Bridging the gap between theory and practice through blogging:

Researchers' and language teachers' experiences engaging with an SLE research blog

Melissa J. Enns

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the potential for blogging as a means to bridge the gap between theory and practice in second language education (SLE) and promote collaboration between researchers and practitioners in the field. A research-based language education blog was used as a platform on which graduate student SLE researchers published short, conceptually accessible summaries of research once a week over a three-month period. In turn, language teachers (LTs) were recruited to follow the blog and publish comments on the posts. Comments on the blog were collected and analyzed, and near the end of the study, visitors to the site were invited to fill in a questionnaire about their experiences with the blog. Interviews were conducted with four LT readers in Montreal, two in Regina, and three graduate student blog post contributors in order to assess how engagement with the project stimulated their beliefs, practices, and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research. Results showed that all participants engaged in meaningful reflection about their beliefs and practices. Although collaborative dialogue was scarce among LT participants on the blog site, blog post contributors felt that they had engaged in collaboration with LT readers through reading and responding readers' comments on their posts. LTs expressed a desire for in-person opportunities for collaborative discussion and curriculum design. In all, the study shows some promise for blogging as a means to connect theory and practice, but blogging alone may be insufficient to fully unite the two.

Keywords: second language education, blogging, theory-practice gap, reflection, collaborative learning, dialogue

Résumé

Cette étude qualitative examine le potentiel de l’écriture de blogue comme moyen de combler l’écart entre la théorie et la pratique dans le domaine de l’éducation en langue seconde (l’ELS) et de promouvoir la collaboration entre les chercheurs et les praticiens. Un blog traitant de la recherche en enseignement des langues secondes a été utilisé comme plateforme pour des chercheurs aux études supérieures afin de de publier courts articles de recherche conceptuellement accessibles. Sur une période de trois mois, quelques professeurs de langue (PLs) ont été recrutés pour suivre le blog et publier des commentaires. Les commentaires ont été collectés et analysés, et vers la fin de l’étude, les visiteurs du site ont été invités à remplir un questionnaire pour partager leurs expériences de participation au blog. Trois entrevues ont été menées avec quatre PLs à Montréal, deux PLs à Regina et trois contributeurs d’études supérieures afin d’évaluer comment leur implication dans le projet a stimulé leurs croyances, leurs pratiques et leurs idées à propos de l’enseignement des langues et la recherche en enseignement des langues secondes. Les résultats ont démontré que tous les participants ont été engagés dans une réflexion significative sur leurs croyances et leurs pratiques, mais il y eu peu de dialogue collaboratif entre les participants PL. Toutefois, les contributeurs croyaient qu’ils collaboraient avec leurs lecteurs PL à travers la lecture et les réponses aux commentaires publiés sur le blog. Les PLs ont exprimé un désir d’avoir l’opportunité de participer à des discussions en personne afin de développer des programmes d’enseignement. En somme, l’étude montre que bloguer constitue un moyen de connecter la théorie avec la pratique, mais peut-être n’est-ce pas suffisant pour unir entièrement les deux.

Mots clés : enseignement des langues secondes, bloguer, écart entre la théorie et la pratique, réflexion, dialogue collaboratif

Acknowledgements

I am a firm believer that few of life's achievements could occur without support and encouragement from others. In addition to copious amounts of coffee and tea and sunlit work spaces filled with plants, this thesis has been fueled by the support of several important people.

First of all, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger. Thank you for catching details I missed, for your steady encouragement, and for the countless times you offered a fresh perspective and assured me that I did not need to panic. I could not have asked for a better supervisor.

I also wish to extend my thanks to Dr. Mela Sarkar and Dr. Alison Crump, whose willingness to let me blog for final projects and great enthusiasm about both my blog and the idea to turn it into a thesis project gave me the push I needed to make this study happen.

Next, I offer my heartfelt appreciation to the loved ones who have supported and cheered for me throughout the entirety of this process. I would particularly like to thank my parents, Jon and Darlene, for their steadfast support and for being there for me at all hours throughout the joys and tears of the process, my sisters for letting me vent, and my extended family for their support and encouragement. Thank you to Oscar for believing in me, reminding me that I can do it, and being so willing to support me in any possible way. I also wish to acknowledge the people of City Church for the refreshment they have brought to my life and the important role of my faith, which has carried me through as I have navigated the challenges and stresses of this thesis.

Finally, thank you to Terry and Stewart. I could not—or at least would not—have taken the leap of going to grad school without your enthusiastic encouragement and generous support. You have made this dream possible. Words cannot express my gratitude, but as a small token of my thanks, I dedicate this thesis to you.

Table of Contents

Tables

Figures

Chapter 1: Why Build Bridges?

The metaphor of a bridge is powerful precisely because it evokes images of connection between two sides that are otherwise inaccessible to each other. The motivation for the current study comes from two events in my career that highlighted the existence of an unbridged gap between theory and practice in second language education (SLE) in a personal way. The first occurred during her years as a teacher of ESL in an academic preparatory school, when I (a full-time ESL teacher at the time) was given pedagogical advice which did not resonate with my conscience. Upon beginning my graduate studies, I discovered that the advice I had been given was contrary to current research findings and potentially damaging to students' self-perceptions and motivation. The second event that contributed to the advent of the current study was the creation of a blog called Ramblings of a Linguaphile as part of two of my final projects in master's level second language education (SLE) courses. The blog was intended to condense SLE research and make it practical for an audience that might not otherwise have access to it. As I began to write posts dealing with topics about which I had previously been uninformed, I began to become curious about the potential of blogs to connect teachers with research by making theoretical concepts and pedagogical implications available to language teachers (LTs) in a shorter and more accessible format than research articles. Could blogging be a viable bridge? Thus, the current study was born.

1.1. Objectives and Organization

The current study had two primary objectives. The first was to assess the potential for blogging in bridging the gap between theory and practice in SLE. This assessment was conducted by examining the experiences of graduate student researchers and practicing LTs with research-based blogging. The second objective was to examine how LTs' and graduate student researchers' experiences with the blog contributed to development of their beliefs, practices, and understandings about language teaching and SLE research. To that end, in Chapter 2 I provide a review of the literature that informs the study, beginning with research highlighting the existence of a gap between theory and practice in second language education (SLE). In Chapter 3, I state the research questions and describes the research design. Next, I present the results of the study for LTs and for graduate student blog post contributors in Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5, I draw from data from the results in order to answer the research questions and offer further discussion. Finally, Chapter 6 includes my discussion of the implications and limitations of the study, my recommendations for further study, and a few concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

This chapter outlines the literature that informs the current study and provides lenses for analysis. To begin, I discuss the gap between research and practice, paying particular attention to the causes of this disconnection and various suggestions that have been made for connecting the two sides. Next, I describe previous attempts to bridge the gap in the field of SLE and highlight certain aspects for the current study. The subsequent section introduces the research supporting the use of blogs as a tool for professional development among both researchers and teachers, followed by a description of the theoretical constructs underlying the use of blogs in this way. After that, I outline the benefits of blogging and define and discuss the concepts of reflection, collaborative learning, and negotiation of identity. Finally, I identify certain gaps in the literature.

2.1. The Gap between Theory and Practice

It is well attested that there is a general gap between theory and practice in the domain of education (Dewey, 1904; Kagan, 1992; Korthagen, 2007) and within the field of second language education (SLE) specifically (Ellis, 2005; Erlam, 2008; Light & Gnida, 2012; Rossiter, Abbott, & Kushnir, 2016; Larsen-Freeman, 2015). This gap is manifested as a disconnection between the findings of research in the field and the pedagogical practices used in the classroom. In other words, despite the facts that many teacher training programs do include a good deal of theoretical instruction (see Richards, 2008) and some schools actively encourage educators to engage in different types of teacher-led research (see García & Traugh, 2002; Richards & Farrell, 2005), there is nevertheless a tendency for emerging research and its implications for teaching beliefs and practices to have little or no bearing on the day-to-day pedagogical decisions of teachers (Kagan, 1992; Labaree, 2003; Belcher, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2015).

Within the field of SLE, Ellis (2005) comments that many second language acquisition (SLA) theories, such as skill acquisition theory, input processing theory, and instructed second language learning, are practically-oriented, having been developed with language pedagogy as a specific aim; however, he notes that these accounts are not always in agreement with each other and that SLA research fails to offer consistent accounts of how instructors may effectively facilitate language learning using these theories. Erlam (2008) notes that SLA theory has shown "increasing alienation from the concerns of the practitioner" (pp. 253-254). In addition, Larsen-Freeman (2015) conducted a literature review focused on the effects of research on grammar instruction practices, arguing that despite a modest impact in some areas, "grammar instruction has been relatively unaltered by research findings" (p.263). These are just a few examples of research confirming the presence of a disconnection between theory and practice in SLE. This gap is highly problematic, in part because of the evolving nature of research and theoretical work in education. Labaree (2003) describes the field of education as constantly being restructured in response to "context-based and time-sensitive" (p. 67) needs and demands that arise through factors such as government policies, requirements by academic institutions, the demands of parents, and the social factors driving each of these. These "public goals" (Labaree, 2003, p. 67) necessitate research that is timely and relevant to the evolving needs and goals of education, both real and perceived. Since theoretical work in education is shaped by changing demands and social realities, it follows that it is important that teachers remain up to date by staying abreast of research.

In addition to broader, shifting sociopolitical realities, a brief examination of the evolution of SLA theories reinforces the importance of current knowledge in SLE. According to VanPatten and Williams (2015), early (pre-1990s) approaches to language education—most notably, the Audio-Lingual Method—were centred in structuralism and the psychological theory of behaviourism. However, empirical research began to "demonstrate major problems with the structuralist-behaviorist account of language learning" (VanPatten & Williams, 2015, p. 17). From that point, many varying accounts of language acquisition have emerged (VanPatten & Williams, 2015; Ellis, 2010), providing an array of strategies and mindsets which may be adapted for modern language classrooms. Since aspects of various theories are constantly being subjected to scrutiny, it may be argued that LTs who do not consult the findings of current research from time to time risk using practices that have been found to be ineffective.

Many researchers have described different benefits of teachers' engagement with current academic literature, championing the notion that teachers should be engaged as critical consumers of research for their own benefit and that of the field (Belcher, 2007; Erlam, 2008; Light & Gnida, 2012). In an extensive review of literature on teacher engagement with research, Borg (2010), for example, concludes that some of the benefits LTs may find through engaging with research include new ways of making sense of the work they do, new ideas to try in the classroom, extended discourse for talking about teaching, theoretical rationale to support and validate pre-existing knowledge, and self-examination of their planning and decision-making processes (resulting in and stemming from new ways of thinking) (p. 414). Despite these professional benefits, however, this engagement with research is seldom seen (Hemsley-Brown & Sharp 2003; Belcher, 2007; Erlam, 2008; Light & Gnida, 2012).

2.1.1. Causes of the gap. Researchers have posited explanations for the existence of this gap between theory and practice. Some of the reasons for teachers' lack of engagement with research are highly pragmatic in nature, including issues such as time, energy, and classroom demands. LTs are typically extremely busy and lack time to engage with research (Belcher, 2007; Erlam, 2008; Light & Gnida, 2012; Borg, 2010). As Belcher (2007) states, "teachers, with more students than discretionary hours in the day, may have little time and energy for keeping up with research that could inform their decision making" (p. 397). Moreover, immediate, practical needs of the classroom often serve as the primary guide for teachers' responses and decisions (Korthagen, 2007). As Korthagen (2007) notes, teachers regularly need to respond quickly to diverse situations, contexts, and external pressures, such as students' response to lessons and materials. Light and Gnida (2012) point out that issues such as access to a photocopy machine, class attendance, students' motivation, and daily classroom dynamics dominate teachers' decisions over aspects directly related to language acquisition. Given these myriad pressing decisions that need to be made moment by moment, most of LTs' immediate concerns tend to be removed from those of SLE researchers, which, as Light and Gnida (2012) state, "perhaps points to why with their limited time and resources, teachers often do not prioritize the time and the effort to access, read, and apply research findings to their contexts" (p. 142). Indeed, the constant stream of concerns and decisions teachers face throughout their day creates a drain on their energy and cognitive resources (Korthagen, 2007; Light & Gnida, 2012), which may further deter them from tackling the additional work of reading research papers on their own time.

In addition to issues of time, energy, and the urgency of immediate practical concerns, there are also problems with the accessibility of SLE research to teachers, both physically and conceptually (Borg, 2010; Light & Gnida, 2012; Montgomery & Smith, 2015; Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017). Borg (2010) examines several publications to discover that many teachers do not have physical access to published SLE research, while those who do may struggle to understand what is written. In an extensive literature review exploring how teachers use research and what may encourage them to incorporate research findings into their own practice, Hemsley-

Brown and Sharp (2004) specifically note that factors such as academic jargon, complex statistics, sheer volume of research articles, and ambiguity within them have been found to deter teachers from reading and/or understanding research. Thus, issues of physical and conceptual accessibility constitute an additional pragmatic barrier to teachers' engagement with research.

Issue of teachers' limited time and the length of many research articles are exacerbated by the fact that these articles may not contain anything of practical use to teacher readers. Erlam (2008) refers to the importance of producing research that is relevant to teachers and their experiences, and Hemsley-Brown and Sharp (2004) note that some teachers voice a preference that "research should exclusively identify strategies and techniques that could have a direct impact on their teaching" (p. 10). However, Belcher (2007) points out that SLE researchers frequently show reluctance to offer pedagogical advice in the implications sections of their papers, owing to the "partial state of knowledge in their research area" and about language pedagogy (Belcher, 2007, p. 398). Montgomery and Smith (2015), also emphasize this point, stating that "responsible researchers try to be careful not to make assertions for which they do not feel they have adequate evidence, and limit the conclusions they draw from their research to statements that can be directly supported by the data they have analyzed" (p. 102). The authors point out that certain conventions which are useful to researcher readers (such as the inclusion of detailed descriptions of study design and methods) can be seen as unnecessary to teachers (Montgomery & Smith, 2015). Moreover, Montgomery and Smith (2015) observe that teachers frequently "express frustration with how 'out of touch' academic articles seem to be with the day-to-day realities" of classrooms (p. 100), a point also acknowledged by Borg (2010), who comments that there is often a mismatch between the lived in-classroom experience of language teachers and the portrayals of language teaching and learning found in research papers. If educators are going to take the time to read research, they at least want to look at material that has practical applications for their contexts (Ellis 2005; Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2004; Borg, 2010). Understandably, teachers are largely unmotivated to ready lengthy and difficult articles without the promise of being presented with practical suggestions for the language classroom.

Overarching the pragmatic factors discouraging teachers' engagement with research, teachers' own perceptions concerning research may additionally hinder them from seeking it out. Borg (2010) and Montgomery and Smith (2015), for example, state that teachers may often have negative perceptions and even suspicion of research. However, Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) examine two previous studies to assess the extent to which research directly or indirectly "finds (or has the potential to find) its way into the hands and minds of practitioners" (p. 614), assessing the degree to which teachers perceive themselves to be hindered by various pragmatic factors. The results showed that negative perceptions about research or its usefulness had a relatively small influence on teacher's lack of engagement with research. Rather, teachers reported practical constraints—especially time—as the greatest hindrance to engagement with research, followed by issues of access and understanding (Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017). Although the study only considered 183 respondents in the United Kingdom, these results suggest that researchers should not assume that teachers are unwilling to engage with research.

2.1.1.1. A gap between professional cultures. In addition to the pragmatic factors hindering teachers from engaging with research, there is a general lack of collaboration between researchers and practitioners in education. Korthagen (2007) concludes that "the gap between research and practice is most of all a gap between professional cultures" (p. 304). Throughout the literature, researchers have commented on a division of knowledge into two categories—one theoretically oriented and the other practically or pedagogically focused. Korthagen differentiates between *formal* (theoretical) and *practical* knowledge, while Ellis (1997) describes opposition between *technical* (research-based) and *procedural* (pedagogically-motivated) knowledge in SLE. According to Ellis (1997), technical knowledge is explicit and testable, while procedural knowledge is implicit, intuitive, and experiential. Erlam (2008) similarly distinguishes between *technical* and *practical* knowledge. The polarization of the two types of knowledge is paralleled by a separation of researcher and practitioner communities based on differing views concerning the purposes and value of research (Montgomery & Smith, 2015).

Teachers' bias toward practical knowledge likely stems from the urgency of the pragmatic issues described previously, as they are highly contextual concerns that lend themselves to experientially-based ways of thinking (Labaree, 2003), so that teachers' classroom responses are most often based on "action-guiding" (Korthagen, 2007, p. 306) practical knowledge and are seldom rooted in theoretical work. Light and Gnida (2012)'s findings support this claim, indicating that LTs' decision-making tends to be centred on practical instructional concerns over theory-based language acquisition considerations. As Labaree (2003) states, experienced teachers tend to view their classroom as unique and known only to them, so that their "own experience as practitioners naturally emerges as their primary bank of professional knowledge" (p. 100), contributing to a strongly "experience-based sense of teaching as a radically particularistic practice" (p. 99). Kagan (1992) and Labaree (2003) additionally note that teachers' highly contextualized experience often forms the lens through which they interpret what happens in the classroom, regardless of other data they may encounter. Not only do they form their own "informal, contextual, highly personal theories from their own personal experiences" (Kagan, 1992, p. 163), but the overemphasis on personal experience also contributes to a belief that "only teachers have the expertise to speak with authority about the teaching and learning of their own students" (Labaree, 2003, p. 100). As a result, when teachers do read theoretical work, they usually understand and interpret it in light of their own experience (Kagen, 1992; Labaree, 2003; Korthagen, 2007; Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2004).

Due to their high valuation of personal experience, teachers' beliefs about education are often highly resistant to change (Korthagen, 2007). They may reject the ideas found in research altogether because they deem them irrelevant to their own contexts and experiences (Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2004; Korthagen, 2007; Borg, 2010), believing that there are "no ideas or theories… that will be of any use to them in dealing with their own unique pedagogical problems" (Labaree, 2003, p. 99). As Labaree (2003) notes, "no matter how much data authors bring to the table or how effectively they make their arguments, personal experience still can carry the day" (p. 100). Thus, the tendency to privilege practical, experiential knowledge can be problematic in that it may isolate teachers from the broader contexts of education as a whole (Labaree, 2003) or espouse dubiousness about the usefulness of research to their practice.

Although a one-sided focus on experiential knowledge detracts from broader (theoretical) understandings of the field, it is important to bear in mind that experiential knowledge is both valid and useful and that a one-sided focus on theoretical knowledge would also be detrimental. Researchers such as Labaree (2003) and Erlam (2008) acknowledge the validity and richness of teachers' experiential knowledge and its potential to play a role in informing research. Whereas teachers are more knowledgeable than researchers about the particular characteristics of individual classrooms, Labaree (2003) comments that researchers "are in a better position to put these characteristics in perspective, by comparing them with other… settings and by viewing them through the normalizing lens of theory" (p. 101). However, Korthagen (2007) observes that researchers tend to "focus too one-sidedly on formal [theoretical] knowledge" (p. 307), and

Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) and Montgomery and Smith (2015) note that because of peer review processes, researchers are pushed to publish for researcher audiences rather than teachers. Labaree (2003) reminds readers that research should ultimately improve education and offer teachers "concepts, generalizations, [and] theories… that make sense of educational processes across contexts" (Labaree, 2003, p. 100). Thus, research in education has an obligation to provide knowledge which may contribute to the improvement of the field, a goal which is stymied by division in the aims and perceptions of researcher and practitioner communities.

2.1.2. Working toward solutions. Having identified various causes contributing to the theory-practice gap in education, several steps have been suggested in bridging it. Many researchers call for collaboration between researchers and practitioners (Belcher, 2007; Korthagen, 2007; Montgomery & Smith, 2015; Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017). Korthagen (2007), for example, analyzes six articles addressing the relationship between theory and practice to conclude that "there is a strong need for researchers and practitioners to build joint communities, bringing together both a research and a practical focus" (p. 304). Similarly, Belcher (2007) argues that there is a need for "collaboration between language teachers and researchers as professionals who can inform each other in research and teaching" (p. 398), while Montgomery and Smith (2015) encourage the "mutually beneficial sharing of experience and expertise between both groups" (p. 100). Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) additionally urge that "teachers [should] critically engage with research evidence and researchers engage with practice throughout the research process" (p. 614). Through collaboration, both LTs and researchers may benefit from each other's knowledge and perspectives.

This sort of collaboration has various entailments. For one thing, it requires a willingness from both researchers and practitioners to see SLE research "through the eyes of those who work in other contexts" (Montgomery & Smith, 2015, p. 104). Researchers, for their part, should recall the impact their work is meant to have on teaching practice (Labaree, 2003) and attempt to be more accommodating of teachers' practical limitations of time and conceptual accessibility. Several authors suggest that researchers create modified and conceptually accessible summaries of their research for teachers (Ellis, 1997; Erlam, 2008; Borg, 2010; Light & Gnida, 2012), a notion which has been confirmed by teachers themselves. Although Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) found that only about 12% of the references listed in professional journals for teachers in three contexts were from research journals, many teachers in the study suggested that "distilling research findings into nontechnical summaries that are disseminated via practitioner outlets would facilitate access" (Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017, p. 629). As Erlam (2008) points out, providing research in condensed format aids in bridging the discourse domains of theoretical and practical knowledge and addresses "the problem of the sheer volume of research literature available and the little time that is available for practitioners" (p. 255). Summaries also give teachers a simple point of reference for comparison with their classroom practices (Light & Gnida, 2012), and Montgomery and Smith (2015) point out that researchers may even use multimedia and visual formats to extend the impact of their work. Researchers may, thus, play a role in bridging the gap between theory and practice providing such resources.

Suggestions have also been made concerning how research should be read by teacher audiences in order to maximize its pedagogical potential. Labaree (2003) suggests that teachers should examine research for areas in which the contexts and situations of a given study overlap with elements of their own context and identify practices that they can "adopt or adapt in order to meet their own pedagogical needs" (p. 100). He reminds readers that research ought to provide

> “a theoretical mirror, which teachers can hold up to their own problems of practice in order to see the ways their problems are both similar to and different from those facing teachers in other settings.” (Labaree, 2003, p. 100)

Similarly, Ellis (2010) observes that “it is ultimately the teacher who must determine the relevance of SLA constructs and findings for teaching” (p. 14) but cautions that these sections should be treated as ideas for experimentation and not as prescriptive lists of rules. Indeed, Larsen-Freeman (2015) asserts that “perhaps the most important contribution of research to practice is to challenge teachers to think differently, to experiment with new practices, and to help them make the tacit explicit by cultivating new ways of talking about their practice” (p. 274). In that spirit, researchers could perhaps be more bold in making pedagogical recommendations in their studies.

Collaboration between researchers and teachers may also occur more directly, impacting the ways that research is conducted and assessed. Researchers such as Labaree (2003), Borg (2010), Belcher (2007), Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) urge that teacher practitioners should be engaged in the research process and invited to assess the relevance of research findings in their contexts. One way this may be accomplished is by encouraging teachers to engage in action research, which is systematic and intentional reflective inquiry conducted by teachers in their classrooms (Labaree, 2003; Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2004; Korthagen, 2007; Borg, 2007; Borg, 2010; Montgomery & Smith, 2015). Korthagen (2007) notes that “research from an insider perspective into the research-practice gap” (p. 309) is needed to successfully bridge the gap, acknowledging that if teachers engage in research through self study, “the integration of research and practice is taking place within one person” (pp. 308). Montgomery and Smith (2015) additionally comment on the potential for research partnerships between teachers and researchers, which would allow teachers to “help researchers to strengthen their data analysis and ensure the validity of their interpretations” (p. 112). Finally, Ellis (2010) suggests placing greater emphasis on producing applied research to help to make “SLA applicable to pedagogy by addressing issues that are of acknowledged relevance to the practice of teaching” (p. 15).

In all, bridging the theory-practice gap requires effort and willingness from both researchers and practitioners. Korthagen (2007) emphasizes that “only through in-depth studies on the outcomes of various attempts to bridge the gap, may we hope to develop insights on which we can build approaches that really make a difference.” (p. 309). The present study documents one such attempt.

2.1.3. Attempts to bridge the gap in SLE. Some efforts have been made to bridge the gap between theory and practice within the field of SLE. It is worth mentioning the work of Ellis (2005), Erlam, Sakui, and Ellis (2006), and Erlam (2008), which provides points that have helped to inform the aims of the current study. Ellis (2005) attempts to set out some accessible, practical, and research-based general principles for language teaching which could be incorporated into language teacher education programs and tested by teachers in their own contexts. Erlam, Sakui, and Ellis (2006), in turn, take Ellis’ (2005) work a step further by reviewing the literature around well-known approaches to language teaching and synthesizing emerging concepts to form ten practical principles meant to “serve teachers as a guide to effective language teaching and as a basis for evaluating their own teaching” (p. 2) and pursuing self-development. Results were published in a language teaching handbook commissioned by New Zealand’s Ministry of Education and distributed to teachers in all New Zealand schools (Erlam, 2008). While the handbook is not comprehensive, it draws elements of task-based learning (Ellis, 2003), focus on form (Long, 1991), Krashen’s (1982) Input Hypothesis, and

Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis. The handbook contains a presentation of the principles, followed by a series of case studies exemplifying their use in different language classrooms in order to model practices "that language teachers can use as a basis for reflecting on their own beliefs and practices" (Erlam et al., 2006, p. 2).

Erlam (2008) evaluates the impact of the project on New Zealand teachers, reporting that the project was highly successful among teachers in two ways. Firstly, the author was invited to present and run interactive workshops and seminars on the project on multiple occasions and with multiple groups, so that the handbook was widely disseminated among language advisors, teachers, and professional development groups both within and outside of the NZ Ministry of Education (Erlam, 2008). The demand for presentation of the handbook offers evidence that institutions and teachers saw it as useful and wanted to read the research and practical principles it contained. Secondly, many of the language advisors who took part in the seminars and workshops—without being asked—went on to present the principles from the handbook to teachers who were unable to attend, encouraging them to use the principles (Erlam, 2008). In other words, they found the content valuable enough to spread and encourage its use. Erlam (2008) sums up the project by writing that "the interest that practitioners at a number of levels… showed in this research project and in the documents that it had generated can be seen as evidence of some success in bridging the gap between research and language pedagogy" (p. 262). This project provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of presenting summaries of research in a condensed, accessible, and practical format as suggested previously.

2.2. Blogging as a Bridge

While the previous suggestions for bridging the theory-practice gap provide a foundation, the present study specifically examines the potential for blogging as a medium for offering the sorts of accessible and practical summaries described. It is, thus, necessary to consider the usefulness of blogging, for both academic blog writers and for practicing LT readers. Several researchers examine blogging as a pedagogical tool in the context of teacher education through projects involving blog writing by student teachers (STs) in undergraduate (Yang, 2009; Deng & Yuen, 2011) or master's level programs (Fisher & Kim, 2013). Since students in these programs were already in an environment structured for learning and presumably had access to research, they may be considered something of an intermediary between researchers and active LTs. Farr and Riordan (2015) collect survey data and conduct corpus analysis of master's level TESOL STs writing on personal reflective blogs and other online modes to examine reflective practices and the construction of teacher identity. Few researchers have made practicing teachers the focus of their blogging studies; however, Luehmann and Tinelli (2008) study the engagement of practicing science teachers enrolled in a graduate seminar, and Nambiar and Thang (2015) examine the effects of blog-writing on practicing teachers' professional development. Participants in all studies wrote and published blog posts, and many also read and commented on each other's posts. Across the studies, there is evidence of benefits for participants, particularly in terms of reflection, collaboration, and identity formation and development, each of which are discussed later in this chapter.

There is also some literature on blogging by researchers. Mewburn and Thomson (2013) examine 100 academic blogs to consider the purposes of academic blogging. The authors acknowledge that academics are often encouraged to blog to learn how to write less obscurely and for a wider audience (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013). Academic blogging may be promoted as a way to "expand and disseminate knowledge" (p. 1106) through building connections and engaging in discussion, but the blogs studied by Mewburn and Thomson (2013) were also (and more commonly) used for diverse other functions and written in varying styles, depending on the purposes and goals of the authors. Some common blog topics included research dissemination, teaching advice, career advice, and personal reflections (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013), all of which are relevant to the current study. Another common element was that the content of most blogs demonstrated some combination of personal and professional material, collectively creating a sort of "virtual staff room," in which readers and other writers could "gather" around topics of interest (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013, p. 1116). The authors suggest that blogs may help to lessen feelings of isolation among readers and writers (Mewburn & Thomson, 2013), which is a feature that was hoped to be beneficial to LT readers in the current study.

Guerin, Carter, and Aitchison (2015) also examined academic blogging in a study involving a blog created by the researchers for doctoral students writing their dissertations. Guerin et al. admit that "learning the genre" (p. 218) was one of the challenges of developing the blog, noting that differences between blogging and other academic writing include the shorter length of posts, the goal of encouraging comments, the broader audience, and the more relaxed and personal tone. In other words, they found that blogging required the development of a different, more personal, voice in writing about scholarly topics (Guerin et al., 2015). Additionally, Guerin et al. state that "the process of preparing weekly posts can teach the authors a great deal about writing" (p. 219), in part through the feedback they receive from peer editors of their drafts. The researchers consider such feedback to be a form of peer review which is of benefit to post authors (Guerin et al., 2015).

The present study builds upon elements of preceding research, making extensions in various regards. In this study, graduate students enrolled in a research-focused Master's level second language education program took the role of researchers in order to condense theoretical work and incorporate practical advice in posts on a blog, while active LTs read and commented on posts. In this way, the blog was used to bridge theory and practice from both sides, and professional development was considered from the previously under-examined perspectives of both graduate student researchers and practicing LTs. Blog post contributors were expected to develop their voice and writing skills, and all participants were expected to engage in reflection, collaborative learning, and identity work, as per the framework outlined below.

2.3. Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical perspectives informing blogging studies vary according to the purposes and foci of the studies, ranging from more socially-focused to more reflection-focused orientations. It is, therefore, necessary to describe the theoretical grounding for the current study. Fisher and Kim (2013) note that the outcomes of ST blogging projects they study are influenced by the way the projects are set up and executed. Upon examining two language education blogs for master's level ST courses in Cambridge and South Florida, respectively, Fisher and Kim (2013) describe the Cambridge project as being influenced by constructivist leanings, which place a central focus on personal reflection. According to Selwyn (2011), constructivism, based in the behaviourist work of Piaget, views learning as "rooted in processes of exploration, inquiry, interpretation and meaning-making" (p. 73). Learning is seen as a process of problem-solving and actively building on previous knowledge to construct perspectives unique to each learner (Selwyn, 2011). Since learning is, thus, "highly iterative and exploratory in nature" (Selwyn, 2011, p. 73), personal reflection is given a place of privilege.

The second group in Fisher and Kim's (2013) study demonstrated a more sociocultural leaning, with interaction viewed as the primary purpose of blogging. Drawing from the works of Vygotsky, the main idea behind sociocultural perspectives is that "the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction with social and material elements" (Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015, p. 207). Instead of stemming from introspection, learning is believed to be driven by collaborative social interaction, with teachers and/or more capable peers scaffolding the learning process for others (Lantolf et al., 2015). Indeed, Richards (2008) states that "the sociocultural view of learning… moves beyond the view of the teacher as an individual entity attempting to master content knowledge and unravel the hidden dimensions of his or her own teaching and views learning as a social process" (p. 169). Thus, community plays an important role in sociocultural theory (Fisher & Kim, 2013), and participants in the Florida group of Fisher and Kim's (2013) study found the element of collaborative learning to be the most salient benefit, whereas participants in the Cambridge group placed the most value on the reflective aspect. Accordingly, Fisher and Kim (2013) conclude that "it is important... that educators think carefully about how blogging tasks are structured and the outcomes they wish to achieve" (p. 145).

Not all accounts of constructivism, however, align with that portrayed by Selwyn (2011) and Fisher and Kim (2013). Jonassen (1999) states that "constructivist conceptions of learning… assume that knowledge is individually constructed and socially co-constructed by learners based on their interpretations of experiences in the world" (p. 217), so that learners engage in meaning-making through solving a problem or working toward a goal. Deng and Yuen (2011) draw from Jonassen (1999) to write that "constructivist learning perspectives… see learners as active creators of knowledge and learning as a social process of negotiation and construction" (p. 441). Thus, Jonassen (1999) and Deng and Yuen's (2011) conceptualization of constructivism connects constructivism as described by Selwyn (2011) and Fisher and Kim (2013) with sociocultural theory.

Deng and Yuen (2011) conducted an empirical study to develop a framework to account for both the interactive and the reflective potential of blogs. According to the authors, both articulation and reflection are needed, and each may entail both internal and social negotiations, so that learning is seen as occurring in two dimensions: an individual dimension consisting of self-reflection and self-expression and a community dimension consisting of social interaction and reflective dialogue (Deng & Yuen, 2011). Similarly, Deng and Yuen (2011) acknowledge

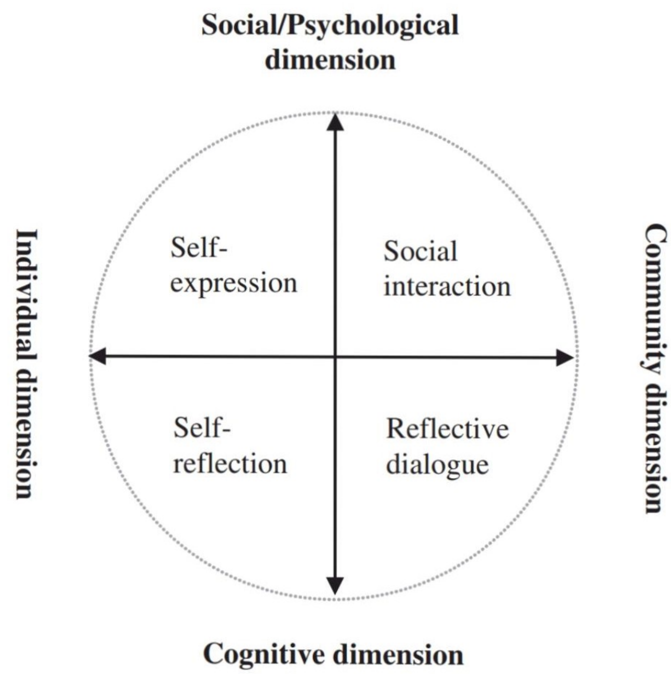


Figure 1. Deng and Yuen’s (2011) working constructivist framework for blogging

that these dimensions interact with a social/psychological dimension and a cognitive dimension, as illustrated in Figure 1. Upon completing their investigation, Deng and Yuen (2011) elaborate their framework to incorporate the specific roles of writing, reading, and commenting on blogs within this framework (Figure 2), highlighting that writing promotes personal reflection, reading is the first stage of a more social sort of reflection, and commenting promotes community through reflective dialogue.

The interaction between social and cognitive factors described by Deng and Yuen (2011) is also at the base of Nambiar and Thang's (2016) study with practicing teachers. Nambiar and Thang (2016) maintain a stance that knowledge and meaning are constructed through social encounters, viewing social constructivism as "consistent with the underlying principle of reflective practice that emphasises learning through self-questioning and self-probing, leading to the development of understanding" (p. 46). Since the present study aims to examine both reflective and social aspects of learning through a blogging project, it combines the two

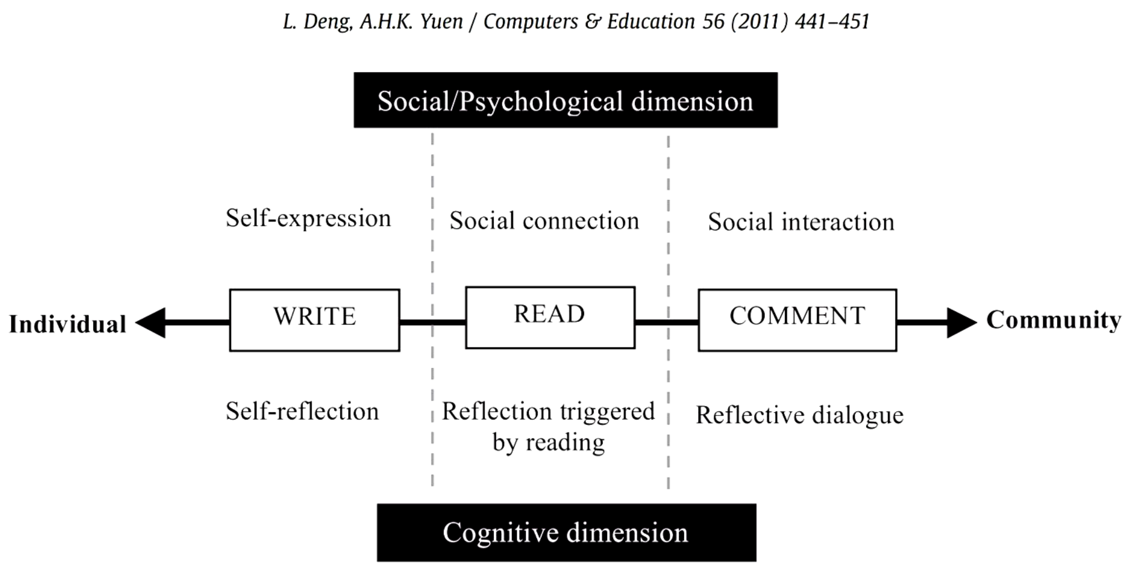


Figure 2. Deng and Yuen's (2011) new framework for the educational affordances of blogs

approaches found in Fisher and Kim's study to follow Deng & Yuen's (2011) framework, also aligning with the perspective of Nambiar and Thang (2016). The constructs of reflective practice, collaborative knowledge construction, and professional identity are considered below.

2.4. Benefits of Blogging

2.4.1. Reflective practice. Reflection is generally considered to be a necessary component of professional development (Brookfield, 2009; Yang, 2009; Farr & Riordan, 2015; Guerin et al., 2015; Nambiar & Thang, 2016). However, the meaning of the concept varies across the literature. For some scholars, reflection entails introspection concerning one's own practices or material learned in a course (Beaudoin, 2002; Luehmann & Tinnelli, 2008; Guerin et al., 2015), whereas others use the term to entail a more critical sort of evaluation of practices (Dewey, 1933; Fisher & Kim, 2013) or, even more broadly, the wider state of education and society as a whole (Brookfield, 2009). Dewey (1933) defines reflective thought as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 16). Importantly, Dewey (1933) does not classify consideration of concrete facts as reflection; rather, reflection must involve inquiry and testing that help to form or reform beliefs. Thus, simple description of current states or practices does not constitute true reflection unless these states and practices are also being subjected to careful evaluation (Fisher & Kim, 2013; Farr & Riordan, 2015). Brookfield (1995) offers four lenses through which teachers should guide their reflections: their own experiences with teaching and learning, students' perspectives, feedback and advice from other teachers and peers, and scholarly research. This final—and often neglected—lens highlights the importance of teachers' engagement with current research.

Selwyn (2011) takes a constructivist perspective to discuss another aspect of reflection: the learner's response. Describing reflection as part of "an iterative process of using current experiences to update one's previous understanding" (p. 73), Selwyn points out that engaging in this process requires the learner engaging in reflection to assimilate, accommodate, or adapt incoming information. Assimilation occurs when information is altered and modified in order to "fit with what is already known" (Selwyn, 2011, p. 73) accommodation refers to the ability to change what is known in response to new information, and adaptation—the ideal response according to Selwyn—"involves the learner using both assimilation and accommodation as they explore and make sense of their environment" (p. 73). These concepts highlight that upon engaging in reflection, one may or may not choose to alter one's thinking or practices.

Dewey's (1933) definition of reflection leaves room for interpretation, since the careful consideration and evaluation he describes might extend from one's own practices to the practices of society as a whole. Addressing this grey area, Brookfield (2009) differentiates between *reflection* and *critical reflection.* He claims that "reflection is not, by definition, critical" and may focus "solely on the nuts and bolts of process… leaving unquestioned the criteria, power dynamics and wider structures that frame a field of practice" (p. 294). Such reflection is useful in developing effective teaching practices and outcomes; however, "*critical reflection* calls into question the power relationships that allow, or promote, one particular set of practices over others" (Brookfield, 2009, p. 294, emphasis added) and asks "whose interests are served by particular codes of practice" (p. 294) and how might they be harmful. This type of critical reflection lends itself to *ideology critique*, or the critical assessment of hegemonies and social inequalities which shape one's beliefs and practices (Brookfield, 2009).

Critical reflection and ideology critique are both components of critical language awareness (García, 2008). García (2008) argues that is it important that all teachers, especially those working in multilingual schools, develop understandings of the social and political realities affecting the use and teaching of different languages, a practice which constitutes *critical language awareness*. The concept of critical language awareness originates with Fairclough (1992), who compiled a series of essays to illustrate that curricula used in language education are laden with theoretical understandings that stem from dominant social realities and that critical attention must be given to the social aspects of language use and teaching, including relationships between language and power. In the context of language teaching, Richards (2008) acknowledges the existence of a “hidden curriculum” that underlies some language teaching policies practices, so that language teaching “is not a politically or morally neutral activity” (p. 173). Richards (2008) argues that

> “language teachers are not simply teaching language as a neutral vehicle for the expression of meanings and ideas, but should be engaged both in reflecting upon the ideological forces that are present in their classrooms, schools and communities and in empowering their learners with the language knowledge and skills they need to be able to function as moral agents in society” (p. 174).

Because relationships of language and power are embodied in language curricula, teachers' increased awareness of SLA literature and critical reflections have the potential to aid them in developing critical language awareness and to inform their pedagogical practices.

2.4.1.1. Previous studies. In the context of blogging for teacher professional development, the research has yielded varying conclusions about the type and depth of reflection such projects encourage. Fisher and Kim (2013) conclude that the Cambridge project, which was framed as a sort of online journal, encouraged reflection that went deeper than simple observation, and as a result, STs analyzed their experiences and even articulated shifts in their beliefs and practices, demonstrating adaptation in Selwyn's (2011) sense. However, despite engaging in true reflection, Fisher and Kim's (2013) study indicates no signs that STs engaged in critical reflection in Brookfield's (2009) sense, since these shifts in beliefs and practices were pedagogical and did not stem from consideration of the social realities underpinning language teaching or the inequalities they perpetrate.

Teacher education blogging studies by Luehmann and Tinelli (2008), Deng and Yuen (2011), and Farr and Riordan (2015) similarly report that ST participants engaged in reflection to varying degrees; however, in all three studies, reflection is measured by criteria such as the demonstration of "a critical disposition toward teaching practices" (Deng & Yuen, 2011, p. 442) or ability to engage in self-critique, to weigh out pedagogical issues, and to experiment with teaching methods (Luehmann & Tinelli, 2008). Even with rather their rather loose definition of reflection, Deng and Yuen (2011) coded only 30-50% of blog entries as reflective despite participants' strong perception that blogging stimulated self reflection. Nevertheless, the study did reveal that "reflective thinking could be provoked by reading each other's blogs" (Deng & Yuen, 2011, p. 448), a finding which is pertinent to the current study. There was no evidence of *critical* reflection in these studies; however, it was not their aim. Perhaps participants would have engaged in critical reflection if the projects had included content and prompts that encouraged it. In summary, engaging in reading and writing blogs is conducive to general reflection concerning teaching practices and how to improve them and could perhaps—if framed properly—also provoke critical reflection in the form of ideology critique.

2.4.2. Communities of practice and collaborative learning. Like reflection, collaborative learning has been linked with professional development, and owing to the public and interactive nature of blogs, blogging projects naturally provide a platform for collaborative learning and knowledge construction (Luehmann & Tinelli, 2008; Deng & Yuen, 2011; Fisher & Kim, 2013; Farr & Riordan, 2015). Many researchers comment on the potential for communities of practice to form around blogs (Yang, 2009; Mewburn & Thomson, 2013; Guerin et al., 2015; Nambiar & Thang, 2016). Summarizing Wenger (1998), Mewburn and Thomson (2013) describe a community of practice (CoP) as a group of people working together with a shared common interest; a sense of community achieved through discussion and the sharing of information and advice; and shared practice, or "a collective repertoire of resources, experiences, narratives, tools, interaction patterns, modes of address… developed over time" (p. 1114). Mewburn and Thomson (2013) note that since blogs attract people with one or more mutual interests and since interaction and information-sharing often occur within these sites, blogs are conducive to the formation of CoPs. Yang (2009) elaborates that blogs are constructed collaboratively by people who share mutual interests and objectives and that members of these blogging communities tend to get more involved than they would in "other pedagogic and web-based environments" (p. 13).

Like Deng and Yuen (2011), Yang (2009) points out a social element of reflective practice, claiming that CoPs formed via blogs can provide a vehicle for social reflection. Indeed, the strong sense of involvement in a community provides an ideal atmosphere for collaborative, co-constructed learning (Farr & Riordan, 2015). Co-constructed learning is achieved through participants collaboratively building upon each other's posts and comments in order to expand collective knowledge (Fisher & Kim, 2013). Richards (2008) points out that "collaborative approaches to learning are central to current pedagogies" of second language teacher education (p. 170). Participants in Fisher and Kim's (2013) study perceived that the collaborative dialogues that occurred on the blog website helped to scaffold their learning. Fisher and Kim (2013) conclude that these results provide "evidence to further support research, suggesting that active social interaction via blogs can provide a space for joint professional learning through sharing both learning and teaching ideas" (p. 155). Thus, blogging projects have the potential to stimulate the development of CoPs and encourage collaborative reflection to deepen learning.

Despite this promising outlook, several studies reveal less interaction than hoped in blogging projects. Farr and Riordan (2015) observe that, although there was evidence of community-building in their corpus data, its primary function turned out to be relationship-building more than social reflection. Similarly, Deng and Yuen (2011) note that most of the interaction on the ST blog and the ST wiki in their study centred around emotional and social support, with few occurrences of more critical dialogue. Although CoPs did form in both cases, they failed to stimulate higher levels of reflection. One possible explanation for this may have to do with the way the projects were set up. Participants in Deng and Yuen's (2011) study, for example, interacted on the blog on a purely voluntary basis with minimal guidelines, and the project was presented to them as a way to relieve stress and share informally. Perhaps if these studies had placed more emphasis on knowledge building through response and interaction, participants might have engaged in deeper collaborative reflections. Finally, the teachers participating in three blogs that were set up as CoPs in Nambiar and Thang's (2016) study did not actively participate in writing posts and commenting, possibly due to feelings of inadequacy stemming from self-comparison with other posts. These studies caution that blogging projects are not guaranteed to lead to engagement in collaborative reflection; indeed, Deng and Yuen (2011) conclude that "the potential of blogs for supporting extensive and dynamic dialogues within a learning community remains questionable" (p. 450). Perhaps these findings indicate a need for more careful structuring of blogging projects if these outcomes are to be achieved.

2.4.3. Professional identity. The personal and social reflections in which teacher participants in blogging CoPs engage are also connected with the development of their professional identity, which also contributes to professional development (Luehmann & Tinelli, 2008; Richards, 2008; Fisher & Kim, 2013; Mewburn & Thomson, 2013; Farr & Riordan, 2015). In the context of language teacher education, Richards (2008) defines identity as "the differing social and cultural roles teacher-learners enact through their interactions with lecturers and other students during the process of learning" (p. 167), which entails both the way people see themselves and the ways they socially enact identity in different settings. Identity is not static, but negotiated and enacted through discourse in a situated community (Richards, 2008; Farr & Riordan, 2015).

Many studies reveal tensions between conflicting identities and the role of reflection in negotiating these identities. Kagan (1992) describes a close connection between reflection and identity formation in pre-service teachers, stating that as STs are exposed to actual classrooms and the beliefs of more experienced teachers, they may encounter a “cognitive dissonance” that prompts them to reconstruct their beliefs and “image of self as a teacher” (Kagan, 1992, p. 155). In an autoethnographic study, Herath and Valencia (2014) acknowledge that PhD “teacher educators in the making” (p. 142) encounter multiple and conflicting claimed and assigned identities in different CoPs, ultimately acknowledging that they are “apprentices of two worlds” (p. 165) who maintain identities as language teachers while developing identities as language teacher educators/researchers. In terms of blogging, Farr and Riordan (2015) conclude that the language items found in the blog they examined reveal narrative and reflective discourse indicating a tension between the identities of *novice* and *professional*. Fisher and Kim (2013) also attest to the role of reflective blogging in facilitating the formation of STs’ professional identity, discerning that STs’ blog posts included comments on the types of teachers they aspired to be and the impact they wanted to have and reflected their evolving thoughts on “what it means to be a language teacher” (p. 148). This identity construction also entailed STs’ comparison of their own practices with those of more experienced teachers (Fisher & Kim, 2013). Each of these studies illustrates processes by which participants negotiated identity.

Identities are also enacted on blogs. Luehmann and Tinelli (2008) find that participants used blogging to portray themselves as certain types of teachers, “engaged in particular practices and facing certain dilemmas” (p. 329). An awareness of blog readership was demonstrated, indicating the expectation that the audience was like-minded and contributing to a collective sense of identity construction through encouragement, mentorship through resource-sharing, and commiseration (Luehmann & Tinelli, 2008). These behaviours scaffolded learning and "nurtured… identity development" (p. 331). On the research side, Mewburn and Thomson (2013) state that although the academic blogs they studied included a mixture of personal and professional subjects, the primary sort of identity expressed was as academics. Thus, blogs and CoPs that form around them may become spaces for negotiation and performance of identity.

2.5. Gaps in the Research

From the previous sections, it can be concluded that, although research of the sort proposed in the current study has been conducted in a few instances (Fisher & Kim, 2013; Farr & Riordan, 2015), there are gaps. Although there is evidence of reflection, collaborative learning, and development of professional identity in studies conducted with STs (Fisher & Kim, 2013; Farr & Riordan, 2015) and practicing teachers (Luehmann & Tinelli, 2008; Nambiar & Thang, 2016), participants in all of these studies were primarily engaged in writing blog posts. It is, therefore, unclear whether these benefits would transfer to teachers who simply read and commented on posts. Additionally, in the cases of studies conducted with STs, participants presumably already had access to current research and, having enrolled in teacher training programs, were in a position to devote time to studying it. Thus, the contexts of the studies were particular to STs and markedly different from than the situations of most practicing teachers, who may not have access to research and certainly have very limited time. Additionally, to my knowledge no blogging study has specifically undertaken to bridge the gap between theory and practice by providing physically and conceptually accessible summaries of research to teacher readers, and no research has considered the development of academics who engage in blog-writing for teacher readers. Although some of the studies described above examine ways of bridging the theory-practice gap in language education and others assess blogging in terms of professional development, none of them seek to do both.

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical work underlying the current study, established the existence of a gap between theory and practice in SLE, and enumerated some suggestions that have been made toward bridging it. Attempts at connecting theory and practice in SLE were described, and the concept of blogging to bridge the gap was introduced. Constructivist (as defined by Deng & Yuen, 2011) theories underlying blogging studies were outlined, and the professional benefits of blogging, including reflection, collaborative learning, and development of professional identity, were defined. Finally, I identified certain gaps in the research. While the present chapter sets the stage for the current study, the following chapter describes the methodology and research questions that were employed in order to make a contribution toward filling some of those gaps.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology that I employed in this study. First, the research questions are stated and methods introduced. Next, the background of the study is described, and my personal experience and biases are considered. Subsequently, I provide a timeline of the study and then introduce the participants. Finally, I outline the data collection and analysis procedures which were employed and define emerging themes and subthemes.

3.1. Research Questions and Method

The present study attempts both to bridge the theory-practice gap and address some of the gaps in the literature concerning the potential for blogs to contribute to LTs' and researchers' professional development. To bridge the gap, I invited collaboration between graduate student researchers in an SLE program and practicing LTs. Three graduate student contributors and I wrote blog posts that contained conceptually accessible summaries of research and considered the practical implications of the research, while practicing LTs were asked to read and comment on these posts. Blog post contributors and LTs were then invited to share their experiences with the project at three focus group interviews, and I used the data to assess the following research questions:

1. How does interacting with a language education blog stimulate teachers' professional beliefs, practices, and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research?
2. How do graduate students' experiences as blog post contributors impact their beliefs and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research?
3. How effective do participants perceive this project to be in bridging the gap between theory and practice in SLE?

In order to investigate the research questions, several qualitative methods of data collection were chosen. First of all, I collected all comments posted on the blog web site between June 13 and December 31, 2017. This method constitutes a form of observation to gather data as unobtrusively as possible (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), although LT focus group participants were asked to post comments whenever possible, and all participants were made aware that their comments would be used for research purposes. The second method of data collection was a questionnaire, which LT readers of the blog were invited to fill out using Survey Monkey in order to provide data about their "thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, …[and] perceptions" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 203) about the blog and its usefulness both in bridging the theory-practice gap and in stimulating professional development through reflection and collaborative reflection. The final—and richest—instrument of data collection was a series of three focus group interviews, during which LT and contributor participants were invited to engage in more in-depth discussions concerning their perceptions and experiences with the project. Focus group interviews were advantageous in that they were able to "help the researcher inductively figure out… the key issues, ideas, and concerns" (Hesse-Beiber & Leavy, 2006, p. 196) surrounding the topic of study. Moreover, as suggested by Johnson & Christensen (2008), the use of three different focus groups promoted triangulation of data across contexts and settings. These instruments are described in greater depth in following sections.

3.2. Context

3.2.1. Research using a blog. As mentioned, a research-based language education blog called Ramblings of a Linguaphile was used as the platform for the study. Created for two final projects in master's level SLE courses, the blog's purpose was to provide a space in which SLA research was presented in accessible language with discussion of potential practical applications.

It was hoped that LT readers would reflect on their practices and perhaps gain fresh perspectives. Through blogging, I became intrigued by the role that blogs such as Ramblings of a Linguaphile might play in bridging the theory-practice gap in SLE. The current study is structured around the concept of blogging as a bridge and the idea that blog writers and readers can engage in professional development through their reflections and collaborative dialogue. I designed the research in a pre-structured but flexible manner, which permitted me to make adjustments in response to changing situations and emerging data (Maxwell, 2013).

3.2.2. A reflexive stance. Creswell (2014) notes that an important characteristic of qualitative research is reflexivity, or conscious reflection by researchers on their role in a study and how their personal background and experiences may shape their interpretations, including which themes they analyze and how they interpret meaning in the data. Thus, I take a reflexive stance, beginning with an examination of my own position in the study.

I come from an ESL teaching background, and as noted by various scholars, I have identified a personal tendency to interpret and evaluate academic readings in light of my own experience and the degree of practical transferability I perceive (Labaree, 2003; Hemsley-Brown & Sharp, 2004; Korthagen, 2007; Borg, 2010). On the other hand, as a master's student, I have also been immersed in the more academic side of SLE, creating a situation in which my perceptions and interpretations may be influenced by a combination of both theoretically and practically oriented perspectives.

Since I wrote the majority of the blog posts myself, it is important to acknowledge the influence of my own perspectives and biases on choosing the content for blog posts, the ways that I interpreted research and presented it to readers, and the structure of the posts. Because one of the characteristics of blogs is often a more personal (as opposed to purely academic) tone

(Mewburn & Thomson, 2013; Guerin et al., 2015), it can be argued that it was beneficial to write blog posts from my own perspective. Nevertheless, in an effort to balance my subjectivity, I invited contributors to write some of the blog posts, engaged in conscious reflection and perspective-taking throughout the writing process, and welcomed discussion from readers about their different perspectives about the perceived merits and drawbacks of ideas presented in posts on the blog. Thus, I attempted to use my own biases and predispositions as a springboard for collaborative discussion.

3.2.2.1. Researcher bias. I notes my personal investment in both the blog itself and in the success of the project. As noted, the study was also born in part from a personal experience which highlighted the theory-practice gap. As a full-time ESL teacher, I was given pedagogical advice in response to a problem with students using their first language in class. However, the suggested strategy seemed problematic, and upon beginning my master's studies, I discovered that research suggested that the strategy was detrimental to students' motivation and confidence and that alternative strategies could be employed to allow home languages to support second language learning. Because of the experience, I have a strong personal interest in seeing the gap bridged in order to avoid similar situations. This bias may have influenced my interpretations of study data through espousing an inclination to fixate on whether blogging as a bridge was working, at the risk of overlooking concepts that participants themselves found more salient. Indeed, throughout the process, I experienced frustration with low levels of engagement on the blog (specifically, through commenting), and I had to consciously adjust my perspective in order to assess the ways the blog *was* stimulating professional growth. In order to minimize the effects of my personal bias, I have made every effort to consider the broader picture by inviting different perspectives, gathering data from multiple complementary sources, considering it from different angles, and allowing salient ideas to emerge from participants' discourse rather than restricting analysis to pre-set themes.

3.3. Timeline

The study was executed in three phases following ethical approval on June 13, 2017 (see Appendix A), as outlined in Table 1. It should be noted that sixteen blog posts existed on the

Table 1

Research Timeline

Phase	Number of Blog Posts	Project Focus	Data Collected
Pre-study (October, 2016- June 13, 2017)	16	Obtaining ethical approval	None
Phase 1 (June 13- July 31, 2017)	1	Recruitment of focus group participants and blog followers	Blog comments
Phase 2 (August 1-October 31, 2017)	13	Posting one blog entry per week; continued recruitment (until mid-September); questionnaire link posted mid-October	Blog comments, questionnaires
Phase 3 (November 1-December 31, 2017)	2	Conducting interviews	Interview transcripts, blog comments, questionnaires

blog site prior to the commencement of the study. These original posts remained open for comments throughout the duration of the study; however, only comments made after June 13 were collected. The first phase of the study spanned from June 13 to July 31 and entailed promotion of the blog and recruitment of participants, and I published only one post on the blog during this period. During the second phase (August 1 to October 31), 13 posts were published (one per week), and LT focus group participants were asked to read them and comment as often as possible. Because of low levels of response to invitations to participate and delayed communications from prospective participants, recruitment for the focus groups continued until mid-September. In mid-October, I posted a link to a questionnaire on the blog website, and the link remained active until the closing of the data collection period on December 31. The final phase of the study spanned November 1 to December 31. During this phase, I continued to publish occasional blog posts and gather data from the comments; however, the primary focus in this phase was conducting focus group interviews with three sets of participants.

3.4. Participants

Data for the study was collected from online and non-virtual modes using three instruments and recruiting participants from three target groups, as illustrated in Table 2. There

Table 2

Participants, Instruments, and Modes of Data Collection

	Instruments	Participants	Location
Online modes	Blog data	Open to the public (target population: LTs); all interview participants	Online
	Questionnaire	Open to the public (target population: LTs); LT interview participants (optional)	Online
Non-virtual modes	Interviews	Blog post contributors	Montreal
		Practicing LTs	Montreal Regina

was some overlap between participant groups in that blog post contributors and LTs who participated in the focus group interviews engaged in virtual participation as well as attending interviews. The participants are described below.

3.4.1. Virtual participants. Online participation was encouraged in two ways: through commenting on blog posts and through filling out the questionnaire. Anyone engaging in either of these activities was deemed a participant. Appropriate disclaimers appeared on blog posts (Appendix B) to inform readers about the study and that their comments constituted participation. Since the amount of data generated by online modes of data collection depended on the degree of participation, I attempted to bolster the blog following by posting invitations for LTs (or any interested parties) to read and follow the blog on social media. Several friends shared these posts, and additionally, an email invitation to follow the blog (Appendix C) was sent to students in McGill's Department of Integrated Studies in Education. Throughout the course of the study, I additionally started Instagram and Twitter accounts to promote the blog and share links to blog posts and used relevant hashtags in attempt to build a following on these platforms and draw more readers to the blog. By the end of the data collection period, the blog had 41 subscribed followers, as well as additional readers who found posts through keyword searches and the links that I shared on social media. The mean number of views per post at the end of the study was approximately 60.

3.4.1.1. Making comments. The first set of virtual participants consisted of readers who chose to participate by responding to discussion questions at the end of each blog post. Most of the comments published were made by LT focus group participants, who had been asked to comment whenever possible. Their user names were known to me so that I could separate their data from other comments and triangulate it with their interview data. In addition, one McGill professor permitted master's students in an SLA course to read and comment on blog posts on Ramblings of a Linguaphile for a small participation grade. Comments by these students were also identified, as they typically included additional academic references, distinguishing them from practicing LTs' responses. Since many of these students were engaged in both research and teaching, they had affiliations with both the theoretical and the practical side of SLE. Their comments were discounted from the data since they were written to meet specific criteria set out by the course instructor rather than purely from the perspectives of LTs.

3.4.1.2. Questionnaire. The second way teacher readers were encouraged to participate was through filling out a brief questionnaire about their experiences and thoughts concerning the blog (Appendix D). An invitation with a link to the survey was posted to every page and new post on the blog site for roughly 11 weeks. The questionnaires were submitted anonymously, and LTs who were part of the focus groups were not barred from participation. For this reason, it is not possible to ascertain which questionnaires may have been filled out by focus group participants and which by other visitors to the site.

3.4.2. Non-virtual participants. I recruited non-virtual participants through a combination of purposeful selection (Maxwell, 2013), where "participants are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to [the] questions and goals" (p. 97), and snowball sampling (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), in that a lack of response to invitations to participate pushed me to cast my net increasingly wider. Maxwell (2013) lists five possible goals of purposeful selection, three of which influenced selection for the present study. The first of these is *representativeness* (Maxwell, 2013), or typicality of participants and their teaching experiences. I supposed that LT participants would share certain general experiences and ideas about the field of SLE. The second is *heterogeneity* (Maxwell, 2013), or range of variation. Although it contrasts with the goal of representativeness, I wished to invite participants from a variety of settings within the study parameters in order to allow for the emergence of both universal concerns and individuals' unique contextual perspectives. The third goal that influenced participant selection was searching for the most productive relationships (Maxwell, 2013), or those that best allow for free and open communication yielding richer data. To that end, I invited participation from colleagues with whom I already had positive collegial relationships. Although Maxwell (2013) notes that care is needed in working with known participants, I took steps to ensure their psychological safety.

3.4.2.1. Contributors. Blog post contributors were recruited from the McGill's SLE master's and doctoral programs, forming the first group of non-virtual participants. The reason for choosing contributors from within the program was twofold. Firstly, given that I (a student in the program myself) acted as the primary blog post writer, inviting other contributors to write helped to encourage consistency across posts, since they all studied similar content. Secondly, in light of the recommendations made by Labaree (2003), Korthagen (2007) and Light and Gnida (2012) for bridging theory and practice it would have been ideal to have full-time researchers write the posts; however, due to limitations of time, drawing from the program was expedient and allowed me to draw from pre-existing connections. As graduate student researchers, contributors were in a position in which they were already focusing on research and had completed many assigned readings for their program, which gave them many options for post topics and made them well-qualified to distill research and consider its practical applications. As Maxwell (2013) notes, "selection decisions should take into account the feasibility of access and data collection, …research relationships with study participants, validity concerns, and ethics"

(p. 99). Thus, contributors were chosen for feasibility of access, to better facilitate good research relationships, and because they were well-positioned to meet the requirements of the project.

An email invitation to participate in research and a consent form (Appendix E) were sent out to all graduate students enrolled in the SLE program by the program coordinator, and I also personally contacted several colleagues. In order to keep the time commitment reasonable, participants were invited to contribute just one or two blog posts. In keeping with the criteria set forth by Guerin et al. (2015), blog posts were to be 900 words or fewer (excluding references), explain or summarize some aspect of SLA research in simple terms, and include discussion of (potential) practical applications. Writers were also asked to end with a few discussion questions as prompts for readers' responses. The last requirement was participation in a 90-minute focus group interview near the end of the data collection period.

Invitations were met with little response; no SLE students responded to the departmental email invitation. Of fourteen colleagues I personally emailed, six agreed to contribute a blog post; however, three dropped out of the study (one midway through the blog post revision process). The three contributors who did participate, Fadia, Joy, and Jung-Su,[1] were international students who spoke English as a second or subsequent language. Each participant contributed one post, and Jung-Su collaborated with me on a second post. They ranged from having little or no teaching experience to a good deal of it, and all three were working on their own theses, which confirmed their ability to function as researchers for the purposes of the study. In an effort to increase the number of voices and perspectives represented on the blog, I also invited participation from several recent graduates of the program, one of whom provided a post. Since

[1] To protect participants' identity, pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis.

he did not live in either of the target communities, I did not ask him to attend the interview. I wrote the remaining ten blog posts.

3.4.2.2. Practicing LTs. The remaining two participant groups were comprised of practicing LTs. One group was recruited from Montreal, and a second group was recruited in Regina, Saskatchewan. I deliberately kept selection criteria fairly wide, including teachers of any language and with any degree of training and experience. The reasons for choosing these locations included both practical and research-necessitated criteria. In order to have in-person focus group interviews, Montreal was a logical choice for its diverse language teaching contexts and my proximity. Inviting participation in Regina, another city in which I had practical connections, enriched the data by expanding beyond the context of Montreal and allowing for comparisons between data gathered from LTs in the two locations. I hoped that diversity in teachers' backgrounds and contexts would broaden the transferability of results by accommodating a wider representation of different voices and perspectives.

Here again, I encountered difficulties with recruitment. I contacted potential participants in numerous language programs, including three immigrant language programs, three university language programs, two or three Cégeps (public colleges which youth attend before entering university), several independent language schools in Montreal, some 35 independent heritage language programs in Regina, TESL Canada, the ESL department of my previous place of employment, and one colleague teaching in a French immersion school in Saskatchewan. In most cases, I contacted school administrators, who forwarded the invitation to participate in research and consent form (Appendix F) to LTs. While many administrators did not respond, most of those who did received the project favourably and agreed to send the invitation to LTs. Nevertheless, few LTs responded. In hopes of bolstering participation, I continued recruitment until midway through the data collection period. In the end, I collected consent forms from three ESL teachers from two programs in Regina and five teachers, primarily of English, from different contexts in Montreal. Three of these joined later than one month into the three-month blogging period. Of the eight teachers recruited, one from Regina and one from Montreal opted out of the focus group interviews due to the volume of their work. The remaining teachers' profiles are summarized in the Table 3.

Table 3

Language Teacher Participants

	Name[2]	Language(s) taught	Age group and level(s) taught	Degree of experience (if known)	Education (if known)
Montreal	Anita	English	Adults (ages ~18-50), pre-intermediate	Taught high school pre-intermediate English c. 2000	Some university, possibly a degree (inferred)
	Pierre	English	Secondary 5 (~16-17 years old), varied levels in classroom	undisclosed	Education degree (inferred)
	Alberto	Spanish, English	Cégep (ages ~17-19), varied levels in classroom	8 years at current job	Master's degree in SLE
	Mabel	English	Cégep (ages ~17-19), mainly intermediate; department coordinator	~10 years	Master's degree in SLE
Regina	Wendy	English	High school (ages ~14-19); program developer and ESL coordinator	~10 years	Master's degree in TESOL
	Mae	English	High school (ages ~14-19), adults during summer program with a different institution	Seasoned teacher nearing retirement, at least 7 years teaching ESL	Education degree, CERTESL

[2] Again, these names are pseudonyms, which will be used throughout the remainder of this thesis.

LT participants were asked to do three things. First, I asked them to read the weekly blog posts for the duration (or the remainder in the case of those who joined late) of Phase 2 of the study (from August to October). Second, I requested that they share their thoughts and perspectives through comments at least eight times throughout the study. This requirement was adjusted for latecomer participants, who were simply encouraged to comment on as many posts as possible. Mid-way through the study, since few participants were commenting on blog posts and there had been no collaborative interaction on the blog website, I emailed participants to encourage them not only to read and comment, but also to engage in discussion with each other. However, even after a second email reminder, there was very little collaborative discussion. The final requirement for LT participants was attendance at a ninety-minute focus group interview at the end of the study.

3.5. Data Collection Methods and Procedures

3.5.1. Instruments. Data collection was carried out using three instruments: blog comments, the online questionnaire, and three focus group interviews, as described in Table 1. Multiple methods were chosen to allow for triangulation of data and to allow for the emergence of different perspectives (Maxwell, 2013). Since it is important in qualitative research to allow participants' own ideas to emerge (Maxwell, 2013) and in the interests of minimizing researcher bias, the questionnaire and the interview protocols included open-ended questions, as well as some that were more specific to the research and objectives informing the study. In addition to the instruments described below, Maxwell (2013) notes the importance of memos in rounding out data collection and analysis. Thus, in order to support my analysis, I wrote memos, or research notes containing ideas for analysis and further study, self-evaluation, and comments about participants' demeanour at different points during the interviews.

3.5.1.1. Online: Blog data. The primary means by which virtual and focus group LT participants engaged in the study was through reading posts on the Ramblings of a Linguaphile site. Disclaimers were posted on all pages to alert readers to the ongoing research, as described previously. Weekly entries were posted from the beginning of August to the end of October, as detailed in Table 1, with questions for reflection and discussion provided at the end of each in order to provide a springboard for participants reflective thinking and collaborative dialogue. All comments published on the blog website during the data collection period were collected for content analysis, following the precedents of Yang (2009) and Deng and Yuen (2011). Comments were also used as a measure of engagement, as in Nambiar and Thang's (2015) and Luehmann and Tinelli's (2008) work, and site statistics were additionally taken into account, as in the study conducted by Guerin et al. (2015). Comments were made by focus group participants, contributors, and other visitors who chose to interact with the blog. Collecting data from an open platform presented a risk of collecting comments written by non-LTs; however, the majority of reader comments on the blog were written by LT focus group participants.

3.5.1.2. Online: Questionnaire. In mid-October, I posted a link to the questionnaire on every blog entry on the Ramblings of a Linguaphile site. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), questionnaires are useful to complement other data in multiple method studies. In the questionnaires, participants were asked to verify their identity as practicing or retired LTs, following which they were invited to provide short answers to three questions targeting their experiences with personal reflection, dialogue through commenting, and general likes or dislikes about the blog. They were additionally asked to answer two questions presented as Likert-style multiple choice questions concerning the degree to which they found posts useful and their likelihood of returning to the site. Finally, participants were asked to indicate how many posts they had read on the blog. In 11 weeks, seven questionnaires were submitted.

3.5.1.3. Interviews. The three focus group interviews constituted the primary source of data for the study. Two interviews took place at McGill University (one with contributors and the other with Montreal LTs), while the third was conducted in Regina with the two Regina LTs. The interviews provided deeper insights into the experiences of participating contributors and LTs and were chosen for their ability to allow for co-creation of meaning between the interviewer and participants and provide "exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory data that may or may not generate theory" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 119). The interview protocols were semi-structured in order to both examine specific themes identified in the literature and allow participants "some freedom to talk about what is of interest or important to them" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 125). Thus, there was flexibility for the research to take on additional directions and perspectives as needed. In designing the interview protocols (see Appendices G and H), I drew from her own experiences as an LT and as a graduate student researcher in order to produce questions of relevance to participants and foster collaborative, symmetrical research relationships (Maxwell, 2013). Interviews assessed the effectiveness of the project in bridging the gap generally and stimulating reflections and dialogue conducive to development of professional beliefs, practices and understandings concerning SLE.

One potential validity threat of interviews is reactivity. According to Maxwell (2013), the researcher's presence in the interview inevitably has an effect on participants' responses. Thus, in order to encourage the rapport needed to form positive interview relationships (Maxwell, 2013), I attempted to maintain approachable and collegial relationships with participants throughout the period of the study. In order to minimize reactivity during interviews, I positioned myself as a colleague to participants, focusing on my graduate student identity for the contributor interview and drawing from my identity as an LT for the two practicing teacher interviews. In the Regina interview, my position as a former colleague was conducive to maintaining a comfortable and collegial environment.

3.5.2. Analysis. Data gathered from blog comments, questionnaires, and interviews was coded using thematic analysis and triangulated in an iterative and ongoing process of examining the research questions and searching for "dialogue among the results of different methods" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 104). Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) define applied thematic analysis as "a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from [qualitative] textual data in a way that is transparent and credible" (p. 15). The approach draws from multiple analytic techniques—such as grounded theory, positivism, interpretivism, and phenominology—to capture "the complexities of meaning within a textual data set" (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 11). One of the strengths of thematic analysis is that it encourages accurate and comprehensive portrayal of participants' experiences (Guest et al., 2012), allowing participants' own concerns and ideas to emerge from the data.

In using applied thematic analysis, Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) assert that "ensuring the credibility of findings… is facilitated by systematicity and visibility of methods and procedures" (p. 15). Thus, I thoroughly examined data from interviews, blog comments, questionnaires, and my notes and identified relevant themes based on repetition within and across contexts and comparison of similarities and differences within and across contexts (Guest et al., 2012). Four primary themes emerged and were coded: idea-processing, audience, challenges, and meta-reflection. I then analyzed these themes through the lenses of reflection, collaborative learning, and professional identity, and relevant sub-themes were identified where necessary. Through the iterative processes of coding and re-coding the data and defining and refining codes (Guest et al., 2012; Maxwell, 2013), answers to the research questions emerged.

3.5.3. Thematic codes. Guest et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of developing clear definitions when coding is used for data. Accordingly, the four themes and 14 sub-themes which were identified in the data are first listed and then defined below. The sub-themes of **idea-processing** included:

- *confirming pre-existing beliefs,*
- *re-evaluation of beliefs and/or practices,*
- *resistance to new ideas,*
- *application and extension of ideas,*
- *negotiating identities, and*
- *personal experience.*

The sub-themes of **audience** included:

- *self-evaluation,*
- *dialogue, and*
- *obligation to readers.*

The sub-themes within the theme of **challenges** included:

- *time and workload,*
- *external constraints, and*
- *isolation.*

Finally, the sub-themes of **meta-reflection** included:

- *perceived effectiveness and*
- *perceived professional gains.*

3.5.3.1. Definitions. The theme of **idea-processing** entails the ways that participants processed content they encountered on the blog or in writing blog posts. Several patterns of reflection emerged from the data. The sub-theme of *confirming pre-existing beliefs* was used when their interpretations of blog content justified or confirmed beliefs or practices they were already using. At times, participants' reflections on blog topics pushed them to engage in *re-evaluation of beliefs and/or practices* they had previously held, whereas in other moments their reflections ended in *resistance to new ideas* presented on the blog, at least in the case of LTs. The sub-theme of *application and extension of idea*s entailed reflections on how to implement suggested in blog posts or research and extensions of the ideas as a result of these reflections. The way that contributors processed the experience reveals that at times they were *negotiating identities* as researchers, grad students, and teachers. Finally, the influence of *personal experience* in participants' interpretation of the content they read and/or wrote was considered.

The second theme that emerged in all groups was **audience**. This code was used for data demonstrating awareness of the blog's readership and the influence of this audience on posts and comments participants made (or did not make). Three sub-themes emerged for audience: *dialogue*, *self-evaluation*, and, in contributors' case, *obligation to readers*. The sub-theme of *dialogue* was used to code participants' perceived engagement in dialogue on the blog website, as compared with data gathered from the blog comments. Self-evaluation occurred when participants assessed the degree of their own engagement in commenting and interacting with other readers on the blog, and obligation to readers was used to code data indicating ways that contributors' awareness of their audience gave rise to a sense of responsibility to provide readers with good content.

The third theme that emerged in all groups was that of **challenges**, specifically those that LTs perceived as limitations to their ability to engage with projects such as the present study and/or implement the practical recommendations outlined in blog posts. There were three primary types of challenges. The first was challenges of *time and workload*. The concept of having too much work and too little time was particularly salient to LTs. The second type of challenge was *external constraints*, or departmentally, institutionally, or politically mandated standards and objectives. Finally, the third type of challenge was *isolation*, entailing indirect challenges faced through perceived isolation from like-minded colleagues.

The final theme to come out of the data was **meta-reflection**, which entails reflections about the project's effectiveness and value in achieving its objectives. Comments about the perceived effectiveness of the project in bridging the gap between theory and practice and presenting accessible summaries of research were noted, as were reflections about perceived professional gains, or the perceived benefits of participating in the project.

3.6. Summary. In this chapter, I have described the research questions underlying the current study, the instruments that were employed, the participants, and the methods of collecting and analyzing the data. I defined four thematic codes and their 14 sub-themes. In the next chapter, I present the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study, beginning with a brief overview of the data. Following the overview, I outline LT data from all instruments according to the themes of idea-processing, audience, challenges, and meta-reflection and their sub-themes. In the final section, I discuss these same themes in conjunction with contributor data.

4.1. Overview of the Data

4.1.1. Blog comments. Throughout the data collection period, a total of 68 comments were posted on the blog website. Of these, 27 (39.7%) were made by LT focus group participants (two of whom dropped out of the study prior to the interviews). This number is significantly lower than the number of comments they were requested to make. Anita, the LT who interacted the most with posts and other readers, published seven comments, and other LT participants made as many as five comments and as few as one. I posted 29 comments (41.2% of the total) in response to readers, and the three blog post contributors collectively published four comments, also in response to readers. The remaining eight comments were made by participants who were not part of a focus group. Of these, three were made by students in the graduate SLA course mentioned previously, and two were made by previous professors, leaving just three comments from readers who had no known connection or external incentive for posting. The blog had about 41 followers by the end of the data collection period, and site statistics indicated that posts made during the data collection period averaged approximately 60 views each during that period. Given those numbers and the fact that few comments were published by readers who were not part of one of the focus groups, engagement through commenting was minimal.

4.1.2. Questionnaires. Questionnaires were filled out anonymously by seven respondents, six of whom identified as Canadian. Respondents' language teaching experience ranged from four to 22 years, with four teaching English and three teaching French. Five of the seven indicated that they would be very likely to read more language education blog posts, either on Ramblings of a Linguaphile or on another site. Three participants had read five or six posts, two had read three or four, and two had read only one or two posts. Two of the self-identified LTs also noted that they were currently doing PhD research. Overall, questionnaire responses did not go into great depth; despite prompts to answer in detail and elaborate on responses (see Appendix A), most respondents provided very brief answers. For example, one respondent's answer to Question 5, which prompted participants to discuss what they liked or disliked about the way SLE research and practical applications were presented in posts they read, was simply "Research based." Several such responses were too ambiguous to be included in analysis. Overall, however, responses to the blog voiced in questionnaires were positive.

4.1.3. Interviews. Interview participants came from two locales and multiple contexts within Canada. Each group had particular concerns and a unique social dynamic. In the Regina group, the two participants had known and worked with each other in a semi-private academic preparatory school for several years, and they knew me well since I had also worked there prior to beginning my graduate studies. Thus, this interview had an atmosphere of familiarity, and conversations returned to ideas and concerns that were highly specific to the school's ESL program. Participants in the blog post contributor interview were also somewhat familiar with one another, as they were all in the same master's program. I had met all three prior to the study and knew two of them well through classes we had taken together. The shared experience of being thesis students in the program fostered some sense of complicity, and two participants often referred to their own research, which had also been the topic of their blog posts.

The Montreal LT group was the most diverse. Only two of the four participants had met prior to the interview, and none had previously met me in person. The four LTs collectively represented three different language teaching contexts within Montreal—two Cégeps, a high school, and a language centre for adult learners. A unique element of the interview was the networking aspect; participants were eager to learn about each other's contexts. They were also eager to engage in collaborative discussion of Québec-specific language teaching concerns, such as the gap between the standards of high schools and Cégeps in Québec and the role of the Ministry of Education in language classrooms. In all, the data from each interview embodied a unique set of concerns and perspectives but also revealed certain unifying elements, especially between LTs. The themes described previously arose in every context, although they were often embodied in different ways, particularly in the blog post contributor group, as opposed to LTs.

4.2. Language Teachers

4.2.1. Idea-processing. One impact of the blog was to push LTs to process their beliefs and practices related to language teaching in conjunction with the content they read on blog posts. In general, LTs expressed appreciation for the reflections in which they had engaged because of the blog. For example, Mae commented in the Regina interview that "any of the ones I read, I always reflect on it… it's always valuable" (Regina, p. 8). Similarly, five of the seven questionnaire respondents placed reflections stimulated by the blog in a favourable light, using words like "stimulate" (p. 4, p. 10) and "thought rpovoking [*sic*]" (Questionnaires, p. 9). Additionally, Respondent 6 commented that posts were "innovative" and "prompted… comparisons to the way I currently teach" (Questionnaires, p. 9).

4.2.1.1. Confirming pre-existing beliefs. One way in which LTs processed the ideas found in blog posts was by using them to confirm or justify beliefs and practices they already employed. When asked about whether reading the blog posts had caused LTs to reflect on their beliefs as language teachers, Wendy responded, “I felt more… [that] I was leaning on my… beliefs with… teaching, like how I believe languages should be taught” (Regina, p. 6). This comment suggests that Wendy was conscious of interpreting blog content through the lens of her prior beliefs.

In other cases, participants responded with enthusiasm to posts which revealed research that supported beliefs and practices they already held but perhaps questioned. This was particularly true in the case of the post titled “Tapping Into the First Language,” which discussed the use of translanguaging practices, or “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named... languages” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283), to scaffold metalinguistic awareness in the target language. The taboo nature of using translanguaging practices in the classroom was subtly acknowledged in the post. In response to the post, several LTs confessed that they already allowed translanguaging practices in their classrooms to some degree and expressed relief to discover that there was theoretical backing for these practices. For example, Mabel found the translanguaging post “reassuring, because I’ve been sort of doing that without thinking about it… it was reassuring to… see that… this is okay to be doing” (Montreal, p. 14).

Perhaps the best example was the case of Pierre, who published the following comment in response to the post:

> “Thanks so much! I used to feel so bad about using French to explain how English works. I was doing on instinct, realising that my weak students had a shot at understanding what they needed to. It is important for my students to know they have access to communicating and understanding, especially when they feel that they are not good at

> languages at all. Without becoming a full fledged Frenglish pidgin class, I think this approach can make success attainable… I suppose translanguaging brings a level of normalcy to the learning process, taking the pressure of having to be perfect all the time off." (Comments, p. 10)

The post helped Pierre to see what he was already doing—but with feelings of guilt—from a more favourable and theoretically-informed perspective. He also showed part of the blog post to some of his students and was very enthusiastic about their positive response. He brought up this particular post during the interview as well, commenting that "some of the things I read in those blogs kind of really clicked" (Montreal, p. 3) and elaborating on the situations that had lead him to begin using strategies of translanguaging in his classroom despite the fact that "if I followed the doctrine, I'd have to speak English all the time" (Montreal, p. 13). He concluded that he "was really happy to find translanguaging," because it "confirmed that belief… my gut [had] told me" (Montreal, p. 13). Thus, the post validated beliefs and practices about which Pierre had previously felt conflicted.

The concept of confirming 'gut feelings' appeared several times in different forms during the interviews. It also surfaced in one of the questionnaires, with one respondent writing that it was "nice to see that there is research done on some things that I have been doing on gut feeling! It's reassuring!" (Questionnaires, p. 7). In all, whether through confirming beliefs and practices about which they were already certain or validating those which they had previously questioned, LTs frequently seemed to process ideas found in the blog posts in such a way that they viewed them as confirming pre-existing beliefs and/or practices.

4.2.1.2. Re-evaluation of beliefs and/or practices. There were instances in which LTs' reflections brought them to re-evaluate their approaches and/or beliefs based on what they had read on the blog. One questionnaire respondent commented that “we often fall into a routine of dispensing lessons[,] and just getting new viewpoints helps prompt a rethink of how to teach the language” (Questionnaires, p. 9). In a more concrete example, Mabel published the following response to a post about gamification of language classes with the following admission: “I thought I was fairly up-to-date when it comes to technology. Clearly, I’m not! …We, teachers, are constantly battling our students to put AWAY their phones. Why not use them instead?” (Comments, p. 23-24). She returned to this concept during the interview, expressing her interest in trying the activities suggested in blog posts that presented ways of using technology in the classroom. Thus, her reflections on the posts stimulated re-evaluation of her attitude toward the use of technology in the classroom and gave her ideas for how it might be done productively.

Another example in which the content of a blog post encouraged re-evaluation of beliefs or practices occurred in an incident Mae encountered after having read a post that discussed ideology critique, or the critical assessment of social realities which shape people’s beliefs and practices (Brookfield, 2009). In the interview, she explained that “that one caused me to do some reflect [*sic*]… [and] when an incident came up here [at the school]… I was pleased that I didn’t overreact” (Regina, p. 7). In the situation she mentioned, a student had made a racially inappropriate comment. Instead of “blasting him,” she engaged the student privately and discovered that “his attitudes were not in any way antagonistic in the remark he made, but he got them from rap music” (p. 8). Having discerned the source of the problem, she noted that “then you have to do a whole other kind of education” (p. 8) to explain why such remarks are not appropriate. She concluded that the blog post had “formed that background” (p. 8) that had helped her consider the situation more carefully before addressing it. Thus, the post had influenced her way of looking at and responding to that particular problem.

4.2.1.3. Resistance to new ideas. On a couple of occasions, it was evident that LTs' reflections had not brought them to reconcile post content with their previous beliefs. For example, Pierre responded to an interview question about whether blog post content had challenged preconceptions about teaching by admitting that he questioned the relevance of the ideas presented in the post on gamification. "Reading that blog," he noted, "I was just like, 'Mmm, I'm not sure. I'm gonna keep that one at arm length…' having kids play that video game to learn how to conjugate the present prefect adequately… uh, gee, I don't know. I don't know" (Montreal, p. 15). Similarly, although Montreal LTs were enthusiastic about the post on translanguaging, Wendy questioned the usefulness of such strategies in the academic prep school in which she worked. She published the following comment in response to the post:

> "it is difficult to imagine translanguaging in this sort of environment simply because it is the differences in organizational processes of the mother tongue vs. L2 that cause 'hang ups' for a learner trying to find academic success. In other words, if a learner does not know how to process and organize language in ways that are academically acceptable in their L2, then they will revert to habits of organization that are acceptable in their mother tongue but ultimately lead to cultural-academic clashes." (Regina, p. 11)

In both cases, the LTs had read the arguments in favour of the techniques discussed in the posts but for different reasons continued to feel resistance toward them. It should be noted that Wendy, went on to describe an idea of having a successful graduate of the ESL program explain English grammar to students in their L1, a strategy which did in fact align with suggestions in the post.

4.2.1.4. Application and extension of ideas. There were a number of instances, on the blog or during the interviews, in which LTs reflected on the application of ideas presented in the blog. By doing so, they frequently extended them to meet the needs of their contexts and added valid points to the discussion, much as in the instance above. For example, the author of a blog post about giving effective written feedback had suggested some practical strategies, including aiming to provide a fixed number of comments on form and content, respectively. Wendy responded to the post by expanding on the ideas presented by offering further suggestions which the post author had not made) in the following excerpt from the blog comments:

> "I have found that an ideal time to provide corrective feedback is during the time a student is creating a text. I happen to work in an environment where we get a lot of one-on-one time with our students, so this idea of providing feedback immediately as a text is being written is a technique I would like to develop within my department. By using a medium such as a Google document… both a teacher and student can be present as the student is writing. Not only can the teacher draw attention to errors in form, but s/he can also encourage discussion on how an error in form can actually affect the overall meaning of what the student is trying to convey." (Comments, p. 7)

In another instance, Anita added to the ideas presented in a post on metalinguistic knowledge by suggesting the "self discovery technique, used for introducing a new grammar point for instance" (Comments, p. 8) as a way to help students build metalinguistic awareness.

In some instances, LTs' idea-sharing also invited response from other readers. For example, the commenter who described her strategies of using visual symbols to provide beginner learners with a form of written feedback acknowledged the limitations of this system in terms of providing students with tools to improve their writing in the future and invited suggestions from the post writer and other readers by requesting their "thoughts on how to provide meaningful, written feedback to low literacy learners" (Comments, p. 6). LTs in both groups also engaged in collaborative discussion about idea application during the interviews. For example, Wendy had written a comment on a blog post about group work in which she had described a strategy she had discovered at a conference, which involved using research as core texts to simultaneously foster language skills and influence student's understanding of the pedagogical approaches being used in the classroom. She had felt that, since students in her context tended to resist working in groups, this approach could be productively used in that setting. When Wendy brought these ideas up again at the interview, Mae was intrigued, and the two discussed the idea and how they could incorporate it into their program for several minutes without my intervention. In this instance, they were considering how the ideas presented in the post might be applied and, in doing so, they extended them.

4.2.1.5. Personal experience. In several instances, previous personal experiences served to scaffold LTs' reflections about ideas presented in the blog and responses to them. For example, Anita published a comment outlining the types of feedback she used most in response to a prompt encouraging readers to reflect on the feedback strategies they used and which ones may be most effective in their context. Her list did not include the use of prompts; however, during the interview, she elaborated that the post "hit me, because… I realized how I was correcting my students at one point, and that made me [think], 'Uh, okay, so I think I should more… be prompting'" (Montreal, p. 21). The post, thus, encouraged her to evaluate her experiences and practices and stimulated reflections on how she could improve them.

Similarly, Alberto's experiences scaffolded his reflections about a blog post which dealt with the ideologies embedded in corrective feedback given to language learners in light of an incident that occurred the same day. In the interview, he described a scenario in which a student had submitted an assignment written in an informal register. He had given the assignment a failing grade but began to question "what kind of standard I'm trying to impose and… the kind of language… I want her to use" (Montreal, p. 4), wondering whether it was appropriate to require her to use an academic register. He considered the fact that the student was studying communications and art, noting that she was "mostly there for the artistic side things" (p. 4). By demanding that she submit assignments in an academic register, he felt that he was "trying to constrain her… with all this formulaic language" (p. 4). This tension between accepted—and indeed, required—linguistic standards and the question of their appropriateness gave rise to internal conflict, Alberto acknowledged that "I should maybe teach the student, like… she should be able to… switch from context to context and be able to adapt the register to the situation, but at the same time… I don't know" (p. 4). Thus, personal experience served as a platform for reflection on the blog post, as Alberto subjected his approaches to evaluation and questioned the standards he was required to uphold.

In some cases, participants used their personal experiences to justify their resistance to new strategies presented in blog posts. For example, Anita demonstrated reluctance to integrate written feedback that balances positive and constructive feedback, a theoretically-informed suggestion made by the author of a post about providing effective written feedback. Anita posted a response that she did not "like writing too much on the students' papers to explain my corrections in detail" (Comments, p. 4) but rather

> "would like feedback, after having corrected a paper, to become a real dialogue with the student, preferably 'live' and not in writing. So that we could go over his writing production and discuss it in a positive fashion on how to improve his work." (p. 4)

She justified this perspective from her own experience as a language learner, writing that "long corrections by teachers made me feel discouraged… and left me with a feeling that I should play it safe next time" rather than trying to be creative with the language (p. 4). Thus, her personal experience informed her response to the post content and the strategies she shared and used.

A similar instance occurred when one commenter pointed out that a post about written corrective feedback was difficult to apply when working with beginner learners. She wrote that

> "Dealing with lower level learners makes it very difficult to provide meaningful written feedback in a way that they can apply it in the future. I find that oral feedback has been much more successful. I am lucky enough to have a computer class with my students a few times a week. During that time, I have the opportunity to sit with students and go over assignments if need be. Currently, I am teaching a foundation literacy class. Written feedback, I find, is entirely useless because they don't understand it at all." (Comments, p. 5-6)

Thus, due to her context, the writer of the comment found it difficult to reconcile the ideas presented in the post with her experience, citing this experience to validate her hesitation and justify her methods.

LT participants also connected the content of many of the comments they published on the blog with their personal experience and strategies. Most of the prompts in the blog posts invited LTs to share about these in the hopes of encouraging readers to make connections between post content and their own practices, and LTs were eager to share their personal strategies. In many cases, these personal experiences and strategies constituted a form of idea-sharing with other readers. Given that writers were aware that their reflections could be read by anyone entering the blog site, it may be surmised that they only shared experiences and strategies that they wished for others to see. For example, the commenter who had hesitations about using written feedback with her beginner students described a strategy she used that had not been mentioned in the post, writing, “I do use visual symbol[s] to indicate what I thought of their work (like a happy face if they did well)” (Comments, p. 6). In sharing her strategy, she made it available for other readers.

4.2.2. Audience. It is presumed that participants making comments on the blog site read the disclaimers and were aware that these comments were accessible to anyone and might be used for research. During the interviews, LTs described a number of different ways that their awareness of the blog’s audience and the research had influenced the comments they did (or did not) make. For one thing, most LTs shared a sense of obligation to only post comments they perceived as being ‘good enough.’ In one interview, Pierre noted, “we kind of want to be perfect on the posts we’re gonna put. We want it to be smart, want to challenge other people’s thoughts” (Montreal, p. 18). The questionnaires revealed similar sentiments, with one respondent noting that s/he had not commented on the blog site because “I’m usually reading ‘on the go’ and feel the need to put more thought into a comment/response” (Questionnaires, p. 2). Another respondent stated that s/he did not post any comments because s/he was reading posts on her/his phone and could not “type fast enough to give a good commentary” (Questionnaires, p. 3), attesting to the perception that comments posted had to meet a certain standard of excellence.

Those LTs who had engaged to a somewhat greater degree in writing comments generally felt that writing these comments played an important role in deepening their reflections. Pierre noted that “the response thing is… very important, because otherwise you don’t feel implicated” (Montreal, p. 11), and in Regina, Wendy similarly found reflective value in writing comments on the blog, stating that post content really “sunk in more, being able to contribute and actually come up with a response, and then I thought about it for days after that, too, and I'm more likely to actually start incorporating it" (Regina, p. 13). Thus, perhaps the perceived pressure of trying to write 'good' comments also encouraged deeper reflection.

4.2.2.1. Self-evaluation and dialogue. Stemming from their awareness of the blog's audience, LTs had varying perceptions about whether any sort of dialogue occurred on the blog site, either between researchers and teachers or among LTs. Despite the fact that the blog post writers responded to all of the comments on their posts, LTs did not mention any dialogue with the writers; in fact, at least one of them was not aware that her comments had received a response. Both Regina LTs to some degree perceived the blog as a space for dialogue, although they had not engaged in conversation with any of the other comment writers. Mae, who posted one comment throughout the duration of the study, asserted that on the blog, "you do connect with people all over!" (Regina, p. 3), which was somewhat contradictory given that she had published just one comment. In Montreal, Pierre found enjoyment having people like or respond to comments he had posted, noting that "it was a lot of fun just to get… a notification that somebody had read my thing, liked my thing, or responded to what I had written. It happened a couple of times, and I was excited" (Montreal, p. 17). However, he added that he had not figured out how to respond to other people's comments. Anita was the only participant who had liked and occasionally responded directly to others' comments, and she stated that she had "tried to engage in conversation" and did feel that "dialogue was established" (Montreal, p. 17). In all, participants' perceptions of whether dialogue had been established on the site varied and at times contrasted with the fact that analysis of the blog comments shows only three instances in which anyone besides the blog post authors responded directly to other participants' comments.

Several LTs demonstrated self-awareness of their level of engagement, confessing to not having written as many comments as they could have. Pierre admitted to "feeling a little guilty that I didn't respond as much as I wis—I had time for" (Montreal, p. 8). Even Anita, who had posted comments and engaged with others on the site to the greatest degree, at one point said, "I must be also critical of myself. I didn't post that much as comments" (Montreal, p. 17). Pierre felt that perhaps the desire to impress others with the comments they wrote may have been "a bit of a barrier, because possibly we're putting too much pressure on ourselves" (Montreal, p. 18).

LTs similarly demonstrated self-awareness when it came to reading the comments others had posted. Alberto, for example, admitted that he had only read the odd comment in passing, while Mabel felt that she had not had the time to follow discussion threads. Wendy engaged in self-evaluation when, after initially discussing the blog as a "community of discussion" (Regina, p. 2), she later confessed that she had not generally read other people's comments, because "I didn't want the other posts to skew my response" (Regina, p. 11). She paused and acknowledged this self-contradiction, stating:

> "I said earlier that I valued it [the blog] so much because it's… so nice to interact with other people, but… I just said I don't know that I read everyone's response because I was thinking of my own. I thought, 'Well, that's a big contradiction right there; what was that all about?' I don't know. I think that maybe it was just the time that I maybe—the evenings that I set aside to do that, I just didn't have time to just really get into everybody's [comments]." (Regina, p. 13)

Wendy showed her cognisance of low engagement in reading other comments and of a contradiction between her perception of the blog as a community and her actual practices. Additionally, her awareness that comments were being used for research appears to have influenced her objectives in writing them by creating a sense of obligation to publish comments that were original and not influenced by other readers' ideas. In all, many LTs underwent self-evaluation of their engagement in writing or reading comments.

Not all LTs, however, critiqued their engagement in reading other people's comments on blog posts. Mae, Pierre, and Anita, had read other comments and found them useful. Anita particularly appreciated comments that were concrete and had examples and had drawn ideas from some of them, while Mae and Pierre appreciated the perspectives offered by other participants. Pierre noted that the "other points of view… furthered reflection" (Montreal, p. 21) and Mae found value in the perspectives of commenters who had (unlike her) gone through the process of learning a second or subsequent language themselves.

Despite varying perceptions concerning the degree to which the blog had been a space for dialogue, LTs generally felt that there was potential for dialogue on the site. Mabel acknowledged that "there's a real conversation that could happen" (Montreal, p. 18) between LTs in different contexts, and Mae felt that "the discussion would be nice" (Regina, p. 14). Nevertheless, despite having had the opportunity to engage in such conversations and having been actively encouraged to do so, LTs largely did not engage in dialogue with each other through the blog site, again revealing a discrepancy between their perceptions and what actually occurred on the blog site.

Montreal LTs were, however, markedly eager to engage in dialogue with each other during the interview. At one point, Mabel expressed curiosity about professional development in non-Cégep educational settings and actually took the role of interviewer for several turns as she inquired about each non-Cégep colleague's context in turn. Their discussions frequently returned to issues such as the gap between high schools and Cégeps in Montreal, as well as to questions of what LTs were doing in contexts outside of Montreal. Alberto, for example, commented that “it would be great to compare… how are people doing things [out West]” (Montreal, p. 22).

Both LT groups specifically expressed a desire for opportunities for collaborative, face-to-face dialogue. In Montreal, three of the four LTs verbalized an interest in continuing to meet regularly in the future to “continue dialogue” and hear from LTs in other contexts (Mabel, Montreal, p. 22), a desire which some of them acted upon in the months following the study. When Pierre expressed his interest in meeting regularly, he emphasized that “there has to be a relationship in there, and I think—let’s sit down and have coffee” (Montreal, p. 23). Similarly, Alberto specifically pointed out that “the online thing… worked, because… we do it whenever we can and wherever we are, but I think that … it will never… replace the face-to-face" (Montreal, p. 23). In Regina, Wendy made a similar confession: “I found that I wish I could *talk* with people and actually have maybe like a workshop” (Regina, p. 3). She appreciated “the convenience of the technological world… and having platforms like that, but I find… written format wanting” (p. 15) in that it is neither instantaneous nor, in her opinion, as clear as verbal communication.

Certain LTs expressed specific ideas for how such face-to-face interactions could be structured. Alberto, for example, was concerned that integrating different techniques suggested in the blog was risky because students might “feel that we… don’t know what we’re doing” (Montreal, p. 8) if the new techniques were not executed smoothly. He was, thus, hesitant to integrate new activities and suggested forming “a group of teachers who… one at a time act as teachers and the others as students” (Montreal, p. 8) to pilot test and refine activities before bringing them to the classroom “in the best way we can” (Montreal, p. 16). He suggested “having monthly or bi-monthly meetings... like round tables” (Montreal, p. 23) to collaboratively work on pedagogical activities and discuss issues such as “how we can bridge the gap between the high school and… the Cégep” (Montreal, p. 23). Although he preferred face-to-face meetings, he also mentioned the possibility of using webinars or Skype meetings to achieve a higher degree of interactivity.

Wendy also envisioned getting together with a group of other LTs, in her case to “work towards creating materials and resources” (Regina, p. 4). She believed that “that type of a blog site could be like a hub, where initially ideas are presented, but then… it could be like a traveling PD” (Regina, p. 15). She believed that the blog could be used as a launching pad, in which “certain topics could be used to generate… workshop[s]” (Regina, p. 15) and felt that “there needs to be something hands-on” (Regina, p. 15) in order to “create a specific set of materials based on this theory” (Regina, p. 20). While Alberto visualized a group that shared ideas and practiced new techniques, Wendy took the idea a step further, imagining collaborative meetings to create theoretically-informed resources. In all, LTs expressed a strong desire for dialogue, despite minimal engagements with other participants on the blog website. They perceived a need for face-to-face collaboration in order to build relationships, broaden their perspectives, discuss pertinent issues in the field, and provide a space to create and practice specific materials and activities to implement pedagogical ideas.

4.2.3. Challenges. During the interviews, discussions frequently returned to the challenges and constraints LTs faced in engaging with projects such as the present study and/or their ability to implement the practical recommendations outlined in the blog. Throughout the course of the two interviews, three primary types of challenges emerged.

4.2.3.1. Time and workload. The most common and frequently mentioned constraints were issues of time and workload. LTs in both interviews made mention of heavy workloads and limited time. Although everyone brought up issues of time at some point, these challenges were more extreme in the cases of certain LTs. For example, Alberto, who had only posted two comments on the blog (both on the day of the interview), made the following statement:

> "When I accepted to participate in this study, I was not counting on the fact that I was going to be given an extra course…almost… halfway through the semester… I had to take over the class, and when I took over the class, I realized that this [previous] teacher… hadn't done any assessment. So basically… my life has been correcting, preparing classes, teaching, like, so it's… too much time in front of the screen, and sometimes I want to say, 'Ahh, I don't wanna.'" (Montreal, p. 7)

Alberto went on to describe how these constraints had made participation challenging, especially when considering that he was "talking just about work; we're not talking about family and all these other things that… make up our life" (Montreal, p. 7). Thus, the demands of his work and desire to maintain a healthy personal life inhibited his participation.

Mabel and Wendy, who both had administrative roles (in Mabel's case, in addition to teaching), experienced similar challenges. Mabel commented that "there are those of us who are just so pressed for time. You know, you've got hundreds of papers to mark…" (Montreal, p. 5). Later in the interview, she used terms such as "crammed" (p. 7) and "crazy busy" (p. 17) to describe her life and justify why she had not written more comments on blog posts. Wendy confessed her frustration at these challenges of time in the following statement:

> "It's one of those things where you feel like, 'Oh, I'm going to have so much time to, you know, be involved in something like this, and it'll be great'—you know, you get so excited about that kind of thing, and then reality is that you're just so dead by the end of the day… or there's just so much going on that… a month goes by, and 'Oh my gosh, I

> haven't even—.' You know, it's just the reality of things. That was something that I… personally found frustrating *because* I saw such value in [the project]… Having a venue that's so accessible and one that I can participate in, but then not having the time." (Regina, p. 2)

While all of the LTs admitted to having faced challenges in terms of time, Alberto, Mabel, and Wendy's examples were the most pronounced.

4.2.3.2. External constraints. The second type of challenge was the imposition of objectives and requirements on LTs and programs by any combination of governmental or school administration policies. In Wendy and Mae's context, Wendy asserted that theoretically-informed ideas such as those presented in the blog "can be applied, but they have to be adapted so much with the expectations of the context" (Regina, p. 6). She stated that in attempting to integrate theoretically-based pedagogies into the program curriculum, her eyes were being opened to "the limitations… that we have imposed on us from the higher-ups" (Regina, p. 6), and she expressed her awareness of how these limitations impacted "everything from… what we can do in terms of programming… [to] how we have to structure our program, semester by semester" (Regina, p. 6). She added that even "the expectations of the other [non-ESL] teachers… limit what we do and actually in a lot of ways determine what we do in our ESL classes" (Regina, p. 6-7). All of these factors, thus, contributed to her perceptions concerning the applicability of ideas presented in the blog posts and the ways she perceived they needed to be adapted for her context.

For most Montreal LTs, the most salient bureaucratic constraints were the requirements of the Ministry of Education. In Alberto's reflections about whether it was appropriate to demand that his arts and communications student use an academic register (described previously), he acknowledged that “I’m trying to repeat something that… the Ministry is telling me I have to do, but actually… I have this concern…” (Montreal, p. 4). Thus, he understood that, regardless of the appropriateness of the ideologies underlying the standards to which he held his students, his agency in changing these practices was limited. He stated that ultimately "the teacher has to fulfill the objectives set by the Ministry,” adding that “teachers sometimes, we’re caught between a rock and a hard place, because… we’re trying to understand the student, but we also… have this sort of… breath on our backs” (Montreal, p. 5).

Mabel made a similar observation in a comment she published on a blog post about using blogs in the language classroom. She stated that her students were required by the Ministry to do academic research projects and noted that “doing their literature reviews from blog sources, unfortunately, will not satisfy my employer (the QC government)” (Comments, p. 25), so she could only consider ways of using blogging that stayed within the constraints of Ministerial objectives. Pierre also demonstrated his awareness of these objectives, asserting that he held his Secondary 5 students to higher standards than other teachers might in order to adequately prepare them for the linguistic requirements of the Ministry in Cégeps, telling them “in my class you’re going to have to work a little harder” (Montreal, p. 6). His practice reflected an attempt to overcome the “disparity between… what is taught in high school… [and] the expectations of the Cégep” (Montreal, p. 6). In all, these comments revealed ways that externally-mandated objectives influenced LTs’ day-to-day practices and ability to integrate new practices.

4.2.3.3. Isolation. A more subtle way in which LTs in both groups faced challenges was through feelings of isolation. In Montreal, three of the four LTs made remarks revealing perceived isolation in pursuing PD among colleagues who showed little interest. Alberto, for example, expressed frustration in the interview at being “the only one” (Montreal, p. 10) in his context with a background in applied linguistics and teaching ESL, in contrast to colleagues who lacked a “teacher development background” (Montreal, p. 10). He felt that teachers had an obligation to seek to improve their teaching; otherwise, he perceived that they “are not doing [their]… job” (Montreal, p. 10). For these reasons, he considered himself to be a “black sheep” (Montreal, p. 9). Similarly, Mabel also made distinctions between herself and the majority of her colleagues, who

> “not only don’t try anything new, but they’re… quite afraid—I think they feel quite threatened, especially the older ones in my department—to try anything new, and so when they… hear about somebody being involved in a study… I think they back away… you know, they’re just… really… daunted by it.” (Montreal, p. 9)

Later, Mabel asked if other LTs’ colleagues would “have an interest in continuing to keep up with the…new pedagogy that’s out there” (Montreal, p. 11), and Pierre responded that they would likely be concerned about taking on additional work (p. 11). Mabel also asked Pierre and Anita if they were encouraged to “keep up with new teaching methods and with pedagogy” (Montreal, p. 10). Anita responded that since she was a volunteer, she was offered little coaching, while Pierre stated that, although his principal had been pleased to hear that he was participating in the study and would be very happy if he was to pursue further education, he would not be given time to research and would be expected not to let his work at the school be affected negatively.

Several LTs also perceived a separation from their colleagues in terms of the materials they used. For example, at the Montreal interview Alberto mentioned his colleagues' reliance on textbooks that often presented situations that were out of date or irrelevant, commenting that he preferred to adapt his activities to make them more relevant and “appealing” (Montreal, p. 16).

Pierre noted that he, too, felt like “something of a black sheep” (Montreal, p. 11) in that he produced most of his teaching material himself. In the Regina interview, Wendy emphasized the “gap between ESL certifications and research” (Regina, p. 5), attributing part of that gap to LTs’ tendency to use existing resources that “don’t fill those gaps of what research is saying” (Regina, p. 15), in contrast to the materials she was working to develop. However, she acknowledged that “it’s hard to break out of… routines and away from… the resources that are on hand, which are easy” (Regina, p. 3). Thus, LTs portrayed themselves as lacking a supportive network of like-minded individuals with regards to the materials they used and the PD they sought.

Indeed, Wendy viewed her context in Regina as “quite a lonely field to work in” (Regina, p. 2) and “an island within an island” (Regina, p. 6) because the school where both Regina LTs taught is the only school in the province to offer a program that of English for Academic Purposes to at the high school level. Moreover, as a program developer working on developing new curriculum that integrated theory and practice, she believed that the prairie provinces were generally “really behind in terms of program development… for ESL” (Regina, p. 2), and she felt that there were “not a lot of other people… working on the program development end of things” in Saskatchewan (Regina, p. 2). Given that she did not read other people’s comments on the blog, Wendy’s sense of isolation had not been remedied through this project’s potential for developing communities of practice (CoPs). In all, LTs’ perceptions of isolation suggest that they did not feel well supported in pursuing professional growth.

4.2.4. Meta-reflection. LTs were very willing to offer their thoughts and feedback about the project during the interviews and through the questionnaires. Their meta-reflections concerned the effectiveness of the project, blog post length and accessibility, benefits and learning gained, the format of the website and posts, challenges of using blogging to bridge the theory-practice gap, and future directions for the project, as described below.

4.2.4.1. Perceived effectiveness. In terms of the overall effectiveness of the project in bridging theory and practice, comments were moderately favourable. For example, the following comment was made in one of the questionnaires:

> "Language acquisition theory and research is on a whole different plane of thinking and often seems removed from practical classroom application. In a lot of ways, you have managed to bring these ideas 'down to earth,' and as such it is easier to visualize how one might implement new teaching ideas that are based on current research."
>
> (Questionnaires, p. 4)

During the interviews, however, LTs demonstrated an air of caution about the success of the blog in bridging the gap. For example, Mabel, referring to blogs in general, believed that "in theory, this platform should be really user friendly for all of us and should work" (Montreal, p. 25), but she did not make any claim that it *did* work. Similarly, Wendy admitted that she had found the blog "effective to a point" (Regina, p. 20) but lacking a more collaborative element. She stated that blog content was "taken where it needs to go, but it just—you need that little jump" (Regina, p. 20) of collaborating to create specific materials based on the theory presented. Thus although LTs found the project useful and valuable, no one claimed that it fully bridged the gap.

In terms of the length of posts on the blog, participants had varying opinions. One questionnaire respondent noted that "posts are short and digestible while being thoughtful explorations of a topic" (Questionnaires, p. 2). Both Regina LTs and two of the Montreal LTs found post lengths appropriate; however, Mae added, "I don't know if I would read much longer" (Regina, p. 22). Alberto, on the other hand, stated that "the length of the… blogs were a bit daunting" (Montreal, p. 7), particularly given his heavy workload. This issue was reflected in Mabel's comments as well. In Regina, Wendy acknowledged the challenge of meaningfully engaging readers with SLA theory while being attentive to readers' time constraints, adding "I don't know if you could make it more brief, [be]cause you have to present theory and then kind of flesh it out and then present some sort of present some sort of practical suggestion" (Regina, p. 23). In all, participants' varying perceptions concerning the length of posts highlighted conflicts due to time constraints.

With regards to conceptual accessibility, most LTs were satisfied. Anita, for example, showed her appreciation for the blog by saying that, "Someone that is really in touch with the new trends and everything, that can really read all that stuff that it seems too complicated for us and get it down to us with… simple words, and shorter, for us to really grasp at the meaning" (Montreal, p. 24). Both Mae and Pierre appreciated the organization of the site that allowed them to choose readings by topic, with Pierre noting, "I had the freedom of reading whatever I wanted in those blogs"(Montreal, p. 8). However, in some cases, terminology was a challenge. Mabel admitted that at first it had taken her a long time to read posts because she had been "disconnected from the terminology" (Montreal, p. 7), and she expressed appreciation that "you could click on certain key terms" (Montreal, p. 25) to access websites that explained the meaning of those terms. Mae, however, mentioned that she had still found it necessary to go to other sites to learn about some of the concepts presented in posts.

One notable critique of the project was made in the Montreal interview. Mabel pointed out that she "would like to see more evidence" (Montreal, p. 15) for the strategies presented in posts, such as the one on gamification. She was curious how effective games such as the one suggested in the post would be for students who did not thrive on competition. She felt that "it's nice to have something tangible" (Montreal, p. 15). Pierre was in agreement, noting that "we need some sort of… proof so we can transport" post content to the classroom (Montreal, p. 16). Given that the post in question had presented compelling results from the contributor's thesis research, it is unclear exactly how much additional proof LTs hoped to see in such a small space.

4.2.4.2. Perceived gains. All of the LTs found the experience valuable, and they discussed several aspects of the project which they had found beneficial. Wendy noted that "it's a very valuable thing to do, just because we do see the gaps in theory and practice…" (Regina, p. 24). Despite the challenges of time, LTs in both interviews believed that involvement in projects such as the current one was worthwhile. Mabel commented that she would "like to be almost forced to have a bridge to something like this, to push me" (Montreal, p. 9), adding that, since many of her colleagues were hesitant to try new things, she would "love it if we were all sort of required to—that we had to—to read and… contribute… once a month or something" (p. 9). She later expressed that colleagues who engaged with the blog "would really see the benefit pretty quickly… if they would just take the time to read a little bit about the literature… and then be inspired the way I honestly have been" to try new things (Montreal, p. 19). She added that it was "worth investing… some time" (Montreal, p. 20) into the project. Similarly, Mae acknowledged that although it was difficult to find the time or cognitive energy to go onto the blog site, "every time you do it, there's something you draw out of it" (Regina, p. 3), later adding that although LTs might "fear that this will take up too much time… I think you have to wade in and try it, and then you realize, 'Hey, you know, this is worth that time. I'll make that time'" (Regina, p. 24). In all, LTs felt that participation in this project or other similar projects was worth their time and would be beneficial for other LTs as well.

In terms of the overall benefits of the project, Mabel found that in presenting current theory, the project was “doing for me what I need in my teaching… I’m feeling a bit more inspired” (Montreal, p. 7). Pierre generally expressed a hunger for theoretically based ideas, noting that he had not been exposed to theory since graduating. He stated that that the blog had given him “specific ideas and proper words to… express the gut feelings I had” (Montreal, p. 3). Since it exposed them to the current theory they craved, both Pierre and Mabel described a sense of being “fed” by the material they read (Montreal, p. 26). Mabel made the following statement:

> “it feed a certain need I kind of have right now… I don’t have time to go back into my basement and find the text books [from my master’s degree]… and look back at those theories… and see what new… findings are… but to have it all there, sort of presented to me, I found it really, really user friendly. Definitely contributed to professional development.” (Montreal, p. 26)

Anita also found the experience “enriching” (Montreal, p. 3) in providing “a new perspective” (Montreal, p. 7) and “get[ting] in touch with theory” (Montreal, p. 26).

One of the salient benefits LTs perceived in the project was the practical suggestions. Wendy and Mae found the blog useful as a “source of ideas” (Mae, Regina, p. 21) and a “jumping off place” (Mae, Regina, p. 22) for further investigation, and Mae acknowledged that when reading posts on the blog, she had made “some notes that I can use practically” (Regina, p. 4). Wendy noted that she had also found inspiration for topics to “present to the staff” (Regina, p. 5) in order to encourage theoretically-informed practices in their program. Similarly, the Montreal LTs, especially Mabel and Pierre, returned often to the concept of looking for inspiration and new ideas to try. Mabel, mentioned some pedagogical activities she had found on the blog and intended to incorporate into her class, including using Kahoot (see “Gamification of the Language Classroom") and starting a classroom blog. She felt that allowing her students to create blogs together to present the findings of their research projects "could be very motivating" (Comments, p. 26). Pierre emphasized that "at the end of reading whatever… post, I have to feel that there's something practical I can do with this" (Montreal, p. 16). Thus, LTs emphasized the importance of practical ideas.

4.2.5. Summary. In summary, LTs' interactions with Ramblings of a Linguaphile stimulated reflections on a number of themes. Participants engaged in varying degrees of reflection as they engaged in idea-processing to confirm pre-existing beliefs, re-evaluate existing beliefs and practices, resist new ideas, and/or apply and extend them to their classrooms. In some cases, LTs re-examined their experiences and strategies in light of post content, and for Mae, Pierre, and Mabel, these reflections stimulated the adoption of new ideas and/or practices. LTs' personal experiences often served as a base upon which they scaffolded their reflections about blog post content or shared ideas and strategies with other LTs. Through the interviews, it became evident that LTs' awareness of the potential audience of comments they published influenced their interactions on the blog site, fostering a sense of obligation to post only comments that they perceived as intelligent and insightful. Several LTs demonstrated self-awareness when they acknowledged that they had not posted as many comments as requested. Although there was little evidence of dialogue on the site, some LTs found the interactions of receiving a like or seeing a response to their comments meaningful, and a strong desire for face-to-face collaborative interaction in response to the blog was expressed in both groups.

The theme of challenges concerning participation in the project or integration of theory and practice in language classrooms resurfaced frequently among LTs. Issues of time and workload were mentioned at some point by all participants, and in some cases limited their ability to read posts and engage in discussion in the comments. Several LTs reflected on the limitations imposed by externally-mandated objectives and standards, which affected whether and how they could implement new ideas in their classrooms and programs. Additionally, most LTs expressed feelings of isolation, positioning themselves as the types of teachers to pursue PD or seek to use theoretically-informed curriculum, in contrast with other LTs in their contexts.

In all, LTs found the project to be of value, despite the fact that their comments revealed that they did not feel that it had fostered meaningful dialogue or the formation of a CoP. Nevertheless, most found the project worthwhile and valued the different perspectives to which it had exposed them and particularly appreciated the practical ideas presented on the blog. Although LTs did not generally perceive the blog to have fully bridged the gap, it provided “a jumping off place” (Mae, p. 22) and was perceived as bringing the two sides a little bit closer.

4.3. Graduate Student Blog Post Contributors

The graduate student blog post contributors played a different role in the study from the LTs. Rather than following, reflecting on, and discussing posts on the blog, their task was to summarize research in short, accessible posts; thus, they were engaged primarily as writers rather than readers. Accordingly, the data collected from their comments on the blog and discussions during the interview offered a different perspective. Nevertheless, the themes of idea-processing, audience, challenges, and meta-reflection still surfaced through the interview, as described in the following sub-sections.

4.3.1. Idea-processing. Whereas LTs’ idea-processing came in response to novel information encountered in blog posts, graduate student blog post contributors’ reflections centred more on the process of writing posts and responding to LTs’ comments. Although contributors’ reflections took a different tone than those of LTs, some of their reflections nevertheless followed similar patterns. Contributors' most salient reflections emerged through their awareness of the blog audience, discussions of the challenges of learning the writing style, and meta-reflections on the effectiveness and benefits of the project.

4.3.1.1. Confirming pre-existing beliefs. There was one notable instance in which a contributor cited the experience with the project as confirmation to pre-existing beliefs. When asked how writing blog posts affected contributors' way of looking at their academic work and/or teaching practice, Jung-Su replied that it provided

> "confirmation of what I already suspected—that researchers are not… breaking new grounds, but most often researchers… explain phenomena that already occurred in the classroom in more systematic ways… What the researchers do is… articulate [teachers']… experience in a more manageable way, understandable way and systematic way… we try to explain things, we try to make sense, that already happened in the classroom" (p. 20).

Participating in the study had, thus, reinforced a pre-existing idea about the role of research.

4.3.1.2. Re-evaluation of beliefs and practices. One contributor's experience with the project encouraged re-evaluation of previous beliefs about the relationship between research and practice. Struck by the potential for dialogue in online modes, Jung-Su noted that the project had opened his eyes to the potential of online modes such as blogging in allowing for transparency in academic work and permitting practitioners to see and participate in the "process of building this knowledge base" (p. 18). He admitted that he had "never thought about using [blogs and wikis]" (p. 18), but that the project had helped him realize that "scholarship can be… bidirectional… It can be a dialogic process" (p. 18) in which researchers and LTs "can be… co-writers of the knowledge" (p. 19). Accordingly, he wished to present theoretical interpretations of LTs' experience in order to show them "a possibility of… interpreting the things that happen in the classroom" (p. 10), desiring to let them have a voice in the process. Thus, Jung-Su's involvement with the project prompted a re-evaluation of the purposes of and means of conducting research.

4.3.1.3. Negotiating identities. During the interview, contributors reflected about different identities that had influenced their involvement in the project. Both Fadia and Joy discussed their roles of researcher and teacher, noting shifts between the two. For example, Joy selected her post topic (written corrective feedback) based on her experience as a teacher but later elaborated that "for sure during the writing the blog post, I was a researcher at one moment," but in all, she felt that she "probably had more emotions as a teacher" (p. 11). Fadia, on the other hand, began writing from the perspective of her thesis research, aligning her identity with that of a researcher by noting that as graduate students, contributors "have the chance to do one of the research" and to "connect these things with the teachers" (p. 11). However, she added that "when I write that [blog post], and read it, I would again feel as a teacher" (p. 11). As Fadia stated, "when it's comments about your practice, it's more like a teacher meeting, and then when it's about how do you know something about this and that, that's what you read in the literature, so maybe you read something that she [the teacher] didn't read, then you share it as a researcher" (p. 11). Thus, both Joy and Fadia acknowledged shifts between the roles of researcher and teacher. Jung-Su, on the other hand, consistently associated more closely with the role of researcher, referring to himself as a "researcher in training" (p. 11). He noted that, whether writing a paper or a blog post—he expected feedback, and he had "self-censored" (p. 11) his blog post in anticipation of the feedback and reactions readers would have. In that way, he felt that the experience was "like a training process… as a researcher" (p. 12). Contributors' reflections , thus, revealed the negotiation of multiple overlapping identities.

4.3.1.4. Application and extension of ideas. One of the challenges of the writing process was making practical suggestions, a component which I requested in every blog post. In some cases, I returned drafts to contributors multiple times, asking for clearer suggestions for how the content could be implemented in readers' classrooms. However, the need to provide practical examples pushed contributors to engage in reflection about how to apply research. For example, Joy pointed out that before writing her post, she "kind of knew how it should be done in classrooms when it comes to feedback, but I didn't know… the specific details…, so I had to think of it and had to reflect myself" (p. 2). Similarly, Jung-Su acknowledged the need to provide teacher readers with concrete and relatable examples (in contrast with academic writing). Thus, throughout the process of writing and editing their posts, contributors engaged in reflection about the application of theoretically-oriented ideas.

Joy also provided a notable example of idea extension. One of the salient aspects of her experience with the blog came through a reader's comment on her post about providing written feedback to students. The writer of the comment requested advice about how to give written feedback to beginner level language learners, and Joy acknowledged that she "hadn't really thought of [that], actually, because my students were… high level of English" (p. 2). Thus, in order to respond to the reader's comment, Joy had to extend her ideas in considering how to apply the content of her post to a different context than the sort she had been imagining.

4.3.1.5. The role of personal experience*.* Similarly to LTs, contributors' own teaching experiences played a role in the process of negotiating identities as they wrote their blog posts and responded to comments. Both Fadia and Joy's prior experiences as teachers influenced how they approached the objectives of the project, and Joy took the idea for her post topic from personal experiences in which she had encountered "some difficulties to have a clear dialogue with my students… to get their clear understanding for my feedback" (p. 2), thus drawing from her identity as a teacher. Thus, her experience served as a launching point from which she asked herself how one should provide good feedback. Then she went on to engage as a researcher in finding relevant theoretical material to present to practicing LTs. She observed that "it was interesting to connect my own personal interests and experiences into the theory" (p. 17). Conversely, Fadia began with a more theoretical perspective but throughout the editing process realized that "[the] blog post has to be as simple as it is for teachers," and that she needed to consider "what they['re] gonna take out of this blog post" (p. 9). Although her first draft had been very theoretical, she based her second draft more upon experience, stating that she wrote it "as something meaningful for me as a teacher. I would imaging myself reading this blog post, and I would imagine how much I would take… from this blog and really go to my class and try it" (p. 9). Thus, personal experience was the basis of Joy's choice of topic, whereas Fadia used personal experience to inform the ways she presented content about her topic.

Jung-Su also acknowledged the role of experience in the process of writing his post. He described his journey of reconciling research, practice, and his own experience concerning off-task behaviour. As a language learner, he "was always told in the classroom… 'Don't talk. Don't do other things, and listen to your teacher… Don't get distracted" (p. 13); however, later when he was teaching, he found that students "were doing exactly the same thing that I did, like getting distracted, but in the end, they come back to what they are doing, and then sometimes… they did better" (p. 13). Because of this conflict between what teachers said and the learning that actually occurred, he chose off-task behaviour as the topic for his first post, in which he presented research suggesting that off-task behaviour is not always a hindrance. These reflections show that he, too, engaged with the project from the perspective of a teacher at times.

Perhaps due to the role of their own identities and experiences as teachers, contributor participants also commented on the overall value of language teaching experience. For example, Joy discussed the importance of teaching experience in giving researchers broader perspectives. She observed that “writing this blog post for this study… it kind of helps me to remind of… how valuable my experiences are, because without my experiences, maybe I couldn’t understand… the teachers’ comments” (p. 20). She added that without experience as an LT, she would not be able to put herself “into their shoes” and would have “very limited eyes” (p. 20), noting that the combination of her experience and theoretical knowledge made her work “wider” (p. 20). Additionally, she believed that she could learn from readers’ experiences, acknowledging that “by writing [the] blog, it’s not only sharing my experiences or my knowledge, but at the same time, and I am learning something by those readers and by those comments” (p. 20). She concluded that the project had reminded her “how valuable those experiences [are] and knowledge at the same time” (p. 20). Jung-Su also acknowledged that reading about practitioners’ experiences in the comments on his posts had enriched his “understanding of the phenomena” (p. 6). Thus, contributors’ reflections and various ways of engaging with the project led them to recognize the validity of personal experience in language teaching and supported them as they sought to consider the perspectives of teachers.

4.3.2. Audience. A central aspect of blog post contributors’ experience with the project was their awareness of and response to their LT audience. Like the LTs, contributors were acutely aware of the public visibility of their posts and comments, a notion that resurfaced frequently among their reflections. All three were enthusiastic to have written for a wider audience than the usual academic audience of one professor. Fadia noted that the blog posts were “more accessible to people than a paper” (p. 5), while Joy referred to blogs as “open areas” (p.

7). Fadia associated the wider audience with personal enjoyment, stating that she felt more enjoyment when she "wrote a post… than a paper, because it feels [like] you connected… this post to many peoples [*sic*]" (p. 4). She contrasted blogging with writing a paper, noting that a research paper "is just a paper… it can be just for one purpose and that's it" (p. 5). She went on to mention that she had saved the link to her post on her phone so that she could "easily with one click send it to a friend, for example—share it with anybody" (p. 5). Fadia particularly enjoyed the potential for a wider readership because it reminded her of the value of her research. "I'm doing research for a value," she observed, going on to state that she believed her research to be "something that can really be heard by teachers" (p. 19), an aspect of the project which caused her to find more meaning in her own research. Joy and Jung-Su also showed signs of enjoying the broader audience.

4.3.2.1. Dialogue. One aspect contributors enjoyed came through perceived dialogues with readers. Despite the fact that there was very little interaction on the blog, both Joy and Jung-Su perceived there to be conversation and even perhaps a sense of community on the site. For example, Jung-Su expressed surprise about his experience with the blog:

> "people actually engaged in conversation [in the post comments]. I was… a little bit skeptical in the beginning, and, uh, actually they shared… their past experiences, and… they actually… showed me …some differences of how they think… how they saw these certain things… and they had something to say then it's… from a different angle, from the practitioner's view, and it enriches my understanding of the phenomena" (p. 6).

He later noted that writing posts and responding to people's comments "gives you the sensation that you are really communicating, you are really talking with the people" (p.17). Joy similarly felt that it was "kind of like a meeting with other teachers, but online" (p. 11). Jung-Su additionally perceived that the blog was "building a… community of practice" (p. 13). Later, he referred to the project as a bridge and a means to "build a channel to communicate" (p. 8) between researchers and teachers, adding that "this blog post allow[s] us to see that we could get… connected with the people['s] practice daily in a more meaningful way" (p. 8-9). He believed that his own role in this community was to "share and listen" (p. 10). Thus, both Joy and Jung-Su had the perception of dialogue and community, with LTs' experiences and comments enriching their understandings.

Fadia's perceptions did not align the other two writers' because, owing to the fact that her post was shared near the end of the study, no comments had been published on it at the time of the interview. She observed that she would "feel more happy to get more responses from the teachers, so… they can open my eyes to different things" (p. 7). Nevertheless, she still had "the feelings or the impression of enjoying sharing this experience with other teachers" (p. 7). In all, the blog post contributors expressed enjoyment in being able to reach a broader audience with their writing, demonstrating eagerness to communicate with readers and perceiving meaningful dialogue in the interactions that did occur.

4.3.2.2. Obligation to readers. Unlike LTs, contributors did not evaluate the degree and quality of their own interactions on the blog, which is not surprising given that they were each responsible for only one or case two posts and responded diligently to readers' comments. In fact, contributors' awareness of the audience fostered a sense of responsibility to their readers that affected both the posts they wrote and their responses to comments. Jung-Su revealed that his awareness of the blog's audience had also had an influence on his topic choice for his post. Initially, he had proposed writing about a very theoretical topic, but upon receiving my feedback pointing out that it would be difficult to offer practical suggestions as per the objectives of the study, he had changed from his original topic, noting at the interview that he had realized he "had to think about the audience," (p. 6) and asking himself, "what would it mean to them?" (p. 6). On more than one occasion, he voiced a concern that if he did not make his posts relevant and accessible to readers, it would "let them down" (p. 6, 7). In contrast, he stated that "in an academic paper, … [I] don't care about whether anybody—professor or the other people can related [*sic*] to the topic… but in the blog post, I was thinking more, like… how I can deliver the content the way they can relate it to [*sic*]" (p. 7). Thus, his sense of obligation to readers affected both his choice of topic and stimulated investment in creating relatable content.

Contributors also showed a sense of obligation to offer "clear explanations" (Joy, p. 14) of concepts and terminology and providing "concrete and relatable examples" (Jung-Su, p. 7). These notions were likely in part influenced by the blog post requirements and my feedback. Nevertheless, contributors showed personal investment in providing good quality material that LTs would enjoy. For example, Joy acknowledged the need to make content "interesting for readers, so that they can read it easily, because otherwise no one's gonna read it and no one's gonna comment" (p. 17). All three contributors discussed the need to provide examples, and Jung-Su made the following statement:

> "Blog post for me is bridging this gap from research and the pedagogical implications, that certain… part of research… [that] can be readily translated into practice. But because these readily applicable things are… deeply embedded into these academic jargons and the whole process of academic rigour, [they]... are not feasible for practitioners." (p. 22)

He added that "SLA research should… emphasize the pedagogical implications" and "how the outcomes… would impact on the practice" (p. 22). Thus, contributors recognized a need to communicate clearly with their readers and make their content relatable.

Finally, in addition to impacting contributors' choices of content and how they chose to present it, awareness of the blog's audience also fostered a sense of responsibility to provide knowledgeable answers to readers' comments. For example, Joy encountered a question which she could not answer in the comments on her post. "I had to read some more research," she noted, "because I didn't want to go… jump in but just say anything" (p. 3). She added that she "kind of felt responsible" (p. 3). Also, Jung-Su's forethought about readers' feedback and reactions demonstrate the care that went into writing posts that they would like. In all, contributors' desire to hear from readers and provide knowledgeable responses emphasize that they perceived themselves to have a sense of responsibility toward their readers.

4.3.3. Challenges. Unlike the LTs, contributors did not discuss many challenges that had influenced their experience with the project; however, those they did mention largely centred on the editing process. During this process, their blog post drafts were shortened and refined in collaboration with me. In most cases, posts were published after two to three drafts had been written and I had followed up with the writers through several exchanges of feedback and revisions. My feedback included requests to define or simplify theoretical terminology, provide concrete practical examples, and adhere to the 900 word limit. The word limit was a challenging aspect for all three contributors. Joy, for example, noted that her first thought was that the limit was not too short; however, she quickly found that she had to cut pieces out to stay under 900 words. Fadia acknowledged the challenge of offering an insightful contribution in a short post, stating that "it's hard with this limited space to really… get everyone from different perspectives of how this could work or not" (p. 14). She had found it challenging to discern how to "adapt [for] all these audience [*sic*]" (p. 14) and was concerned that there would be teachers who disagreed with the content of her post (p. 14) or that someone would cite studies that contradicted hers. She acknowledged that “being wise of everything, it’s hard” (p. 14). The last aspect that contributors found challenging was providing practical suggestions. Joy mentioned that both “giving specific things in there so that [LTs]… can readily apply it to… classroom settings” and adjusting her terminology to “make it clear for them to understand” (p. 4) were challenging. Thus, the primary challenges acknowledged by contributors emerged through the editing process.

4.3.3.1. Acknowledgement of LT challenges. Although the blog post contributors did not describe the same types of challenges as LTs discussed, they did show awareness of the needs of LT readers. In particular, contributors perceived that LTs would have challenges with time, busy schedules, and physical access. For example, Jung-Su commented that research may help teachers, who “already know, already experience… many kinds of things in the classroom, but they didn’t have time, or they didn’t think about it… they don’t have a chance to articulate it” (p. 20). Similarly, Joy and Fadia acknowledged issues of time and access faced by teachers and their own position of privilege in having the time and ability to do research. Joy stated, “I felt like I have some privileges to have an [*sic*] access to those research articles because we are the same teachers, like language teachers… Our role is the same, but somehow I only have those access… so that’s why… I’m able to write something more theoretical than them” (p. 9). Similarly, Fadia noted that graduate student researchers “have maybe the time more than… teachers right now, who are busy with their classes or students—we have more time to read the articles or get to the research world, and as we have this chance in the blog posts, we can connect these things with the teachers” (p. 11). Thus, the contributors were conscious of the privilege of their position and aware of some of the challenges faced by teachers in connecting with theory.

4.3.4. Meta-reflection. The meta-reflections of blog post contributors came from a more research-oriented perspective than those of LTs. They all spoke favourably about the value of the project, and their perspectives reflected their role as post authors. Their comments focused on the skills and experiences they perceived themselves to have gained in writing for an LT audience in a blogging forum. Contributors did not make any critiques of the project.

4.3.4.1. Perceived effectiveness. In terms of bridging the gap between theory and practice, blog post contributors' discussions revealed perceptions of the project as successful. For example, Fadia commented that the "blog post is really connecting… research to teachers" (p. 10) without addressing the question of whether LTs would actually engage with the material that was made available. Moreover, contributors' sense of engaging in dialogue and community with teachers, as discussed previously, suggests that the project was presumed to be successful in stimulating collaboration between the two communities. These findings contrast with the discussions of LTs, who did not acknowledge any dialogue with blog post writers. Thus, contributors' perceptions of the effectiveness of the project were very favourable, in contrast to findings in the LT groups.

Contributors also professed that the project had helped them bridge the theory-practice gap on a personal level. For example, Fadia appreciated "the chance of the blog post to connect… theoretical framework with the practical framework," noting that she usually studied more theoretical aspects of SLE and that they were "always separated about the practical in my head" (p. 21). She felt that writing a blog post had helped her to connect the two sides, stating that "during the process of writing the blog post, you feel that somehow these are *really* connecting, and it makes more sense" (p. 21). Moreover, the project espoused reflections about the purpose of research. For example, Jung-Su observed that as researchers, "you have to be accessible to your readers, and you have to be meaningful for them… Otherwise, it is nothing, because in the end, we do this because we believe in teaching and learning… and we believe… by doing this, we can change a little… fraction of the world called education" (p. 10). Thus, contributors showed mindfulness of the gap and their part in bridging it.

Contributors' reflections additionally revealed links between the editing process and their understandings about how to bridge the gap. For Joy and Fadia, the editing process encouraged reflection on the importance of communicating clearly, particularly when it came to the terms they used. All three had been asked to clarify the meaning of certain terms in their drafts, and Joy acknowledged that "during the editing process, I realized that maybe… what I wanted to say is not really clear for… readers, especially practicing teachers" (p. 12). Jung-Su had similar thoughts, stating that to "regurgitate [research]… with… difficult words and then the complicated concepts, it will just let them down" (p. 6). He attributed value to the editing process, acknowledging that it "enabled me to adjust the things I said in a more… accessible way" (p. 16). He also noted that the feedback I offered requesting "some kind of explanation here, and… an example here and there… made… my idea fuller" (p. 13-14) and later referred to blogging as a means to "translate" research for LTs (p. 22). Fadia acknowledged that the feedback she received "opened my eyes… to understand the standard of blog posts" (p. 12). In all, contributors' discussions revealed that they found the project successful in bridging the gap between theory and practice both globally and personally, fostering collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and encouraging development of understandings about how to communicate research to LTs effectively.

4.3.4.2. Perceived gains. All three contributors also had positive perceptions about the project in terms of their professional growth. They valued the opportunity to develop new professional writing and communication skills. Fadia, for example, noted that “if you want to be a professional in blog post writing, it’s totally different than writing a paper. So, the editing… taught me how to really understand these two different styles of writing” (p. 15). She went on to elaborate that “to deliver the content in a… very, let’s say entertaining way… to readers—so just to make it accessible… this is a skill in writing in open source or in an online course, and it’s not easy to learn how to do that” (p. 16). Similarly, Joy found the project useful “for adjusting myself to… a different style of writing, especially when it comes to online” (p. 15). Contributors imagined using these new styles of communication in future endeavours, as all three considered the possibility of sharing their research in online forums. Fadia stated that she would consider blogging in the future “to connect or bridge… information to… other teachers (p. 22), Joy noted that the project had lead her to her contemplate vlogging, and Jung-Su speculated about the potential for blogs and wikis. He was particularly intrigued by the potential these platforms had for communication and collaborative knowledge building among researchers and practitioners. Thus, all three believed that they had gained useful knowledge about how to communicate research to a practitioner-based audience and showed an interest in doing so in the future.

The notion of communication also gave Joy and Jung-Su some ideas for their own theses. Jung-Su shared that his experience had given him “the idea that in writing articles or in writing the thesis I’m going to write… I’m going to share… and I want to listen what they are going to say” (p. 10), and Joy acknowledged that LTs’ comments on her post had encouraged her to broaden her perspective when it came to writing her thesis, adding that participating in the study had “really helped in that sense” (p. 3). Finally, Fadia noted that the project had had an impact on her professional vision, stating, “if I really get back to teaching again, I would really have more vision of… connecting some research to actually the field of teaching” (p. 9-10). In all, participants perceived that they had gained writing and communication skills and ideas for incorporating similar projects into their professional practices and the field of SLE as a whole.

For Fadia, an additional benefit of participation in the study was that it gave more meaning to her own research. She described how having the opportunity to share her research with practicing teachers had stimulated her investment in her research in the following statement:

> "Before you sent me an email… for the blog post, I was… writing the thesis, honestly… just 'cause I want to fill my master's thesis requirement and that's it. You know? It's just… an academic goal. And when you talked to me about this… I saw it as an opportunity, like, my research is meaningful to the world, you know? And when I wrote it in a post, and I saw it in its last version, I was feeling there is a value. I'm doing research for a value… And this is really something that can be heard from the teachers. So yeah, thank you… I was feeling something more meaningful toward my research… instead of… having as a requirement of master." (p. 19)

Thus, the project had positively affected her mentality about her thesis research.

4.3.5. Summary. In summary, contributors' interactions with the blog stimulated reflections on most of the same themes as LTs, although from a different perspective. Jung-Su found confirmation of certain pre-existing beliefs, and in writing their posts, contributors reflected carefully on how to apply theoretical ideas, bringing personal teaching experiences to bear in so doing. One aspect in which contributors' reflections were distinct from those of LTs was in the aspect of negotiating between the competing identities of researcher and LT, with Fadia and Joy acknowledging fluidity between the two.

Contributors were aware of the accessibility of the blog, which impacted the way they approached their writing. This awareness of their audience stimulated a sense of responsibility toward readers that affected their approaches to writing posts and responding to readers' comments. Unlike LTs, contributors perceived that they had engaged in interaction and dialogue on the site. They found that readers' comments on their posts enriched their understandings of their topics. Their sense of responsibility to readers was strengthened through the editing process. While contributors found it challenging to adhere to the 900 word limit, clearly define terms, and provide concrete examples and pedagogical suggestions, they expressed appreciation for the writing and communication skills they gleaned, and they demonstrated cognisance of ways in which they, as researchers, could make their work more accessible to practitioners.

Unlike the LTs, contributors did not question the degree to which the project was effective in bridging the theory-practice gap. Rather, they reflected on ways it had succeeded, particularly in terms of development of new perspectives toward research and its purposes, professional writing skills, and ideas for how to carry their learning forward in their own professional endeavours. All three contributors expressed interest in using online platforms as a space for disseminating research and/or engaging in dialogue and community with practitioners as a result of participating in the study. In all, contributors valued the project and found it successful on both a personal level and a more global one. In the next chapter, I discuss the significance of these findings and posit answers to the research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Having laid out the findings of the study in terms of the major themes that emerged from the data, I now assess the project's success in bridging the gap and stimulating professional development of participants' beliefs, practices, and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research. This chapter draws from the LT and contributor results described previously in order to present answers to each of the study's three research questions, beginning with LTs, followed by contributors, and finishing with both groups' perceptions about the overall effectiveness of the project.

5.1. Research Question 1

The first research question was: How does interacting with a language education blog stimulate development of teachers' professional beliefs, practices, and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research? Results from questionnaires, LTs' comments on the blog, and their discussions during the interviews suggest that their professional beliefs, practices, and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research underwent development in a number of ways while remaining unchanged in others. LTs' understandings concerning SLE research did not show substantial evidence of adjustments; however, several expressed their interest in hearing about current research, and all demonstrated willingness to engage with it through their consent to participate in the study. Moreover, LTs' comments about the value of the project and their hunger for theoretical 'inspiration' positioned them as being eager to learn and develop their practice. Mabel, Alberto, and Wendy, specifically highlighted their experience with and interest in SLE research when they made references to previous and current connections with theory. Although these comments provided evidence that LT participants saw value in SLE research and were interested in allowing it to inform and back their practices, they provided no evidence of any shift in perspective concerning SLE research.

Given the difficulty I encountered in finding participants, participating LTs' numerous comments about the challenges of finding time for an additional commitment in their already busy schedules, and the low number of comments posted on blog posts during the study, a strong self-selection bias appears to have had an influence in the current study. Despite my efforts to minimize the time commitment, time limitations alone likely deterred any LTs who did not have a strong interest in learning about research from participating. Indeed, Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) acknowledge a similar likelihood in their study assessing the degree of LTs' exposure to research, noting that LTs with prior exposure to or interest in research would be more likely to participate than those who had none. This conjecture raises the challenging question of how LTs who have no prior interest in developing their teaching practice through exposure to SLE research could be enticed to engage with projects designed to make it available to them. In the case of the current study and projects like it, the proverbial horse can be told there is water available but may easily remain disinterested or too busy to drink.

Although there was no notable evidence of shifts in LTs' perceptions about SLE research, they did engage in reflections about their practices by assessing them and evaluating possible alterations. In some cases, LTs identified pedagogical strategies they hoped to integrate, as when Mabel expressed her intentions to try blogging and incorporate activities using the app described in the post on gamification. Similarly, Anita reflected on the types of oral corrective feedback she employed and those she perceived she should employ after reading the blog post on this topic. Moreover, Mae's reflections on the post about ideology critique influenced both her beliefs and practices when they lead her to adjust her approach in handling a student's racially inappropriate comment. Notably, LTs felt that the presence of externally mandated objectives and requirements somewhat limited their ability to accommodate new approaches. Nevertheless, there was evidence that LTs reflected upon their beliefs and practices, considered how they might improve them, and in at least one case, acted on these reflections.

Another instance in which an LT reflected upon the limitations imposed by externally-mandated requirements and engaged in re-evaluation of understandings about language teaching was when Alberto described his reflections about the blog post about linguistic ideologies underlying corrective feedback, questioning whether it was appropriate to require students in all Cégep programs to use an academic register for assignments. This constituted the most notable instance in which an LT engaged in critical reflection (Brookfield, 2009) through his acknowledgement that the Ministry dictated the linguistic standards to which he held students. Alberto did not delve into the ways ideologies perpetrated by this power structure might be harmful, but he did acknowledge the constraints he was placing on this student because of these ministerial requirements, and by doing so, he engaged in some degree of critical assessment of the ideologies underlying his practices and the power structure that espoused them. These reflections constitute an example of ideology critique—the critical assessment of social realities and attitudes which shape people’s beliefs and practices (Brookfield, 2009)—and a step toward developing critical language awareness (García 2008), or understandings about the social and political realities underlying language use and teaching.

The fact that there was not more evidence of critical reflection through ideology critique can largely be attributed to the study’s design. All but one of the blog posts published throughout the study period focused on practical aspects of language teaching and had little leaning toward more sociological elements. It would likely be possible to encourage more critical reflection in future attempts at using blogs to bridge the theory-practice gap by simply choosing more sociologically oriented topics for blog posts. However, the results of the current study suggest that a shift in focus from practical to sociological might not be engaging to the audience, or at least that it might attract a different audience. Despite their interest in research, LT participants favoured the practical suggestions in the posts over the more theoretical aspects, expressing their desire for concrete practical pedagogical ideas. If Pierre's desire for something practical he could do after reading each post is typical of other LTs' attitudes, it might be challenging to create sociologically-oriented blog posts that offered enough concrete practical suggestions to keep LT readers engaged. This leaning supports Hemsley-Brown and Sharp's (2004) observation that teachers often feel that "research should exclusively identify strategies and techniques that could have a direct impact on their teaching" (p. 10). Although Alberto showed interest in engaging in ideology critique, he was an exception among the LT participants in the current study.

Linked with their desire to find specific pedagogical strategies, LTs also demonstrated a tendency to evaluate content through the lens of their personal experiences. They often used blog posts to confirm and justify pre-existing beliefs and practices, demonstrating Selwyn's (2011) notion of assimilation by fitting the ideas presented on the blog into their prior knowledge. Even when presented with new and theoretically-supported information, LTs often showed a tendency to gravitate toward those concepts which fit with their existing beliefs and practices, supporting Labaree's (2003) claim that teachers' "experience as practitioners naturally emerges as their primary bank of professional knowledge" (p. 100), Korthagen's (2007) statement that teachers' preconceptions and experience "shape the way new knowledge is being understood" (p. 304), and Hemsley-Brown and Sharp's (2004) comment that research has suggested that "teachers only consider an article or find it credible when it matches their personal experience" (p. 10).

Thus, personal experience played a key role in how LTs interpreted and responded to ideas presented in the blog.

Despite the privilege they gave to their own experience in interpreting blog content, this leaning was not necessarily detrimental. It must be remembered that researchers such as Labaree (2003), Ellis (2010), and Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) express that it is necessary for LTs to consider the relevance of research findings to their own contexts, and Labaree (2003) additionally emphasizes the importance of searching for elements that may be adopted or adapted to teachers' own pedagogical needs. Thus, although personal experience can hinder LTs from accepting new ideas, findings of the current study also showed several instances in which personal experience formed a productive part of participants' reflections. In some cases, for example, experience-based resistance to the ideas presented in blog posts was well justified, such as when the blog commenter who taught beginner level learners questioned the usefulness of written corrective feedback in her context. In this instance, the readers' personal experience aided her in assessing the relevance of the post to her context. Personal experience also played a productive role in helping participants scaffold their reflections and allowing them to share strategies with other readers, as when Anita's assessment of her experiences giving oral corrective feedback in response to a blog post on the topic helped her identify strategies to make her feedback more effective.

Another example of an LT evaluating the relevance of research findings to her context was when Wendy shared her hesitations about utilizing translanguaging strategies. Wendy's hesitance about adapting these practices was not theoretically unsupported, as there is research that suggests that caution and sensitivity are needed in assessing the degree to which translanguaging practices are appropriate in a given classroom. For example, Ballinger, Lyster, Sterzuk, and Genesee (2017) offer evidence from Canadian French immersion classrooms to suggest that allowing crosslinguistic pedagogies (or translanguaging) in minority language classrooms may not be helpful to learners, cautioning readers that "crosslinguistic pedagogy should not be seen as a one-size-fits-all affair; rather, it should be adapted fit the context in which students are learning" (p. 50). Wendy assessed the relevance of translanguaging to her context and similarly concluded that it may not always be helpful. However, her willingness to extend the ideas found in the post in such a way as to make them appropriate to her context showed precisely the sort of adaptation suggested by Labaree (2003) and further described by Selwyn (2011). Thus, although personal experience lead Wendy to take a cautious stance toward accommodating translanguaging pedagogies into her practice, she was nevertheless engaging in productive reflection. Although reliance on personal experience is associated with resistance to change by Labaree (2003) and Korthagen (2007), the findings of the current study suggest that perhaps it is not as detrimental as it is sometimes made to sound—*if* it is coupled with an openness to carefully consider new perspectives and how they might be adapted to the context.

5.1.1. Collaboration. The project did not succeed in stimulating development of LTs' beliefs, practices, and understandings through collaborative reflection and construction of knowledge as outlined in Deng and Yuen's (2011) model of the affordances of blogs. Although LT participants did post comments, they published fewer than requested and scarcely engaged with other people's comments at all, even after explicit (and repeated) encouragement to do so. In addition, LTs demonstrated no sense of engagement with researchers through blog post writers' responses to their comments. There are many possible reasons for the paucity of collaboration on the site. For one thing, there was not enough time to build a more substantial following, which would have better supported the development of a CoP. Guerin et al. (2015), for example, built up a following and CoP over a period of two years, and Luehmann and Tinelli (2008), who examined ways that practicing science teachers enrolled in a graduate seminar engaged with blogs created for their use, describe the importance of deliberate and intentional community-building in order to attract and stimulate interactions with "like-minded others" (p. 331). With the very short timeframe between receiving ethical approval to recruit new followers to the blog and commencing the data collection period, there was not sufficient time to build up a following and establish a CoP that would perhaps have encouraged more commenting.

There were also other obstacles influencing the lack of development of a CoP on the Ramblings of a Linguaphile site. Other blogging studies, such as those of Fisher and Kim (2013) and Farr and Riordan (2015), recruited STs who presumably had classes together, so that blogging was a complement to face-to-face interactions that were already established. Thus, in these studies the formation of CoPs around blogs was actually an extension of existing CoPs. Since participants in the current study were not part of a shared CoP prior to participating and in most cases did not meet each other until the interview, it is perhaps unsurprising that they did not engage in a great deal of interaction. The fact that they did not have any prior connection may have discouraged them from interacting on the blog web site. In addition, Deng & Yuen (2011) summarize research to suggest that interaction on blogs can further be hindered by an "asymmetrical interactive mechanism" (p. 449), arguing that blog writers have more power and presence on the site, so that exchanges between bloggers and readers are somewhat one-sided. This problem could perhaps be mitigated by the addition of a discussion forum, in which readers and blog post writers could communicate freely (see Yang, 2009).

There were additional logistical, technical, and personal factors that hindered collaboration in the project. For one thing, had more LT participants agreed to participate, there would have been a greater number of people writing comments, which would have increased the potential for collaborative interaction. Also, some participants lacked the technological savvy to engage with others' comments. Finally, knowing that their comments would be read by others and used for research, seems to have contributed to a sense of obligation in LTs to make sure that the comments they posted sounded knowledgeable, as revealed by their conversations during the interview and some of the comments submitted in the questionnaires. The pressure of these self-imposed standards was likely compounded by LTs' time limitations; if they did not have the time to write a comment of the caliber they perceived necessary, they were less likely leave a comment at all. This finding resonates with Nambiar and Thang's (2016) conjecture that one of the reasons that their LT participants did not actively engage in posting on the blogs used for their study was that they were intimidated by others' responses.

In spite of their minimal collaborative reflection on the blog site in practice, LT participants did perceive the blog as having potential for dialogue, although only Anita—who was the most responsive on the site—felt that any sort of dialogue had actually been established. It is, thus, somewhat surprising that although LT participants were encouraged to engage in conversation with other commenters during the study, expressed a sense of isolation from like-minded LTs, and professed a desire to hear from LTs in other contexts, they did not take the opportunity to engage in collaborative dialogue on the blog site. However, although collaborative reflection is a desirable and necessary dimension of reflection according to Deng and Yuen's (2011) model of the affordances of blogging, the lack of engagement in collaborative dialogue in the current study does not necessarily mean that LTs in the current study completely missed the collaborative aspects of reflection. Beaudoin (2002) found that nearly all participants in his study of students who were inactive in an online graduate course felt that they learned as much or more from reading others' comments as from writing their own. Although some LTs in the current study did not read others' comments, others found value in doing so. LTs' diverse learning styles should, thus, be taken into consideration when assessing their engagement with the project.

Additionally, LTs did engage in collaborative reflection during the interviews, as they exchanged perspectives and considered how certain ideas from the blog might be implemented in different contexts. A resonating theme from LTs' collaborative discussion in both interviews was that they desired to interact with LTs in other contexts and engage in collaborative reflection and implementation of ideas in a face-to-face setting. Specifically, there was an interest in continuing with the blog but adding a workshopping element, or "traveling PD" (Wendy, p. 15), in order to use the blog as a starting point for discussion and development of concrete activities and resources. The Montreal LTs additionally expressed an interest in continuing to meet to discuss current issues in their different contexts. Despite their avid interest in expanding the project in these ways, however, it is uncertain whether LTs would actually have the time and desire to engage with this sort of expansion of the project. Thus, although the blog site itself remained almost completely devoid of interaction between readers, LTs in the focus groups were eager to engage in collaborative reflection during the interviews. This finding reveals that LTs' feelings of isolation were not assuaged through participation in the project, perhaps in part due to their preference for in-person interactions. The fact that several LTs implied a sense of being isolated in their pursuit of developing theoretically-informed practices and expressed desire for community stands in contrast with their low engagement in interaction on the blog site and suggests a need to complement blogs with face-to-face interaction.

5.1.2. Summary. In all, LTs engaged in meaningful reflection that stimulated their professional beliefs, practices, and understandings concerning language teaching, although there was not substantial evidence of evaluation of their beliefs and understandings about SLE research. Despite a professed interest in SLE theory, LT focus group participants gave preference to the concrete pedagogical ideas presented in the blog posts. They also tended to rely on personal experience in confirming pre-existing beliefs, evaluating material presented in blog posts, and sharing ideas. Nevertheless, there was evidence that LTs had engaged in varying degrees of meaningful reflection, even in some of the instances in which they demonstrated resistance to ideas presented in blog posts or confirmed their pre-existing beliefs. There were also a couple of instances in which LTs engaged in more critical reflections. In all, findings supported Borg's (2010) suggestion that LTs stand to benefit from engaging with research through encountering new ways of making sense of their work, engaging in self-examination, finding new ideas to try in the classroom, and discovering theoretical rationale to support and validate pre-existing knowledge.

Participants engaged in little collaborative reflection in the blog comments during the study; however, they were eager to collaborate during the interviews and revealed a strong desire for opportunities to discuss issues and workshop pedagogical activities face to face with other LTs from different contexts. Although both Farr and Riordan's (2015) and Deng and Yuen's (2011) blogging studies similarly reported low levels of online engagement, CoPs were still formed in both of these projects, an outcome which was not born out in the current study. However, those studies examined participation from STs recruited from university courses, who already had classes together. This fact further attests to the possibility that the addition of an in-person component to projects of this sort would augment the development of a true CoP online. In all, the project was somewhat successful in stimulating LTs' professional beliefs, practices, and understandings through personal reflections but had little impact in promoting collaborative reflection and development of an online CoP.

5.2. Research Question 2

The second research question was: How do graduate students' experiences as blog post contributors impact their beliefs and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research? Results from graduate student blog post contributors' comments on the blog and discussion during the interview reveal several ways in which their beliefs and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research underwent evaluation and shifts. Many of their reflections were closely linked with the awareness of writing for a broader LT-based audience. All three contributors valued the opportunity to disseminate their research to a broader audience and engage in dialogue with LTs. Despite the low levels of LT engagement through commenting overall, contributors were eager to respond to LTs' comments on their posts and, in contrast to the perceptions of the LTs, they felt that dialogue had been established between themselves and their readers. As far as the blog post contributors were concerned, the project was successful in connecting them with practitioners, as encouraged by Korthagen (2007) and other researchers. Although LTs did not engage in collaborative construction of knowledge through discussion in the comments, blog post contributors did feel that LTs' comments on their posts pushed them to expand their understandings. They welcomed LTs' ideas and responded by engaging in careful reflection and sometimes further study.

In connection with blog post contributors' awareness of their LT audience, contributors expanded their understanding of the importance and value of teaching experience. For one thing, contributors drew from their own language teaching experiences in order to present topics that would be relevant to LTs' day-to-day practice. In doing so, they made their posts more personal and developed a genre-specific voice that was appropriate to blogging and markedly different from typical scholarly writing, as described by Guerin et al. (2015). Moreover, contributors also reflected on the value of LTs' experiences and their usefulness in informing research. They found new perspectives through the experiences LTs shared in the comments and considered how these perspectives could further inform their research. Through the project, Joy gained a deeper appreciate of the value of her own teaching experiences in helping her to connect her research to LTs, and Jung-Su considered the need for SLE research to provide LTs with possible lenses for interpreting their experiences. Thus, contributors' involvement with the project encouraged a realignment of their values concerning the purpose of research.

The opportunity to connect their research to LTs brought an awareness of writing for a broader and more practically-oriented audience and fostered a sense of responsibility to readers. Contributors' discussions at the interview revealed a preoccupation with providing content that was clear, relevant, and interesting to LT readers. Jung-Su attested to having a greater concern about writing content that was engaging for blog readers than he would have had writing an academic paper, while Joy was motivated to make sure her post was accessible and interesting in order to ensure that readers engaged with it. These findings confirm Guerin et al.'s (2015) claim that the interactive potential of a blog helps to mitigate "the sense of writing into a void that can sometimes accompany more formal publication practices" (p. 219). They also suggest that contributors were developing understandings about how to make research accessible and practical for LT audiences. For example, contributors' consideration of LTs' lack of time as well as their discussions of the challenge of adhering to the word limit suggest an increased awareness of the need for conciseness in writing for an LT audience.

Contributors—especially Joy and Fadia—additionally felt a sense of responsibility to consider various perspectives in their posts and to provide knowledgeable answers to readers' comments. In Joy's case, this sense of obligation lead her to do further research before addressing a comment that challenged her to consider her topic from another perspective. Finally, contributors' sense of obligation to their readers, in tandem with the feedback they received during the editing process, helped to stimulate a greater understanding of the need to provide practical suggestions which practitioners may evaluate and adapt for their contexts, as recommended by Labaree (2003). Jung-Su acknowledged that research ought to emphasize pedagogical implications, and although this may have been a pre-existing belief, his experience with the project appears to have reinforced the notion and brought it to the foreground. In all, contributors' awareness of writing for a broader audience fostered a sense of responsibility, that, in combination with the feedback the received, encouraged a greater appreciation of the need to simplify and condense research for presentation to LT audiences.

Contributors acknowledged certain challenging aspects of writing blog posts, particularly noting the difficulties of keeping them short, using accessible language, accommodating multiple perspectives, and including concrete practical suggestions. As Guerin et al. (2015) note, one of the challenges faced by academics who wish to blog is to learn the genre, which entails writing shorter entries, inviting comments from readers, and using a more personal voice. Contributors to Ramblings of a Linguaphile particularly discussed the challenges of communicating clearly, with Joy expressing a realization that her first draft may not have been as clear as she had originally thought. The need to explain theoretical terms likely exacerbated the challenge of keeping blog posts under 900 words. Finally, the requirement of including practical suggestions, an aspect valued by LT participants, pushed contributors to write about more applied aspects of SLE research rather than highly theoretical components, as demonstrated by Jung-Su's change of topic. The project, therefore, encouraged contributors to consider to the degrees to which different kinds of SLE research would be relevant to LTs, as encouraged by Belcher (2007) and Ellis (2010), and how to provide concrete practical examples and suggestions. In all, contributors' discussions suggest a re-evaluation of the kinds of writing and vocabulary appropriate to practitioner-based audiences.

These findings highlight the commitment required of researchers wishing to contribute to narrowing the gap between theory and practice. Contributors' discussions suggest that providing conceptually accessible summaries of research requires willingness to invest time and effort into creating content that is comprehensible, useful, and engaging to the audience. Moreover, LTs did not always find the concepts presented in the posts straightforward despite the fact that contributors (including myself) edited post drafts multiple times in an effort to describe terms and concepts clearly. Clearly, great care is required to ensure that research summaries are conceptually accessible in readers' eyes and not just from the researcher's perspective.

Despite the challenges of learning a different genre and writing for a non-researcher audience, blog post contributors showed willingness to invest the necessary time and effort. Indeed, they found enjoyment and motivation in making their research available to a broader and more practice-oriented audience, resonating with the findings of Guerin et al. (2015), who linked blog writing with inspiration. Fadia in particular showed pride in sharing her work and perceived that through making it available to the LTs it was meant to benefit, it also became more meaningful to her personally. Contributors' involvement with the project, thus, gave them a heightened appreciation for disseminating research to a broader practitioner audience, and the opportunity to provide practitioners with something of use added depth and meaning to their own research. Their motivation was also demonstrated through their willingness to go through multiple drafts of their posts, their investment in creating engaging content, and their eagerness to respond to readers' comments on their posts. Their eagerness to share their research may have been influenced to some extent by other factors, such as the opportunity to publish their work as student researchers (as opposed to established academics, who do not need to concern themselves with 'getting their work out there') and the fact that they were contributing to research and specifically aiding a peer. Nevertheless, contributors' enthusiasm to write for the blog and eagerness to engage in dialogue with LTs is a promising result.

An additional facet of blog post contributors' experiences with the writing process and interactions with blog readers was that they engaged in negotiations of professional identity. Both Joy and Fadia acknowledged that as they went through the process of writing their posts and responding to readers' comments, they found that they shifted between the roles of language teacher and researcher. At times, there was some tension between the two identities, as when Fadia noted that she had started from a researcher's perspective, but my feedback asking her to make her post more accessible and practical had pushed her to move to a teacher's perspective. Similarly, Joy felt that her experiences as an LT enabled her to better understand and respond to readers' comments, but her ability to engage in research better equipped her to present research and respond to comments. In contrast to the other two contributors, Jung-Su felt that he had primarily engaged with the project as a "researcher in training" (p. 11), a concept which acknowledges the otherwise unacknowledged identity associated with being a graduate student. Nevertheless, even Jung-Su drew from his own teaching and learning experiences in choosing the topic of his blog post, which suggests that he also engaged with the project as a teacher in some capacity. Thus, all contributors negotiated between the identities of (student) researcher and LT as they engaged in the process of writing blog posts and responding to comments.

This fluidity of identity between the roles of researcher and teacher confirms the findings of previous studies, such as Herath and Valencia (2014), who found that as teacher educators in the making, they navigated through conflicting claimed and assigned identities in multiple CoPs. Furthermore, they discovered that at times they attempted to align their identities with those of their participants (Herath & Valencia, 2014), much like graduate student participants in the current study aligned with their LT audience by drawing from their own experience as LTs in choosing topics and responding to comments. Also, Farr and Riordan (2015) found blogs to foster the expression of identities, particularly as a reflection of their ST participants' conflicting identities as *novice* or *professional*. In the current study, graduate student blog post contributors' identities were expressed in terms of their navigation between research-oriented and experience-based elements. Furthermore, contributors' consideration of the value of teaching experience was a basis for perspective taking, as they attempted to view their research through teachers' eyes, even as Montgomery and Smith (2015) urge. Finally, while Fisher and Kim (2013) found that ST participants in their study reflected on "what it means to be a language teacher" (p. 148), blog post contributors in the current study also reflected what it means to be a researcher.

In all, contributors' involvement with the project stimulated reflection and realignment concerning the purposes of SLE research and the ways it should be approached if it is to have any impact on teaching practice. Through participating, all three contributors reflected on the importance of making research accessible to practitioners and how to do so, the value and roles of experience in SLE research, the relative usefulness of different kinds of SLE research to practitioners, and how they might make their own research available to LT audiences through the use of online modes such as blogs, vlogs, and wikis. Thus, their participation not only pushed them to learn a different genre of professional writing which required them to write less obscurely as mentioned by Mewburn and Thomson (2013), but the learning they gained also influenced their own research, adding depth to their understandings and motivation. Finally, participation encouraged negotiation of the identities of researcher and teacher.

5.3. Research Question 3

The third research question was: How effective do participants perceive this project to be in bridging the gap between theory and practice in SLE? Overall, the findings of the current study are favourable in that all participants saw value in the project. However, the degree to which they perceived it to be effective in bridging the gap between theory and practice in SLE varied. Blog post contributors viewed the project through the lens of their personal experiences with writing for the blog, and their comments demonstrated no inkling that it might not be effective. Rather, Fadia discussed how the project had helped her to make connections between research and practice on a personal level, and contributors generally demonstrated a new mindfulness of their roles in bridging the gap. Additionally, they perceived that they had engaged in meaningful dialogue with their readers, found new perspectives for their research, and learned a new writing style. They also engaged in reflection on how to present LTs with meaningful content, and increased their awareness of and interest in making their research available to LT audiences. Although contributors made few direct comments about the perceived effectiveness of the project overall, it may be considered that it was successful in terms of the increased awareness of the needs of LTs, professional reflection, and learning it promoted.

Although blog post contributors presumed that the blog was an effective means of bridging the gap, LTs participants perceived certain problems. The most frequently mentioned of these were issues of time and workload. Despite contributors' (including my own) efforts to make blog posts short enough to fit in their busy schedules, LTs encountered difficulties in keeping up with posts and commenting, particularly in the cases of Alberto and the two LTs who were program administrators. Even having agreed to participate to a specified extent, LTs' engagement with the project was hindered by their lack of time. Additionally, more than one LT confessed to finding the terminology used in the posts somewhat challenging, in spite of contributors' efforts to use accessible language. Unfortunately, the time challenge resonates with the work of Brookfield (2009), who notes that workers in fields such as social work and education, tend to get caught up in hegemonies of accepting greater and greater workloads (usually with no increase in pay) in the interest of aiding the populations they serve, a practice that empowers the very system that is starving them.

The tension between the scarcity of time and the perceived value of the project is likely the source of the contradiction inherent in the fact that LTs had hesitations about the length of blog posts but at the same time wished to see more details and proof presented in the posts. LTs also generally felt that, despite the presentation of practical implications and suggestions in posts on the blog, the project needed an element of response. In both the Montreal and the Regina groups, LTs perceived a need to engage in face-to-face collaboration and idea-sharing with other LTs in order to discuss, test, and fine-tune the details of how to implement ideas presented in the posts. A few of them believed that LTs often get into a rut with relying on pre-existing but insufficient resources, a belief which implies that in order to fully bridge the gap between theory and practice, the focus needs to go beyond the personal practices of teachers and researchers and include the creation of theoretically-informed language teaching resources.

Even though LTs perceived the element of collaborative response to be missing, they saw value in the project, with several of them specifically noting their appreciation of the exposure to research and the chance to update their understandings. There was a general consensus that participation was worth the time it required, and LTs' discussions indicated that they would be likely to recommend that other LTs engage with this or similar projects. Indeed, Mabel noted that she would like for both herself and her colleagues to be pushed to do so. In addition, LTs' interest in suggesting future developments for the project—such as the idea of "traveling PD" proposed by Wendy (Regina, p. 15)—further attests to the value they saw in it. Thus, LTs perceived the project as worthwhile and effective in stimulating reflection on their teaching practices despite a perception that an additional step was needed in order to fully bridge the gap.

Finally, in terms of creating shared researcher-teacher communities, as encouraged by Korthagen (2007) and Belcher (2007), contributors perceived it to be more effective than did LTs. Contributors gleaned new perspectives and directions for their research from readers' comments and perceived themselves to be collaborating with practitioners as professionals who can inform each other in research and teaching (Belcher, 2007). However, LTs did not acknowledge interactions with the blog writers and showed more interest in forming communities with teachers from different contexts. This is in part due to a lack of emphasis on the aspect of connecting researchers with practitioners during the recruitment phase. Like other studies in which participants commented little and engaged in little reflective dialogue it may be said that "the goal of dynamic interaction involving multiple students in a conversation is far from achieved" (Deng & Yuen, 2011, p. 449).

The significance of the findings of the current study and answers to the research questions discussed in this chapter are further expanded in the next chapter, in which I present the implications and limitations of the study and offers suggestions for future research.

Chapter 6: Implications and Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the findings of the current study in order to consider its implications and limitations. The study is concluded with my recommendations for future attempts at bridging the gap between theory and practice and a few final remarks.

6.1. Summary of Findings

The findings of the current study reveal some promise for blogging as a means to connect research and practice in SLE. Both LTs and graduate student blog post contributors who participated in the study engaged in professional development through their reflections concerning the blog and its content, and these reflections stimulated their beliefs and practices concerning language teaching and SLE research in a number of ways. Blog post contributors developed professional writing skills for reaching broader audiences, and gained new perspectives about the purpose and accessibility of SLE research through their reflections. They also gained understandings concerning the usefulness of dialogue and perspective-taking between researchers and LTs, which are key elements recommended by Korthagen (2007) and Belcher (2007) for bridging the gap between theory and practice. Finally, they entertained the notion of making their own research available to practitioners through online modes such as blogging, vlogging, and wikis.

As for LTs, data gathered through the interviews, questionnaires, and blog comments reveals that they appreciated the opportunity to refresh their knowledge of SLE research. A common thread among LTs was a sense of reassurance when blog posts, particularly the one about translanguaging, provided them with theoretical support for beliefs and practices they were already using based on ‘gut feelings.’ LTs were also appreciative of the practical suggestions for how to implement ideas presented in research in their contexts. While there was evidence of LTs engaging in Selwyn's (2011) assimilative reflection by fitting new information with what they already knew and interpreting it in light of their own experiences, closer examination at times revealed a more adaptive element, suggesting that they used the research presented in posts as a "mirror, which teachers can hold up to their own problems of practice" as Labaree (2003, p. 100) recommends. In some cases, the reflections stimulated by blog post content had a direct impact on the ways LTs thought about and handled day-to-day situations. Overall, LTs engaged in meaningful reflection about their beliefs and practices, which stimulated their development as professionals and in a few cases transferred into their approaches. In terms of stimulating reflection, the results bode well for the potential for the continued use of blogging as a means to bridge theory and practice.

The findings in terms of participants' collaborative reflection, as outlined in Deng and Yuen's (2011) model for the affordances of blogging, were less favourable, with asymmetrical perceptions between the contributor group and the LTs. Blog post contributors felt that they had engaged in dialogue with LTs on the site, perceiving that LTs' comments on their posts contributed to their own understandings and broadened their perspectives, in line with the suggestions of Labaree (2003), Belcher (2007), and Montgomery and Smith (2015). Indeed, this experience fed their perception that LTs' experiences and voices had value for researchers and ought to be afforded a place in the research process. However, in reality, there was very little engagement in dialogue on the blog website. With very few exceptions, LTs did not attempt to respond to post writers or each other, despite the fact that blog post writers responded to their comments. While this contradicts the findings of Fisher and Kim (2013) and others, it is similar to the findings of Farr and Riordan (2015) and Deng and Yuen (2011). Thus, although student researchers felt that they had connected with LTs, the study overall failed to achieve the collaborative potential of blogs.

6.2. Challenges and Limitations

The study findings illuminate certain problems with blogging to bridge the gap. Given the difficulty I had in attracting LT participants, it is unclear how LTs without a prior interest in connecting with SLE research might be enticed to engage with research-based blogs, particularly given the notoriously heavy workloads and limitations of time generally faced by teachers. Even those LTs who demonstrated interest in participating were impeded by their time limitations, with some dropping out of the study and those who remained participating to a lesser degree than requested. If finding the time was such a great challenge to those LTs who *wanted* to learn about current SLE research and had agreed to participate, the sobering reality is that, even if researchers strive to write short blog posts using accessible language, it may be difficult to attract those LTs who could most benefit from exposure to research.

Reasons for the difficulties in recruiting participants may include the timing, as recruitment emails were sent out in June and July, when teachers' attention was likely focused either on finishing the semester or their summer pursuits. Graduate students may also have been taking a break from their studies during the summer months and may not have received the recruitment email. Additionally, the fact that email invitations were usually sent via program administrators may have discouraged recipients from opening or reading the invitation, given the daily barrage of administrative emails both LTs and graduate students receive. As Maxwell (2013) notes, the way that research relationships are initiated is key to the ongoing success of the research, and so the impersonal way the information was passed on may have inhibited interest.

Another challenge was that although LTs considered that the project was worth the time investment required and some expressed a belief that their colleagues would benefit from participating in this or a similar project, they engaged in very little interaction with other LTs or with blog post writers. LTs' absence of communications with graduate blog post researchers can be attributed to the design of the study. Although LTs were recruited to comment on blog posts and encouraged to interact with each other, their comments on posts were not framed as an opportunity to communicate directly with researchers and even offer input into the research process. Thus, while blog post contributors wrote for an LT audience, they were also inadvertently situated as experts in contrast to teacher readers. The overall effect was that although most of the LT participants did write comments, they did not view their comments as meaningful exchanges with the blog post authors and did not take advantage of the opportunity to engage in dialogue with researchers or each other, resulting in a situation in which there was no notable formation of CoPs between researchers and practitioners or among LTs on a research blog. This lack of collaborative dialogue brings into question whether it is realistic to hope that blogs might be used to stimulate shared researcher-practitioner CoPs but also suggests future avenues for study, as will be suggested shortly.

In terms of validity, one concern with collecting comments as data is the potential for reactivity, or "the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). The perceived need to publish insightful comments on the blog maybe have been amplified by the knowledge that these comments would be scrutinized by a researcher, which may have further discouraged blog readers from publishing comments. In addition, perhaps adjustments such as the addition of a discussion forum could be made in order to encourage conversation in a space where different voices may heard be more equally and the effects of the asymmetrical interactive mechanism (Deng & Yuen, 2011) lessened.

While discussion forums may help, it must not be overlooked that LTs in the current study perceived that an additional step was needed in order to fully bridge the gap, namely an opportunity for collaborative response through in-person discussion and implementation of content and ideas presented in the blog. Thus, blogging alone may be insufficient in fully bridging the gap between theory and practice, but perhaps coupling research-based blogs with practical workshops aimed at developing specific curricula and strategies for implementing suggestions made in the blog would prompt that "little jump" further (Wendy, Regina, p. 20) that LTs wished to see. The blog could be used to stimulate reflection, while researcher-lead workshops could be a place to simultaneously encourage the development of researcher-practitioner relationships and take the final steps in closing the gap by developing materials. Again, however, these ideas may be overly optimistic in that they require researchers and LTs who are willing to participate, and time and funding would be needed for such endeavours.

In addition to challenges in engaging LTs with research-based blog, there is also the question of finding researchers willing to contribute posts or start their own practically oriented blogging projects. Although the perceptions of the graduate students who consented to participate were very favourable, overall response during recruitment was very low. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that graduate students are at the early stages of their careers in research, and since publication experience is requisite to advancing such a career, these students might be more eager to share their work with the world in any form than would an established researcher. Thus, it is by no means certain that established researchers would be as willing to write for to research-based SLE blogs. However, it may be that graduate students are in fact the ideal candidates to contribute to bridging the theory-practice gap through blogging, since they are often familiar with both research and practice and stand to benefit from the development of professional writing skills and engagement in a form of publication. In the current study, blog post contributors' tendency to draw from their own teaching experience in order to come up with relatable content suggests that the ability to shift between the identities of researcher and LT is an asset to researchers seeking to bridge the gap through blogging. Moreover, it may be possible to productively incorporate blogging to bridge the gap into SLE programs as a required or optional component of coursework.

6.3. Recommendations

Given the findings of the current study, there are certain steps that should be taken in future attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice using blogs. First of all, any existing blogs with similar objectives should be identified and thoroughly examined in order to identify strategies that may better help to foster the development of strong CoPs, both among LTs in different contexts and between LTs and researchers. Indeed, one strategy which was not employed to its fullest in the current study was linking to other blogs, which Guerin et al. (2015) point out may attract readers from those sites. Additionally, the findings of the current study suggest that similar projects might be more successful if certain changes were made to the design. Future studies should better emphasize the potential of blogs for communication and information exchange between researchers and LTs, a step which might better encourage collaboration between the two groups and contribute to the formation of shared CoPs as encouraged by Korthagen (2007). Both researchers and LTs should be encouraged to learn from each other's knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, blog readers and writers should be provided a space, such as a discussion forum, in which they can process information collaboratively. This accommodation would alleviate the effects of the asymmetrical interactive mechanism described by Deng and Yuen (2011) and perhaps encourage more interaction.

Beyond changes to the design, future studies should, if possible, more closely examine the identities negotiated by LTs and researchers engaging in blogging, as that aspect of professional development was not fully exploited in the current study due to space constraints. Finally, in light of LTs' desire for a face-to-face element, in the future it would be advisable to supplement blog content with collaborative workshops aimed at developing tangible activities and curricula. Although issues related to time and funding remain, perhaps with the above adjustments, research-based blogs might be utilized to greater effect in bridging the theory-practice gap.

6.4. Conclusion

In all, blogging to bridge the gap was moderately successful. The blog provided a useful way of presenting LTs conceptually accessible summaries of research and encouraging reflection. LTs engaged in meaningful reflection about their practices as they evaluated ideas and strategies presented on the blog, and in some cases these reflections subsequently had an impact on their practices. Graduate student researchers, on the other hand, gained new perspectives about the value of making their research accessible to LTs both physically (through blogging) and conceptually (through writing entries that were short and clear), the writing skills needed for this type of blogging, the need for dialogue between researchers and LTs, and the value of LTs' experiences in informing the research process. Thus, in terms of stimulating reflection, the project achieved its objectives.

However, despite the promise of blogging as a reflective tool for both researchers and LTs, it largely failed in its goal to encourage the development of a shared CoP between both groups. Although blog post contributors felt that they had entered some level of dialogue with LT readers, LTs did not share this perception. Indeed, they lacked the time and/or technological savvy to engage with others through the comments on the blog, and they felt pressure to contribute comments that were insightful, which further hindered the organic development of collaborative reflection. In addition, the LT participants unanimously perceived a need for something beyond blog posts which offered practical suggestions, desiring the addition of opportunities to engage in face-to-face collaborative reflection, planning, and development of pedagogical materials in response to blog content. Thus, while the project was successful in stimulating reflections about LTs' and researchers' beliefs, practices, and understandings concerning language teaching and SLE research, it did not lead to any great degree of communication and collaboration between researchers and practitioners.

These findings make a valuable contribution to the body of literature on both the theory-practice gap and on blogging for professional development in SLE. They suggest several further directions that could be taken with similar research in the future, and most notably, they bring to the forefront a notion that simply presenting short, conceptually accessible summaries as suggested by Borg (2010), Light and Gnida (2012), and others may not be enough; attempts to bridge the gap may also need to create space for tangible practical response through the creation and pilot testing of pedagogical materials that respond to the research presented. However, it must be remembered that with only six LT participants in two communities and three blog post contributors (as well as my own posts), the results of the current study have limited generalizability. For this reason, future attempts at blogging to bridge the gap are needed in order to confirm the current findings and continue to offer additional perspectives in assessing the usefulness of this method. Nevertheless, the current study at the very least confirms that making

SLE research findings available to practitioners through blogging holds potential and is indeed a tool for encouraging reflective practice.

References

Beaudoin, M.F. (2002). Learning or lurking? Tracking the "invisible" online student. *The Internet and Higher Education, 5*, 147-155. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(02)00086-6.

Belcher, D. (2007). A bridge too far? *TESOL Quarterly, 41*(2), pp. 396-399. Retrieved 12 January, 2017, from http://www.jstor.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/stable/40264360.

Borg, S. (2007). Research engagement in English language teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*, 731-747. Retrieved 12 January, 2017, from https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1016/j.tate.2006.03.012.

Borg, S. (2010). Language teacher research engagement. *Language Teaching, 43*(4), 391-429. DOI:10.1017/S0261444810000170.

Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. (2009). The concept of critical reflection: promises and contradictions. *European Journal of Social work, 12*(3), 293-304. DOI: 10.1080/13691450902945215.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Deng, L. & Yuen, A.H.K. (2011). Towards a framework for the educational affordances of blogs. *Computers and Education, 56*, 441-451. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2010.09.005.

Dewey, J. (1904). The relation of theory to practice in education. In C. A. McMurry (Ed.), *The relation between theory and practice in education of teachers: Third yearbook of the National Society for the Scientific Study of Education*, 9-30. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Retrieved from https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=WNunDgAAQBAJ.

Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA research and language teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2005). Principles of instructed language learning. *Asian EFL Journal.* Retrieved from https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download%3Fdoi%3D10.1.1.599.4983%26rep%3Drep1%26type%3Dpdf&ved=2ahUKEwjDhMOv69DYAhVF54MKHQ6NBVsQFjAAegQIFRAB&usg=AOvVaw07WbiYZKuzAwm94Dv327L-.

Ellis, R. (2010). A principled approach to incorporating second language acquisition research into a teacher education programme. *Reflections on English Language Teaching, 9*(1), pp. 1-17. http://www.nus.edu.sg/celc/research/books/relt/vol9/no1/01to18_ellis.pdf.

Erlam, R., Sakui, K., & Ellis, R. (2006) *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: Case Studies*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media.

Erlam, R. (2008). What do you researchers know about language teaching? Bridging the gap between SLA research and language pedagogy. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching,* 2(3), 253-267. Retrieved 9 January, 2018, from https://doi.org/10.1080/17501220802158958.

Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Critical language awareness*. London: Longman.

Farr, F., & Riordan, E. (2015). Tracing the Reflective Practices of Student Teachers in Online Modes. *Recall, 27,* 1, 104-123. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?q="language+education"+blog&id=EJ1048375.

Fisher, L., & Kim, D. (2013). Two approaches to the use of blogs in pre-service language teachers' professional development: a comparative study in the context of two universities in the UK and the US. *The Language Teaching Journal, 41*(2), 142-160. DOI: 10.1080/09571736.2013.790130.

García, O. (2008). Multilingual language awareness and teacher education. In J. Cenos & N.H. Hornberger (Eds), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd ed.), Vol. 6, pp. 385-400 Retrieved from https://ofeliagarciadotorg.files.wordpress.com.

García, O. & Traugh, C. (2002). Using descriptive inquiry to transform the education of linguistically diverse U.S. teachers and students, in L. Wei, J.-M. Dewaele, & A. Housen (eds.), *Opportunities and Challenges of (Societal) Bilingualism*. Walter de Gruyter: New York.

Guerin, C., Carter, S., & Aitchison, C. (2015). Blogging as community of practice: lessons for academic development? *International Journal for Academic Development, 20*(3), 212-223. DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2015.1042480.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis.* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Hemsley-Brown, J. & C. Sharp (2003). The use of research to improve professional practice: A systematic review of the literature. *Oxford Review of Education 29*(4), 449–470. DOI: 10.1080/0305498032000153025

Herath, S. & Valencia, M. (2014). Neither a "complete insider" nor a "complete outsider": Autoethnographies of two teacher-educators-in-the-making. Chapter 7 in Y. L. Cheung, S. B. Said, & K. Park (Eds.) *Advances and current trends in language teacher identity research*, 141-164. DOI: 10.4324/9781315775135.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Leavy, P. (2006). *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Johnson, B. & Christensen, L. (2008). *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Jonassen, D. (1999). Designing constructivist learning environments. In C. M. Reigeluth (Ed.), *Instructional-design theories and models: A new paradigm of instructional theory*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kagan, D. M. (1992). Professional growth among preservice and beginning teachers. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(2), pp. 129-169. Retrieved 9 January, 2018, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1170578.

Korthagen, F. A. J. (2007). The gap between research and practice revisited. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 13*(3), 303-310. DOI: 10.1080/13803610701640

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Labaree, D. F. (2004). *The trouble with ed schools*. Retrieved 9 January, 2018, from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com.

Lantolf, J. P., Thorne, S. L., & Poehner, M. E. (2015). Sociocultural theory and second language development. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2015). Research into practice: Grammar learning and teaching. *Language Teaching, 48*(2), pp. 263-280. DOI: 10.1017/S0261444814000408.

Light, J. & Gnida, S. (2012). Mind the Gap: How a Project in Alberta Attempted to Narrow the Gap Between Classroom Teachers and Language Education Research. *TESL Canada Journal 30*(1), pp. 139-150. Retrieved from http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/index.php/tesl.

Long, M. (1991). “Focus on Form: A Design Feature in Language Teaching Methodology”. In K. de Bot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.), *Foreign Language Research in Cross-cultural Perspective.* Amsterdam: John Benjamin, pp. 39–52.

Luehmann, A. L. & Tinelli, L. (2008). Teacher professional identity development with social networking technologies: learning reform through blogging. *Educational Media International, 45*(4), 323-333. DOI: 10.1080/09523980802573263.

Marsden, E. & Kasprowicz, R. (2017). Foreign language educators’ exposure to research: Reported experiences, exposure via citations, and a proposal for action. *The Modern Language Journal, 101*(4), 613-642. DOI: 10.1111/modl.12426.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mewburn, I. & Thomson, P. (2013). Why do academics blog? An analysis of audiences, purposes, and challenges. *Studies in Higher Education, 38*(8), 1105-1119. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2013.835624.

Montgomery, C., & Smith, L. C. (2015). Bridging the gap between researchers and practitioners. *Die Unterrichtspraxis, 48*(1), 100-V. Retrieved from https://proxy.library.mcgill.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1709292154?accountid=12339.

Nambiar, R.M.K. & Thang, S.M. (2016). Examining Malaysian teachers' online blogs for reflective practices: towards teacher professional development. *Language and Education, 30*(1), 43-47. DOI: 10.1080/09500782.2015.1071386.

Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review, 6*(3), 281-307. DOI 10.1515/applirev-2015-0014.

Richards, J. C. (2008). Second Language Teacher Education Today. *Relc Journal: a Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 39*(2), 158-177. DOI: 10.1177/0033688208092182.

Richards, J. C. & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). *Professional Development for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rossiter, M. J., Abbott, M. J., & Kushnir, A. (2016). L2 vocabulary research and instructional practices: Where are the gaps? *TESL-EJ, 20*(1), 1-25. Retrieved from http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume20/ej77/ej77a6/.

Selwyn, N. (2011). *Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates*. New York: Continuum.

Swain, M. (1985). "Communicative Competence: Some Roles of Comprehensible Input and Comprehensible Output in its Development". In S. Gass and C. Madden (Eds.), *Input and Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, pp. 235–252.

VanPatten, B., & Williams, J. (Eds.) (2015). *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.

Yang, S. H. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice. *Educational Technology & Society, 12*(2), 11-21. Retrieved 2 November, 2017 from http://www.jstor.org/stable/jeductechsoci.12.2.11.

Appendix A: Ethical Approval

McGill

Research Ethics Board Office
James Administration Bldg.
845 Sherbrooke Street West. Rm 325
Montreal, QC H3A 0G4

Tel: (514) 398-6831

Website: www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human/

Research Ethics Board II
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 45-0617

Project Title: Bridging the gap between theory and practice through blogging: Language teachers' experiences with a research blog

Principal Investigator: Melissa J. Enns

Status: Master's Student

Department: ISE

Supervisor: Prof. Susan Ballinger

Approval Period: **June 13, 2017 to June 12, 2018**

The REB-II reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

Deanna Collin
Ethics Review Administrator, REB I & II

---

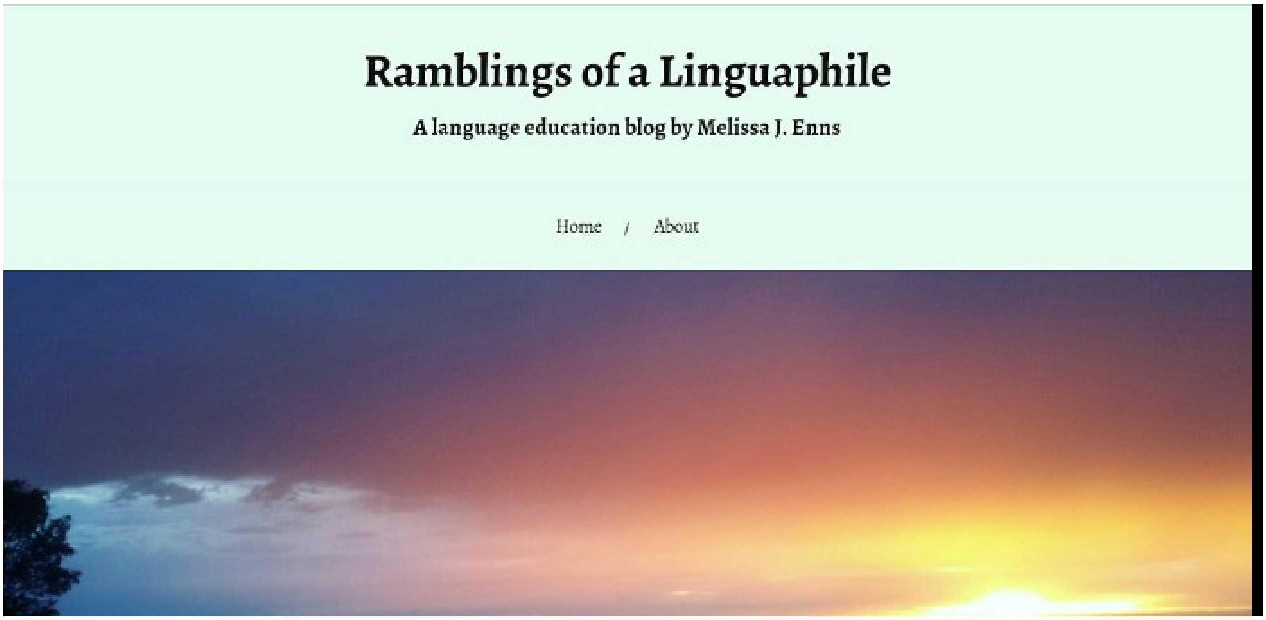
* Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described.
* Modifications to the approved research must be reviewed and approved by the REB before they can be implemented.
* A Request for Renewal form must be submitted before the above expiry date. Research cannot be conducted without a current ethics approval. Submit 2-3 weeks ahead of the expiry date.
* When a project has been completed or terminated, a Study Closure form must be submitted.
* Unanticipated issues that may increase the risk level to participants or that may have other ethical implications must be promptly reported to the REB. Serious adverse events experienced by a participant in conjunction with the research must be reported to the REB without delay.
* The REB must be promptly notified of any new information that may affect the welfare or consent of participants.
* The REB must be notified of any suspension or cancellation imposed by a funding agency or regulatory body that is related to this study.
* The REB must be notified of any findings that may have ethical implications or may affect the decision of the REB.

Appendix B: Blog Disclaimer

Throughout the data collection period (June 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017), the following disclaimer appeared on all pages and posts on the Ramblings of a Linguaphile blog site:

> *Please note that this blog is currently being used for thesis research. Between [date of approval] and November 30, 2017, any comments made on posts to this site may be used for research purposes. The identity of the person who posted the comment will be kept anonymous. For more information about the study, please see the About page. By commenting, you consent to participate.*

Appendix C: Invitation to Follow the Blog



Calling all language teachers!

Want to broaden your knowledge of cutting edge pedagogical issues without having to read research articles? Then this opportunity is for you!

McGill MA student Melissa J. Enns is conducting a research project investigating the potential of using short blogs posts as a means to make second language education research accessible to teachers in practical ways.

If you would like to broaden your professional understandings about a range of relevant topics in second language education while contributing to the advancement of research, you are invited to follow the blog:

Ramblings of a Linguaphile
https://ramblingsofalinguaphile.com

Questions? Contact Melissa J. Enns at melissa.enns@mail.mcgill.ca or her supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger, at susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca.

Appendix D: Questionnaire[3]

The comments and opinions you disclose in this questionnaire will be analyzed as part of a research project that is investigating the use of blogs as a way to connect second language education research and practice. Your name and identity will remain anonymous, and a pseudonym will be assigned to any information you provide here. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher, Melissa Enns, at melissa.enns@mail.mcgill.ca or her supervisor, Susan Ballinger, at susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca. If you have any questions about your rights or welfare as a participant of this study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer, Ms. Lynda McNeil, at lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

By filling out and submitting this questionnaire, you are agreeing to allow your comments and opinions to be used for research.

Thank you for participating!

1. Please indicate your consent by checking each box below if your answer is "yes."
    a. I am at least 18 years of age.
    b. I am a practicing or retired language teacher.
    c. I consent to share my comments and opinions with the researcher, and I understand that they may be published anonymously in research reports or articles.

Comments: ____

2. Please fill in the following information:
    a. Nationality:
    b. Number of years taught:
    c. Language taught:
    d. Level (ex- low, intermediate, high; primary, secondary, adult):

3. How many posts have you read on the Ramblings of a Linguaphile website?
    a. 1-2
    b. 3-4
    c. 5-6
    d. 7 or more

4. How useful did you find e material you read about?
    a. Not useful
    b. Somewhat useful
    c. Very useful

Comments: ____

5. Have your visits to Ramblings of a Linguaphile stimulated self-reflection on your beliefs and practices as a teacher? If so, how? If not, why not?

[3] This text has been reformatted from the Survey Monkey version.

6. What did you like or dislike about the way educational research and practical applications were presented in the post(s) you read?

7. Have you ever considered commenting on a post? Why did or didn't you post your comment?

8. How likely are you to read more language education blog posts, either on Ramblings of a Linguaphile or on other sites?

    a. Unlikely
    b. Somewhat likely
    c. Very likely

    If you indicated that you are unlikely or just somewhat likely to return to the site, what might increase the likelihood of you visiting this or other language education blogs in the future? What would you hope to find?

Appendix E: Contributor Consent Form (p. 1 of 3)

Title of Research: Bridging the gap between theory and practice through blogging: Language teachers' experiences with a research blog

Researcher:	Melissa J. Enns	**Supervisor:**	Dr. Susan Ballinger
E-mail:	melissa.enns@mail.mcgill.ca	**E-mail:**	susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca
Phone:	306-737-0715	**Phone:**	(514) 398-4527, Ext. 09471

Dear Contributor,

I am currently carrying out a study as part of my Master of Arts thesis in Second Language Education at McGill University. This study aims to examine the potential for using a blog as a means to bridge the gap between theory and practice in language education.

Throughout the study, I will upload posts to my language education blog, Ramblings of a Linguaphile, once a week between August 1 and October 31, 2017. I have recruited a group of language teachers to read the posts and interact with posts and other readers. Since collaborative learning is one of the aims of the study, I wish to encourage diversity of perspectives by inviting you to contribute one or two posts (depending on your preference) and attend a focus group discussion of no more than ninety minutes following your involvement.

If you choose to participate as a contributor, your post(s) may cover a wide range of topics in second language education, including metalinguistic knowledge, feedback, collaborative teaching, the role of learners' other languages in the target language classroom, scaffolding, metacognitive instruction, the role of technology in language education, "text speak" and L2 learning, or another topic that is approved by the researcher. In your post, you will be asked to observe a limit of 900 words and cite at least one to two relevant source from the academic literature on the topic to integrate theoretical work with classroom applications in a simplified and practical manner. Posts may include pictures, videos, hyperlinks to other sources, and so on. If you require additional support in writing your post(s), I will be available to help. You may be asked to make minor revisions to the draft you submit. Following writing any posts, you will be asked to join a 90-minute focus group discussion in November, at which time you will be invited to share about your experience with integrating research and practice for blog posts.

Interview conversations will be audio and/or video recorded to aid with data analysis, and every effort will be made to ensure the protection of your privacy. Recordings will only be used for transcription purposes, and following that time, your contributions to the discussion will be analyzed and described under a pseudonym. Audio and/or video files from the focus group discussion and any other identifiable data will be stored on my password-protected computer and on my password-protected McGill OneDrive account. No one but the researcher and her supervisor will have access to them. Audio and video files will be stored in the same way and deleted following data analysis (approximately one year after the focus group discussion). Your blog posts will be publicly visible; however, you are free to write under a pseudonym if you wish your comments to be anonymous. Your name and any other identifiable information will not be disclosed in research reports or published articles. You may choose whether or not you wish to

Contributor Consent Form (p. 2 of 3)

allow your post(s) to remain publicly posted on Ramblings of a Linguaphile following completion of the study.

There will be no financial reimbursement for posts written; however, participating will give you experience in research publication, and you will be entered into a draw for a $15 Tim Horton's gift card and a $25 Chapter's/Indigo gift card. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you will have the right to withdraw at any time. Any blog posts written prior to withdrawal will remain posted on the blog site unless otherwise requested. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address or number above, or you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger, at susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca or (514) 398-4527, Ext. 094715. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa J. Enns
Department of Integrated Studies in Education
3700 McTavish Street, McGill University
Montreal, QC, Canada, H3A 1Y2

E-mail: melissa.enns@mail.mcgill.ca
Tel: +1306-737-0715

For the researcher:

I have discussed the details in this informed consent form with ___________________________ (participant's name). I have given her/him the opportunity to ask any questions s/he may have, and I have answered them to the best of my ability.

_______________________ ___________________________

Date Investigator's signature

For the participant:

Please indicate your consent by placing a checkmark in the appropriate space below:

___ I agree to participate in this study by contributing **one** blog post of no more than 900 words, ***or***

___ I agree to participate in this study by contributing **two** blog posts of no more than 900 words each.

Yes ___ No ___ I consent to allow my blog post(s) to be published on Ramblings of a Linguaphile under my own name or a pseudonym that I choose.

Yes ___ No ___ I consent to participate in a focus group discussion of no more than 90 minutes following the study (in November).

Yes ___ No ___ I agree to the audio and/or video recording during the focus group Discussion.

Yes ___ No ___ I agree that the data from my participation in this research can be used for future related studies.

Yes ___ No ___ I consent for my blog post(s) to remain published on Ramblings of a Linguaphile after the completion of the study.

Contributor Consent Form (p. 3 of 3)

Name (printed): ____________________________

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights and welfare as a participant of this study, please feel free to contact the McGill Ethics Officer, Ms. Lynda McNeil, at lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca**.**

Appendix F: Language Teacher Consent Form (p. 1 of 2)

Dear Participant,

I am currently carrying out a study as part of my Master of Arts thesis in Second Language Education in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. This study aims to examine the potential for using a blog to bridge the gap between theory and practice in language education. Your participation in this study will help to provide valuable perspectives that will aid in the evaluation of using blogs to share research in a more accessible fashion and to suggest directions for future research in this area. Your participation will involve reading a blog post of 900 words or fewer one time per week between now and October 31, 2017, commenting on at least eight of the posts, and participating in a 90-minute focus group discussion with some other participants in November or December.

Interview conversations will be audio and/or video recorded to aid with data analysis, and every effort will be made to ensure the protection of your privacy. Recordings will only be used for transcription purposes, and from that time onward, your comments will be analyzed and described under a pseudonym. Audio and/or video files from the focus group discussion and any other identifiable data will be stored on my password-protected computer and on my password-protected McGill OneDrive account. No one but the researcher and her supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger, will have access to them. Audio and/or video files will be stored in the same way and deleted following data analysis (approximately one year after the focus group discussion).Your interactions on the blog will be visible to the public; however, you are free to comment under a pseudonym if you wish your comments to be anonymous. Your name and any other identifiable information will not be disclosed in research reports or published articles.

There will be no financial reimbursement for your participation; however, you will be entered into a draw for a $15 Tim Horton's gift card and a $25 Chapter's/Indigo gift card. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not feel comfortable with any of the questions at the focus group discussion, you do not have to answer them. You also have the freedom to withdraw from this study at any time without any penalty or prejudice. The findings of this research will be published in my thesis and possibly in professional journals and/or newsletters, and the data you provide may be used in future related studies. I will be happy to share my findings with participants.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the e-mail address or number above, or you may contact my supervisor, Susan Ballinger, at susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca or (514)398-4527, Ext. 094715. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa J. Enns
Department of Integrated Studies in Education
3700 McTavish Street, McGill University
Montreal, QC, Canada, H3A 1Y2 Tel: +1306-737-0715
E-mail: melissa.enns@mail.mcgill.ca

Language Teacher Consent Form (p. 2 of 2)

For the researcher:

I have discussed the details in this informed consent form with ___________________________ (participant's name). I have given her/him the opportunity to ask any questions s/he may have, and I have answered them to the best of my ability.

_______________________ _______________________

Date Investigator's signature

For the participant:

Please indicate your consent by placing a checkmark next to your responses below:

I agree to participate in this study by:

___ reading each week's blog post on Ramblings of a Linguaphile.

___ commenting on blog posts or responding to other people's comments eight times or more throughout the duration of the study using an anonymous or real username that I choose.

___ attending the ninety-minute focus group discussion in November or December.

Yes ___ No ___ I agree to the audio and/or video recording during the focus group discussion

Yes ___ No ___ I agree that the data from my participation in this research can be used for future related studies.

Name (printed): ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________Date: ___________________________

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights and welfare as a participant of this study, please feel free to contact the McGill Ethics Officer, Ms. Lynda McNeil, at lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca**.**

Appendix G: Contributor Interview Protocol

General:

1. What was your overall experience with this project?
2. Did you find that you learned about new concepts or strategies through engaging with research in this way? If so, what are a couple that stand out to you? Why do they stand out?

Self-reflection:

3. Do you feel that writing your blog post(s) helped you to find clearer links between theory and practice in language education? If so, how?
4. In what ways did you reflect on your beliefs and practices as a language teacher?
5. Did the reflection add depth to your understandings of SLE theory and practice? If so, how?

Collaborative learning:

6. Did you engage in conversation in the comments of your own or other writers' posts on Ramblings of a Linguaphile? If so, do you feel that these conversations impacted your understanding of the concepts being discussed in posts or the relationship between theory and practice? If so, how?
7. Do you feel that these conversations added depth to your understandings of SLE theory and practice? Please explain.

Closing:

8. Having participated in this study, what are your thoughts about using research blogs such as Ramblings of a Linguaphile to work toward bridging gaps between theory and practice in language education?
9. How was (or wasn't) participating in this study helpful to you in your own professional development?
10. Are there any further comments you would like to make regarding your experience with this study?

Appendix H: Language Teacher Interview Protocol

General:

1. What was your overall experience with this project?
2. Did you find that you learned about new concepts or strategies through engaging with Ramblings of a Linguaphile? If so, what are a couple that stand out to you? Why do they stand out?

Self-reflection:

3. Do you feel that you the blog encouraged you to reflect on your beliefs as a language teacher? If so, how?
4. Do you feel that you the blog encouraged you to reflect on your teaching practices? If so, how?
5. Do you feel that this reflection influenced your professional development in any way? Please explain.
6. Did the reflection influence shifts in your beliefs, attitudes, and/or practices as a language teacher in any way? If so, how?

Collaborative learning:

7. If you engaged in conversation with others through comments on posts in Ramblings of a Linguaphile, do you feel that these conversations impacted your understanding of the concepts being discussed in posts or, more generally, of language teaching and learning as a whole? If so, how?
8. Do you feel that these conversations influenced your professional development in any way? Please explain.
9. Did these conversations in any way contribute to shifts in your beliefs, attitudes and/or practices as a language teacher? If so, how?

Closing:

10. Having participated in this study, what are your thoughts about using research blogs such as Ramblings of a Linguaphile to work toward bridging gaps between theory and practice in language education?
11. Are there any further comments you would like to make regarding your experience with this study?