Innovating the TESOL Practicum in Teacher Education

Recognizing new opportunities and challenges brought about by technological and social change, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, this volume explores innovative design, implementation, and pedagogy for practica experiences in teacher education programs in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

By showcasing research and practice undertaken in a range of teacher education courses and programs, the volume offers evidence-based approaches to enhancing pre- and in-service teachers' learning and cultural awareness. Chapters come together coherently to address issues and explore innovative structures revolving around high-quality TESOL practica. Particular attention is paid to emerging opportunities offered by virtual and simulated learning in online and in-person practica, as well as potential changes to best practice in community-based programs.

Using a diverse set of lenses to examine the practical, theoretical, and methodological aspects of TESOL practica, this volume will be of interest to students, scholars and researchers with an interest in TESOL education, as well as in open and distance education.

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Eric J. Johnson

Introduction

While the COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant vulnerabilities across all social and political structures in the United States (and beyond), the epiphenomena resulting from quarantines and social distancing directives have been especially impactful within educational contexts (Kamenetz, 2020; Mitchell, 2021). Being thrust into a situation where teaching and learning was confined to online environments, educators, students, and families found themselves struggling to navigate unfamiliar technology demands, scheduling challenges, and atypical patterns of social interaction. This unprecedented situation revealed a myriad of educational inequities and a severe lack of pedagogical preparedness. As a consequence, school districts and state agencies scrambled to create effective systems for teaching, learning, and family engagement.

The unfolding adaptations to quarantine directives across the 2020–2021 school year afforded repeated opportunities to observe the ways in which educators experienced school closures, reactionary policymaking, and digitally mediated methods of teaching and learning. Although using technology as an instructional tool is not a recent phenomenon, relying solely on technology for all aspects of teaching and learning in public education is a unique situation. Equally as impactful was how social distancing and quarantine mandates restructured (or altogether eliminated) in-person classroom activities and relegated social interactions to digital devices. As turbulent as this situation has been, it has furthered our understanding of virtual teaching and learning processes, as well as how these processes impact educators and students from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Discussion Trajectory

As a faculty member in a teacher preparation program that provides a variety of credentialing pathways, I have the privilege of collaborating with educators and university students who work with English learners across multiple school districts and K-12 language program models (e.g., dual language, sheltered instruction, and ESL). This discussion highlights the experiences of university students from different professional contexts (e.g., early childhood education, preservice programs, para-educators, and experienced K-12 teachers) who worked with linguistically diverse students in Washington State during the 2020–2021 pandemic school year. Specifically, I illustrate the experiences of students in TESOL practicum courses who relied primarily on virtual teaching and learning (V-T&L) pedagogies. For the purpose of this chapter, V-T&L refers to the implementation of schooling practices conducted within a virtual/online environment (i.e., not on school grounds) based on interactions that are mediated through digital devices and instructional platforms.

By exploring the ways that the practicum students adapted their pedagogies and parent engagement strategies in V-T&L contexts, I demonstrate the fundamental role that families played in the schooling process during the quarantine mandates. All of the participants who contributed to this project were university students taking practicum courses required to earn a K-12 teaching endorsement in "English Language Learners" (Professional Educator Standards Board, 2015) in Washington State during the first full pandemic influenced school year (2020–2021). When necessary, I differentiate between the professional contexts of the practicum students as such:

- "Teacher" – practicum students who are practicing K-12 teachers enrolled in an ELL endorsement program.
- "Teacher candidate" – undergraduate students who are pursuing their teaching certificate and ELL endorsement.
- "Practicum students" or "Participants" – students across all practicum courses (teachers and teacher candidates).
- "Educator" – teachers and administrators in general (i.e., not specific to this project).

Additionally, the use of "practicum" indicates courses in which the students were embedded in K-12 classroom placements and expected to be actively involved in the instructional process. Therefore, the collective experiences of all the practicum students described here are significant in terms of the unprecedented schooling contexts that produced them as well as their implications for teacher preparation programs and professional development moving forward.

Although this chapter is not meant as an instructional framework for practicum courses in teacher preparation programs, it does illustrate the

"implementational space" (Hornberger, 2002) that practicum courses provide for innovations in K-12 classroom practices. Whereas K-12 teachers are often constrained by professional policies and practices that guide their professional *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2004), teacher preparation faculty can use practicum courses to provide opportunities for teachers to try new and creative approaches within their classrooms that are outside of "doxic parameters" that might otherwise deter such efforts (Johnson & Johnson, 2015). It is my hope that the ideas presented here will be taken up and extended in inspirational ways to better meet the needs of teachers who strive to improve the educational experiences of linguistically diverse students across any K-12 context.

The remainder of this discussion draws on the notion of funds of knowledge (FoK) to highlight how practicum students from a variety of different teaching contexts experienced V-T&L in ways that are relevant for future iterations of practicum placements in classrooms with English learners (ELs). Specifically, I highlight the challenges faced by teachers and teacher candidates within V-T&L instructional contexts, and how those challenges, in turn, produced innovative techniques for working with EL students and families based on their FoK. My discussion concludes with recommendations for how these strategies can be integrated into practicum courses to enhance professional development opportunities and better prepare teachers for instructional demands across traditional face-to-face and V-T&L contexts.

Conceptualizing V-T&L Contexts

Over the past three decades, the use of technology has created a generation of what Prensky (2001) calls "digital natives" whose lives are mediated through numerous points of technology. Although Coomey and Stephenson (2001) initially questioned the effectiveness of "e-learning," much progress has been made since the turn of the century in terms technological advances and familiarity with digital practices. Throughout this timespan, the general use of technology for educational purposes has been established as the norm (Mehanna, 2004). In their description of "e-teaching and e-learning," Bjorke and Lazareva (2016) point out that online education has become commonplace due to the ubiquity of applying digital devices and programs in daily educational activities; though, as they point out, virtual classrooms and learning environments are still quite exotic. In addition to the overall pedagogical unfamiliarity with V-T&L contexts, Simuth and Sarmany-Schuller (2012) also call for a deeper understanding of the psychological obstacles posed in virtual learning environments. This aspect of V-T&L brings to light many interesting pedagogical and social challenges when cast against a traditional classroom schema – even more so when teachers and students are not willing participants in remote schooling.

While research has demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating students' home/community technology skills in classroom settings (Hin & Subramaniam, 2009; Lim & Toh, 2020), prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, little can be found on the implications of compulsory V-T&L across the K-12 spectrum of students and educators. This point is even more concerning when applied to already traditionally marginalized student populations such as ELs and students with special needs (Mann, Li, & Besnoy, 2021; Mitchell, 2021). In addition to considering how to support students within V-T&L environments, how to engage culturally and linguistically diverse families within these digital parameters is also a primary concern (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2021). Although teaching approaches and student academic needs are generally the focus of most research, policy, and media publications on V-T&L (pre- and post-quarantine), largely absent is an emphasis on training teachers how to engage K-12 families as partners within virtual schooling contexts.

To promote student success, it is imperative for teachers to integrate consistent means of authentic family engagement practices. Models of family partnerships are ample in the literature (Epstein et al., 2019; Mangual Figueroa, Suh, & Byrnes, 2015; Mapp & Bergman, 2020; Yulianti, Denessen, Droop, & Veerman, 2020), including specific means of engaging families through home visits (Johnson, 2014, 2016a). All of these approaches demonstrate significant impacts on student progress as well as socioemotional support. Since the practicum courses described in this discussion were focused on improving instructional methods for working with EL students, substantial attention is placed on V-T&L placements in school districts with high populations of linguistically diverse students engaged their students and families during quarantine mandates; this is something that has yet to be fully documented. As students in EL practicum courses, participants were given opportunities to experiment with different approaches to engaging students and families through structured assignments. Whereas the literature is replete with evidence to support family engagement, as well as clear strategies for doing so, never has there been a context where widespread family engagement was required as a part of daily instruction like we saw during the 2020–2021 school year.

Funds of Knowledge

Scholarship on how structural inequities shape US schools has been emphasized vehemently in recent decades (Delpit, 2006; Kozol, 1991), producing widespread calls for pedagogies that are "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 2014), "culturally responsive" (Gay, 2010), and "culturally sustaining" (Paris, 2021). In a similar vein, Rogoff (2014) and Rogoff et al. (2017) argue for a cultural approach to understanding learning and development as embedded within community-based practices to promote a focus on diverse students' strengths as learners.

Although these concepts are individually nuanced, they all push for a change in the ways that students and families from diverse backgrounds are engaged by schools. This orientation demands that educators overcome their own deficit perspectives as a necessary step toward learning about – and building upon – their students' "funds of knowledge" to enhance academic experiences (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

While the FoK concept was initially employed to encompass "the wider set of activities requiring specific strategic bodies of essential information that households need to maintain their well-being" (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992, p. 314), the concept has been expanded in a number of ways relevant to this discussion. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) outline "funds of identity" to highlight how a person's identity is shaped through the broader social influences within contexts and experiences that are important to individual students. As applied to the current discussion, the funds of identity concept helps illustrate the students' and families' perspective of their shared responsibility (and the value of their contributions) within V-T&L instructional procedures. The notion of FoK and funds of identity has been taken up recently to explore social cohesion and classroom climate within schooling contexts (Volman & Gilde, 2021). For the purpose of this chapter, I draw on the concept of FoK (and identity) to encompass both academic and personal background knowledge, accumulated life experiences, skills used to navigate everyday social contexts, and world view(s) structured by broader historically situated sociocultural forces. I also extend this perspective to everyone involved in the educational process involving V-T&L (i.e., students, family members, and educators).

Gathering Experiences

Data Collection

Data were collected primarily through narrative surveys from practicum students and community members from linguistically diverse school districts in Washington State during the 2020–2021 school year. Narrative surveys differ from quantitative surveys that generally rely on multiple choice or scale oriented responses. Instead, narrative surveys allow participants to respond to questions or prompts by representing their experiences in their own words instead of a predetermined set of potential answers. This method "helps the researcher to identify broad patterns across a wide variety of narrative cases" (Shkedi, 2004, p. 88). I integrated a collective (i.e., focus group) approach to the survey by providing prompts using a shared online format called Padlet (see Padlet. com) that allowed groups of participants to contribute publicly visible commentaries and respond to each other's comments.

Data were collected at three points during the school year. At the beginning of the 2020 fall semester, surveys were administered to elicit

viewpoints on overall challenges and effective strategies for working in V-T&L environments with EL students. Before winter break, participants were asked to contribute thoughts focused specifically on V-T&L and family engagement using the following prompts:

- What is a primary challenge for you while teaching students in their home environment?
- What roles and or responsibilities do parents/caregivers have to help you conduct your virtual lessons?
- What is one recommendation that you have for parents/caregivers to facilitate the E-T&L process?

In the 2021 Spring semester, data were collected in the form of course assignments based on engaging students and families during K-12 instruction. The participants were assigned to develop and implement lessons around their K-12 students' FoK. They recorded the lessons and evaluated their own practices. They submitted reflections and contributed to a concluding survey over their observations of the FoK-based lesson. This included questions on how the quarantine and V-T&L environments have impacted the way teachers draw on their students' FoK.

Participants

The surveys were administered to cohorts in three different credentialing programs: (1) A non-degree professional development program comprising practicing K-12 teachers working toward an ELL endorsement, (2) undergraduate students pursuing their teaching certificate and ELL endorsement who were in a K-12 practicum placement with EL students, and (3) undergraduate students pursuing their teaching certificate in early childhood education who were in general practicum placements in bilingual (Spanish/English) classroom settings (i.e., not a practicum placement specifically focused on the ELL endorsement). Among the undergraduate students, there was a group of para-educators working on their teaching and endorsement credentials. Additionally, there was an opportunity for community members (parents and youth) to participate in a narrative survey to provide their perspectives of V-T&L contexts. This opportunity was provided to families by the teachers and teacher candidates who participated in this project. In total, there were 149 participants spanning six school districts in Eastern Washington. A specific breakdown of the participants is listed below:

- Non-degree seeking students who were practicing K-12 teachers pursuing the ELL endorsement: $n = 42$.
- Undergraduate students who were practicing para educators in K-12 classrooms pursuing their teaching certification and ELL endorsement: $n = 11$.

- Traditional undergraduate students in an elementary education (K-5) teacher preparation program pursuing their teaching certification and ELL endorsement: $n = 31$.
- Traditional undergraduate students in an early childhood education teacher preparation program who were preschool teachers pursuing their Pre – 3 teaching certification: $n = 30$.
- Community members and parents of children who are English learners: $n = 35$.

The surveys were administered in the fall (2020) and spring (2021) to students within each cohort such that they had opportunities to see and comment on each other's posts but not the posts of the other cohorts. Limiting the survey interactions to each individual cohort allowed me to compare themes within and across the different cohorts (i.e., so they did not influence each other's perspectives). Since the prompts involved eliciting perspectives on different aspects of V-T&L and shifting patterns of schooling during the pandemic, it was helpful to have participants in different professional contexts (classroom teacher, para educator, traditional practicum student, and preshool practicum student) to compare experiences and help generalize findings for any practicum placement. As mentioned above, additional data were collected from class projects that the participants submitted as part of their coursework. The projects entailed planning out and implementing classroom lessons with K-12 EL students. The projects and associated reflections were based on V-T&L with English learners and families. Examining data from surveys, lesson implementations, and personal reflections was helpful for triangulating the patterns and themes that emerged across the school year.

Data collection was inductive and ongoing across the school year to focus on points of concern that were brought up during each class meeting. While the input on V-T&L from the participants included details on a wide array of issues pertaining to their contexts, the following discussion focuses on points relevant to teaching students and engaging families in K-12 schools – and excludes comments on broader issues that were frequently mentioned (e.g., vaccine initiatives, political standpoints on COVID-19, and views on school closures and reopening). The data are described below in terms of the initial challenges posed by V-T&L and the resulting approaches used to adapt to the new social and educational demands incited by the pandemic.

Findings

Obstacles and Challenges

A primary concern expressed by the practicum students involves the challenges generated by the V-T&L requirements thrust upon them during the quarantine. While some obstacles were surmountable,

additional hurdles continued to arise across the school year as schedules shifted and V-T&L platforms/programs flooded the educational landscape. The most common difficulties mentioned by the educators include technology, home environment distractions, student engagement, and social-emotional concerns. Fleshing out these obstacles helps set the stage for the deeper underlying professional and interpersonal processes that emerged within this context. Unsurprisingly, the most common point of frustration revolved around technology, especially in the fall of 2020. The following are the most frequently listed issues:

- lack of access to Internet and/or students' unreliable Wi-Fi hotspot devices
- insufficient bandwidth and Internet speed to run educational applications
- multiple siblings using the Internet at the same time, slowing connectivity
- how to navigate digital platforms and applications
- relying on digital communication with students (e.g., video, email, or cell phone)
- teaching parents how to use the V-T&L platforms

Echoing these concerns, one of the parent participants noted:

Son muchos los desafíos, por ejemplo: el tiempo, el espacio, el horario, etc., pero el mayor de todos es la situación económica, porque el uso del Internet es una fuente muy indispensable para las clases de mi hijo. [*There are many challenges, for example; time, space, schedule, etc., but the greatest of all is the economic situation, because the use of the internet is a very indispensable source for my son's classes*.]

While getting access to devices (e.g., computers and tablets) was not mentioned as an issue due to the resources provided by the local districts, the inability to provide in-person technology support with computers and hotspot Internet was a major source of frustration for both teachers and parents.

Another primary difficulty included "distractions" in the students' home environments during V-T&L video streaming sessions. The distractions can be divided into three general categories. First, activities that distracted the students within their own homes, usually caused by siblings, parents, pets, or other ambient noises (e.g., neighbors mowing their lawn or siblings playing loud music). This pattern was described by many teachers as students lacking a quiet location to engage in V-T&L sessions. The second category of distractions involved what students can see in each other's video stream (e.g., having classmates walking around while on camera, seeing other students' family members or background

environment, being exposed students dressed without shirts, or seeing classmates lying in bed during discussions). The third set of distractions involved instances that distracted the teachers personally (e.g., student background environments, students playing video games or on their cell phones during class sessions, students turning their cameras on and off, students logging in late or leaving early, and waiting for technical difficulties to clear up during class).

While technology issues and student distractions surfaced as the most common challenges in V-T&L, there were a number of more nuanced issues that teachers encountered. The lack of in-person interaction deeply impacted how teachers viewed their ability to promote effective student engagement, which manifested in a number of ways:

- students not wanting to show their faces on video
- students attending or leaving video sessions at will
- students being unwilling to participate/talk in video sessions
- short class meeting sessions not allowing enough time to check in with every student
- difficulty integrating cooperative group activities
- challenges engaging with students in breakout rooms
- lack of group chemistry between students

These serious concerns are markedly different than the obstacles involving technology or distractions. That said, it must be pointed out that like K-12 students, teachers are products of a traditional approach to pedagogy, and these concerns should not suggest that student engagement is not possible in V-T&L environments; rather, these are important points to consider when designing V-T&L activities. Such comments also demonstrate the importance educators place on in-person interactions with students during the learning process.

A final point of concern that was highlighted throughout the school year involved the impact V-T&L had on the social-emotional wellbeing of students. Many of the participants emphasized stress factors in their K-12 students involving virtual interaction fatigue, feeling disconnected from their friends, too much screen time, frustration with learning difficult content with minimal support, feeling uncomfortable while attending video class sessions and office hours. Beyond V-T&L factors, many of the practicing teachers described students with high levels of anxiety stemming from the impact of COVID-19 on their family's financial situation. One teacher mentioned that she could see that parental stress was exacerbating her students' anxiety levels and their ability to engage in V-T&L lessons. While the accumulation of these difficulties seemed overwhelming at times, they ultimately incited a deeper level of creativity and left everyone experimenting with new strategies for engaging students.

From Obstacles to Opportunities

In spite of being framed as educational obstacles posed by V-T&L, the experiences mentioned above can also be seen as exposing areas of teacher preparation that have been inadequate to support educators, students, and families. By drawing on the concepts of FoK and family engagement, it is possible to turn the difficulties into opportunities to improve not only V-T&L contexts, but schooling practices in general. In the sections below, I outline how the collective experiences of the practicum participants and their K-12 students during V-T&L can be reframed to better understand how to support students and families. Specifically, the experiences outlined by the participants demonstrate what I proffer as *cooperative funds of knowledge*. Additionally, I describe why the teaching efforts put forth by educators at multiple levels (state, district, school, and classroom) are most effective when *school–family coalitions* are established as a pedagogical and administrative framework.

Cooperative Funds of Knowledge

Drawing on students' FoK has been widely embraced as an important vehicle for enhancing learning opportunities and promoting social justice. The FoK model has been, rightfully so, focused on students and families (i.e., not teachers) as a way to honor, validate, and prioritize epistemologies and life experiences that might otherwise be overlooked or under-appreciated. The V-T&L context provided an opportunity for us to see how everyone involved in the schooling process navigated the social and pedagogical chaos produced by the pandemic. Thus, not only were students cast into unfamiliar classroom environments and forced to rely on skills and experiences (literally) grounded in their home contexts to manage learning activities – so were parents and teachers. Here, I put forth the notion of *cooperative funds of knowledge* to encompass the simultaneous and interdependent integration of FoK of students, teachers, and parents/caregivers to facilitate instruction and promote learning.

In a physical classroom, teachers can propel academic progress by harnessing their students' classroom-based FoK as a platform for engaging them in content-related learning tasks (Johnson & Johnson, 2016). In V-T&L environments, this process was hampered in large part due to unfamiliarity with virtual pedagogies and interactions. Most teachers had not been trained to teach in such an environment, nor did most school districts have experts with adequate skillsets to provide professional development on how to teach in a V-T&L environment. This left teachers and students in a situation where they were simultaneously forced to learn: (1) academic content, and (2) how to navigate pedagogical aspects of virtual environments.

This process, especially the latter aspect, was heavily reliant on students' family members (e.g., parents and older siblings helping younger

students navigate Internet access, devices, and learning applications/ programs). Additionally, it was very common – mostly with early elementary students – for the same family members to act as tutors, or even as the teacher, for academic content instruction. The resulting patterns of interaction demonstrate a system whereby teachers relied on students and their family members for fundamental aspects of classroom instruction. For early elementary students, this process hinged upon the students' family members as educational brokers that had to ensure a variety of tasks:

- Internet access
- tech support for devices
- navigating screen processes (e.g., website tabs, managing functions on the video programs, guiding students through academic points in the activities)
- securing learning spaces within the home
- managing multi-child V-T&L classrooms in the same home
- balancing their academic support activities with their own work obligations

The same responsibilities that are listed above were also widely experienced by the practicum students (i.e., who were simultaneously working and parenting their children in V-T&L contexts). This trend can be seen as contributing to a sense of empathy between teachers and parents who were plunged into a situation of balancing work responsibilities and their children's schooling.

As described above, the absence of in-person physical interaction was a fundamental factor that impeded the progress of both students and teachers. As one teacher commented,

> not being able to easily meet with students when you know they need help. In the classroom, you can just swing by their desk or they come to the carpet. Now it has to be scheduled, and that relies on the student and the parent.

This observation highlights the important role of the teacher, student, and parent. The metonymic nature of this statement underscores how complex V-T&L expectations are. In other words, supporting students necessitates the teacher setting up a meeting with the parent (or other family member). "Relying on the student and parent" involves navigating schedules, Internet access, technology devices, and online learning platforms – all before engaging with the academic content.

This point was also reflected in comments made by parents when asked to describe their experiences with V-T&L. As one parent expressed,

> Porque cuando estábamos trabajando con los niños desde casa, practicamente todo el trabajo dependía de los padres. Se les

mandaban actividades y libros a casa, pero algunas veces sí ayudaban los padres, y otras veces no tanto." [*Because when we were working with the children from home, practically all the work depended on the parents. Activities and books were sent home, but sometimes parents helped and sometimes not so much.*]

For teachers, "relying on the student and parent" in the V-T&L context is not the same as in traditional classroom instruction (i.e., that generally just *encourages* parent participation in academic processes). Conversely, the commentary of this parent positions the family as the locus of the schooling process and illustrates the essential (and required) roles that parents and guardians played during V-T&L delivery.

As the school year progressed and teachers, students, and parents developed more consistent routines involving V-T&L, a number examples emerged that spotlight how teachers intuitively extended content-based lessons to include a cooperative FoK approach. As part of a practicum course for working in bilingual early childhood settings, teacher candidates were charged with developing V-T&L lessons based on two objectives: (1) design a content lesson based on their students' FoK and (2) demonstrate appropriate techniques for parents to assist with the lesson. In one example, Ms. Hermosa (a dual language preschool teacher) developed a math lesson focused on addition and subtraction. Most of her students were from a Mexican heritage background, so she decided to use the children's text *Los Mariachis* (by Rita Rosa Ruesga) as a platform for her math discussion. Since many of her students were involved in raising livestock, Ms. Hermosa video recorded her lesson outdoors in a large covered grain shed, which provided an effective surface for securing math manipulatives in an upright position (in the grain). She skillfully modeled how the parents can read to their children while simultaneously taking care of a (rather squirmy) toddler on her lap as she captivated her students' attention by using math manipulatives made from popsicle sticks. She also demonstrated how to engage an older child as an assistant (holding the video camera, setting up sticks, asking questions) during the lesson.

This example illustrates how teachers can integrate cooperative FoK to engage parents beyond just technical support and classroom management. Ms. Hermosa modeled how to support academic content within a FoK setting (e.g., farming environment, mariachi theme), but more importantly, she illustrated how to navigate academic content support by utilizing household resources (e.g., familiar outdoor locations, popsicle sticks) while taking care of younger children. Her ongoing explanation of the video recording process to her older child also modeled realistic ways for parents to record the lessons (i.e., to be prepared when their children were required to submit videos of their activities as part of regular V-T&L assignments). Moreover, by uploading her video demonstration to Youtube, Ms. Hermosa could send the link to all of the families in her

class so that the parents would have easy access the lesson and be able practice it with their own children.

Multiple other examples followed a similar pattern. Most notable were lessons designed around culturally familiar topics and conducting activities in relatable home contexts while integrating common household items and products for demonstrations. The notion of cooperative FoK is especially relevant here considering the ways in which the background experiences and cultural environments of the teachers are integrated with those of the students and families to conduct content-based lessons (Johnson, in press; Johnson & Johnson, 2016), exemplifying how teachers can tap into the funds of identity of the families to enhance educational outcomes and promote an overall sense of well-being (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Volman & Gilde, 2021).

This phenomenon extends the original notion of how FoK can enhance learning experiences in a couple ways: (1) by relocating the locus of instruction outside of the school and situating it in the home settings of educators and families and (2) by explicitly modeling how parents can assist in the instructional process (instead of just expecting them to teach their children academic content). This approach further engages students and families by embedding learning within familiar settings and community practices (Rogoff, 2014; Rogoff et al., 2017). While this phenomenon most likely would not have emerged without the interdependent (academic) responsibilities placed on families due to the quarantine mandates, we now have a template for a cooperative FoK approach to teaching practices moving forward. The varied applications of a cooperative FoK approach also underscore the potential for enhancing academic progress and family engagement outside of a quarantine V-T&L setting.

School–Family Coalitions

The sudden quarantine mandates during the spring of 2020 (prior to the 2020–2021 school year) left families scrambling to navigate their daily routines while policing social interactions and health concerns. For most families, academic progress took a backseat to childcare and work responsibilities. While many schools developed impromptu teaching and learning activities in the initial stages of the quarantine (e.g., sending packets of homework to the students and providing digital devices for online activities), there was not much consistency on how those structures were implemented, and even less evidence of best practices to guide such approaches. The summer of 2020 provided school districts and other educational agencies with time to reconsider more coherent approaches for starting the upcoming school year (i.e., in the fall of 2020). Based on this context, a very important trend emerged across a variety of administrative contexts in Washington State: a focus on families as an integral part of V-T&L.

Washington's state department of education (the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI]) explicitly prioritized families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as a starting point for preparing for the upcoming school year. During the summer, the OSPI (2020) developed the "Best Practices for Using Technology with Multilingual Families Toolkit" to help school districts create avenues of support for students and parents from linguistically diverse backgrounds. As a primary recommendation, the OSPI (2020) placed a great deal of emphasis on having schools engage with their families' FoK (pp. 14, 16). Although specific ways in which local districts integrated the OSPI's guidelines varied (e.g., Kennewick School District, 2021; Pasco School District, 2020), the fact that the state department of education responded to such widespread requests for assistance on engaging linguistically diverse families around this topic is significant. In the introduction to their toolkit resource, the OSPI (2020) provides a rationale based on input received from parents across Washington:

> Parents know how important it is to have an opportunity to learn the platforms their children are using so they can better monitor their work and to be attentive to the learning of their children. Parents agree that both teachers and parents were caught off guard with online learning but working together they can support children in their academic goals.
>
> (p. 4)

The OSPI used parent voice here to validate families as the starting point for developing educational services during this timeframe. This fundamental shift in the philosophy of schooling is not to say that families were not considered as important prior to the pandemic. Instead, this context highlights the critical role that all families play in accessing, promoting, and sustaining academic progress. In most cases, families are generally targeted for support when students struggle in school, to the extent that they are often blamed for student challenges (Johnson, 2014). In the case of the quarantine, all families were seen as necessary participants in the schooling process in such a way the effectiveness of V-T&L (especially for elementary students) hinged upon parents, guardians, and other family members. This resulted in a school–family *coalition* support system.

My use of "coalition" is meant to reflect the parallel nature of the obligations, emotional investment, and efforts contributed by teachers, students, and families to persevere through V-T&L schooling during these challenging times. Whereas other effective school-home interactions and family engagement strategies have been described as "partnerships" to project an equal distribution of power in the relationship (Epstein et al., 2019), my use of the term *coalition* positions educators, students, and families as allies whose significant roles in V-T&L schooling are dictated through an atmosphere of imperative interdependence to ensure

academic continuity. In other words, whereas "partnerships" are generally employed in the literature to highlight efforts to engage parents in voluntary school-based activities, the term "coalition" indicates a deeper degree of collaboration that extends beyond leveling power dynamics and portrays families as indispensable allies in the everyday instructional process. Specific examples of responsibilities and activities involved in effective school–family coalitions were pointed out by educators across a variety of grade levels.

For many of the practicum students, the notion of a school–family coalition manifested in their own limitations that caused them to rely on students and parents. Most of the participants in this study were quick to point out their reliance on parents for a variety of daily tasks, for example:

- Structuring the learning environment (e.g., helping with digital access, providing spaces within the home for attending V-T&L sessions, and minimizing background distractions).
- Helping with classroom management (e.g., addressing their child's appearance, checking to ensure cameras were on when appropriate, and ensuring students are attending learning sessions).
- Academic support activities (e.g., participating with younger children to help with discussions, assisting with learning tasks, and providing manipulatives for activities).
- Childcare and family participation (e.g., communicating with teachers about schedules for work and childcare, and navigating V-T&L for multi-child homes).

By no means is this list of examples exhaustive; rather, it displays specific instances that require a strong coalition between teachers and families in order to promote effective learning environments.

Implications

As the findings demonstrate, instruction through a V-T&L approach requires extensive dependence on the cooperative FoK of teachers, students, and parents. In addition, developing strong school–family coalitions is necessary to effectively access and integrate cooperative FoK. Below, I point out specific components to consider when training teachers who work with students and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Next, I suggest ways that practicum students can develop the skills to implement this approach across V-T&L and in-person schooling contexts.

Engagement as Communication

The most fundamental component of an effective school–family coalition is communication between educators and parents/guardians. This point

was echoed by most parents who contributed to the survey. As one parent pointed out,

> La comunicación con los padres sobre lo que se les enseñará a los niños es muy importante, porque los padres pueden aportar información muy importante para lo que desea que su hijo aprenda en la clase. [*Communicating with parents about what the children will be taught is very important, because parents can provide very important information on what they want their child to learn in class*]

Although it is important to emphasize effective methods of communication, *what* is communicated was also mentioned by parents as a point of concern. For example, it was common for parents to express challenges with being able to navigate the content of their children's academic lessons:

> Tener buena comunicación con los maestros es muy importante para no tener pena de hacer preguntas cuando no entiendes de lo que se trata la clase. [*Having good communication with teachers is very important so that you don't feel embarrassed about asking questions when you don't understand what the class is about*]

As mentioned here, when parents are embarrassed about not understanding the content of classroom assignments, they are less likely to participate. These comments also resonate with the sentiments described above that everything depended on the families, which can be overwhelming and cause parents to not feel comfortable enough to help with V-T&L lessons.

So, how can educators ensure effective communication and authentic family engagement? Communication is most effective when families are engaged in ways that demonstrate a sincere interest in them as people while validating their backgrounds. My previous work provides a foundation for teacher preparation strategies on topics spanning the importance of conducting home visits (Johnson, 2014, 2016a), applying a FoK approach to the process of home visits (Johnson, 2016b), the benefits of collaborating with parents on FoK lessons with EL students (Johnson & Johnson, 2016), and how to apply a home visits and FoK approach within dual language classroom settings (Johnson, in press; Johnson & Newcomer, 2020). The current V-T&L context not only reinforces the importance of family engagement, it extends our understanding of how this process can be done and illustrates new ways that school–family coalitions support learning.

When the quarantine mandates were initially imposed, school districts were left scrambling to figure out how to provide academic materials to students. In many districts, especially those serving low income

communities, educators were responsible for delivering school supplies to their students' homes. This provided an avenue for educators to experience home visits as part of their job duties, which, for many teachers, resulted in a shift in their orientation toward engaging parents outside of school contexts. As one elementary dual language teacher commented,

> I've interacted with more parents than I ever have, I think we're starting to really see this as a partnership between the parents and the student, and how we can work together to make sure that they're successful … People say it's so helpful to get to know the families and to help them, but I didn't start doing it until I had to.

While this comment resonates with findings in my previous work on conducting home visits, it also demonstrates the impact on educators who would not normally elect to conduct the visits (i.e., most home visits are voluntary). Furthermore, the home visit experience prompted this teacher to reconsider the role of home visits as a consistent part of their job duties:

> And I was like, this is something we should do every year. Like, why don't we visit their houses every year at the beginning? And I think to like that's a big part of like educational justice reform. And I think of how much we lacked that prior to COVID, it and it makes me really sad. Like how many parents and families could we have impacted if we were to just take the extra step to go and get them involved.

Equally as significant as the shift in this teacher's view that home visits should be more routine, they emphasize how home visits can contribute to "educational justice reform" – and how this realization was actually incited by the COVID-19 quarantine restrictions.

So, what does all of this mean for supporting teacher candidates in practicum settings? From a professional development perspective, educators can benefit from training on how to conduct home visits both in person and virtually. Whereas there is ample literature dedicated to conducting home visits, scant are examples of how to engage with families virtually. Even though the recommendations listed in my previous work still apply to virtual home visits, more attention needs to be placed on how to scaffold the parents' awareness of how to use digital platforms and the parameters of electronic communication. Additional research is also needed on the parents' perspectives of virtual environments to better understand what their needs are. Most importantly, before establishing expectations of parents to help their children with V-T&L tasks, further examples of how teachers establish relationships with families to learn from their FoK in virtual environments need to be promoted.

Conclusions

At the very least, the experiences outlined in this chapter provide a window into the reality of V-T&L from an educator's perspective. This can help future practicum students prepare for V-T&L placements by giving them an idea of the challenges that potentially await. More profound benefits can be seen in the theoretical contribution of this discussion. By drawing attention to the emergence of *cooperative funds of knowledge* and *school–family coalitions*, this chapter depicts an integrated approach for supporting linguistically diverse students and families – an approach that can be sustained long after the pandemic has dissipated. That said, while previous work on integrating FoK in multilingual classroom settings highlights a number of explicit guidelines for educators to consider (Johnson, in press), there is great need for additional exploration into effective strategies for integrating *cooperative* FoK into traditional classroom settings (i.e., not just V-T&L). It is up to instructors in teacher preparation programs to design opportunities for practicum students to engage with activities that are grounded in a cooperative FoK approach that is developed through sound school–family coalitions.

Whereas the quarantine context provided a platform for recognizing the critical role that cooperative FoK can play in the schooling process, it is now essential that we continue to explore how this concept can be extended to further enhance the school experiences of students and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Although the concepts fleshed out in this chapter are described as byproducts of the COVID-19 quarantines and V-T&L, they should not be seen as relegated to virtual environments. Preparing educators to develop school–family coalitions and integrate cooperative FoK strategies into their regular teaching practices benefits V-T&L environments as well as traditional classroom instruction – which ultimately furthers our capacity to promote a social justice orientation for supporting multilingual students and their families.

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