect her insights to relevant theoretical concepts, focusing specifically on the postmethod parameter of particularity (line 19-21). This connection aimed to deepen her understanding of how tailoring learning activities to the specific needs and context of students aligns with a foundational principle of the postmethod pedagogy.

In this MS, I reasoned through Alice's pedagogical choices by thoughtfully analyzing them and making meaningful connections between her intuitive, everyday practices and the scientific concepts that inform them. By drawing these connections, I aimed to help Alice reflect on her actions with greater awareness and link her teaching strategies to established principles, such as those outlined in the postmethod pedagogy. This process not only supports her growth as a reflective practitioner but also enhances her ability to make informed pedagogical decisions that are grounded in both her context and theoretical understanding.

This dialogue exemplifies responsive mediation: I guided Alice through reflective questioning rather than direct instruction. This approach fosters the development of more robust and independent pedagogical reasoning, as it encourages the teacher to actively engage with theoretical concepts and reconstruct her own understanding through dialogic reflection (JOHNSON, 2016). The conversation evolved through different levels of mediation, helping Alice critically assess her own teaching choices and encouraging her to consider alternative strategies for engaging the student more effectively. It was also important to me that Alice felt comfortable during our mediation sessions so she could express her genuine thoughts with greater confidence.

The next excerpt is drawn from the second MS. It is important to note that I observed random classes, which did not consistently involve the same student(s). However, the following excerpt is from the same private student as in the previous mediation session, but on a different day. It is worth recalling that the classes follow themes chosen by the teacher.

EXCERPT 4 (MS 2)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | M: Today the class was about art. What was your purpose for this class? |
| 2 | A: Yeah, she likes it. This is an easy way to discuss things in English . |
| 3 | Sometimes I have to ask her to talk in English, because she likes to talk in |
| 4 | Portuguese. So then I thought "how can she feel free to talk in English? To try it, |
| 5 | experiment vocabulary..." I noticed that when I involve the students, I bring |
| 6 | students reality to the topic, they are more engaged. |
| 7 | M: That's great! With that, you are illustrating the first parameter of the |
| 8 | postmethod, particularity in action! |

This time, when asked about the purpose of her class, Alice prioritized the topic and her goal of encouraging her student - who had demonstrated difficulty maintaining English during class before the present study - to speak in English, rather than focusing on grammar first (lines 2-6).

Alice connected her teaching objectives, specifically improving the student's speaking skills, with the student's interests and needs. This adjustment exemplifies the parameter of particularity.

However, as Alice did not name the concept of particularity in her explanation, and it was a rather simplistic definition, I did it myself to guide her towards articulating the underlying theory and becoming more theory-conscious in her teaching decisions.

The following excerpt is from the same MS but about a different class, which was also themed.

EXCERPT 5 (MS 2)

1	M: The topic of this second class was cooking. There were two moments in this
2	class, in the first, you brought a picture with many cooking verbs and the student
3	copied. In the second moment, you asked the student some personal questions,
4	related to cooking but not using the vocabulary, like “so, who cooks in your
5	house? Who washes the dishes?”
6	A: Yeah, yeah.
7	M: OK. Why did you choose to do these activities?
8	A: I was thinking that pictures are good for us to remember the words,
9	memorizing or associating with the drawings, you know. But the second
10	moment, the conversation, I didn't plan , actually. It was just something that
11	occurred to me at the moment of the class . And I think it was a very engaging
12	moment, you know, because the student was trying to remember his personal
13	life, things that I didn't know about him.
14	M: Do you think you could have used this engaging moment to practice the
15	vocabulary of cooking methods you had just showed him?
16	A: Yes, that's true. Maybe while the student was still looking at the pictures, I
17	could have asked him some things like: “OK, so which ingredients do you
18	chop/boil/fry in your house?”

19	M: And do you notice that, conducting activities like that, you are connecting all
20	the three parameters of the postmethod?
21	A: So, in the rush of everyday life, we end up doing some activities without
22	always thinking much about the specific purpose, right? But I believe that, yes,
23	whenever possible, I reflect on it. I try to find a more appropriate way for that
24	student to develop their skills in a better way. But I confess I can't remember
25	what all the three parameters are right now...
26	M: You can rely on particularity when choosing the type of class/topic of the day,
27	based on students' profiles, needs and contexts. [...] Next you rely on practicality
28	when you reflect how you should deliver the content in a way to reach the
29	objectives of the class. [...] And also the parameter of possibility when you give
30	space for cultural aspects and critical thinking related to the topic of the class.
31	[...]
32	A: Yes, I understand.

In this excerpt, we observe another instance of Alice reaching a more refined understanding of her teaching choices when prompted to reflect on her practice. Initially, Alice admitted that while her use of visual aids for vocabulary retention was intentional, the engaging discussion that followed was unplanned (lines 8-13). She recognized that this spontaneous moment of engagement could have been a valuable opportunity to reinforce the cooking vocabulary introduced earlier (lines 16-18).

Despite demonstrating an ability to adapt and recognize effective teaching moments, Alice did not link her strategies to the postmethod framework. When asked about the postmethod principles, she appeared hesitant and uncertain, suggesting a lack of knowledge in articulating these connections herself (lines 21-25). This highlights that while Alice is able to make improvements in her pedagogical decisions intuitively, according to her everyday concepts, she still requires explicit guidance to link such decisions to the theoretical foundation of the postmethod approach.

Therefore, I chose to provide explicit mediation once more, clearly naming the parameters and explaining how her choices aligned with the postmethod (lines 26-30): particularity (tailoring content to students' needs), and practicality (reflecting on and refining teaching methods. This approach aims to create new ZPD activity, a

movement that might potentially strengthen her understanding and enable her to consciously link her everyday teaching decisions with theoretical concepts.

There were several instances where the teacher displayed an intuitive understanding, or everyday concepts, of how to apply the principles of the postmethod approach in her lessons. However, to support her go through internalizing these concepts and developing conscious, theory-based reasoning, a combination of both explicit and implicit mediation would still be necessary.

By naming the underlying parameters, I aimed to move beyond routine practice, encouraging Alice to actively engage with the reasoning behind her teaching choices. This explicit mediation was designed not merely to clarify concepts but to provide a structured way for her to question, analyze, and refine her approaches. In doing so, she would be less likely to repeat methods out of habit (mindless behavior) and more inclined to make pedagogical decisions based on informed theoretical reasoning, ensuring a dynamic and responsive teaching practice. This transformation is possible because, as argued by Vygotsky (1978), language functions as a psychological tool that mediates higher mental processes, enabling individuals to restructure their thinking. By engaging Alice in conceptually rich dialogue, the mediation encouraged her to externalize, reflect upon, and gradually explore new ways of understanding her teaching, thus fostering greater agency and intentionality in her professional practice.

Excerpts 6 and 7, from MS3, illustrate how the interactions we have had created new ZPD activity. In these MSs, I adopted a more inquiry-based approach, asking questions to encourage Alice to reflect on her practices without my intervention. At certain moments, I chose to explicitly connect her performance to theoretical concepts in response to her seeming to have reached the ceiling level of the ZPD activity we jointly created. Excerpt 6, for instance, illustrates our discussion about a group class that follows a thematic structure.

EXCERPT 6 (MS 3)

- 1 **M:** So your class today was about New York. What was your **intention** with the
2 topic?
- 3 **A:** I was thinking of **involving them with this topic** because last class they
4 mentioned they would like to travel. I remember that one of the students told me
5 “I would like to visit some museums” because he is a history teacher and he
6 likes this and the other student is a teacher too and she likes arts and museums.
7 I think it was my idea to involve them and **explore vocabulary**. The **modal**
8 **verbs too**. I think “would” or “could” or “can” are very important when you are
9 talking about this topic.
- 10 **M:** Yes. So they needed “can, could” to talk about places you can go to in New
11 York.
- 12 **A:** Yes. I started the class with a dynamic game on the topic of New York City
13 to see what they know about it and involve them in the topic.
- 14 **M:** After talking about New York in this game, you brought an explanation about
15 “can, could”, right? So what was your intention with this explanation?
- 16 **A:** Um, I don't know. Sometimes when we are preparing the class we think “ohh
17 maybe it's good to put a grammar box.” But then I thought it might be good for
18 them to have some examples. Especially because the students like grammar.
19 So I decided to introduce the grammar topic.
- 20 **M:** But let me tell you, there's no problem in bringing grammar to class. The
21 purpose of your class was New York City and traveling, right? And for the
22 students to be able to talk about what they can do in New York City, they should
23 know how to use “can and could.” So there is no problem in bringing grammar
24 to class. But it's necessary for the grammar to be connected to the topic.
25 Did you do that?
- 26 **A:** No... I just explained the modal verbs and brought examples and grammar
27 activities about other things. Not connected to traveling...
- 28 **M:** And what happened to the students' performance? Do you think they reached
29 your class objectives?
- 30 **A:** Not really, they were confused.
- 31 **M:** Considering the parameters of the postmethod, how could you have
32 conducted the grammar part of the class?

33	A: I don't know exactly... but... yeah, I'm not sure. Can you help me?
34	M: Do you remember the second parameter, practicality?
35	A: I know it's about the way we present and... ähn... conduct... our classes.
36	M: Yes, based on theories we have studied, implemented and also created on
37	our own after reflecting about our classes. Now, how about the first parameter,
38	particularity?
39	A: Hmmm, about being particular about the student and his or her needs...
40	profile...
41	M: Good. So now let's join them. We discussed that grammar should be
42	contextualized, and the content of the class was New York and what people can
43	or can't do there.
44	A: Maybe I should have shown them how to use the modals with the
45	dialogue . After that my examples should be connected to things we can or can't
46	do when we travel to specific destinations. Everybody in the group lives in
47	different cities, it would have been fun to explore that.

The way the interaction in Excerpt 6 unfolded illustrates how the mediation provided created new ZPD activity, as my inquiry into Alice's practice prompted her to revisit and reflect on it through the lens of scientific knowledge. First, by pointing out that she had not connected the grammar explanation to the class discussion topic, I made Alice aware of this disconnection, an action that is central to a Vygotskian approach to teacher education, given its potential to help teachers deepen their understanding of the profession (Agnoletto, 2024). As the interaction progressed, Alice's explicit request for mediation – "Can you help me?" – signaled the moment in which she reached the ceiling level of the ZPD activity created, thus showing me that it was time to become more explicit than I had been so far. In order to be responsive to her response (Johnson & Golombek, 2016), I brought the parameters of particularity and practicality into my mediation, with the aim of having Alice build bridges between these scientific concepts and what she had done. Consequently, she was able to think of an alternative to the way she approached grammar in class, doing it in a way that capitalized on the parameters I had reminded her of, which points to the role that leading teachers to revisit their activity through scientific knowledge has on allowing them to imbue what they do with meaning.

Excerpt 6 brings another noteworthy point. Once again, Alice placed emphasis on the topic of the class - New York City and traveling - before mentioning the grammar focus (lines 3-9). This reinforces the observation that she can already frame lessons around engaging themes first, integrating grammatical instruction as a secondary element.

Excerpt 7 is from the same MS but about a different class, in which there is one private student who follows an English coursebook.

EXCERPT 7 (MS 3)

1	A: [...] in the beginning of the class [another class about art] I saw that there was
2	a video. But I decided not to show the video to her because it was not so new.
3	And I know that she doesn't like it so much when we show her old things, you
4	know, because she's a teenager and she likes technology, she likes new things,
5	you know? And I just decided to discuss parts of the class and I mix it with parts
6	that I create and parts that are in the book, you know.
7	M: That's great. You have this connection with the student, so you understand
8	what works for her and what doesn't work. So you watched the video and you
9	thought "maybe it's better for me to approach this topic with her instead of
10	showing the video". That's perfect. Bringing a meaningful topic for that particular
11	student? That's great! Did you think about the postmethod when you
12	decided that?
13	A: Actually, no, it was just something that occurred to my mind... naturally,
14	you know? But thinking about it now, I think it has to do with the postmethod.
15	M: Why?
16	A: Maybe because I thought about my student, what is better for her.

Alice exhibited alignment with the principles of the postmethod approach by carefully thinking about her students when preparing the classes, even the one that follows an English coursebook. The principle of particularity is present in both examples. In the first, Alice chose to connect the topic of New York to her students' interests and professions; in the second, she adapted the activity proposed by the coursebook to her teenage student's preferences and opted for a more dynamic and personalized discussion over using a dated video.

This demonstrates that Alice is able to integrate postmethod principles into her lesson design, making informed instructional choices based on her students' needs and preferences. However, her engagement with these principles seems to be more practical and instinctive rather than explicitly grounded in theory. While she successfully tailors her methods, she does not yet articulate the theoretical rationale behind them. This suggests that while her teaching is responsive, she still requires support in bridging theory and practice in a more intentional way. As a mentor, my role has been to make the underlying theories explicit, ensuring that she can name and justify her choices within a postmethod framework. Without this explicit reflection, there is a risk that effective teaching strategies could remain habitual rather than intellectually informed, limiting her ability to critically adapt and refine her approach over time.

However, despite these successes, Alice expressed uncertainty about the motivations for her decisions, indicating a lack of confidence in explicitly articulating her reasoning or connecting it to theoretical principles (line 13). Her answers constitute reinforced evidence of implicit, intuitive knowledge at play. This aligns with Vygotsky's notion that practical knowledge often originates in unconscious processes and is rooted in prior experiences and internalized unconscious routines. In other words, her actions may stem from tacit, everyday concepts that she has internalized but has not yet consciously articulated or connected to theoretical frameworks.

The principles of the postmethod approach already reverberate (Dellagnelo; Agnoletto; Johnson, 2022) on her class planning, signaling an initial stage of development that has to be capitalized on. While she is capable of performing certain practices effectively, she does it unconsciously; her practices are not theory-informed, which suggests that she still benefits from guided reflection and dialogic mediation to develop a deeper, theoretical understanding of why those practices work. Additionally, what works with one group of students might not work with another. Theory provides a stable framework that helps teachers make informed adjustments rather than relying on intuitive habits and routines, as it allows for abstract thinking.

The following MS focused on a themed class centered on the topic of weather, with a grammar section dedicated to the present continuous.

EXCERPT 8 (MS 4)

1 **M:** What was the **purpose** of last class?

2 **A:** It was to **improve vocabulary related to weather**, because the class before
3 he was trying to tell me about a heavy rain in his city, and he couldn't remember
4 some vocabulary... flood, for example. So I decided to bring this topic for this
5 class. And also I wanted to **review the use of the present continuous**.

6 **M:** You started the class asking him about the weather in his city. So why did
7 you do that? Why did you start the class like that?

8 **A:** I just wanted to feel what he remembered about vocabulary words. You know,
9 if he answers me with some words, good. Then I feel that it's possible to talk
10 more with him. And also because we live in different cities, so it would be nice
11 for him to share about the weather where he lives and hear about where I live.

12 **M:** Good. And by doing that, you can connect it to the parameter of...

13 **A:** Hmmm practicality? No, no, no, particularity!

14 **M:** Why?

15 **A:** Yes, because it talks about doing lessons and activities considering the
16 needs and characteristics of the students, right?

17 **M:** Yes, that's right. And how about the second parameter, practicality?

18 **A:** Sorry, but I think I didn't use it in my class...

19 **M:** But do you remember what it is about?

20 **A:** Hmmm... something about theory?

21 **M:** Yes, it is about theorizing what you do in the classroom and doing what you
22 theorize. Do you think you do that?

23 **A:** I try to reflect if my class was good or not, or what moments were not so
24 good... **But I don't know if I use theory**, you know?

25 **M:** You know the theory of the postmethod, right? And it embraces varied types
26 of teaching strategies and theories, even the ones we kind of create, based on
27 our reflections of our teaching. We "use" it when we consider what teaching
28 strategy we will use for that class or activity and how it might impact the student.

29 **A:** Yes, nice.

30 **M:** You also brought some texts describing the weather in different cities and
31 what people were doing at that moment. Do you remember that? And do you
32 remember **you asked the student to read the texts out loud**?

33	A: Yeah.
34	M: And what did you notice when you asked him to read that out loud?
35	A: Ohh, at that moment I forgot the tip that you gave me. You know, after the
36	class I remembered I should have asked him to read in silence first.
37	M: What do you think about the student's comprehension of the texts?
38	A: He definitely had difficulty getting them. He also asked me to read them in
39	silence after he finished reading out loud, can you believe that? He knows the
40	theory! [laughter]
41	M: Do you remember why it is important for the student to read in silence if the
42	purpose is text comprehension?
43	A: Because he needs to understand the message first and then to practice the
44	pronunciation.

In the last two MSs, Alice successfully articulated her awareness of the pedagogical choices she made regarding the objectives of her classes. Specifically, she prioritized focusing on the topic first, followed by addressing vocabulary or grammar as secondary goals. This shift in her approach indicates a meaningful progression, as Alice appears to have moved beyond viewing grammar as the central aim of her lessons, embracing a more holistic and responsive strategy that aligns more closely with communicative and learner-centered principles. This further evidences reverberation (Dellagnelo; Agnoletto; Johnson, 2022) of our interactions in her planning, even though she does not name things yet.

Particularity is present once more in Alice's approach. By initiating the class with a personalized question about the weather in the student's city, she creates a meaningful connection between the topic and the student's reality (lines 6-11). More than that, the fact that she chose weather specifically because her student had previously had difficulty expressing ideas within this topic shows her sense of plausibility - or involvement - with her teaching.

Alice's teaching decisions suggest that the principle of particularity is subtly guiding her actions. Even though she is not yet able to fully articulate this connection and to name it with confidence, her practice demonstrates an emerging alignment with this principle, reflecting a growing sensitivity to the specific needs and contexts of her students.

Regarding practicality, it is possible to see that most of the actions she performs in the classroom are still intuitive, as she even admitted she did not consider practicality when preparing the class and that she does not know how to “use” theory to prepare her classes (line 18). It also shows that Alice still considers theory something distant from the actual practice.

On the other hand, Alice has shown an effort to reflect on the efficacy of her classes, which aligns with the principles of the postmethod approach. By encouraging her to embrace this reflective practice, I tried to build her confidence in relying on the postmethod approach to guide her reflections and teaching strategies and searching for theories that resonate to her.

Alice’s acknowledgement of forgetting to have the student read silently first – a step previously addressed in mediation sessions – underscores a critical detail. Her recognition of the student’s comprehension struggles (line 38), as well as his subsequent request to read silently, demonstrates Alice’s growing awareness of how different strategies influence learning outcomes. However, her need for a reminder at this point suggests that practicality is still in the process of being assimilated by her.

The student’s request to read silently (lines 38-40) played a crucial role in reinforcing this understanding, so I tried to capitalize on that (lines 41-42). It provided Alice with a direct, tangible connection between theory and practice – allowing her to experience firsthand how reading aloud can hinder comprehension due to cognitive load and memory limitations. This real-time realization is likely to facilitate a faster and more consistent understanding and incorporation of this principle into her teaching practice.

Moving on to a second moment of the same MS:

EXCERPT 9 (MS 4)

1	M: I saw that you skipped the grammar part of the class. Why did you do that?
2	Was it on purpose?
3	A: Yes, it was on purpose. I think because it was more important to discuss the
4	other activity because of the time, I think in that moment I decided that “ohh,
5	maybe in another moment we can discuss this grammar again”.
6	M: Perfect. You decided, analyzing the context of the class, that it was better to
7	do another activity to ensure your objective would be reached. That's great.

- 8 **A:** It has to do with one parameter, right?
- 9 **M:** Definitely! Which one?
- 10 **A:** Hmmm, the first, I think.
- 11 **M:** Particularity, yes. So you said you're going to approach the present
- 12 continuous in another moment. But let's imagine you had time to approach the
- 13 grammar topic in this class. How would you do that?
- 14 **A:** Could you refresh my mind? Did I put a grammar box in the lesson plan or
- 15 not?
- 16 **M:** Yes, you did.
- 17 **A:** I put a box about the present continuous. I remember now. I confess I put a
- 18 very traditional grammar with the subject, with the verbs and I put examples that
- 19 are not related with the weather, you know, the topic of the class, yeah.
- 20 **M:** Ok, but we've seen that there's no problem in putting a grammar box, the
- 21 effectiveness is in the way you introduce grammar and conduct activities about
- 22 it.
- 23 **A:** Yes, I remember that.
- 24 **M:** Then, **following a postmethod perspective, how would you introduce**
- 25 **this part?**
- 26 **A:** Maybe in the first moment, in the texts where it mentions what people are
- 27 doing in different places and different weathers using verbs with ING. I think it's
- 28 a moment to introduce this because the student would feel that it's important
- 29 when you are describing something the moment it is happening, then you use
- 30 the ING in the verbs.
- 31 **M:** **Going back to the texts**, great.
- 32 **A:** I think... is this enough?
- 33 **M:** To introduce the grammar topic, yes. But he needs to practice, right?
- 34 **A:** I think I would bring a common "fill in the blanks the appropriate verb tense"
- 35 exercise, you know. But reflecting with you now, it doesn't sound like the best
- 36 idea.
- 37 **M:** And why is that?
- 38 **A:** I think... the activity is not about the previous topic anymore... and the
- 39 students wouldn't feel motivated to practice.
- 40 **M:** Yes, it would be like, one part of the class is about weather, ok, but then in

41	the other moment, you are talking about people's actions.
42	A: It can be confusing, yeah.
43	M: So, thinking about the postmethod, how could you...
44	A: ... I have an idea! I could have brought images of people doing different things
45	in different types of weather, similar to the text that he read. But this time, he
46	would have to describe the weather to me and also what the people are doing.
47	M: Bingo!

This excerpt illustrates Alice once more adapting classroom activities in response to contextual demands. She deliberately chose to skip the grammar section due to time constraints (lines 3-5) so that her lesson could meet its primary objectives, which was no longer the grammar structure. This reveals progress in aligning her teaching decisions with the parameter of particularity. The fact that she spontaneously mentioned that her strategy has a connection to the postmethod (line 8) is positive, because it shows she is starting to make connections herself. Her answer to which parameter was being explored and if the teaching strategy she suggested was enough (lines 10 and 31), demonstrated uncertainty, so she is still not confident to inform her practice without the help of a more experienced other. Through further responsive mediation sessions, it is possible that her reasoning becomes more robust.

Additionally, Alice demonstrates a practical appropriation of postmethod strategies, applying them intuitively in her teaching. However, her difficulty in explicitly naming the concepts involved may hinder a deeper understanding. As Vygotsky (1962) points out, conceptual mastery often unfolds in two stages: first, familiarity with the terminologies, and then the construction of meaning through their use and reflection. Without identifying these concepts explicitly, her learning risks remaining intuitive rather than consciously articulated. Naming and discussing these parameters would not only solidify her understanding but also enable her to make more intentional and theoretically informed pedagogical decisions.

This finding reinforces the theoretical discussion presented in the literature review, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) view of how knowledge emerges. As noted, learners often begin with spontaneous concepts – those developed through direct experience and practical engagement – which serve as the foundation for the development of scientific concepts, marked by abstraction, generalization, and

theoretical awareness. The data also confirm Cazden's (1981) claim that performance precedes competence, suggesting that practice often comes before a full conceptual grasp. In this light, Alice's intuitive engagement with postmethod principles represents a legitimate and valuable entry point into the learning process. Nonetheless, for this procedural knowledge to evolve into conceptual understanding, it must become an object of reflection and be mediated by language. In Vygotskian terms, naming functions is a psychological tool that enables learners to transform action into thought, and thought into intentional pedagogical practice.

This MS also reveals that Alice still struggles to integrate grammar instruction within the principles of the postmethod approach on her own. Her suggestion to use a traditional "fill-in-the-blank" exercise for practice (line 33) initially demonstrates her reliance on familiar methods. Through implicit mediation, new ZPD activity was created as I guided Alice toward recognizing more effective ways to introduce grammar (lines 36-42). Alice could then identify an opportunity to introduce the present continuous in a meaningful context - connecting its usage to the descriptions of weather and actions mentioned in the text her student had previously read (lines 43-45).

By the end of the session, Alice proposes another alternative approach - this time an activity to practice the grammar topic - that integrates grammar into the lesson's thematic context. Her idea to use images of people performing actions in various weather conditions reflects a significant advancement toward associating her teaching methods with the principles of particularity and practicality, as this activity reinforces the lesson's objectives and also provides a meaningful and engaging context for the student to practice the target grammar. By coming up with such an appropriate way to present grammar functionally in response to my mediation, it becomes clear that the ZPD activity enabled Alice to go beyond her constraints. Given her ongoing difficulty with conceptual thinking, I could have used the opportunity to explicitly link her idea to the parameters at issue, thereby reinforcing her understandings of the concepts. However, I missed the opportunity, which could have strengthened the connection between the insights she had and the scientific knowledge behind them.

Following the previous mediation session, the subsequent MS provides an opportunity to assess whether Alice's reflections influenced her decision-making in a meaningful way. Observing how the principles and strategies we discussed are

manifested in her teaching offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of the mediation and the degree to which Alice is in the process of professional growth.

EXCERPT 10 (MS 5)

1	M: The last class I observed was with Paul. What was the goal of this class?
2	A: The topic was adventure and extreme sports . And besides vocabulary of
3	unusual sports, I wanted to introduce the use of the modal “would” .
4	M: Nice! The “main dish” of your class was adventure. But because it's not so
5	common for us to do extreme sports, he needed to understand how to use
6	“would” to talk about hypothetical things that he would like to do.
7	A: Yes, and I used some texts. I remembered the difference between reading
8	and pronunciation activities. My focus was not on pronunciation. It was on
9	understanding the text. So I asked him to read in silence. But I thought he was
10	still a little confused, especially in the first text.
11	M: And why was that?
12	A: I really don't know...
13	M: I would suggest that in the beginning he was a little confused because he
14	didn't know what “would, would like” means, right. What if you had introduced
15	the reading activity with something like “now, you are going to read short texts
16	about radical, dangerous sports that some people would like to try... OK, ‘would
17	like’?” He would probably say, “ohh, no teacher, I don't know”.
18	A: Then I would explain it and then he would read the text. He would start
19	reading the text knowing about the content of the text. When the student does
20	the reading activity knowing about the topic, about what he's going to encounter,
21	it's easier for them, yeah?
22	M: Yes, and this is called pre-reading activity. It's important to prepare the
23	student for what he is going to read. This time you didn't put a grammar box...
24	Did you miss it? [both laugh]
25	A: I thought it was unnecessary and in the end, it really wasn't.
26	M: Why do you think that?
27	A: After reading the text and reinforcing the use of “would” , I asked him
28	some questions using the modal, and he seemed confident to answer. I think he
29	remembered the modal, the vocabulary...

30	M: And did you consider the parameters of the postmethod when planning this
31	lesson?
32	A: I tried! [laughter] I always think about my students now when I prepare my
33	classes, if the topic makes sense for them, if the grammar makes sense...
34	Before, I just chose topics randomly according to what I thought was
35	interesting.
36	M: This is good. This has to do with one parameter, right?
37	A: The first one, particularity. I remember a lot about this one.

In this MS, Alice demonstrates progress in integrating the feedback and strategies discussed in previous mediations. Her class objectives - introducing vocabulary about adventure sports and teaching the modal “would” for hypothetical scenarios (lines 2-3) - reflect an approach that balances linguistic goals with contextual relevance.

One notable improvement was her decision to prioritize comprehension over pronunciation in the reading activity, asking the student to read the text in silence (lines 7-9). This change confirms my previous guess that the situation described in Excerpt 8 was a pivotal experience for Alice. It was theory coming to life in the classroom setting. Having theory validated and brought to life through real-world teaching moments effectively illustrates the dynamic interplay between abstract concepts and tangible classroom practices, making it highly relevant for the scenario of professional growth.

Apart from that, Alice appears to have understood the importance of analyzing if the activities being proposed reflect the specific learning objectives, meaning that if the activity is a reading comprehension activity, it has to focus on comprehension, not on pronunciation or the like.

In this context, there was a new issue to work in terms of practicality – find the reason why the student still struggled to understand the text (lines 9-10) . During the mediation, I introduced the concept of ‘pre-reading activity’ (line 22-23). Alice quickly recognized the potential benefit of providing a pre-reading explanation, showing how ZPD activity between us was enhanced. Her reflection on how this strategy could have facilitated comprehension (lines 18-21) highlights her growing capacity for reasoning teaching, essential for the parameter of practicality.

Another noteworthy decision was omitting the grammar box, a traditional teaching tool that Alice decided was unnecessary for this lesson (line 25). This decision aligns with the postmethod principle of contextualized grammar instruction, as she opted to reinforce the target structure through meaningful questions and discussion rather than isolated grammatical rules. And this time, Alice seemed conscious of her teaching choice and the effectiveness of that based on the student's confident responses (lines 27-29).

Regarding the parameter of particularity, Alice was able to say the name of the parameter in this excerpt (line 36). This parameter appears to be the one Alice most easily puts into practice, and this is perhaps a result of naming. Her ability to articulate not only what she implemented in her classes, but also the reasoning behind her choices, suggests awareness of the concept and its application. In particular, her engagement with the parameter of *particularity* — the concept most frequently mediated throughout this study — reflects the sustained opportunities she had to connect theoretical principles to her practical activity. By repeatedly revisiting this parameter during our discussions, she was encouraged to critically reflect on how her pedagogical decisions aligned with the specific needs of her learners and the sociocultural realities of her context.

This MS indicates that Alice is beginning to connect her decisions with the postmethod framework more confidently. However, as Smagorinsky (2003) suggests, the process of learning to teach is rarely straightforward. Instead, it often involves a "twisting path" where teachers navigate through theoretical frameworks, personal beliefs, and classroom realities. This nonlinear journey is marked by moments of uncertainty, trial and error, which are integral to professional growth. The next excerpt demonstrates exactly that.

EXCERPT 11 (MS 6)

1	M: So let's talk about the last class. The topic of that class was types of houses.
2	You started the class showing her three pictures of different houses, and you
3	asked her to choose her favorite one.
4	A: Yeah, I tried to ask her to describe them a little. I remember that you
5	suggested it to me. That, maybe, to keep talking and engaged, personal
6	questions like describing things or her preferences, could be more effective.

- 7 **M:** Exactly. And that's what I want to comment about. If we compare her
8 interaction in this class with the previous classes that I observed. Did you notice
9 any difference?
- 10 **A:** Yeah, I think she talked more and she continued talking for some time about
11 the subject. Because sometimes she starts in English and then she talks in
12 Portuguese. It was so nice that in that class she was describing in English and
13 trying to remember the vocabulary.
- 14 **M:** Do you think you can connect this class with the three parameters of the
15 postmethod approach?
- 16 **A: Particularity** because I know she is really interested in this topic. I knew she
17 follows a channel on YouTube about architecture and she likes to talk about
18 these details. So she was comfortable with the topic, and also confident with the
19 questions that were asked. The questions were simple. And then it encouraged
20 her to continue talking.
- 21 **M:** Great!
- 22 **A:** But the other two parameters, I am not sure... Sorry, **can you help me**
23 **remember them?** Possibility and... practical... practicality, right?
- 24 **M:** Yes! The parameter of practicality talks about the teacher's ability to assess
25 and evaluate their teaching strategies and decide which ones are more effective,
26 according to theories we know and theories we develop.
- 27 **A:** Yeah, right.
- 28 **M:** How do you think this parameter could be reflected in this class?
- 29 **A:** Well, I think it was a very good class. She reached the class objectives.
- 30 **M:** Which were?
- 31 **A:** Well, keep her talking in English with confidence through a topic she really
32 enjoys.
- 33 **M:** Ok, but do you remember the fill-in-the-gaps activity you brought to class?
34 Do you remember the student's performance at that moment?
- 35 **A:** Hmmm, she was really distracted and started going off topic a lot.
- 36 **M:** This was not the first time it happened with the same student, right?
- 37 **A:** Yes, you're right. I insist on these vocabulary activities because I want the
38 student to learn new and important words, you know?
- 39 **M:** But don't you think there are other ways of doing that? How the postmethod

40	approach could help you with that?
41	A: Maybe when I was deciding how I would practice the vocabulary related to
42	houses. I know she's a very communicative student, and I've noticed that
43	activities that she needs to express her likes and dislikes are more engaging.
44	So if I decided to bring a more communicative approach to this moment... Like
45	the images I brought in the beginning of the class...
46	M: Great. That's true. You don't need to bring a fill-in-the-blanks activity to help
47	your student gain vocabulary. How about the last parameter, possibility?
48	A: Sorry, can you help me remember...
49	M: Sure! It considers the social, cultural, and personal experiences of students
50	when teaching. It's about making lessons meaningful and relevant beyond just
51	language rules. Do you think you could do that in your class?
52	A: Ohhh, yes! I remember that we discussed the differences between Brazilian
53	and Italian houses, because she is going to Italy soon.
54	M: Did you do that on purpose?
55	A: Honestly, not exactly. It was just natural , I think. But my purpose was for her
56	to practice the vocabulary from the fill-in-the-blanks activity, you know?
57	M: But considering what I said about the possibility parameter, do you think our
58	goal as English teachers is just linguistic?
59	A: Well, no... it's more than that. It's related to culture too.
60	M: And make the students think, reflect about the world around us. With the help
61	of language.
62	A: Yes, with the help of language.
63	M: You see how all the three parameters are interconnected? And recurring to
64	them helps improve the effectiveness of our classes?
65	A: Yes, that's true!

This excerpt clearly illustrates Alice's journey along what Smagorinsky (2003) describes as the *"twisting path"* of teacher development, where progress is nonlinear and often punctuated by moments of uncertainty and rediscovery. Although Alice had demonstrated some level of understanding of the parameters of the postmethod framework — particularly *particularity*, and to a lesser extent *practicality* — her lapse in recalling two of them during this MS (lines 22–23) highlights the dynamic and non-

linear nature of the learning process. Her limited engagement with the parameter of *possibility* suggests that deeper conceptual development requires more sustained and focused mediation.

Upon reflection, I acknowledge that my own mediation approach may have contributed to this outcome. In my effort to make *possibility* more accessible and support Alice in grounding her pedagogical practice in theory, I ended up oversimplifying the parameter — treating occasional signs of critical thinking as sufficient evidence of engagement. While this choice helped maintain the flow of our discussions, it inadvertently diluted the transformative scope of *possibility*, which, according to Kumaravadivelu (2006), involves critical awareness, identity work, and the questioning of power structures and institutional norms. This experience highlights not only the inherent complexity of mediating abstract concepts, but also the need to balance pedagogical tact with theoretical integrity.

Alice's ability to confidently identify the parameter of *particularity* in this interaction suggests that the ZPD activities previously co-constructed created favorable conditions for her to expand her understanding of the concept. She effectively connects the student's personal interest in architecture and her upcoming trip to Italy with the lesson content, ensuring contextual relevance and engagement (lines 16–20).

However, when it comes to practicality and possibility, Alice struggled not only to recall them but also to articulate how they related to her teaching practices. From a practicality perspective, by this point Alice might have theorized that fill-in-the-blank activities may not offer meaningful opportunities for vocabulary practice. Yet, she repeated this task and initially perceived her class as successful — despite later admitting that the student seemed disengaged and kept shifting topics. This illustrates the ongoing challenge Alice faces in critically analyzing her practice through theoretical lenses.

With my prompts, Alice revisited and connected the parameters to her instructional decisions, demonstrating how the use of both implicit and explicit mediation supported her cognitive development. Still, this growth was more clearly observed in relation to particularity, which received consistent and situated mediation throughout our sessions. In contrast, the other two parameters were less frequently and less systematically explored, which may explain her more superficial engagement with them. This asymmetry reflects the responsive nature of the mediation process:

while particularity often emerged organically from classroom episodes and was continually revisited, practicality and possibility demanded more abstract reasoning and deliberate conceptualization — which I did not consistently sustain. This limitation was discussed earlier in this chapter.

The twisting path of teacher development, as framed by Smagorinsky, is evident here: Alice oscillates between clarity and doubt, gradually expanding her understanding of how her pedagogical decisions relate to the postmethod parameters. This process of reflection, mediation, and tentative insight reflects the complexity and ongoing nature of teacher learning.

The parameter of practicality, in particular, appears to pose a significant challenge for Alice. This may be because it requires her to theorize her own practice — a task that demands conceptual tools she is still developing. The dynamic nature of classroom interactions exposes her to varied situations: on one day, the challenge involves managing pronunciation within reading activities; on another, the contextualized teaching of grammar; and on yet another, the design of pre-reading tasks. Such variability makes it difficult to stabilize learning around a single framework. Consequently, opportunities to return to the same theoretical ground are scattered, preventing sustained and cumulative mediation.

This lack of prolonged focus may also explain Alice's limited engagement with the parameter of possibility. My mediation practices prioritized particularity, leaving possibility less explored in our discussions. As a result, the concept was not reinforced with the consistency needed for deeper development. Without opportunities to revisit and explore its theoretical implications over time, Alice's awareness of possibility remained at an incipient stage.

The next excerpt demonstrates that Alice has also begun to deepen her reasoning about contextualized grammar. However, she still relied on my guidance to connect her practices to the postmethod framework — particularly to the parameter of possibility.

EXCERPT 12 (MS 7)

1	M: So, last class with the girls was about neighbors. You started the class
2	showing them a short video, right? What was your intention with the video?
3	A: I was thinking about having a little fun in the beginning of the class and I

4	would like them to get involved with the topic. I think it was just for fun .
5	M: So it was a warm up. It was a very funny video, yes, but I noticed that you
6	didn't ask them any questions about the video.
7	A: Well, maybe because I forgot... I just put it in the beginning. I think I tried to
8	mention it, but I forgot to ask about the video.
9	M: Yeah, It was an opportunity for you to encourage them to use their English
10	and to make them feel connected to the topic. How could you have done that?
11	A: Mmhmm yeah, for sure. Maybe asking them what they saw in the video, what
12	the person was doing, what happened in the end...
13	M: Uhum. For you to give importance to the video.
14	A: I completely forgot to ask something. I think I was worried about the class
15	and I forgot.
16	M: How do you think the parameters of the postmethod could have helped you
17	to guide this part of the class?
18	A: Hmmm I considered the parameter of particularity when I chose the topic
19	and the activities for the class, according to the students profiles and needs ...
20	M: Yes, but the video brought a comic reflection about neighbours. Do you
21	remember the parameter of possibility ...?
22	A: ... about critical thinking... Yeah, I could have explored the message of the
23	video to discuss the relationships people have with neighbours.
24	M: Exactly. Or even bring a little cultural awareness asking them to try to identify
25	where the video is from, based on their actions.
26	A: You're right!
27	M: You also showed the girls some rules of a fake apartment building. What they
28	<i>can, can't, must or mustn't</i> do, right? So what was your intention in that final
29	moment of the class?
30	A: I was thinking these examples could be useful for them to create their rules
31	for another moment, you know. What important rules they think are necessary
32	or relevant.
33	M: I will give you two scenarios. And I want you to tell me which one, in terms of
34	theory, you think is more effective. Scenario one was your scenario, the one in
35	which you explained the modal verbs <i>can, can't, must, mustn't</i> and so on and
36	the imperative using practical examples of real life situations connected to the

37	topic: apartment building rules. You showed them the rules through the rules of
38	a fake apartment building. This is 1 scenario. The other scenario is just saying
39	to them that these are modal verbs for rules and you bring a table of grammar
40	points and...
41	A: OK! OK, I understand! Ohh no, because I think they would feel confused if I
42	mix it with a lot of possibilities and if I put the grammar... we are discussing
43	about neighbors, we're discussing about this kind of rules and then we change
44	it for modal verbs without contextualizing... Scenario 1, for sure.
45	M: Your scenario, then!
46	A: My scenario! [both laugh]

By situating grammar within a tangible, relatable context, Alice not only embodied the postmethod principles but also fostered deeper learner engagement. Using practical scenarios helps students see grammar as a functional tool for real communication, which shifts their focus from memorization to meaningful application. This transition is pivotal in empowering learners to think critically about language as a dynamic part of their everyday lives.

Alice's approach is a commendable example of contextualized teaching. By aligning grammar instruction with her students' immediate needs and situating it within a relatable framework – like neighborhood rules – transforms abstract language concepts into practical tools. This not only makes the learning process more engaging but also reinforces the idea that grammar is inherently tied to communication and real-life applications, rather than being a set of isolated rules. It's a meaningful shift that reflects a more holistic view of language teaching

When asked to compare her scenario with the second one (teaching grammar abstractly with a content table), Alice confidently chooses her own scenario, which is grounded in real-life, context-based learning (lines 33-44). Her reasoning shows that she has understood the importance of making grammar learning relevant to students' lives, which is a direct application of practicality in the postmethod approach. By applying the parameter of practicality, Alice reflected on her teaching methods and was able to bridge the gap between theory and practice while realizing that traditional grammar teaching does not engage her students. She, therefore, integrated communicative activities that make grammar learning more interactive and meaningful.

At this point, it is worth recalling that Alice previously recognized that reading comprehension activities are not intended for pronunciation checks after both responsive mediation and a firsthand example from a student who struggled when required to read aloud. Similarly, it is my interpretation that she has moved away from traditional grammar boxes due to responsive mediation as well as students' apparent lack of motivation toward such approaches.

Although Alice missed a valuable opportunity to engage her students more deeply with the video she brought - failing to ask them questions that would have connected them to the content - she was able to quickly and critically reflect on the situation during the ZPD activity created. As a result of my mediation, she soon recognized how the parameter of possibility could have been applied, considering how the video could have been used to foster critical thinking (lines 22-23). This reflection highlights Alice's growing ability to not only identify areas for improvement but also to connect her teaching decisions to theoretical frameworks of the postmethod approach. However, it is important to note that she achieves this understanding solely through my mediation.

Analyzing the next excerpt, the development of a more robust reasoning process continues to become evident, demonstrating an increasing ability to critically engage with pedagogical concepts and apply them in practice.

EXCERPT 13 (MS 8)

1	M: The last class I observed was about aliens, right? I am curious, what was
2	your intention with this class?
3	A: Honestly, I was thinking it would be fun, you know, interactive.
4	M: Do you think you can relate your class with the parameters?
5	A: I think about particularity because it's a possibility to put me and Jasmine
6	together on the same topic, discussing funny ideas. And you know, we were
7	close to each other at that moment. By the way, I think it's useful for her. Of
8	course it's a science fiction class, but it's related to movies, movies from the
9	past, movies nowadays. And it's a possibility for her to create opinions about
10	it and vocabulary about this topic.
11	M: ... and that is connected to the parameter of...
12	A: Possibility!

13	M: Great! Do you think Jasmine did a good job or were you expecting something
14	different?
15	A: I was expecting more engagement. She didn't seem so motivated in some
16	moments.
17	M: And how could it be possibly changed?
18	A: I think maybe I put too many vocabulary activities . And maybe I have to
19	do another type of activity with her, you know, selecting just words and creating
20	phrases in a spontaneous way with her. I know my student by now, but
21	sometimes we choose the wrong activity for that moment , you know.
22	M: It's nice that you are reflecting that.
23	A: Yeah yeah. Because of our conversations, I do this a lot more with my classes
24	after I do the classes, you know. I reflect "ohh was it a good class?"
25	M: Happy to hear that! We should always reflect on our classes to see what we
26	can change or improve... There's one parameter saying that, right?
27	A: Reflecting about what we do and connecting to theory... Practicality!
28	M: Good job!

In MS8, Alice demonstrates progress in connecting her teaching practices to the parameters of the postmethod approach. She successfully identified the relevance of particularity and possibility in her class about aliens. She was able to recall the parameters without any prompting for the first time, indicating growing familiarity with the postmethod framework. Also she names the parameters of practicality and possibility for the first time (lines 5-12).

Alice once more showed a reliance on traditional activities for improving the student's vocabulary, but this time, she recognized it herself, without my help to identify that (lines 18-21). This proactive reflection is a crucial step in the development of a more adequate teaching stance, as it shows Alice's ability to assess the effectiveness of her strategies critically.

Additionally, her positive feedback about the impact of the MSs (lines 23-24) highlights the value of this mentoring approach in fostering reflective practices and confidence in theoretical application. While Alice is progressing well along the "twisting path" described by Smagorinsky (2003), this session marks a moment of increasing independence and theoretical grounding in her teaching development.

MS 9 appears to demonstrate a seemingly more independent way to reason upon her practice through the concepts at issue. Yet, she still needs to be inquired into the relation between her pedagogical choices and the three parameters - she only mentions the parameters after being pushed by my inquiry, which set the stage for joint ZPD activity (line 4). The next excerpt is from a group class with themed lessons.

EXCERPT 14 (MS 9)

1	M: The topic of the class was first impressions. What was your purpose with
2	that class?
3	A: This time, I remembered the parameters while preparing the class [laughter]
4	and it was great! The topic was first impressions because I wanted them to be
5	able to talk about their experiences when they visit a new place. They love
6	traveling so I think it was a nice topic for them. I also saw an opportunity to
7	explain the differences between adverbs and adjectives, when describing the
8	food, landmarks, way people drive, cook, talk...And for them to be able to
9	describe those things, they should know how to use the adjectives and adverbs.
10	So after I introduced the topic and engaged them in a conversation, I asked them
11	to read a text in silence describing the first impression of three different cities.
12	Then I asked them which one was their favorite and why. The text was short, so
13	I decided to check their pronunciation, asking them to read it out loud.
14	M: And do you remember how you introduced the adverb part?
15	A: I just used the examples from the text and asked them if they could see any
16	difference. I asked them questions until they could explain to me the difference
17	between adjectives and adverbs. After that, I showed them some words in a box
18	and compared the two things, adjectives and adverbs. I also created some
19	examples about my city. As we were in the end of the class, I asked them to do
20	the same, but for homework. To describe a city and use adjectives and adverbs.
21	M: Good. Do you think the grammar box made any difference in understanding
22	the topic?
23	A: Yes, because I contextualized grammar with the text we had just read first. It
24	was... how can I say... a complement maybe. A complement to show the
25	conclusion they got by themselves.
26	M: Grammar boxes are not always the enemies, they can be...

27	A: Friends! Yeahh [both laugh]
28	M: You said you remembered the parameters while preparing your class. How
29	do you think your class explored the parameter of possibility? Do you remember
30	this parameter?
31	A: Yes. I think a lot about what you said about the postmethod, that the lessons
32	should encourage students to be critical. That this is part of learning a
33	language. I confess that before I used to think that these moments of
34	interaction and conversation with the student were just for him or her to
35	practice vocabulary , you know? But now I try to bring interesting discussions
36	sometimes, about the topic. Then, [in this class] before and after reading the
37	text, we discussed how first impressions impact us, our lives... I asked them
38	what their first impressions about Europe were, and what they thought foreign
39	people would think about Brazil if they came here for the first time.
40	M: That's really nice!

In excerpt 14, MS 9, Alice once more demonstrated strong ability in contextualizing grammar by presenting adjectives and adverbs through a meaningful and relevant topic for her students (lines 6-9). By using the text as a foundation, she allowed the students to deduce the differences independently before consolidating the concept with a grammar box, which she described as a useful complement rather than an isolated tool.

It is noteworthy that Alice began incorporating an implicit approach to grammar instruction only after the MSs started, even though we have not directly talked about the differences between implicit and explicit instruction during the MS. This observation indicates a positive influence of these mediations in expanding her teaching perceptions, fostering a broader understanding that extends beyond the principles of the postmethod approach.

For the second time, Alice was able to connect her lesson to the postmethod parameters after being inquired, this time notably possibility, as she encouraged her students to reflect critically on how first impressions shape perceptions and cultural interactions. This reflection was evident in the discussion about students' impressions of Europe and their predictions of what foreigners might think about Brazil. Her confidence in articulating these connections and the clear alignment of her teaching

practices with theoretical principles highlight a more robust and evolving understanding of her role as a reflective practitioner (lines 28-39).

After the 9th MS, Alice continued to demonstrate a strong ability to consciously implement the principles of the postmethod approach in her teaching practice, moving beyond the intuitive application seen earlier. This shift indicates that Alice has developed a deeper understanding of the postmethod approach; however, she still relies on mediation to access and articulate this knowledge. At this stage, she is able to identify and relate the concepts primarily during scaffolded moments of interaction — that is, within ZPD activity — and not yet as part of her autonomous, self-regulated reasoning. In addition to that, it is possible to state that the reasoning behind her action in the beginning of the mediation sessions was based on everyday concepts, but now, towards the end of the sessions, she has been merging everyday with scientific concepts.

We now examine MS10, which is from a private class with themed lessons. Once again, this session offers a unique context for observing how she now integrates key pedagogical principles into her teaching.

EXCERPT 15 (MS 10)

1	M: Last class was about makeup. What was your intention with the class and
2	were you successful in reaching your goals?
3	A: I was successful because I followed the three parameters.
4	[M and A laugh]
5	A: I wanted her to be able to describe steps with words like “first”, “next”, “after
6	that”, “then”, “finally”... Then I thought about the parameter of particularity and
7	chose a topic that would be nice for her. For example, there are many lessons
8	about cooking for describing processes, but I know she doesn’t like cooking...
9	M: It wouldn’t be the best choice...
10	A: Yeah. Then I chose makeup cause I know she really likes it.
11	M: Ok, and what about the other two parameters?
12	A: I remembered practicality to decide how I would conduct the class. I know
13	she’s involved when she shares personal things, so instead of introducing new
14	makeup vocabulary by just showing her some images, I asked her to take her
15	makeup bag and show me what she had. Then we talked about the names of

16	the makeup she had. She loved it! It was easy to introduce the... grammar, let's
17	say, part. After reviewing the names of the products, I told her my makeup
18	routine and highlighted the expressions of sequencing. Then I asked her to do
19	the same thing about her makeup routine.
20	M: Amazing! It's missing one parameter...
21	A: Oh, of course! Possibility! She's a teenager, so at the end of the class we
22	discussed if there's a right age to start using makeup.
23	M: Great, work! I'm proud of you.
24	A: Thanks! Actually, I'd like to share an experience I had with a student in a
25	class you didn't observe. This student of mine is a kid, and his mom sent me a
26	message complimenting the class I had with him about <i>Pokémon</i> , saying he
27	wouldn't stop talking to her about it. The class was about Pokémon because I
28	also wanted to talk to him about skills. So, why not talk about Pokémon skills as
29	it's a topic he loves? And in the next class, he was able to remember the
30	grammar rule because I know it was meaningful for him. I realized that a class
31	where I'd initially focus on grammar can have a much more positive and
32	<i>lasting</i> impact on the student if it's planned strategically and with theory
33	in mind. Thank you for these sessions, they really helped me rethink my classes
34	and keep reflecting!

By the time we reached MS10, it became evident that Alice had achieved a level of independence and depth in applying the principles of the postmethod approach. The excerpt illustrates her ability to consciously integrate all three parameters - particularity, practicality and possibility - into her teaching. Her decision to tailor lessons to the students' interests, such as makeup and Pokémon, demonstrates a thoughtful understanding of their individuality and the importance of meaningful learning experiences. When a student's mother congratulated her on the quality of her class, Alice felt a deep sense of pride (lines 25-32). The acknowledgment from an outsider reinforced the value of the transformation she had been undergoing, making her appreciate the changes in her teaching approach even more.

Moreover, Alice's ability to explain her pedagogical choices with more clarity (naming) and confidence shows the evolution of her reasoning. Yet, even though she

demonstrates more capacity to reflect critically on her teaching strategies, she still relies on external prompts to connect her lessons to the parameters.

The decision to conclude the mediation sessions at this point was based on Alice's awareness of the postmethod framework and the clear alignment with it that she shows at this stage. Concepts that were initially abstract to Alice were explored during the ZPD activities jointly created, which allowed her to revisit how she thinks about her classes and change it.

In summary, MS10 marked the culmination of a transformative process for Alice, highlighting her journey from intuitive practicing (everyday concepts) to a more deliberate, theory-driven and reflective approach. This growth also sets a strong foundation for Alice to continue evolving as an educator beyond the sessions.

Upon reviewing my mediation, I now realize that I may have attempted to address too many aspects in a short period of time. Alice has shown the most noticeable progress in the parameter of particularity, which was where I consistently focused my efforts and maintained sustained mediation. However, in my attempt to also embrace the other two parameters, I was not always clear enough to fully consolidate her own findings.

Also, I recognize that while I provided theoretical explanations for certain aspects of Alice's struggles, I did not always extend the same level of clarity to others. Specifically, I explained the theoretical reasoning behind avoiding reading a text aloud during a reading comprehension activity, yet I failed to do the same when addressing grammar instruction. I did not explicitly articulate the advantages and disadvantages of teaching grammar in a contextualized manner, which might have limited her ability to make informed instructional decisions. This gap in my mediation suggests that, within the parameter of practicality, for example, I should have ensured a more thorough integration of relevant theoretical insights to fully support her development.

The same issue occurred with the possibility parameter, which could have been explored much more extensively. A deeper engagement with criticality would have allowed Alice to not only reflect on instructional choices but also critically analyze their implications and underlying assumptions. Without a more thorough exploration of this aspect, her ability to engage in independent, well-informed pedagogical reasoning remains constrained.

Although I asked questions and occasionally referenced theoretical concepts, Alice's engagement remains somewhat fragmented. This suggests that Alice required

mediation that was more strategic and sustained in relation to the parameters. A more structured and responsive mediation approach would have enabled her to become more aware of concepts in a way that would foster more independent instructional reasoning.

Summing up, as I look back, I recognize several moments where I could have been more strategic. However, the study ultimately became a learning experience and a form of self-mediation that, in retrospect, would likely now lead me to adopt a more directive and targeted approach in practice.

CHAPTER 5

FINAL REMARKS

This chapter aims at summarizing the main findings of the present study as well as raising pedagogical implications, presenting its limitations and suggesting possibilities for further research. In order to do so, this chapter is divided into three sections. Section 5.1 outlines the main findings of the study, which emerged from the qualitative data analysis, addressing first the general question and then the specific ones. After that, section 5.2 discusses the pedagogical implications obtained from the findings. Finally, section 5.3 addresses the study's limitations and proposes directions for future research.

5.1 MAIN FINDINGS

This study aimed to explore how an EFL teacher develops the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation. By investigating Alice's journey through a microgenetic study, the research sought to investigate if responsive mediation sessions, based on Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory, could foster an EFL teacher's understanding and performance of the postmethod approach in her teaching practice. The study examined three specific research questions, which shaped the analysis and reflections presented. The specific research questions were: (i) To what extent does an EFL teacher initially understand the postmethod approach and teach in accordance with it?; (ii) How does her understanding of the postmethod approach and her classroom practice change as her pedagogical choices are inquired into and responsive mediation is offered?; (iii) In what ways can the changes in her understanding and classroom practice be attributed to the mentor's inquiry and mediation?

In the following subsection, I will address both the specific and general research questions, drawing upon the data analysis presented in the previous chapter.

5.1.1 General Research Question

How does an EFL teacher develop the robustness of her reasoning teaching through mentor-guided inquiry and responsive mediation?

The results indicate that Alice's pedagogical reasoning gradually evolved through responsive mediation sessions, which combined targeted inquiry and dialogic reflections. In every session, I identified gaps in the teacher's comprehension of the postmethod approach and its parameters and then provided explicit or implicit interventions, aligned to the teacher's emergent needs. This created a "twisting path" of advance, review and conceptual refinement.

By the end of the study, Alice was able to name and apply several principles of the postmethod approach more consciously and to make pedagogical decisions more clearly grounded in both contextual realities and theoretical frameworks. However, considering that robust reasoning is viewed in this study through the lens of Johnson's definition - as a more advanced form of reasoning that is resilient, well-founded and adaptable to a variety of challenges - her reasoning did not become fully autonomous and robust, as she still relied on external prompts to articulate the parameters in depth.

The following subsections explore the specific research questions and trace the key stages of her developmental process.

5.1.2 Specific Research Question 1

To what extent does an EFL teacher initially understand the postmethod approach and teach in accordance with it?

To assess Alice's initial grasp of the postmethod approach, a semi-structured interview was conducted prior to the responsive mediation sessions. The findings reveal that she began with a superficial understanding of the three postmethod parameters - particularity, practicality and, especially, possibility - viewing them as distant theoretical labels rather than concepts immediately applicable to her teaching. For instance, in general terms she could distinguish that postmethod is a theory rather than a prescriptive method, yet she could not articulate what this distinction means in classroom practice.

More specifically, the parameter of particularity was the parameter she understood best: she readily described it as the need to adapt lessons to individual student profiles. As for practicality, she recognized that activities should align with specific lesson objectives, but her explanation stopped there - she did not reference any pedagogical theories she might draw on to make those decisions. Finally,

possibility proved most problematic; Alice was unable to explain what this parameter was intended to convey.

This lack of depth indicates that the postmethod concepts remained highly abstract in Alice's mind and needed to be concretely worked through via responsive mediation during ZPD activity. In other words, at the study's outset, the postmethod parameters neither informed her practice nor shaped her reasoning and decision-making.

Classroom observations corroborated these interview insights: early in the observation cycle, Alice's teaching was largely intuitive, aligning with Vygotsky's (1986) notion of everyday concepts. For example, in MS1, she selected content that genuinely interested her student, yet when asked about the lesson's objective she referred only to the grammatical topic. It was only after I explicitly explained what the postmethod approach "claims" that she was able to connect the theory to her practice, highlighting just how intuitive her choices had been. This also demonstrates that, even with a basic grasp of postmethod principles, such an understanding was rarely sufficient to break away from more structural, prescriptive teaching methods. In addition to struggling to link theory and practice on her own, she was unable to name the theoretical framework underpinning her actions.

Overall, Alice's initial understanding of the postmethod approach - and her teaching in line with it - appeared to be abstract, intuitive and vague, highlighting the need for a stronger theoretical foundation and responsive mediation to bridge these concepts with her pedagogical practice.

5.1.3 Specific Research Question 2

How does her understanding of the postmethod approach and her classroom practice change as her pedagogical choices are inquired into and responsive mediation is offered?

Alice's pedagogical practice and reasoning improved progressively through a twisting path during the mediation sessions. As these sessions progressed, a twofold movement of (i) reflection and (ii) application emerged: (i) By the end of the study, Alice could provide more nuanced justifications for her choices - naming parameters, questioning her procedures, and reasoning with greater confidence; (ii) In the

classroom, she replaced mechanical activities with intentionally contextualized tasks and incorporated moments of cultural and critical discussion.

In the early sessions (MS 1 - 2), Alice's use of postmethod principles was largely intuitive and unvoiced: she picked topics that resonated with her students but could not yet name or theoretically justify those choices, relying on explicit mediation to bridge her everyday practices with scientific concepts. This also corroborates with Cazden's (1981) claim about performance and cognition not necessarily developing together, considering that, in this case, Alice's performance preceded her competence. During these two first sessions, Alice engaged in collaborative ZPD activity where the parameters of the postmethod approach initially exceeded her current capabilities. Through substantial explicit mediation, she, in a guided way, participated in the process of identifying and connecting her teaching practices with the underlying principles, gradually expanding her developmental possibilities within the learning interaction.

As the sessions progressed (by mid-point MS 3 - 7), she began to respond more readily to prompts - reframing grammar instruction, critiquing pedagogical strategies and using contextualized. While she continued relying on me to articulate and anchor her reflections, she was more actively participating in our ZPD activities. This engagement signaled her increasing ability to grasp the principles with support, illustrating the ongoing process of learning and development.

The later MS sessions marked a transformative phase: in MS 8–10, Alice began to name multiple postmethod parameters with increasing initiative, bringing some theoretical principles into her practice and reflecting on her choices with more confidence. While these references were not always entirely spontaneous, she often anticipated my prompts or mentioned the concepts with less insistence or guidance on my part. In these sessions, Alice was more firmly engaged in ZPD activity, where the principles of the postmethod approach became more accessible through dialogic interaction. Continued mediation allowed her to participate more actively in making connections between theory and practice — a process that, in earlier stages, depended heavily on my intervention to occur.

The following paragraphs provide a detailed and precise account of Alice's reasoning and teaching evolution across each mediation session, making her professional development trajectory more visible.

In MS1, Alice's initial use of particularity emerged intuitively: she chose the lesson topic based on her student's interests but was unable to articulate this rationale until prompted, showing that theory did not yet inform her decisions. She failed to distinguish between the objectives of a determined activity and this required explicitly defining and linking the postmethod parameters to her practice.

In MS2, again, Alice applied particularity intuitively - selecting topics based on student interests - but she could not name or discuss the parameter on her own. Her inability to verbalize any parameter necessitated another round of explicit mediation, guiding her to connect her decisions more consciously to theory. As the mentor, I used a strategic mix of implicit prompts (reflective questions) and explicit naming of parameters, demonstrating responsive mediation tailored to Alice's ZPD.

MS3 was marked by a more inquiry-based mediation letting Alice begin her own analyses (e.g., "What was your intention with this topic?"). This signaled that Alice had reached a new ZPD level within our joint activity where she could reflect with support. She consistently chose meaningful themes - showing continued intuitive use of particularity - still without naming it. When she brought grammar disconnected from the theme, Alice asked for help ("Can you help me?"), indicating the "limit" of her ZPD activity for that moment. I then explicitly reintroduced particularity and practicality to help her reintegrate grammar into the lesson. Alice continued to rely on intuitive explanations and needed explicit theoretical clarification.

Alice once more selected a relevant topic intuitively in MS4, again without naming particularity and repeated an earlier error by asking a student to read out loud in a reading comprehension activity. When questioned, she remembered the prior mediation and recognized the student's difficulty, showing how experience facilitated theoretical understanding. She hit another ZPD "limit" when she sought a prompt ("Can you refresh my mind?"), at which point I explicitly defined particularity and practicality.

This time, in MS5, Alice not only prioritized the topic of the lesson but also spontaneously integrated the target grammar, showing greater balance between linguistic and contextual goals. She chose silent reading over pronunciation checks, bringing theory to life, and omitted the grammar box in favor of meaningful questions - evidence of a shift toward contextualized grammar. When challenged, she named particularity for the first time, marking a milestone in her conceptual development. This aligns with Vygotsky's assertion that a concept only becomes a true tool for thought once its name is known and familiar (Vygotsky, 1986).

Alice confidently recalled only particularity in MS6, indicating that this concept had become more. She nevertheless repeated a mechanical fill-in-the-blanks vocabulary activity despite student disengagement, illustrating persistent “mindless behavior.” Her oscillation between clarity in applying particularity and uncertainty about the other parameters illustrates the non-linear nature of professional growth. The session also highlighted the challenge of reinforcing all three parameters equally, as practicality and possibility received less attention than particularity.

In MS7, Alice aligned lessons and activities with students’ interests again and named particularity when prompted. I guided her to see how she could have used possibility - promoting critical reflection and cultural awareness. Though she still needed mediation to fully articulate the parameters, Alice offered her own insights into what made activities effective. Grammar appeared contextually rather than as abstract charts. Overall, she applied postmethod principles more consistently but continued to rely on prompts for theoretical naming, underscoring the need for sustained, ongoing, intentional mediation, as Johnson (2009) posits.

MS8 culminated in Alice demonstrating a broader grasp of multiple parameters, naming them with minimal intervention. By recalling and applying particularity, possibility and practicality, she showed increased autonomy in her pedagogical reasoning.

In MS9, Alice once more named the parameters when prompted, though she still depended on questions to deepen her reflections, indicating the ongoing nature of the ZPD activity. Additionally, she was able to make more confident connections between theory and practice.

In the final session, MS10, Alice reported having deliberately followed all three parameters: particularity when choosing “makeup” instead of “cooking” to match the student’s preference; practicality when using the student’s own makeup kit to introduce sequencing language (“first,” “next,” etc.); and possibility leading a critical discussion on the “right age” to start wearing makeup. She named each parameter clearly and explained her pedagogical decisions with confidence. While her reasoning cannot be considered fully robust, MS10 marks her transition from intuitive practice to a more intentional, theory-driven approach, laying a solid foundation for her ongoing development as an educator.

In summary, across the 10 mediation sessions Alice’s trajectory clearly illustrates a progression from intuitive, everyday practices to a more conscious and

theoretical pedagogy. This non-linear, “twisting path” underscores how responsive mediation can support teachers’ movement from unconscious performance toward a more consciously informed instructional stance.

5.1.4 Specific Research Question 3

In what ways can the changes in her understanding and classroom practice be attributed to the mentor’s inquiry and mediation?

It is well established that the nature of mediation directly influences a mentee's cognitive and pedagogical development. In this study, Alice’s initial grasp of postmethod concepts can be attributed to my interventions. Early on, heavy explicitness helped introduce those new concepts. By repeatedly naming the parameters - particularly when Alice struggled to recall them - I helped transform unclear, intuitive practices into explicit “scientific concepts” that Alice could reflect upon and discuss. After defining each parameter, I consistently demonstrated its use to Alice’s real classroom decisions. For instance, after Alice described a “video about neighbors” warm-up, I explicitly connected it to possibility by showing how she could use it to spark critical cultural reflection.

Gradually, the bridge between theory and practice shifted through a balance with more implicit prompts, encouraging Alice to generate her own insights. This balance of implicit prompts (questions that encouraged Alice to reflect) and explicit explanations (direct naming and definition of parameters) was adjusted session by session, ensuring that mediation was responsive to Alice’s participation in the ZPD activity and supported her evolving engagement with the principles. In each mediation session, I used open-ended, diagnostic questions (e.g., “What was your intention with this topic?”; “How could you have connected that activity to the lesson objectives?”) to identify gaps in Alice’s conceptual understanding. By identifying exactly where her knowledge stood, I could tailor follow-up support to her emerging needs.

Additionally, whenever Alice reverted to mechanical or decontextualized activities (e.g., fill-in-the-blank drills, pronunciation checks disguised as comprehension tasks), I intervened with reflective inquiries (“Why choose this activity?”; “What do you think your student gained from this drill?”). By challenging habitual routines, I tried to encourage Alice to replace “mindless behavior” with purposeful, theory-grounded choices.

Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that Alice achieved fully autonomous, robust reasoning teaching by the end of the study, likely because the mediation concluded shortly after I shifted predominantly to an implicit approach. Moreover, I did not maintain a consistent approach to all the parameters in every mediation session, which may have affected the teacher's ability to advance her deep understanding of the concepts. Sustained, long-term mediation - specifically focused on consolidating practicality and possibility - might have further deepened her conceptual knowledge and supported a more enduring transformation in her teaching reasoning.

5.2 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The insights gained from this study contribute to understanding the development of the teacher's expertise within the postmethod approach and offer valuable perspectives for enhancing teacher education practices. Hopefully, the findings may inform the implementation of effective professional development across diverse educational contexts.

This study underscores the importance of intentionally supporting teacher development - whether for novices or experienced educators - through a structured, theory-based mentoring approach. Drawing on Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory and on a sociocultural perspective to teacher education, our findings demonstrate that responsive mediation is the engine of professional growth: it is through intentional, dialogic interactions with a more experienced other that teachers move from intuitive practice to conceptually grounded pedagogy.

A key implication is the need to design methods and mediation with clear intentionality. Mentors must thoughtfully choose when to use explicit mediation (naming and defining theoretical constructs) and when to adopt a more implicit, inquiry-based stance (asking open-ended questions that prompt teachers to generate their own insights). Calibrating this balance ensures that support stays attuned to the Zone of Proximal Development activities established in the mentor-mentee interaction and fosters autonomy over time.

Another critical lesson from this research is the power of naming. Introducing concepts by name and repeatedly linking them to concrete classroom examples can

transform everyday practices into tools for reflective thinking. By making terminology familiar, mentors enable teachers to articulate and refine their decision-making, accelerating the shift from intuitive strategies to theory-informed ones.

Finally, this study also highlights the importance of managing cognitive load for mentees. While it may be tempting to address multiple theoretical principles at once, effective mediation requires pacing: each concept needs enough time and repetition to move from the social plane into a teacher's individual repertoire. In this work, although three postmethod parameters were introduced, only one - particularity - reached significant consolidation by the end of the sessions; the other two remained part of the teachers' ongoing ZPD activity, requiring further guided exploration. Teacher educators should therefore prioritize depth over quantity, ensuring that each concept is explored sufficiently before introducing additional ones.

By embedding these practices - responsive, ZPD-anchored mediation, intentional use of explicit and implicit strategies, strategic naming of concepts, and careful pacing - teacher education programs can more effectively guide educators along their own twisting paths toward robust, reflective, and adaptive teaching.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Despite offering rich insights into how responsive mediation can foster the development of pedagogical reasoning, this study has some limitations that point to directions for future research. First, the study focused on only one EFL teacher, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could replicate this design with multiple participants across different contexts (e.g., public vs. private schools; primary vs. secondary levels) to determine whether the observed mediation effects hold more broadly.

The second limitation is about timeframe and concept load. Ten mediation sessions were conducted over a single academic semester. Introducing and working with three postmethod parameters within this period placed considerable cognitive demand on the teacher and may have prevented deeper understanding of all concepts. Subsequent studies might focus on fewer parameters at a time or extend the duration of mediation - perhaps across two semesters - to allow more sustained engagement and consolidation.

Third, while immediate improvements in Alice's reasoning and practice were evident, the study did not include follow-up observations or interviews to assess whether these changes persisted beyond the mediation period. Rather than viewing this solely as a limitation, it presents an exciting avenue for further research. Longitudinal studies, such as post-intervention observations conducted several months later, would provide deeper insights into the durability of conceptual understanding. Examining whether Alice's engagement with postmethod principles remains stable, evolves, or fades over time could significantly enrich our comprehension of how mediated reflection influences long-term pedagogical development.

Summing up, this study has highlighted the significance of responsive mediation in teacher education, emphasizing the essential role of dialogue between mentor and mentee in fostering a more grounded pedagogical mindset. By bridging theory and practice, the findings suggest promising directions for the evolution of teacher training programs, particularly the need for further research that examines teachers' trajectories beyond the mentorship phase. Given the dynamic nature of teacher learning, future studies could specifically further explore the sustainability of these changes, contributing to the design of more responsive and contextually relevant teacher education programs.

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