Second Language Teacher Education

A Sociocultural Perspective

Karen E. Johnson

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Second Language Teacher Education

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Filling a gap in the literature, this book presents a comprehensive overview of the epistemological underpinnings of a sociocultural perspective on human learning and addresses in detail what this perspective has to offer the field of second language teacher education. Captured through five changing points of view, it argues that a sociocultural perspective on human learning changes the way we think about (1) how teachers learn to teach, (2) how teachers think about language, (3) how teachers teach second languages, (4) the broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that are ever present and ever changing in the second language teaching profession, and (5) what constitutes second language teacher professional development.

Directed to language teacher educators; those who conduct research on the content, activities, and outcomes of language teacher education; and seasoned language teachers who often move into teacher training roles with little or no background in the theory and research that informs language teacher education, this is not a book about *how to do L2 teacher education*, but rather, *how to think about what we do in L2 teacher education*. Overall, it clearly and accessibly makes the case that a sociocultural perspective on human learning reorients how the field understands and supports the professional development of second language teachers.

Karen E. Johnson is Liberal Arts Research Professor of Applied Linguistics at The Pennsylvania State University, and Co-director of the Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research.

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To Glenn, Elizabeth, and Lillian

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Preface

In my many years of working with second language (L2) teachers and teacher educators, I have often been asked about my approach to L2 teacher education. By "approach" I assume they mean not only what I *do* as a teacher educator to prepare L2 teachers for their work, but also the core epistemological underpinnings that shape what I do. I use the term "epistemology" rather than "beliefs" because the foundation of what I do as a teacher educator is built on the epistemological stance I embrace; in other words, how I have come to understand the origins and nature of knowledge, knowing, and coming to know. My short answer is that over the years I have come to embrace the epistemological underpinnings of a more general sociocultural turn in the human sciences, which in turn has influenced how I have come to understand teacher learning and the entire enterprise of L2 teacher education. This book is my long answer to the question. However, it is not a book about *how to do L2 teacher education*. It is a book about *how to think about what we do in L2 teacher education*. And, as I argue, how we think about what we do in L2 teacher education changes dramatically when we think about knowledge, knowing, and coming to know from a sociocultural perspective.

In this book I present a comprehensive overview of the epistemological underpinnings of a sociocultural perspective on human learning, and address in detail what this perspective has to offer the field of L2 teacher education. Representing a coherent "theory of mind" that recognizes the inherent interconnectedness of the cognitive and the social, a sociocultural perspective assumes that the way in which human consciousness develops depends on the specific social activities in which we engage and the culturally constructed materials and semiotic artifacts or tools, the most important of which is language, which we use to participate in those activities. Examining the topic through five *changing points of view*, I argue that a sociocultural perspective on human learning changes the way we think about: (1) L2 teacher learning; (2) language; (3) L2 teaching; (4) the broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that are ever present and ever changing in the L2 teaching profession; and (5) what

constitutes L2 teacher professional development. Overall, I argue that a sociocultural perspective on human learning reorients how the field of L2 teacher education understands and supports the professional development of L2 teachers.

The target audience for this book is teacher educators like me, who direct and/or teach in L2 teacher education programs as well as those of us who conduct research on the content, activities, and outcomes of L2 teacher education. Additionally, this book is intended for students of L2 teacher education; that is, graduate students who are preparing to enter the academy as L2 teacher educators as well as seasoned L2 teachers who find themselves in L2 teacher educator roles with little or no background in the theory and research that informs the field.

The field of L2 teacher education, I believe, can benefit significantly from a sociocultural perspective on human learning upon which to ground both our scholarly research and our pedagogical activities with L2 teachers. And while I have written about teacher learning and L2 teacher education from a sociocultural perspective before, this work represents a book-length examination of the explanatory powers that a sociocultural perspective offers the field of L2 teacher education. As I argue throughout this book, a sociocultural perspective can enable our field to trace the inherent complexities that make up the sum of L2 teachers' learning and teaching experiences, and make visible what those experiences ultimately lead to. And by capturing this transformative process, we can expose the rich details of how L2 teacher learning emerges out of, can be supported by, and is co-constructed among, L2 teachers and L2 teacher educators within the settings and circumstances of their work.

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I would like to acknowledge my colleague Jim Lantolf whose scholarly expertise in Vygotskian sociocultural theory has enriched my own understanding of this extremely compelling theory. I thank him for his willingness to share his expertise with me and for his careful reading and insightful feedback on several chapters in this book. I also wish to acknowledge my doctoral students, Kyungja Ahn, Sharon Childs, Eun-ju Kim, Elizabeth Smolcic, and Davi Reis, who were, at the time when I was writing this book, willing to learn with me as we sought to use a sociocultural perspective to inform our research. In true sociocultural fashion, my interactions with them mediated not only their learning but my own as well. Finally, I wish to thank the reviewers commissioned by Routledge for their support of and feedback on earlier versions of this book and the acquisitions editor Naomi Silverman and series editor Eli Hinkel for recognizing this book's potential contribution to the ESL and Applied Linguistics Professional Series.

Chapter 1

Defining a Sociocultural Perspective

Converging research from anthropology, applied linguistics, psychology, and education has taken up the term *sociocultural*, often using it with slightly different meanings and sometimes with very different applications. At its core, however, the epistemological stance of a sociocultural perspective defines human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts, and is distributed across persons, tools, and activities (Rogoff, 2003; Salomon, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). This is significant because, unlike behavioral or cognitive theories of human learning, a sociocultural perspective argues that higher-level human cognition in the individual has its origins in social life. That is, instead of assuming that there are universal features of human cognition that can be separated from the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they emerged and are used, a sociocultural perspective focuses on sociocultural activities as the essential processes through which human cognition is formed. Ultimately, a sociocultural perspective seeks "to explicate the relationship between human mental functioning, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this functioning occurs, on the other" (Wertsch, 1995, p. 3).

The epistemological tenets of a sociocultural perspective are drawn largely from the seminal work of Lev Vygotsky (1978, 1986), the Russian psychologist and educator, and his followers Leont'ev (1981) and Luria (1982), and more recently those who have extended his theories, including Cole (1996), John-Steiner (1997), Kozulin (1998), Lantolf (2000, 2006a), Wells (1999), and Wertsch (1991). A sociocultural perspective assumes that human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities, and that it is the social relationships and the culturally constructed materials, signs, and symbols, referred to as *semiotic artifacts*, that mediate those relationships that create uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking. Consequently, cognitive development is an interactive process, mediated by culture, context, language, and social interaction. Knowledge of the world is mediated by virtue of being situated in a cultural environment and it is from this cultural environment

that humans acquire the representational systems that ultimately become the medium, mediator, and tools of thought. This suggests that meaning does not reside in language itself, but instead in the social group's use of language, and therefore cognitive development is characterized as the acquisition and manipulation of cultural tools and knowledge, the most powerful of which is language. According to Wertsch (1995), "individuals have access to psychological tools and practices by virtue of being part of a sociocultural milieu in which those tools and practices have been and continue to be culturally transmitted" (p. 141).

A sociocultural perspective also emphasizes the role of human agency in this developmental process. It recognizes that learning is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity. Thus, cognitive development is not simply a matter of enculturation or even appropriation of existing sociocultural resources and practices, but the reconstruction and transformation of those resources and practices in ways that are responsive to both individual and local needs. How an individual learns something, what is learned, and how it is used will depend on the sum of the individual's prior experiences, the sociocultural contexts in which the learning takes place, and what the individual wants, needs, and/or is expected to do with that knowledge.

Likewise, a sociocultural perspective positions social activities and the language used to regulate those activities as being structured and gaining meaning in historically and culturally situated ways. Thus both the physical tools and the language practices used by communities of practice gain their meaning from those who have come before. Ultimately, a sociocultural perspective argues that human cognitive "development can be understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities—which also change" (Rogoff, 2003, pp. 3–4).

What does a sociocultural perspective have to offer L2 teacher education? The professional education of teachers is, at its core, about *teachers as learners of teaching*. And if the learning of teaching constitutes the central mission of L2 teacher education, then as a field we must articulate an epistemological stance that enables us to justify the content, structure, and processes that constitute L2 teacher education. In essence, this is the central goal of this book: to articulate the various ways in which a sociocultural perspective on human learning transforms how we understand teacher learning, language, language teaching, and the enterprise of L2 teacher education.

Changing Points of View

Building on this epistemological stance, the central question I address in this book is: What does a sociocultural perspective on human learning have to offer the enterprise of L2 teacher education? I answer this question from five *changing points of view*.

Teachers as Learners of Teaching

First, I argue that a sociocultural perspective *changes the way we think about teacher learning*. Since L2 teacher education is, at its core, about teachers as learners of teaching, understanding the cognitive and social processes that teachers go through as they learn to teach is foundational to informing what we do in L2 teacher education. In Chapter 2: Shifting Epistemologies in Teacher Education, I trace the epistemological shifts that have influenced the way in which we have traditionally thought about teacher learning. I argue that the research on teacher cognition carried out over the past 30 years has solidified our understanding of the sociocultural processes that are involved in teacher learning. In Chapter 3: Teachers as Learners of Teaching, I examine teacher learning from a sociocultural perspective, arguing that it provides us with a *theory of mind* that recognizes the inherent interconnectedness of the cognitive and social, and allows us to see the rich details of how teacher learning emerges out of and is constructed by teachers within the settings and circumstances of their work. I illustrate what these sociocultural processes look like by exploring teachers' narrative accounts of their own professional development. These accounts illustrate how teachers, through different mediational means, come to know what they know, how different concepts in their thinking develop, and how this internal activity transforms their understandings of themselves as teachers, their teaching practices, and the opportunities they create for student learning.

Language as Social Practice

Second, I argue that a sociocultural perspective *changes the way we think about language*. From a sociocultural perspective, language functions as a psychological tool that is used to make sense of experience, but also as a cultural tool in that it is used to share experiences and to make sense of those experiences with others, thus transforming experience into cultural knowledge and understandings. Since all social activities are structured and gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways, the language used to describe an activity gains its meaning from concrete communicative activity in specific sociocultural contexts. In Chapter 4: Language as Social Practice, I argue that while a sociocultural perspective represents a *theory of mind* rather than a *theory of language*, it aligns well

with theories of language that emphasize the fundamentally social nature of language and conceptualize language as a constellation of social practices. I critique the traditional theories of language that have dominated the fields of linguistics and second language acquisition, and consequently permeated the content of L2 teacher education, as having failed to provide L2 teachers with a conceptualization of language that is amenable to L2 instruction. I propose that preparing professionals who embrace a *language as social practice* stance requires that L2 teachers become consciously aware of the underlying concepts that are embedded in how language use expresses meaning. They should also recognize that meaning is situated in specific social and cultural practices which are continually being transformed. Finally understanding language as fluid, dynamic, and unstable is as fundamental as conceptualizing language use as accessing resources and making choices about how to be in the L2 world.

Teaching as Dialogic Mediation

Third, I argue that a sociocultural perspective *changes the way we think about language teaching*. When teaching creates learning opportunities in which individuals can participate in activities that provide them with direct experiences in the use of new psychological tools, such tools have the potential to function as powerful instruments for human learning. In Chapter 5: Teaching as Dialogic Mediation, I argue that teaching within the context of formal schooling is best characterized as integrating a student-centered approach with deliberate teaching. From this perspective, dialogic mediation, or the character and quality of interaction between learners, teachers, and the objects in their learning environments, is paramount. Such interaction has the potential to create opportunities for development because this arises in the specific social activities learners engage in, the resources they use to do so, and what is accomplished by engaging in those activities. Tracing such development requires examining the processes in which learners' activities are initially mediated by other people or cultural artifacts but later come under their own control as they appropriate certain resources to regulate their own activities. Therefore, when teaching is conceptualized as dialogic mediation, the character and quality of interaction in terms of its communicative functions, the consequences for the social construction of meaning, and cognitive development are central.

Additionally, from a sociocultural perspective a fundamental goal of formal schooling is concept development. Within the context of the professional development of teachers, it is the emergence of true concepts (fully formed higher-level psychological tools) that enables teachers to make substantive and significant changes in the ways in which they engage in the activities associated with teaching and learning. And for true concepts to emerge, teachers must have multiple and sustained opportunities

for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance as they participate in and learn about relevant aspects of their professional worlds. When teachers' concept development leads to changes in the ways in which they think about and engage in instructional activities, a sociocultural perspective allows us to turn our attention to the relation between teacher learning and student learning. That is, when teachers have truly reconceptualized some aspect of their teaching, when they have come to think about and organize activities in the classroom in fundamentally different ways, this creates enormous potential to see changes in how students engage in learning activities, which can, in turn, lead to changes in both what and how students learn.

Macro-Structures and the L2 Teaching Profession

Fourth, I argue that a sociocultural perspective *changes the way we think about the broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures* that are ever present and ever changing in the L2 teaching profession. In Chapter 6: Macro-Structures and the Second Language Teaching Profession, I use the analytical framework of Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Thorne, 2004) to map the social influences and relationships involved in networks of human activity, or, in the case of L2 teacher education, to account for how an individual teacher's activities shape and are shaped by the social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that constitute his/her professional world. I review recent research that exposes how educational reform policies and high-stakes tests affect the ways in which teachers and their students are positioned, how teachers enact their teaching practices, and, more importantly, the kinds of learning environments teachers are willing and able to create for their students. I then argue that it is the responsibility of L2 teacher education to make teachers aware of the sanctioned policies, curricular mandates, and high-stakes assessment practices that can and will shape their work if they are to work with and against the consequences that these macro-structures may have on their instructional practices and, in turn, on their students' opportunities for L2 learning.

Inquiry-Based Approaches to Professional Development

Fifth, I argue that a sociocultural perspective *changes the way we think about what constitutes professional development*. In particular, I argue that if we embrace the notion that teacher learning is social, situated in physical and social contexts, and distributed across persons, tools, and activities, then L2 teacher education needs to redraw the boundaries that have typically defined professional development. This, I argue, involves looking at sites of teacher learning beyond visible professional

development activities such as coursework, workshops, and seminars, to include teachers' informal social and professional networks and the extent to which their classrooms are sites for professional learning. In Chapter 7: Inquiry-Based Approaches to Professional Development, I describe how the underlying assumptions of inquiry-based approaches to professional development are aligned with a sociocultural perspective and the potential these approaches create for productive teacher learning and improvements in teaching practice. I then describe various models of inquiry-based professional development, all of which, at their core, are designed to support teachers' concept development, create alternative structural arrangements that support sustained dialogic mediation between and among teachers and teacher educators, and provide assisted performance as teachers struggle through issues that are directly relevant to their professional worlds. Finally, I illustrate how inquiry-based approaches to professional development encourage teachers to engage in on-going, in-depth, and reflective examinations of their teaching practices and their students' learning, while embracing the processes of teacher socialization that occur in classrooms, schools, and wider professional communities.

Future Challenges for L2 Teacher Education

I conclude, in Chapter 8: Future Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education, by proposing several challenges that a sociocultural perspective poses for the field of L2 teacher education. The first challenge is to recognize that both the content and activities of L2 teacher education must take into account the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are located in the contexts where L2 teachers live, learn, and work. Creating locally appropriate responses to support the preparation and professionalism of L2 teachers will entail recognizing how changing sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts impact upon the ways in which teachers are positioned, how they enact their teaching practices, and, most importantly, the kinds of learning environments they are willing and able to create for their L2 students. A second challenge is to explore more fully the complex relationship between teacher professional learning and student L2 learning. A comprehensive understanding of this relationship will be essential if policy makers and other educational stakeholders are to recognize that time, attention, and support for professional development can and in fact do lead to greater gains in student L2 achievement. And finally, a third challenge for L2 teacher education is to equip teachers with the intellectual tools of inquiry that will enable them to resist the politics of accountability that are rapidly shaping global educational policies and national curricular mandates. This would enable teachers to create educationally sound, contextually appropriate, and socially equitable learning opportunities for the L2 students they teach.

Chapter 2

Shifting Epistemologies in Teacher Education

Over the past 40 years, the ways in which educational research has conceptualized teacher learning (which has in turn informed the activities of teacher education) have shifted dramatically. This shift did not occur in isolation but was influenced by epistemological shifts in how various intellectual traditions had come to conceptualize human learning; more specifically, historically documented shifts from behaviorist, to cognitive, to situated, social, and distributed views of human cognition (Cobb & Bowers, 1999; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996; Parker & Winne, 1995; Putman & Borko, 2000; for reviews of parallel shifts in conceptualizations of language and second language acquisition see Firth & Wagner, 1997; Lantolf, 1996; MLJ Focus Issue, 2007).

Overcoming a Positivist Epistemological Perspective

The sociocultural perspective defined in Chapter 1 stands in stark contrast to the cognitive learning theories of the positivist epistemological perspective that define learning as an internal psychological process isolated in the mind of the learner and largely free from the social and physical contexts within which it occurs (Lenneberg, 1967). Positivism, according to Shulman (1986), has had the greatest impact on the "great conversation" about teaching and teacher education of the past half century. Positivism, also referred to as the scientific method, is rooted in the belief that reality exists apart from the knower and can be captured through careful, systematic processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Knowledge is considered to be objective and identifiable, and represents generalizable truths. In other words, knowledge is out there and can be captured through the use of scientific methods.

In educational research, positivist research has sought to identify patterns of good teaching and has traditionally focused on what effective teachers do (teaching behaviors/processes) that leads to student achievement (test scores/product). Sometimes referred to as "process-product" research, positivist research methods typically involve random sampling

that is assumed to represent the broader population, data collection, and analysis methods that can be replicated, and attention to issues of validity and reliability in order to control for bias.

Historically, the education of teachers has been predicated on the notion that knowledge about teaching and learning can be transmitted to teachers by others, usually in the form of theoretical readings, university-based lectures, and/or professional development workshops which often take place outside the walls of the classroom. It has been assumed that learned ideas can be transported from one place to another, and for this reason the positivist paradigm has focused on notions of transfer in learning to probe how knowledge travels from one setting or context to another. It has consequently tended to see classrooms and formal schooling as "a site for decontextualized knowledge so that, abstracted, such knowledge may become general and hence generalizable, thus transferable to situations of use in the 'real' world" (Lave, 1997, p. 18). While positivist research over the past 50 years has identified some common notions about what constitutes good teaching (more time on task, increased wait time, use of advanced organizers, etc.), the level of abstraction that is necessary for such research to meet positivist standards of methodological rigor tends to strip both the contexts and the particulars from an understanding of the activity of teaching.

Since the early 1980s the positivist epistemological perspective has had many vocal critics. The most common complaints are the oversimplified, depersonalized, and decontextualized nature of the underlying assumptions of this research (i.e., all students are the same, or broad characterizations about teaching), and the simplistic, almost commonplace nature of the findings (i.e., more time on task leads to higher test scores). Critics have argued that the complexities of classroom life cannot be captured in neat, clinical experimental designs and that any generalizations that emerge simply whitewash the complex social, historical, cultural, economic, and political dimensions that permeate schools and schooling in the broader social milieu (Shulman, 1986). Yet the most damaging critique of this perspective is how little influence it appears to have had on improving classroom teaching and learning (National Educational Research Policies and Priorities Board, 1999). Even those who have attempted to translate positivist research findings into forms useful for teachers have been largely unsuccessful (Huberman, 1985; Kennedy, 1999; Raths & McAninch, 1999; in L2 teacher education see Clarke, 1996).

Shifting Towards an Interpretative Epistemological Perspective

In a backlash against the dominant positivist research paradigm, an interpretative epistemological stance, drawn largely from ethnographic

research in sociology and anthropology, began to establish itself in educational research circles in the mid-1970s (Stenhouse, 1975). Interpretative perspectives are grounded in the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and emerges from the social practices that people engage in. Therefore social reality is understood as being created by people, and exists, in large part, within people's minds. Seen from this stance, the goal of interpretative research is to uncover how people participate in and constitute social reality. When this epistemological perspective is used as a lens through which to look at teachers and teaching, the central research question becomes: How do teachers participate in and constitute their professional worlds? By coming to know this, we can take its insights and apply them to the sociocultural contexts where teacher learning takes place, whether it be in a teacher education program, in a classroom, or in any professional development experience.

In educational research, embracing an interpretative epistemological stance required a shift from observational studies of what teachers do to ethnographic descriptions based on observation, description, and interviews with teachers about why they do what they do. In addition, rather than attempting to predict what teachers do or should do, interpretative research is interested in uncovering what they already know and are able to do, and how they make sense of their work within the contexts in which they teach. In that sense, interpretative research focuses on what teachers know, honors what they know, and helps to clarify and resolve the dilemmas they face.

The interpretative epistemological stance was appealing in teacher education because until the mid-1970s and early 1980s research on teachers had not explored the complexities of *teachers' mental lives* (Walberg, 1977; also see Freeman, 2002). Once researchers began to ask teachers why they teach the way they do and what they take into consideration as they make decisions about what and how to teach, it became clear that a positivist paradigm was insufficient for explaining the complexities of both teachers' mental lives and the teaching processes that occur in classrooms. From an interpretative stance, researchers could no longer ignore the fact that teachers' prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and, most importantly, the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do.

Emerging Research on Teacher Cognition

An emerging body of research on how teachers learn to teach and how they carry out their work, now known as *teacher cognition*, has helped to reconceptualize our understanding of how teachers learn to do

their work (in L1 see D.L. Ball, 2000; Carter, 1990; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; in L2 see Borg, 2006; Freeman, 1996, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Woods, 1996). This research has helped to capture the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts throughout their careers. It acknowledges that since teachers' knowledge of teaching is constructed through experiences in and with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators, the processes of learning to teach are socially negotiated. Teacher learning is understood as normative and life-long; it is built through experiences in multiple social contexts first as learners in classrooms and schools, then later as participants in professional teacher education programs, and ultimately in the communities of practice in which teachers work (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Grossman, 1990). More importantly, usable knowledge in teaching requires knowledge about oneself as a teacher, about the content to be taught, about students, about classroom life, and about the contexts within which teachers carry out their work (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Elbaz, 1983; Freeman, 1996; Johnson, 1999; Shulman, 1987). Ultimately, learning to teach is conceptualized as a long-term, complex, developmental process that is the result of participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching.

Given this characterization of how teachers learn and develop, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) argue that teacher education must lay the foundation for life-long learning, with the ultimate goal of "helping teachers become professionals who are adaptive experts" (p. 359). Adaptive experts, they argue, are able to balance efficiency and innovation. In other words, adaptive experts are able to master the skills and strategies to plan, manage, carry out, and assess the activities of teaching and learning while at the same time adapting and adjusting to the complexities that are embedded in those activities in order to make sound instructional decisions within the contexts in which they teach. Thus, being appropriately innovative requires a certain amount of routinization in teaching but the essence of effective teaching is contingent on teachers' abilities to adapt and adjust to the unpredictable nature of classroom life. Ultimately, the learning of teaching becomes a life-long enterprise, and teacher education, whether pre-service or in-service, must be designed to support the development of teachers' adaptive expertise.

Reconceptualizing the Knowledge-Base of L2 Teacher Education

The fact that educational researchers had begun to uncover the sociocultural processes that influence how L2 teachers learn to teach and how they carry out their work as teachers led to a questioning of the

traditional knowledge-base of L2 teacher education. A knowledge-base is, in essence, a professional self-definition. It reflects a widely accepted conception of what people need to know and are able to do to carry out the work of a particular profession. In L2 teacher education, the knowledge-base informs three broad areas: (1) the content of L2 teacher education programs: *What L2 teachers need to know*; (2) the pedagogies that are taught in L2 teacher education programs: *How L2 teachers should teach*; and (3) the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned: *How L2 teachers learn to teach*. So the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education is, by definition, the basis upon which we make decisions about how to prepare L2 teachers to do the work of this profession.

Having a widely accepted, publicly articulated knowledge-base brings both recognition and value to a profession. By defining what L2 teachers need to know and are able to do, a knowledge-base sets the standards for professional licensure and credentialing, and in essence defines what it means to be a professional L2 teacher. A knowledge-base, likewise, excludes those who do not possess certain knowledge, skills, or types of experiences. This is particularly important in L2 teacher education where the status of the native speaker remains entrenched in the public discourse; that is, "if you can speak the language, you can teach it." Thus, the value that a knowledge-base promotes is critical to the establishment of L2 teaching as a legitimate profession.

Yet a knowledge-base is not a static or neutral entity. Instead, it is grounded in certain values, assumptions, and interpretations that are shared by members of a particular professional community. And these values, assumptions, and interpretations are grounded in particular epistemological perspectives—that is, what counts as knowledge, who is considered to be a knower, and how knowledge is produced. Ultimately, the epistemological perspective that gains legitimacy within a particular professional community often depends on issues of access, status, and power.

Historically, the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education has been grounded in the positivist epistemological perspective. It has been compartmentalized into isolated theoretical courses and separated from teaching, leading to what teacher educator D.L. Ball (2000) has referred to as "the persistent divide between subject matter and pedagogy" (p. 242). The content of L2 teacher education (*what L2 teachers need to know*), drawn largely from theories and research in linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA), positioned disciplinary knowledge about the formal properties of language and theories of SLA as foundational knowledge for the professional preparation of L2 teachers. Moreover, L2 teaching was viewed as a matter of translating theories of SLA into effective instructional practices (*how L2 teachers should teach*). Thus,

historically the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education was defined largely in terms of how language learners acquire a second language and less in terms of how L2 teaching is learned or how it is practiced (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Most L2 teacher education programs operate under the assumption that it is necessary to provide teachers with discrete amounts of disciplinary knowledge, usually in the form of general theories and methods that are assumed to be applicable to any teaching context (*how L2 teachers learn to teach*). This view of teacher learning leads to "front-loading" (Freeman, 1993) in teacher education: the notion that teachers can be equipped in advance, at the start of their careers, for all that they will need to know and be able to do throughout their teaching lives. Learning to teach has been viewed as learning *about* teaching in one context (the teacher education program), observing and practicing teaching in another (the practicum), and, eventually, developing effective teaching behaviors in yet a third context (usually in the induction years of teaching). However, D.L. Ball (2000) argues that "a fundamental problem in learning to teach [is that], despite its centrality, usable content knowledge is not something teacher education, in the main, provides effectively" (p. 243). Thus, most of what teachers learn actually occurs in on-the-job initiation into the practices of teaching, rather than in professional teacher education programs (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 1996).

In order to build a knowledge-base for L2 teacher education that includes attention to the activity of L2 teaching itself—that is, who does it, where it is done, and how it is done—Freeman and Johnson (1998) argue that the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education must include not only disciplinary or subject matter knowledge that defines how languages are structured, used, and acquired; it must also account for the *content* of L2 teaching, in other words, "what and how language is actually taught in L2 classrooms as well as teachers' and students' perception of that content" (p. 410). The problem, as Freeman (2004) cogently argues, is that the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education has assumed that these two types of knowledge are one and the same. That is, the disciplinary knowledge that defines what language is, how it is used, and how it is acquired that has emerged out of the fields of linguistics and SLA is the same knowledge that teachers use to teach the language and, in turn, is the same knowledge that students need in order to learn the language. However, in mainstream educational research a distinction has been made between the accepted disciplinary knowledge of a particular field and the pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) that teachers use to make the content of their instruction relevant and accessible to students. For example, mathematics education in the North American context has been able to separate the disciplinary definitions

and theories of mathematics from the mathematical content that can be usefully taught throughout a child's schooling. This is not to say that math teachers do not need the disciplinary knowledge of their field but it does suggest that they also need to acquire the pedagogical knowledge that will enable them to teach mathematical concepts in ways that will enable their students to learn them (Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005).

A Sociocultural Perspective on L2 Teacher Education

A combination of shifting epistemological perspectives on human learning and the accumulation of almost three decades of research on how teachers learn to teach and how they carry out their work in classrooms highlights the fundamentally social nature of teacher learning and the activities of teaching. Learning to teach, from a sociocultural perspective, is based on the assumption that knowing, thinking, and understanding come from participating in the social practices of learning and teaching in specific classroom and school situations. Teacher learning and the activities of teaching are understood as growing out of participation in the social practices in classrooms; and what teachers know and how they use that knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretative and contingent on knowledge of self, setting, students, curriculum, and community.

A sociocultural perspective on human learning informs several interrelated aspects of L2 teacher education. First, it explicates the cognitive processes at work in teacher learning. It provides us with a *theory of mind* that recognizes the inherent interconnectedness of the cognitive and the social. It opens up the possibility to trace how teachers come to know, how different concepts and functions in teachers' consciousness develop, and how this internal activity transforms teachers' understandings of themselves as teachers, of their students, and of the activities of teaching.

Second, a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher education also recognizes that the education of teachers is not only a process of enculturation into the existing social practices associated with teaching and learning but also a dynamic process of reconstructing and transforming those practices to be responsive to both individual and local needs. Thus, human agency is central because teachers are positioned as individuals who both appropriate and reconstruct the resources that have been developed and made available to them while simultaneously refashioning those resources to meet new challenges. Thus, a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher education involves changing, and not simply reproducing, L2 teachers and their instructional activities.

Third, a sociocultural perspective informs both the content and the processes of L2 teacher education. It is well established in the teacher cognition literature that teachers typically ground their understanding of

teaching and learning as well as their notions about how to teach in their own instructional histories as learners (Lortie, 1975). Thus, L2 teachers typically enter the profession with largely unarticulated, yet deeply ingrained, notions about what language is, how it is learned, and how it should be taught (see Borg, 2006; Freeman, 2002). Vygotskian sociocultural theory defines such notions as "spontaneous and non-spontaneous concepts" because they are formed during concrete practical activity and are more or less open to conscious inspection (Vygotsky, 1963). Scientific concepts, contrary to their everyday counterparts, "represent the generalizations of the experience of humankind that is fixed in science, understood in the broadest sense of the term to include both natural and social science as well as the humanities" (Karpov, 2003, p. 66). As a consequence, they are systematic, coherent, and generalizable. From an educational perspective, therefore, scientific concepts are extremely valuable because they enable learners to move beyond their everyday experiences and allow them to function appropriately in the range of settings in which they may find themselves. From a sociocultural perspective, the professional development of L2 teachers becomes a process of building on teachers' everyday concepts about language, language learning, and language teaching to enable them to understand the scientific concepts about language, SLA, learning, and L2 teaching that are produced, accepted, and adapted in the profession. Of course, these scientific concepts shift as our profession's understandings of language, SLA, and L2 teaching shift. Just as the dominant conceptualization of language has shifted from structural to functional and the dominant view of SLA from mentalistic to socially situated, so too have the goals, content, and activities of L2 pedagogies. It is not surprising that L2 teachers experience tension as they engage in a process of being simultaneously enculturated into ways of being an L2 teacher and at the same time expected (and in some cases mandated) to reconceptualize and reconstruct those ways of being as they confront new challenges. Such challenges are evident around the globe where national educational policies mandate that L2 teachers embrace more "functional" conceptions of language and teach more "communicatively" in order to meet the linguistic and educational needs of citizens who must function in the global economy (Kim, 2008; Li, 1998). Yet these same teachers, and the students they teach, have emerged out of and continue to function in educational institutions that have historically embraced structural conceptions of language and participated in grammar-oriented approaches to L2 teaching and learning.

This conundrum, of reproduction and enculturation vs. autonomy and originality, rests at the core of L2 teacher education. Yet, as Vygotsky (1963) states, "scientific concepts grow down through spontaneous concepts, and spontaneous concepts grow up through scientific concepts" (p. 116), thus indicating both their dialectical relationship and the process

involved in developing "true concepts" or the basis of expertise in a particular domain. A similar argument has been made in general educational research by Kennedy (1999), who characterizes "expertise" in teaching as emerging out of the ways in which teachers make sense of "expert" knowledge, or knowledge that is prepositional, written down, codified in textbooks, and publicly accepted as a principled way of understanding phenomena within a particular discourse community (*scientific concepts*), and their own "craft" or "experiential" knowledge that emerges through their own lived experiences as learners of teaching (*everyday concepts*). As teachers begin to link this "expert" knowledge to their own "experiential" knowledge, they tend to reframe the way they describe and interpret their lived experience. These new understandings enable them to reorganize their experiential knowledge and this reorganization creates a new lens through which they interpret their understandings of themselves and their classroom practices. Thus, "expertise" has a great deal of experiential knowledge in it, but it is organized around and transformed through "expert" knowledge. And teacher learning is clearly not the straightforward internalization of "expert" knowledge from the outside in. Instead, teachers populate "expert" knowledge with their own intentions, in their own voices, and create instruction that is meaningful for their own objectives (A.F. Ball, 2000). This, others have argued, positions teachers not as passive recipients of theory but as active users and producers of theory in their own right, for their own means, and as appropriate for their own instructional contexts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

Lastly, a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher education requires that teacher educators examine existing mediational tools and spaces while also creating alternative ones through which teachers may externalize their current understandings of concepts and then reconceptualize and recontextualize them and develop alternative ways of engaging in the activities associated with those concepts. Within the research on teacher cognition, this is being carried out and documented in different ways. The first involves the work being supported by the reflective teaching (Lockhart & Richards, 1994; Schon, 1983; 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), action research (Edge, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Wallace, 1998), and teacher research movements (Burns, 1999; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Edge & Richards, 1993; Freeman, 1998). These movements have helped to generate both reflective tools and public and private spaces for teachers to reflect on and inquire into their own experiences as mechanisms for change in classroom practices. While teacher research stems from teachers' own desires to make sense of their classroom experiences, it is defined by ordered ways of gathering, recollecting, and/or recording information, documenting experiences both inside and outside of the classroom, and creating written records of the

insights that emerge. The tools and spaces that are situated in these experiences enable teachers to bring to the surface the spontaneous concepts that shape their consciousness and take up and appropriate the scientific concepts that make up the disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge that constitutes the profession.

Additionally, there is a growing body of research that focuses on how practitioners make sense of the disciplinary knowledge they are exposed to in their professional development programs. Some have examined this through classroom-based research studies that examine how L2 teachers enrolled in professional coursework make sense of and take up the disciplinary knowledge, in particular the acquisition and use of disciplinary knowledge about language (i.e., Bartels, 2005). Such work supports the usefulness of such disciplinary knowledge in shaping teachers' conceptions of language but highlights a general lack of transfer of this knowledge to classroom language teaching. Others have documented the complex ways in which teachers actively link theoretical knowledge to their own experiential knowledge as they reframe the way they describe and interpret their lived experiences (i.e., Sharkey & Johnson, 2003). This work highlights how the new understandings that emerge enable teachers to reorganize their experiential knowledge and this reorganization creates a new lens through which they interpret their understandings of themselves and their classroom practices. It recognizes that teachers' knowledge has a great deal of experiential knowledge in it but it is organized around and transformed through theoretical knowledge.

In conclusion, taking up a sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher education refocuses our orientation toward the professional development of L2 teachers. First and foremost, it shifts the focus of attention onto teachers as learners of L2 teaching. Second, it highlights the socially situated nature of teacher learning and exemplifies the cognitive and social processes that teachers go through as they learn to teach. Third, it exposes the existing mediational means that shape teacher learning and it provides us with a window into how alternative mediational means may have the potential to shape it. Fourth, it shows us how teacher learning not only shapes how teachers think and act but how changes in teachers' ways of thinking and acting have the potential to change students' ways of engaging in activities which can in turn change their ways of learning as well as what they learn. Finally, a sociocultural perspective is not a methodology or an approach to how to "do" L2 teacher education. Instead, it is a theoretical lens, a mindset, or way of conceptualizing teacher learning that informs how L2 teacher educators understand and support the professional development of L2 teachers.

Chapter 3

Teachers as Learners of Teaching

At its core, L2 teacher education is primarily concerned with teachers as learners of teaching. As we saw in Chapter 2, for much of our history the disciplinary knowledge we have drawn on to inform both the content (*what L2 teachers need to know*) and processes (*how this is best learned*) of L2 teacher education has centered on the learning of second languages, rather than on teachers as learners of teaching (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). However, when we turn our attention to how teachers come to know what they know, how certain concepts in teachers' consciousness develop over time, and how their learning processes transform them and the activities of L2 teaching, we put ourselves in a much better position to support teacher learning and development in the broader enterprise of L2 teacher education.

Understanding Teacher Learning from a Sociocultural Perspective

From a sociocultural perspective, teacher cognition originates in and is fundamentally shaped by the specific social activities in which teachers engage. Thus, teachers' knowledge and beliefs are constructed through and by the normative ways of thinking, talking, and acting that have been historically and culturally embedded in the communities of practice in which they participate (as both learners and teachers). This suggests that the normative ways of acting and interacting and the values, assumptions, and attitudes that are embedded in the classrooms where teachers were once students, in the teacher education programs where they receive their professional credentialing, and in the schools where they work, shape the complex ways in which they come to think about themselves, their students, the activities of L2 teaching, and the L2 teaching–learning process.

We can trace teacher learning from a sociocultural perspective by looking at the progressive movement from externally, socially mediated activities to internal mediation controlled by the individual teacher.

Vygotskian sociocultural theory refers to this process as *internalization*. This means the process through which a person's activity is initially mediated by other people or cultural artifacts but later comes to be controlled by him/herself as he or she appropriates and reconstructs resources to regulate his or her own activities. Three types of tools which humans use to mediate their activities are cultural artifacts and activities, concepts, and social relations; relevant examples might be, respectively, textbooks and the instructional activities they engender, metaphors commonly associated with teaching such as "teaching as knowledge transmission," and the differential power relationships between teachers and students. Tools can be both physical and social; for example, textbooks are physical tools but it is their sociality rather than their physicality that matters. In other words, textbooks are used to create certain types of instructional activities (i.e., answering comprehension questions at the end of a reading). Tools can also be symbolic (i.e., teaching as knowledge transmission) but the specific functions of a tool are developed through social activity, so that each of the tools used in a society has been culturally developed over time, each both shaping that particular society and at the same time being shaped by it. An artifact can be regarded as a tool when it is used for a particular purpose; consequently a tool's function is not intrinsic but culturally defined. For example, a teacher's manual developed in conjunction with a textbook series can be thought of as a cultural artifact since its functions have emerged historically and culturally out of the educational publishing industry that has embraced the formal rationality scientific paradigm (Weber, 1964). In other words, in educational circles a teacher's manual functions as a social tool that is designed to maximize the efficiency and productivity of teachers, in essence telling them what to say, when to say it, and what to do, to the exclusion of any consideration of the individual needs of and differences among students (Shannon, 1987). Thus, a novice teacher's activities may be initially regulated by a teacher's manual, but later come under her control as she internalizes certain pedagogical resources (time management, knowledge of students' abilities, pedagogical content knowledge, etc.) that enable her to teach concepts and/or skills in ways that are more appropriate for a particular group of students in a particular instructional context.

Thus, *internalization*, in the Vygotskian sense, is not the straightforward appropriation of concepts, knowledge, or skills from the outside in. According to Leont'ev (1981), "the process of internalization is not the transferral of an external activity to a preexisting internal 'plane of consciousness': it is the process in which the plane is formed" (p. 57). Thus, higher cognitive development is a dialogic process of *transformation* of self and activity rather than simply the replacement of skills (Valsineer & Van der Veer, 2000). This suggests that human agency plays

an important role in determining what is internalized and how the process of internalization shapes new understandings and new ways of engaging in activities. So, for example, the initial over-reliance on a teacher's manual will most certainly shape how a teacher thinks about and engages in instructional activities, yet evidence of internalization will appear in how that teacher reconceptualizes, restructures, and reengages in classroom instruction over time. A more experienced teacher may, in fact, reorder, drop, and/or supplement the activities outlined in a teacher's manual, to better meet the particular needs of her students and/or any institutional constraints (i.e., high-stakes tests) that are present in her instructional context. Over time, the teacher's manual may sit on the shelf, although symbolic remnants of it may remain in the ways the teacher thinks about and engages in the activities of L2 teaching.

We can trace teacher cognitive development by examining how mediation develops, captured by the Vygotskian concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). Defined as the difference between what a person can achieve independently and what he or she can achieve working in collaboration with others or with someone more expert, the ZPD has been described as "a metaphor for observing and understanding how mediational means are appropriated and internalized" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). In fact, the essence of a sociocultural perspective is that engagement in dialogic mediation as a component of goal-directed practical activity leads to and shapes higher-level cognitive development, and since dialogic mediation occurs through language, the nature of language use within the ZPD is critical to shaping opportunities for learning that in turn create the potential for cognitive development.

While the term ZPD has been co-opted by some in the educational community to mean any form of assistance that supports learning (see Kinginger, 2002), Vygotskian sociocultural theory characterizes the ZPD as an arena of potentiality; a metaphoric space where individual cognition originates in the social collective mind and emerges in and through engagement in social activity (see Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). To help tease apart its multidimensional nature, Meira and Lerman (2001) differentiated between *performative*, *interactive*, and *emergent* aspects of the ZPD. The *performative* aspect reflects the most common definition, that is the difference between what an individual can perform on his or her own versus what the individual can perform in collaboration with a more capable peer or expert. From this stance, knowing what an individual can do on his or her own tells us very little about his or her potential to learn something new. However, seeing/hearing how the same individual interacts with someone more capable while accomplishing a task that is beyond his or her abilities creates a window through which we can see that individual's potential for learning and capabilities as they are emerging. Thus, while the *interactive* aspect of the ZPD represents a metaphorical

space where growth can occur through interactions with more capable peers or experts, the gap between what individuals can do alone and what they can do in collaboration with others will invariably differ depending on the type of task being performed and the situation in which it is being performed. And this too will change in the very activity of engagement. Thus, the *emergent* aspect suggests the ZPD is never static or stable, but comes into existence and changes in the activity of dialogic engagement.

From recognizing the ZPD as multidimensional, dynamic, and the site of potential growth, it follows that the kinds of mediational means that are offered to learners must be strategic rather than fixed or random. And this is difficult to do in schools where the mediational means that are offered to teachers tend to be formalized (textbooks), fixed (particular instructional techniques), and routinized (norms of schooling). Wertsch's (1985) notion of *strategic mediation* suggests that the kinds of support that teachers give to learners must be efficient, targeted, and goal-oriented so that learners develop an overall orientation toward the task or concept while at the same time beginning to appropriate an expert's understanding of it. In L2 teacher education, this suggests that teachers not only need to understand the task or concept from the perspective of an expert but they must also understand where the student is—in other words, what it is like not to fully understand the task or concept—and then be skilled at providing strategic mediation that enables students to move toward expertise or automaticity.

Within this socially situated, dynamic process of dialogic engagement and strategic mediation, opportunities for learning are created that have the potential to lead to *concept development*. Of the various kinds of tools (artifacts and activities, concepts, and social relations), Vygotskian sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of concepts in learning. Concepts are not fixed objects but develop dynamically through use, so they are learned over time and formed through the processes of synthesis and analysis, while moving repeatedly between engagement in activity and abstract reasoning.

As was mentioned briefly in Chapter 2, Vygotsky (1963) distinguishes between two types of concepts—everyday and scientific—the content of which shapes our mental activity. Everyday concepts are subdivided into two categories, depending on their accessibility to conscious inspection. Spontaneous concepts are formed during the concrete practical experiences of children as they are socialized into a culture. These are largely invisible to conscious inspection. When someone attempts to bring this type of knowledge into consciousness the result is usually a vague, incoherent, incomplete, and even inaccurate statement of the concept. If you ask a prospective teacher to define cooperative learning, for example, she might say "group work," a description that reflects her experiences as a learner in school. A second type of concept at work in everyday life is

non-spontaneous. These are open to conscious inspection and are by and large based on the directly observable empirical features of an object or action (Kozulin, 1995). Non-spontaneous concepts are usually intentionally taught and consciously acquired and include our understanding of such actions as how to ride a bike or bake a cake by following a recipe. In L2 teacher education contexts, for example, orchestrating a "jigsaw" activity may require the teacher to be able to break an instructional task apart into compatible and manageable sub-tasks and assign them to individuals within a group, but it does not necessarily require an in-depth understanding of the principles of cooperative learning. Thus, everyday concepts, both spontaneous and non-spontaneous, are closely linked to concrete activities in social contexts.

Scientific concepts, contrary to their everyday counterparts (whether spontaneous or non-spontaneous), result from theoretical investigation of a specific domain. When understood within and through everyday concepts, scientific concepts enable learners to move beyond the limitations of their everyday experiences and function appropriately in a wide range of alternative circumstances and contexts. When teachers enter L2 teacher education programs they are typically exposed to the scientific concepts that represent the up-to-date research and theorizing that is generated in their respective discipline(s). Part of their professionalization becomes making connections between the scientific concepts they are exposed to in their L2 teacher education coursework and their everyday concepts about language, language learning, and language teaching. The responsibility of education, according to Vygotskian sociocultural theory, is to present scientific concepts to learners, but to do so in a way that brings these concepts to bear on concrete practical activity, connecting them to the everyday knowledge and activities of learners. Robbins (2003) points out that a key to concept development is the extent to which instruction interrelates everyday and scientific concepts, because it is this relationship that "lies at the heart of internalization," that is, the transformation of the social into the psychological (p. 83).

Kozulin (2003) outlines different types of information typically conveyed in educational settings as psychological tools (true concepts), technical skills, and content. Psychological tools are the most powerful of the three because they guide cognitive activity across many situations, while content is typically specific to a discipline or knowledge arena, and technical skills are typically applied only in the activity in which they were learned. Thus, when concepts and content are presented together, the concepts may be understood by learners to be content, and thus they may not be internalized as cognitive tools. Returning to the "group work" example mentioned above, if the concept of cooperative learning is presented to teachers alongside a set of procedures for operationalizing it in the classroom, teachers may assume that "group work" is cooperative

learning and thus may not fully internalize the concept. Because psychological tools, or concepts, are much more powerful than content and technical skills, noting the difference between them and focusing on concepts is critical. Furthermore, psychological tools must be learned deliberately and systematically for them to be generalizable across activities.

On the other hand, Karpov (2003) argues "scientific concepts play such a mediational role only if they are supported by students' mastery of relevant procedures" (p. 68). Thus learners need to be given explicit descriptions of the content of the concept and also of how to use it. He emphasizes that a scientific concept is not fixed knowledge but can be used flexibly by the learner. Evidence of the ability to use a concept is seen in its application in various situations and in the ability to articulate the reasons for doing so; in other words, *thinking in concepts*. He also argues that to teach concepts successfully the essential elements must be distilled, and then learners must be presented with these elements through the use of symbols. Symbols are abstract tools; that is, they give distance from the immediate context, and enable learners to focus on the essential elements. Once the symbols are internalized, they become a mental model and the concept becomes a tool which can be used to mediate further problem solving across activities and contexts.

Another form of mediation, in addition to tools, is human mediation. Kozulin (2003) suggests that studies of human mediation (i.e., social relations), especially that between teachers or parents and children, reveal a variety of activities by which others mediate learning. Rogoff (1995) argues that there are three general forms of human mediation: *apprenticeship*, wherein community models are provided to a novice; *guided participation*, which occurs through joint activity by expert and novice; and *appropriation*, where the novice uses the tool without social mediation. Within these forms of human mediation, strategic mediation, more commonly referred to as *scaffolding*, is critical to moving learners from and between everyday and scientific concepts. However, in many educational circles, scaffolding is most often regarded as a way of supporting learners as they are learning. However, not every kind of assistance offered by a teacher, a textbook, or a peer functions as true scaffolding. In Vygotskian sociocultural theory, scaffolding is conceptualized as a psychological tool, one that reduces the cognitive load required to perform a particular task. Moreover, the nature of that scaffolding must have the goal of cognitive development, otherwise it remains as *assisted performance*. And while part of the cognitive load is taken over by someone else, the learner is kept in the center of the task, and it is only with this cognitive assistance that he or she can fully engage in it. Through a process of dialogic engagement that shifts and changes as the learner's capacities shift and change, his or her potentiality is

supported. It is important to note, however, that scaffolding within the ZPD can only lead to the development of what is already ripening, whereas through assisted performance you can get almost anyone through any kind of task if you give the right kind of assistance, including direct assistance: for example, "do this, do that," etc. But if the capacity is not ripening, then there is not much possibility of development. This is why assistance has to be contingent on what a learner can do with cognitive assistance that is both given and withdrawn at the appropriate points. It is the actual engagement in the task (however partial that may be) that allows the learner to appropriate and internalize the cognitive functioning that will eventually lead to internalization or the ability to complete the task autonomously and automatically.

Finally, it is important to point out that the cognitive assistance that emerges through dialogic mediation within the ZPD is not necessarily contingent on the presence of a more capable peer or expert. In fact, studies of peer interaction from a sociocultural perspective, particularly in L2 instructional contexts, have found that L2 learners can scaffold one another or mutually construct assistance in ways that are similar to how experts scaffold the performance of novices. Within the context of L2 learners learning French, Donato (1994) was able to demonstrate that the dialogic mediation between peers engaged in open-ended communicative tasks enabled them not only to collectively complete a task that they were unable to complete individually, but also to co-construct linguistic knowledge about the language that was later used in independent performance. Likewise, Ohta (2001) demonstrated that L2 learners of Japanese were able to provide developmentally appropriate assistance to one another, in a sense "creating a greater expertise for the group than of any of the individuals involved" (p. 76). Wells (1996) argues that

> in tackling a difficult task as a group, although no member has expertise beyond his or her peers, the group as a whole, by working at the problem together, is able to construct a solution that none could have achieved alone.
>
> (p. 10)

Thus, differences in peers' abilities are not fixed but fluid, dynamic, and contingent on how and what is being accomplished in and through the group's activities. This extension of the scaffolding framework to include peer interaction is especially important in L2 teacher education where inquiry-based approaches to professional development (see Chapter 7) are grounded in sustained dialogic mediation among teachers as they collectively struggle through issues that are directly relevant to their professional lives.

"Seeing" Teacher Learning

To see teacher learning from a sociocultural perspective, three recently published teacher-authored narratives are analyzed below. In the first, Boshell (2002) describes how seeking advice from fellow teachers enables him to externalize his reasoning about teaching those he referred to as his "quiet" children. Through a process of engaging in sustained dialogic mediation with his fellow teachers, Boshell eventually comes to understand and teach these children in fundamentally different ways. By exposing us to how he appropriates and internalizes certain mediational means within the ZPD, we are not only able to see his potential for learning but we are also able to see his nascent capabilities to teach his "quiet" children. In the second, Sharkey (2003) narrates how *thinking in concepts* emerges out of using the discourse of theory to rethink, reorganize, and rename her past, present, and future L2 teaching experiences. For Sharkey, two related scientific concepts that are embedded in the discourse of theory become the mental models she is able to use to contend with other dilemmas that arise in her teaching. Her narrative illustrates how her emerging ability to think in concepts enables her to internalize alternative ways of thinking about and participating in the social practices associated with L2 teaching. And finally, Herndon (2002) traces how her own development as a teacher of L2 literature eventually alters the nature of the activities she orchestrates in her classroom and this, in turn, influences both what and how her students learn to read literature. The cultural artifacts (both physical and symbolic) that mediate her development take various forms, yet each supports the process of internalization by enabling her to move from externally, socially mediated activities to self-regulation or internal control over theoretically and pedagogically sound instructional practices.

Teacher-Authored Accounts of Professional Development

Each of the published narratives reviewed below is based on teacher-authored accounts of their own professional development. In each, a teacher engages in systematic self-exploration of his or her own conceptualizations of L2 teaching through his or her own stories and language. Their narratives capture the complexities of their practice, trace their professional development over time, and reveal the ways in which they make sense of and reconfigure their work. Such narrative inquiry, it is argued, enables teachers not only to make sense of their learning experiences but also to make significant and worthwhile changes within themselves and their teaching practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Golombek, 2002).

Additionally, these teacher-authored accounts embrace a narrative epistemology (Bruner, 1996) and rely on Sarbin's (1986) argument that

narratives are part of the constructive process in which humans interpret and reinterpret their experiences according to narrative structures. This stance recognizes that narratives, by their very nature, are not meant to describe phenomena objectively. Rather, they are intended to expose how people's understandings of phenomena are infused with interpretation. Thus, narratives represent a socially mediated view of human experience. They are holistic and cannot be reduced to isolated facts without losing the essence of what is being conveyed.

Moreover, each teacher-authored account is an example of Polkinghorne's (1988) *narrative of explanation*; that is, they are retrospectively interpretative since they aim to reconstruct and reconfigure past events through the retelling of them. They tend to be structured chronologically, revolving around teachers' interpretations of a series of events. Through the reconstruction of these events, these teachers reconcile what is known with that which is hidden, selectively infuse those events with interpretation, and actively seek to bring meaning to their experiences.

Mediational Means in the Zone of Proximal Development

As an example of how mediational means are appropriated and internalized in the ZPD, consider evidence from Boshell (2002; see also Golombek & Johnson, 2004),[1] a fifth grade teacher in a bilingual English–Spanish elementary school in Spain, whose narrative inquiry chronicles how he sought external mediation with fellow teachers to explore why some students remained silent in his class. Within the ZPD that he and his fellow teachers co-constructed, Boshell was able to express or externalize his concerns about and interactions with his quiet students in a non-evaluative manner using the principles of Cooperative Development (Edge, 1992; see also Chapter 7).

In excerpt 1, Boshell's colleague, Henny, functions as a temporary other, or sounding board, as he attempts to reconcile how his classroom behaviors may be affecting his students' interaction patterns.

> **Excerpt 1: A Colleague as Temporary Other**
> Two of these techniques seemed important in terms of my own development at this initial stage: Reflecting and Focusing (Edge, 1992a, pp. 28–44). Reflecting describes the process whereby the Understander (sic, the person who listens to the speaker) helps the

1 Extracts reprinted with permission from Cambridge University Press. Boshell, M. (2002). What I learnt from giving quiet children space. In K.E. Johnson & P.R. Golombek (Eds.) *Teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development* (pp. 180-194). New York: Cambridge University Press.

speaker to see his or her ideas clearly. This is done when the Understander acts as a mirror in order to reflect the speaker's own ideas. Henny, as the Understander, attempted to do this by paraphrasing what I was saying. At first, though, she seemed unable to accurately capture how I felt about my effect on my quiet children. This was because I was not very sure myself. In any case, her inaccurate reflections of what I was trying to say forced me to think again and express myself further. Indeed, as I became clearer, the reflections seemed more accurate. Here is an extract from our conversation:

Mike: Yeah, I'm serious in the classroom, and that's why they might participate in a limited way. I never smile, and I reckon that could make them a bit wary of me.

Henny: *Let me see. You're saying that it's because you're serious that they don't participate in any great detail.*

Mike: *Hang on, perhaps it's not because I'm serious*. After all, you can be serious, but still organise them into pairs whereby they are more likely to participate in greater depth, just that you do this in a serious way! No, *I think it's because I'm a dominant type of teacher*.

Henny: So you're saying that despite being a serious teacher, that's not important. You could provide them with pair work, just that you would go about organising this in a serious way. It's you being serious that puts them off.

Mike: Yeah, that's right. Being in pairs would probably make them feel more comfortable, and more likely to participate. No, it's definitely me being dominant that puts them off. I try to control absolutely everything in class, and what's more I rarely allow them to do pair work.

Henny: So it's your dominance that puts them off from contributing more.

Mike: Yeah I think it must be.

(Boshell, 2002, pp. 183–184)

Clearly, it is Henny's restatements and questions that push Mike to come to terms with an aspect of himself as a teacher that may, he believes, be inhibiting student participation. As he notes in his narrative, it is her "inaccurate reflections" that compel him to examine the issue more deeply: "I think it's because I'm a dominant type of teacher."

In excerpt 2, Boshell attempts to understand the reasons behind his dominating behaviors by having another dialogue with his fellow teacher, Henny:

Excerpt 2

At this point, I was not sure why I felt the need to control the quiet children's language and the quiet children themselves. I explained to my colleague, however, that I did know that I was under immense pressure at school to ensure that the children understood the content I taught. This comment led Henny to use another Cooperative Development technique, Thematising. Edge (1992a, p. 46) defines Thematising as suggesting that there could be a connection or a "thematic relationship" between two statements that the speaker has made. My colleague asked me whether there was any connection between denying the quiet children space and feeling pressure from parents. This made me realise that perhaps there was a connection between the two. I explained to my colleague that, because I was responsible for ensuring that the children did understand the content, I felt I needed to control the language and activities within the classroom. My colleague then reflected this back to me: "Am I right in saying that you think that, because you'll be held responsible if the children don't understand, that is why you attempt to control the language and activities?"

This helped me see that if they did not understand a particular topic, I would be blamed. Out of this came the idea of fear. My colleague asked me whether I wanted to focus on fear in more depth. This I did, commenting that I was afraid to give the quiet children control over their topic-related language and tasks. I felt that if I did, they might not understand the content. This explained why I tended to either interrupt and finish off what they were saying or summarise what they had said. Through using both strategies, I felt that I could make the quiet children's contributions clearer, so that they themselves—on hearing my explanation—would better understand the content.

(Boshell, 2002, p. 188)

From Boshell's vantage point, we hear how his fellow teacher continues to mediate his learning, but instead of simply parroting back she now attempts to help him make connections between the ideas that are emerging. Boshell explains that it is through this dialogic mediation that he comes to understand that by interrupting and summarizing his students' contributions he is actually deterring them from participating; yet without their participation he is unable to discern if they understand the content of his lessons, an important institutional goal of his instructional setting.

Once Boshell recognizes this contradiction, he begins to seek alternative ways of interacting with his students. After teaching a lesson on space, he created an activity that required the children to construct a space mobile

of the sun and planets. He planned not to intervene but to let the students create the mobile as they saw fit. Despite his emerging understanding of this instructional problem and a plan to rectify it, he felt that the space mobile activity was unsuccessful. Again, he describes seeking out his colleague in order to help him understand why his plan did not meet his expectations:

> **Excerpt 3**
> I explained that I had always denied the quiet children space, but now that I had provided them with an activity for which they were solely responsible, they had not known how to use their space. Henny drew on Thematising to help me see for myself how my concerns were connected: "So you're saying that you're frustrated as you've always denied your quiet children space, and yet when you give it to them, they can't do anything with it. Could there be a link or a connection in here somewhere?"
>
> Hearing this made me realise that the reason the quiet children have not been able to use this space may have been exactly because they had never had it before. They had been taken from a situation in which they had hardly any space to one in which they were expected to plan and contribute orally as much as they wished. The fact that they had not been able to take advantage of this situation seems to support what Stevick (1980, p. 20) suggests about space: "If there is too little, the student will feel stifled. If there is too much, the student will feel that the teacher has abandoned him."
>
> (Boshell, 2002, p. 191)

After watching a videotape of this session, Boshell describes his emerging understanding of his changing role as a teacher if he is to succeed with these children.

> **Excerpt 4**
> At the beginning of the activity, I didn't want to be too involved; however, after a while, I realised that I had nothing to fear by relinquishing some control. I noticed that the quiet children did know the topic and were more likely to participate if they had some space in which to do so. Furthermore, I realised that *I had a role to play in creating this space, by providing the structure for, or giving some shape to, the activity itself.*
>
> (Boshell, 2002, p. 192)

The sustained dialogic mediation between Boshell and his fellow teachers enabled him to externalize his understandings of a very specific classroom dilemma and over time he was able to reconceptualize and

restructure the modes of engagement he used with his students. Eventually, at least in his mind, Boshell is able to gain greater control over a set of instructional practices that are better aligned with his emerging conceptualization of himself as a less dominant yet instructionally supportive teacher. Boshell's narrative inquiry is a striking example of how peer interaction, albeit of a very particular type (Cooperative Development; see Edge, 1992), can create mediational means within the ZPD that have the potential to advance cognitive development.

Disciplinary Knowledge and Concept Development

An example of how interconnecting everyday and scientific concepts can mediate teacher learning comes from a collection of "dialogues" between *TESOL Quarterly* readers (classroom teachers) and *TESOL Quarterly* authors (researchers) of previously published *TESOL Quarterly* articles that focus on issues of language, culture, and power (see Sharkey & Johnson, 2003). These dialogues highlight the complex ways in which teachers actively link theoretical knowledge (scientific concepts) to their own experiential knowledge (everyday concepts) as they reframe the way they describe and interpret their experiences.

In responding to Norton's (1995) article entitled "Social identity, investment, and language learning," Sharkey (2003)[2] narrates her emerging understanding of the theoretical constructs of *subjectivity* and *subject positioning* embedded in the article as situated in and understood through her experiences as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. In the following excerpts taken from Sharkey's response, these theoretical constructs enable her to *think in concepts*, and ultimately to think about L2 teaching and learning differently.

In excerpt 5, Sharkey opens her narrative with a description of the *subject positioning* of a 15-year-old immigrant student, Ivan, who is being asked to participate in the annual school-wide Christmas production.

> **Excerpt 5: "Now Dash Away, Dash Away, Dash Away All!"**
> Ivan, a fifteen-year-old immigrant from the southeast Russian republic of Khabarovsk, is a sophomore in a U.S. public high school. He has been in the United States for three years. A handsome young man, with poise beyond his years, he does construction work with his father after school and on weekends. His passion for aeronautics is evidenced by his membership in the civil air patrol and the ease with

2 Extracts reprinted with permission from TESOL. Sharkey, J. & Johnson, K.E. (Eds.) (2003). *TESOL Quarterly dialogues: Rethinking issues of language, culture, and power*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

which he talks about the capabilities and specifications of the latest Russian fighter jets. Ivan is enrolled in all mainstream classes at the high school, but frequently comes to the ESL room to get extra help with his assignments and hang out with his friends, bilingual students from Russia, Ukraine, Rwanda, and Indonesia.

December in the ESL room means a heavy dose of U.S. cultural literacy through a multitude of Christmas activities: making ornaments, decorating the classroom tree, and participating in the ESL students' Christmas production. This year, each student is given a 16 × 20 inch page from a coloring book version of the Clement Clarke Moore poem, "A Visit from St. Nicolas" popularly known as "'Twas the Night Before Christmas." Each student is given a picture to color and must memorize the line of verse that accompanies it. The final production will be a row of ESL students (ages fourteen to nineteen) holding up their colored pages and saying their lines at the appropriate time.

Ivan is given a picture of Santa leading his reindeer and shouting, "Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!" He sees this task as childish but he can't explicitly say this to his teachers. Instead, he demonstrates his resistance by coloring the reindeer with hot pink heads, fluorescent yellow collars, and bright purple antlers, a Las Vegas nightclub interpretation of Santa's flight crew. Tom, the social studies ESL teacher, shakes his head upon seeing Ivan's work and says, "I don't know, Ivan. I think you'll have to re-do that." Later, Susan, the head ESL teacher, tells me that Ivan is a nice guy but a poor student. She voices her concern over what she perceives as his refusal to improve his English. She interprets his reindeer artistry as another example of his negative attitude.

(Sharkey, 2003, p. 56)

In excerpt 6, Sharkey summarizes her understanding of Bonny Norton's article by highlighting how the theoretical constructs of *subjectivity* and *subject positioning* challenge traditional notions of second language acquisition.

Excerpt 6: Theoretical Constructs as Mediational Means

In her thought-provoking article, Bonny challenges prevailing theories of second language acquisition, particularly in how those theories have ignored the social identity of the learner and the role of power in social interactions between native and non-native speakers. She advocates replacing the notion of motivation, which tends to overemphasize learners as fixed, ahistorical, decontextualized entities, with the notion of investment, which better "capture[s] the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their

sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it" (p. 9). Critical social theory and feminist poststructuralism frame Bonny's study, and thus, key tenets of these theories are worth mentioning. Critical social theory posits that power is distributed unequally and researchers who hold this view seek to uncover the structures and practices that maintain the asymmetrical distribution of power and suggest alternatives. The poststructuralist view of identity, or subjectivity, is that it is multiple, a site of contestation, and changing over time. These concepts come alive in Bonny's longitudinal study of the language learning experiences of a small group of immigrant women in Canada. In her article, Bonny analyzes the experiences of Martina, from Czechoslovakia, and Eva, from Poland, and demonstrates how these women struggle against their marginalized positions as nonnative speakers of English, and claim the right to speak, drawing strength from their social identities as mothers and/or professionals.

(Sharkey, 2003, p. 56)

In excerpt 7, Sharkey returns to her portrait of Ivan and uses the theoretical constructs of *subjectivity* and *social positioning* to make sense of not only Ivan's experiences but also the experiences she has created or hopes to create in her own L2 teaching.

Excerpt 7: Subjectivity and Social Positioning in the ESL Classroom

During the 1998–99 school year, I worked as volunteer tutor in the ESL room at a US public high school. I got to know students like Ivan over months of working with them, helping them with a variety of assignments, from writing essays for English class and completing college applications to finishing up science lab reports and checking grammar exercises in their ESL textbooks. Bonny's article had a tremendous influence on my experience at the high school. The concept of subjectivity and subject positions led to questions like "Who are students allowed to be in this classroom? in this curriculum?" and "How might this positioning of students affect their language learning?" I asked these questions as a teacher, and I thought about these questions in order to understand how teaching positions students.

Let's go back to Ivan for a minute. Outside of the high school he is a young man planning for his future as a jet pilot, actively involved in community service and contributing to the financial status of his family. Standing up in front of 2000 fellow high school students, with a page from a coloring book, and shouting out "dash away, dash away, dash away all!" contradicts his image of himself. It is not an image he wants to project to the high school community. He rejects the subject position of child that this student production offers him

> and subverts his participation by coloring the reindeer a combination of shocking hues. He wins. His teachers decide his coloring is not appropriate and Ivan won't be participating in the activity. He loses, too, for now his teachers use this behavior to label him an unmotivated English language learner. Again, I think about my own teaching: what subject positions are available to students in my classroom? This is not a question I asked myself before reading Bonny's article. The combination of reading Bonny's article and trying to bring issues of identity into my teaching, helped me ask different kinds of questions about language learners and language learning.
>
> (Sharkey, 2003, pp. 56–57)

Sharkey comes to understand the theoretical constructs embedded in Norton's article not as a set of abstract principles but as coming alive in how she makes sense of *subjectivity* and *social positioning* in terms of this immigrant student, this ESL classroom, and her own L2 teaching. And she uses the discourse of theory (scientific concepts) to rethink, reorganize, and rename her experiences. This renaming process ultimately leads to changes in the way she comes to think about her instructional practices. Thus, the theoretical constructs articulated in Norton's article function as psychological tools (scientific concepts) that mediate her thinking in ways that lead to new ways of thinking about L2 teaching and learning.

Transformation of Activity: Teacher Learning—Student Learning

Tracing teacher learning, or the processes of internalization and ultimately transformation, provides insight into how teacher learning can work to alter the nature of activities in the classroom that, in turn, can influence what and how students learn (Johnson, 2007).[3] Herndon (2002)[4] narrates the experience of creating and co-teaching a literature class for 25 immigrant students in the New York City public schools. The goals of the class were to develop overall reading fluency, expose the students to a variety of literacy texts, and to let them experience "literature as literature" (p. 36) rather than as a vehicle for learning English or about other subjects.

3 Reprinted with permission from Routledge. Johnson, K.E. (2007). Tracing teacher and student learning in teacher-authored narratives. *Teacher Development*, 11 (2), 1–14.

4 Extracts reprinted with permission from Cambridge University Press. Herndon, L.D. (2002). Putting theory into practice: Letting my students learn to read. In K.E. Johnson & P.R. Golombek (Eds.) *Teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development* (pp. 35–51). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Herndon begins her narrative by exposing a gap between her cognition and emotions. In excerpt 8, she establishes herself as a competent teacher, experienced, confident, respected by her peers. Yet something in her teaching "didn't feel right." In effect, she describes the emotional dissonance she feels as a teacher of literature.

Excerpt 8: A Gap between Cognition and Emotions

I had been teaching English to mainstream and ESL students in private and public schools for several years. Although I was well practiced as a teacher of writing, my real love was reading, and my students and colleagues generally appreciated my skills as a literature teacher. I had learned how to choose literary works that the students enjoyed, how to craft study guides that delved into the key themes of a text, and how to lead students in provocative class discussions. I was an effective teacher, no doubt, but somehow my teaching didn't feel right to me.

(Herndon, 2002, p. 35)

In excerpt 9, Herndon explains the root cause of this emotional dissonance: while embracing the notion that students must have "ownership" over their reading and writing processes, in practice she typically maintains control over which ideas are expressed and whose voice is heard, and admits that the texts "belonged" to her more than to her students. This contradiction, between her stated beliefs and her instructional practices, creates an expressed need to "shift the balance" between what she does and what her students do in the classroom. This contradiction drove her to use this new teaching position to restructure her instructional practices to be more in line with her stated philosophical and theoretical beliefs about the teaching of literature.

Excerpt 9: Contradiction between Beliefs and Practices

My training had emphasized the importance of allowing students ownership over the reading and writing process, a philosophical orientation that I embraced in theory but failed to follow fully in practice. Perhaps my love of literature was part of the problem. As I prepared a lesson plan, my excitement about a reading would sweep over me and thoughts would begin to race through my head. In the classroom, my ideas too often predominated, and my voice was too often the most assured in the room. Although students generally enjoyed and benefited from my classes, in the end, the literature we studied belonged more to me than it did to them. My new teaching position provided me with a chance to shift the balance. But how?

(Herndon, 2002, p. 35)

Excerpts 10, 11, and 12 highlight the mediational means that Herndon sought out and relied on to restructure her literature instruction. Throughout the narrative, but most evidently in excerpt 10, she mentions a close colleague, the one with whom she was co-teaching this new course, and how she was able to externalize her thinking with her like-minded colleague. This colleague, while remaining in the background of the narrative, helped to mediate her learning and enabled her to articulate her underlying rationale for creating ways for students to co-construct meaning by sharing their personal understandings of the texts they read.

> **Excerpt 10: Externalizing Understandings with a "Temporary Other"**
> A close colleague and I were charged with designing and teaching this course. We would draw upon our backgrounds in whole language methodologies and student-centered curriculum as we developed and implemented a semester-long, thematically based reading and writing course. . . . We hoped to lead students toward more complex understandings of their own and one another's viewpoints, and of their places in the larger world.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, p. 36)

Yet it was more than simply talking through her ideas with this colleague that Herndon describes as pushing her own learning and thus the restructuring of her instructional practices. She and her colleague also appealed to theories about reading and the instructional configurations they support in order to enable their students to derive meaning from the texts they read. In excerpt 11, Herndon appropriates the ideas of "many reading theorists" who argue for the use of the instructional technique "story maps" to help students develop a basic understanding of the structure of unfamiliar texts.

> **Excerpt 11: Appropriating Theories**
> Throughout the reading unit, we operated on the assumption that students' understandings would evolve as a result of several types of interactions with each story. An important part of the process was the use of story maps: graphic organizers that allow students to represent visually the meanings they derive from a text (see Hanf, 1971; Hyerle, 1996). Many reading theorists (Barnett, 1989; Grabe, 1991; Hudson, 1988; Mikulecky, 1984) have noted the effects of formal discourse structures on reading comprehension, as well as the importance of providing students with at least a basic orientation toward unfamiliar texts. In our short story unit, mapping proved to be an effective means of addressing these concerns.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, p. 40)

Yet in Herndon's narrative we see that she does not simply appropriate the theories of reading researchers, but she populates those theories with her own interpretations and intentions for her students. In excerpt 12, she embraces Eskey and Grabe's notion of two levels of interaction that occur during the reading process but then goes on to propose a third level, that of "the social interactions of different readers working together" to make sense of what they read.

Excerpt 12: Populating Theories

> Eskey and Grabe (1988) have described reading as entailing two levels of interaction: the interaction between the reader and the text, and the simultaneous interaction of various processing strategies within the reader. In our classrooms, we wished to add to this conception at least one other level: the social interactions of different readers as they worked together to make sense out of what they had read. While respecting the varying interpretations of individual readers, we attempted to structure group tasks that would encourage students to share their linguistic and cultural knowledge with each other as they engaged in the acts of reading, and re-reading and deriving meaning from the texts.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, p. 41)

Herndon's explanation, in excerpt 13, for using story maps and other group tasks enables her to align her conceptualization of student ownership with her instructional practices. And these changes in her instructional practices require that she engage differently in the activities of teaching literature. She could no longer "jump in" or "correct" her students but needed to give them "space" to work through their own interpretations.

Excerpt 13: Changing Modes of Engagement

> Maintaining such a stance toward the reading process required great discipline on my part. I often wanted to jump in and "correct" students' initial misinterpretations but soon saw how much more effective it was to let students work out as much as possible for themselves. Although they tended at first to look to me for answers when they disagreed with each other, students soon accepted their roles as co-teachers and called on me only when they were truly unable to work out an answer among themselves. . . . By encouraging students to work together, I was able to give them the space they needed to work out their own interpretations, while feeling confident that I had not left them completely "alone" with the text.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, p. 41)

Again, we see in excerpt 14 that Herndon's use of book groups, an alternative instructional configuration, requires her to participate in new modes of engagement. She recalls no longer being the "primary owner" of the text; she has taken on the role of "mentor and guide" which in turn allows "students to become expert advisors" and "establish a sense of ownership" over the texts they read. Over time, the implementation of these alternative instructional practices, along with her new modes of engagement, significantly altered the patterns of interaction in the class.

Excerpt 14: New Modes of Engagement

> Book groups have come to form the heart of my teaching, and of my students' learning each semester. . . . With several different novels being read simultaneously in each of my classes, I can no longer be the primary owner of each text. As I circulate from group to group, helping students to address the issues they bring to my attention, I become a mentor and guide rather than a final authority. The use of book groups encourages—in fact, requires—me to take this role, thereby allowing my students to become expert advisors to one another as they establish their own sense of ownership over a wide variety of literary texts.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, p. 48)

We see evidence of her development later in her narrative when she recalls, in excerpt 15, occasions when she implemented these new instructional practices in both poetry and novel units as well as in social studies and other literature classes. These descriptions suggest she has internalized these new modes of engagement and is able to recontextualize them in other instructional contexts.

Excerpt 15: Recontextualization

> In subsequent classes, I have used similar approaches to the ones outlined in this chapter, adapting and refining them in relation to the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the students. The content-free guidelines developed for the short story unit have inspired similar sets of guidelines for full-class poetry and novel units. Student-generated questions now form the basis of almost all of my class discussions—about social studies content as well as literature—and I am continually amazed as I watch students in each new class establish their own unique methods of negotiating the discussion process among themselves.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, p. 48)

Herndon's narrative concludes with descriptions of her own transformation as a teacher. Her willingness and ability to "step into the

sidelines" and "allow my students and their learning to take center stage" are evidence of her development. She goes on to describe her teaching as more "satisfying" for both her and her students, suggesting she has resolved her own sense of emotional dissonance.

Excerpt 16: Transformation

My own growth as a teacher of reading, as I learned to step into the sidelines, allowing my students and their learning to take center stage, was as significant as my students' growth as readers over the course of the semester. The size and heterogeneity of my classes, although challenging at times, ultimately helped me to make this shift. Faced with twenty-five students at such varying levels of linguistic proficiency, I had no choice but to abandon the teacher-centered methods that had worked well enough in my leveled ESL classes in the past. I was compelled to relinquish my old approach for a new one—one which would prove, over time, to be much more satisfying to me and my students.

(Herndon, 2002, p. 48)

Just as we see evidence of this teacher's learning in her narrative, we also see evidence of her perceptions of the nature of her students' learning. In excerpt 17, she describes the intense engagement of her students in a discussion of the novel *Down These Mean Streets* and a soft-spoken student's "astute observation" about the father–son relationship in the story. This new mode of engagement, expressing one's personal understanding of the meaning of a text, has a profound impact on the nature and intensity of the group discussion, one that she doubts she would have been able to provoke on her own.

Excerpt 17: New Modes of Engagement—Students

One of the liveliest discussions was about "Alien Turf," an excerpt from Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets*. Twenty-one of twenty-six students participated verbally, many of them connecting personally to the issues of racial prejudice and urban violence that are central to the story. Desmond, an intense but quiet boy who had been listening attentively but silently throughout the forty-five-minute discussion, spoke up:

> *Everybody talking about gangs and violence, and I see that, too. But in my mind that's not what the story's about. When I was reading, I keep thinking what Piri really want is love from his father. Like when he was fighting and he was thinking what would his father say. Then at the end he knew his father loved him. When he say he'll bring the rollerskates, it's like he's saying that he really love his son.*

> Had I planned and led this discussion, I might or might not have pointed out the father–son relationship that is at the heart of the story. If I had, however, my introduction of this theme would not have carried nearly the same weight as Desmond's contribution did, for him personally as well as the rest of the class . . . there was a feeling in the classroom that the conversation had progressed to a different level as a result of his astute observation.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, pp. 42–43)

In excerpt 18, Herndon goes on to describe the ways in which her students have come to internalize these new ways of engaging with the texts they read. Question posing and journal writing has enabled them to "become skilled at composing thoughtful questions about deeper meanings." She indicates that her students have actually begun to internalize these modes of engagement; that is, they have fundamentally altered the way they "consciously or subconsciously" engage with texts.

> **Excerpt 18: Internalizing New Ways of Engaging with Texts**
> The processes of question posing and journal writing were repeated in the novel unit as well. By the time, most students had become skilled at composing thoughtful questions about deeper meanings of what they had read. I sensed, moreover, that they had internalized this strategy as part of the reading process. At the start of the short story unit, students sometimes took an entire period to come up with eight questions; during the novel unit, most groups were able to compose their questions much more quickly, suggesting that prior to consulting with their classmates, students had already begun to formulate interpretive questions, consciously or subconsciously, on their own.
>
> (Herndon, 2002, pp. 45–46)

In excerpt 19, we see evidence that these new modes of engagement have actually enabled one student to reconceptualize how she thinks about herself as a reader of English. The student's journal entry reflects her new-found confidence as a reader of English, and Herndon's assessment of her final essay as "a highly original analysis" suggests that she has begun to engage with texts in meaningful and emotionally satisfying ways.

> **Excerpt 19: Reconceptualizing Reading in English**
> Although group interactions play an important role in my students' literary experiences, perhaps most significant are the opportunities provided for students to derive intellectual satisfaction and personal meanings from the stories they read. I was particularly impressed by

the opening paragraph of one student's final response to Rudolfo Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima:

> *This is the first big book I ever read in English. At first, I thought it is too long and hard for me, but after some time I became to really like the story. The people are Mexican like me, and some parts of the story were in Spanish. Sometimes I was confuse about what happen, but my group always help me to understand. I felt so good after I finish it, that I can read a book of 262 pages!*

In her final essay, she offered a highly original analysis of the effects of World War II on each of the characters' lives. These connections were in no way explicit in the novel, and some of Maria's more advanced classmates struggled to meet the challenge. Buoyed by a sense of intellectual investment, personal connection, and the support of her classmates, however, Maria was able to construct her own meaning from a demanding literary text.

(Herndon, 2002, pp. 48–49)

As evidenced in Herndon's narrative, the new modes of engagement that she introduces into her classroom lead to, at least in her estimation, students' more personal and more meaningful engagement with texts. In her narrative, her students have begun to internalize new ways of engaging with texts, and at least one student has reconceptualized the way she thinks about reading in English.

Conclusion

In each of these teacher-authored accounts we see how various tools (cultural artifacts and activities, scientific concepts, and social relations) mediate teacher learning. These tools worked to create a temporary "other" which supported the transformative process and enabled each teacher to move from external social activity to internal control over their cognitive and emotional states. Moreover, their development was influenced by the intersections of scientific and everyday concepts. Such intersections represented the places where scientific concepts provide both a discourse through which to name experiences and a basis upon which teachers are able to ground their internal rationale for alternative ways of understanding themselves and the activities of teaching. Yet, even though these teachers used scientific concepts to understand and name their practice, they still had to work through the transformative process in personally meaningful ways in order to change the nature of their instructional activities. Thus, as Lantolf (2000) argues, "even in those cases in which experts and novices do come together, as in a teaching

situation, novices do not merely copy experts' capabilities; rather they transform what the experts offer them as they appropriate it" (p. 17).

Ultimately, a sociocultural perspective enables us to see important aspects of the cognitive processes at work in teacher learning. It enables us to trace how teachers come to know, how different concepts and functions in teachers' consciousness develop, and how this internal activity transforms teachers' understandings of themselves as teachers, of their students, and of the activities of teaching. It enables us to see how various tools work to create a mediational space in which teachers can externalize their current understandings and then reconceptualize and recontextualize their understandings and develop alternative ways of engaging in the activities associated with L2 teaching.

Chapter 4

Language as Social Practice

If someone professes to be a language teacher, he or she could be expected to possess some specialized knowledge about the language. However, what constitutes knowledge about language has been characterized, both historically and institutionally, in a number of distinct and often disconnected ways in L2 teacher education. For much of our professional history, the public discourse surrounding L2 teachers has operated under certain assumptions about the supremacy of the native speaker; that is, *if you can speak the language, you can teach it*. Thus, in part, knowledge about language has, at least in the public discourse, been defined as "native speaker-ness."

At the same time, however, in order to raise the professional stature and legitimacy of the L2 teaching profession, the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education has drawn heavily from the disciplinary knowledge in linguistics and SLA to define what it is that L2 teachers need to know about language and second language learning (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Yet how knowledge about language is presented to teachers in their teacher education programs or how it is instantiated in their instructional materials is contingent on how language is defined and how SLA is understood.

Defining Knowledge about Language

Historically, the definition of language that has dominated the fields of theoretical linguistics and SLA finds its roots in the Saussurian–Bloomfieldian science of semiology (Saussure, 1959; see also Lantolf, 2006). Also taken up by Chomskian linguistics, the study of language proper was intentionally separated from its use and its users in order to extract language, as an objective science, from what Saussure (1959) referred to as the everyday world of messy speech. According to Agar (1994), culture was ignored, "making language into a pristine skyscraper rising above the chaos of the streets" (p. 37). What remained as the proper domain of linguistic science defined language as a stable, neutral, and

naturally ordered hierarchical system consisting of predetermined syntactic, phonological, morphological, and pragmatic characteristics that reside in some deeper psycho-cognitive level in the individual. This mentalist-individualistic definition of language has dominated much of the traditional research in theoretical linguistics and SLA (see Firth & Wagner, 1997). Even with the widely accepted theoretical construct of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972) in SLA theory and the onslaught of communicative approaches to language teaching (CLT) in the 1970s and 1980s that emphasized language use rather than conscious knowledge about language forms, this definition of language has remained relatively stable. Under the influence of CLT, language continues to be conceived of as a set of rule-governed forms that when employed appropriately at the right time and in the right place were presumed to lead to the development of L2 communicative competence. So, while the definition of language per se remains the same, the major difference is that CLT's instructional attention focused on using the correct forms appropriately, rather than simply learning about those forms. And because this definition of language has remained firmly entrenched in SLA theory and L2 pedagogy, this has led some vocal critics of CLT to argue that

> in spite of trendy jargon in textbooks and teachers' manuals, very little is actually communicated in the L2 classroom. The way it is structured does not seem to stimulate the wish of learners to say something, nor does it tap what they might have to say.
>
> (Legutke & Thomas, 1991, pp. 8–9; see also Kumaravadivelu, 2006)

As one would expect, the mentalist-individualist definition of language has, in turn, heavily influenced the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education. The profession has long assumed that L2 teachers need to have a theoretical understanding of the syntactic, phonological, and morphological rules of a language, and that once they have consciously acquired that knowledge they should be able to help L2 learners acquire it, or, within the CLT movement, use it to engage in meaningful communication. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of providing L2 teachers with knowledge about the formal linguistic properties of language and then assuming that such knowledge would directly inform L2 teachers' instructional decisions remains suspect even today. In fact, a recent collection of classroom-based research studies that examines how L2 teachers enrolled in professional coursework make sense of and take up the disciplinary knowledge about language found rather discouraging results (Bartels, 2005). Conducted by applied linguists, most of the studies in this collection focus on the acquisition and use of disciplinary

knowledge about language (KAL) and indicated the usefulness of KAL in shaping teachers' conceptions of language. But they found a general failure to transfer this knowledge to classroom language teaching. Thus, while L2 teachers do appear to learn about language, its forms, uses, and functions, in their L2 teacher education programs, this knowledge appears to have little impact if any on how they actually teach second languages.

An alternative approach to studying L2 teachers' knowledge about language has been not to document if and how teachers understand the disciplinary knowledge about language from their L2 teacher education program, but instead to document the nature of L2 teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) about language, in other words how they actually go about teaching language to L2 learners. Borg's (1998) study of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher's understanding of grammar teaching placed pedagogical content knowledge of grammar within the teacher's overall pedagogical system. While he found little evidence of direct translation of theoretical linguistic knowledge of grammar in this teacher's instructional practices, he did uncover deeply held beliefs about the importance of awareness-raising and grammatical accuracy, the knowledge and needs of the students, and the need to actively engage students in their own learning. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) examined ESL teachers' pedagogical content knowledge of language in terms of how they crafted grammatical explanations, examples, and activities for their L2 students. They found very little evidence of theoretical linguistic knowledge in teachers' grammatical explanations but, instead, extensive evidence of "on-the-spot adjudication of sample sentences the students throw out" (p. 459), focusing much more on intention and meaning than on structural or even functional rules. Thus, they argue against a knowledge-base that is envisioned as a "repository of inert facts." They believe, instead, that the knowledge-base should reflect the "highly process-oriented" nature of how teachers dialogically engage with their students as they walk them through "the gradual acquisition of understanding rather than in terms of the transfer of information" (p. 466).

This research suggests that the traditional definition of language that has permeated the content of L2 teacher education programs may not provide teachers with a conceptualization of language that is amenable or useful to L2 instruction. As mentioned earlier, the problem is that the disciplinary knowledge that defines what language is, how it works, and how it is acquired that has emerged out of the fields of theoretical linguistics and SLA is not the same knowledge that teachers need to teach L2, nor is it the same knowledge that students need in order to learn L2 (Freeman, 2004).

Language as Social Practice

An epistemologically different definition of language, one sometimes referred to as *language as social practice*, has been present in various intellectual disciplines, most notably anthropology (Rogoff, 2003), critical social theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Foucault, 1980), cognitive psychology (Leont'ev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985), and applied linguistics (Gee, 1999; Halliday, 1985), for much of the past century but has only taken on significant legitimacy within the disciplines of applied linguistics and SLA in the past two decades (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Lantolf, 2000, 2006). It is also important to point out that the sociocultural perspective put forth in this book represents a theory of mind, rather than a theory of language. That said, language is central in a sociocultural perspective because at its core it argues that the human mind is mediated by socially constructed symbolic artifacts, including above all language (Lantolf, 2000). From a sociocultural perspective, language is a vital means by which humans represent thought. Vygotsky (1978) described language as a psychological tool, something humans use to make sense of their experiences. However, he argued that language is also a cultural tool in that it is used to share experiences and to make sense of our experiences with others. Thus, language is a means of transforming experience into cultural knowledge and understanding. It is through language, both spoken and written, that successive generations benefit from the experience of those who have gone before and it is language that each new generation uses to share and define its own experiences. From a sociocultural perspective, the language of the individual develops in relation to its functions within the sociocultural activity in which the individual participates. And since all social activities are structured and gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways, the language used to describe an activity gains its meaning not from some underlying representation encoded in the words themselves but in concrete communicative activity in specific sociocultural contexts. So, while a sociocultural perspective represents a theory of mind rather than a theory of language, it does align well with theories of language that emphasize the fundamentally social nature of language and conceptualize *language as social practice*.

From a *language as social practice* perspective, meaning resides not in the grammar of the language, or in its vocabulary, or in the head of an individual, but in the everyday activities that individuals engage in. Thus, language has meaning only in and through the ways in which it is used. Gee (1999) distinguishes between *discourses*, or how we use language "on-site" to create a perspective, to participate in social activities, and to enact certain identities as taking place within *Discourses*, and *cultural models* or historically grounded, socially accepted ways of being in the world that are shared and valued among particular groups of people.

Thus, meanings are not stable or general, but are situated and dependent on the context of use. From a *language as social practice* perspective, meaning is situated in specific social and cultural practices, against a rich store of historical and cultural knowledge (i.e., Discourses) which continually transforms those practices. The following quote from Gee (1999) sums this up nicely:

> thinking and using language is an active matter of assembling the situated meanings that you need for action in the world. This assembly is always relative to your socioculturally-defined experiences in the world and, more or less, routinized (normed) through cultural models and various social practices of the sociocultural groups to which you belong.
>
> (p. 49)

Likewise, Gee (1999) argues that all languages have many "social languages" and different social languages reflect their own unique grammars which function as resources for users to engage in activities and enact certain identities. From a *language as social practice* perspective, the grammar does not signal the meaning of an utterance; instead, it is the shared cultural models and Discourses in which the language is used that define what the utterance means. For example, a different social language will be used when a series of events is related to a close family member from that used on the witness stand of a courtroom, and these social languages have different grammars. In each case, meaning is not a matter of decoding the grammar. It is a matter of knowing which of the many inferences that can be drawn from an utterance are relevant. And, according to Gee (1999), relevance is a matter of context, point of view, and culture.

Probably the most well-known and well-established theory that aligns with a *language as social practice* perspective is that of Halliday's (1989) systemic functional linguistics. With its emphasis on describing the functional uses of language, systemic functional linguistics seeks to explain how humans create and interpret the social or textual contexts in which meaning is made. Thus, any text, written or spoken, contains the underlying concepts of *field*, or the content of the text (what is the text about?), *tenor*, or the roles of participants (who is taking part?), and *mode* (what is the language itself doing?). Within this view of language such functions are realized in different types of texts, using different grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic resources offered by the language but chosen by the user to do certain things with the language in certain social contexts. Thus, language is viewed not as a finite set of rules but as a semiotic system, from which users make certain choices depending on the particular activities and particular contexts in which they are participating.

Again, according to Gee (1996, 2004), people do not learn a "language" per se, but instead they learn different "social languages." Each social language offers distinctive grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic resources that allow users to enact particular socially situated identities and to engage in specific socially situated activities. Likewise, a *language as social practice* perspective reflects a dynamic constellation of sociocultural resources that emerge out of and are recreated within social and historical usage. Thus, any utterance creates a context of use, or *genre* (Bakhtin, 1981), in which the utterance typically belongs, conjuring up specific meanings and inferences while simultaneously creating a space for one's own voice to be expressed.

Embracing Language as Social Practice in L2 Teacher Education

Embracing a *language as social practice* perspective in L2 teacher education does not mean that L2 teachers do not need to know about the structural properties of a language. Having a meta-language about these properties may in fact offer useful psychological tools that teachers can use to make students aware of the various linguistic resources that are available to them as they begin to develop the capacity to function in the L2 world. But what is different about the *language as social practice* perspective is that, instructionally, the point of departure is no longer the discrete form or communicative function but the conceptual meanings that are being expressed that denote ways of being in the world. Agar (1994) created the term *languaculture*, reuniting language and culture after their long disciplinary history of separation, to capture the fundamentally social nature of our consciousness and the role of language in the development of consciousness, and to position meaning rather than form as more prominent than the Saussurian–Bloomfield–Chomskian perspective allows (see Lantolf, 2006). From a *language as social practice* perspective, meaning is central; not in the service of form or function, but as the expression of deeply embedded concepts that denote ways of feeling, seeing, and being in the world. These ways of being in the world, or one's *languaculture*, offer language users various symbolic resources with which they can assemble what they want to say and by doing so enact socially situated identities while simultaneously engaging in socially situated activity. When language is conceptualized as social practice, the focus of L2 teaching shifts towards helping L2 learners develop the capacity to interpret and generate meanings that are appropriate within the relevant *languaculture* (see Lantolf & Johnson, 2007).

However, to embrace a *language as social practice* perspective, L2 teachers need to be able to open up the *languaculture* for conscious inspection. This is often difficult to do because the *languaculture* consists

largely of spontaneous concepts formed in concrete practical activity that expert users of a language are socialized into through their lived experience; thus, they are often invisible to the very users who rely on them to function in the *languaculture*. This explains why expert speakers are sometimes unable to explain why an utterance expresses a particular meaning in a particular context. And even if they are able to say more than "*this is just how you say it*," relying on disciplinary definitions of the formal linguistic rules of thumb that they may have learned consciously in their L2 teacher education program, as the Bartels (2005) collection suggests, may be insufficient as well. In fact, such so-called rules of thumb may lull users into a false sense of competence; for example, they may assume that if they get the grammar right, the utterance will be understood as it was intended (Negueruela, 2003). For L2 teachers to embrace a *language as social practice* perspective, they need to become consciously aware of the underlying concepts that are embedded in how language use expresses meanings. Moreover, they must come to understand the *languaculture* as fluid, dynamic, and unstable, and thus difficult to package into the type of curricular content (activities and textbooks) that tends to dominate L2 pedagogy.

In the remainder of this chapter, I provide examples of mediational means that are designed to engage L2 teachers in conceptualizing *language as social practice*. A precursor to these activities is articulating a clear definition of how a sociocultural perspective defines language and the role language plays in human learning, which has been covered in detail in the preceding chapters of this book. However, at this juncture, it seems appropriate to outline several concrete examples of how different mediational means can help L2 teachers develop an understanding of *language as social practice*.

Developing Teachers' Awareness of Language as Social Practice

Andrews (2007) states that *teacher language awareness*, in the context of L2 teaching and L2 teacher education, is grounded in the assumption that "teachers' understanding of the language they teach and their ability to analyze it will contribute significantly and directly to their effectiveness as teachers" (p. 946). Framed as the *subject-matter knowledge* (Shulman, 1999) of L2 teaching, teacher language awareness has traditionally meant developing a conscious understanding of, and the meta-linguistic terminology to explain, the structural and/or functional features of language (i.e., syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, and/or notional/functional). More recently, the teacher language awareness literature has been extended to include a teacher's competence as a language user, a language analyst, and a language teacher (Andrews, 2007; Edge, 1988;

Wright, 2002). Wright (2002) argues that a central goal of L2 teacher education should be for teachers to develop an "overall sensitivity to language—their linguistic radar, as it were" (p. 115), enabling them to become curious and reflective about language, to see how language is used in authentic contexts, and to link their knowledge about how language works to their instructional activities. He goes on to claim that

> a linguistically aware teacher not only understands how the language works, but understands the students' struggle with language and is sensitive to errors and other interlanguage features. The linguistically aware teacher can spot opportunities to generate discussion and exploration of language, for example by noticing features of texts which suggest a particular learning activity.
>
> (p. 115)

While Wright does not make explicit reference to a *language as social practice* perspective, his domains of developing L2 teachers' language awareness align nicely with the *language as social practice perspective* outlined above. Wright's *user domain* represents the ability not only to use the language appropriately in a variety of situations but more importantly to develop an explicit awareness of the social and pragmatic norms which underlie appropriate use. His *analyst domain* encompasses developing a deeper understanding of how the language works, including the grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic resources that are available to language users and how it is that users both choose and manipulate these resources to accomplish their communicative goals. And finally, his *teaching domain* focuses on how to create and exploit language learning opportunities within the activities of the L2 classroom that will help language users develop the capacity to generate meaning from and function in the L2 *languaculture*.

Analyzing E-mail Messages

The following series of language awareness activities extends Wright's (2002) domains in order to illustrate how L2 teachers (and potentially their L2 learners) can develop language awareness through the analysis of the genre of e-mail messages. Since different genres contain recurrent features that are prototypical of particular texts, close textual analysis can expose how particular linguistic forms function in the creation of different text types (see McCarthy & Carter, 1994). Likewise, since a *language as social practice* perspective recognizes the dynamic constellation of sociocultural resources that emerge out of and are recreated within social and historical usage, all genres carry with them a context of use that typically conjures up specific meanings and inferences while

simultaneously creating a space for one's own voice to express itself (Bakhtin, 1981). Raising L2 teachers' awareness about these meanings, inferences, and resources is central to developing their language awareness and to conceptualizing *language as social practice*.

E-mail messages are an interesting genre because they often contain elements of both written and spoken language use, they are a relatively recent but now very common means of communication, and they require a good deal of socially situated cultural and linguistic knowledge in order to be used appropriately.

1) User Domain

Asking teachers to discuss the questions given in the box below can help them draw upon their conscious and subconscious knowledge of how meaning is situated in and emerges out of language use. In addition, it can help draw their attention to the common considerations that they, as users of the language, have about composing and responding to this communicative genre.

a) Describe an experience in which you have had difficulty composing an e-mail message. Why was it difficult? What did you have to consider?
b) Describe an experience in which you had to respond to an e-mail message that was "somewhat odd". How did you respond?

2) Analyst Domain

Examples 1 and 2 give two e-mail messages sent to me by applicants (pseudonyms) to our MA TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) program. The first was written by an American applicant, the second by a Chinese applicant. The purpose of asking L2 teachers to reflect on the linguistic, pragmatic, and discourse features of these e-mail messages is to enable them to become consciously aware of the resources that authors use (appropriately and inappropriately) to do things with language. By design, the activities force L2 teachers to articulate the common and/or expected linguistic, pragmatic, and discourse features that constitute requests made via e-mail.

Example 1

Subject: Questions about the MA TESOL Program.

Dear Dr. Johnson,

I was very pleased to learn that I have been accepted into the MA TESL program. I plan to begin the program in the Fall 04 term. Before arriving on campus, I wonder if it would be appropriate to contact my advisor regarding appropriate courses and other program requirements? Also, I wonder if two years to complete the program is pretty much standard for your program or if the time can be accelerated? Since I applied fairly late and have no financial support from the University for this year, I would also like information about how I might apply for a teaching and/or research assistantship for next year. If you could send this information to me at your earliest convenience, I would greatly appreciate it.

Once again, thank your for accepting me into the MA TESL program. I look forward to working with you in the very near future.

Regards,

"Carter Marksmen"

a) What is the communicative effect of the e-mail message in Example 1? If you were to receive it, what would be your impressions of the sender?
b) Notice how the e-mail message begins. Does it seem appropriate? What linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic issues do you think the writer considered when beginning this e-mail message?
c) Notice the overall rhetorical structure of this e-mail message. Does it seem appropriate? What discourse features do you think the writer considered when writing this e-mail message?
d) What grammatical, lexical, pragmatic features does the writer employ in writing this e-mail message? What assumptions do you think the writer is making about the receiver of this e-mail message?
e) What do you think are the communicative goals of this writer? What grammatical, lexical, pragmatic features did the writer employ to achieve these goals?

Example 2

Subject: So sorry to trouble you again.

Hello, Dear Dr Karen Jason

Today, when I gone to post office to send the completed application materials to you I was stolen. It is unfortunately the applications also was stolen. Now I am afraid the time is not enough for me to apply.

1) Please send the application forms by e-mail to me. So I can download and print them, it will be the fastest way.

2) If that won't work, please send the application forms to me by international EMS? But that means you or your department will pay the EMS fee for me. Then please tell me the name, address for receiving money order, I will return the EMS fee to you or your department by money order after I receive the application forms.

3) If the time is enough, please send me the application forms by common way?

I am sorry to trouble you because of my fault.

Merry Christmas! (a little bit earlier!)

"Yi Lin"

a) What is the communicative effect of the e-mail message in Example 2? If you were to receive it, what would be your impressions of the sender?
b) Notice how the e-mail message begins. Does it seem appropriate? What linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic issues do you think the writer considered when beginning this e-mail message?
c) Notice the overall rhetorical structure of this e-mail message. Does it seem appropriate? What discourse features do you think the writer considered when writing this e-mail message?
c) Locate 1–2 grammatical, lexical, and/or pragmatic "errors." Discuss why they are errors (what grammatical, lexical, pragmatic rule(s) are being violated) and how they affect the meaning of the message.
d) Rewrite the sentence(s) with the "errors" identified above in at least three different ways. Discuss how each version of the "corrected" sentence(s) alters the meaning of the message.

3) Teaching Domain

To link the development of L2 teachers' language awareness to their pedagogy, the questions in the box below can help draw their attention to the common linguistic, lexical, discourse, and pragmatic characteristics that are expected in this communicative genre. In addition, L2 teachers can begin to consider appropriate instructional activities that will enable their L2 learners to build capacity to use the genre of e-mail appropriately in the L2 *languaculture*.

a) Do you recognize any linguistic, discourse, or pragmatic features of Example 2 that may be influenced by the writer's L2 *languaculture* (Chinese)? If so, what are they and what social significance do they play in this e-mail exchange? Likewise, what linguistic, discourse, or pragmatic features might the receiver of this e-mail message expect to see?
b) This e-mail message contains a request. Discuss ways in which you might teach L2 learners how to make a request in an e-mail message.
c) Rewrite the e-mail message with appropriate linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic features. Be prepared to explain why you made certain choices over others and how those choices help to shape the meanings being expressed.
d) What does analyzing e-mail messages such as these suggest about L2 language learning and teaching?

Different communicative genres can be analyzed to develop L2 teachers' language awareness. Overall, the central goal of these sorts of activities is to enable L2 teachers to see how meaning is situated in the social activities that L2 users engage in, to open up the *languaculture* for conscious inspection, and to help teachers embrace a *language as social practice* perspective when they think about and carry out L2 instruction.

Analyzing Classroom Transcripts

The language of the L2 classroom is often referred to as just that—classroom language, implying that it is fundamentally different from language in the everyday world. Some 30 years ago, CLT was conceptualized with the intention of transforming classroom language so that it would, in fact, mirror language in the everyday world. Yet, as much published research has documented, even under the guise of CLT, especially in global contexts, other than adding a few novel instructional

activities (information gap, role-play, task-based activities, etc.) the language of the L2 classroom remains unlike language in the everyday world (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Legutke & Thomas, 1991; Nunan, 1987; Widdowson, 1990).

From a *language as social practice* perspective, the context within which language is used is critical to how it is used, what it means, and what is being accomplished through it. If we consider the language classroom as one such context, instead of trying to change it into something that it *is not* (i.e., make classroom language mirror language in the everyday world), from a *language as social practice* perspective we might be better off trying to understand classroom language in terms of what it *is* trying to accomplish. Certainly Vygotskian sociocultural theory argues for the value of formal education, suggesting that teaching represents the means through which higher-level cognitive development is enhanced. And from a sociocultural perspective, learning is a profoundly social process, grounded in dialogue and mediated through language; thus the classroom is uniquely suited to foster learning (this is the premise upon which teachers and students enter classrooms), which can in turn lead to development. This does not mean that all classroom interaction or all teacher assistance is productive and thus will enhance learning, but it does suggest that we can look at classroom language to see what sort of dialogic mediation may or may not be going on there, and the extent to which that mediation is supporting L2 learners' attempts to build capacity to generate meaning from and function in the L2 world.

One of the unique features of classroom language is that it creates special opportunities for teachers and students to involve other people in their thoughts and to use language to develop their own thoughts. In fact, much of what constitutes classroom language is the public co-construction of knowledge. This co-construction can be more or less controlled by the various ways in which teachers establish the patterns of classroom communication (see Johnson, 1995). However, from a sociocultural perspective, whatever L2 learners are (or are not) able to do with language is determined by the particular circumstances in which the learning takes place and by the contributions of other people involved in the activities. According to Mercer (1995), "a learner's actual achievement is never just a reflection of that individual's inherent ability, but is also a measure of the effectiveness of the communication between a teacher and a learner" (p. 72).

When we look at classroom transcripts, we see teachers and students working out what they know and achieving what they can. And a great deal of classroom learning concerns how to use language—to represent ideas, to interpret experiences, and to formulate and solve problems. So when L2 teachers are asked to analyze classroom transcripts from a *language as social practice* perspective, the focus is not on the correct

linguistic form or most appropriate communicative function, but, instead, on the nature of the activities that teachers and students are involved in, on what is being accomplished by participating in those activities, on how language and other cultural artifacts are being used as mediational tools in those activities, and on whether or not what is being accomplished is working to build L2 learners' capacity to generate meaning through, and therefore successfully function in, the L2 world.

Asking L2 teachers to analyze classroom language, their own and that of other teachers, can help develop an awareness of how language mediates thinking in the L2 classroom. It can help to expose the norms that govern participation in any given activity and the extent to which L2 learners are (or are not) able to participate in that activity. Additionally, analyzing classroom transcripts can help L2 teachers to recognize the resources L2 learners are using or attempting to use, or need to be aware of in order to successfully or even partially participate in classroom activities. Most importantly, however, analyzing classroom transcripts can enable L2 teachers to see what is being accomplished in an activity and whether or not what is being accomplished is working to build L2 learners' capacity to generate meaning in and through the language and therefore to successfully participate and learn from the instructional activity.

Teaching "Ahhh!" Said Stork *by Gerald Rose*

The following classroom transcripts are taken from two different elementary EFL classrooms, taught by two different EFL teachers. Both teachers are expert speakers of English, teaching beginning EFL elementary students (8–9 years old). The lessons were recorded as part of a school-wide innovation by which authentic children's literature (rather than textbook dialogues or basal stories) was incorporated into the EFL curriculum. The transcripts are taken from instructional sessions in which the teachers are introducing the book *"Ahhh!" Said Stork* by Gerald Rose. In both classes, the teachers introduce the book by drawing the children's attention to the center-fold illustration of nine jungle animals staring at a single egg. This pre-reading instructional technique of tapping into students' prior knowledge was part of the professional development training both teachers had received as part of this school-wide curricular innovation.

Teachers are asked to read the transcripts and consider the questions in the box below.

a) How would you describe the characteristics of classroom language in transcripts 1 and 2?

b) What sorts of opportunities does the teacher's/students' use of language in the transcripts create for learning and second language acquisition?
c) What sorts of questions does the teacher ask?
d) How does the teacher correct/respond to "errors"?
e) What does the teacher do or say that enables the students to figure out how they are supposed to talk and act?
f) How do the teacher's expansions enable the exchange of ideas to continue regardless of the linguistic limitations of the students?
g) What's the pedagogical purpose of the lesson?
h) What have the students learned?

Transcript 1

Teacher: What do you see in the picture, Suzie?
Student 1: I see an elephant and a monkey and . . .
Teacher: Suzie can see an elephant and a monkey. Marcus, what can you see?
Student 2: I see a snake.
Teacher: Good. A snake. What is the snake doing?
Student 2: Climbing a tree.
Teacher: The snake is climbing a tree, say that again.
Student 2: The snake is climbing a tree.
Teacher: Good. The snake is climbing a tree. Yes, Matti?
Student 3: A zebra.
Teacher: A zebra? What color is the zebra?
Student 3: Stripes.
Teacher: Stripes? The zebra has stripes? Yes, what color are the stripes?
Student 3: Black
Teacher: Good. Black. The zebra has black and white stripes.
Student 3: . . . (*Not clear*)
Teacher: The zebra has black and white stripes. Again.
Student 3: (*Repeats*) The zebra has black and white stripes.
Teacher: The zebra has black and white stripes. OK, now in your groups and pairs—some of you are in pairs—I want you to write down something about the picture. I want you to list all the things you can see in the picture. Just list them down. Then write down a sentence about two things in the picture.

Students work in groups/pairs. Ten minutes later in the lesson . . .

Teacher: Now your sentences, sentences. Tell us anything you see in the picture. Who's ready with a sentence? Rena? Just your sentence.
Student 4: The monkey is on the elephant.
Teacher: Good. The monkey is on the elephant. Another sentence.
Student 5: A hippo . . . (*Not clear*)
Teacher: Loudly.
Student 5: A hippo. (*Still not clear*)
Teacher: I can't hear you. Say it loudly. It is correct, but I want you to say it again, loudly.
Student 5: (*Loudly*) A hippo is brown.
Teacher: A hippo?
Student 5: A hippo.
Teacher: Which hippo? This one? (*Points to the picture*) This hippo? The hippo, this one is brown. The hippo is brown. Say again.
Student 5: The hippo is brown.
Teacher: Good. The hippo is brown. Again, loudly.
Student 5: (*Loudly*) The hippo is brown.
Teacher: Very good. Now this picture is about this story. We're going to read this story.

Transcript 2

Teacher: This book is about lots of different kinds of animals. Animals you might see in the jungle. Does anyone know the name of an animal that lives in the jungle?
Student 1: An elephant.
Teacher: Right. You might see an elephant in the jungle. What else?
Student 2: A monkey.
Teacher: Right. A monkey, have you ever seen a monkey? Yes? Who else has seen a monkey? You've seen a monkey? What was the monkey doing?
Student 3: Eating.
Teacher: Eating? What was the monkey eating?
Student 3: (*Silence*)
Teacher: What do monkeys eat?
Student 4: Bananas.
Teacher: Bananas. Right, sometimes monkeys eat bananas. Look at this picture. (*Shows the class the picture*) Is the monkey eating a banana?
Student 4: No.
Teacher: No, he's not eating a banana. What's the monkey doing?

Student 5: On the elephant. (*Touches head*)
Teacher: Right. The monkey is sitting on the elephant's head. That's funny. Have you ever seen a monkey sitting on an elephant's head before?
Student 6: (*Shakes head, yes*)
Teacher: You saw a monkey sitting on the elephant's head? Tell us about it.
Student 6: Ride.
Teacher: Riding? He was riding on the elephant? Sure, he could do that. It would be sort of bumpy, right? Riding on an elephant.
Student 7: I was on elephant.
Teacher: You were on an elephant? Wow! When did you ride on an elephant?
Student 7: Circus.
Teacher: At the circus? You rode on an elephant at the circus? Wow! That must have been fun. What else did you see at the circus?
Student 7: Clowns.
Teacher: Clowns? You saw clowns at the circus? Were they funny?
Student 7: (*Shakes head, yes*)
Teacher: Look at this picture. What are all the animals doing? What are they looking at?
Student 1: Egg.
Teacher: Right here. (*Points to the egg*) Do you see an egg? They are looking at the egg. Right. Why do you think they are looking at this egg?
Student 1: They want it.
Teacher: They want it? The egg . . . everyone wants the egg? Why do you think everyone wants the egg?
Student 6: Eat it.
Teacher: To eat it? Everyone wants to eat the egg? Well, let's fine out. This story (*shows the cover*) is called *"Ahhh!" Said Stork*. Let's find out what the animals want.

After teachers have read through both transcripts and fully discussed questions a) through h) in the box above, they should consider the questions in the box below.

a) What are these teachers trying to accomplish in this initial segment of the lesson?

b) How are the teachers using language to accomplish this?
c) What linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic resources do the teachers offer to students that allow them to participate in this activity?
d) What linguistic, discourse, and pragmatic resources do the students use to participate in this activity?
e) What have the students learned? In terms both of the content of the lesson segment and of how to talk and act in these classrooms?
f) What conception of language, learning, and teaching do you think these teachers hold? What evidence in the transcripts leads you to think this?

Asking L2 teachers to analyze classroom transcripts can help them develop an awareness of classroom language and how the nature of classroom language, and the activities that teachers and students engage in in classrooms, shape not only how language is used, but how it is used to accomplish things in classrooms. Overall, the central goal of analyzing classroom transcripts is to enable L2 teachers to see how language is used in classrooms to accomplish things and the range of resources that teachers offer students and that students take up as they engage in those activities.

Building Curriculum from Contexts of Use

Another way to enable L2 teachers to develop language awareness is to ask them to build curricular content by carefully examining the social contexts within which the L2 will be learned and used. This is the premise of most English for Specific Purposes programs in that the content of instruction (*what gets taught*) comes directly from the contexts in which the learners must function in the L2. A remarkable example of building curriculum from context of use was created by a pre-service elementary teacher enrolled in our TESL certificate program. This teacher, Wendy,[5] had worked as a summer camp counselor for girls aged 7–15 in rural Pennsylvania for many years. The camp draws girls from all over the world (Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North and South America) and each year a significant number of girls arrive who speak English as a

5 Permission granted in 2005 to reproduce portions of "Surviving Camp S4G Susquehannock for Girls."

second language. The directors of the camp asked Wendy to provide ESL instruction for these girls during the seven-week camp. Thus, as a requirement of our TESL certificate program, she created a seven-week course designed to increase these campers' use of and confidence in English (speaking, writing, reading) so as to enhance their overall camp experience.

In order to create the content of this course, she conceptualized it around what she understood to be at the heart of the camp experience: camp culture and camp communication. Understanding its culture, she believed, would enable these campers to become aware of the various ways of acting, talking, thinking, and being at this particular camp (i.e., *languaculture*). Since summer camps, by their very nature, typically contain unique structural arrangements (social groupings, daily schedules) and social rituals (sports, games, food, songs, traditions), she also organized the content around the unique culture of this camp. In addition, she believed that communication at camp with fellow campers, counselors, directors, instructors, medical staff, and the home (their parents) was a critical part of having a successful camp experience. The concept map in Figure 4.1 illustrates how she conceptualized the content of her course.

Taking a *language as social practice* perspective, she systematically reflected on the contexts and meanings of language use and the range of linguistic, social, cultural, and pragmatic resources that campers use to have a successful camp experience. This led her to design a syllabus called "Surviving Camp S4G Susquehannock for Girls" which is given in an abbreviated version in the box on the following page.

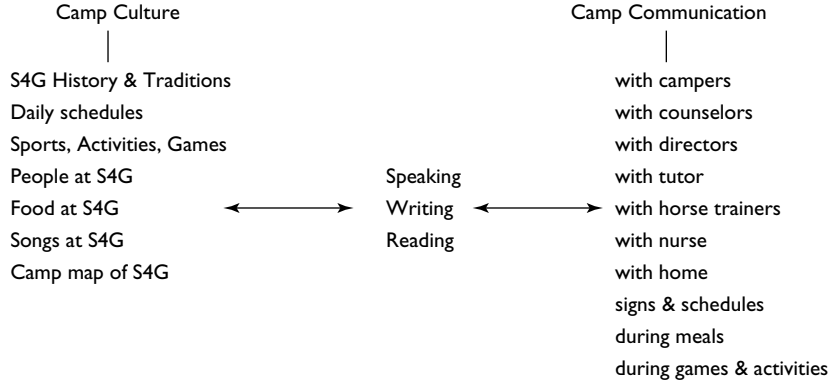

Figure 4.1 Surviving Camp S4G.

Week 1: What is Camp Susquehannock?
Week 2: Where Do I Go? (Sports, Activities, & Games)
Week 3: What Are They Singing?
Week 4: What Am I Eating? (Food at S4G)
Week 5: Let's Gallop (Learning to Ride Horses)
Week 6: What's Villa? (Traditions at S4G)
Week 7: Camp's Over Already? But I Just Got Here!

For each session, Wendy had the campers engage in investigations and activities in which the *languaculture* of the camp was brought to the surface and thus became the focus of instruction. For example, during Week 1 the campers made a guided tour of the camp, took pictures of key locations, learned about what goes on in each location, conducted investigative interviews with key people at each location (camp director, nurse, horse trainers, head counselors), and then worked together to construct a visually annotated description and interactive map of the camp. By engaging in these activities, the campers develop an awareness of the various resources at the camp while simultaneously learning about the most appropriate linguistic choices they needed to make to gain access to those resources (i.e., how to tell the camp nurse you aren't feeling well). Throughout the process of creating this course, Wendy became keenly aware of the *languaculture* that exists in this camp and used that knowledge to devise ways in which her campers could begin to participate in camp life while simultaneously acquiring the linguistic resources that are necessary to become full-fledged members of this unique social community. Thus, while the content of the course emerged out of the *languaculture* of the camp, the focus of Wendy's instruction was to enable her campers to gain access to certain linguistic and symbolic resources with which they learned to exercise their communicative agency in this unique community.

Conclusion

From a *language as social practice* perspective, meaning does not reside in the language, but instead it is situated in and emerges out of the social group's use of the language. When language is understood as social practice, the role of the L2 teacher becomes to assist L2 learners as they develop the capacity to interpret and generate personal meanings that make sense in the relevant *languaculture*. Building such capacity means L2 teachers need to help L2 learners make appropriate choices: choices about how their L2 use positions them in relation to others and the

cultural schema it may evoke, choices about how their L2 use may be understood and evaluated by others, and choices about how best to access the linguistic and symbolic resources they need to accomplish their goals as L2 users. As the capacity to function in the L2 increases, so too will the variety of the interactions and experiences that L2 learners will increasingly encounter. Preparing L2 teachers who embrace a *language as social practice* perspective requires that they become consciously aware of the underlying concepts that are embedded in how language use expresses meanings, recognize meaning as situated in specific social and cultural practices which are thereby constantly transformed, understand language as fluid, dynamic, and unstable, and finally, conceptualize language as about making choices about how to be in the L2 world.

Chapter 5

Teaching as Dialogic Mediation

Teaching, Learning, and Development

From a sociocultural perspective neither education in general nor teaching in particular is about the transmission of specific bodies of knowledge and skills. Wells (2002) argues that education "is about the development of understanding and the formation of minds" or, more precisely, "the development of a mind to learn" (p. 2). A sociocultural perspective offers an alternative to both the traditional teacher-centered transmission view of teaching and the unstructured student-centered discovery learning view of teaching. Because a sociocultural perspective recognizes the inherent connections between teaching, learning, and development, instruction may best be characterized as integrating a student-centered approach with deliberate teaching. Moreover, the focus of attention, from a sociocultural perspective, is not on the teacher or the students, or both, but on the character and quality of the activities they are engaged in together, the resources they are using to engage in those activities, and what is being accomplished by engaging in those activities. Ultimately, teaching has the potential to lead development when it creates opportunities for the individual to master new psychological tools (true concepts). In other words, when teaching creates opportunities in which learners can participate in activities that provide them with direct experiences in the use of new psychological tools, and in ways that make the evolving histories and functions of these tools explicit, such tools have the potential to advance cognitive development.

While formal schooling itself is understood to be a set of socioculturally and institutionally organized practices, the activity of participating in these practices will, for better or worse, have an impact on cognitive development. From a sociocultural perspective, instruction (teaching/learning) within the context of formal schooling can be characterized as a dialogic process of reconceptualizing and recontextualizing knowledge as teachers and learners engage in activities together (Karpov, 2003; Kozulin, 2003). The knowledge that makes up the content of schooling, commonly referred to as *subject matter*, has already been constructed by

culture through history and is typically instantiated in artifacts such as textbooks. But it is through instruction (teaching/learning) that learners discover ways of bringing that knowledge to bear on their lives, and in particular on their ways of acting and interacting in the everyday world. From a sociocultural perspective, instruction (teaching/learning) is characterized as a long-term, cyclical process of dialogic mediation in which learners' everyday (spontaneous and non-spontaneous) concepts (actual developmental level) are made explicit and reflected upon, and scientific concepts are introduced, experimented with, and used in various meaningful and purposeful activities (potential developmental level), with the ultimate goal of advancing learners' cognitive abilities so that they can accomplish goals or solve problems on their own (cognitive development). Dialogic mediation is the primary means by which learners are assisted as they appropriate relevant linguistic and cultural resources and are guided as they use and transform those resources to accomplish certain goals. Development begins in a particular domain by being externally and socially regulated. Learners' initial attempts may begin as *persistent imitation* that is transformed in the process of trying again and again (Valsineer & Van der Veer, 2000). In this process, speech serves to make a person's thoughts accessible to the processes of social influence. In fact, the very act of speaking about one's current understandings makes those understandings explicit to oneself and to others. Once a person's everyday concepts have become explicit, they are open to discourse processes that can promote reorganization, refinement, and reconceptualization.

Teaching as dialogic mediation involves contributions and discoveries by learners, as well as the assistance of an "expert" collaborator, or teacher. Instruction in such collaborative activity is contingent on teachers' and learners' activities and related to what they are trying to do. The assisting teacher provides information and guidance relevant to furthering learners' current goal-directed activity. Both information and guidance need to be provided in a way that is immediately responsive and proportionate to the learners' varying needs. In this sense, the assisting teacher provides *strategic mediation* (Wertsch, 1985) since assistance is targeted in such a way as to enable learners to develop an overall orientation toward the task or concept while at the same time beginning to appropriate the assisting teacher's understanding of that task or concept. Under such conditions, instruction (teaching/learning) has the potential to push development because it allows the individual to learn to use new psychological tools in the very activities from which these tools have emerged and are being used.

In what follows, I trace the notion of concept development, or more specifically the development of *thinking in concepts*, and the nature of the assistance that is required if scientific concepts are to become internalized and actualized in teachers' activities. I then discuss the role of

dialogic mediation in teaching, learning, and development by examining the quality and character of interaction between teachers and students as mediational means that scaffold learning, assist performance, and create the potential to push cognitive development.

The Development of Conceptual Thinking

If we embrace a sociocultural perspective, the activities of L2 teacher education, whether in the form of workshops, seminars, or teacher-initiated inquiry, must have at their core opportunities for dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance as teachers participate in and learn about some relevant aspect of their teaching. Moreover, as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, teachers enter the profession with a powerful *apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie, 1975), which is essentially made up of everyday concepts (spontaneous and non-spontaneous) that are acquired both formally and informally as a result of schooling experiences and that form the basis of teachers' intuitive thinking about teaching. One goal of teacher education, therefore, is to move teachers beyond these everyday concepts by introducing them to scientific concepts; in other words, concepts that are formulated by one's professional discourse community, defined in formal theories, and acquired through formal instruction. Vygotskian sociocultural theory argues that there is a dialectic relationship between everyday and scientific concepts: that is, each is acquired in relation to the other. Moreover, Vygotsky rejected the traditional view of a *concept* as a word label or a set of defining attributes or characteristics. Instead, he defined a concept in terms of the *acts of thinking* that it represents, noting that the concept label, or word, is a sign that can be used in various mental operations. Conceptual thinking, for Vygotsky (1998), is "a new form of intellectual activity" (p. 56). As we saw in Chapter 3, it wasn't simply the concept labels of *subjectivity* and *subject positioning* within the critical social theory and feminist poststructural literature that shaped Sharkey's (2003) thinking, but the way in which these scientific concepts enabled her to understand the unfortunate experiences of an immigrant student in an American high school ESL program. It was this that pushed her to reconceptualize the kind of learning environment that she sought to create as an ESL teacher.

Conceptual thinking serves as the basis for expertise in any professional domain. Teachers demonstrate their expertise by thinking in scientific concepts, not just by holding them; thus, the goal of L2 teacher education is to expose teachers to relevant scientific concepts while at the same time assisting them in making everyday concepts explicit and thereby using them as a means of internalizing scientific concepts. The expertise, or conceptual thinking, from which they will operate is thereby created. Given this goal, the activities of L2 teacher education must assist teachers

in this process of making their everyday concepts explicit, of reflecting on and critiquing them, and of beginning to think in concepts about aspects of their teaching which are relevant to their daily professional lives (goal-directed activity).

Reconceptualizing the Concepts of Methodology, Language, and Teaching

A very practical, concrete example may be helpful here. In our Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language program, I teach the introductory ESL Methods course. For most of the teachers enrolled in the course, it is their first entrée into the professional discourse of teaching ESL. And the teachers, mostly pre- and in-service and a mix of domestic and international, enter the course with deeply ingrained spontaneous concepts about teaching that have been formed throughout their lengthy apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). One of the everyday concepts that these teachers typically hold is that there is a *best method* of language teaching and that if they could only learn this method, they would be good language teachers. Their conception of *method* is rooted in our profession's history of L2 teaching and denotes certain ways of thinking about and engaging in the activity of L2 teaching, usually involving a somewhat strict set of teaching behaviors based on preconceived assumptions about SLA to which they were exposed as students. A second everyday concept that these teachers tend to hold is about the nature of *language*, which they usually conceptualize as a stable, neutral, and naturally ordered hierarchical system consisting of predetermined syntactic, phonological, morphological, and pragmatic characteristics that reside in some deeper psycho-cognitive level in the individual. This mentalist-individualistic definition of *language* has dominated much of the traditional research in theoretical linguistics and SLA, and is typically grounded in teachers' experiences in formal foreign/second language study. And a third everyday concept that these teachers tend to hold has to do with the nature of *teaching*, usually understood more generally as the delivery of some predefined content to students en masse. Since I have found that all three of these everyday concepts tend to frame these teachers' understandings of almost everything that I cover in this course, I begin the course with a series of dialogic activities that support the reconceptualization of their everyday concepts of *methodology*, *language*, and *teaching*.

As part of our first class meeting I ask the teachers to do a word association activity in which they list all the words that come to mind when they think about the words *methodology*, *language*, and *teaching*. Once they have formulated a fairly lengthy list, I ask each teacher to find a partner and compare lists. I ask them to articulate the meanings they associate with these words and to discuss how they currently understand

these three concepts. Each pair then joins another pair, and they are asked to discuss their collective understanding of all three concepts. On the blackboard, they then construct a concept map that includes all of the words generated. I mediate this activity by asking individual teachers to articulate how they understand a particular word, or why certain words should be grouped together or linked to other groups of words in the concept map.

Critical to this stage of concept development is *verbalization* (Gal'perin, 1992). The very act of speaking about one's current understandings makes them explicit. In the course of their discussions each individual has the chance to verbalize his or her understandings as well as misunderstandings. When these understandings (or misunderstandings) have been verbalized they become known to peers and/or to me as we participate in the discussion. Additionally, they come to be known by the individual as well, because they have been made material and explicit. This opens up opportunities to explain and clarify concepts that may have remained unclear to the individual. In other words, once an individual's concepts have become explicit, they are open to dialogic mediation that can promote reorganization and refinement.

This process of verbalization is followed by the introduction of the scientific concepts that reflect how the TESL/Applied Linguistics professional community has, over the past two decades, deconstructed the concepts of methodology (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), language (Gee, 2004), and teaching (Johnson, 1999). This is where everyday and scientific concepts have a dialectical relationship since scientific concepts are learned through everyday concepts. In other words, prior knowledge of the real world is used to understand scientific concepts presented in formal schooling, or what Vygotsky (1986) described as both *growing down* and *growing up*.

For our next session teachers read different published research articles in which the authors critique the traditional concepts of *methodology*, *language*, or *teaching* by introducing alternative conceptualizations; specifically, *post-method pedagogies* (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), *language as social practice* (Gee, 2004), and *reasoning teaching* (Johnson, 1999). Teachers are asked to read one of the assigned articles and write a one-page reaction paper that reflects how they understood this alternative conceptualization and what in their view it suggests for how to think about L2 teaching and learning. The activity of writing these reaction papers creates a mediational space for teachers to verbalize (albeit in writing) and externalize their current understanding of the alternative conceptualization defined in the article they read. I, once again, mediate their learning by reading and responding in writing to their reaction papers, by asking questions, requesting further clarification, and/or providing additional explanations of these concepts.

In our next class session, the teachers are first grouped according to the article they read and given time to discuss their collective understandings of it. They are encouraged to refer to their reaction papers during the discussion and jot down notes if their understanding of the article shifts or changes as a result of their discussion. Next, the teachers are reorganized so that each teacher in the group has read a different article on a different concept. In these groups, each teacher is responsible for explaining the author's alternative conceptualization to the other group members who have not read that particular article. These discussions, which can go on for an extended period of time, involve each individual explaining their author's conceptualization of *post-method pedagogies*, *language as social practice*, and *reasoning teaching*, followed by discussion and further clarification. The quality of the verbalization that goes on at this stage in the process is substantively different than in the first grouping, since only one of the group members has read the article under consideration and the collective voices of the previous grouping are often present in these discussions. This process is followed by a large group discussion, mediated by me, in which each group articulates a collective definition of the concepts of *post-method pedagogies*, *language as social practice*, and *reasoning teaching*. These emerging definitions are discussed, combined, and eventually crafted into a visualization, or concrete visual depiction, of these newly emerging concepts. Critical to this stage is attention to the relationships between and among the essential attributes that are being used to define each concept.

To concretize these emerging concepts, in the next class session the teachers watch short video clips of several different ESL teachers. The video clips are authentic classroom instruction and represent ESL teachers teaching at different instructional levels, covering different content, and pursuing different instructional goals. After viewing each video clip, small groups of teachers discuss what they saw in terms of our on-going discussion of the concepts of *post-method pedagogies*, *language as social practice*, and *reasoning teaching*. The central questions I ask them to address are, "What constitutes the nature of activity in each classroom?" and "What are students actually learning by participating in the activity in each classroom?" Teachers are also asked to link what they see in these video clips to the revisualization that we generated in the previous class session.

Based on these discussions, groups of teachers are then asked to revisit their revisualizations and to refine and/or reconstruct them accordingly. The nature of the language that is present in this verbalization round tends to be much more abstract, the concept labels of *post-method pedagogies*, *language as social practice*, and *reasoning teaching* tend to be used repeatedly, in various contexts, for various purposes, and their talk gives evidence that they are beginning to apply the abstracted essential

attributes of these concepts to understand and interpret the nature of the activities shown in the video clips. Of course, simply using these concept labels, or words, does not in any sense presuppose their full mastery of conceptual thinking, but once I begin to hear evidence of the development of *thinking in concepts*, we move on to the level of action.

In the next activity each teacher is responsible for teaching some L2 language/culture-related concept, item, or skill to the entire class. These tend to be short, usually fun, micro-teaching activities (i.e., non-verbal gestures in greetings, appropriate use of honorifics, the cultural conception of tea service, etc.). Critical to this activity is an assigned reflection paper in which teachers must discuss how they planned, carried out, and assessed their micro-teaching session and relate the processes they went through to our revisualization of the concepts of *post-method pedagogies*, *language as social practice*, and *reasoning teaching*. Typically they reflect on the nature of the activities they created, the ways in which language was taught and used, and the various dimensions of their instructional decision-making. These reflection papers function as an additional mechanism for verbalization and mediation by me after which a final revisualization is created, discussed, and shared with the entire class.

I find tremendous instructional value in this series of dialogic activities since these newly emerging concepts serve as a lens through which the teachers tend to make sense of every aspect of the remainder of the course. As the teacher educator, I play a critical role in this dialogic process in that I determine the concepts that I believe are central to the professional development of L2 teachers, I select the readings that define the scientific concepts under consideration, I mediate the teachers' thinking by asking them to verbalize their understandings, and I assist them with means of visualization and goal-directed activities that support the development of thinking in concepts about L2 teaching and learning. This series of dialogic activities provides assisted performance as they participate in the activities of teaching while simultaneously learning about them. Ultimately, the development of thinking in concepts is being supported by dialogic mediation among and between peers and experts (me and the authorities in the discipline), and evolves out of a cyclical process of verbalization and visualization that brings to the surface teachers' everyday concepts, exposes them to scientific concepts, and creates the potential for the development of deeper understandings, or true concepts, that can then act as the basis for informed action.

Reconceptualizing Reading Comprehension Instruction

Another concrete example comes from the work of Au (1990) who traces the conceptual development of a teacher as she worked through the process of coming to understand and implement an alternative model of

reading comprehension instruction that was designed specifically for children of Polynesian-Hawaiian heritage (Au, 1985; Gallimore, Dalton, & Tharp, 1986; Tharp, 1982). The model of instruction was designed to build on the oral literacy competencies of these children as they engage with texts in substantive and personally meaningful ways. The teacher was simultaneously trained in the model of instruction while engaging in it with a group of six children over a 24-week period. Each of the teacher's lessons was videotaped and then viewed by her and a researcher. Stimulated recall data on the teacher's thoughts and reflections were recorded. The teacher's commentary was found to focus on five main issues throughout the 24-week experience: pacing, planning, controlling the topic of discussion, drawing on relevant prior knowledge, and teacher responsibility. However, changes in the teacher's understanding of these issues shifted over time as she began to internalize the model of instruction. This was evidenced in how she conceptualized the difficulties she was having in implementing the model and how she formulated specific goals for overcoming those difficulties.

In accordance with a conceptualization of teaching as dialogic mediation, this teacher was not left on her own to figure out the model of instruction but fully participated in it while simultaneously learning about it through extensive dialogic mediation with a more experienced teacher (the researcher) who was an expert in this model of reading comprehension instruction. As the teacher engaged in conversations with the researcher, her thinking became explicit (verbalization), and this gave the researcher the opportunity to influence her thinking. The teacher's everyday concepts about reading instruction, formed through her many years of teaching experience, interacted with the scientific concepts that served as the basis of this model of instruction (emphasis on higher-order thinking skills, active systematic instruction, responsiveness to students, and thematic development; see Au, 1979). This interaction helped to reorient the way in which she thought about and carried out reading instruction. The dialogic engagement between the teacher and researcher served to bring previously tacit knowledge about reading instruction to the surface and, once articulated, this knowledge became open to restructuring, leading to deeper meanings or true concepts. The role of speech, between the teacher and researcher, was central to her conceptual development and eventual internalization of the model of instruction. Conceptual development, in this case, began by being externally and socially regulated, as the teacher worked through the process of engaging in this alternative model of instruction while simultaneously learning about it. The researcher played a critical role in making explicit her expert understanding of the model of instruction and supporting the teacher as she worked toward mastering both the instructional behaviors of the model and a deeper conceptual understanding of it. Therefore, this teacher had not just learned how to

teach reading in different ways, but instead she had learned to think in concepts about the teaching of reading and the teaching–learning relationship in fundamentally different ways. Such conceptual tools when applied to other instructional contexts will most certainly inform how this teacher acts and thinks about the activity of teaching.

Scaffolded Learning and Assisted Performance

From a sociocultural perspective, what a learner can do is at least in part determined by the particular circumstances in which the learning takes place and by the contributions of other people involved. This suggests that the construction of knowledge and conceptual development represent a joint rather than an individual achievement. Wood, Burner, and Ross (1976) first introduced the concept of *scaffolding* to illustrate how a person can become intimately and productively involved in someone else's learning. Following their observations of mother–child interactions, they argued that the more experienced adult is sensitive to what the less experienced child can and cannot do, and therefore provides a quality of cognitive support, typically through dialogue, that enables the child to accomplish a task without having to carry the entire cognitive load. The quality of that cognitive support (what the adult says and does) makes explicit the complex nature of the task and demonstrates what the completed task entails, while simultaneously breaking it down into manageable steps that the child can gradually acquire in the process of participating in the actual task.

A significant body of research has critiqued the now common metaphor of *scaffolding* as being uncritically appropriated and misinterpreted by the L2 educational community to represent any and all teacher–student interaction (Kinginger, 2002) or as too mechanical and misrepresenting the semantic character of human interaction (Packer, 1993). Others prefer the terms *dialogic interaction* (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Donato, 2004) or *collaborative dialogue* (Swain, 2000) to refer to graduated assistance provided by a more experienced other that is contingent on actual need and removed when the learner is able to function independently. Gallimore and Tharp (1990) argue that there are multiple means of assisted performance that teachers collaboratively employ along with learners as they reconstruct knowledge and more generally engage in the teaching–learning process. They note that modeling, feeding back, questioning, and cognitive restructuring all require teachers to be responsive to individual student understandings and abilities in moment-to-moment interactions and to assume an appropriate level of responsibility for assisting performance. Additionally, learners play an active role in this process and as they gain increasing awareness of and control over their actions and begin to demonstrate that they have internalized aspects of

assistance and gained greater autonomy, teachers begin to relinquish aspects of their assistance appropriately. In stressing the central role of dialogic mediation in cognitive development, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) argue that

> the relationship of learning to development hinges on dialogic mediation, on the ways in which socialization processes involving the inculcation of concepts through practical-critical activity, mediated by direct adult and/or peer intervention, provide opportunities for the construction of psychological tools through which developing individuals are able to increasingly participate in and produce culturally organized activity.
>
> (p. 289)

In this sense, teaching as dialogic mediation means that the character and quality of classroom interaction between students and teachers are critical. Classroom interaction has the potential to create opportunities for conceptual development because this arises in the specific social activities learners engage in, the resources they use to do so, and what is being accomplished by engaging in those activities. And tracing development requires examining the processes in which learners' activities are initially mediated by other people or cultural artifacts but later come under their control as they appropriate resources to regulate their own activities (internalization).

Teachers' Questioning Patterns

If we look, for example, at much of the traditional classroom-based research in second language acquisition, we find that classroom interaction, particularly what L2 teachers say, has long been conceptualized as both a source of linguistic input and an elicitation technique that creates linguistic output. Such assumptions have been supported by research which indicates that increased use of referential questions and wait time are linked to gains in students' classroom language learning (Chaurdon, 1988; Long & Sato, 1983). However, others who have viewed teachers' questioning patterns from a sociocultural perspective argue that they function not as straightforward mechanisms for input and output but as symbolic linguistic tools that semiotically mediate, assist, and scaffold mental activity that promotes L2 development (McCormick & Donato, 2000). From this stance, the focus is not on question type or even on how certain question types might stimulate interaction or negotiation of meaning but on their "mediational quality; that is, their ability to assist learning" (McCormick & Donato, 2000, p. 184). From this stance, teachers use questions to do certain things, and these things, or "goal-directed actions" (Wells, 1996, p. 76), are central to understanding how

activity, and consequently opportunities for learning, are constituted in L2 classrooms. In other words, from this perspective teachers' questions are viewed as highly productive and frequently used tools to do things: to foster class participation, to expand learner comprehension, and to advance L2 development.

Of course, not all teachers' questions function as productive mediational tools, but they certainly have the potential to do so. For example, Verplaetse (2000) describes the discourse strategies employed by a North American high school science teacher whose highly dialogic full-class, teacher-fronted discussions encouraged high levels of interaction from both native and non-native English-speaking students. His initiation strategies of *wondering out loud, questioning*, and *drafting student participation*, feedback strategies of *acceptance and/or echo of student comments*, and *non-judgmental accepting paraphrasing* strategies all worked to create multiple opportunities for students to be full participants in the reconstruction of knowledge in the classroom. For example, in excerpt 1, the teacher's acceptance of a student's insufficient responses creates multiple opportunities for the student to modify and expand her answers (in 36, 38, 40, 42). Her attempts are supported by the teacher's paraphrase (in 37), additional acceptances (in 39, 41), and the teacher's eventual modeling of scientific terminology (in 43).

Excerpt 1

33. *Teacher*: . . . Now, you guys seem to be talking about X and Y. And people seem to be talking about X and Y like they're these old friends, like you understand exactly what they are. Can somebody let me in on this? (*Hands raise*) Are we just choosing X and Y randomly?
34. *Students*: Yes, Yeah . . .
35. *Teacher*: Could, why don't we choose G and B? (*Hands are raised*) Liana.
36. *Liana*: Well, X and Y are in math . . .
37. *Teacher*: X and Y are in math.
38. *Liana*: It's on a calculator?
39. *Teacher*: Yeah?
40. *Liana*: And it has X and Y on it, and [*Laughter*] use.
41. *Teacher*: So we can=
42. *Liana*: =it's like people use a lot of it for examples, because they use it in math.
43. *Teacher*: OK. So they're commonly used as variables, as unknowns. So that's why we're just using X and Y? Is that why you were, you guys, were using X and Y? (*Smiling*)

(Verplaetse, 2000, p. 233)

This teacher's discourse strategies, especially the non-judgmental listening nature of his responses, modeled alternative ways of thinking and talking about scientific concepts. Thus, the focus of attention from a sociocultural perspective, it can be argued, is not so much on what is being said as on what is being accomplished in the activity of what is being said.

Additionally, as McCormick and Donato (2000) argue, teachers' instructional goals and motives are central in determining what function their questioning patterns play in supporting student learning. Consider excerpt 2 from a fourth/fifth grade North American content-based ESL science class in which the teacher (Ken) is teaching a lesson on insect coloration (Johnson, 1999). The lesson focuses specifically on the four reasons why insects have color (camouflage, advertising, warning, mimicry), scientific concepts that are covered in the mainstream fourth/fifth grade science curriculum.

Excerpt 2

1. *Ken*: Now, an insect [*pause*], an insect, that's colored like that because of the flower that it's on, what would that be called? What's the reason that that insect is that color? Phan?
2. *Student 1*: Camouflage.
3. *Ken*: Camouflage, that's the first one, cam-ou-flage, that's the first one and the camouflage is coloring for protection. If you were a bird flying around would you be able to see that easily?
4. *Students*: No.
5. *Ken*: But what about that one? Now, was I, mother nature, making a big mistake making a bug that color? Look is that hard to see?
6. *Students*: No.
7. *Ken*: So why do you think this bug is this bright color walking around on a green piece of grass? What do you think?
8. *Student 2*: Because maybe like some grasses are like light green? So something colored, so that's kind of light, so . . .
9. *Ken*: Does this look like it's kind of light?
10. *Student 2*: Hum, to me it does.

[1] We had talked about the concept of camouflage the day before so that's why he [Student 2] said that. But now, I'm introducing the next reason, and I'm trying to contrast it with camouflage. And I'm about to introduce the next reason, advertising, but he still is thinking that I'm talking about camouflage. He even tries to say it's an example of camouflage, because he knows what that means, so he

thinks up a reason, something about some grasses are light green, so even here, he's trying to fit this new example into the first reason. I'm trying to help him see that this insect is easy to see, it's not camouflage, so I'm trying to walk him through his own logic, but he doesn't seem to get it.

11. *Ken*: This, is it hard to see this bug on this green piece of grass or easy to see him?
12. *Student 2*: Easy.
13. *Ken*: If you were a bird flying around which of these two insects would you see real fast?
14. *Student 2*: The one on the green grass.
15. *Ken*: The one on the green grass. Now, it might be that there's some lighter colored grass but this particular bug doesn't have colors for that reason. Who can think of another reason? He's so bright, he's so easy to see.

(Johnson, 1999, p. 89)

After reviewing the concept of camouflage (lines 1–4) covered in the previous lesson, Ken asks the class to speculate on why a brightly colored bug might be so visible on a green leaf (lines 5–7). As we hear in Ken's stimulated recall comments [1], he recognizes that Student 2 is trying to fit his answer into the first reason why bugs have color (camouflage) even though the reasoning behind his explanation doesn't make sense. Ken leads Student 2 through a series of questions that attempt to assist him in recognizing the illogic of his explanation. Ken describes his questioning pattern as "trying to walk him through his own logic" even though he remains concerned that Student 2 "doesn't seem to get it." We can characterize Ken's questioning pattern as an attempt (albeit unsuccessful) to assist Student 2's learning while at the same time achieving his instructional goal of contrasting, for the rest of the class, the first two reasons for insect coloration (camouflage vs. advertising).

Maximizing Classroom Interaction

In addition to teachers' questioning patterns, the quality and character of classroom interaction most certainly shapes the nature of the assistance given by expert others, in other words, teachers. Gibbons (2003) traces how two elementary science teachers in a North American public school skillfully and purposefully used language to mediate between their ESL students' limited English language proficiency and commonsense understandings of science concepts on the one hand, and the educational discourse of the elementary science curriculum on the other. Gibbons

traces how these teachers mediated language and learning by engaging in a range of dialogic strategies during moment-to-moment interactions, including: mode shifting, signaling how students can self-reformulate, indicating where a reformulation is needed, and modeling alternative ways of recontextualizing personal knowledge. In the excerpt shown in Table 5.1 taken from Gibbons' study, as students describe how two bar magnets behave in relation to the position of the poles (+, –) the teacher "re-represents or recontextualizes" (p. 257) the students' experiences and the events they are talking about in a way that draws in the scientific concepts and discourse of the science curriculum.

The teacher in this interaction appropriates the students' meaning while at the same time recoding their everyday meanings and recasting them into more scientific terminology. So *stick* becomes *attract*, and *not pushing* becomes *repelling* (p. 258). Gibbons argues that such mode shifting creates a bridge between the students' current language proficiency and the discourse of the science curriculum because the science discourse (*attract* and *repelling*) builds on what the students already know, but it is being used in meaningful interaction and purposeful activity. Gibbons questions the common notion of *comprehensibility* as linguistic simplification (Krashen, 1985), conceptualizing it instead as involving the use of multimodal texts: what the teacher is doing (*demonstrating*), what the students are saying (student/everyday), and what the teacher is saying (*multiple ways of expressing the same idea*), and new meanings (*attract* and *repelling*) being made transparent through purposeful use (*manipulation of objects*). In conceptualizing teaching as dialogic mediation the teacher's discourse is *contingent* (Van Lier, 1996), as evidenced in Verplaetse's (2000) and Gibbons' (2003) work, because what teachers say depends in large part on the shared meanings and goals of both the teacher and the students as well as the teacher's ability to understand the students' attempts to communicate ideas.

Table 5.1 Mode Shifting in Text 1

Student	*Situationally embedded*	*Everyday*	*Formal*
it sticks together	like that (*demonstrating*)	they stuck to each other	they attract each other
you can feel . . . that they're not pushing . . . if we use the other side we can't feel pushing		and stick together or pushing away	when they were facing one way you felt the magnets attract when you turn one of the magnets around you felt it repelling

Source: Gibbons (2003, p. 258).

Conclusion

Conceptualizing teaching as dialogic mediation focuses our attention on the character and quality of classroom interaction and its mediating role in learners' overall conceptual development. Embracing a conception of teaching as dialogic mediation shifts attention to the norms that govern participation in an activity and the extent to which L2 learners are (or are not) able to participate in that activity. Attention also shifts to the resources L2 learners are using or attempting to use, or need to be aware of, in order to successfully or even partially participate in the activity. Finally, attention shifts to what is being accomplished in the activity and whether or not this is working to build learners' capacity to generate meaning through, and therefore successfully function in, relevant interaction and activities. When teaching is understood as dialogic mediation, instruction (teaching/learning) has the potential to create opportunities for productive interactions to occur in goal-directed activity settings. And since language has an extremely powerful influence on conceptual development, what goes on in these activity settings, the language used, the objects that are present, and how the language and the objects are understood, used, and transformed in purposeful activities, set the stage for teaching, learning, and development. From this point of view, learning is not development; however, properly organized instruction (teaching/learning) can result in cognitive development and can set in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. From a sociocultural perspective, teaching and learning are necessary and universal aspects of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological functions.

Chapter 6

Macro-Structures and the Second Language Teaching Profession

A sociocultural perspective by definition links the individual with the social, assuming that learning and development are always socially situated. If the goal of L2 teacher education is to prepare the individual teacher to function in the professional world of L2 teaching, then it is critical to account for how an individual's activities shape and are shaped by the social, cultural, and historical macro-structures which constitute that professional world. Activity theory, an extension of Vygotskian sociocultural theory first put forth by Leont'ev (1978, 1981) and more recently taken up others (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Thorne, 2004), attempts to do just that. According to Thorne (2004), activity theory attempts to tie together individual development and the social-material conditions of everyday life. As an analytical framework rather than a theory per se, it maps the social influences and relationships involved in networks of human activity. In other words, to fully understand the activities that L2 teachers and their students engage in, it is essential to understand the broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that shape those activities.

Educational reform policies, high-stakes tests, and the norms of schooling embedded in instructional contexts are powerful macro-structures that affect the ways in which L2 teachers and their L2 students are positioned, how L2 teachers enact their teaching practices, and most importantly, the kinds of learning environments they are willing and able to create for their L2 students. It becomes the responsibility of L2 teacher education to make L2 teachers aware of the sanctioned policies, curricular mandates, assessment practices, and norms of schooling that can and will shape their work if they are to be expected to work with and against the consequences that these macro-structures may have on their instructional practices and, in turn, their students' opportunities for L2 learning. In this chapter, I scrutinize these macro-structures through the analytic framework of activity theory so as to understand how L2 teacher learning and the activities of L2 teaching are interdependent in their development, thereby exposing the impact that these broader macro-structures have on L2 teaching.

Activity Theory: An Overview

Built on the tenets of Vygotskian sociocultural theory, activity theory maintains that human activity is fundamentally artifact-mediated and goal-oriented. In other words, people do not function individually or independently of others, but they mediate and are mediated by the social relationships they have with others. Likewise, they pursue their goals through the use of culturally constructed physical and symbolic artifacts. Thus, human cognition is situated in and develops through activities unique to the societies in which they have been constructed during their collective histories. Rather than exploring learning and development by isolating a single factor and controlling for all others, an activity theoretical perspective attempts to construct a holistic view of human activities as well as human agency within these activities. As a way to depict how different individuals' activities are interwoven and thus how and where individual thinking emerges in social contexts, Engeström (1987) suggests the model of a collective human activity system shown in Figure 6.1.

In an activity system, the *subject* is the individual or group whose agency is selected as the point of view in the analysis. For example, one might seek to understand how an individual teacher understands, functions, and engages in a certain goal-directed activity, perhaps communicative language teaching, in a particular instructional context. The *object* is the "problem space" at which these activities are directed and that object is continuously molded and transformed into an *outcome* that is shaped by a host of *mediating artifacts* (both physical and symbolic). For example, if the *object* of a teacher's instruction is for L2 students to develop greater overall L2 communicative proficiency, but in the activity system students must pass a nationally mandated high-stakes grammar and reading comprehension test (*mediating artifact*), the *outcome* may actually morph into students attending to grammar and vocabulary rather than advancing their overall L2 communicative proficiency. The teacher may even recognize this contradiction, and try through her activities to

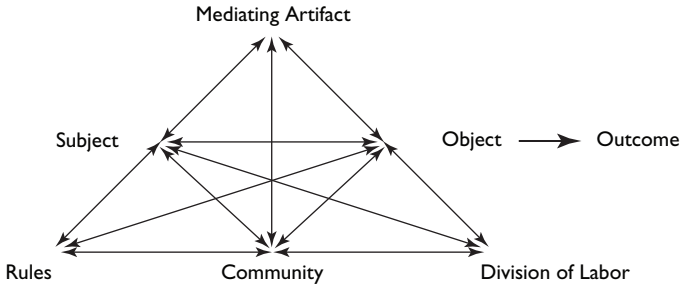

Figure 6.1 Human Activity System.

redirect the outcome, but given the power of high-stakes tests and student agency, her students may only attend to aspects of her instruction that they perceive will enable them to achieve their goal of passing the high-stakes test.

The *community* within an activity system consists of groups who share the same general *object* and who position themselves as distinct from other communities. Depending on the *subject* of the activity system, a *community* might comprise fellow teachers in the school or the classroom community created by a teacher and a group of students. Of course, in any community there exists a *division of labor* determining who does what, how activities get done, and who holds power or status. Likewise, how things get done is shaped by *rules*: both explicit and implicit norms and conventions that place certain limits as well as possibilities on the nature of interaction within the activity system. More often than not, the *rules* have been ritualized through a long sociocultural history. According to Cole and Engeström (1995), an activity system contains the results of all previous activity systems that have influenced it. Thus, the concept of sociocultural history is an important explanatory tool for understanding any activity system. In fact, every dimension of the activity system—whether it be the subject's personal history, the community's values, beliefs, and norms, or the physical and symbolic artifacts that mediate the subject's activities—has emerged from and become stabilized through its sociocultural history. Thus, for example, the norms of schooling, sometimes referred to as the *hidden curriculum* (Denscombe, 1982), represent the sociocultural norms and values emphasized by schools that dictate what teachers and students accept as usual or normal in classrooms and schools.

The power of activity theory as an analytical framework is that it allows us to capture how each component in the activity system influences the other either directly or indirectly, while simultaneously capturing the situated activity system as a whole. And when we do this, invariably we uncover inner contradictions or the "clash between *individual actions and the total activity system*" (Engeström, 1987, p. 31). As in the example given above, a high-stakes grammar and reading comprehension test can derail even the best-intentioned L2 teacher's efforts to enable her students to develop greater overall communicative proficiency. As Engeström (1999) argues, human activity is both unstable and unpredictable, and the first stage in resolving any contradictions that the activity system may be facing involves uncovering them.

Educational Reform Policies

Within the L2 teaching profession, educational reform policies represent key cultural-historical artifacts that mediate the activity systems in which

L2 teachers learn and work. Typically, educational reform policies are designed and implemented with the goal of altering the content, delivery, and outcome of education in a particular country, state, or segment of society. And while D.L. Ball (2000) argues that educational policies and/or curricular mandates do not actually tell teachers what to do, they do create circumstances in which the range of options is narrower.

Over the past quarter century the L2 teaching profession has shifted toward more communicative-oriented outcomes for L2 teaching. That is, it is no longer sufficient simply to know about the language; learners are now expected to be able to use the language to do things in an increasingly globalized world. In order to effect such change in the content, delivery, and outcome of L2 education, some countries have instituted top-down educational reform policies. Most begin with the ministry of education, where national curricula and national exams are established. These macro-structures come to represent these policies which are assumed to trickle down to teachers through teacher education programs, to seep into the textbooks and other curricular materials that teachers use, and to end up in new ways for L2 teachers to think about and participate in the activities associated with L2 teaching and learning. Unfortunately, this sort of top-down approach to educational reform rarely has the widespread impact that policy makers expect.

English Language Educational Reform Policies in South Korea

The on-going English language educational reform efforts in South Korea are an interesting case in point. Historically, the learning of English in South Korea has been regarded primarily as a tool to get high scores on university entrance exams. Because the content of the exam was mainly grammar and direct translation, English teaching methodology was grounded in the grammar–translation approach in Korean schools. The result of this educational history is the inability of Koreans to speak English competently or use what knowledge they have of its grammar and vocabulary to engage in meaningful interactions in English (Chosun Ilbo, 2000). As English has become the lingua franca of business and industry in the global market place, the South Korean government and the ministry of education reported that an inability to communicate in English was damaging to the country's economic growth and prosperity and to its political position on the international stage of industrialized nations (Jung & Norton, 2002). As part of a globalization campaign, entrance into prestigious schools and universities, securing a job and/or promotion, and social positioning have come to be based, in part, on English language proficiency (Jung & Norton, 2002). In response, South Korea's ministry of education's sixth and seventh national curricula for public schools

mandated that CLT replace traditional grammar-translation, and audio-lingual methods and that teachers teach English through English (TETE), using task-based activities that engage learners in meaningful language use. The implementation of these curricula was incremental, starting in 2001 with the third, fourth, and seventh grades and completed in 2004 with the twelfth grade. Textbooks were revised in accordance with the principles of CLT to achieve the goal of improving students' L2 communicative competence (Cha, 2000; Sim, Moon, Park, & Kwon, 1998).

Yet numerous studies indicate that the CLT and the TETE mandates did not succeed in improving students' L2 communicative competence because they failed to take into account the limited oral language proficiency of the local teaching force, the washback effect of the grammar–translation-oriented examination system, and the normative ways of schooling that South Korean teachers and their students are socialized into. Much of this research has found that English language teachers in South Korea, not surprisingly, enact their curricula in very traditional, non-communicative ways (Cha, 2000; Choi, 2000; Choi et al., 1986; Kim, 2008; Kwon, 2000; Li, 1998).

Using activity theory as an analytic framework, Kim (2008) examined the interface between the ideologies that are embedded in the South Korean English language educational reform policies, namely CLT and TETE. This also involved how Korean English language teachers understand and carry out their teaching practices under these policies, and how Korean students experience their teachers' instructional practices. Kim found that both teachers and students envisaged the curricular reform efforts in ways that reflected their own personal and professional perceptions of English language teaching and learning within the Korean social, cultural, and schooling context. While on the surface the teachers agreed that South Korea's English education should aim to help students develop communicative competence, the contradictions they experienced when trying to implement the curricular reform mandates made it difficult for them to fully support the ministry of education's version of a CLT-based curriculum. Specifically, whereas the government's CLT-based curriculum supports learner-centered, task-based communicative activities conducted in English to promote students' L2 communicative competence, the teachers' personal beliefs about language learning and teaching had a much stronger influence on the way they carried out their instructional practices. The teachers firmly believed that a teacher-centered classroom that emphasizes the mastery of language structures was, in fact, a prerequisite for authentic communication. This belief, coupled with a lack of confidence in their own English language competence and an insufficient understanding of the CLT-based curriculum, represented an insurmountable obstacle to their implementation of the curricular mandates. Moreover, while students found communicative activities to be fun and motivating, they did not

regard them as core learning activities. Typical of EFL learning contexts where authentic communication through the target language is not students' main learning objective, passing school exams was seen as paramount. Consequently, any activities that did not center on this goal were viewed as unimportant. Despite the goals of the curricular reform efforts, students were aware of the marginalized position of communicative activities and thus regarded them as trivial.

Engeström (1987) argues that the norms and rules of the community function as psychological tools for its members. Like many Asian educational communities, South Korean schools measure academic performance on the basis of exam scores (Hiramatsu, 2005; Li, 1998; Pennington, 1995; Sakui, 2004). This is derived from a societal zeal for higher education as a must-have for financial and social success. In this "exam-oriented" culture, high performance on exams is regarded as the dominant objective (*object*) of study in secondary schools, and most South Korean educational community members are driven by this goal (*outcome*). To obtain this goal, teacher-centered language classes are a preferable and pervasive *rule* that defines the *division of labor* between teachers and students. This attitude supports Leont'ev's (1978) view that "consciousness and meaning are always formed in joint, collective activity" (p. 137). Collective activity is apparent in the consciousness and meaning of what is considered to be "real learning" in South Korean schooling. Together, schools, community members, teachers, students, and parents have co-constructed this unique but collectively shared meaning for "real learning" and "pedagogical value" within this community, and as such it functions as an *inner contradiction* that has stymied much of the English educational reform efforts by the South Korean ministry of education.

Inner Contradictions and Interventions

Engeström (1999) indicates the importance of studying inner contradictions by pointing out the unstable and unpredictable nature of human activity. He also points out that finding "disturbance, innovation, and contradiction" (1999a, p. 177) is useful in that it can reveal the status quo of the activity system, the first step toward resolving any contradiction that it may be facing. Identifying such contradictions can be done through close observation of an activity system. In this process, it is neither possible nor productive to focus only on physical actions, neglecting the language used within the system. Language is an important resource in that it enables us to identify how participants understand the contradictions they face in an activity system. Likewise, once these inner contradictions have been identified, appropriate interventions can be created and implemented.

Redesigning a School Community: The Case of a Finnish Middle School

Using activity theory as an analytic framework for understanding how a school community collectively analyzed and redesigned its practices, Engeström, Engeström, and Suntio (2002) studied a Finnish middle school located in a socially and economically disadvantaged urban area, as its faculty and administration sought to implement a learner-centered pedagogy and create greater connections between the school curriculum and the world outside of school. The research team, in collaboration with the school's faculty, traced the historical roots of the inner contradictions of the current activity system, which included a lack of knowledge on the part of teachers about their students' sociocultural backgrounds and career goals, student apathy, students' inappropriate manners and use of language, impoverished working conditions in the school, and lack of adequate time for collective planning. Collectively and over an extended period of time, a new vision for the school was projected that centered on increasing and improving the school's resources, implementing a "learning to learn" orientation for the curriculum, and extending the work of the school to involve and be relevant to the world outside of school.

Over the course of a year, the research team traced the implementation of a single curricular innovation referred to as the *final project*. All graduating ninth-grade students were to select a relevant topic and create a cross-subject project in their final year at the school. Teacher guidance and instructional time would be provided and students could use the final project as grounds for raising their final grades in other school subjects. All final projects would then be displayed in an end-of-the-year exhibition. Throughout the process of creating and enacting this curricular innovation, the research team recorded the language used by the teachers to describe their perceptions and experiences as they implemented the final project. The teachers were found to spend considerable time debating the pedagogical principles of the project and discussing how to organize and provide guidance for students. However, there was a noticeable shift in how they characterized their students over the course of the year. Interestingly, the teachers' discourse showed a gradual shift from predominantly negative to predominantly positive talk about the students. The research team attributed this shift to changes in the teachers' activity system. That is, the final project, acting as a *mediating artifact*, forced both teachers and students to operate across the traditional school subject boundaries and to work on long-term activities that extended beyond the traditional lesson or instructional unit, thus changing both the *division of labor* and the *rules* of the activity system. Additionally, carrying out the final project fostered a sense of personal pride and ownership beyond the obligatory demands of the traditional curriculum. This was also

supported by the fact that students could use their projects to enhance their grades. This precipitated a change in the students' motive for engaging in these activities, which positively altered the *outcome* of the activity system. Overall, the research team concluded that the final project remediated the teachers' activity system: the *object* of their activity was no longer to control apathetic students by imparting, and then testing them on a codified body of knowledge but had shifted toward engaging with people they began to characterize as competent students whose active engagement in "learning-to-learn" activities fostered a sense of trust and respect between teachers and students.

The Engeström et al. (2002) study is a striking example of how activity theory, as an analytic framework, can help to expose the dynamic interdependence between the individual and the social; in other words, how they affect and are affected by one another. When contradictions emerge, innovations can be targeted in such a way that a change in one dimension of the activity system will have repercussions for the system as a whole.

Implementing Educational Reform Policies: The Teaching Practicum in South Korea

Typically, it is the responsibility of L2 teacher education programs to provide those who are entering the profession with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to both understand and implement the educational reform policies set by local, state, and national governing bodies. This generally happens within the context of university-based coursework and the teaching practicum. The teaching practicum, whether offered concurrently with or at the completion of coursework, is recognized as one of the most significant institutionalized experiences in the developmental process of learning to teach. It offers novice teachers the opportunity to gain actual classroom experience under the supervision of a more experienced mentor, and through direct participation in the social practices associated with teaching it socializes novice teachers into the existing and emerging ways of being an L2 teacher and of thinking about L2 teaching.

Within the English educational reform efforts in South Korea, the practicum is an especially important site for the implementation of the ministry of education's English educational reform policies. Ahn (2009) examined how the curricular mandates of CLT and TETE were instantiated and embraced during the teaching practicum of a group of South Korean novice EFL teachers. Using activity theory as an analytic framework, Ahn examined how the CLT and TETE policies were enacted in the activities that two teams of novice teachers engaged in during their four-week teaching practicum. Each team consisted of an experienced mentor teacher and two novice teachers who had recently completed their required university-based coursework in English linguistics and literature,

English language teaching, and general education. For both teams, the activities of the four-week teaching practicum included: (1) observing and discussing model lessons (taught by the mentor teacher and each novice teacher); (2) creating and submitting lesson plans for feedback from the team; (3) observations of the novice teachers' teaching by the team; (4) participating in post-observation team conferences; and (5) keeping a reflective journal about the practicum experience. In addition, a content analysis of the ministry of education's seventh curriculum manual identified four key premises of the English education reform efforts. These are: (1) the development of students' communicative competence; (2) the use of English as the medium of instruction: (3) communicative activities and task-based language learning; and (4) learner-centered language learning. These four premises functioned as psychological concepts that the ministry of education expected novice teachers to embrace in their university-based coursework and enact in their instructional practices as future English language teachers. Overall, Ahn found that the extent to which each of the four novice teachers was able to internalize the CLT and TETE policies—in other words, the extent to which communicative-oriented activities and the use of English as the medium of instruction were apparent in their instructional practices—depended in large part on the nature of the mentoring they received during the practicum, on their own language learning and schooling histories, and on the norms of schooling embedded in the Korean educational system.

The mentoring relationship between the mentor teachers and the novice teachers was found to define both the *rules* and the *division of labor* within the teaching practicum which, in turn, significantly altered the original *object* and *outcome* of the practicum experience. For example, within Team A the mentor teacher modeled, emphasized, and valued explicit knowledge of English in preparation for school exams over meaningful use of English or the development of students' communicative competence. During model lessons, teaching observations, and follow-up team conferences, teacher-controlled instruction and non-communicative approaches were not only emphasized but praised by the mentor teacher. While the mentor teacher did use English as the predominant medium of instruction, thus modeling the TETE policy, both novice teachers were found to use English less and less as the practicum progressed. Concerns over "losing control" of the lesson (*rules*) and students' tendency to remain passive (*community* and *division of labor*) emerged as a rationale for using Korean rather than English during instruction. Within Team A, the *object* of the practicum shifted from enacting the CLT and TETE reform policies in their instructional practices, the *outcome* of which was to increase students' overall communicative proficiency, to preparing students to pass school exams, maintaining control over student behavior, and ensuring appropriate student participation.

On the other hand, within Team B, the mentor teacher established a more flexible mentoring relationship with the novice teachers, both modeling and encouraging them to experiment with more communicative-oriented activities. Interestingly, while their initial lessons were filled with activities that were designed to encourage communicative interaction (games, jigsaws, etc.), as the practicum progressed both novice teachers were found to rely more and more on Korean in order to get students to participate even minimally. Despite encouragement from their mentor teacher, the institutional norms (*rules*) of minimal student participation within the Korean schooling system, combined with the need to maintain classroom management and to complete their lesson plans, overwhelmed the Team B novice teachers' own idealized conceptions of how they would enact the CLT and TETE reform policies. This was in spite of the fact that both novice teachers in Team B had expert command of English and extensive first-hand experiences with communicative-oriented approaches to English language instruction. This finding alone clearly contradicts the claims of the ministry of education and other literature (Park, 2000; Nunan, 2003) that teachers' poor spoken English is the root cause of their inability to enact the TETE policy. Within Team B, the *object* of the practicum remained to enact the CLT and TETE reform policies in their instructional practices. However, the *outcome*, to increase students' overall communicative proficiency, was compromised because the novice teachers were unable to fully overcome the passivity that students are socialized into in the Korean schooling system (*community* and *rules*). More for Team A than Team B, the "collective activity" (Leont'ev, 1978), or mutually shared sense (*community*) of what it means to learn English in the context of formal schooling in Korea, mediated these teachers' ability to enact the CLT and TETE reform policies in their instructional practices.

In addition, the novice teachers' language learning and schooling histories influenced their understandings of and attempts to enact the curricular reform mandates. In Team A, both novice teachers had good command of English but virtually no first-hand experience with communicative-oriented activities and were themselves products of the traditional teacher-fronted Korean schooling system. While both recognized the value of the TETE policy, they were found to teach English as they had been taught, through grammar–translation, drill and repetition. While they varied in their attitudes toward the use of English as the medium of instruction, and consequently did, to a limited extent, encourage students' use of English, both eventually succumbed to the norms of student participation embedded in Korean schooling and, in fact, used this to justify their reliance on teacher-fronted traditional instructional practices. In Team B, as mentioned above, both novice teachers had expert command of English, extensive first-hand experiencs with communicative-oriented activities, and for much of their schooling histories (10–12 years) were educated outside of Korea,

attending elementary and/or secondary schools in which English was used as a medium of instruction. Therefore, in one sense, the teaching practicum, for Team B's novice teachers, was itself a gradual progress of (re)socialization into the norms of Korean schooling. The novice teachers in Team B were found to use English more often in class. However, their students' use of English was extremely limited and almost non-existent in small group activities. Over the course of the practicum, the novice teachers in Team B were able to enact, to a limited extent, the CLT and TETE curricular mandates. Yet, at the same time, institutional constraints, in particular the norms of Korean schooling, persisted even as they attempted to enact more communicative-oriented instructional practices and teach English through English.

Ahn's (2009) analysis of the activity systems within which these novice teachers were learning to teach identified a host of *inner contradictions*. The norms of schooling that are endemic in the Korean educational system mediated the extent to which these novice teachers were able to enact the CLT and TETE curricular mandates. Additionally, their language learning and schooling histories and the nature of the mentoring they received were influential in mediating the extent to which they are able to fully embrace those mandates. From an activity theory analytical framework, such *inner contradictions* become the starting points for the design and implementation of appropriate interventions. Moreover, any intervention must take into account all of the contradictions that may exist anywhere in the activity system in order to ensure that its *object* and the *outcome* are not subverted but maintained and eventually achieved.

High-Stakes Language Testing

High-stakes language testing, particularly when initiated at the state or national level, represents a powerful macro-structure that has a tremendous impact on what L2 teachers teach, how they teach, and what their L2 students ultimately learn. And while there are many vocal critics of the undemocratic and unethical nature of language testing (see Shohamy, 2001), issues of accountability and educational reform are invariably linked to the content, use, and consequences of language testing.

The international Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) has been found to have a powerful washback effect on the content and instructional practices of ESL/EFL teachers (Hughes, 1998; Wall & Alderson, 1993). Using a case study methodology, Johnson, Jordan, and Poehner (2005)[6] uncovered the ways in which the classroom practices

6 Extracts reprinted with permission from Lawrence Erlbaum. Johnson, K.E., Jordan, S.R., & Poehner, M. (2005). The TOEFL trump card: An investigation of test impact in an ESL classroom. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 2 (2), 71–94.

of one ESL teacher and his students interact with their perceptions of the validity of the TOEFL—specifically, the extent to which they viewed the TOEFL as an accurate measure of English language proficiency. While both the teacher and his students described the TOEFL as "full of tricks" and believed that the variety of English tested on the TOEFL was not the variety of English used in day-to-day interactions with native speakers of English, the institutional authority of the TOEFL was found to strongly influence the teacher's perceptions of his students' English language proficiency, which in turn shaped the nature of his instructional practices in the classroom.

To illustrate the impact of high-stakes tests, such as the TOEFL, on the everyday instructional practices of L2 teachers, two examples from the Johnson et al. (2005) case study are discussed below. Using activity theory as an analytic framework, the teacher, Mark, represents the *subject* of the activity system, because his agency and point of view were the focus of interest to the researchers. The *object* of this activity system is for Mark's students to develop a level of English language proficiency that will enable them to be successful in the academic setting of an American university. The *community* within which this activity system sits has a somewhat contentious history of divergent approaches to English language instruction (form vs. function), yet contains mutually agreed-upon competencies in reading, writing, listening, and speaking that are assumed to be necessary for academic success. These competencies have been institutionalized within the language program's curriculum (*mediating artifacts*) as leveled instruction in the four skill areas with an eye toward English for academic purposes. Additionally, the *community* reflects both the *division of labor* and the *rules* that govern who does what, how English language instruction is carried out, and how students advance through the program's instructional levels. An interesting *rule* that has been institutionalized in this particular institution is that students can progress to the next instructional level if they achieve a particular TOEFL score, even if the collective recommendation of their instructors is that they should repeat the instructional level. Thus, within this activity system, a TOEFL score can function as a *mediating artifact* that, if high enough, can shift the *outcome* of the activity system as a whole. Let us now consider the cases of Joon and Noelle from Johnson et al. (2005).

Constructing a Student: The Case of Joon

Joon, a 30-year-old Korean woman who enrolled in the intensive English language program, had had a successful career in her own country before coming to the U.S. Her goal was to gain entrance into a graduate program at an American university, but at the conclusion of the previous semester her instructors reviewed her classroom performance and decided

she should repeat the current level of instruction. On her own, however, Joon had taken the TOEFL and received a score that, following institutional policy, allowed the judgment of her instructors to be overridden. Thus she was granted permission to move on to the next level of instruction.

Her teacher, Mark, voiced his and his colleagues' concerns regarding Joon's promotion to the next level. What is interesting in the following excerpt is Mark's tacit acceptance of the TOEFL as a more accurate assessment of Joon's English abilities than the evaluation of the instructors who had worked with her daily over several months. In fact, this discrepancy led Mark to view Joon's English language proficiency in a different light.

Excerpt 1

M: She's an odd one because uh that particular student was . . . *last semester she didn't do very well in the Reading II and all the Level II classes and we were basically gonna make her repeat the whole thing and then she turned out with the, turned up with this really good TOEFL score, which amazed everybody*. So because she got the TOEFL score, she, in a sense was *in charge of her own promotion*.

R: Mm hm.

M: And she moved up to Level 3—but we tried to talk her out of going to 3 but she was sure she needed to go to Level 3.

R: Uh huh.

M: So what I mean is, that she'd got contradictions in her language learning and uh w-what that tells us right away is that uh *we can't trust ourselves (laughs) to read her*, you know we just have to allow her to, *to wander through and hang on the best we can*.

R: Mm hm.

M: But when we do talk about things, I do try to tell her exactly what I think. You know, you, you're talking, that's good, you're not so clear but please keep trying, don't worry about us, you know, keep pushing it through, I'll try to, you know, I dunno.

R: Mm hm do you think it was, it was a mistake for her to move up to Level 3?

M: No, no, I think it's exactly what she needed, but I, *I felt that as teachers living with her for a whole semester, grading exam after exam, each exam confirming the idea that she really wasn't doing well* . . .

R: Mm hm.

M: . . . and then suddenly having her do well on the TOEFL, which is even more unusual. Um, it-it-it's in a way it's to her credit as well as *sort of humbling to us, to, to realize we really don't know*

how much English she knows despite all the data we collected all semester.

(p. 85)

Mark goes on to state that he continued to have difficulty understanding Joon's spoken language in class and often noticed errors in her written English. He further admitted to feeling frustrated with what he described as his inability to understand Joon well enough to even answer her questions or to respond appropriately, although he continued to encourage her attempts to participate in class. However, it is Mark's response to these communication problems that is noteworthy. His comments suggest that he sees himself as partially at fault for not being able to understand Joon:

Excerpt 2

M: But I haven't been able to do it when *I want* to, because *she hasn't quite come to the threshold of me being able to understand what it is. You think I'd be able to after all this time*.

R: Well, if her attempts are limited, maybe not.

M: *You'd think listening to foreign student questions, I'd be able to put it together* but *she's so convoluted*.

(p. 86)

Thus Mark recasts the failed communication in such a way that he acknowledges that Joon is "*convoluted*" and that *she* has not "*come to the threshold*" of comprehensibility, but at the same time he implicates himself as failing to comprehend her. He is not "*able to understand*" or "*able to put it together*." As an ESL teacher, he clearly appears to expect that he should be able to make sense of what she is saying.

These remarks stand in stark contrast to Mark's earlier appraisal of Joon. Indeed, Joon's poor classroom performance was taken as a valid indicator of her relatively low English proficiency. Her higher-than-expected TOEFL score changed this perception, and Mark began to construct her as a more competent speaker of English than he had previously thought. Joon's English was still largely incomprehensible to him, and yet he was no longer comfortable to attribute failure to her simply on the grounds that her oral proficiency was low. For Mark, her TOEFL score had proven that this could not be the case. Instead, he seemed to feel obliged to share the responsibility when their communication broke down:

M: Oh yeah, yeah, and I'm pleased with how she's doing, um, but ah . . . see, that's another thing, when I look at her homework, she's not always accurate. Um, she doesn't always give me what

I wanted her to give me. *And now remembering what happened before then I, I sort of have to say, well (laughs), is it possible to see this from her point of view*, you know.

R: Ah hah.

M: Does she really mean more than she says or is there something there? So, not, she's not that precise yet, but, but it did amaze me she did well on the TOEFL and it did sort of uh *disappoint me in myself that I wasn't able to see that* 'cause I can usually, I usually think that where the student's at again and when they don't do well, we know that well, they're not doing their best work.

R: Mm hm.

M: Now here I am thinking that she was doing her best work and it wasn't very good and then *she proved me wrong*.

(pp. 86–87)

Given the activity system Mark and Joon are operating in, it is not surprising that he allowed a commercially available high-stakes test such as the TOEFL to overrule his own professional judgments. Clearly, the *object* of Mark's instruction was to enable Joon to be a competent user of English for academic purposes; a year's classroom performance indicated that she was not. However, the *mediating artifact*, the higher-than-expected TOEFL score with its institutional authority and universally perceived validity as an accurate measure of English language proficiency, led Mark to construct Joon as a more competent user of English. Thus the object of his activities shifted toward a different *outcome*, one in which he would "*allow her to, to wander through and hang on the best we can*." As Johnson et al. (2005) point out, this makes a strong case for the "trumping" power of the TOEFL, because it shows how radically this student's test score affected her teacher's confidence in his own assessment of her English language proficiency and how it led him to reevaluate the role that his instructional practices might play in supporting her L2 learning.

Constructing a Student: The case of Noelle

Noelle, an 18-year-old student from Cyprus, entered Mark's intensive English language program in order to earn a high enough TOEFL score to be admitted to an American university to study Speech Pathology. She initially took the TOEFL just before leaving for the U.S. and, much to her surprise, was unable to obtain the minimum score required by the university where she intended to study. In Cyprus, Noelle had done much of her formal education in English. In fact, at her school, English was a subject of study as well as the medium of instruction for certain subjects (e.g., music and art). Noelle had registered to take the TOEFL again at

the end of the course, and if her scores were not high enough for her to be admitted for full-time university study she would return home to Cyprus and explore other options for her post-secondary education.

Mark described Noelle as an enthusiastic student in class but one who also did "*so many things without thinking*," and had a tendency to "*shoot from the hip*." She was an outgoing student and participated very actively in class—so much so that Mark remarked that she had "*been talking almost the whole class*." Noelle was often the first to offer an answer, and both she and Mark had a great deal of confidence in her English. In particular, Mark noted her ability to rely on a kind of intuition when she was speaking. Noelle claimed that she had many opportunities to speak English outside of class, since she had an American roommate. She also said that she spent a great deal of time watching American television programs and movies.

It is interesting to note that both Noelle and Mark considered her scores on the TOEFL to be fairly low. The fact that she was still in Mark's class indicates that she had not yet achieved an acceptable score on the test. In the excerpt below, Mark attempts to explain why Noelle's TOEFL scores should have been so low despite her fluency and facility with the language.

M: So I think *when Noelle talks a lot to native speakers, she does learn a lot of English, but um I think it's dormitory English* really.
R: Uh huh.
M: *Instead of TOEFL English*.

(p. 88)

Thus Mark explains Noelle's low TOEFL score by distinguishing the kind of English she was learning outside of class from the kind necessary to receive a high score. For Mark, then, it was possible for Noelle to be successful in communicating and interacting with both native and non-native speakers of English but not successful in the TOEFL.

Here again, the TOEFL score, when incongruent with a student's classroom performance, functioned as a *mediating artifact* in Mark's activity system. However, unlike in the case of Joon, Noelle's lower-than-expected TOEFL score led Mark to give less credence to the test result. And Noelle concurred with this assessment; in an interview, she agreed that a person could have high grades and good performance in an ESL class but still receive a low TOEFL score. In her case, this was due, at least in part, to the prominent role of grammar in the TOEFL. When describing her previous experience of taking the TOEFL, Noelle admitted, "*The grammar scared me a lot. It's the worst part for me*." In fact, while discussing how the TOEFL could be improved, she said that the test would be better if it had a speaking component. When asked to explain

her reasoning, she simply responded, "*Because I am awful in grammar, but I am very good at speaking.*" In her ESL classes, she claimed that she was more successful in situations that allowed her to rely on her communicative abilities in English rather than her explicit knowledge of grammar.

This ambivalence over the meaning of one's TOEFL score illustrates the extent of Noelle's struggle with the authority accorded to the test. On the one hand, Noelle was confident in her own abilities in English and refuses to allow them to be undermined by her low TOEFL score. Rather than accepting her test performance as an indication of low English proficiency, she continued to believe that her communicative abilities were good and that it was her trouble with grammar that caused her score to be lower than anticipated. On the other hand, she found herself fighting an enormous amount of social and institutional pressure to admit that a TOEFL score can—and does—measure some part of students' success with the language.

One of the most striking findings of the Johnson et al. (2005) study is the fact that the teacher, despite his repeated criticism of the TOEFL, possessed a mostly uncritical acceptance of its authoritative power as an indicator of an individual's English language proficiency. This belief is most likely grounded in the TOEFL's long history of being endorsed by various institutional authorities and its worldwide acceptance as the definitive test of English language proficiency. In both the cases outlined above, the authoritative power of the TOEFL was sufficient to prompt this teacher to realign his perceptions of his students' English language proficiency with their TOEFL scores rather than with their actual classroom performance.

Conclusion

A fundamental premise of a sociocultural perspective is that individual mental functioning does not exist as separate from the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which it occurs. Instead, individual cognition comes into being as a result of engagement in the social world. Recognizing how the individual teacher is both shaped by and shapes that social world creates a point of departure for L2 teacher education. The activities of L2 teaching and learning to teach are not neutral but instead are embedded in and emerge out of the broader social, historical, political, and ideological practices that constitute L2 teachers' professional worlds. This being the case, L2 teacher education programs have an obligation to inform L2 teachers of and provide them with the tools to actively and continually scrutinize the macro-structures that are ever present in the contexts in which they live, learn, and work. Such macro-structures may be tangible artifacts, such as high-stakes tests, curricular mandates, and

educational reform policies, or symbolic artifacts, such as locally situated ideologies about the role of schooling and L2 learning and teaching. Activity theory as an analytic framework is a useful lens through which to accomplish this because it can expose the activity system that teachers are operating in and identify any contradictions within it that are working against the stated *object* and *outcome* or that are changing them altogether. As we saw in this chapter, why L2 teachers and their students are unable and/or unwilling to enact educational reform policies in the settings in which they work, how educational reform policies can get subverted by powerful norms of schooling, minimizing novice teachers' abilities to enact them in their instructional practices, and how high-stakes tests can alter L2 teachers' perceptions of and responses to their students as L2 learners, all functioned as inner contradictions that mediated L2 teacher learning and teaching, and their students' opportunities for learning. Yet, once such contradictions are identified, L2 teacher education can work to create mediational means that target these contradictions; that is, create conditions within which L2 teachers can work through how they will respond to and work against the negative consequences of the macro-structures that are present in their professional worlds. In Chapter 7, I examine how inquiry-based approaches to professional development create mediational means for teachers to collectively engage in on-going, in-depth, systematic, and reflective examinations of their teaching practices and their students' learning. They thereby create opportunities for sustained dialogic mediation between and among teachers and teacher educators, and provide assisted performance as teachers struggle to understand and work against the negative consequences of the macro-structures that are directly relevant to their professional worlds.

Chapter 7

Inquiry-Based Approaches to Professional Development

Traditionally, the professional development of teachers has been thought of as something that is done by others *for* or *to* teachers. And while post-secondary coursework, professional workshops, and educational seminars will most certainly continue to play an important role in the professional credentialing of L2 teachers, a host of alternative professional development structures that allow for self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning that is directly relevant to teachers' classrooms have begun to emerge. Since the mid-1980s, the reflective teaching movement (Schon, 1983, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), the predominance of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Somekh, 1993), and the teacher researcher movement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) have helped to establish the legitimacy of teachers' accounts of their experiences and to recognize the importance of reflection on and inquiry into those experiences as a mechanism for change in teachers' classroom practices as well as a forum for professional development over time. Indexed in the general teacher education literature as the *new scholarship* (Schon, 1995; Zeichner, 1999), this growing body of research has fostered the popularity of a variety of school-based, practitioner-driven, collaborative, inquiry-based approaches to professional development. In this chapter, several models of inquiry-based professional development will be reviewed, including: Critical Friends Groups (Bambino, 2002), Peer Coaching (Ackland, 2000), Lesson Study (Takemura & Shimizu, 1993), Cooperative Development (Edge, 1992), and Teacher Study Groups (Burns, 1999; Clair, 1998; Dubetz, 2005). These particular models were selected for review because of their unique structural arrangements, which create the potential for sustained dialogic mediation among teachers as they engage in goal-directed activity, and which provide assisted performance to those struggling through issues that are directly relevant to their classroom lives. Consistent with a socio-cultural perspective, each of these models seeks to create a mediational space for teachers to engage in on-going, in-depth, systematic, and reflective examinations of their teaching practices and their students' learning. They are grounded in the fundamental principle that participation and

context are essential to teacher learning; and they support the notion that teachers' informal social and professional networks, including their own classrooms, can function as powerful sites for professional learning.

Before each model is reviewed, however, a critical question facing inquiry-based approaches to professional development is: To what extent does the collective sharing and collaborative analysis of teachers' accounts of classroom experience actually foster productive teacher learning and improvements in teaching practice? Or from a sociocultural perspective one might ask: Do these approaches create a mediational space where dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance support teachers' conceptual development and lead to more productive instructional practices? To answer these questions, several issues must be addressed. These include: (1) the narrative nature of teachers' accounts of classroom experience; (2) the school context and culture in which teachers' accounts of classroom experience emerge; (3) the powerful linkages between teachers' accounts of classroom experience and the professional discourses and practices that exist beyond their localities; and (4) the zone of proximal development as a mediational space that is created in inquiry-based approaches to professional development.

The Narrative Nature of Teachers' Accounts

For more than two decades educational researchers have argued that teachers' knowledge is largely structured through narratives. For many, narratives are epistemologically the most authentic way to understand teaching from the view-point of the teacher (Cizek, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Doyle, 1997; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Lyons & LaBokey, 2002). Grounded in the notion that narrative accounts of experience function as a powerful vehicle for structuring human understanding (Bruner, 2006), Elbaz (1991) argues that:

> story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way.
>
> (p. 3)

Equally important is the notion that narrative accounts of experience connect phenomena and infuse them with interpretation and thus uncover our interpretations of the activities we engage in. Therefore, narratives situate and relate facts to one another, and the essence of "truth" is not

static or given, but lies in *how* phenomena are connected and interpreted (Doyle, 1997).

Teachers' accounts of classroom experience, generally structured chronologically, revolve around their interpretations of a series of events. Through the reconstruction of these events, teachers reconcile what is known with that which is hidden, selectively infuse those events with interpretation, and actively seek to bring meaning to their experience. Thus, inquiry-based approaches to professional development position the collaborative sharing and analysis of these accounts as a powerful mechanism for systemic change in teacher thinking and classroom practice.

The School Context and Culture in which Teachers' Accounts Emerge

It is essential to recognize that teachers' accounts of classroom experience are constructed in particular social and institutional settings and therefore are not neutral but constitutive of those settings. For example, studies of workplace discourse, both within and outside of schools, find that narrative accounts of experience not only constitute a pervasive feature of workplace discourse but also function as a resource for workplace learning (Engeström & Middleton, 1998). And while not all workplace discourse takes narrative form, through the use and reuse of workplace narratives, "individuals interpret and reinterpret situations, identify and name problems, resolve or contain ambiguity and uncertainty, aid or justify decisions, educate novices or newcomers, and solidify social bonds" (Little, 2007, p. 220).

In schools, teachers rely on narrative accounts of experience to construct a shared understanding of their work. Much to the dismay of early descriptive portrayals of teachers' work conducted in the late 1960s and mid-1970s, such accounts were found to privilege knowledge gained from classroom experience over theoretically derived or empirically warranted alternatives (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975). Yet more recent comparative studies of school workplace discourse suggest that the context and culture of the school itself have a tremendous impact on how teachers talk about their experience and on whether and how these accounts positively impact both teacher learning and improvement in instruction (Hornberger, 2006; Little, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989). When inquiry-based approaches to professional development operate in schools with strong "teacher learning communities" they have been found to positively exploit teachers' narrative accounts of experience for both professional learning and instructional decision-making (Little, 2003). Such schools were found to have a culture of seeking out connections with external professional reform movements

and networks. They had also amassed an extensive body of curricular resources, had far-reaching personal sources of assistance, and had a shared language and mutually understood concepts that framed the way the teachers and the school community envisioned quality instruction (Horn, 2004; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Moreover, within schools with strong teacher learning communities, teachers' accounts of their classroom experiences were most influential when they included speculation about how students were thinking or reasoning during instruction. That is, when such accounts focused on their students' problem-solving strategies (or lack thereof), teachers were much more likely to reconsider some of their habitual instructional practices (Kazemi & Franke, 2004).

Linkages between Teachers' Accounts and Professional Discourses

When teachers make direct linkages between their accounts of classroom experience and the broader professional discourses and practices of their discipline, they are more likely to reframe the ways they describe and interpret their classroom experiences and the learning strategies of their students. Thus, a common goal of inquiry-based approaches to professional development is to replace the traditional theory/practice dichotomy with the more fluid construct of *praxis* (Freire, 1970; see also Johnson, 2006). Simply put, the focus of teachers' attention is not on what theory says should happen in practice, but on how theory and practice inform one another. And from a sociocultural perspective, it is the transformative process of making sense of classroom experience (everyday concepts) through the theoretical constructs of the broader professional discourse community (scientific concepts) and vice versa, which enables teachers to reconceptualize the way they think about teaching and student learning (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Simon, 1992; Walker, 2003). As we saw in Chapter 3, Sharkey's (2003) emerging understanding of the theoretical constructs of *subjectivity* and *subject positioning* was situated in and understood through her experiences as an ESL tutor. Moreover, her understanding of these theoretical constructs was not straightforward, but populated with her own intentions and voice (Bakhtin, 1981). This enabled her to understand her classroom experiences in fundamentally different ways. Central to inquiry-based approaches to professional development is teachers' recognition that knowledge that informs their teaching is not just abstracted from theory and codified in textbooks. It also emerges out of a dialogic transformative process of reconsidering and reorganizing lived experiences through the theoretical constructs and discourses that are publicly recognized and valued within their professional discourse community.

The Zone of Proximal Development as a Mediational Space

From a sociocultural perspective, inquiry-based approaches to professional development by their very nature have the potential to create a mediational space in which the Vygotskian notion of the ZPD becomes public and in which we can trace how mediational means have the potential to support teachers' professional development. Given that the ZPD is a metaphor for capturing an individual's potential abilities by observing and promoting his or her current performance through social interaction, the public spaces created by inquiry-based approaches both make visible teachers' current capabilities and reveal those abilities which are not yet fully formed but are still in the process of developing. Likewise, given the power of language within a sociocultural perspective, it is assumed that the talk or social interaction that goes on in inquiry-based approaches functions as mediational means that support teacher learning, creating the potential for improvement in instruction.

In highlighting such qualities of inquiry-based approaches to professional development, I am in no way suggesting that simply placing teachers in groups and asking them to address the professional challenges they face will ensure their development and/or improve their practice. There is an abundance of documented evidence that collaborative pedagogical relationships are neither unproblematic nor straightforward (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2006; Hornberger, 2006; Shulman & Sato, 2006). As just one example, based on a collection of studies that examined the talk of collaborating English language and subject matter teachers charged with putting educational policy into practice in Asia, Australia, and the United Kingdom, Hornberger (2006) argued that while such talk is critical to teacher learning, it is often marred by unequal and hierarchical relationships between participants, for example, the positioning of English language teachers as ancillary to the work and professional knowledge of subject-matter teachers. In such cases, Hornberger (2006) claims that it was the English language teachers' considerable interactional skills that enabled them to be perceived as on a par with their subject-matter peers. Likewise, within the teacher mentoring literature, Feiman-Nemser (2006) argues that talk among teachers should not consist of veteran teachers giving novice teachers technical assistance (*here's how to do it*) and emotional support (*you can do it*). Instead, she argues for "educative mentoring" (p. xii); in other words, mentoring that is aimed at teacher growth by enabling teachers at all levels of experience and expertise to respect, challenge, and support one another as they collectively seek to reach standards of excellence in their work. Thus, two critical features the inquiry-based models of professional development reviewed here are, first, the deliberate structuring of both talk and collective activity in ways that

position teachers as equal partners and, second, the intentional creation of social conditions for teachers to receive support and assistance to do more than they would be able to do independently.

As was mentioned in Chapter 3, while early interpretations of the ZPD positioned the more capable peer or expert as necessary to lead the development of a less skilled individual (Kozulin, 1986; Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984), more recent, expanded interpretations of the ZPD recognize that physical tools such as computers and calculators, symbolic tools such as textbooks and journals, and peers engaged in collaborative goal-directed activities function as legitimate mediators of learning (Wells, 1999). Additionally, studies of peer interaction from a sociocultural perspective have found that peers can scaffold one another in ways that are similar to how experts scaffold the performance of novices (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001). This is possible largely because differences in peers' experience and expertise are not fixed but fluid, dynamic, and contingent on how and what is being accomplished in and through the group's activities (Wells, 1999). Thus, in each of the inquiry-based professional development models described below we are able to envision how the unique structural arrangements and resulting teacher discourse have the potential to create opportunities for productive teacher learning and improvements in instructional decision-making.

Models of Inquiry-Based Professional Development

Critical Friends Groups

Emerging out of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform in the mid-1990s, Critical Friends Groups conceive of teacher professional development as collaborative and practitioner-driven, with an explicit focus on exploring and analyzing the dynamic nature of student learning. Dunne, Nave, and Lewis (2000) define the goal of Critical Friends Groups as "to identify student learning goals that make sense in their schools, look reflectively at practices intended to achieve these goals, and collaboratively examine teacher and student work in order to meet that objective" (p. 9). Critical Friends Groups are built around the use of protocol-guided conversations. Different protocols are designed to focus the attention of the group on specific aspects of student learning by closely analyzing and reflecting on a piece of student work or a classroom dilemma. The protocols also set rules for who speaks, when, and about what, in essence framing the discourse so that it addresses the explicit purpose of a particular protocol. Additionally, Critical Friends Groups' discussions are guided and monitored by a facilitator or a coach who keeps the group focused and on track through the use of protocols, while a teacher presents the dilemma to the group.

Although protocols may differ in their format and in the way they are used, they all share common elements: sharing the question or dilemma, inviting questions from the participants, giving and receiving feedback, and promoting self-reflection. Allen and Blythe (2004) describe protocols as guided conversations that help teachers look beyond the surface of a "problem" to the many layers that lie beneath it. They argue that protocols should "promote among colleagues both exploration of important areas of teaching and learning as well as sustained collaborative inquiry into particular questions about teaching and learning" (p. 11). The discourse is structured into timed segments that invite specific kinds of talk: describing the problem, asking clarifying or probing questions, and providing warm (strengths) or cold (weaknesses) feedback (Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafta, 2003). Protocols are therefore designed to look at different aspects of teacher practice by either raising open-ended questions that emerge from work or seeking solutions to specific problems that have been identified.

Thus, Critical Friends Groups create a structured environment where teachers can "talk through" a dilemma, collaboratively coming to understand it and seeking possible solutions. Numerous studies of Critical Friends Groups have shown that participating teachers are more likely to take risks in their teaching by trying new things, to look for connections between the curriculum and assessment, to collaborate with other teachers, to take on leadership roles within the school community, and to shift their view of classroom instruction from teacher-centered to student-centered (Dunne et al., 2000; Franzak, 2002; Allen & Blythe, 2004). Critical Friends Groups have also been found to strengthen collegial bonds among teachers through close reflection on individual practice and student thinking and learning. Like other inquiry-based approaches to professional development, Critical Friends Groups are a means for teachers to articulate their goals for both their students and themselves, and to examine curriculum, student work, and various issues in the school culture that impact student learning, while at the same time directing their own professional learning (Dunne & Honts, 1998).

Peer Coaching

Peer Coaching, as the name indicates, is "the process where teams of teachers regularly observe one another and provide support, companionship, feedback, and assistance" (Valencia & Killion, 1988, p. 170). While teaching observations have long served as a mechanism for teacher assessment on the grounds that when combined with substantive feedback they can lead to positive teacher development and improved instructional practice, peer coaching has two distinct features. First, it focuses on the activity of coaching as a mechanism for teacher growth and professional

development. Second, it is conducted by teachers who view themselves and each other as peers, rather than by supervisors or persons who hold positions of power over other teachers. In separating themselves from assessment or evaluation, Peer Coaching programs are designed to create non-evaluative, safe learning environments in which teachers can experiment with new instructional strategies and techniques, while at the same time reflecting deeply about the quality and impact of their instructional decisions and actions (Aukland, 1991).

Two types of Peer Coaching are most prominent in the research literature. The first is what Joyce and Showers (1995) refer to as *technical coaching*, whose goal is to support teachers as they attempt to implement instructional innovations or alternative practices into their classrooms. In such cases, the peers share an understanding of the changes they are attempting to implement, and the focus of their pre-conference, observation, and post-conference discourse is on the extent to which they are able to effectively implement the instructional innovations or alternative practices. A second type of Peer Coaching is referred to by Garmston, Linder, and Whitaker (1993) as *collegial coaching*: peer teachers articulate questions or concerns they have about their own practice, and these determine the focus of the pre-conference, observation, and post-conference discourse. In both types, the pre-conference stage focuses on setting explicit goals for what the coach will attend to in the observation. In the pre-conference stage, the coach may use specific cognitive strategies, such as paraphrasing and asking probing questions, to help the teacher articulate these goals. During the observation stage, the coach records aspects of the lesson that focus on those explicit goals, and then presents them to the teacher during the post-conference stage. The coach and teacher then examine the records, discuss their perceptions of the lesson and collectively decide on an action plan for future instruction.

While some Peer Coaching programs utilize observation instruments (see Cummings, 1985; Murphy & Eblen, 1987; Mello, 1984), others collect video recordings of teachers' instruction. The result is a non-filtered record of a teacher's instruction that can be reviewed by both the peer and the teacher. Regardless of the mechanism for creating a record of one's teaching, the feedback provided must be accurate, specific, and non-evaluative (Showers, 1985). Peer coaches have been found to give feedback in multiple ways but the most common are: (1) mirroring—the coach records data and gives them to the teacher to analyze or make sense of; (2) collaborative coaching—the teacher and coach work together to find ways to improve teaching; and (3) expert coaching—the coach acts as a mentor who gives specific suggestions (Wolf & Robbins, 1989).

Overall, the non-hierarchical social relationships and structural arrangement of Peer Coaching create opportunities for teachers to guide their own learning and development while engaging in goal-directed

dialogic mediation with a non-evaluative and trusted peer. Teachers who participate in Peer Coaching programs have been found to develop strong interpersonal relationships within their school community, to be more likely to take risks, to feel more supported by their colleagues, and to position themselves as members of a learning community (Nolan & Hoover, 2004).

Lesson Study

Lesson Study or lesson research is a well-established approach to professional development that originated in, and is widespread throughout, Japan's educational system (Lewis, 2000; Takemura & Shimizu, 1993; Watanabe, 2002). Like other inquiry-based models, Lesson Study is teacher-directed, collaborative, and non-evaluative, and grounded in concrete everyday classroom practices. Teams of teachers co-plan a lesson that focuses on a particular content or unit of study. Throughout the planning process the team draws on outside resources, including existing textbooks, relevant research, and innovative instructional strategies, and engages in sustained conversations about these resources, while focusing specifically on student learning and the development of certain skills and knowledge at the completion of the unit of study (Lewis, 2000; Yoshida, 1999).

While the lesson itself may be innovative, unique, or creative, it must be embedded within the school curriculum and form part of the everyday experiences of the students. In the initial planning stages, the lesson benefits from the collective experience and expertise of a team of teachers. Once the plan has been developed, one member of the team volunteers to teach the lesson while the others observe. Sometimes outside "experts" are invited to observe the lesson and provide feedback. The lesson may also be audiotaped or videotaped to supplement the anecdotal records kept by the observers. The observers are trained to focus their attention on aspects of student thinking and student activity; in other words, on what the students say, write, or do, on how students interact with the materials used in the lesson, on any misconceptions that might become apparent, and on aspects of the lesson that support students' conceptual understanding of its topic.

After the lesson, the teacher, observers, and outside experts reconvene to discuss their observations in a colloquium or panel discussion. Typically, such gatherings begin with presentations by the teachers who planned and taught the lesson. They may focus on their rationale for how they organized the lesson, on what they hoped to accomplish, and on any segments of the lesson that matched or fell short of their goals. Then the observers comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, with a specific focus on students' reactions to various parts of it and on evidence of student learning.

After the colloquium, the team revisits the lesson based on the feedback they received and a revised lesson is taught either to the same class or to a different group of students. A second debriefing is held that focuses more on broader curricular goals and the overall effectiveness of the lesson. The lesson study cycle culminates in the team publishing a report, which includes lesson plans, observed student behavior, teacher reflections, and a summary of the group discussions. These lessons are then made generally available. Thus an easily accessible catalogue of well-crafted, well-designed lessons is created that captures not only the complexities of teaching certain curricular contents or units of study but also articulates specific desirable student learning outcomes (Lewis, 2000; Yoshida, 1999).

Much of the published research conducted in both the U.S. and Japan claims that participation in the Lesson Study process increases both student and teacher learning and development (Hiebert & Stigler, 2000; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Lewis, Perry, & Murata, 2003; Yoshida, 1999). Proponents of Lesson Study argue that the process focuses teachers' attention on student thinking and learning rather than on the implementation of curricular mandates or the alignment of instruction to local or national standards (Joyce & Showers, 1995). From a sociocultural perspective, as teachers observe each other, provide and accept feedback, and reflect on classroom practices, a space is created where dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance support teachers as they work through the process of planning, teaching, and reflecting on a lesson. Like Peer Coaching, the content of Lesson Study is grounded in concrete activity: in other words, in teachers' observations of actual lessons. This feature helps to center teachers' attention on concrete activity in a lesson rather than on narrative accounts of teachers' experiences of a lesson. Yet, because Lesson Study takes place within a school-wide or even district-wide context, it provides teachers with opportunities to discuss broader school, state, or national goals and the extent to which these goals are instantiated in their own instructional practices. By design, Lesson Study has tremendous potential to create the sort of mediational space that is conducive to productive teacher conceptual development and improved instructional practice. The few descriptive accounts of teachers' experiences with Lesson Study suggest that it enables teachers to improve their classroom practice, fosters the spread of new content and approaches to teaching that content, connects classroom practice to broader school-wide and national goals, and honors the role of teachers in shaping the curriculum in ways that foster student learning (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998).

Cooperative Development

Cooperative Development (Edge, 1992, 2002) is an inquiry-based approach to professional development that promotes *self-development* as it occurs within the context of a supportive group of colleagues. According to Edge (2002), "cooperative development is a way of working with one or more colleagues in order to develop as a person who teaches in your own terms" (p. 18). Grounded in the Rogerian (Rogers, 1992) attitudes of respect, empathy, and sincerity, the nature of all interactions and ensuing discourse in Cooperative Development is to be void of any and all evaluative judgment. By design it creates a deliberate and carefully regulated mediational space for a teacher (Speaker) to talk through (verbalize) anything that is "tentative, troubling, incomplete, partial, or emergent" (Mann, 2002, p. 195) with a colleague (Understander), who through the nature of his or her talk creates as much "space" as possible for the Speaker to articulate his or her thoughts, ideas, concerns. The Understander's role, initially, is to listen carefully and restate or reflect back what the Speaker has said. This first move, *Reflecting*, gives the Speaker "space" to articulate, while the Understander attempts to check his or her understanding, encourage further articulation, and facilitate the Speaker's articulation of new insights. The next move, *Making Connections*, allows the Understander to make connections between points that have emerged from the Speaker's explorations. This is intended to enable the Speaker to consider connections that he or she may not have been aware of or to build on those connections to make new ones. These can come in the form of *Thematizing* (making connections to seemingly unrelated points or issues from the Speaker's discourse) and *Challenging* (ideas or opinions acknowledged and affirmed by the Speaker that the Understander finds difficult to accept). The ensuing "talk" creates a mediational space in which the Speaker can use the Understander as a "temporary other" while he or she works through the recursive processes of articulation (verbalization), with the ultimate goal of rearticulation and/or reconceptualization. In the next move, *Focusing*, the Understander assists the Speaker toward his or her purpose. *Focusing* suggests a depth of understanding that was not previously evident to the Speaker and that becomes the prelude for the final move, *Into Action*. By this move the Speaker sets particular goals, usually in the form of direct actions that will be carried out in the classroom. Once direct actions have been articulated, the Speaker has the opportunity to verbally rehearse the actions to be taken as a way of confirming what he or she will do next. Of course, this process is recursive and on-going over an extended period of time, with each participant having multiple opportunities to take on the role of Speaker and Understander.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Boshell's (2002) experiences as a participant in a year-long Cooperative Development group, specifically as a

Speaker, enabled him to externalize his reasoning about teaching his "quiet" children, and through the extended dialogic process of Speaker/Understander discourse he eventually came to understand and teach these children in fundamentally different ways. The dialogic interactions central to Cooperative Development are engineered in such a way that the process enables teachers to externalize their understandings without evaluative judgments while working toward reconceptualizing how they think about themselves and their instructional practices. In Boshell's case, the process of engaging in Cooperative Development allowed him to regain internal control of his instructional behaviors as he tried out new ways of engaging in teaching, ways that were better aligned with his conceptualization of himself as a teacher (Golombek & Johnson, 2004).

Another example comes from Mann (2002),[7] who retrospectively narrates the experience of participating in a year-long Cooperative Development group in which the participants audiotaped the talk that emerged when pairs (Speaker/Understander) engaged in *Reflecting*, *Focusing*, and *Thematizing* moves. In addition, the group held follow-up sessions in which they used critical extracts recorded from their initial session to assess the nature and value of the moves that were made by the Understander. Mann describes his experience as "talking my way into understanding" (p. 198) and goes on to demonstrate how both sessions (initial and follow-up) "provided time and space for articulation." He says that "other individuals in the group helped me articulate my experience in ways that would not be available in other kinds of meeting and teacher talk" (p. 198).

In one session, Mann describes his unease with the way in which he thinks about and engages in lesson planning. During the *Reflecting* move, he expresses concern over the gap between his "planning beliefs" and his "planning practices."

Excerpt 1

Steve: As soon as I enter into a plan<u>n</u>ing world (.) in terms of talking (0.4) it seems to
ca<u>u</u>se some kind of *str*ess,
Nick: Mmm
Steve: which I—which I feel imposing on me. and this imposition, (.) this stru<u>c</u>ture that I've preplanned, (0.4) I find is—is a saddle (.) a chain (.) something which inhibits me.

(p. 199)

7 Excerpts reprinted with permission from Cambridge University Press. Mann, S. (2002). Talking ourselves into understanding. In K.E. Johnson & P.R. Golombek (Eds.) *Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development* (pp. 195-209). New York: Cambridge University Press.

This gap, between his cognition and his emotions, becomes the impetus for change and it is through extended dialogic interaction between Speaker and Understanders that he comes to the realization that, for him, there is a distinction between *being prepared* and *being planned*. In excerpt 2, he describes how interactions with the Understanders (Ellie and Helen) enable him to articulate how planning makes him less responsive as a teacher.

Excerpt 2

Ellie: You feel that—do you feel that you've had some sort of signals and being unable to
change your response to it?

Steve: I think it's partly that and partly the fact that I don't feel open to any signals=

Ellie: =So you don't feel you <u>see</u> them.

Steve: .Hhh (0.6) I see the two things in opposition >you know< this driving force to get
through this plan (0.4) does mean that perhaps I don't even see the signals

Helen: So, it's as if you're looking <u>back</u> into your head all the time rather than looking out
and communicating <u>with</u> . . .

(p. 200)

Mann's intuitive sense that lesson planning is essential is grounded, no doubt, in the institutional expectations of his pre-service teacher training program in which as a novice he was socialized into feeling he must account for everything that he would do in the form of detailed lesson plans. In one sense, engaging in lesson planning mediates the actions of the teacher and, at least on paper, demonstrates to the teacher trainer that the teacher "knows what he or she is doing." Yet these deeply ingrained planning beliefs contradict his current teaching practices as he describes his teaching as more successful when he doesn't plan as much. This issue resurfaces in a later interaction when he realizes that the stress he feels about planning comes from some external pressure to feel as if you "know what you are doing." This realization, made public by externalizing his conception of planning, enables him to begin to articulate a distinction between *being prepared* and *being planned*.

Excerpt 3

Nick: And that's the big distinction I hear now in what you're saying (.) between being
prep<u>are</u>d to enter the arena (.) and the idea of having a <u>plan</u> which you think will

ride roughshod over the various possibilities that could have occurred in that
arena.

Steve: Yes, yes (.) and another thought hits me from that, (.) from the preparation/
planning distinction . . .

(p. 202)

In summarizing what he learned from participating in the process of Cooperative Development, Mann says:

> this process helped me to articulate something that I think has been an important part of my teaching since the mid-eighties. However, I had not been able to fully form or "justify" this position. The session helped me to do that.
>
> (p. 202)

At this point in the narrative, we are able to see an emerging rearticulation of how Mann is beginning to conceptualize teaching, in particular the distinction between *being prepared* and *being planned*. Yet without evidence of how this plays out in Mann's actual planning and instructional activities, we can only describe this stage of his development as an idealized conception of teaching with a commitment to action, rather than evidence of internalization.

Interestingly, Mann claims that successful Understander moves involve offering comments that do not evaluate or suggest anything new and require that Speaker and Understander are on the same "wavelength." Yet the moves that he describes as unacceptable actually appear to have a greater influence on his thinking and his ability to articulate the distinction between *being prepared* and *being planned* than those moves he describes as acceptable. For example, in excerpt 4, Robert "touches a nerve" in one statement that he makes about "not knowing where to go" in a lesson.

Excerpt 4

Robert: Is it the case that you don't know where to go until someone has made a contribution?

Steve: I think there are plenty of places I could go, (.) I'm not talking about knowing
nothing about the area you've allotted to talk about. I'm not talking about no
preparation, (.) no reading no thinking around the area . . .

(p. 201)

While Mann suggests that he is somewhat put off by the evaluative nature of Robert's comment "you don't know," he does admit that this move "helps me to further my emerging distinction between prepared and planned" (p. 202). Thus, the strict nature of the rules that define this mediational space may, in fact, inhibit constructive critiques that might push a Speaker to move beyond his or her current thinking toward alternative ways of understanding oneself and one's teaching.

Overall, Cooperative Development creates a unique kind of mediational space and a unique kind of discourse within which self-exploration and the articulation and rearticulation of ideas can emerge. An innovative feature of this approach is that it deliberately alters the ways in which teachers interact with one another when they talk about their teaching. Aware of the negative effects that the typical "teachers' room talk" has on teachers' professional growth, with evaluative comments and judgmental exchanges forcing teachers to position themselves as "knowing what they are doing," Cooperative Development allows them to talk their way into new understandings and new ways of thinking about and engaging in their teaching.

Teacher Study Groups

The term Teacher Study Group has come to represent a broad range of structural arrangements that, like the models reviewed above, are designed to foster collaborative, inquiry-oriented, school-based professional development (Francis, Hirsh, & Rowland, 1994). Typically, Teacher Study Groups are situated within the context of professional development schools (PDS), that is, long-term partnerships between public schools, universities, and, sometimes, professional associations and/or funding agencies that seek to promote opportunities for university-based and school-based faculty to identify and study problems of practice together (Holmes Group, 1995; AMPE in Burns, 1999). By design, PDS are quite variable because they must fit within the organizational structures of the institutions involved and meet the needs of all participants including teacher education candidates, school-based faculty, and university-based faculty. Within PDS, Teacher Study Groups recognize teachers' own classrooms as legitimate sites for professional development. They believe that careful, critical, and systematic self-examinations of one's own practices and settings can function as a path to empowerment, and they view teacher research and/or action research as a vehicle for social, organizational, and instructional change in educational practices (Little, 1984, 1990; Talbert and McLaughlin, 1993, 1994).

Most Teacher Study Groups support teachers' engagement in some form of teacher research and/or action research, a process in which

teachers examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research. They were initiated in the 1940s by the social psychologist and educator Lewin (1946), who argued that teacher involvement in both research and its application would result in more immediate and more effective change in educational practice. However, in the 1950s, when experimental quantitative research dominated and the goal of educational research was to be objective and seek generalizable truths, action research was attacked as "unscientific," little more than common sense, and the work of amateurs. Yet, in the 1970s and 1980s questions about the applicability of scientific educational research to solve real-world educational problems began to emerge. More recently, the push for the empowerment of teachers and the importance of collaboration through participation in professional development have helped to establish the legitimacy of teachers' local knowledge and encouraged educational change through local understandings of persistent and relevant problems (in L1 see Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Schon, 1983; Kemmis, 1985; in L2 see Wallace, 1998; Edge, 2001; Burns, 1999; Freeman, 1998).

Teacher research and/or action research carried out within the context of Teacher Study Groups assumes that teachers work best on problems they have identified for themselves; that they will become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently; that they help each other by working collaboratively; and that working with colleagues helps them renew their professional knowledge and lives. Most published research on the impact of Teacher Study Groups, particularly in the L2 teacher education literature, is overwhelmingly positive. Case studies of individual PDS argue that Teacher Study Groups foster teacher professionalism, shift teachers' focus of attention from the delivery of content to understanding and fostering student learning, enable teachers to find answers to questions and concerns directly from their classrooms, and improve the quality of instruction, especially for language minority students (Clair, 1998; Cormany, Maynor, & Kalnin, 2005; Dubetz, 2005; Gebhard, 1998).

Dubetz (2005) reports on a Teacher Study Group made up of bilingual teachers, curriculum coordinators, student teachers, and a university PDS liaison as they sought to improve the quality of biliteracy and content-based ESL instruction for language minority students in an urban public elementary school. The group, evolving over an eight-month period, followed a protocol of: (1) describing current teaching practices; (2) analyzing specific children's learning; (3) explaining learning using academic theories; and (4) analyzing curriculum materials. During study group discussions, participants were found to articulate theories of practice that were grounded in their day-to-day activities with students. They consistently problematized their practice and sought reasonable and

sustainable solutions, and they drew on a complex network of knowledge sources, including knowledge of students, cultural and linguistic knowledge, knowledge of bilingual politics and policies, theory and research, and emerging understandings of effective L2 teaching practices. One teacher featured in Dubetz's (2005) account was found to shift the focus of her study group "talk" from the problems a particular child was experiencing to that child's existing abilities and what could be done instructionally to build on them. A subtle shift, Dubetz notes, but one that the teacher attributed to the supportive, collaborative, mediational means afforded her by her participation in the Teacher Study Group.

In a different Teacher Study Group configuration, Cormany et al. (2005) trace their experiences in a "researchers in residence" group in an at-risk urban public high school. The group, made up of six content-area teachers and two university facilitators, met on a monthly basis to establish and assist the teachers as they engaged in year-long classroom-based action research projects. In particular, Cormany and Maynor trace how their participation in action research supported by the researchers in residence group enabled them to develop new understandings of themselves as teachers, of the curriculum they taught, of the theory they were exposed to, and of their own teaching practices. They describe their learning as "side-by-side transformation"; in other words, they experienced independent but interconnected changes in their teaching practices. Accordingly, they claim that their action research projects enable them to know their students in a deeper, more meaningful way and they emerged from the Teacher Study Group experience with an increased sense of efficacy and empowerment.

Burns (1999) proposes collaborative action research, specifically for English language teachers, as a mechanism through which "action researchers can link their investigative work to that of other colleagues and [explore] in what ways such collaborative processes can make an impact upon whole-school changes and priorities" (p. I). Reporting on the long-term national English language program known as the Australian Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), designed to address the English language needs of adult immigrants to Australia, Burns foregrounds the daily experiences of teachers involved in collaborative action research groups, and chronicles how action research functioned as transformative in both the improvement of the quality of teachers' instruction and their own professional empowerment and development. For most, if not all, of Burns' teachers, the focus of their action research and the nature of their collaborations took on very localized configurations. That is, the types of research techniques they employed, the range of research questions they tackled, and the nature of their collaborative discussions emerged from the context of their daily work, the needs of their learners, and the concerns and needs of their colleagues. In essence, this method created a

powerful and seemingly supportive and sustainable mediational space for professional development.

Finally, while the benefits of Teacher Study Groups as a viable mechanism for substantive and sustained professional development is well documented, "persistent questions" remain about the effectiveness of Teacher Study Groups as an alternative form of professional development (Clair, 1998; Gebhard, 1998). Clair's (1998) year-long study of working with two Teacher Study Groups suggests that while the participants began to think independently, trusted their expertise and that of their colleagues, and valued the merits of sustained, school-based professional development, they continued to seek simple solutions to complex education problems. They felt powerless in the face of educational mandates and changing school demographics, and they failed to critically address issues of cultural diversity or to accept responsibility for the education of language minority students. For Clair's part as an outside facilitator, a tension remained about inviting teachers to reformulate their own ideas without imposing her own. She concludes that if alternative professional development models such as Teacher Study Groups are to become the norm in L2 teacher education, then more must be known about the problems such groups encounter and what sorts of solutions have been tried and/or might be possible in a range of educational settings.

Conclusion

Overall, the underlying assumptions of these inquiry-based models of professional development align well with a sociocultural perspective in that they define professional development as learning systematically *in*, *from*, and *for* practice. They recognize that participation and context are essential to teacher learning. And they create conditions for teachers to engage in evidence-based learning and decision-making. The models of inquiry-based professional development described here seek to create alternative structural arrangements that support sustained dialogic mediation between and among teachers and teacher educators and provide assisted performance as teachers struggle through issues that are directly relevant to their professional development and classroom lives. And because they are located in the institutional settings in which teachers work, they enable teachers to examine their own teaching practices and their students' learning while embracing the processes of teacher socialization that occur in classrooms, schools, and teachers' wider professional communities.

Chapter 8

Future Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education

Although the overall mission of L2 teacher education has remained relatively constant, that is, to prepare L2 teachers to do the work of this profession, our understanding of that work—of who teaches English, who learns English and why—of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts in which English is taught, and of the varieties of English that are taught and used around the world, has changed dramatically in the last half century (Johnson, 2006). To address these changes, I conclude by outlining several major challenges facing L2 teacher education. The first challenge is to examine our existing practices while simultaneously creating alternative practices that support the professionalization of L2 teachers in the complex social, political, economic, and cultural settings where they learn and work. A second challenge is to explore more fully the complex relationship between L2 teacher professional learning and student learning, so that it becomes evident to policy makers and other stakeholders that time, attention, and support for L2 teacher professional development can in fact lead to greater gains in student achievement. A third challenge is to enable L2 teachers to resist the politics of accountability that are shaping global educational policies and curricular mandates while simultaneously equipping them with the intellectual tools of inquiry that will empower them to create educationally sound, contextually appropriate, and socially equitable learning opportunities for the L2 students they teach. These challenges, discussed in detail below, begin to map out uncharted territory for the field of L2 teacher education.

"Located" Second Language Teacher Education[8]

A major challenge for L2 teacher education is the recognition that the professional development of L2 teachers takes place in ever changing

8 Reprinted with permission from TESOL. Johnson, K.E. (2006). The sociocultural turn and its challenges for L2 teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40 (1), 245–247.

sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts around the world. Thus, the assumption that there can or should be uniformity in what L2 teachers should know and be able to do is called into question. Both the content and activities of L2 teacher education must take into account the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are "located" in the contexts where L2 teachers learn and teach. Context is not necessarily limited to specific geopolitical boundaries: sociopolitical, sociohistorical, and socioeconomic contexts may shape and be shaped by local and global events, for example, the globalization of English (Canagarajah, 2005) or the recognition of World Englishes (Matsuda, 2003; Jenkins, 2006).

Studies from around the globe find L2 teachers enacting their practices in styles that suit the normative ways of teaching and learning that are historically embedded in their local contexts (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Li, 1998; Probyn, 2001; Simon-Maeda, 2004). More specifically, despite the fact that questions about the exportability of "western methods" have been raised for some time (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1998; Scovel, 1986; Ting, 1987), ministries of education, national educational policy makers, and other legislative bodies continue to set educational policies that impose western methods without taking into account the local constraints that will ultimately affect the extent to which L2 teachers are willing and/or able to implement curricular innovations. The implication for "located" L2 teacher education is not to expect L2 teachers to succumb to the hegemonic practices that are imposed on them but, for example, to expose L2 teachers to the pedagogical value of helping L2 students create alternative identities (i.e., "I don't need to sound like a native speaker of English") or creating discursive spaces both inside (i.e., safe houses, see Canagarajah, 2003) and outside (i.e., new technologies) the classroom where L2 students can try on new linguistic and cultural identities in ways that support their L2 learning (Gebhard, 2004).

"Located" L2 teacher education must also enable L2 teachers to scrutinize and navigate the consequences that broader macro-structures, such as educational policies and curricular mandates, have on their daily classroom practices. For example, the U.S. educational reform movement legislated by the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Congress, 2001) has created a host of challenges for the assessment and accountability of limited English proficiency student achievement. While intended to raise the academic profile of English language learners to be on a par with their English-fluent counterparts, inconsistent classification mechanisms, lack of clarity over how proficiency is defined, and undue test performance pressure have created a contested and often contradictory work environment for L2 teachers and administrators (Abedi, 2004; Freeman & Riley, 2005). Additionally, as we saw in Chapter 6, high-stakes tests such as the TOEFL must also be scrutinized to ensure that teachers' professional

judgments about the communicative abilities of their L2 students are not "trumped" by high-stakes tests (Johnson et al., 2005).

"Located" L2 teacher education begins by recognizing why L2 teachers do what they do in the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which they work. It continues to co-construct with L2 teachers locally appropriate responses to their professional development needs. Of course, this will be both a macro and a micro enterprise since it requires both attention to the social and ideological structures that shape and are shaped by the contexts in which L2 teachers live and work and also recognition of the complexities of classroom life and the relative autonomy that can exist there. Equally important is the need for "located" L2 teacher education to engage L2 teachers in and with the wider professional discourses and practices that are evolving beyond their localities as a means to critique their local knowledge and their local context. When L2 teachers engage in reflexive inquiry, their local knowledge evolves out of an engagement with wider professional discourses and practices and has the potential to lead to praxis (Canagarajah, 2002).

An important element of creating locally appropriate responses to L2 teacher education is close examination of how L2 teachers are constructed in the settings in which they work and the relative status of L2 teaching in those settings. Those who have explored how L2 teachers negotiate their identities cite a combination of biographical and contextual factors that keep their identities in a continual state of flux (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Mantero, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Navigating and sustaining a sense of professional expertise, regardless of one's linguistic biography, is critical to how L2 teachers will ultimately position themselves and their work in the contexts in which they teach (Johnston, 1997; Tsui, 2004). Constructing locally appropriate responses to support the preparation and professionalism of L2 teachers is and will continue to be a challenge for L2 teacher education. It will entail recognizing how changing sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts impact upon the ways in which L2 teachers are positioned, how they enact their teaching practices, and, most importantly, the kinds of learning environments they are willing and able to create for their L2 students.

Linking Teacher Learning and Student Learning

In L2 teacher education, the focus of attention should be, as I have argued throughout this book, on *teachers as learners of teaching*. Yet, embedded in the enterprise of L2 teacher education, and rightly so, is the assumption that teacher professional development will lead to greater student achievement. This assumption, obvious as it may seem, has yet to be adequately addressed in the educational literature. It is no simple task to

draw causal relationships between what teachers learn as part of their professional development, and what students learn as a result of what and how teachers teach. In fact, from a sociocultural perspective the issue of causality is extremely problematic since there are no causes of learning, at least not as the concept is understood within the positivist paradigm. From a sociocultural perspective, one cannot claim that *teaching causes learning* or that *professional development causes better teaching*, because when human agency plays a central role in development, there are always differences in how different people react to the same set of circumstances at different times (Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007). Vygotsky's position on this was that "explanations exist not of predictions of behavior grounded in a causal epistemology, but in either the tracing or reconstruction, or both, of behavior grounded in a historical epistemology" (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007 p. 888). Thus, the assumption that professional development causes better student achievement implies an overly simplistic and inadequate understanding of the dynamic and complex nature of the activities of teaching and learning. If, in fact, teaching caused learning or professional development *caused* good teaching, educational practice in general and teacher education in particular would be a straightforward, highly effective, and highly efficient enterprise. Obviously, nothing could be further from reality. While no one would argue against some sort of relationship between teaching and learning, a sociocultural perspective frames learning and development in terms of *reasons* rather than causes. Freeman and Johnson (2005) describe this relationship as one of *influence* rather than causality. From this stance, a major challenge for the future of L2 teacher education will be to uncover how teachers' professional learning influences their teaching and, in turn, how that teaching influences their students' learning. As they put it, "the challenge is to uncover how this *relationship of influence* between teaching and learning unfolds" (Freeman & Johnson, 2005, p. 79; italics added).

As we saw in Chapter 3, Herndon's (2002) narrative inquiry represents a chronology of her professional learning and demonstrates that, at least in her mind, the alternative ways she organized and supported activity in her ESL literature class created new modes of engagement for her and her students. Moreover, it was these new modes of engagement (activity) that encouraged students' more personal and more meaningful engagement with literary texts. Thus, one can argue that as part of her Masters in TESL program as well as in the activity of conducting and writing her narrative inquiry, Herndon was reading and making sense of the theory and research that inform the teaching of L2 reading. It was, in part, the scientific concepts embedded in that theory and research that enabled her to reconceptualize the way she thought about the teaching of L2 reading. This had some influence on the ways in which she chose to alter the modes

of engagement through which L2 reading instruction was carried out in her classroom.

In an attempt to uncover the *relationship of influence* that links teacher learning and student learning, Freeman & Johnson (2005a)[9] examine the professional learning of a North American secondary-level French teacher who participated in an inquiry-based professional development project known as Teacher Inquiry Seminars. The Inquiry Seminars offer teachers a disciplined way of thinking about their teaching in relation to their students' learning. An essential premise is that with time, structure, and a community of colleagues, teachers can become more able to understand how students learn, and more skillful at observing, describing and analyzing student learning. They thus become more able to take intelligent action toward improving their instructional practices. The French teacher, Maggie Cassidy, who was the focus of the study, describes how her long-term participation in the Inquiry Seminars helped her to develop an ability to take in the feedback that she was getting constantly from her students and to use it to make thoughtful decisions about what and how she teaches. She describes *feedback from students* as:

> *Feedback from students*, it's coming at me all the time, like a stream of information; their body language, their accents, their fluency, all the content, all the stuff around the content but also all the information that is telling me about their affect, their affective relationship to what we're doing. It's just always coming at me and that's what I work with to be able to make decisions as I go along.
>
> (Freeman & Johnson, 2005a, p. 86)

Feedback from students, combined with her developing ability to *step back*, as she calls it, enable her to gain perspective and balance in her moment-to-moment interactions with her students:

> Reflective teaching requires that I *step back*, that I be less impulsive, that I read students, so that I know when to engage with them and when to leave them alone. Sometimes it's just that tiny *stepping back*, when I think to myself, "How can I make the most of this moment?"
>
> (Freeman & Johnson, 2005a, p. 86)

In Cassidy's view, these conceptual tools involving *feedback from students* and *stepping back* that emerged out of her long-term participation

9 Extracts reprinted with permission from Routledge. Freeman, D. & Johnson, K.E. (2005). Towards linking teacher knowledge and student learning. In D.J. Tedick (Ed.) *Language teacher education: International perspectives on research and practice* (pp. 73–95). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

in the Inquiry Seminars enabled her to make more thoughtful decisions about her own teaching and to understand student learning better. Interestingly, these conceptual tools play out in unique ways in Cassidy's French classroom and help to support how she creates and structures the activity of teaching French as well as how her students experience the learning of French.

Cassidy does not use commercial textbooks of any sort to teach French. She recalled:

> For many years I used a textbook, or I should say, on the surface my teaching was linked to a textbook. But now I don't. I've come to realize that it is much too easy for students to leave the language within the covers of the book.
>
> (Freeman & Johnson, 2005a, p. 81)

Instead, the French language content evolves within a proficiency-based framework from the students themselves. Using a carefully scripted instructional sequence of brainstorming, investigation and negotiation of form and meaning, and enactment, Cassidy arranges activity in her classroom so that it is the students who generate the language that they learn to use (see Freeman, 1992). Having set the topic, Cassidy facilitates a whole-class brainstorming session in which the students generate ideas and vocabulary, in a mix of both English and French, which she notes on the overhead projector. Next, the students actively engage in developing their understanding of the language content as they investigate, negotiate, and rehearse it while considering Cassidy's extended explanations of it. In small groups, classmates work collaboratively to co-construct their understanding of the French lexicon and grammar while simultaneously expressing shared understandings of both the topic and the language used to talk about it. Through peer interaction with assistance from Cassidy, the French language content moves from simple words and phrases to extended expression of ideas in fully formed discourse. Finally, students use the French language content that has emerged and has now become concretized on the overhead projector to participate in short interactions, role plays, and tasks, usually prompted by Cassidy. The ensuing performances entail using French language content that was collectively generated, expanded, and formalized in both ritual and impromptu activities.

Throughout this process the overhead projector, a physical tool in Cassidy's classroom, also functions as a social tool in how the activity of learning French is accomplished. In addition, this particular tool (physical and social) supports Cassidy's use of the conceptual tools of *feedback from students* and *stepping back* since it is her and her students' use of the overhead projector that enables her both to see and support student

learning. Cassidy identifies the overhead projector as the locus of activity in her classroom:

> The OHP [overhead projector] is where this happens, it is where they come together. With the *intermédiaire*, working on describing past events, I might announce a theme, World War II, and ask them to come to class with any vocabulary they know, in English or French, and we put it on the OHP. This tells me what they know and don't know. It enables me to "see" what my students know. I don't assume anything and I don't bore them either. So, the OHP can be a powerful diagnostic.
>
> (Freeman & Johnson, 2005a, p. 83)

Besides being a tool for getting at students' prior knowledge, Cassidy claims that the OHP creates common content out of individual experience. She says, "The materials comes from them; it's their lives. It gets put up on the overhead projector and then it becomes common." Additionally, she views the OHP as enabling her to have more *flexibility* and *fluidity* in her teaching:

> For me the OHP is not static, it allows my teaching to be fluid because if a kid gives me a word and I begin to write, I might pause halfway through and say, "Now does this [word] need an x or not?" And argue about that for a while, and we figure it out, and we go on. In a textbook, the words are already there and they're right. Who cares about that? But when it comes from them, it's alive and they care about it. They want to get it right, because it's theirs. And it gets created right in front of their eyes.
>
> (Freeman & Johnson, 2005a, p. 83)

Thus, in Cassidy's classroom the OHP serves a range of functions. It functions as a diagnostic device to determine what her students know and don't know. It functions as a site for meta-linguistic discussions about the form and function of the language. It functions as a repository for the French language content. And it functions as a resource that supports students' emerging use of and command over the new language.

Looking back at the various functions that the OHP has in Cassidy's classroom, we can see the *relationship of influence* that the conceptual tools of *feedback from students* and *stepping back* play in the activity of teaching and learning French in this classroom. In order for Cassidy to use *feedback from students* she must see it. Seeing it on the OHP creates space for her to *step back*. It is that ability to step back, the core of reflective teaching, which enables her to be more *flexible and fluid* in her teaching. According to Freeman and Johnson (2005a),

> Overall reflective practice invites teachers to consider how changing the operations through which an action is carried out can ultimately change the activity in which the action is embedded. The Inquiry Seminar supplies conceptual tools that allow and indeed encourage that consideration to happen. As Cassidy steps back, reads students, reflects in action, and makes thoughtful decisions about what to do and say, we begin to see how she blends physical and conceptual tools into activity.
>
> (p. 87)

By analyzing student drawings and narrations of their own learning, Freeman and Johnson (2005a) conclude that the multiple functions of the OHP were mediated by the conceptual tools of *feedback from students* and *stepping back* that emerged out of her participation in the Inquiry Seminars. When students were prompted to draw and then narrate in writing "a moment in their classroom when something that the teacher did helped them learn French," their drawings consistently featured the OHP, sometimes to the exclusion of the teacher altogether. The student data suggest that Cassidy's students seem to see their own learning of French as mediated by this particular physical tool. While their drawings do not indicate what they learned (content), they do indicate how students experienced (activity) that learning. Understood from a sociocultural perspective, one cannot exist without the other. Development depends on the specific social activities in which these students engaged and the culturally constructed semiotic artifacts or tools they used to participate in those activities. The *relationship of influence* here is how Cassidy's students are experiencing the learning of French. As in Herndon's (2002) ESL literature class, *the relationship of influence* is not solely what is learned but the ways in which students engage in the activity of learning. Particular modes of engagement (activity) influence both what and how students learn, and, for both Herndon and Cassidy, creating and supporting those modes of engagement emerged out of their own experiences as participants in professional development programs. Thus, documenting the complex *relationship of influence* that exists between L2 teacher professional learning and student L2 learning is an extremely important challenge for L2 teacher education.

The Intellectual Tools of Inquiry[10]

Our understanding of how L2 teachers learn to do the work of their profession has enabled us to think about the professional development of

10 Reprinted with permission from TESOL. Johnson, K.E. (2006). The sociocultural turn and its challenges for L2 teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly* , 40 (1), 247–250.

L2 teachers as a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts, distributed across persons, tools, and activities, and both influencing and influenced by both participation and context. Most L2 teachers, however, continue to work in institutions in which they, their students, and their instructional practices are constructed by the positivistic paradigm that defines good teaching in terms of student performance on standardized tests and conceptualizes learning as internal to the learner. Compounding this problem is the fact that most L2 teachers are products of this same paradigm, having been socialized into normative ways of thinking about L2 teaching and learning and then finding themselves in L2 classrooms that are largely regulated by these same normative practices. Add to this the oppressive nature of global educational policies and curricular mandates that hold teachers accountable for student learning based on standardized assessment instruments and dictate what content is to be taught, when, and how, and it becomes painfully obvious that the *politics of accountability* have infiltrated the public discourse surrounding L2 teaching, L2 learning, and the professional preparation of L2 teachers. In light of these realities, it is not surprising that L2 teachers struggle to reject a "teach for the test" mentality, are frustrated by being positioned as managers of curricula rather than as facilitators of the L2 learning process, and increasingly feel professionally disempowered within the contexts in which they work (for L1 see Cochran-Smith, 2005; for L2 see Gutierrez, Larson, & Kreuter, 1995; Gebhard, 2005).

In order for L2 teachers to work productively in an educational climate of standardization and accountability, they need, now more than ever, to function as "transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988; see also Pennycook, 1989, 2001). In other words, they need the intellectual tools to position themselves as

> professionals who are able and willing to reflect upon the ideological principles that inform practice, who connect pedagogical theory and practice to wider social issues, and who work together to share ideas, and exercise power over the conditions of more humane life.
>
> (Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p. xxiii)

More than half a century ago, the progressive educational philosopher John Dewey (1933) characterized the intellectual tools of inquiry as the means by which humans make experience "educative." He argued that it is through the attitudes of openmindedness (seeking alternatives), responsibility (recognizing consequences), and wholeheartedness (continual self-examination) that teachers come to recognize their own assumptions about themselves as teachers, about their students, about the curriculum they teach, and about the nature and impact of their teaching practices.

It is foundational to the principles of reflective teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) that when teachers inquire into their experiences, the intellectual tools of inquiry enable them to confront the taken-for-granted assumptions about what is and is not possible within the context in which they teach, to systematically problematize their own everyday practices, and to regularly ask the broader questions of not just whether their practices work, but for whom, in what ways, and why.

If L2 teachers are to function as transformative intellectuals, the intellectual tools of inquiry must permeate all dimensions of their professional development experiences. Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to explore their professional identities, L2 teachers can come to recognize their own beliefs, values, and knowledge about language learning and language teaching, and become aware of their impact on classroom practices (Johnson, 1999). Through such inquiry they can come to terms with the fact that they teach from somewhere, that their knowledge, beliefs, values, and practices are socially situated and socially constituted, and that those practices have social, cultural, and academic consequences on the lives of their L2 students (Johnston, 2003). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to explore the disciplinary knowledge that is codified in journal articles and scholarly books, L2 teachers can reflect on and relate to such knowledge in ways that foster an understanding of experience through the multiple discourses of theory. Such inquiry cultivates the co-construction of knowledge that informs their practice (Sharkey & Johnson, 2003; A.F. Ball, 2000). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to explore the English language, L2 teachers can develop an awareness of the integral nature of language form, function, and use. While knowledge about language, its grammar, phonology, and semantics is insufficient if L2 teachers lack knowledge of their use, function, and pragmatics (Andrews, 1999, 2007; Widdowson, 2002), L2 teachers who are "linguistically aware" (Wright, 2002), or function as "critical discourse analysts" (Belz, 2004), are able to challenge commonly held notions about standardized English ideology and native speakerness (Cook, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996), recognize the complex nature of multilingualism and language learner identity (Norton, 2000), and see how language teaching practices are related to broader social, cultural, and political relations (Pennycook, 2001). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to find out about L2 students and their language learning, L2 teachers can build upon the linguistic and interactional competencies that L2 students bring to their classroom (Johnson, 1995; Gebhard, 2005), recognize the physical and symbolic tools that mediate L2 student learning, and examine the relationship between how they organize the social activities that constitute their classrooms and what L2 students learn (or do not learn) from engaging in those activities (Freeman & Johnson, 2005a). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to investigate the institutionally sanctioned policies, curricular mandates,

and assessment practices that shape their work, L2 teachers can recognize how their daily practices are constitutive of broader social and political issues but also use such realizations to work against the consequences that these macro-structures can have on their classroom activities and thus students' opportunities for L2 learning.

The emergence of the L2 teacher research movement and inquiry-based professional development (Burns, 1999; Edge, 2001; Freeman, 1998; Wallace, 1998) has made significant headway in altering the nature of the activities that L2 teachers are asked to engage in in their L2 teacher education programs and beyond. This, in and of itself, has helped to challenge many of the unfair hierarchies that exist in the L2 teaching profession. Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to explore their professional worlds, L2 teachers can come to understand the ideological principles that inform the social practices that constitute them, their students, and their teaching practices—in other words, the complex social, cultural, political, and institutional factors that affect L2 teachers, teaching, and student learning. An overarching challenge for L2 teacher education is to ensure that whatever L2 teachers inquire about, it is the *substance* of that inquiry that will enable them to function as transformative intellectuals in the settings in which they learn and work. The substance of their inquiry must, according to Dewey (1920), take into account:

> observation of the detailed makeup of the situation; analysis into its diverse factors; clarification of what is obscure; discounting of the more insistent and vivid traits; tracing the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves; regarding the decision reached as hypothetical and tentative until the anticipated or supposed consequences which led to its adoption have been squared with actual consequences. This inquiry is intelligence.
>
> (p. 164)

Conclusion

The challenges outlined above are by no means insurmountable. In fact, they come at a time of intense scrutiny of the role of English in globalization and during an increasingly public struggle over whose English is being taught, learned, and used around the world (Matsuda, 2003; Jenkins, 2006). The sociocultural perspective presented in this book is, in my opinion, foundational to meeting the challenges facing L2 teacher education. A sociocultural perspective on human learning challenges the way L2 teacher education has traditionally thought about how teachers learn to teach, how they think about and teach language, the broader social, cultural, and historical macro-structures that are ever present and

ever changing in the L2 teaching profession, and what constitutes L2 teacher professional development. Overall, this book has argued that a sociocultural perspective on human learning reorients how the field of L2 teacher education understands and supports the professional development of L2 teachers.

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