PREPARING TEACHERS FOR DIVERSE CLASSROOMS: AN ACTIVITY
THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF TEACHER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation in
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by
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ABSTRACT

As the lives of citizens around the world become more globalized, the need intensifies to examine the learning process that is negotiated when an individual crosses borders. The borders we cross may be external, physical ones, but more significantly, as human interaction is sustained, they take the form of cognitive and internal transformations.

The need is urgent in U.S. public schools where the teaching cohort is predominantly White and monolingual while the student population is increasing in cultural and linguistic diversity. In a teacher education program, how do teacher-learners transform their monolingual and first culture life experience to move towards some degree of intercultural competence? What specific teacher education practices can move teacher-learners towards ‘political clarity’ and help them to analyze assumptions that are subsumed in our views towards the educational system? This study investigates the cognitive activity of intercultural development as novice ESL teachers become border-crossers in a TESL preparation program which includes a short-term immersion experience in a Spanish/Quichua-speaking community in Ecuador.

Using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as a theoretical framework, the study theorizes the complex web of interaction that unfolds as teachers negotiate a new culture, language(s) and ESL teaching practice. CHAT views human action as deriving equally from agency (the power to act and make deliberate choices, rather than be guided by the context) and structure (social and material) and in this way highlights the relations between micro-interactional activity and macro-social structures. Significantly, the study
illustrates how a short-term cultural and linguistic immersion experience brings up tensions surrounding home, university and school-based ideologies, and most importantly, how teachers respond to contradictions, resulting in far-reaching transformations to their social identities and teaching practices.

Qualitative data from participant journals, interviews, classroom observations, and ethnographic observation offer a holistic view of teachers as they interact over a one year period. This study fills a gap in the existing literature to advance understanding of mechanisms that variably promote or constrain teacher learning about culturally responsive instructional practices in public schools.
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Chapter 1

The cultural/linguistic gap between teachers and students in U.S. public school classrooms

1.1.0 Social Problem and Background

The cultural gap in the United States between school children and their teachers is wide and growing. Students in public school classrooms are increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse and demographics forecast such diversity to continue for the foreseeable future. In 2000, the proportion of students of color in the U.S. school population was 39 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002); by 2035 (in thirty years), students of color will make up the majority group in U.S. public schools (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). The Education Law Center (2005) reported that in Pennsylvania the number of English language learners in the public schools increased by 34% from the 1999-2000 to 2002-2003 academic years while the number of white, monolingual students decreased (p. 2). Additionally, more than 82% of the state’s school districts are now serving some numbers of these students while “the graduation rate for these learners is lower than any other subgroup, except Latinos, (obviously, an overlapping category)” (Education Law Center, 2005, p. 2).

Meanwhile, across the nation, teachers of color make up only about 16 percent of the nation’s teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). And perhaps more significant than racial background, there are distinct differences in life experiences among teachers and students. Teachers as a group are predominantly European-American, middle class and female (Taylor & Sobel, 2001, p. 488). Many of their students are ethnic minorities, live in poverty and speak a language other than English (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In a review of the research on multicultural education, Sleeter (2001) has reported that as a whole, pre-service teachers bring little intercultural experience to the activity of teaching. Assaf & Dooley (2006) concurred with Sleeter’s claim
asserting, “teachers often possess stereotypical beliefs about diverse students and have little knowledge of racism, discrimination, and structural aspects of inequality” (p. 42).

In particular, teachers who instruct English language learners are often monolingual English speakers, teaching their native language, and therefore, viewing the world from a monocultural stance. However, their everyday classroom world is a multicultural one. As a result, teachers may have difficulty understanding or relating to those who do not benefit from the white, middle-class privilege that they themselves enjoy (Gomez, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Their primary classroom efforts are oriented to helping English language learners to succeed in the social and academic worlds of the school. Therefore, part of the desired training for ESL (and all teachers working in public school classrooms) should include knowledge, skills and experience that contribute to intercultural awareness and should emphasize the development of a teaching practice that is responsive to students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A recent report sponsored by the National Academy of Education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) asserted, “The importance of connecting new learning to prior experiences and the intrinsically cultural nature of learning and knowing suggest that teachers will need knowledge to understand students’ backgrounds and experiences in order to structure meaningful learning experiences for all of them” (p. 237).

1.2.0 Thesis Purpose

University teacher education programs are challenged to develop new approaches to prepare teachers for growing diversity in public schools. Many teachers enter the classroom with little direct experience among people that are different from themselves; a lack of experience that may lead them to view diversity as a problem rather than a resource (Sleeter, 2001). Teacher education should help teachers to develop a reflective practice, a goal which requires critical analysis of one’s own culture and a consciousness of how human differences are used by people in power to rationalize inequities and maintain their position of dominance in society (Merryfield, 2000).
In response to this challenge, some teacher education programs are increasing efforts to recruit teacher candidates of color. Others are providing community-based, cross-cultural placements for teaching practice that show some promise in developing culturally sensitive teachers (Suarez, 2002). The purpose of the present study is to explore teachers’ changing perceptions and teaching practices as they participate in a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) preparation program which includes an immersion experience in another country. In addition to exposure to instructional strategies for English Language Learners (ELLs), the program offers learning activities that encourage teachers to explore their own cultural identities, develop conceptual understanding of culture and interculturality, as well as uncover the macro-social relationships that underlie the processes of global human migration. The overall aim of the research is to describe the teachers’ learning experiences and identify the affordances and constraints that shape the processes of learning about teaching English language learners in diverse classrooms.

1.3.0 The Need for This Research

Over the past ten years, a sizable body of research has investigated the pedagogy which attempts to develop culturally responsive teaching practices for teachers in preparation (Assaf & Dooley, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2004b; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Gay, 2000; Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willet, 2002; Huber, Kline, Bakken, & Clark, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Recently, in an effort to establish a holistic understanding of what culturally relevant pedagogy “looks like” as it is enacted in practice, Morrison, et al. (2008) conducted a synthesis of the classroom-based literature on culturally relevant teaching practice published since 1995. Their effort indicates a growing and substantial research interest in classroom pedagogies that address culturally relevant teaching which is understood to include high expectations for student achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness for teachers.

One avenue of inquiry has investigated changes in teacher attitudes and beliefs as a result of intercultural exposure or guided classroom instruction on diversity (Brown, 2004; Byrnes, Kiger, &
Manning, 1997; Finney & Orr, 1995; Goodwin, 1994; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). One study provided data on pre-service teachers as they enter a teacher education program, examining their beliefs about addressing the needs of diverse students (Taylor & Sobel, 2001). Another approach examined autobiographical narrative to understand the situated knowledge that influences pre-service teachers’ views on race, culture and class (Powell, Sobel, Hess, & Verdi, 2001).

A second major line of research has described pedagogical interventions with the specific goal of preparing teachers for instruction of diverse learners (Applebaum, 2008; Deering & Stanutz, 1995; Freedman, Bullock, & Duque, 2005; Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willet, 2002; Huber, Kline, Bakken, & Clark, 1997; Mahan & Stachowski, 1990; Sleeter, 1995; Suarez, 2002; Taylor & Sobel, 2003). However, little empirical research has moved beyond descriptions of teacher attitudes or pedagogy to explore the internal cognitive activity of teacher development.

In this study, I am interested in exploring how teacher-learners change and develop when they become “border-crossers,” in a multicultural and multilingual setting. For the teachers, the border-crossing experience is both literal and metaphorical. In a globalized world, the borders we cross may be external, physical ones, but more significantly, as human interaction is sustained, they take the form of cognitive and internal transformations. This project illuminates how the socially mediated experiences of an ESL teacher preparation program impact participants’ views of themselves as teachers, of their students and of the activity of teaching. The intent of this research project is to delineate and theorize the developmental process that teachers must undergo in order to become culturally relevant teachers. My claim is that personal and professional transformations in identity and acknowledgement of personal histories and values must take place as part of the process of a teacher becoming a culturally responsive practitioner. My goal in this research project is to open a window into the ontological process of development for teachers engaged in learning about language, cultures, social justice and equity in education.
Specifically, this study attends to the interface between social interaction and individual development and takes a holistic view of an entire teacher preparation program for ESL teachers. Thus, the proposed study fills a gap in the existing literature to describe the developmental process that occurs for particular teachers and the conditions that support or hinder it.

1.4.0 Research Questions

In light of previous research into teacher development and cognition and maintaining a focus on real-world educational interventions for teacher preparation, this study investigates the following questions.

In an immersion-type teacher education program for ESL teachers, how do teachers develop perceptions and teaching practices that are responsive to the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse learners? What are the affordances and constraints that impinge on the process of teacher learning in this context? How do teachers understand the experience? How does the immersion experience and program as a whole transform their self-perceptions as teachers of English language learners?

a) What are important learning moments of the program from the perspective of the teacher learners? What meanings do participants attribute to these activities? How is their learning mediated by other people, artifacts, history and power dynamics? What constrains their activity and what supports it?

b) What are the goals of the program and its communities? What are the shared beliefs and understandings that underlie the activity of the program? What are the constraints or unexpected influences that arise to impinge upon the program’s activities?

c) What is the hierarchy of authority and division of labor that influence how activity is carried out? What are rules and procedures that govern the behavior of participants in the program? What aspects of institutional and individuals histories play a role in the unfolding of activity?

1.5.0 A Dissertation Roadmap

In Chapter 2, I describe the theoretical commitments that are foundational to this study. I begin with a broad look at Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and recent shifts in the field to view language learning as a social process. Secondly, I outline a sociocultural approach to understand
teacher learning and development, and subsequently specify the main principles of this approach as they apply to my data analysis. A particular outgrowth of sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1985) cultural historical activity theory (Engestrom, 1987, 1999a, 1999b), is described in detail as it used to uncover the complex web of activity that occurs during the TESL program that I examined in the study.

In Chapter 3, I review the literature that attempts to theorize how to prepare teachers for interaction with diverse students. I draw on research related to teaching for social justice and explore the claim that teachers need to become aware of the social structures, ideologies and public attitudes that impinge upon the day-to-day interactions within public schools. Further, I investigate research that focuses on engaging teachers in reflective and personally transformative activity to embrace “otherness” and recognize the hybridity and diversity of their students. The chapter continues with a discussion of the development of ‘intercultural competence’ and ‘intculturality’ and concludes with conceptual moves to integrate language and culture within one concept of ‘languaculture’ (Agar, 1994).

Chapter 4 outlines my methodology. I discuss the rationale and motives behind the educational practice of an immersion experience for teachers, the research participants, data collection and methods of analysis. Chapter 5 is the first of three data analysis case studies. Chapter 5 explores Nora’s experience in the 7 month long program. This chapter illustrates the dissonance related to the cultural & language immersion situation and Nora’s identity shifting as she relates her personal experiences with Ecuadorians on the street, with her host family and in her teaching practice. Chapter 6 opens a window on Anna’s intercultural learning during the program and as she reflects back months later. Chapter 7 describes Alex’s learning and experimentation with instructional strategies for ELLs during the brief teaching practice and later as she moves into her student teaching experience back in the U.S. several months later.
In Chapter 8, I examine the learning program holistically using the activity system framework to orient my analysis. I synthesize the detailed ethnographic data gathered from the three focal participants with interview data from other actors within the activity system (host families, program faculty, Ecuadorian staff) and my field notes as participant-observer. Particular attention is directed to both individual and social transformations occurring during participation in this learning experience. Activity theory is an applied methodology which should necessarily lead to innovation and provide tools to allow enactment of positive interventions for future practices. The concluding section, Chapter 9, offers a view into the programmatic transformations that this research effort has afforded for this program in particular, and as applicable to other teacher education efforts.
Chapter 2

Teacher Learning from an Activity Theoretical Perspective

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical commitments that underlie this study. Drawing on the cultural-historical tradition of Vygotsky, Luria, and Leont’ev, I make a case for a sociocultural theoretical approach to understand teacher development and attempt to extend its reach to teacher learning about diversity, and specifically to explain how a teacher’s own second language and culture learning is a necessary part of that process. I argue that a sociocultural approach to human development, and in particular, cultural-historical activity theory (hereafter activity theory), is useful not only as a theoretical tool for research, but also as a guide to the development of sound educational practices for teacher education. My argument is situated generally within an area of second language learning theory which sees language learning as a social process.

2.1.0 The Shifting Intellectual Climate: Language as Social Practice

Historically, over the course of its development as a field of inquiry, the study of second language acquisition (SLA), has engaged with a variety of theoretical perspectives. Then, a little more than a decade ago, a noticeable shift began to occur in the theoretical orientation of SLA research. In 1997, Firth & Wagner made a call for a “reconceptualization” of the field of SLA to embrace “contextual and interactional dimensions of language use” emphasizing not only cognitive functions, but equally, the social, interactional aspects of language and language learning (1997, p. 285). From the theoretical stance they outlined, language is understood as immersed in a social and cultural context and simultaneously contributes to and constructs culture and the context in which humans interact. Investigations into language learning moved away from a fixed concern with individual learners and internal mental activities toward language in interaction and language linked to relations of power,
ideology and change in society. From this perspective, to put it simply, language learning is located within social interaction and not in the head of the individual learner (J. K. Hall, Vitanova, & Marchenkova, 2005).

Firth & Wagner’s proposal aligns closely with the theory of mind outlined by Vygotsky who asserted that cognition arises from participation in human social activity (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007). Sociocultural theory, based on subsequent formulations of Vygotsky’s ideas about learning and the mind, allows investigation of cognitive activity and human development without isolating the process from the social context. (Thorne, 2005, p. 394). While Firth & Wagner were not the first or only researchers to see language learning as a social process, their *Modern Language Journal* article has been described as a seminal contribution to second language research and generated an intellectual tension within SLA which continues as an ongoing conversation today (Block, 2007; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2007).

### 2.1.1 A Sociocultural Turn in Teacher Education

Parallel to the intellectual discord in SLA research, a paradigm shift is underway in teacher education which transforms a view of teaching as a technical endeavor to one in which teaching is seen as a cognitive and sociocultural process (Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Martin, 1993; Sleeter, 1999). Cochran-Smith (2004b) reminds us of long-standing debates in teacher education; particularly, the tension between positivist and constructivist understandings of teacher learning, and a growing awareness of the role of teaching in the reproduction or reconstruction of larger social structures. She calls a recent shift in understandings of teacher learning as “a new image” of teacher education which moves attention from what teachers do, to what they know, and emphasizes how teachers’ sources of knowledge inform their work in classrooms (2004).

Other theorists have explained this epistemological shift as a move from a dominant positivist view toward a sociocultural understanding of teacher learning. According to Sleeter (1999), positivism led much of the inquiry into teaching and teacher education for the past 50 years.
“Positivist social science is rooted in the belief that reality exists apart from the knower, and can be grasped through a careful process of data collection” (Sleeter, 1999, p. 4). The scientific method provides guidance for the research process, and generalizable “truths” systemize research findings into categories such as teacher styles, behaviors, competencies or methods (Sleeter, 1999, p.5). More recently, Watzke (2007) has observed that “foreign language teacher education has traditionally relied on a limited knowledge base in developing policies and programs to support teacher development” and believes the focus has been on the transmission of knowledge to teacher candidates rather than shaping new practice through classroom teaching (p. 63). In contrast, from a sociocultural perspective, teacher learning is characterized as lifelong and socially embedded, emerging from a process of reshaping existing knowledge, beliefs and practices and not simply the application of new theories and methods (Johnson & Golombek, 2003).

Meanwhile, Firth & Wagner’s call was also heard within second language (L2) teacher education research. Freeman (2007) has claimed that Firth & Wagner “redescribed the territory, or spaces, in which instructed language learning was seen to take place. Spaces that had been seen as largely internal to the learner; and therefore private, they argued, could be seen as interactional and thus publicly accessible to both study and intervention” (p. 895). Thus, in language teaching analysis and theory, concepts such as meaning and communicative intent began to be seen as open to negotiation among learners and teachers. As Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) have insightfully stated, second language learning “…is about much more than the acquisition of language forms: it is about developing, or failing to develop, new ways of mediating ourselves and our relationships to others and to ourselves.”(p. 145).

2.1.2 A Sociocultural Theory of Mind

Sociocultural theories assert that cognitive development (or learning) is a socially mediated activity. Thus, the way that our consciousness develops depends on the specific social activities in which we engage, and the symbolic and physical artifacts with which we interact (Johnson, 2006). Teacher
learning builds on prior knowledge of the self and beliefs about the world, both of which are historically and socially situated (Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Cognitive development emerges by reshaping existing knowledge through a process of external social mediation that gradually becomes internal and controlled by individual learners (what Vygotsky (1978) called “internalization”).

According to the sociocultural view, cognitive development is transformational and is not simply a transfer of knowledge; it is a dialogic process of change to the self and to the activity. Thus, teacher learning is an interplay between creative thought or action and established knowledge; as individual teachers engage in teaching activity, they transform their work and their own understanding (Martin, 1993).

2.2.0 Why Activity Theory?: Theorizing the Cultural-Historical Context

In this research project, a sociocultural orientation to L2 teacher preparation is enacted both in the practices that are adopted to prepare teachers, as well as in the research orientation to gain new insights into the processes of teacher learning about diversity. As a researcher, my interest is to uncover and analyze teacher development and thinking. As a teacher educator, I hope to position teachers as transformative agents who are sensitive to the social, historical and political dimensions of teaching (Giroux, 1988; Hawkins, 2004)

Given the explicit goal of this teacher education program, learning through interaction within a new cultural and language context, I have selected activity theory as a theoretical framework to orient the analysis. In activity theory, the concept ‘activity’ takes a different meaning than its everyday sense; first, it is the minimal unit of analysis to understand human cognitive development; and second, it encompasses dynamic human practices in the world and defines them in cultural and historical terms (Sawchuk, Duarte, & Elhammoumi, 2006). Activity theory is an appropriate choice for this project because it attempts to weave together individual development and the social-material conditions of everyday life (Thorne, 2004). As Lantolf and Genung (2002) have noted, “Although some approaches acknowledge the relevance of the social environment in individual development,
they fail to build a framework in which there is a necessary, dialectic link between individuals and social structure” (p. 176). Therefore, I assume that historical, contextual and social factors need to be uncovered to account for the process of second language and second culture acquisition and use activity theory as the theoretical framework to map the social factors implicated in this learning situation.

2.2.1 Contradiction and Change Spur Development

It has been well documented that teachers in U.S. public schools are primarily White, monolingual, of middle-class backgrounds, and from suburban or rural home contexts (Taylor & Sobel, 2001, p. 488). Meanwhile, public school classrooms are increasingly more diverse---culturally, linguistically, racially and ethnically. Many teachers who are preparing to work with multicultural/multilingual students come to the task of teaching with a monolingual and dominant culture life experience. How then, does a teacher move from a life experience defined by the majority culture and dominant language to understand and interact with a classroom reality of cultural hybridity, multilingualism and diverse home life experiences? I propose that that some type of transformative learning experience is necessary to move from the mono- to the multi- and further, because language and culture are integral parts of social identity, a learning experience is more likely to produce transformation and development if it is an ‘embodied’ experience. From an activity theoretical view, “Learning can be seen as a resolution, often ephemeral, to the tensions that produce changes in the conceptual, social and material conditions of one’s everyday life. These changes, in turn, create new contradictions (or opportunities for development).” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 209).

In this regard, activity theory provides important insight and theoretical direction. In the translated introduction to the German edition of “Learning by Expanding,” Engeström (1999b) emphasized one of the book’s major claims, “inner contradictions are the chief sources of movement and change in activity systems” (p. 3). In my effort to understand teacher learning about diversity, I suggest that intercultural learning is a developmental process that is inherently social, involves
internal contradiction and may mean rejection of previously established beliefs or ways of being.

Activity theory is broad enough to encompass collective transformation; it does not focus on the lone experience of an individual learner (or teacher), but is inclusive of all human agents and artifacts in a learning system. In this way, it accounts for the mediating artifacts that impinge on the process of intercultural learning, and provides a way to describe the unfolding of intercultural competence in an empirically-grounded context.

2.2.2 Embodied Cognition and Transformative Experience

Cognitive linguists assert a consequential link between our physical experiences and cognition and have devised the concept of ‘embodied cognition,’ which refers to the fact that our daily experience is partially structured by the nature of the physical body and by our neurological system. According to Evans & Green (2006), “The concepts we have access to and the nature of the ‘reality’ we think and talk about are a function of our embodiment: we can only talk about what we can perceive and conceive, and the things that we can perceive and conceive derive from embodied experience.” In this view, language does not directly reflect the world, rather it is mediated by (and at the same time mediates) our particular human interactions in the world.”(p. 46). Thus, our ‘world view’ is dependent on our unique embodied experiences (Evans & Green, 2006).

Lantolf & Johnson (2007) have emphasized the commensurability of cognitive linguistics and sociocultural ontologies. They cite Vygotsky’s (1986) key argument, (later taken up by activity theorists), that cognitive development occurs when tensions or conflict arises between the individual (or group) and the world of other individuals within social and intellectual activity (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007, p.890). For both research and the practice of L2 teacher education, Lantolf & Johnson’s (2007) position reunites language learning and language use and suggests that we can track a learner’s development by “examining the processes through which learners’ activities are initially mediated by other people and cultural artifacts, but later come under their control as they appropriate
resources to regulate their own activities (i.e. internalization)” (p. 886). (The process of internalization will be fully explained below.)

The central idea of activity theory, that learning and development involve contradiction, disequilibrium and transformation, plays out clearly in the immersion situation of this project. Both direct personal interaction with cultural and linguistic ‘others’ and the dissonance resulting from immersion in a foreign setting are pivotal embodied experiences that lead to conflict, transformation and development. Specifically, the data analysis in the following chapters offers evidence of personal identity shifts, conflicts between working-class and professional ideologies, and changes in thinking about teaching. These aspects of the learning process will be outlined theoretically in greater detail in Chapter 3 and illustrated empirically through case analyses of three teacher learners in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

2.2.3 Individual and Collective Transformation

Several researchers have used activity theory as an analytical tool within educational contexts to examine how groups of seemingly individual human actions are connected and how these interactions can sometime generate contradiction and conflict, followed by transformation and change (Wolff-Michael Roth & Tobin, 2004; Storch, 2004; Thorne, 2000, 2004; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). A premise of activity theory is that we need to uncover the learner’s goals and motives within a given learning situation in order to fully understand the performance of a learner in that particular situation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). From this perspective, human activity is always connected to a motive and it is from this motive that the object arises to give activity a specific direction, a motivating force. An activity’s object gives it a specific direction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). At times, an individual’s object for a learning experience and the program’s object may not coincide. This has been demonstrated in Yamagata-Lynch’s (2006) study of teacher professional development in which the teachers’ motivation and goals for participating in professional development are often not in alignment with the university or school district that designs the learning experience. This
misalignment becomes a source of tension and contradiction that can either be an obstacle to teacher learning or can lead to change in the social, conceptual or material conditions of everyday practice for the teacher.

Furthermore, while Lantolf and Thorne (2006) acknowledge that activity theory is often used as a diagnostic frame for descriptive and analytical understanding, they emphasize that its essence is transformational. The potential for activity theory to bring about innovation is expressed in Engestrom’s (1999a) idea of ‘radical localism,’ the notion that a possibility for change is alive in the details of everyday individual activity which collectively make up the whole of society. Additionally, Thorne (2005) has pointed out that activity theory does not separate research-based understanding from transformative action, therefore, the application of activity theory to a particular classroom or educational activity can lead to the development of insights or “symbolic-conceptual” tools to enact positive interventions.

Thus, the intent of this research project is twofold: 1) to analyze an activity system to better understand the developmental trajectory that teachers undergo in learning to become teachers of diverse learners and, 2) to stimulate and advance changes within the activity system itself, so that the system (the educational program) can better meet its potential. Particular system-wide transformations will be outlined in the final chapter.

2.3.0 Activity Theory: Intellectual Background

Activity theory is a conceptual framework that helps us to understand the unity of consciousness and activity (Nardi, 1996). Activity theorists argue that consciousness is not a set of discrete disembodied cognitive acts (decision-making, classification, remembering), and certainly it is not the brain; rather, consciousness is located in everyday practice—you are what you do. And what you do is firmly and inextricably embedded in the social matrix of which every person is an organic part (Nardi, 1996, p.7).
The roots of activity theory lie within an effort to develop a new psychology based on Marxist philosophy after the Russian revolution of 1917 (Bannon, 1997). One of the primary principles that Soviet psychologists agreed upon was that “the human mind comes to exist, develops, and can only be understood within the context of meaningful, goal-oriented, and socially determined interaction between human beings and their material environment” (Bannon, 1997, p. 1). This general principle was further developed by Sergey Rubinshtein and Lev Vygotsky and subsequently, has become known as the sociocultural theory of human development. Vygotsky was primarily concerned with the development of higher mental functioning which he saw arising from the activity that humans use to control the physical and social environment (Martin, 1993). Later, the conceptual framework known as cultural historical activity theory, growing out of the basic principles of sociocultural theory, was elaborated by A.N. Leont’ev (1978), a student of Vygotsky. Over the past two decades, there has been an international explosion of interest in activity theory and related theories of mind, culture and activity. Today there are journals, conferences and research projects specific to activity theory and the approach is being applied broadly in fields as diverse as applied linguistics, psychology, human-computer interaction, cognitive science, anthropology, communications, work place studies and education. Sawchuk, Duarte, & Elhammoumi (2007) emphasized that this growing interest corresponds with the increasing complexity of social activity across borders, the need for an interdisciplinary approach to solve global problems, the powerful role of technologies as mediating factors and importantly, the desire to understand change (occurring ever more rapidly) in systems of human activity (p. 1).

2.3.1 Activity Theory Evolves

Engeström (1999b), one of the prominent researchers in contemporary activity theory, describes the evolution of activity theory over three generations. The first generation centers on one of the fundamental ideas that underlie activity theory, Vygotsky’s notion of cultural mediation (Engestrom, 1987; Lantolf & Genung, 2002; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Vygotsky’s (1978) idea, illustrated in the
now famous triangle showing the relationship between subject, object and mediating artifact, established a link between the individual and the social structure. According to this perspective, human activities are mediated by artifacts which can be symbolic (for example, language), physical (a mountain, a feature of the landscape), or involve relationships between human beings. The key to understanding the human psyche and cognition, then, becomes the object-orientedness of human activity (Engestrom, 1999b; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

In Engeström’s (1999b) view, a limitation of the first configuration of the theory was that the unit of analysis was individually-focused and failed to account for the collective nature of human activity. The second generation, inspired by the work of A.N. Leont’ev, stresses the complex interactions between an individual subject and the community, and the mediation of mind through ‘sensuous human activity’ (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; A. N. Leont'ev, 1978). This perspective on human activity was a departure from Vygotsky’s writing which centered on the mediation of mind by cultural tools. For Leont’ev, a focus on interpersonal relations, the core of Vygotsky’s work, was only a special case of activity; Leont’ev’s conceptualization was broader and emphasized the explanatory power of the practical relations between the world and the transformation of objects in human activity (D. A. Leont'ev, 2003). Most importantly, second generation activity theorists operationalized the role of communities, division of labor, power and responsibilities among the participants in an activity system (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Engeström’s graphic which extended Vygotsky and Leont’ev’s ideas to map a collective activity system is provided in Figure 2.1. A detailed account of the components of the activity system as they apply to this research project and the data analysis is offered in Chapter 4.
Additionally, during the 1970’s, activity theory expanded beyond theorists of the Soviet Union to applications in various contexts around the world (Engestrom, 1999b). Engeström (1999b) has pointed out that when activity theory “went international, questions of diversity and dialogue between different traditions or perspectives became increasingly serious challenges” and asserted that the third generation of activity theory attempts to face these challenges (p. 2).

With the work of third generation activity theorists, which is still in progress, the basic activity system model has been expanded to include multiple activity systems that interrelate across space and time. A recent research effort of Engeström and colleagues concerns itself with the notion of ‘knotworking,’ while others take differing approaches, but all are concerned with multivocalic representation of the activity being investigated (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Multivocality refers to offering the perspective of the participants in a system in addition to the analytical “from above” systemic representations of the researchers (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 212).

### 2.3.2 Activity Theory: Basic Principles

Activity theory encompasses several key principles relating to human cognition, psychological development and human action. Given the broad reach of this conceptual apparatus, it is critical to understand its key constituent elements and how they may apply to an activity system. Bannon

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**Figure 1. Activity System (based on Engestrom, 1987, 1993, 1999a)**

![Activity System Diagram](image)
(1997) summarized the key principles of activity theory as object-orientedness, tool mediation, the dual concepts of internalization and externalization, hierarchical structure of activity, and continuous development. In later publications, Engeström (1999a) and Lantolf & Thorne (2006), outlined further directions in which activity theory has moved more recently—expansive learning as a key to transformation and innovation in collective human endeavors.

The principle of “object-orientedness” which is a foundational concept of cultural-historical psychology and arises from the materialist philosophy of Marx, claims that “human beings live in an objective reality which determines and shapes the nature of subjective phenomena” (Bannon, 1997, p. 2). Lantolf & Thorne (2006) put this in another way, “Marx’s core argument is that changing social and material conditions produce changes in consciousness” (p. 213). With this basic assumption, researchers are able to look for an objective account of subjective phenomena (Bannon, 1997, p. 2). Therefore, activity (in the sense of activity theory) describes transformational action, “It is through activity that new forms of reality are created, including the transformation of the self.” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 215).

Another fundamental idea that underlies activity theory (and Vygotsky’s thinking before that) is mediation (Engestrom, 1987; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998). The Vygotskian perspective of mediation is revolutionary in that it negates the Cartesian dualism that splits the individual mind from the societal structure and which psychology wrestled with in Vygotsky’s time and continues to be an issue today (Engstrom, 1999b, p. 1). According to Lantolf & Thorne (2006), “Vygotsky resolved the crisis in psychology by arguing that both the natural and the cultural lines of development (i.e. the internal and the external) were necessary for human thinking to emerge and develop.” (p. 153). Thus, through a process called internalization, humans gain control over natural mental functions by bringing externally (socioculturally) formed mediating artifacts into thinking activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006 p. 153).
Vygotsky (1978) differentiated between “elementary functions” which are “directly determined by stimulation from the environment” and higher mental functions whose “central feature is self-generated stimulation, that is, the creation and use of artificial stimuli which become the immediate causes of behavior” (p. 39). These artificial stimuli, or ‘sign operations,’ are characteristic of human activity (not found in animals) and the product of specific conditions of social development (Vygotsky, 1978). This means that higher forms of thinking (memory, attention, rational thinking, learning, development) necessarily involve symbolic forms that are external to the human mind (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). External symbolic forms are a consequence of cultural activity, therefore, culture and biology weave together to establish higher mental functioning. A key to the interaction of all of these factors is language. Engeström (1999a) asserted that the traditional dualistic framework of psychology does not help us to understand deep social transformations that are more rapid and far-reaching in today’s world: “More than ever before, there is a need for an approach that can dialectically link the individual and the social structure” (p. 19).

While a full treatment of the debate is not possible here, internalization, a key concept of Vygotsky’s theory, is actively critiqued by researchers (See Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, for an extended discussion). For activity theory and for this research project, the important point is that internalization is seen as a transformational and reciprocal process in which a person transforms what is internalized according to their own potential, culture and history and then through externalization, can potentially impact the self and the community. (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.158).

Tools shape the way that humans interact with the environment, and the principle of internationalization/externalization explains how external activities ultimately result in shaping internal mental structures (Bannon, 1997). Vygotsky offered the now often-cited claim that every psychological function appears twice, first between people on the interpsychological plane and then within the individual on the intrapsychological plane (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 153). In this way, mediation is a bi-directional process—the mediating artifact allows external objects to become
mentally represented (internalization) while mental activity becomes objectified through speech or human action in the process of externalization and affects the material reality of the individual and others (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 154). “Internalization provides the possibility for human beings to simulate potential interactions with reality without performing actual manipulations on real objects” (Bannon, 1997, p. 2). Therefore, mediated activity is transformative both internally and externally. Activity theory recognizes these two basic processes as interwoven and operating continuously at every level of human activity (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). It emphasizes that internal mental activities cannot be understood if analyzed separately from the external contexts in which they are formed and transformed.

In order to increase the analytical usefulness of activity theory, Leont’ev outlined a hierarchical structure of activity by creating a three-level taxonomy of activity type: 1) the activity level, 2) action, and 3) operations (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 216). An example is useful to illustrate the different levels of activity; my behaviors at the activity level might be described as carrying out research into a particular topic. The activity level is motivated by a biological or social need and is always connected to a motive, although the motive may not be consciously apparent to the actor or actors (2006, p. 216). It is the broadest level of the hierarchy and takes its form from the “historical structuring of social practice” (2006, p. 217). An activity is driven by a motive; my motive in conducting research may be to better understand activity theory or to gain respect in my academic field, or alternatively, my primary motivation may be to get a good grade and complete a course requirement. The activities involved in conducting research on this topic may take different forms depending on my motive.

The action level is the second level of the unit and includes the goal-directed activity of the moment—identifying source material, reading articles, developing a structure and coherence to a paper, writing a paper or giving a presentation on my work. Actions are autonomous from the activity level because the same goal-directed action may serve differing higher level activities.
For example, I may write a research paper, but the action of writing may be to serve divergent higher-level activities as in the purpose of getting a grade or to expand collective knowledge. Actions are what must be done to achieve a conscious goal. Third level activities are called operations and are “real-time in process means in which an action is carried out” and therefore respond to the local conditions under which they are carried out (2006, p. 219). Conducting my research in a small village of Ecuador or in a public school classroom in Pennsylvania may change the operational conditions of the activity while the activity and action levels may remain the same.

Finally, it is significant to point out that Leont’ev’s hierarchy has been criticized for several reasons. One is the idea that the hierarchy is too structural and fails to account for human creativity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 221). Another critique is that the focus on the individual action portrays human activity as a string of individual acts while ironically, one of the objects of activity theory is to understand human collective action embedded in social practice (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999, p. 12).

2.3.3 Concept Development: Linking Abstract Principles with Worldly Experience

Turning attention back to the initial points of this chapter, let us remember that a shifting perspective of SLA and L2 teacher education research has begun to re-unite the social and the individual, language and culture, and language learning and language use. This research project and the teacher educational practice that it analyzes are aligned with this unification and movement away from dichotomous thinking about those concepts and how they interact in daily life. In practical terms, the teacher education program of interest seeks to offer teachers new conceptualizations of language, culture, and diversity, as well as teaching practices for English language learners, but it also provides the opportunity for teachers to discover how the concept or principle to be learned functions in concrete practical activity. As an example, teacher learners complete courses before departure for Ecuador which encourage them to think about culture, their own particular cultural frame, the
inseparability of culture and language, and the L2 learning process. Efforts are made to engage with conceptual and theoretical understanding of these things. Then, as they engage in their day-to-day teaching of English language learners, L2 learning and cultural interactions during the immersion program in Ecuador, the potential for seeing how these concepts function in everyday life comes alive and real. Vygotsky (1986) argued that conceptual knowledge is internalized only when it is connected to the everyday life and activities of learners (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007). As such, the practice and research effort of this project attempt to move teacher learners from in-class learning of concepts to real-life interactions with English language learners, cultural “others,” and peer and more-expert educators. In Chapter 6, we will see how a teacher’s understanding of specific aspects of teaching English language learners develops and how her teaching practice in the classroom mediates transformation in her conceptual thinking. Vygotsky (1986) offered a theoretical framework for concept development that helps to understand her changes in thinking.

Vygotsky (1986) identifies two types of concepts; scientific and spontaneous. Spontaneous (or everyday) concepts tend to be situated in the context in which they are learned (bottom-up) and are less conscious to the learner. Scientific (or theoretical) concepts are taught in formal schooling and can be abstracted to apply to other situations; therefore, we are more aware of scientific concepts. Vygotsky makes a further distinction among complexes, pseudoconcepts, and concepts to explain how people develop conceptualizations over time. In this gradual process of concept development, a learner might first develop a complex and then next, a pseudoconcept, both of which approximate the unity of the formal, abstract logic that underlies a scientific concept. To illustrate the levels of concept development in Vygotsky’s theorization, we can examine a teacher who is first exposed to the instructional practice of cooperative learning (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). During initial experience with this practice, a teacher might label any group activity as cooperative learning whether students are actually collaborating or not. Any connection to the idea of cooperation is included in the complex, so that group activity equals cooperative learning without awareness of the
distinguishing characteristics of the elements of cooperative learning. As the teacher gains experience and information using this teaching practice, she/he may realize that cooperative learning requires that students share a goal and distribute tasks, but still some critical elements may be missing from the teacher’s conceptualization of cooperative learning, for example, the team may lack individual or group accountability. Vygotsky (1986) calls this stage a pseudoconcept; there is the appearance of a concept but there are still internal contradictions in the overall definition or conceptualization of the notion. Lastly, the teacher becomes aware of all of the individual elements which interact in a unified way to create a cooperative learning situation and a concept emerges as the teacher thinks about and implements cooperative learning activity.

Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the theoretical approach in which my research is situated. I began with a broad look at SLA and L2 teacher education research and a focus on recent shifts in thinking from language and language learning as internal in-the-head processes to a view of language as a social process, language and culture as interconnected and language learning occurring through interactions with others in contexts of use. Sociocultural theory and Vygotsky’s original conceptualizations of mediation and internalization were explained and then activity theory as a specific outgrowth of Vygotskian thinking. I ended with Vygotskian notions of concept development which brings us closer to the activity at hand—teacher learning about how to effectively teach in diverse classrooms. The next chapter will move specifically into that subject area to review the literature on culturally responsive teaching, teaching for social justice, intercultural learning in immersion situations, and the development of intercultural competence. In the methodology chapter which will follow next, I will come back to a more detailed explanation of activity theory as it relates to the data and focal activity system in this research.
Chapter 3

Pieces of a Developmental Puzzle: Teacher Education For Diverse Classrooms

“…multicultural education is a journey: beginning with their personal transformation, teachers can move on to create more productive ways of working with others, and from there to challenge the policies and practices in which they work” (Nieto, 1999, p. xviii).

Introduction

In her book, The Light in Their Eyes, Sonia Nieto draws clear ties between the micro-world of daily classroom interaction and the macro-world of educational policies and societal structures. Specifically, she proposes that to become a multicultural teacher you must first be a multicultural person. Exploring the ways that social structures impact upon schools while embarking on a path of learning about and embracing other cultures is a tall order for teachers, particularly for those whose life experience has not offered frequent opportunity for personal interaction with cultural ‘others’ and other languages. However, it is a challenge that some teachers clearly embrace as part of who they are, and who they are becoming (see introductory quote from Alex, chapter 7).

In this chapter, I will explore how the field of teacher education articulates how to prepare teachers to teach learners who in significant ways (language, race, cultural background) differ from the white, monolingual English-speaking, dominant culture of the U.S. While one might argue that all learners are diverse and all interaction is in some way intercultural, teachers who instruct English language learners in U.S. classrooms hold a particular responsibility to guide their students to develop proficiency with new cultural frames and the language of the school system. In my analysis, I situate cultural and linguistic difference in the wider societal network of power relations of which they are a part (May, 1999). Further, I concur with other authors who recommend an unmasking of the reproductive processes of society which uphold and maintain the values and cultural practices of the
dominant majority culture (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Gay, 2000; Giroux, 1992; Kostogriz, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001; May, 1999; McLaren & Muñoz, 2000; Moll, 2001). In this work, I move beyond an assumption that English language learners must accommodate to mainstream culture, a given that is at the heart of the myth of what it means to be “American.” (May, 1999). I propose that teachers (and others from the dominant culture) need to engage in reflective and personally transformative activity to embrace “otherness” and recognize the hybridity and diversity inherent to all cultural frames including their own. An important component of this learning endeavor is the development of an understanding of the societal structures that impact upon schools, curricula, learning and personal interactions.

Specifically, I review the practices that have been proposed and are being used to prepare teachers for diversity in public school classrooms. Throughout, I foreground the interdisciplinary nature of this research project by situating my review of the literature in several distinct, but related bodies of inquiry. First, I investigate the literature related to teacher education for equity, multiculturalism and social justice. Second, echoing Nieto’s (1999) proposal that one must be a multicultural person to become a multicultural teacher, I explore the work that conceptualizes the development of ‘intercultural competence,’ particularly in relation to foreign language teaching, an area that is inclusive of both second language and culture learning. Third, given that a central practice of the TESL program under study is a learning experience intentionally set in a second language and culture context, I include some implications from the literature that investigates learning in immersion contexts.

3.1.0 Intellectual Roots: Educational Equity and Multicultural Education

In surveying the literature on preparing teachers for diverse classrooms, I note the following subtitles of important works: “teaching for social justice,” “creating multicultural learning communities,” “race, diversity and social justice,” “students and teachers caught in the cross fire.” Issues of
educational equity in our society are hard to miss. Sleeter (1995) summarized the underlying sentiment forcefully,

As a society, we do not collectively seem to know how to educate a diverse population well. Nor do we collectively seem to know how to approach many other challenges that relate directly to equity and diversity, such as distributing resources in ways that work for diverse communities or communicating across lines of difference without regarding the differences themselves as a problem. (p. 5).

According to McLaren and Muñoz (2000), these concerns as they are currently situated in the field of *multicultural education* originated in the civil rights movement of the 1960’s and were directly related to the social, political, cultural and economic struggles of ethnic groups over racial integration. Others trace multicultural education back to the 1940s and the progressive education movement of which John Dewey was a major figure. Over time, the umbrella of *multicultural education* has become more expansive to include other forms of diversity including links with indigenous rights groups, bilingual education, gay and lesbian organizations and workers’ and women’s organizations and concurrently has become increasingly politicized (2000). Generally speaking multicultural education has been defined as:

An approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs, and affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies and an interdependent world. It is based on the assumption that the primary goal of public education is to foster the intellectual, social and personal development of virtually all students to their highest potential. Multicultural education is comprised of four interactive dimensions: the movement toward equity, curriculum reform, the process of becoming interculturally competent, and the commitment to combat prejudice and discrimination, especially racism (Bennett, 1999, p. 11).

While it may seem difficult to argue against such ideals as equity and cultural plurality in the diverse society of the United States, the project of multicultural education has incited passionate opposition. Since multicultural education as an educational approach is rooted in political concerns, criticism has come from both the left and right of the political spectrum. Radical educators claim that multicultural education does not go far enough to incite change in society and purports a “benign pluralism” (see Sleeter, 1996). And conservative educators argue against multicultural education as a radical anti-American and anti-white movement with the potential to divide American society (see
Ovando & McLaren, 2000). The conservative opponents charge that multicultural education: a) divides society by teaching students competing ethnocentrismis, b) denies successful participation in American society because it ignores the intellectual heritage of the Western world (“the Great Books”) and replaces it with ethnic content, c) promotes conflict by nurturing a sense of historic grievances for minority groups, among many other claims (2000). Banks (1995), one of the foremost thinkers and passionate defenders of multicultural education, counters that the underlying core of such attacks is the fear by whites that their dominant position in society is declining because of large increases in non-majority populations in the U.S. Banks (1995), in the *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, describes the primary concerns of multicultural education as: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure.

Sleeter (1996) has made the additional claim that over time, the way multicultural education is presented to teachers has changed. What was once an educational movement with clear connections to larger social and political racial struggles is now often expressed as sensitivity training for white teachers (1996). Many educators now view multicultural education as a way to teach “at risk” children, a vehicle to help students of color to assimilate to the dominant cultural ways, in other words, as a form of individualism, with a primary focus on the individual “at risk” student. Sleeter (1996) argues for the continued development of multicultural education in ways that are true to its original mission: “to challenge oppression and to use schooling as much as possible to help shape a future America that is more equal, democratic and just, and that does not demand conformity to one cultural norm” (p. 15).

In 2005, in the context of the standards movement in public education, Sleeter advocated for “valuing, learning from and passing on a much wider array of knowledge.” (p. 8). Standards-based reform in recent years has proposed to set clear standards for all students as a way of minimizing the role of race and class differences in students’ access to an academically challenging curriculum. In
other words, while standards-based reform seeks to make curriculum standards public and transparent, it simultaneously homogenizes the curriculum. Ironically, this is happening at a time when US classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. According to Sleeter (2005), “That narrowing of what is possible to know results in paradoxical situations such as trying to address an equity issue—the achievement gap—with only a limited range of conceptual tools for understanding why it exists in the first place.” (p. 6). Multicultural education advocates for a diversity of expertise as intellectual resources for constructive participation in a multicultural democracy and a diverse world (Sleeter, 2005).

3.1.1 Teacher Education for Social Justice

Cochran-Smith (2004b) identifies the same preoccupations with educational standards and accountability in public education and their influence on how policy-makers, researchers and teacher educators, as well as the general public, view teacher preparation. Cochran-Smith (2004) explains that two sets of issues: on the one hand, educational equity and the achievement gap, and teaching quality and preparing highly qualified teachers, on the other hand, have been conflated into one issue. Current conceptions within this view of the “problem of teacher education” are: 1) educational equity expressed as holding all students accountable to the same tests, despite unequal resources and opportunities for learning; 2) teachers preparation conceptualized as training that ensures that teachers have basic subject matter and technical skills to increase students’ test scores; and 3) preparing children for a democratic society means “assimilating all children into mainstream values, language and knowledge perspectives so they can enter the nation’s workforce, contribute to the economy, and preserve the place of the United States as the dominant power in a global society.” (2004, p. 1).

In contrast, Cochran-Smith and others who interrogate questions of how to prepare teachers for social justice (J. Banks, 2001; Gomez, 1996; Nieto, 2000; Rodgers, 2006; Sleeter, 1996, 2005), understand teacher preparation differently. Specifically, Cochran-Smith argues that teacher education should be viewed as both a “learning problem” and a “political problem for social justice” and
suggests that understanding teacher education in this way offers an outline for a theoretical framework of preparing teachers for diverse classrooms (2004).

3.1.2 A Learning Problem

Cochran-Smith (2004) reminds us of long-standing tensions in teacher education—such as the tension between positivist and constructivist understandings of teacher learning, and an awareness of the role of teaching in the reproduction or reconstruction of a larger social structure. She argues for “a new image” of teacher education which moves attention from what teachers do, to what they know, and emphasizes how teachers’ sources of knowledge inform their work in classrooms. Others have explained this epistemological shift as a move from a dominant positivist view toward a sociocultural understanding of teacher learning (Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Martin, 1993; Sleeter, 1999). According to Sleeter (1999), positivism led much of the inquiry into teaching and teacher education for the past 50 years. “Positivist social science is rooted in the belief that reality exists apart from the knower, and can be grasped through a careful processes of data collection” (p. 4). The scientific method provides guidance for the research process, and generalizable “truths” systemize research findings into categories such as teacher styles, behaviors, competencies or methods (Sleeter, 1999, p.5). Concomitantly, Johnson (2006) has recently pointed out that despite a sociocultural turn in the human sciences in general, and a sociocultural understanding of teacher cognition in particular, the positivistic paradigm continues to dominate the practices of L2 teacher education. Johnson (2006) argues that narrowing the epistemological gap between understandings of L2 teacher cognition and how teachers are being prepared to teach is critical to the furthering of teacher education within the field of language teaching.

According to Cochran-Smith (2004), the idea that teacher education for social justice should be framed as a learning problem can be captured in three premises: 1) teacher education creates “inquiry communities” where everyone is a learner and a researcher; 2) inquiry is an intellectual and political stance; and 3) teacher knowledge is localized, cultural and critical. An inquiry community
includes both beginning and experienced teachers (and school and university-based educators) and is a process that unfolds over a professional lifespan. The inquiry community is further described as “experienced teachers and university supervisors work[ing] along with prospective teachers to make their own struggles and their own on-going learning visible and accessible to others and thus offer their own learning as grist for the learning of others.” (2004, p. 13). Cochran-Smith points out that most education programs have not included in their operations the intellectual context to support teacher educators’ learning about social justice, and therefore, part of what must happen is a process of “unlearning” racism and other problematic stances that are often “buried” in teacher education courses and procedures.

The second premise of teacher education for social justice, inquiry as stance, is a term that “involves making problematic the current arrangements of schooling; the ways knowledge is constructed, evaluated, and used; and teachers’ individual and collective roles in bringing about change.” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 14). The emphasis of the work of inquiry communities is to extend action and problem-posing to the immediate context as well as to larger social and political contexts. The emphasis of stance refers to the way we see things and the lens we use to understand events and implies inquiry over time. Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1993) inquiry stance names the process of teachers learning to theorize pedagogy and participate in a community of professionals that are engaged in the work of social justice. The concept is analogous to “praxis,” inspired by the work of Freire (1970) which means taking action on the world in order to change it as well as critically reflecting on the actions and the change; it also suggests the reciprocal shaping of theory and practice (Cochran-Smith, 2004). An inquiry stance assumes that a teacher education program does not transmit an authoritative body of knowledge, but encourages teachers to explore their identities as transformative intellectuals, or educators that intend to make deliberate and critical contributions to the discourses of schools (Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willet, 2002; Giroux, 1988).
Thirdly, the way that teacher learners construct *local knowledge* is a process of working with more experienced teachers, raising questions, making connections and generally linking the specifics of individual students and localized classroom settings to bigger educational ideas and frameworks. The intent is a close linking of the intellectual and practical work of teaching. In the views of social justice educators, the goal of education is successful participation in a democratic society, which involves inquiry into the social and political structures that support and deny access to power and opportunity in society. A local connection is essential to enable this sort of inquiry. Thus, understanding social structures and the ideologies that sustain them frames teacher education as a political problem.

### 3.1.3 A Political Problem

For explanatory purposes, Cochran-Smith (2004b) separates learning and political principles in her conception of teacher education for social justice, but she also asserts that they are intrinsically linked. While over the last 15 years, a body of theoretical work has been articulated to outline a “new” teacher education, still much of teacher education practices have remained unchanged and many education departments continue to operate from a “deficit” perspective about the education of minority students (Cochran-Smith, 2004b; Nieto, 1999; Sleeter, 1996). For Cochran-Smith (2004b), the “political problem” of teacher education is the challenge of naming and confronting the ideologies implicit to the educational system. Some of these problematic assumptions are:

- American schools and society are meritocratic
- Racism and sexism are problems that have been solved
- Tracking systems and high-stakes testing are neutral ways of organizing learning and assessing progress
- The purpose of schooling is assimilation to mainstream values

The process of helping educators to analyze assumptions that are subsumed in our views towards the educational system, has also been defined by Bartolomé and Balderrama (2001) as *political clarity*, or the process of coming “to understand better the possible linkages between macro-level political, economic and social variables, and subordinated groups’ academic performance at the micro-level.
classroom.” (p.27). There is a tendency for teachers to depoliticize schooling, seeing teaching as a neutral activity removed from social and economic consequences (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001). Thus, political clarity is essential for teachers so that they can become aware of and explain the ideologies that affect schooling practices.

Understanding hegemony and the way it plays out in public schools is another aspect of political clarity. Hegemony, a concept put forth by Antonio Gramsci (2000/1929-35) refers to the way that certain social groups manage to dominate others and maintain positions of privilege without the consensual approval of the disempowered. Gramsci suggested that a key way that hegemony operates is in the creation of social systems that marginalize particular groups and relegate members to subordinate positions. The schools are one system where this phenomena plays out; teachers (and students) accept that there will always be a ranking of students—“that’s just the way it is” (Balderrama & Díaz-Rico, 2006, p. 30). At each opportunity, teachers with political clarity speak out against practices and attitudes based on hegemonic ideas or beliefs. In sum, teacher education for social justice has at its core the goal of making it normative, rather than exceptional that teachers work as advocates for social justice.

3.1.4 Approaches to Teacher Preparation for Social Justice

Many authors have proposed practices for teacher education programs that move students to awareness and action for social justice. Cochran-Smith (2004b) believes that working to reform teaching in this way is not a skill that can be learned at the university and then “applied” in classrooms, but rather is localized in the history and culture of teaching at individual schools and in the personal biographies of teachers and their efforts to raise questions about common practices and resist inappropriate decisions. One approach is to create critical dissonance or incongruity between what teacher learners learn in their teacher preparation programs and what they believe, have experienced, and continue to experience about schools in their teaching placements (2004b). The intent is to disrupt existing beliefs about how children experience school and provide an alternative
vision for classroom interaction, instructional and assessment practices. Some strategies include action research projects in schools, field experiences coupled with ethnographic studies of individual students, families or classrooms, and journals where students reflect critically on their teaching and their observations in schools. While these practices aim for transformation of individual teacher perspectives and beliefs, such strategies often have limited success and can be damaging when the aim is to provoke critical dissonance between university and school practices (2004b). Cochran-Smith describes several “troubling messages” that may arise including the idea that educators outside of school (those in the university) bring the critical perspective to schools and are those that can liberalize and reform those on the inside, or that teachers’ practices are outdated or conservative and need to be changed or “gotten around”(2004b). Ironically, critical dissonance which argues for the voices of teachers in the abstract may end in criticizing or devaluing school-based teachers’ practices and lived experiences (2004b).

The second element of this approach to prepare teacher learners for social justice is collaborative resonance based on the joint work of learning communities within the university and the schools (2004b). Collaborative school problem-posing is a process of “tapping into contexts that support ongoing learning by student teachers in the company of experienced teachers who are themselves actively engaged in efforts to reform, research or transform teaching” (2004b, p. 27). One of the key assumptions of this approach is that the formal instructional aspects of university teacher preparation programs are unlikely to alter students’ perspectives on society, while experiential learning is potentially more powerful.

In sum, it appears that a life-long commitment to learning within communities, and learning experiences that are personally transformational are two key aspects of teacher education for social justice. And while many teacher education programs today advocate a critical stance, what if teacher-learners don’t enter programs with the desire to engage in these issues? What happens when teacher-learners enter these preparation programs with the more modest, but perhaps more individually
pragmatic goal of just wanting to learn to teach? What if they are not interested in personal transformation?

It is likely that many students choose to become teachers because they see it as a socially uncontroversial professional choice. In her book about pre-service teacher identities, Alsup (2006, p. 63) claims that there is a “myth of normalcy” in education which she expresses as, “The teaching life is relatively uncomplicated, and those who select it are “average” citizens (usually female) who wish to maintain their “regular” (married, heterosexual, conservative) lives in well-adjusted, middle-class contexts.” How does teacher education confront these tensions?

Interesting for its look backwards, Rodgers (2006) took a historical perspective to explore how a particular teacher education program, The Putney Graduate School of Teacher Education (PGS) which ran from 1950-1964, faced the dilemma of teaching teachers to care about social justice. The Putney School (founded on John Dewey’s principles of reflective learning and Theodore Brameld’s “reconstructionist” teaching principles) operated on an explicit curriculum of education for social justice during a time period and context which strongly favored institutional authoritarianism and conservatism and tended toward efficiency in education in order to remain strong against Cold War adversaries. That political context and the resulting pressures on teacher education are strikingly similar to that of today in which the agenda to produce “highly qualified teachers” frames teacher education as a policy problem and proposes to eliminate teacher preparation as an entry requirement and allow market forces to determine teacher placement and retention (Cochran-Smith, 2004a). The Putney School involved a mixed-race, mixed-nationality and multi-age group of teacher-learners, who first lived and studied together, and subsequently traveled together over a period of weeks to various sites of civil action in the South (Rodgers, 2006). Students had the opportunity not only to study racial prejudice and social change, but to live it with their classmates and to experience others who were engaged in the current struggles of society. Emotion was a key part of the process. The school’s director, Morris Mitchell, believed teacher-learners need to be immersed in experiences that
moved them emotionally as well as intellectually (Rodgers, 2006). His priority was to foreground social issues rather than pedagogy. In the process, there was often frustration, on both sides—Mitchell at times, because his students did not seem to share his priority of social change and his students because what mattered to them most was knowledge of and skill in teaching (Rodgers, 2006).

Rodgers (2006) conducted in-depth interviews with previous students, reviewed the school’s curriculum and student reflections written during that period. She found that despite the tensions, or perhaps as a result of them, students later indicated that their perspectives on the world and education had changed due to their experiences of being at the school. Rodgers (2006) concluded:

> For change to be long-lasting, for souls to be turned, teacher-students must have direct experience with compelling contemporary issues, engage in internal and communal reflections, articulate their own needs and plans, and be guided by teacher educators and mentors who are doing the same—all of which will give them insight into themselves, the society in which we live, and institutions in which they work, and ground them in the authority of their own experience. (p. 1290)

She suggests that “a commitment to social justice comes not from program requirements but from a place of internal authority that is the outgrowth of personal transformation.” (Rodgers, 2006, p.1290). She concurs with Cochran-Smith and others “that becoming a teacher committed to social justice requires a fundamental shift in the way one views the world, one’s place in it and one’s relationship to others” (Rodgers, 2006, p.1270). In other words, learning to teach for social justice is as much about learning how to make sense of one’s own experience and life history as it is learning how to act in particular ways in the classroom (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

In addition to the extensive work of Cochran-Smith, other researchers have explored teacher education programs within the U.S. that have attempted to move teachers toward a social justice perspective (J. Banks, 2001; Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willet, 2002; Huber, Kline Bakken, & Clark, 1997; Kroll et al., 2005; Sleeter, 2005). In one way or another, all of these programs take up the concept of “inquiry stance” or “praxis” and emphasize connections to local communities and life-long learning.
3.2.0 Race, Racialization and Teaching English Language Learners

Over the past fifteen years, a sizable body of research has been built which investigates teacher education for cultural, racial and linguistically diverse students. I use the term “diverse students and classrooms” while acknowledging that ‘culturally diverse’ or simply “diversity” is commonly used as a euphemism for non-White and non-middle-class students (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001). In a review article, “Preparing Teachers for Culturally Diverse Schools: Research and the Overwhelming Presence of Whiteness,” Sleeter (2001) summarized 80 studies that focus on teacher preparation for diverse classrooms. She concluded, “Although there is a large quantity of research, very little of it actually examines which strategies prepare strong teachers. Most of the research focuses on addressing the attitudes and lack of knowledge of White pre-service teachers” (2001, p. 94).

Further, while the literature on teacher education for social justice is consistently inclusive of different types of diversity and frequently makes explicit reference to English language learners as part of “diverse populations,” there is little research that attempts to bridge the two fields (teacher education for social justice and ESL teacher education). In his review of critical pedagogy in English language teaching, Canagarajah (2005) asserted, “Although teaching a colonial language to students from many minority language groups is a controversial activity fraught with political significance, L2 professionals largely adopt an idyllic innocence toward their work” (p. 931). He attributed this to a structuralist orientation to language and a positivistic tradition in SLA research which kept English language teaching pragmatically preoccupied with linguistic and communicative skills. A critical orientation to language teaching and learning emerged in the second language learning and teaching literature in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, and has since become more attune to the “shaping influence of culture, discourse and consciousness on learning activity.” (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 932).

A recent exception to the divide between the two fields is a recently published special topic issue of TESOL Quarterly (Sept. 2006) on issues of race and racialization. In an introductory article, Kubota & Lin (2006) have pointed out the peculiarity of the silence about race within TESOL given
the interest in other academic fields as well as the tremendous amount of racialized diversity in the field. Kubota & Lin argued that race, ethnicity and culture are ideas that categorize human beings based on discursively constructed phenotypical and cultural characteristics. *Racialization* is simply racial categorization or a process of ascribing meaning to particular biological features of a human being which are then acted upon and therefore, “racialization produces and legitimates differences among social groups based on perceived biological characteristics, yet it is a dynamic and historically situated process in which racial significations are always shifting.” (Kubota & Lin, 2006, p. 477). *Racism* is discourse that enforces a specific power dynamic that oppresses certain racialized groups as inferior to maintain the status quo of the dominant. Kubota & Lin (2006) emphasized that some of the complexity of the terms lies in the fact that racism in everyday life commonly signals overt forms of prejudice or individual discrimination while understanding *racism* as a discourse allows us to see that most individuals are not intentionally racist, but what is racist is the collective structuring of social reality.

Also included in this issue of *TESOL Quarterly* is a study which investigates four K-12 ESOL teachers and the significance of their racial identities as they negotiate the inherent racialization of their teaching contexts (Motha, 2006). While all four beginning teachers had antiracist orientations, they struggled to position themselves in an institutional culture whose dominant ideology supported the supremacy of both Whiteness and of native speaker status (Cook, 1999; , 2006). Motha’s (2006) study calls for educators to take a position against color-blind and no-differential treatment arguments which she argues obscure issues of power and privilege, and therefore, hold up racial and linguistic hierarchies. Similarly, Cochran-Smith (2004b) has recommended that teacher education be “read as racial text.”(p. 89). In this she means that it is critical to analyze any curriculum to see what kinds of messages about race or racism are being told, what assumptions are made, what identity and points of view are implicit and what is valued and devalued. She concludes, “to teach lessons about race and racism in teacher education is to struggle
to unlearn racism itself---to interrogate the assumptions that are deeply embedded in the curriculum, to own our own complicity in maintaining existing systems of privilege and oppression, and to grapple with our own failure.” (2004, p. 101).

3.2.1 What Teachers Need to Know: Teaching English Language Learners

There is clearly a need for research that links the fields of ESL teacher education and issues of teaching for social justice. English language learners increasingly make up a larger percent of the public school population than students of color who speak English as a first language (Balderrama & Diaz-Rico, 2006). Issues of race and class are compounded by language issues in U.S. schools. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) in *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World*, a recent effort to codify the knowledge base for the teaching profession, made the claim that knowledge of subject matter and knowledge of how to teach are not sufficient for effective teaching. “Teachers’ attitudes and expectations, as well as their knowledge of how to incorporate the cultures, experiences and needs of their students into their teaching, significantly influences what students learn and the quality of the learning opportunities.” (J. Banks et al., 2005) Thus, teacher education programs, and specifically, programs that prepare teachers to instruct English language learners, need to be concerned with helping teachers to examine their own cultural assumptions and inquire into the backgrounds of their students. The report suggests preparing teachers to be “cultural brokers,” who understand different cultural systems, know how to interpret cultural symbols and can establish links between cultures in their teaching (2005, p. 243).

Additionally, national and state accreditation standards for teacher education specify themes of diversity and the need for teachers’ intercultural competence (Suarez, 2003). As an example, TESOL’s *Standards for P-12 ESL Teacher Education*, includes one domain of knowledge which states, “Candidates know, understand and use the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to the nature and role of culture and cultural groups to construct learning environments that
support ESOL students’ cultural identities, language and literacy development, and content-area achievement” (2002, p. 16).

3.2.2 Culturally Responsive Teaching Pedagogy

In offering instruction to English language learners, a teacher must rely on the ability to address diversity and cultural issues in their teaching of diverse students in the classroom. Some have categorized the teaching abilities and the kinds of knowledge or insights that teachers should have in interacting with diverse learners as a “culturally responsive” teaching practice (Gay, 2000; Huber, Kline, Bakken, & Clark, 1997). In terms of learning outcomes for teacher-learners, several authors have begun to describe their experiences with teacher preparation programs that take culturally responsive teaching as a goal. In a description of the Bilingual/ESL/Multicultural Education Practitioner Program in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a philosophy on how to build the competence of teachers to work with cultural and linguistic diversity is outlined as follows:

- Diversity is a resource, not a problem
- Elementary and secondary students with previous schooling experiences need more than language instruction to help them meet the challenges of negotiating classroom interactions and expectations in academic subject matter
- Students do not have to be separated from same-language peers to develop English language skills
- Parents, other family members, and the community should be involved in the education of their children
- Teachers must examine their own assumptions regarding students and their families to understand fully how racism and other biases operate within schools
- Teachers must have high academic standards while simultaneously affirming student diversity (Gebhard, Austin, Nieto, & Willet, 2002, p. 223)

One guiding principle underlying the teacher education program is the belief that all teachers, not just ESL or bilingual teachers need preparation in teaching students from all backgrounds. And, secondly, the idea that all teachers need to make pedagogical decisions that take into account issues of equity and social justice (2002).
3.2.2 Culture as a Barrier?

Further, concerns for effectively teaching diverse students bring attention to cultural barriers which get in the way of improved teacher performance (Scahill, 1993). Teachers tend to see the world from their own racial, gender and cultural location. Teacher education should help teachers to develop a reflective practice, a goal which requires critical analysis of one’s own culture and a consciousness of how human differences are used by people in power to rationalize inequities and maintain their position of dominance in society. (Merryfield, 2000). Meanwhile, Scahill (1993) has asserted “a central task of teacher preparation should be to assist inexperienced teachers to be capable of transcending their culture-bound common sense perceptions and thought patterns as they gain experience in professional practice.” (p. 2).

Unfortunately, empirical data demonstrate that exposure to multicultural education and issues of diversity, racism and privilege in teacher education are often without intended effect (Brown, 2004; Gomez, 1996; Merryfield, 2000; Sleeter, 1995, 2001; Zeichner, 1996). It appears that intellectual analysis alone is inadequate to bring about changes in beliefs and attitudes as well as the critical social perspectives that are crucial to change in educational contexts. In fact, several studies have found that stand-alone cultural diversity courses can reinforce stereotypical perceptions of self and others, and teachers exit such courses unchanged or affirmed in their previously held worldview (Brown, 2004; Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997; Goodwin, 1994; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). On the other hand, studies that demonstrate the impact of community-based immersion experiences for teachers speak to the power of experiential learning (Cooper, Beare, & Thorman, 1990; Mahan & Stachowski, 1990; Suarez, 2003; Zeichner, 1996). In particular, direct intercultural experience along with carefully guided reflection of the experiences can contribute to shifts in attitudes especially if students are a cohesive group in which teacher learners stay in close contact (Zeichner, 1996). Gomez (1996) asserts that the most promising teacher education practices placed teacher candidates in situations in which they became the “other” and were simultaneously engaged in seminars or on-
going reflection to guide their self-inquiry about diversity. Merryfield (2000) offers compelling evidence for the importance of direct experience with diversity and the “other” in an analysis of the personal histories of 80 teacher educators who were recommended by their peers as professionals committed to diversity and global education. The qualities and experience that emerged in a content analysis of their personal histories were direct personal encounters with people who differed in some substantial way (race, ethnicity, class, and language) and pivotal experiences living outside of the mainstream culture and experiencing what it feels like to be the “other.” These pivotal experiences created a contradiction between past beliefs and multiple realities of new experience (deconstruction of previously held beliefs) which are revised over time as the identity of the individual changes and is re-constructed with ongoing experience (2000). In Merryfield’s study, almost all white teacher educators who grew up within the middle-class had to leave the US and live in another culture in order to experience life as an outsider and recognize the unearned privilege of people in the mainstream society (2000). In the case studies presented in the following Chapters 5, 6, and 7, the teachers begin to experience identity shifts and self-questioning even in the brief period of the immersion experience in Ecuador. Obviously, more research is needed that views the process of intercultural learning as a developmental, transformative and socially embedded process that takes place over the course of an entire teaching career.

3.3.0 From Culture to Languaculture: Primary Concepts and Definitions

So far, I have referred to the need for teachers to engage in ‘intercultural learning,’ without a specific explanation of the word ‘culture.’ Agar (1994) tersely claims that “Anthropologists know that “culture” is a mess. They’ve known it for years. Culture is so basic, so fundamental, so important, and no one can quite figure out what it is. But then most things in the human situation that are that important are also mysterious.” (p. 120). While definitions of culture are abundant, they might be seen to fall into two distinct categories. The first sees culture as surface level indications of a group’s shared meanings, for example, food, music, art, buildings, clothing, while also encompassing aspects
of the nation-state which that culture identifies with, such as its history, institutions, geography. The second category takes a sociological or anthropological view of culture and goes deeper to acknowledge collective practices and values, or a network of products, meanings and perspectives that a group of people share. (Dervin, 2007).

A third view of culture, *languaculture* (Agar, 1994), goes one step further to bring together the conceptualization of language and culture and move beyond the dichotomy of language-culture which originated with the early 20th century linguist, Saussure. In Saussure’s (1959) efforts to make linguistics an objective science (for which he is referred to as a ‘founder of modern linguistics’) he drew a firm distinction between *language* and *speech*, the former, being a pure, clean inventory of the symbols that make up language (the focus of interest for linguistic study) and speech as the messy actualization of language in everyday life. According to Agar (1994), Saussure drew a line around language and left culture out. The term, *languaculture*, is a move towards reunification. Lantolf & Johnson (2007) understand this new concept as: “Languacultures reflect our consciousness, our ways of seeing, feeling, thinking and acting in circumscribed domains; and shape how we construct reality.” (p. 879). In a world where people of distinct cultural backgrounds come together, use often becomes learning at the points where different languacultural frameworks come into contact or sometimes conflict. Agar (1994) calls these points of conflict when individuals experience languacultural encounters as, *rich points*. I will return to *rich points* and contact between languacultures below, for now, I would like to move outside of the field of linguistics to draw a picture of the wider struggle with the concepts ‘culture’ and ‘intercultural.’

Historically, anthropologists viewed a culture (usually a “foreign” one) as a bounded, self-contained system and attempted to describe how that system worked (Shaules, 2007). Agar (1994) asserts that anthropology once saw culture as something that “those people have” instead of something that happens to them. And while culture as a “singular deterministic entity which controls behavior or which one ‘belongs’ to’ is still a common conception in everyday thought and discourse,
culture as bounded and monolithic is hard to find today (if it ever existed as a ‘bounded’ system at all) (Shaules, 2007, p. 27). A contemporary idea proposed across fields of study (in linguistics, education, cultural studies, communication) is that the boundaries of cultural identity have become so fragmented in modern societies that the concept of culture (and cultural identity) itself are called into question and perhaps no longer valid (S. Hall & DuGay, 1996; Phillips, 2007; Shaules, 2007). However, Shaules (2007) makes an important point when he cautions that “we need to be careful to distinguish between cultures as: “1) a form of personal, ethnic or social identity, and 2) a community of shared meanings.” (p. 31). Those who raise the flag of ‘postmodernism’ are interested (and rightly so) in how elements of race, gender, ethnicity, power relations affect one’s sense of self and view of the world. But, is social identity the same as the ability to understand the set of meanings that another cultural community shares? As an example, in the group of teachers studied in this project, an American university student (Nora) has one parent who is of half-Mexican descent, and because of this cultural heritage, Nora feels a strong personal connection to Mexico, or even more broadly, to the Spanish-speaking world. This doesn’t mean, however, that Nora will arrive on a study trip to Mexico with an ability to understand the behavior and cultural practices of the Mexicans any better than others in her student group. Nora’s cultural identity may influence her attitudes towards Mexicans and Spanish-speakers generally, but the framework of languaculture of the people with whom she will interact in Mexico (while it clearly is diverse, dynamic and not-bounded) will still take concerted effort and time for Nora to notice, accept or understand. Nora’s cultural identity is not the same as her culture.

3.3.1 Interculturality and Intercultural Competence

Theoretical understandings of intercultural competence have developed out of a wide range of disciplines including anthropology, applied linguistics, sociology, social psychology, speech communication and business management. Within the literature on language teaching and learning, the process of ‘intercultural learning’ and its assumed goal ‘intercultural competence’ or
‘interculturality’ are frequently investigated, while their exact meanings are also under debate and disagreement (O’Dowd, 2003). Further, there is some ambiguity in the use of the terms “intercultural” and “cross-cultural” (R. Scollon & Scollon, 2001). In this study, the term “intercultural” will signify the study of distinct cultural or other groups in interaction with each other while “cross-cultural” signals a comparative study of one cultural group by another where there is no interaction (2001, p. 539).

For this project, I highlight a working definition of interculturality, from a recent report of The Baring Foundation in the UK which undertook “a succinct analysis of the theoretical frameworks of leading thinkers in this field” as part of a concerted effort to explore the concept of interculturalism (James, 2007, p. 1). The report asserts that interculturality is:

a dynamic process by which people from different cultures interact to learn about and question their own and each other's cultures. Over time this may lead to cultural change. It recognises the inequalities at work in society and the need to overcome these. It is a process which requires mutual respect and acknowledges human rights. (James, 2007, p. 1)

This definition originates out of the policy and academic discussion since the early 1990s in the European Community which named 2008 The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. (James, 2007, p. 3) Based on the academic commentary of “leading thinkers,” Bhikhu Parekh, Paul Gilroy, Avtar Brah, Amartya Sen and Miles Hewstone, the definition seems to recognize the fluid nature of culture and societal inequalities that exist between groups of people. Thus, I adopt this definition as consistent with the research goals and practice of this project which attempts to bring teachers to understand the power of hegemonic dominant cultures and the values and practices of subordinate cultural groups in the U.S. And without being clear whether cultural change is intended on a macro or micro-level, this definition clearly assumes a learning process.

While there are hundreds of definitions of intercultural competence, (see Deardorff (2006) for a recent synthesis), one of the more comprehensive frameworks to outline “intercultural communicative competence”(ICC) was developed for the Council of Europe by Byram and Zarate in 1994 and is described in detail by Byram (1997). I have chosen to use Byram’s model of ICC as a
guide to this research because it was designed specifically for the context of foreign language learning and includes educational objectives which specify the roles of the learner and teacher. ICC corresponds with an effort to expand the reach of “communicative competence” within foreign/second language teaching to include intercultural competencies. Developing an ability to speak another language is now seen as only part of the process of language learning. Successful language use implies interaction within another cultural framework; a perspective that regards language and culture as essentially inseparable phenomena (Agar, 1994; Kramsch, 1993, 1998; Thorne, 2006). Further, no longer is ‘culture’ defined by the equivalence of one nation, one culture, one language. The term, *intercultural*, refers to communication between people of different ethnic, socio-economic, gendered and social groups (Sercu, 2004). In Table 1, I summarize the major categories of learning that constitute Byram’s model.

**Table 1. Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence**

- **Attitudes** – Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend belief about other cultures and beliefs about one’s own
- **Knowledge** – of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction
- **Skills of interpreting and relating** - ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own
- **Skills of discovery and interaction** – ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction
- **Critical cultural awareness/political education** – ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries (Byram, 1997, pp. 50-53)

Byram (1997) distinguishes between contexts where “intercultural competence” and “intercultural communicative competence” are applicable. In the former, individuals interact in their own language and culture with people from another culture/linguistic background. Their effectiveness in interacting across cultural boundaries is affected by knowledge of intercultural communication, ability to make interpretations, and openness to otherness, among the other competencies outlined in the ICC model above (1997, p. 70). This will be the likely situation of ESL teachers working with linguistically and
culturally diverse students in U.S. public schools. The second situation in which one enacts “intercultural communicative competence” emphasizes the ability to interact with people from another country or culture in a foreign or second language. ESL teachers may ideally have this ability, but it is not a universal requirement within the field at this time. Byram asserts that the difference is one of degree of complexity and involves the ability to manage a wider range of contact situations for the latter (1997, p. 71). The TESL preparation program that I investigate in this study refers to the development of “intercultural competence” (IC) for teacher participants as one of its explicit goals (see Appendix A for the program’s goals and rationale).

### 3.3.2 Intercultural Learning through Cultural & Linguistic Immersion

One of the most common strategies advocated in the literature to prepare teachers for cultural diversity is field experience that put teacher learners in direct contact with others of different cultural, linguistic, racial or ethnic backgrounds (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Teacher educators seem to agree that coursework and academic analysis alone are insufficient to bring about the affective and cognitive changes needed to develop intercultural competence (Byram, 1994; Finney & Orr, 1995; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Byram (1994, 1997) believes that learners need to “decentre” in order to achieve the complex psychological change involved in intercultural learning. This process is articulated as a concrete skill in his model of intercultural competence. To “decentre” requires that learners problematize their culture’s representation of the world, taking an outsider’s view of their own culture which they had before known only as an insider. Therefore, their cognitive schemata are modified to take into account new representations which either extend their understanding or challenge their established views of the world. According to Byram, “decentreing” implies a challenge to one’s identity and change in affective dimensions of personality (1994, p. 70). This means that attitude shifts during intercultural learning are not simply adopting positive attitudes towards the target culture because even positive prejudices can hinder effective intercultural
interaction. Thus, “decentreing” involves personal development that is deeper than attitudinal shift and involves some sort of re-interpretation of the self or perhaps transformation of social identities.

Similarly, Bennett (1993) in his developmental model of intercultural learning sees true intercultural sensitivity as the ability to step away from one’s own cultural background and identify the cultural values and reasoning behind beliefs, actions and behaviors of the other. This notion he names “constructive marginality” and is a parallel concept to the component of “skill of interpreting and relating,” in Byram’s model. In contrast to earlier models of intercultural learning, learners are no longer required to “take on” the target culture, replacing their own values and behaviors, but rather enter a metaphorical space of hybridity and multiplicity of cultural identity.

Several theorists have articulated what may happen when an individual meets cultural (or other types of) difference and begins to move along a path of intercultural learning. In language learning contexts, Kramsch (1993) has theorized the concept of a “contact zone” as the space in which people of different cultures meet and where ideas and cultures merge or collide and re-emerge. In a similar way, Agar (1994) uses the term “rich points” to describe the spaces where contradictions or uncertainties occur when different languacultures come together. And in a culturally diverse U.S. classroom, Gutierrez and Rymes (1995) examine power dynamics among teacher and students. They propose the concept of a “third space,” a middle ground where authentic interaction and communication can occur between culturally diverse teacher and student. The “third space” is defined as a bridge where teacher and student redefine what counts as knowledge (1995, p. 467).

The notion of “third space” is fully developed in the work of Homi Bhabha (1990). He suggests “third space” is a unique entity existing in the meeting of boundaries of cultures and discourses. In Bhabha’s writings on colonizing discourses, hybridity is a form of liminal in-betweenness that opens up an “interrogative” space which questions established cultural and historical identities. Bhabha’s conceptualization applies to macro issues of national and cultural identities in literature, however, this notion can also be used to better understand micro-interactions or
what happens when individuals face new cultural frameworks. Kramsch (1993; 1998) and others have applied this theoretical notion to investigate how this intercultural “third space” might be experienced by an individual second language learner and what implications may hold for pedagogy.

**Summary: (Re)integration of Language and Culture**

Despite great interest in ‘teaching culture’ as a part of the language learning project, language and culture still occupy separate spaces in official documents, foreign/second language curricular and materials, and the minds of teachers, learners and researchers. As proposed by Lantolf & Johnson (2007), this research project asserts a commitment to promoting the re(unification) of language and culture. It assumes that teachers who teach language (and content) to English learners will benefit, both professionally and personally, from their own forays into other cultures, analysis of cultural representations and their efforts at second language learning. Later chapters offer data to illustrate how particular aspects of experience-based learning in an immersion situation mediate teachers’ development of teaching practices that are responsive to the needs of diverse learners, or in some cases, impede that process. Further, I make the claim that given particular conditions (again as outlined in the following chapters), this process can begin to take place in a very brief amount of time in a carefully structured cultural and linguistic immersion program. I assert that the process of becoming ‘intercultural’ does not have a fixed end point and is a life-long developmental process. In our world today, the process is greatly facilitated by the tools of technology, increased frequency of border-crossing travel, mass communication and migrations of peoples around the world. As proposed in the introductory chapter, the need to insert a multicultural/lingual ideology into the mainstream activity of our schools and individual life stories of teachers is critical to a successful academic experience for all students and to promote healthy relationships in an increasingly interdependent world.
Chapter 4

Methodology

“It is never the thing, but the version of the thing.”
(Wallace Stevens, p. 743 as quoted in Freeman, 1996)

4.1.0 The Research Context
This study focuses on an ESL teacher certificate program which takes place over a seven-month period at a small liberal arts college, “Woods College,” in the northeastern U.S. The certificate program was designed in 2003 when the state department of education mandated 12-credit hours of specific ESL preparation for public school teachers, the only ESL-related credential required for teachers and the result of a civil rights lawsuit against the state for neglecting to provide quality instruction to ELLs. The design of the ESL teacher preparation program at Woods College accounted for two learning goals that were thought to be critical learning objectives by the team developing the program: 1) a mentored teaching practicum with ELLs in classroom setting, and 2) informal (out of classroom) exposure to and structured learning of a second language and culture. A teaching practicum during an immersion experience abroad provided a context in which to enact these learning activities and overcome the lack of cultural homogeneity and absence of an ELL community in the region surrounding Woods College.

The study abroad experience occurred over a three and a half-week period in a small city and university in the Andean highlands of Ecuador. The TESL certificate program required six courses (12 credits), including the immersion abroad, the teaching practicum and second language instruction (Spanish or Quichua). The program is approved by the state department of education and follows state guidelines to satisfy requirements of the ESL Program Specialist certificate for public school teachers which is an endorsement that is added to the primary instructional certification. The focal
group for this research study was the third cohort to complete this ESL certificate program in the spring and summer of 2006.

4.1.1 The Curriculum

The six courses of the certificate program were designed in intensive weekend and on-line formats so that in-service teachers from across the state would be able to participate in the program. The program also accepted third or fourth year pre-service teacher learners enrolled in the Education program of Woods College. The entire certificate program is completed in seven months (February through August) while most participants are full-time teachers or students and is thus, a highly intensive learning experience. All participants complete a research paper or curricular unit as a capstone project as the final assignment of the program. Table 2 shows the courses and their sequence.

Table 2: ESL Certificate Program Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Departure</th>
<th>In Ecuador</th>
<th>After Return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Weekend Courses &amp; On-Line instruction</td>
<td>Three Intensive Weeks in Ecuador</td>
<td>Two Weekend Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED/ESL 460 – Linguistics for English Language Teachers</td>
<td>ED/ESL 462 -Understanding Language Acquisition and Cognition</td>
<td>ED/ESL 464 – Diversity in Education: School, Family &amp; Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 credits, one weekend session and 6 weeks online instruction</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
<td>1 credit, one weekend session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED/ESL 461 – Introduction to Language Learning and Culture</td>
<td>Practical experience (Language and culture instruction &amp; experience)</td>
<td>ED/ESL 465 – Building a Professional Community of ESL Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 credit, one weekend session &amp; ethnographic exploration in Ecuador</td>
<td>ED/ESL 463 – Developing a Teaching Practice 4 credits</td>
<td>1 credit, one weekend session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 credits</td>
<td>Coursework Teaching practice with local children</td>
<td>Coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching practice with local children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2 The Setting of the Immersion Experience

The particular site in Ecuador was chosen for several reasons. First, the small size and security of the community make it an ideal site for outsiders to navigate without personal risk that can be associated with large urban centers. Relatedly, it is a community in which many inter-familial and interpersonal ties facilitate the hosting of a group of outsiders. Secondly, the community is richly bicultural and bilingual: a large percentage of local residents in the city and surrounding region are members of the indigenous Quichua-speaking peoples and their culture flavors the local traditions, beliefs, and history of the place. Thirdly, a new university in the community had recently opened its doors and was eager to establish international ties. The Ecuadorian university was founded with the intent of promoting intercultural learning and experience to its students and warmly welcomes a group of U.S. teachers arriving to do the same. Finally, several members of the teacher education team that developed the program, (including the researcher), have lived in Ecuador and had personal contacts and knowledge of the language and cultures of the region the teachers would visit.

4.1.3 Teaching and Learning Goals

The experience abroad undertakes three specific learning outcomes for teacher-learners: 1) to develop intercultural sensitivity and build interculturality, 2) to apply English language teaching strategies that are responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse students in actual classroom settings, and 3) to reflect on and enrich individual teaching practices. The program’s rationale, as developed over the first few years of program implementation, is included in Appendix A. The program design intentionally included the following activities in which the program goals are carried out and teacher development is enacted:

1. A mentored teaching practicum with Ecuadorian English language learners
2. Classroom instruction on ESL teaching pedagogy and second language learning theory
3. Daily life with a local host family
4. Ethnographic-type tasks to investigate local cultures and languages
5. Twice-weekly talks by community members on Ecuadorian history, economics, the indigenous political movement, music, and ecology/sustainability
6. Second language (Spanish or Quichua) instruction
7. Visits to local Ecuadorian schools
8. Informal interaction with local community members
9. Weekend excursions to distinct cultural and ecological regions of Ecuador for a broader perspective on the country and peoples

During the three weeks in Ecuador, two courses (ESL/ED 462 & 463) are offered in an intensive format of daily class sessions. Each course includes a practical component. The first course on second language learning research and theory is linked to instruction in Spanish or Quichua and the participant’s analysis of their language learning experiences inside and outside of the classroom. The second course on ESL instructional practices includes a practicum teaching English to Ecuadorian children in which teacher-learners co-teach and are observed and given feedback by experienced mentor teachers. The intensive schedule does not allow much time for reading during the three-week period abroad. Consequently, participants complete reading/writing and reflective assignments to prepare for the courses offered in Ecuador before departure.

4.2.0 Participants & Sampling

Program participants self-select to participate in this particular educational program as TESL certificate programs are offered by other colleges and universities in the state. This means that program participants often have some interest in international contexts. Approximately 75% of the past program participants have had some international travel/study experience, although in most cases the time abroad was brief and devoted to tourism. The focal cohort of program participants included 10 teachers and was diverse in teacher age, experience, and background. Table 3 illustrates some characteristics of the overall cohort of teachers.

Table 3. Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Teacher-Learners</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>From 21 to 59 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td>From 0 to 34 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area of Certification</td>
<td>English, Spanish, German, Special Ed, EFL, Elementary Ed, Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Background</td>
<td>7 European-American, 1 Korean-American, 1 Mexican, 1 Korean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four individuals were selected as focal participants for interviews because they represented the diversity of age and experiences of the group. One of those four participants dropped out of the program (and thus, the research study) during the first week of study in Ecuador. The participant’s departure was without warning, nor signs of discomfort and thus, was a shock to both the staff and participants of the program. Thus, three focal participants were followed over the course of 11 to 15 months. A case study is presented on each focal participant in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Each chapter begins with a descriptive profile of the participant.

### 4.2.1 Data Sources

Three main types of data were collected, analyzed and then set within the activity theory framework: semi-structured interviews with teacher-learners and other program staff, written narratives, and teacher mentor/researcher field notes of the teaching practicum and entire research process. A central tenet of activity theory is that activity must be understood through an examination of the role of artifacts (symbolic or physical) in everyday life (Nardi, 1996). It also sees consciousness as embedded in the social matrix and not as a set of discrete cognitive processes (Nardi, 1996). Therefore, the framework preserves multiple realities, or different and possibly contradictory views, of the learning experience. Data were collected of several types, both participant-centered or etic, and observer-centered or emic. Appendix B outlines the entire program and specifies the data sources, the focus within the activity system, the frequency of contact at that data gathering point, and the role of the researcher in relation to the data being collected.

**1) Interviews (three focal participants, program staff & host families)**

After obtaining informed consent, I conducted and recorded using MP3 format, semi-structured interviews with the three focal participants, once immediately before the certificate program began, twice during the immersion experience and twice after the program was complete and teachers were back in their classrooms in the U.S. (a total of five interviews; approximately 7 hours per participant). Thus, the interviews occurred over a period of from 11 to 15 months (depending on when final
interviews were arranged) and each interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. Following the procedures of ethnographic interviewing outlined by (Spradley, 1979), a broad question begins the interviews, such as, “Tell me what you are thinking as you prepare to go to Ecuador?” leading to a focus on specific topics brought up in the initial response. However, I allowed the interview questions to emerge from the topics that came up as we talked. An interview protocol for the first interviews is included in Appendix C. Additionally, I interviewed the program faculty (three instructors/teacher mentors), the host families of the focal participants, and the local Ecuadorian site coordinator to include their views and uncover the roles they play in the learning experience.

2) Written narrative and reflections (all ten participants)

Prior to departure for Ecuador, I interacted with the group as class instructor and program director. I was the instructor for the second course of the program, ED/ESL Introduction to Language Learning and Culture, completed a month before departure to Ecuador and which is structured to begin the exploration of the intercultural learning process. The work collected for data analysis from this course was not be graded to attempt to avoid the “Hawthorne effect” (Carspecken, 1996), in other words, to minimize the potential for learners to write what they think their instructor wants to hear in order to get a better grade. This particular course offered before departure gives background on the theoretical concepts of culture and intercultural competence and covers considerations of the interrelationships between culture and language in the classroom. I also co-taught ED/ESL 463 Teaching ESL: Developing a Teaching Practice while in Ecuador and acted as a teacher mentor for two of the focal participants. Data analysis included the following written work completed by program participants.

- **Linguistic autobiography** (account of one’s attitude to their language(s), linguistic history of family; language learning experiences)
- **Photographic metaphor project** to express participants’ ideas of their teaching identity (a photo(s) presented as a metaphor for the teacher one wants to become, along with a written explanatory narrative)
- **Written narrative statements** of personal and teaching goals for the program (completed at program inception)
3) Field notes: Classroom observations & researcher notes (three focal participants)

In my role as one of the teaching mentors in the program, I engaged in a process of teacher observation and feedback with three of the focal teacher-learners as they taught English to Ecuadorian children in classes that met twice per week for an hour and a half. I included for analysis my notes from this process, as well as the teachers’ written reflections completed as part of the mentoring process. During the program itself and the data analysis process, I wrote field notes which were also included in the data set.

4.2.2 Data Analysis

A constant comparative methodology was used in a grounded content analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to gain access to the conceptual world of the teachers as they interact and learn about ESL teaching in a cultural and linguistically different setting. Data were grouped and analyzed in three chronological phases; 1) the pre-departure data, 2) data collected during the immersion program, and 3) data collected after program completion; a longitudinal view that provides a valuable perspective on intercultural learning as a process over time. Specifically, I completed the following steps:

1) I read through the data once for general impressions while writing ideas or comments in the right-hand margin. 2) I re-read the data underlining phrases and ideas that clustered together and connecting them to key words that named the concept or idea of the segment. I wrote these words in the left-hand margin. I made an effort to code all of the data; if a segment seemed difficult to classify, I labeled it as an “outlier.” Also, I reused key words that were used previously and continued creating new key words as necessary, but I did not go back and change key words previously established. These initial key word codes were primarily descriptive or as described by
Miles & Huberman (1984) “they entail no interpretation, but simply the attribution of a class of phenomena to a segment of text” (p. 56). 3) Next, I read through the data again, but this time with a focus on reading the key words and noticing patterns or relationships between key words. I found that the key words began to cluster naturally together into major themes. As I read, I wrote down the major themes that arose and also the specific instance within that theme that was signaled by the key word. I tried to keep the labels of the major categories near to the language used by the participant, using *in vivo* codes (Flick, 2002), in order to keep the analysis as close to the data as possible. Often, I went back to the data to more clearly understand the idea behind the key word and noted page numbers of striking passages. This process, called axial coding (Flick, 2002) allowed the construction of a coding category with specific dimensions of the category emerging from passages of the data. When ideas or questions came up as I was going through this process, I stopped to write a conceptual memo. 4) Using the overall codes and the list of incidents that displayed those themes, I began to write a narrative summary of each coded category. I found that often an incident described by a key word might fit into several categories, but I made decisions at this point as to which category the key word fit into. In this phase, I attended more closely to the research questions than in the previous steps. I also asked questions of myself and of the data related to the components of the activity system. 5) Finally, I placed the major codes into the activity system framework and wrote a brief profile of each focal participant.

Next, the data gathered to explore the learning context of the TESL certificate program were categorized according to the basic structure of an activity system: *subject, object, mediational means, outcomes, community, division of labor* and *rules* as identified by Engeström (1987, 1993) and as applied to the foreign language learning context by Thorne (2004). In following chapters, the reader will find an activity system framework created to illustrate the learning experiences from the perspective of each of the three focal participants (in data analysis Chapters 5, 6, 7). It is important to note that in activity theoretical terms all activity is collective and dialectical and thus, it is not
possible for an activity system to arise out of the activities of a single individual. However, as an interpretive tool, the activity theory frame was a useful heuristic to organize data and identify patterns that became visible through the analysis of the activity relevant to each participant, but which always involved other program participants, English learners, faculty, staff and homestay families as well as the mediational means of the local setting. In other words, activity theory provided both theoretical concepts to understand human development as mediated activity within a system, but also a tool to uncover and organize an analysis of interactions among different elements of the system. Therefore, while I have moved my analytical lens to examine individual learners as they moved through the activity system, the unit of analysis is still the activity itself (including all actions within the entire TESL program). The full analysis of the activity system is described in Chapter 8, “Learning and Development through Cultural & Linguistic Immersion: A Cross-Case Activity Analysis.”

Activity theory combined with a grounded content analysis offers an explanatory lens on how participants understand the activities of the preparation program, enabling the researcher to construct a comprehensive picture of intercultural learning which other theoretical analyses may not provide. Specifically, a grounded content analysis, conducted independently at each chronological phase, progressively uncovered internal and external factors of the learning experience foregrounded by the participants themselves, and which demonstrate transformation in personal subjectivities in relation to their personal identities and their views toward the “other.”

At this point, I offer a brief explanation of the activity system framework which the reader will encounter again in data analysis chapters. Again, the data were subject to a grounded analysis with the goal of understanding the learning experience from the perspective of the actors within the activity system. However, in preparation for this research project, I mined the existing research literature and reflected on my past experiences as teacher/mentor with previous cohorts and could anticipate some elements of the activity system that are critical to teacher learning. In order to illustrate the component parts of an activity system, I have imagined a possible configuration of this
activity system relying on this knowledge, however, the actual activity system can only be fully constructed from the data (and will be encountered in following chapters). Figure 2 shows this imagined activity system based on the research literature and what the researcher brings to the experience based on her past experiences. It indicates that the category subject concerns the teachers, who we expect to undergo transformation through their participation in the activities of the program and produce an outcome or some level of intercultural sensitivity or change in teaching practice (or possibly resistance to intercultural learning or learning in general). Each teacher subject brings to the activity system their own subject history, ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975) or images of ‘teaching’ developed through the on-going process of being a student over many years, and specific motivations and capabilities. Mediation means are symbolic or material artifacts that mediate, (or interact as part of and are affected by equally), the actions of the subjects within the system. In this setting, they might include the English language learners, the readings and discussions in class, visits to local Ecuadorian schools, and the process of journal writing, among many others. The object is the orientation to the activity and is described as the ‘raw material’ or ‘problem space’ at which the activity is directed (Engeström, 1993, p.67). An activity system object is multiple and often changing as the system evolves. The object of this activity system might include some or all of the following motives: a) to earn the credential to get a job as an ESL teacher, b) to learn about instructional practices for ELLs, d) the desire to develop Spanish proficiency, e) the desire for travel and cultural learning. The community encompasses the participants that share in the activity at hand, in this case, the teacher mentors, the host families, the local site staff, Ecuadorian students learning English and the other teacher learners in the program or possibly other community members. Family back at home or administrators and fellow teachers at the teacher’s home school site may also play a distant, but powerful role in the activity. Division of labor refers to the horizontal interactions among participants and how the factors of power and status might afford or constrain the activity of the
system (Engestrom, 1993; Thorne, 2004) and rules are the explicit and implicit regulational norms that affect the activity.

**Figure 2  TESL Program as Activity System**

![Diagram of TESL Program as Activity System]

**Transcription**: Interviews that were conducted in Spanish were transcribed and analyzed in Spanish by the researcher to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation inherent to translation. To protect the privacy of the individuals who participated in this study pseudonyms are used throughout to refer to all people and the U.S. University and town where the program was developed. In the narrative, each data excerpt is labeled to indicate which data phase the excerpt comes from (pre, during or post-immersion) and what type of data (interview, journal, or reflection paper) as well as the page number. In transcribing the audio data, an effort was made to closely maintain the language of the interviewees and transcription conventions were as followed:
Transcription Conventions
Inaudible words = XXX
Words that are not 100% clearly audible = (in parenthesis)
Pauses in speech that are longer than normal for this speaker = …
Dash signals partially articulated words = ―I often won-‖
Laughs, chuckles, coughs are coded in parenthesis = (laughs)
Interviewer’s speech typed in italics
Text [in brackets] signals author’s comments or clarification

4.3.0 Researcher’s Role
As coordinator and one of the course instructors of the TESL certificate program, I was intimately involved in the design of the program, therefore, I benefit from insider knowledge of its challenges, underlying philosophy, and implicit workings. I am fluent in Spanish and have previously lived and worked in Ecuador over extensive time periods.

4.3.1 Research Quality
Several methods to achieve credibility in this study are employed. I have provided a detailed account of the context from which data is gathered as well as a description of my role as practitioner researcher. The final reporting of data takes a narrative form in order to provide a “thick description” to give voice to the activity that unfolds during the program (Creswell, 2003).

My foundational belief is that teachers can learn to understand and interact with diverse “others” and in essence, “perform beyond themselves” if given the chance to act in a new situation with support and encouragement. My interactions in this “performance” is documented and considered to add to the meaning that teachers create in their interactions in another country.

4.3.2 Significance
Over the past 40 years, teacher education research has shifted its conceptualizations of teacher cognition from behavioral, to cognitive and information processing models, and more recently, to social, situated and distributed views of teacher learning and cognition (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Johnson, 2006). An interpretive or situated paradigm, drawn from ethnographic research traditions, is now seen as better suited to explain the complexities of teachers’ professional worlds (Johnson, 2006). This research provides insights into the ways that a short-term cultural and
linguistic immersion experience for teachers can bring up contradiction surrounding home, university and school-based ideologies and most importantly, how teachers respond to these contradictions, resulting in far-reaching transformations to their personal and professional identities. This view of teacher cognition as it develops over a seven-month period will offer a foundation upon which pedagogical interventions to stimulate intercultural learning can be constructed. It will illuminate the factors that may hinder or encourage the development of competence in intercultural interaction, and thereby, provide direction for teacher educators in identifying the types of learning experiences that are significant to prepare teachers for culturally, racially and linguistically diverse classrooms.
Chapter 5

Teachers Crossing Borders: The Dissonance of Immersion and Working Towards Political Clarity

Introduction

In this chapter, I apply the activity theoretical framework to understand the experience of the immersion program for one focal participant. While we cannot use a single participant’s personal experience to make generalizations about learning that takes place during immersion/study abroad generally, a detailed analysis of individual experience can offer important insights into the conditions that facilitate (or alternatively, impede) learning in an immersion context. Activity theory helps to reveal the complexity of this learning situation.

In an international immersion experience, the context for learning is particularly relevant because participants are thrust into a place where their normal circles of social and psychological support are not available. Concomitantly, the belief and values of teacher learners as actors (agency) can be explored to explain how they mediate knowledge and how the context of the immersion situation sustains the development of particular forms of learning. Thus, activity theory is useful to show how the past experiences, goals and motives of a teacher learner structure his/her capacity to recognize and use opportunities for action that are available within the activity system, and how in turn, their identities and learning are shaped by these opportunities.

The Notion of Contradictions

In the introduction to the German edition of “Learning by Expanding,” Engeström emphasizes one of the book’s major claims, “inner contradictions are the chief sources of movement and change in activity systems” (1999b, p. 3). Later Engeström recommends a re-conceptualization of human development along three parallel lines: 1) instead of just benign achievement of mastery,
development should be viewed as partially destructive and rejection of the old; 2) instead of just individual transformation, development should be viewed as collective transformation; 3) instead of just vertical movement across levels, development should be viewed as horizontal movement across borders” (1999b, p. 3).

In my analysis of Nora’s (pseudonym) experience of the TESL program, I have paid particular attention to specific incidents that seem to be contradictory or hint at discontinuity within the overall perspective of the participant. The longitudinal nature of this study made it possible to view the development of themes over the course of a year’s time. In our pre-departure interview, a few themes arose as threads that then became interwoven throughout the activity of the program then surfaced again in written narratives and interviews throughout the three phases of data analysis. Some themes were resolved for Nora during the year, while others are long-term processes of growing awareness and change that may take place over a lifetime.

**Nora: A Descriptive Profile**

Nora is a 21 year old college student just finishing the third year of an undergraduate teacher certification program in elementary and special education at a liberal arts college in the Northeastern U.S. She grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania which she describes as “very sheltered.” Her father is half Mexican and fluent in Spanish and grew up in Texas near the Mexico/U.S. border where his family still resides. Her mother is also from Texas, but not of Latino heritage. Spanish is not used in Nora’s home context. She mentions hearing her father speaking Spanish when he talks to his parents (in Texas) on the phone and she refers to visits to Mexico and Texas during her adolescence, but otherwise using the language is not part of her upbringing. Nora and her siblings are the first generation of her extended family to attend college. Nora attributes her “love” of Spanish and her desire to learn the language and culture to her family heritage.

Nora talks of having a desire to become a teacher since childhood. In the first interview, she frequently mentions past teachers that she felt a connection to, and in particular, a teacher who taught
her Spanish from 7th through 12 grades. She had a brief study abroad experience in Spain as a high school student which she describes in highly positive terms, for example, “was really just amazing,” “they absolutely loved me,” “I was so excited!!” She enters this teacher education program with a low-intermediate level of Spanish proficiency.

One theme that recurs in our interviews is her uncertainty about her future first teaching position. She questions what kind of teacher she will be (special education, or “regular” classroom teacher or ESL) and if she will feel prepared for the demands of the job. She views the TESL certificate as both a potential new professional path, and as a way to make her more prepared for the job market.

As might be expected for a young undergraduate about to graduate and move into a first teaching position, Nora seems vulnerable and conflicted about who she is, who she might become and her place in the world. Specifically, the contrasting values of her working class family with those of the college community in which she now interacts are repeatedly mentioned. Nora is also exploring her “Spanish” identity which surfaces frequently as she talks about learning Spanish.

**Nora’s Learning about Diversity: A Conceptual Mapping**

In this section, I give an overview of Nora’s particular experience as she participates in the activity system of the TESL program. A mapping of the activity system that arose from a grounded analysis of interviews with Nora, her journals and teaching observations appears in Appendix D.

Previous research on study abroad and cultural immersion experiences have demonstrated that a sojourn abroad does not always bring about culture or second language acquisition. While we can assume a general trend toward gains in the group when considered as a whole, there is significant variation among individuals concerning language, cultural and personal development during study abroad (Kinginger, 2007). The premise of this research project is that student learning during immersion is crucially dependent on an individual’s past history, dispositions toward learning and the *mediational means* that are present in the learning situation. According to sociocultural theory,
human beings have the capacity to internalize and self-generate auxiliary means that allow us to voluntarily organize and control mental activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Thus, the relationship between people and the world is often indirect, or mediated by symbolic or concrete “artifacts.”

Mediation is a general term in sociocultural theory that refers to artifacts (physical or symbolic things in the world), concepts or activities that are not only involved in the network of relationship that occurs as human beings achieve their goals, but are also a constituent part of the activity. Sociocultural theorists define mediation as simultaneously material and conceptual (or ideal) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). For example, a book exists in the mind of the author that eventually creates it and gives it material shape through the activity of writing. For an individual learner, mediating means are at first, just objects. However, through repeated use and the guidance of others in social practice, “the mediating artifact allows external objective social activity to become idealized through the construction of personally relevant meaning while mental activity (the ideal) becomes objectified through speech and thus influences the material activity of self and others.” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.154). The learner’s agency is also critical to the activity system because the learner may take up on particular mediation means and ignore others. For learners, the object of activity is always negotiated or even perhaps subverted during a period of interaction; “within a given time and space, there are constraints and affordances that make certain actions probable, others possible, and yet others impossible.” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 238). A particular learner’s ongoing construction of identity is shaped by participation in particular communities of practice, their history and macro-level ideologies of language learning and education. An aspiration of this particular learning activity system is that local interaction and direct experience with the “other” will help to strengthen an individual learner’s sense of agency.

Nora as the subject of the activity system brings a dynamic set of subjectivities to the learning experience. She inhabits a contradictory identity space in which she actively contrasts her working class family background and what she views as the more “liberal” values of the college community.
Further, while clearly asserting her love of teaching, as a pre-service teacher she is uncertain about what kind of teacher she is and will become, the opportunities that will be available to her when she completes her certification program and her capabilities as a novice teacher. A high school study abroad program influences her expectations for the current study abroad immersion experience. Moreover, while Nora views the Spanish language as an important and valued part of her family heritage, she has had minimal exposure to Spanish in her home life. This paradox affects how she approaches second language learning and generally informs her self-concept and activity in the program.

As Nora begins the program, the object of the activity system encompasses two different motives: 1) she wants Spanish in her life, and 2) she believes that earning the ESL teaching certificate is a way to expand job opportunities. During the program, a shift seems to occur from Nora acting on a long-term goal which is removed from her current activity (expand job opportunities) to a motive more centered within and perhaps arising from the activity itself. Nora asserts, “as we were going through the program, I found, you know, this [ESL instruction] is really serious, it’s something people need...” (post-interview, p. A6). A grounded analysis of the data illustrate various mediational means that are critical to Nora’s learning within the activity system that act as either affordances or constraints to her development as an ESL teacher. In following sections, they will be illustrated through excerpts from the data. To summarize, they include:

- verbalization and externalization of her thinking about language learning, teaching and theory
- direct interaction with Ecuadorian people in the local environment, her host family and as a teacher with English language learners in the classroom.
- the process of co-constructing meaning with her co-teachers as they plan their lessons
- a reflective thinking process enacted in writing journals and a linguistic autobiography
- the emotional and cognitive dissonance to her subject positions arising from her participation in the cultural immersion and being separated from her family and friends
- the limited time period of this immersion and practice teaching experience

The community of the activity system that is particularly relevant to Nora includes her host family, the other teacher-learners she is grouped with in practice teaching, the English language learners themselves, Ecuadorian people with whom she interacts on the street, and even her family and
boyfriend back at home. While the latter are not physically present in the activity system of the immersion program, they are present for Nora during the pre- and post-program and we will see that they exert a direct influence on how she engages in the program. One rule that is critical to Nora’s learning and her participation in this activity system is that reflective thinking is an expectation to be displayed in many of the written work for the program courses. Another rule that supports her learning are the conversations that she has with the researcher; as Nora externalizes her views on issues she is exploring, particular points of awareness become visible that may have gone unnoticed without the act of verbalization. An example of the division of labor within the activity system is the expectation that teacher-learners collaborate in planning and offering English classes to Ecuadorian young learners, so that cooperation, sharing of ideas and co-constructing knowledge is inherent to the program design. Outcomes for Nora include her acknowledgement of familial relationships and their importance to her identity, setting of a future goal to complete a special dual Master’s program in Bilingual Education with a concentration on special needs populations, development of empathy for ELL’s as individuals and transformation of self through shifting identities. The primary factors critical to Nora’s learning are discussed in greater detail below using a sociocultural perspective on teacher learning and development.

5.1.0 Border-Crossing: A Transformative Process

Block (2007) has asserted that “border crossing experiences inevitably and irrevocably destabilize an individual’s sense of self-identity…this destabilization subsequently leads to struggle, the negotiation of difference, and the emergence of third-place identities” (p. 867) which are similarly uncovered in Anna’s experience and described in Chapter 6. As a border crossing experience, the immersion program in Ecuador provides the mediational means which Nora interacts with in a process of identity destabilization and potential transformation. For Nora, the process of identity negotiation is twofold; 1) as a young person negotiating the class-based ideological constructs of her home context,
her university and study abroad environment, and, 2) as a novice teacher learning for the first time about culturally appropriate and second language teaching practices

5.1.1 Opening to the World: Class-based Ideologies of Home and University

As Nora talks and writes about her ideas about teaching, and her plans for the future, there is frequent contradiction and vacillation. Nora seems to be negotiating an identity that moves away from the conception of self developed during her younger years in her home community. She struggles to develop a subjectivity that asserts autonomy, but still relates and remains connected to the world of her family and friends. In addition, as a beginning teacher, Nora faces the challenge of incorporating her personal subjectivities into a potentially new image of herself as a teacher which may distance her from earlier selves. Generally, this means that she must navigate professional and cultural expectations of what it means to be a public school teacher, and more specifically, the particular demands that may be placed upon her and which she may choose to take on as a teacher of English language learners.

We can watch Nora exploring her personal autonomy through the frequently heard voices of her family back in the United States, who are not present physically during the immersion program, but clearly affect her interactions during the program. Nora characterizes her home community as a small, insular place. In Nora’s own words, it is a “very, very sheltered community” where the people are “very close-minded.” The experience of attending a small liberal arts college in a small town two hours from her home community represents exposure to difference for Nora. Early in our first interview, Nora explains what coming to college means to her in clearly contradictory terms: “coming here to [the college], I’m not saying it really opened my eyes and everything, but it was a big change, and I think everyone that I’ve met here at college has really opened my eyes to new things that I never would have found before.” Again, in our second interview during the immersion program, Nora remarks, “Yeah it’s funny like how much more I’ve developed my own
ideas since I came into college…and then my parents are going, we don’t know why we sent you to a liberal school?! (laughs) (during immersion, p.18).

For Nora, her high school study/tourism experience in Spain was the beginning of this “opening” process. She says, “And I think Spain started with—helped start me on that and getting used to it and everything.” In this section of the interview when I ask about the meaning of her previous experience in Spain, she uses the words “open-minded” or “open my eyes” 14 times within 64 lines of text or about every 5th line. Through repetition, Nora emphasizes how she perceives study abroad and the college community as an opening experience for her and she firmly positions herself in a place of becoming more “open-minded.” Further, she evaluates the study abroad experience very highly as, “the most wonderful experience of my life.” (pre-immersion interview, p. 13).

Throughout the interviews and journal entries, she draws frequent contrasts between her individual views and experience and her family context and life history---her hometown, its provincialism and a lack of diversity in her secondary school, the conservative political views of her parents, her Texan cousins and her boyfriend. We might view these contrasts as objectifications of contradictory aspects of her life that she is working to resolve as she takes on new identity positions. In the following excerpt she contrasts her attitude of openness to the attitudes of her parents. She claims, “…by the time I was a senior [high school], I feel that I was more open to things by the time we-I was in Spain. And I feel like I had already started to try to look at things more with open eyes than just being like, I don’t want to see it. Which is basically what my parents, when I was younger had taught us to do.” (pre-interview, p. 17). She goes on to explain how her parents had advised her to respond to people asking for money on the streets in Mexico, “Just turn your shoulder and not look and not even try to help in some other way than giving them money. But the thing my dad told us when we were young was that if you give them money, they’re just going to tell their friends and then they’re going to all ask for money.” She expresses her reaction to her parents’ advice through a linguistic instantiation of ‘direct thought.’ “Which might, like I mean, I’ve seen it happen. I know
it’s true, but at the same time I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, I can’t believe that!’ You know, it was just like my parents thought it was like the most wrong thing to do. So it was really a lot of [my] parents’ influence too.” (pre-interview, p. 17).

According to Chafe (1994, p. 221), in conversational language, ‘direct thought’ is a kind of remembering of the speaker’s own inner dialogue and is used by the speaker to convey involvement or emphasis. In the bolded statement she is remembering what she thought in response to her parents’ recommendations. Through that remembering she asserts her desire to adopt a different response to the ‘other’ than the attitudes taught to her by her parents. At the same time that she is agreeing with her parents’ view, she also objectifies and names the impact of her parents’ beliefs and position herself in opposition to them. In the process, she is recognizing the influence of her parent’s attitudes, but begins to assert a new subject position for herself which contradicts the views of her parents.

In another example, during the post-program interview, Nora takes a stance on the “English Only” movement that is clearly in opposition to the views of her family and boyfriend. Referring to her boyfriend, Nora says, “he believes that we should have an official language and this is where we differ because I still think we shouldn’t and I had the debate with my brother over Christmas about having an official language and…he wants one, but he doesn’t understand how far people will go with it.” (post-immersion, p. 26). A structured debate in one of her classes on the sociopolitics of “English Only” functions as a mediating artifact that helps Nora to externalize and then internalize her understanding of the topic. She remarks, “…because we had that debate in [SLA] class and you know I didn’t know all that much about [the issue] beforehand. When we got there and had that debate I had to be on the opposite side of what I really felt, and it really is an eye-opening experience, because then you can be sitting there being the extremist, but what happens to people in between like my brother or my boyfriend?…” (post-immersion, p. 27). Later, she acknowledges the role of this experience in her learning saying, “I think maybe even taking these courses and having the
background that I do has even helped me understand more the debate about having an official language and why I feel that its not necessary and I feel like…if my brother would go through a course like this he might change his mind a little bit more, so I mean that’s not the point, but I think he might understand it a bit more.” (post-immersion, p. 29).

On the other hand, this process of becoming “open-minded” is a source of conflict as it represents some distancing from her family roots. Nora relates a conversation with her Texan cousins, in which they voice disapproval of Nora going to college,

‘Great, you’re spending your parents’ money.’ And, but I mean in the end, we [she and her siblings] are going to get good jobs and they won’t, but part of it was that, I mean, they were my cousins. So, it was just unconditional love because they’re your cousins, you’re supposed to love them. And it’s really upsetting, just the fact that I want to help make the world a better place, but they’re more ‘gimme this, gimme that…I want, want, want..gimme, gimme, gimme.’ So, I mean I’ve always been open-minded around them, just for the fact that they’re my cousins….I’m going to accept you as you are, but my sister and brother don’t. So then it comes down to being torn between my own family. (pre-immersion, p. 12).

Nora also refers to the knowledge that she gained through a comparative framing of the cultural histories of Latin and North American by one of the local Ecuadorian professors. “I particularly liked learning the history of Ecuador and all of that from Maria in Spanish and getting it translated and because I know a little bit only because I’ve read some of Isabelle Allende’s books… I never thought of looking at them side by side and it was a real eye-opener.”(post-immersion, p. 19). The geopolitical history of the two regions becomes one of the “stories” that she relates to her family upon return to the U.S.,

I remember that was one of the stories that I told Tom’s [her boyfriend] family was that when we got to his house which was sometime later after I had gotten back, they started asking me and I was like, I didn’t know what to tell them because it has been awhile, and I was like oh, I remember….I think my favorite class out of any of them was when Maria taught us in Spanish about the history because I didn’t realize the things that happened. (post-immersion, p. 19).

Sociocultural researchers have pointed out that symbolic mediating artifacts, such as literacy, can act as ‘cultural amplifiers,’ in the same way that a physical tool can amplify the bodily capabilities of the biological individual (e.g. a hand-held fruit picker extends a human’s reach to the top of an apple tree)
(Bruner, 1966; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Ron Scollon, 2001). Literacy amplifies memory and increases the capacity to organize and communicate information so it extends our cognitive reach. However, while symbolic mediating artifacts like literacy or “schooled knowledge,” carry the potential to transform the way we think, they often involve far-reaching ideological consequences (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This is because a cultural artifact such as academic knowledge or ‘schooled literacy,’ is differentially valued by different social groups within a community and the valuing of distinct practices gives rise to political and ideological struggles between groups (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). We can see how Nora is caught between the differing value orientations of her working-class background and the liberal discourse of the program which asks her to explore both sides of the issue of “English Only” and implicitly takes a stance in opposition to it. Nora comes up against ideological tensions between home and school communities in other ways too. In the excerpts below, in addition to ‘expert’ knowledge (Kennedy, 1999), defined as the knowledge put forth by researchers and codified in print, and then made available to her through the lectures of her teachers and course readings, Nora acknowledges the daily experience of the immersion program and how it gives her new exposure to bilingualism as a family and school practice.

…the part about going down to Ecuador to do this program is, you know, the key piece…I kind of came to an awareness of it, because here in Pennsylvania we, or at least I, haven’t come in contact with very much bilingual education and stuff. But, while we were down there, I saw all of you guys’ kids [children of instructors who are being raised bilingually] and it just made me so aware of…how much they have learned from bilingual school. It kind of intrigues me a lot and I thought of doing my research paper on bilingual programs. (post-immersion, p. A14).

I think even at one point, I was saying [to my boyfriend], ‘What do you think of sending kids to a bilingual school?’ Yeah and it’s something I think, you know, we both grew up here. It’s something that’s not prominent, but, you know, in a place like Texas, it is. Or you know, other than Pennsylvania, I don’t wanna say that, but…It’s a very common thing and I never realized that before. (post-immersion, p. A13).

By the final interview, six months after the program is completed, Nora mentions that she is considering a Master’s program in bilingual special education in a large, urban center which again signals her interest to move beyond her home context. She comments,
I’d really like to look into it, just because I think it would be an-an experience in itself, considering I’m coming from such a small place and I came to college at such a small place….Might as well try something big. I mean, I haven’t done it yet. It would be a change and I just, I think it would be my dream job to teach at a bilingual school in a special education classroom. (laughs) I don’t know why, it just would be like a dream job for me. (post-immersion, p. A5).

Both the ‘expert’ knowledge and the daily interactions (practical knowledge) of the immersion program, which give Nora direct contact with bilingual families, act as mediating artifacts that move her towards new ‘idealized conceptualizations’ (Golombek & Johnson, 2004) of language learning and teaching. Additionally, I have offered evidence of class-based ideological contradictions between the values propagated by the teacher education program and those of her family and home context. Unfortunately, because the data follows Nora only six months after the program, we cannot know if Nora will pursue her dreams or actually begin to align teaching practices to her new understandings. Long-term longitudinal research to investigate what happens as teachers move back to the classroom to interact with diverse learners is clearly needed. Also, as has been recently called for by Block (2007), social class is an important, but as of yet, under-investigated factor in identity-in-SLA research. A similar claim can be made about research on teacher learning and development, especially in regard to teacher learning about diversity and culturally appropriate teaching strategies.

5.1.2 Talking Through and With Others: Working Towards Political Clarity

A meditational means that is significant for Nora’s learning is verbal interaction with others. There are frequent instances in our interviews of Nora “talking through” her ideas on concepts she is learning about or her reactions to personal interactions within the program. “Talking through” in the sense that Nora initially lacks a clear opinion or stance on a topic, but seems to become aware of her perspective while she is talking in the interview situation or as she is relating a past conversation/event that happened previously with other people. As she tells about a small group discussion in which participants are trying to understand a teaching metaphor that each student has created to illustrate their beliefs about teaching, she says, “Karen is like me, we think out loud until we understand it.” (during immersion, p.48).
Nora often defers to the voices of others as she talks, including other participants, program faculty and her family at home. The presence of a group of people that are experiencing the immersion program, courses and practice teaching along with Nora seem to aid her in considering and evaluating personal experiences. For example, as she talks about the emotional discomfort and “homesickness” that she felt during her first week in Otavalo, she empathizes with the older participants whom she realizes may not have had recent experience in “school.” She says,

I can’t believe I’m this stressed, and I’m still an undergraduate, you know I should be used to it but at the same time I’m sitting there going, “Oh my gosh, I don’t know what other people who’ve been out of school for so long are thinking” and so, I think I like this group a lot just because we have been pretty supportive of one another. (during immersion, p. 44).

The other participants in the group function as a “temporary other” with whom a dialogic interaction is established around the issue of how to respond in a compassionate way to children asking for money on the street. Nora contrasts her uncertainty and vacillation about how to respond to street children to what she perceives is a clear stance on the part of her classmates. Having been exposed to poverty before in Mexico, she has thought about how she might react this time and seems discouraged that her reflecting on it beforehand hasn’t prepared her to react in a different way (more compassionate, humane) when she encounters children on the street in Quito. In the following excerpt, the contradiction she feels is expressed through vacillation on various ways of responding and her going back to previous experience in a similar situation in Mexico.

….we did talk a lot about it [poverty] when we were in Quito a lot about the children who are so impoverished and I still haven’t even made up my mind on that (laughs) [….] Yeah ‘cause that’s what I felt like we had to do is like we had to know—we had to have a feeling about [no,no] it right away ‘cause I think some of the people in the group really did have that [well, yeah ] and so then for me I kinda was like alright well I’m kind of sad but at the same time like I’m sure there’s some way I could help them, but then I was well I don’t want to give them money so I’d rather give them food, and then was like I could give them money I don’t need it, so then I’ve been back and forth between like all of it…because I remember when we went to Mexico it was like that also and that was kinda the part that when I was younger that scared me and so I was like alright well I’m going to prepare myself for this time, and you know, and have an answer for what I’m going to do when I run into it and then when it came down to being in the Plaza de San Francisco in Quito and had all those little kids run up like just some of the-you know the stories that, you know they say, you know they crowd around you and they take stuff out of your pockets and it all came into mind so whenever they walked up to me I just brushed them off and
then I was surprised at myself cause then **I felt bad because I didn’t even like give them a chance** or, you know I didn’t even like think about reaching into my pocket and giving them the change that I did have so then I was just surprised by myself on that note because I didn’t—I didn’t really want to have that reaction. (during immersion, p. 5).

She refers to what “they say,” referring to stories of being robbed by street kids, thus an ideology of fear of the “other” becomes an element of her immediate response to the children she meets. However, Nora wants to respond differently in the future, “I was surprised by the response that I did have…**I did kind of think the next time I’ll try harder to have a different response and so I think that’s like the mentality that I took on after we had talked about it with everybody else…**” (during immersion, p. 6). In this example, while she does not mention the concept, she illustrates the distinction between Dewey’s “routine” vs. “reflective” action, a notion that is explicitly discussed in her ESL teaching practice course. Routine actions are guided by impulse and traditional authority and lead the way in which Nora actually responds, but she seems to wish to respond in a more reflective way taking into account her emotions, past history and the viewpoints of others (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

After the program’s conclusion, we see that this incident remains with Nora. This is not surprising because issues of “white privilege” (McIntosh, 1989) and racism are explored in the program courses. Culture-specific knowledge of Ecuador is also offered in weekly talks (by Ecuadorian speakers) about the historical, social, economic aspects of the country. A comparative view of U.S./Ecuadorian national cultures and histories enters into her dilemma about her response to street children. In a post-program reflection she writes,

> Learning about the culture and history in terms of US history and culture, really made an impact on me. Never before had I thought to compare our U.S. history to the history and culture of another country. I gained a better understanding of why things are the way they are in Ecuador….I found that there are issues that I was never aware of before. (post-immersion reflection, p. 11).
In a paper on the general topic of culture and language learning written several weeks after the immersion program is completed, her negotiation of a response to people asking for money on the street resurfaces.

The first issue that is very important to me is the issue of poverty. Before I went to Ecuador, I had visited Mexico with my family and my parents had scared me by telling me to not give any beggars anything because then they follow you around. I saw this occur first hand and did not know how to interpret my feelings. So when it came time to go to Ecuador I was unsure how I would react to the homeless and beggars. **It helped a lot when we had discussions about the poverty and I was able to understand much more the differences and similarities that there are between our cultures.** The first and major difference is that the poverty line is much lower in Ecuador than in the US…The part that made me extremely nervous was that I could have gotten robbed by one of these unfortunate people. We had discussions about what to do and how to handle it, but I was still unsure of how to take all of this knowledge and develop intercultural competence. What I found was that you have to find your own ways to cope with the poverty yourself. Whether it is giving them food instead of money, or always carrying coins in your pockets to give them, or even understanding that even after you are robbed that they really need the money more than you, it is important to keep in mind that in the end there is no right or wrong answer. You have to do what you feel is right for you at that moment. (post-immersion reflection, p. 7).

Nora claims that classroom discussion and a comparative analysis of national cultures have helped her to negotiate difference, yet the people she encounters on the streets are positioned as the “other”, referred to as “unfortunate people.” In other parts of this paper, she points out structural societal differences between the US and Ecuador that contribute to large portions of the Ecuadorian population being without resources to meet basic human needs, (i.e. lack of a minimum wage, gaps in government social services, underfunded educational system). In the end, while taking an individualistic and somewhat pragmatic stance, she acknowledges that people have real universal basic needs and that she is privileged to be in a position to decide how to interact with people whose basic needs are not being met. I summarize her position as: 1) each individual decides how to respond to a request on the street for money, depending on their own personal views or preferences of the moment, and 2) there is no right and wrong way, whatever one decides, will do. Nora’s analysis does not place the need for change within the social structure, but perhaps this can be expected given that the social context is which she interacts is not her home context and the time period of interaction is very brief.
The process of helping educators to analyze assumptions that are subsumed in our views towards education has been defined as political clarity, or the process of coming “to understand better the possible linkages between macro-level political, economic and social variables, and subordinated groups’ academic performance at the micro-level classroom” (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001, p. 27).

There is a tendency for teachers to depoliticize schooling, seeing teaching as a neutral activity removed from social and economic consequences (2001). Thus, we may question whether Nora has gained some political clarity which helps her to become aware of and explain the ideologies that affect schooling practices. We can view Nora’s interaction with Ecuadorian people as the center or stimulus for a struggle to develop political clarity. In this situation, both the actual life experience of the immersion situation and the class discussion that provides a comparative look at national cultures are some meditational means of her developmental process. It is doubtful that Nora would have engaged in this process of political clarification without the emergence of this life experience that presents her with a real-life contradiction and which she feels the need to resolve.

Again, there is evidence of Nora adopting an idealized conceptualization of an ESL teacher acting as advocate for English learners and their families. Nora proposes the notion that an ESL teacher may need to support ELLs and their families in access to social services and that differential access to resources both in the US and in the home countries of her students may be something to explore in the classroom.

Some students may be coming from this type of background where they were oppressed and had nowhere to turn to, but now they have arrived in the U.S. to find relief from the oppressed lifestyle….It is also very important to realize that even if they moved here to find relief from poverty, they may also be experiencing worse conditions….I feel that in this situation, teachers may need to find help for students and families, or at least to point them in the right direction for help. I believe that for every teacher it is important to address this issue very openly and directly. Students will not understand difference and how our social system works if we are unable to discuss it. (post-immersion reflection, p. RP 7).

As she discusses her beliefs about teaching, in particular her questioning where the responsibility for learning lies in the classroom, she recalls a conversation that she had with her boyfriend in which he
claims that Spanish-speaking students in his high school didn’t learn English because “**they didn’t make any effort because they didn’t care because they could still speak Spanish no matter what….and if they don’t want to learn, they’re not going to learn.**” (pre-immersion, p. 32). In retelling the dialogue with her boyfriend, Nora engages again in stating her opposing viewpoint

I don’t remember exactly the conversation I had with him, but I really didn’t understand how they couldn’t want that and I think I was—**no it’s not because they didn’t want to learn English,** it was just—he was like, “no it was just that they were just bad students” and I thought well maybe it was the teacher’s fault. (pre-immersion, p. 33).

She goes on to assert that it is the teacher’s role to

…be the facilitator of learning and to hand that responsibility over to the students. You tell me what you want to learn and I’ll help you find the answer. Its not, “I’ll tell you the answer”…I truly believe that if a student is having problems then the teacher should do everything in their power before telling a student they are the problem (pre-immersion, p.33).

When I ask how this teaching belief relates to her participation in the TESL program, she says that the political aspects of language and the educational system interest her. She describes some debates that she has had with her sister and boyfriend on issues of English language teaching in the schools. She remarks,

I’m really interested in finding out how to make ESL programs better….at this stage I haven’t taught anything yet [right] and so obviously I’m still in college you know [the beginning stage] beginning where you know everything is perfect and when you get out of college, you know ever-everything’s going to be perfect and its going to be the perfect world and everything will work but I know that’s not true, but I mean I’m really interested in finding out what the best practices are just because I think one of my biggest goals in life is to be the best teacher I can be. (pre-immersion, p. 19).

Arising out of the personal interaction within the program, Nora must attend to contradictory responses to encountering children who live on the streets of Quito. The direct experience of social and global differential economic privilege challenges Nora to consider how she understands the situation. Significantly, her past history and the framing of how to act toward “unfortunate people” learned from her parents contradict the ideas of other participants, “expert” knowledge of what it means to be a teacher of diverse learners, and her beginning understanding of the social realities of Ecuador. Discussions within the class sessions formally, and informally among the participants,
concerning issues of poverty and global inequality mediate her thinking. In working through these contradictions, she externalizes her ideas about poverty with “temporary others” that include other program participants, her journal and reflective writing, interviews with the researcher and even with friends and families after the experience is over. In the end, we see Nora appropriating a conceptualization of the role of the ESL teacher as social or community advocate for English language learners and their families. As a pre-service teacher who has not yet begun her student teaching experience in the U.S. public school context, Nora remains in a place of conceptualization. At this point in her development, she has no experience or “practice” that the theory can inform, so she is left with the theory or generalized idea of what practice should look like. This issue becomes more critical as we follow Nora’s experience in the program below.

5.2.0 Negotiating Uncertain Spaces

Keeping Spanish as part of her life is one of Nora’s motives for participating in the TESL certificate program with its immersion experience in Ecuador. In her words,

I feel it will fulfill one of my own dreams that I’ve had since I was younger, since I started learning Spanish, was to always have Spanish in my life….it was kind of the answer to what I wanted—to have this Spanish in my life still...(during immersion, p. 8).

According to Kinginger & Farrell Whitworth (2005, p. 2), motives for foreign language learning resonate within the emotional lives of learners and are related to gender, national or class-related identities to which they aspire or which they reject. The enactment of these motives may be viewed as a creative act in which learners assemble and display rationales and desires which arise from personal histories, as well as from the way that the learners position themselves and are positioned by others in daily interaction within another language and culture (Kinginger, 2007).

Nora’s father is Mexican-American and grew up in Texas speaking Spanish as a child at home, but was restricted to English in school under threat of “corporal punishment.” While Spanish was rarely spoken in her home, Nora sees the language as “a huge part of my family’s heritage.” (linguistic autobiography, p. 2). Nora reports, “My father is fluent in Spanish and I wish that he had
taught us Spanish at an earlier age, but he was determined to overcome his poverty stricken childhood.” (linguistic autobiography, p. 2). Despite Nora’s father’s refusal to use the language with his children, he “sparked my interest when I was little. I obviously had that culture, I wanted to learn Spanish” (pre-immersion, p. 4). As a class assignment, Nora writes a “linguistic autobiography” in which she charts her history and experiences with language.

I’ve always wanted Spanish to be there. I think in our family it’s a big thing….we talked about our linguistic autobiographies [in class] and I think that one thing, I don’t think it’s necessarily disturbing, but it’s like, kind of like a jolt is that, my dad speaks Spanish, but, when it comes to me, my sister, my brother, we didn’t learn as children, we learned in a formal setting in a classroom… it’s kind of one of the things that I think I’ve gotten out of this. I hadn’t thought about, you know, continuing the Spanish and everything and I hadn’t really thought about how, you know, with my father Spanish almost ended if my sister and I hadn’t taken Spanish in high school. ….it’s just a big thing…and I don’t want it to end here. (during immersion, p. 55).

The act of externalizing this history in the linguistic autobiography and then talking about it with others is a mediational means that triggers for Nora an awareness of the importance of this heritage in her life and as central to her identity.

During the immersion experience, Nora interacts in a bilingual/bicultural environment in Otavalo (Spanish/Quichua) and with several families of program staff who are raising their children bilingually in the U.S. (English/Spanish). Nora begins to envision bilingualism as part of her own life. She comments on exposure to bilingual children during the program, “I think it also helps with…Maura and her children and Karin and her children. And just seeing them converse in Spanish, it’s just amazing. I just think….the one regret is that I didn’t learn Spanish at a younger age.” (during immersion, p. 56). In our post-program interviews, she has taken on the dream of becoming a bilingual/special education teacher. At this moment, she also seems to embrace the notion of familial bilingualism,

I mean I love the idea….there’s no doubt in my mind that I want to send my kids to a bilingual program at some point, or at least, teach them Spanish before they’re…like adolescents, I waited, I, I had my teaching in formal schooling which is fine, you know, it’s fine, but I really like the idea of the bilingual. (post-immersion, p. A1).
However, the contradiction around Spanish for Nora’s father (in school contexts where he was punished for L1 use) seems to continue to live in Nora’s own experience with Spanish. She asserts, “I felt confident in Spanish in high school, but after attending college I feel that I have partially lost the language somewhere” (linguistic autobiography, p. 3). In our first interview, she talks in superlative terms about her high school study abroad experience as “the most wonderful experience of her life” and asserts an intention to make Spanish a minor in college. But paradoxically, she stops studying it after her second year in college. “I love Spanish to death, but I ended up dropping it because I didn’t enjoy my Spanish classes here” (pre-immersion, p. 24). When she took the Spanish placement test upon entering college, she placed in Spanish II and says she felt discouraged—“having taken Spanish since I was in 7th grade and then coming into college and only skipping one [level] was like, well, maybe I really didn’t learn all that much in high school. But then again, I had been to Spain.” (pre-immersion, p. 25). Nora entered college believing she had a good background in Spanish and then found it difficult to meet expectations for herself in a Spanish class which she initially viewed as below her capabilities. What worked to support her language learning in high school, a familiar community of learners and a supportive teacher, were not available to her in college. She points out, “I’ve thought about why I did not enjoy Spanish here [at college]…partially, it was because I was spoiled in high school having the same teacher…by my senior year, the students I was with in class were also the ones who’d been taking it since 7th grade. (pre-immersion, p. 26).

Thus, there is the contradiction of “loving Spanish,” but giving it up, or in Nora’s words, “I kinda just dropped Spanish off,” as if she opened the door of her car and let Spanish walk away (pre-immersion, p.5).

Nora’s contradiction around Spanish might be seen as a mirroring or continued embodiment of her father’s contradiction. The Spanish language was his home language, but he was prevented from using it in school. Thereafter, while the father is bilingual, his wife is not and they move away from Texas to the Northeast where the language practice of his own family becomes monolingual.
We cannot know if the father continues to identify with the Spanish language, but his daughter seems to both desire this identification, and at the same time, experience obstacles to enacting it in her own life.

In their longitudinal research on language socialization across several geographically dispersed Mexican-American communities, Schecter & Bayley (2002) demonstrated the diversity of discourse practices that exist within Mexican-American society. In their study, while nearly all participants said that Spanish has a prominent role in their individual identity, there is wide variation in the use of Spanish by and among family members and in intergenerational transmission of the minority language. Schecter & Bayley’s work examined socialization through the life cycle, offering a diachronic perspective on intragenerational patterns of language use. It demonstrated, as Nora’s experience seems to suggest, that bilingualism is additive while movement towards monolingualism for immigrant populations can entail high costs, significantly a loss of cultural and linguistic capital and identity (2002). Nora laments the fact that she did not learn Spanish as a child and the experience of learning about teaching language in another language/cultural context stimulates her interest and dreams to add Spanish as a resource in her life.

5.2.1 Spanish: Remembering or Learning

Contradiction surrounding Nora’s Spanish identity extends to her language learning experience in Ecuador. Nora has said that Spanish was not spoken in her home and she grew up in a solidly monolingual English community where there was little linguistic and cultural diversity. However, Nora has studied Spanish for six years from 7th through 12th grades and then completed two semesters during her first year of college. For Nora, participation in the TESL program is a way to get back to Spanish (which she hasn’t studied for two years) and keep it in her life. As she talks about learning and using Spanish in Ecuador, it is clear that she is remembering a lot of language that she had been exposed to previously and that her comprehension skills are stronger than her ability to speak confidently. In her linguistic autobiography, she writes, “I am glad that my school had the option of
taking Spanish as a second language starting in 7th grade and I love to listen to it being spoken. I understand the language more when I hear it than when I actually speak it. I am very happy that I learned the language.” (linguistic autobiography, p. A4).

Initially, as Nora talks about the upcoming trip to Ecuador, she makes a connection between her own L2 learning process and that of ELLs in the U.S. Again, she refers to articles that she read for the program which mediate her thinking about second language learning.

And, I feel like, for teaching ESL, I think it’s really important, especially after doing the assignment that was due today. Um, some of those, uh, articles really reminded me about, you know, you kind of have to put yourself in their shoes a lot, and you have to really open your mind about what they’re feeling….For me, it makes me think about how, when I’m learning Spanish, I don’t know everything, and I never feel like I’m gonna be a fluent speaker of Spanish. And, I think that, you know, if you think that way, then you never will be a fluent speaker, but if you tell yourself that ‘I’m going to learn this and I’m going to, you know, do my best….then, maybe, eventually, you’ll get to be fluent. (pre-immersion, p. 13).

Perhaps because she has not used or studied Spanish for several years, Nora frequently frames her learning process as “remembering” Spanish, rather than learning it. As she talks about her Spanish language class in Ecuador, she comments,

well the weird thing about the class is truly, it’s just been a review, like she’ll [the instructor] say something and I’m like, oh my gosh, yeah I knew that…(during immersion, p. 26.).

It’s kind of hard for me, just because I feel like I’m kind of more in a review of my Spanish than actually learning it cause I don’t really know how much more I can learn because I really do know, I know its up here. I just need to review all of it and like so it’s kind of hard because I’m having to think all the way back to seventh grade!... (during immersion, p. 25).

Later, as we talk more about her Spanish language class in Ecuador she says,

I really do enjoy the Spanish class….I kind of feel like I can be like a model for the rest of them, I think that’s what I like about it, I think I shou- yeah, I should concentrate more on that, but at the same time, like you know the first couple of weeks….I made mistakes and so then like the thing that didn’t help is that Clara [another participant] called me out majorly on the mistakes, she was like NO! that’s wrong and that made me feel really bad. (during immersion, p. 27).

Nora seems to be caught in a contradictory space of wanting to take ownership of Spanish, but not yet having full command of the language for use. In a course on second language acquisition that Nora is
completing in Ecuador, she is asked to analyze the language learning experience she is having during the immersion experience. She has trouble relating her language learning experience to theoretical knowledge of second language acquisition that is being discussed in class. She says, “I’ve tried to think of those things, but I always just keep reverting back to the well, I just understand Spanish more than I can speak it (laughs) so…” (during immersion, p. 26). However, in our interviews, she clearly articulates her own language learning strategies and ways that the host family scaffolds her language learning. She gives examples of how family members help her to find words she need to express an idea, how she sometimes uses a dictionary, or other times just tries to say a Spanish word even though she is not confident of the pronunciation, and how she tries to describe aspects of her life in Pennsylvania in an effort to share personal information in the L2. She also relates how the family gives her explicit feedback,

…the other thing I’ve noticed is that my conjugation of verb forms has gotten really bad (laughs) and that’s one of the things that we’ve been going over in the Spanish class so I’ve been getting better but I find myself as I’m talking to them and I’m trying to go faster, um I always end up conjugating wrong (laughs) so then they’re like and-and they make me [do they correct you?] yeah they correct me and then they make me say it and then they make me say it again and I’m alright I understand [is that helpful or not?] well it is, but its not only because I-I cor-I try to correct myself after the first time like I think about it if I really don’t know to say it then I-I do appreciate it but some of the time I’m like oh yeah yeah [its just that you forgot] yeah, so it-so I mean its nice and it’s sometimes not, but it’s not bad. (during immersion, p.14).

Wilkinson (1998) suggests that researchers should take into account both the types of contact students develop and their reactions to and perceptions of these contacts when language learning in the study abroad context is investigated. Other than the language class, Nora’s contact with Spanish speakers is primarily with her host family and her students, and in our post-program interview, the family is the first memory she brings up, “whenever I was at their house, I think I remember feeling like you know, they kind of accepted me into their family so it was like my own house and then it was just a nice warm place to be.” (post-immersion, p. 2). She felt welcomed, loved and cared for by the host family. Her interaction in Spanish with the family was situated mostly around breakfast and the evening meal where conversation is the focal point of the interaction.
In the beginning of the sojourn in Ecuador, she says,

…at first whenever I got here, they had to speak really slow for me and now it’s getting to the point where I understand them when they’re conversing with somebody else. INTERVIEWER: So you notice a difference in your ability to understand over this week? “Yeah just because I hadn’t heard Spanish in such a long time and I had missed it and so when they spoke to me I asked them to speak more slowly, but now its gotten to the point where they don’t have to speak that slowly to me anymore and I can just listen to what they’re talking about and just sit there and nod my head or say “sí” and they’re like, Oh you understand us?....and I think they’re noticing and I mean they still tell people that I only speak a little bit of Spanish, but then I’m like all right I speak a little bit more now so. (during immersion, p. 12).

Over the three weeks of the program, the verbal interaction seems to gradually become more significant,

I remember when I first got here, at night we would just sit around and eat dinner we’d only talk just a little bit and I’d go to my room and I’d do homework. And now, it’s like OK, I’d rather sit at the table. We talk and we joke and I mean I’ve learned to play an Ecuadorian card game and I kind of taught my mom how to play hearts. (during immersion, p. 52).

Nora makes an effort to use Spanish,

I think I’m trying to speak more without hesitation or like just using the language more instead of listening. I’m trying to talk when I can’t [like pushing yourself], yeah, I’m pushing myself and if I can’t get it out one way, then I try to think of another way to get it out. (during immersion, p. 13).

Since no language proficiency testing was carried out during the program, actual improvements in proficiency cannot be demonstrated. However, several incidents that Nora relates in our final interview, five months after the program’s completion, point to her having taken up identity resources related to becoming a Spanish speaker. By positioning herself as a user of Spanish, she gives expression to an identity of “Nora as a Spanish speaker.” One resource relates to language play in which Nora tells me that since returning from Ecuador she often translates things into Spanish in her head. In several other anecdotes, she is positioned as a Spanish speaker by others who ask her to eavesdrop on Spanish-speakers walking by, or to translate a sign in Spanish. She tells me,

I was really surprised about how much came back to me when I got there and um it’s funny because when I see Carla [another program participant], she, I’m like oh if I talked in Spanish to her, she’d understand me (laughs) and so I mean sometimes in my own mind I think its always there and since I went to Ecuador like it had always been there since high
school, but since I got to college things have changed and focal points have gone different ways, but when I went to Ecuador again and brought Spanish more back into my life again its become another big focal point. (post-immersion, p. 14).

Thus, it seems that Nora’s participation in this program allows her to re-connect with something that she values in her life, the Spanish language. Nora’s motive to ‘keep Spanish in her life’ seems to have been partially satisfied, at least in terms of her identification with her family’s Mexican-American heritage. Block’s (2002) assertion that study abroad can be interpreted as a potentially crucial turning point in the life story of a learner in which learners are exposed to identity options which they may choose to reject or accept seems to be very relevant in Nora’s experience. In Nora’s case, the object of the activity system was motivation to find or rediscover her identity as a Spanish speaker based on her personal history and family heritage. In a three week time period, she seems to have had some success in this endeavor.

5.3.0 Dissonance of Immersion

Nora has a rough first week in Otavalo. She reports feeling uncomfortable, emotional and homesick. Her response to being in the immersion situation surprises her, because she did not have a similar reaction when living with a host family in Spain as a high school student.

I didn’t-its really weird cause I’m not one person to be homesick. I don’t mind being away from home like I’ll say-once in a while I wanna go home just ‘cause I miss my mom…but I’m not one to get homesick so I’m-I’m really surprised at myself on how this past week has gone. (during immersion, p. 43).

Returning to a Spanish-speaking country to learn Spanish has been a dream since high school; she does not see herself as a person that would not adapt well to the immersion situation.

5.3.1 Identity: Valuing Familial Relationships

During the second week of the program, when Nora admits her feelings of distress to her advisor, the staff is also surprised because her outward behavior during the classes and daily interactions give no indication of stress or tension. Perhaps, this is because Nora believes that she should hide her discomfort,
I think yesterday I was so tense...and I knew it was because on Sunday I had made up my mind...I’m going to tell somebody how I’m feeling, I was like, it doesn’t matter, but like I just, I don’t know, I kind of clam up when it comes to that...I guess that’s kind of how I like I-I tell myself that I try to not let people know how I’m feeling”

INTERVIEWER:  *Uh huh so was it, were you conscious last week of trying like to not let on that you were feeling bad inside*

Yeah-yeah just ‘cause like I didn’t want anybody to feel bad for me and I didn’t want to like I don’t want for anybody to feel like I- I don’t know, like they had to [take care of you] do something for me yeah. (during immersion, p. 30).

There seem to be contradictory sides to the way Nora talks about the immersion experience as it happens during her first week in Ecuador. On one hand, Nora experiences emotional dissonance expressed as homesickness and stress. As she describes her experiences of the first week, she frequently uses words such as, “stress, frantic, tension, discouragement, homesickness, overwhelmingness,” “everything going wrong” and “so many thoughts running through my head” which cause her to have trouble falling asleep. However, on the other hand, when she talks about the Ecuadorian culture, she comments,

*I really am enjoying the culture here* just because you know it is different from Spain, but also at the same time there are a lot of things that are also the same and at the same time, I’ve been to Mexico before and I kinda feel like I’ve always had this different cultural background compared to everybody else so I’ve kind of felt like I always liked to come to these places just because I feel at home (laughs) so [do you?] yeah, I kinda—I really do just because I-I truly just like the culture. (during immersion, p. 28).

Thus, there is tension between Nora’s identification with her Mexican-American heritage and claim to comfort in Spanish-speaking countries on one side, and the emotional dissonance that arises as Nora acts within the immersion situation on the other. Not wanting to reveal her discomfort to others may reflect Nora’s expectation that she should feel comfortable in this cultural and linguistic setting because she sees it as somehow a part of her family’s Mexican-American heritage. Paradoxically, while neither the Spanish language, nor Mexican-American culture seem to be active constructs in her home life, Nora’s identification with that heritage, leads her to believe she should feel ‘at home’ because of her ‘different cultural background.’ At this point, Nora operates under an essentialist view of culture that sees all Spanish-speaking cultures as the same. Therefore, she claims some degree of affiliation with the culture(s) of Ecuador as an automatic by-product of her Mexican-American family
heritage. However, in our post-program interview six months afterwards, while still working under the premise of national cultures, she has recognized that her initial assumptions were not valid.

I really didn’t know much about Ecuador and I kind of just grouped it in the same with Mexico and all of that and they’re all different, I’ve now seen them, yeah, I didn’t see them as separate until now….and I think that’s one of the major things that I’ve realized…(post-immersion p. 18).

This expectation may arise from a ‘romanticized’ view of cultural understanding as an automatic by-product of both her family heritage and of the study abroad experience. A view of study abroad as an experience that automatically leads to increased understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds, seems to hold within educational circles and the general public as well. However, empirical research has shown that such expected outcomes of study abroad experiences are neither automatic, nor generalizable (Kinginger, 2008).

The interviews with the researcher act as a meditational means for Nora to work through the emotional discomfort that she feels during the first week of the immersion situation. She has the opportunity to verbalize how she is feeling and through this verbalization, she comes to understand her emotions. She remarks,

I knew I needed at some point to talk to somebody and I knew by yesterday, I was like-I was needing somebody so bad, but at the same time, I knew we were going to meet today, so it was XXX.

INTERVIEWER: Well that’s OK, I mean we have the time then, and you know-and I think sometimes just the talking through things like you noted, you make some connections and realizations that you can’t, you know, I do that all the time

Yeah, for me talking is how I do it too. (during immersion, p. 48).

Nora goes on to say that she noticed a few of the other co-participants learn through talk “we think out loud until we understand it.”

By our final interview, Nora has an explanation for her early emotional discomfort in Ecuador. She connects the dissonance she experienced during the immersion experience to her emotional life within her family at home. In the following excerpt, Nora expresses this dissonance using the word “homesick” pointing back to her family at home.
I think when I finally realized, you know just two months ago I finally realized that I was really homesick then and I had all this stuff happen before I left…..but I think since I didn’t realize I was homesick, I think that kind of just made the experience a little bit harder for me. But….putting that behind me and looking back on it, I like—it was a wonderful experience….it was just amazing just to go and be able to do it and I think having to come to that realization let me go back and think about it more….I think I just wasn’t ready to go, like it came really fast for me….I think there was still emotional stuff from my family going on, I wasn’t ready to leave yet (chuckles) so it was, I don’t know, I feel like in my family I’m usually the one who is the big hold-everyone-together. (post-immersion, p. 7).

Nora sees her role within her family as the facilitator of communication and the one who brings the family together; “when I go home I feel like my family talks more to each other than when I’m not there.” (post-immersion, p. 8). As might be expected for a 21 year old who is about to complete her college education, there is tension for Nora related to connections to her family and thoughts of becoming increasingly independent as she contemplates a job search and a possible move out of state. While the time abroad pulls her physically away from her family, it also seems to bring Nora’s ties to her family at home into sharper focus. Concomitantly, the host family relationship in Ecuador is important to Nora. When I asked her what stories or anecdotes she related to family and friends upon return, she says, “I told them how I cried whenever I left the [host] family because I enjoyed them so much and I felt, I guess because I’d been torn away from my own family, I felt I needed a family there and they had become that.” (post-immersion, p. 10) Given time to reflect on the experience afterwards, Nora re-affirms her desire to be involved with and connected to her own family. She expresses regret at not being home to grieve with her family at her grandfather’s death; “when I came to school [after summer break], I was torn away from another family crisis that I didn’t get to finish.” (post-immersion, p.21).

As we continue to discuss the TESL program and how the experience abroad affected her personally, Nora clearly sees the learning related to the immersion experience as an ongoing process that has taken time for her to understand. Further, she seems to have appreciated the act of verbalizing her thoughts during the interview as a mediating resource to help her in the process of understanding.
I think that [it] took a little and I think it’s still happening um but I—that has taken me a long time to think about because you know—if you would have asked me right afterwards I would have said it’s a wonderful life-changing experience and that would have been all I would have been able to tell you (laughs) I wouldn’t have been able to explain it, but now it makes me realize more about how much I depend on my family even though I say I don’t, and I’m the one that doesn’t get homesick, I’m sitting there going yeah I really do depend on them...even that how much other things can affect you and your life and then have it drag over to everything else....you know being a student, trying to balance all of those things, I had done it before but then also bringing in emotional baggage from just being at home and having to deal with it was I think a realization that was kind of a little more eye-opening for me. (post-immersion, p. 20).

The time abroad seems to have allowed Nora to affirm her place within her own family and recognize the value of her familial relationships. Thus, the experience of immersion allowed Nora to reconstruct her identity in relation to her family.

5.3.2 Dissonance Related to Motives

Secondly, Nora’s stress of the first week may arise from misalignment between her object for the TESL program and the object of the TESL program as an activity system. Nora engages in the TESL certificate program in Ecuador with two general life motives that she hopes will be met by the experience: 1) to “bring Spanish back into my life,” and 2) get another certificate “under my belt” for future job opportunities. As a subject in an activity system, Nora comes to this experience with goals that are shaped by her personal history and future needs; 1) a desire to take on a Mexican-American identity and the Spanish language, and, 2) a desire to position herself for jobs that will allow her to move out of her ‘sheltered’ home community. Meanwhile, the primary object of the overall activity system is to guide participants to develop a teaching practice that is culturally relevant and appropriate for teaching English language learners. It also intentionally expects second language and intercultural learning. Before the program begins, Nora seems to have not considered these programmatic learning goals. When I inquire what she had thought about the courses and program-related activity before she left for Ecuador, she says:

INTERVIEWER: Did you think much about taking the classes before you came?
NORA: (laughs) No, actually, I didn’t.
INTERVIEWER: What did you think about?
NORA: I thought about just being abroad. I think it was just the, you know, living with the family and-and doing that sort of stuff and traveling and I mean I thought about going to school but only in the context that when I was in Spain, I went to a private school…and I think I was really concentrating on the family part coming here, but at the same time I didn’t really know what to expect…it was just kinda like alright, I don’t really know what to expect um I-I kept telling myself I wasn’t nervous about being safe or anything like that but I figured I’ve been abroad before and I knew how to take care of myself in order to be safe and so I was going over that in my head…(during immersion, p.4).

For Nora, the conscious object for participating in the program (learning Spanish and an external motivation to earn a teaching certificate) and the object of the program (learning conceptual knowledge about working with ELLs and teaching strategies for teaching English and academic content) do not fully coincide. And further, her unclear expectation of what the experience would offer her added to the contradiction. Additionally, as we will see below, Nora’s lack of experience as a teacher and the brief span of time that the program makes available to her to develop teaching competencies also give rise to cognitive/emotional dissonance surrounding her learning to be a teacher of diverse learners.

5.3.3 Dissonance: An ‘Out of Body’ Experience

Nora is a pre-service teacher and has just completed the junior year of her undergraduate education certification program. She participates in the TESL program the summer before engaging in the practical student teaching component of her teacher preparation program. Thus, while she has learned about teaching in her education courses, she has not yet had the opportunity to enact the cultural practices of being a teacher. In her educational program, the three-week practice teaching component in Ecuador is her first supervised teaching practice experience. During this brief time period, she observes mentor-teachers teaching English to Ecuadorian learners and subsequently plans and teaches four classes in collaboration with two other co-participants.

Nora repeatedly refers to her inexperience as a teacher. During the teaching practice, she writes, “After teaching two lessons this week, I have found that I feel very inexperienced, very confused and very excited all at the same time.” (during immersion reflection, p. TR 5). On the last day of the program, she says, “It went really fast, as much as I thought it would go a lot slower,
spending all the time in class and everything, it went really fast (chuckle) and I’m sitting here going, ‘wow, I think I need more time to teach.’ (during immersion, p. 50). A lack of instructional strategies to draw upon, the intensity and short duration of the program, and perhaps a lack of appropriate scaffolding for her leaning all interact to make it difficult for Nora to fully appropriate what is being learned about instructional practices. There are repeated expressions of Nora’s need for more time to engage in practice and reflection in order to internalize new knowledge:

“I feel, I still feel like I need more time to teach and to actually get a grasp of it.”
“I need to take everything that we’ve talked about and take it home with me and just keep, digesting it.” (during immersion, p. 53)
“I also wish that there was more time to bring everything that we have learned into the classroom.” (during immersion reflection, p. TR 1)
“I didn’t really have time to let it all sink in.” (during immersion reflection, p. TR 3)

Her feelings of dissonance seem to be a condition of her experience related to the teaching practice. She uses the metaphor of an ‘out of body’ experience to express the dilemma of having to act in the professional role as an English language teacher, but without having established her own practice or identity as a teacher.

The part I have trouble with is actually remembering to use the stuff we learn in class while I am on the spot in the classroom. I feel very out of my element here and feel like I didn’t know where I was or what I was doing while I was teaching. Looking back now, I feel like while we are here, I am having a very out of body experience. I hope that when I am in a normal classroom, I do not do some of the things I did here. Such as forgetting to use what we’ve learned. Maybe the true problem is that not everything has really connected for me yet. (during immersion reflection, TR p. 2).

In contrast to the program participants who are in-service teachers, Nora does not yet have teaching experience, nor does she have much previous exposure to diversity in classroom or life settings. Because Nora lacks classroom experience, she does not have a conceptual framework about teaching that would allow her to internalize what she is seeing, talking about, acting within. Thus, the mediated activity of practice teaching seems to be perceived by Nora as going on outside of herself; it is an ‘out of body experience,’ and within the short time span of three weeks cannot be fully internalized or appropriated. While Nora sees the reflective journal writing as a way to externalize her understandings, she is also aware that the multitude of ideas about teaching that are offered in this
intensive learning environment cannot be internalized immediately and expresses hopes that they will ‘eventually click but come naturally.’ In an interview a few weeks after return to the U.S., she is still trying to make sense of her experience in Ecuador. When I ask her what she has been thinking about in relation to her teaching and the program in Ecuador, she says,

I was more thinking about all of the SLA components and the teaching part of it and, you know, the experience in Ecuador and I thought a lot about it and I feel that it’s one-been one of the greatest exper-experiences of my life….I would be so different if I didn’t have this, I think, and I-and I remember when I said it in Ecuador, I was more thinking along the lines of, all right well, I’m not quite sure of everything that we’ve done here, I have to keep thinking about it, so I can get it into my brain and so I understand it, so I can use it. (post-immersion, p. A9).

While her overall evaluation of the program is positive, at this point in time, she seems to be struggling to come to terms with the experience and make it her own.

More specifically, Nora seems to internalize some of the concepts and instructional practices that the program offers to support ELL’s in the classroom. In a final reflective paper about ELL teaching practices, she describes the importance of several notions: ‘building a classroom community,’ ‘appropriate content and language objectives for particular students’ and ‘the importance of knowing cultural differences, in particular, knowing my own cultural background.’ These are a few of many concepts that were embedded in the coursework about teaching ELLs. But, there is only limited evidence that Nora has been able to ‘populate’ the expert knowledge with her own interpretations and attempts to enter into new ‘modes of engagement’ with students (Bakhtin, 1981; Johnson, 2007). As Johnson (2007) reminds us, teacher development is a highly individualized and recursive process in which variability in development is expected. Depending on where teachers are when they engage in learning, some teachers may be able to demonstrate actual transformation in thinking and teaching practices, while others may exhibit only ‘idealized conceptions of teaching.’ (2007). The brief time frame of the program allows her to notice tension between her teaching beliefs and new concepts introduced about ESL teaching, but the activity system holds several contradiction
for Nora; 1) it does not offer sufficient time for Nora to apply notions of good teaching practices for ELLs in the classroom, and 2) the *object* of the activity system and Nora’s *object* do not coincide.

We can understand Nora’s process of development as a teacher of diverse learners through Vygotsky’s (1986) theoretical premise that people develop conceptual knowledge by participation in cultural practice. Conceptual knowledge is not distinct from cultural practice, but developed over time within worldly experience. Vygotsky (1986) argues that the interplay between formal knowledge and practical experience (knowledge gained through activity in the world) enables people to consider problems beyond their range of personal experience. An important point to understand Nora’s development is that she is engaging simultaneously in both practice (actual teaching and written reflection on that practice) and formal knowledge (readings and class discussion on theory and expert knowledge) within a bounded activity system. In the final analysis, both the limited time and the discordance between Nora’s motives and those of the program are mediating factors that constrain her development.

Most of the comments that Nora makes about her learning about teaching ELLs might be described as a new awareness or in Vygotskian terms, a *complex*. Because the activity of Nora observing demonstrations of teaching and actual classroom practice teaching is limited to approximately 12 hours over the 3-week time period, Nora has only limited opportunity to develop full *concepts*. Vygotsky (1987) argues that instruction in principles alone cannot result in the development of a *concept*: “Direct instruction in concepts is impossible. It is pedagogically fruitless. The teacher who attempts to use this approach achieves nothing but a mindless learning of words, an empty verbalism that stimulates or imitates the presence of concepts.” (p. 170)

In a final reflection paper in which Nora writes about the principles of teaching ELLs that she has come to value through her activity in the program, she comments,

I believe that content based instruction is the most appropriate way to teach the students language. Teaching universal subjects that could be taught under almost any content area just by adapting the topic to fit, is the basis for content based instruction. While in Ecuador, I
learned that even if they do not know the vocabulary, it doesn’t mean that they do not understand the concept of what you are teaching (post-immersion reflection, p. RP 1).

On one hand, Nora’s comment broadly associates content instruction and language learning by implying that simplifying the language of the content ‘to fit [the learner’s proficiency]’ will produce language learning. She has developed a complex; she has not yet developed a full conceptualization of all of the elements that together make up the concept of ‘content based instruction.’” On the other hand, she seems to have realized that lack of L2 proficiency does not indicate a lack of conceptual understanding for ELLs. In this same paper, she later writes, “I believe that keeping age appropriateness in mind is very important because the students will learn more if they are not treated like they are at a younger age than they are. I became aware of this because of the lesson that we taught.” (post-immersion reflection, p. RP 2). Thus, here she reveals the importance of the cultural practice of teaching to bring about her learning.

Attention to how she structures her classroom language as comprehensible input to ELLs is a new awareness for Nora and becomes a long-term goal that she continues to develop as part of her public school student teaching placement in the coming year. In Ecuador, Nora comments on the language she uses in her lesson with the English learners and how their reaction to her depends on the words she uses. She admits that she hadn’t thought much about how to make her language and instructions comprehensible to the beginning level English learners. This issue becomes one she works on consistently throughout the teaching practice. Later, in a post-program interview that takes place five months after the TESL program is completed and as she is beginning a semester-long student teaching experience in the public schools, she comments,

…and another thing that I realized is that one of the competencies that you have to pass um for becoming a teacher is um the one that stuck out majorly in my mind was the language that you use while you’re in the classroom with the students…the competency is I think its partially how you explain things to the students, if its clear enough and then just in general [giving instructions or] the type of language you use…and then I went in to talk with my supervisor and she had asked, she asked me, she goes, well why did you mark yourself here on this one? she was like, I thought that was really interesting and I looked at her and I said well after taking the Ecuador courses and going to Ecuador I just, I realized I’m now more aware of the language that you use and that and how much it can impact somebody so I
was jus- I was like I would like to improve that for myself because I know I can do better than that so...(post-immersion, p. 4).

Thus, the development that was initiated in her brief teaching practice in Ecuador is continued in her student teaching in the U.S.

5.3.4 Cultural Learning and Building Empathy for ELLs

In his investigation of study abroad participants’ retrospective accounts of their out-of-class experiences, Laubscher (1994) notes that in order for immersion to result in an increased understanding of the host culture, students need some sort of “decisive intervention,” usually on the part of a “key [native-speaking] informant” to help them make sense of their encounters. “Simply having the data available,” he observes, “is no assurance that substantive learning will take place” (1994, p.106). An absence of an insider perspective leads to a tendency for participants “to interpret new experience in the light of past experience” (Laubscher, 1994, p.107).

While Nora’s remarks about her experience of cultural/linguistic immersion were primarily about her feelings of homesickness and stress, nevertheless, her host family played a major role in her learning about culture-specific aspects of the cultures of Ecuador. After the immersion program is over and as she begins to sort through the experience, she says, “The stay with the host family gave me first-hand insight to typical life, family structure, beliefs and values, and in turn their culture…It was another experience that made a very big impact on me.”(post-immersion reflective, p. RP8). The host family is an important mediator in Nora’s experience. In addition, to their role in her language learning, she clearly connects with the host family on an emotional level. She comments, “…and the family, the host family because I had enjoyed them so much and I felt, I guess because I’d been torn away from my own family, I felt like I needed a family there and they had become that…I was still emotional about leaving them [her family in PA] and so I think that was another realization that I had…” (post-immersion, p. 10). She goes on to explain that she feels that she somehow transferred emotions from things going on with her family at home to the immersion situation in Ecuador.
Further, she recognizes that her particular experience with her host family is not generalizable to all Ecuadorian families. She remarks,

**Firstly, I have realized that even though I stayed with a very nice family it was also very different for other people in our group. In other words, generalizations cannot be drawn from only one family, but discussion about each different experience for us helped to gain more information to observe....I have read and observed that in Latin American family structure, it is the responsibility of some child (mostly the eldest) to take care of the mother after she is old and senile. This makes the families close... My host mother said that in their culture it is very important that you be near your family. This is very different from my family here in the US because my immediate family is very separated from my extended family. However, when looking at any one family it is very important to remember they do not represent the entire culture.** (post-immersion reflection, p. 8).

Nora considers the host family experience of other participants as well as comparing what she knows of her own cultural norms and that of the family she lives with. As she thinks back on the experience, she also makes comparisons about culturally-based norms of child-raising, gender roles and social class mobility in both societies. Additionally, a historical perspective is critical to Nora’s developing cultural understanding. One of Nora’s favorite class sessions during the program is a talk by an Ecuadorian who draws a comparative analysis between the colonial histories of North and South Americas. Nora says,

…my favorite was when Maria taught us in Spanish about the history because I was like, **I didn’t realize the things that happened...** when you compared, when you put them side by side, that’s what it is, **I never thought of looking at them side by side and it was a real eye-opener and I remember going back to his [her boyfriend’s] house and talking about that and it was a big deal for me.** (post-immersion, p. 19).

Learning about the culture and the history in terms of U.S. history and culture, really made an impact on me. Never before had I thought to compare our U.S. history to the history of another country...I gained a better understanding of the why things are the way they are in Ecuador. **I also realized that by comparing the histories and cultures of both countries, I found that there are issues that I was never aware of before.** (post-immersion reflection, p. 11).

Nora also becomes aware of the importance of understanding her own cultural background and points to the mediating artifact of a linguistic autobiography that she writes for one of the courses. She comments,

Through writing a paper about my linguistic past, I realized even more how much Spanish and culture is a part of my life....before I went to Ecuador for this program, I felt that I was
very culturally aware. After this experience, I feel that I was both right and wrong. I was right because I knew all about my family’s experience and our own cultural differences, but I was wrong because I had assumed that they [all Latin American cultures] were all the same. After writing the linguistic autobiography, I was very aware of my own cultural background and this helped facilitate even more intercultural learning for me. (post-immersion reflection, p. 11).

Additionally, the experience of cultural immersion seems to have contributed to Nora’s ability to empathize with the situation of immigrant students.

The entire Ecuador trip was an experience in itself because it helped to give an idea of what it might feel like to be an immigrant in the U.S. The importance of being aware of the cultural differences between the students is that it helps to ease the bumps of creating a classroom community. I feel that the course we took before we left helped me to realize how important it was to know my own feelings. I have always had an awareness of my own background and I feel that this will be used in everything that I do as a teacher to help me to understand where the students are coming from. In the future, I can use the experiences and feelings that I felt while I was in Ecuador to help me to understand the position the students may be in. (post-immersion reflection, p. RP 4).

Overall, the analysis of journals and interviews illustrate several types of cultural learning that Nora is able to explore through her interaction with the mediating artifacts that are present in the learning situation: 1) recognizing that national cultures are not homogenous, nor static; 2) an acknowledgement that historical circumstances of cultural groups can lead to enhanced understanding of cultural values and practices; and, 3) understanding one’s own cultural background helps one to be able to analyze other cultural frameworks. We can see Nora engaging with mediating artifacts of several forms: writing about her past language/cultural history, listening to other participants’ stories about their host families, comparisons made by Ecuadorians of the colonial histories of North and South Americas. These mediational means support a process of internalization and transform how Nora understands herself as a teacher and the way she intends to position herself in relation to her future English language learners.

Summary

First, Nora desires to awaken her Mexican-American family heritage and in particular her Spanish language ability. Secondly, she is motivated by the perceived improved job prospects of graduating with teaching certification and a certificate as an ESL Program Specialist. The possibility of future
jobs in other places reflects Nora’s desire for “opening” and moving beyond her “sheltered” home community. These underlying goals drive her participation in the TESL program. During the seven-month program, various mediational means interact with Nora’s history, motives and personal identity including verbalization and writing about theoretical constructs, direct interaction with cultural “others,” discussion with other participants, and the dissonance of cultural and linguistic immersion. The data demonstrate that, for Nora, there is some tension between the object of the program (to learn how to teach English language learners in a culturally-responsive way) and the objects that motivate Nora. This tension contributes to the dissonance of not being able to communicate easily in the L2/C2 and Nora is emotionally distraught during her first week in Otavalo. However, as the immersion experience continues, Nora’s desire to re-connect with Spanish and reinforce her identity positioning as a Mexican-American seem to be satisfied through her second language learning activity and developing cultural awareness (both of herself and of Ecuadorian cultures). Moreover, her interaction during the program and verbalization in her journal, with the researcher and other participants allow Nora to re-conceptualize her role within her own family back at home. To some degree, she comes to terms with the social class tensions that arise as she considers her family and her developing professional self. Nora clearly views the journey to Ecuador as a way to “open up to the world.” During the program, Nora negotiates uncertain spaces, but seems to successfully move to a “third space.” After graduation, Nora moves to North Carolina for a teaching position as a special education teacher in a public school.
Chapter 6

A ‘Third Space’ for Intercultural Learning

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to offer a comprehensive picture of the second focal participant in this study, known by the pseudonym of Anna. The framework of activity theory is used to explore Anna’s experience of learning in the TESL program and to uncover the specific aspects of the learning context that mediate her learning about diversity and ESL teaching. I draw on principles of learning and development from sociocultural theory to move this analysis from simple description to a nuanced and textured understanding of Anna’s learning process.

Anna: A Descriptive Profile

When the TESL certificate program begins, Anna is a 59 year old public school teacher. She has worked in the public schools for the past 20 years. She is certified in both special education and social studies, but currently works as a “therapeutic” aide with children who have been identified by the schools with behavioral problems. Anna grew up in a bilingual community in Quebec, Canada and learned French as a child. She moved to the U.S as an adolescent. Before working in the public schools, she taught French at a private boarding school. She has studied German formally and has begun to study Spanish independently in preparation for the immersion portion of the TESL program in Ecuador. In the past, she has traveled abroad to several countries for short-term study and recreation and has a strong interest in languages and cultures.

Anna’s Learning about Diversity: A Conceptual Mapping

Activity theory offers an analytical framework in which the particularities of Anna’s experience as she learns to teach ESL are revealed and the interrelationships among actors and artifacts (mediators)
within the system are made visible. Appendix 1 offers a conceptual map of Anna’s learning, according to the activity system framework.

Anna is dissatisfied in her current job and views the TESL program as a way to open up new professional possibilities. As she begins the program she comments, “I am working on a new future here.” Thus, Anna is oriented towards change; she is hopeful that the learning experiences of the program will move her along a new career path. The object of the activity system for Anna is her desire for change in her life. The community that lends direction (or at times offers source of conflict) and shapes her experience in the TESL program include her Ecuadorian host family, the Ecuadorian English language learners, her mentor-teacher, and her co-teacher in the teaching practicum. Various rules were significant to Anna’s experience, but perhaps the most important to her learning was a program expectation that she reflect in writing on her language and cultural learning and development as an ESL teacher. Anna initially struggles with how to be reflective in her journal writing task, but in the end, it becomes clear that the externalization of her thoughts and experiences is a key mediating artifact for her learning. The division of labor demonstrates how power is distributed through the system. An example is the requirement that teacher learners collaborate in co-teaching English language classes in their practice teaching experience. Anna’s relationship with her co-teacher becomes a source of conflict and in time, a source of awareness about herself as a teacher and individual. Mediation means include her host family’s language and cultural scaffolding and the articles and theoretical knowledge that she is exposed to in the program courses.

Below I fill in the conceptual map displayed in Appendix E with narrative detail to give a nuanced understanding of Anna’s learning process throughout the seven-month program, including her perspective looking back several months after the program’s completion. What is most interesting (and deserving of greater research attention) are not the details of Anna’s personal experience in themselves, but the affordances and constraints of this situated experience that interact as Anna moves forward in her learning about diversity. Therefore, I have described Anna’s
experience staying as close to her words as possible. Three primary themes emerged from the data that elucidate Anna’s learning about cultures, language and teaching: 1) a “third space” for intercultural learning; 2) personal interactions with the other; 3) re-interpreting a life: conflict and transformation. The themes are inclusive of mediating factors of the program activity system as well as of her individual history, values, previous experiences and ideas about herself that are transformed or made stronger through her participation in the program activity.

6.1.0 A “Third Space” for Intercultural Learning

On the one hand, Anna’s words uncover a sense of her enjoyment of acting within a “third space” between national cultural borders. On the other hand, there are clearly signs of emotional distress at being the other and having to act without language proficiency nor clear cultural knowledge and cues. At first (from Phase 1, pre-immersion, and Phase 2, during immersion data), her comments portray a “third space” in an external, objective way in which she sees herself as free to move outside of home and host cultural norms. In our post-immersion interview (Phase 3), however, the “third space” begins to be expressed internally, as changes to identity or view of the self.

6.1.1 What Anna Brings to the Experience: Tertiary Socialization

In our pre-departure interview, Anna tells various anecdotes of past interactions with people of cultural difference, including incidents from a trip to Panama, a language study program in France, her childhood growing up in Quebec, and a best friend early in her marriage who was Austrian. Anna is curious and interested in other cultures. Over the years, she and her husband have hosted over 30 exchange students in their home. The time in Ecuador will clearly not be Anna’s first experience interacting with cultural others, and she anticipates the experience with excitement and sees it as a longer, more intense cultural exploration than her previous interactions with other cultures.

The idea that I’ll be living with a family and I’ve done that before and it’s always been an absolutely wonderful experience. But I’ve always either had an interpreter or known the language. This time will be different and it’ll be an extended time…So, I’m expecting that it will be a really positive experience. (pre-immersion, p. 7).
Anna prepares carefully for the trip to Ecuador and tells of her detailed planning process to pack her things. Both learning Spanish and learning about the cultures of Ecuador are cited by Anna as specific personal goals for the program. Before departure she reads a guidebook and other general information about Ecuador in addition to the course-related reading that she has been assigned to complete. She clearly is motivated to learn Spanish and spends an hour a day studying it on her own before departure. She remarks, “I don’t want to be totally illiterate when I get there. I want to be able to communicate with my family. Plus, I really love Spanish….the music of the language.” (pre-immersion, p. 20).

Ecuador lies on the equator and Otavalo, the community where the program unfolds, is a small city situated at approximately 10,000 ft. above sea level in the Andean highlands. Several volcanoes reaching to 17,000 ft. above sea level soar above the town and are significant elements of the visual landscape. At the street level, indigenous Otavalans wear colorful and distinctive traditional dress and barter for their art and handicrafts in one of the largest open-air markets in South America. A stay in Otavalo brings with it a constant (and delicious) visual reminder that one is not at home. Anna clearly enjoys the obvious cultural and sensory environmental differences of her surroundings in Otavalo. As Anna tells me about an upcoming visit to an indigenous community, she says,

I’m expecting that to be different…. I mean from Otavalo. Otavalo is different—way, so different from Quito. [the capital of Ecuador]
INTERVIEWER: Yes, how is it different?
It’s—Quito’s just like any other big city, except it’s in Spanish. I mean you could- and the, ah buildings are somewhat different, but other than that, the city culture could’ve—could be in NYC or Boston or Panama City or Paris—well, Paris was a little different. But maybe just because I spoke the language. But, uh, you know, it’s like you can go into parks in the daytime, but not at night. And um, that’s just sorta the same in every city that I’ve ever been to.
INTERVIEWER: uh-huh. And so this town [Otavalo] feels different from a town at home? In what ways?
Yeah. Oh my gosh! There’s this guy that walks his goats down the street everyday. One day I got lost coming home and there was an um indigenous person sitting in the middle of, you know, it’s like an empty lot, with her sheep….and then the cows were grazing in the strip right beside the Pan-American Highway. I mean, that to me, is just like totally foreign. No
matters where I--where you go in the States, you don’t see that. But I love it. I just love it! (during immersion, p. 11).

Anna’s response to the new cultural context is consistently positive, evidenced by the frequent and highly positive evaluative terms that she uses to describe what she observes. She sees learning about culture as an adventure and relates several anecdotes where she has fun as an “outsider” in a new culture. Anna expresses the freedom of being a sojourner within another culture in which she does not feel constrained by home cultural norms, and perhaps is not aware of, or chooses to ignore, host culture norms. One example during a brief language study trip to Paris,

But I learned a lot of French. I learned that my French was really very passable. One afternoon I let myself get picked up by a Portuguese guy and he spoke only Portuguese and French, and I spoke English and French, so we talked in French. And I was trying to ward off his passes and not give him where I lived and I had a great time with him. And he says, “Are you going to tell your husband about this?” And I said, “Sure!” He says, “You can’t do that!” I said, “Sure, he’ll be fine with it. (pre-immersion, p. 9).

Another example takes place early in her stay with the host family in Ecuador:

I was really noticing everybody at the table today and—at my house [in the U.S.] we have all these rules. I’m trying to teach my husband good table manners (chuckle), because that—that was what I grew up with in Canada; you had to be perfect all the time, uh, with your manners and your speech, and he never was. And so, you know, it’s like, your napkin has to be on your lap; and, when you’re done, you have to put your knife and fork in the middle of the plate. That’s American; Canadian, it’s on the side of the plate. And you don’t put your elbows on the table, and yada, yada, yada; and so everybody’s grabbing Coke and—

INTERVIEWER: Here?
Yeah. —at the table and the— You know, no- everything’s informal, and it was so much fun! You know, I just didn’t have to think about my manners. And, when I was a little girl, my mother told me that, if I did not have perfect table manners, nobody would like me. INTERVIEWER: Oh. And that’s a strong one.
Yeah (chuckles)
INTERVIEWER: So do you think you might, like, give up some of the thing about having the perfect table manners?
Probably not; but I certainly don’t have to worry here about not being liked because I’ve got my elbows on the table when I shouldn’t.
INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you’re allowed to be more comfortable, ‘cause you know those rules, you don’t even have to think about?
Right, they’re out the window. (during immersion, p. 38).

As I interview Anna in her host family’s dining room, we are frequently interrupted by family members passing through the room. Following Ecuadorian norms, each person, even the small children, stop and greet us and we pause our interview to chat with them. After one of these breaks in
our interview, Anna exclaims, “This is just how it is. Just everybody running around. And, if I need to go upstairs and watch TV, there’s no problem and—I just love it!” (during immersion, p. 12).

Anna’s intercultural learning during this immersion program is predicated on her past experiences with other cultures and her positive orientation towards and enjoyment of difference. In several recent studies of intercultural learning in study abroad contexts, previous experience with ‘otherness’ is observed to be a powerful variable in the amount to which study abroad participants profit from cultural exposure (Byram & Alred, 2002; Ehrenreich, 2006; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Byram & Alred (2002), drawing on Berger & Luckmann (1966), argued for a process of “tertiary socialization” to explain what happens when learners are confronted by a target language/culture whose norms or concepts may be incompatible with those acquired in primary (familial, childhood socialization) and secondary socialization (subsequent socializing processes to other segments of the society). Byram & Alred (2002) hypothesized that when tertiary socialization takes place it is not one set of beliefs and schemata that are replaced by others, but that new beliefs and schemata are held side by side with existing ones (p. 343). Byram & Alred (2002) offer some evidence that during study abroad, those that had some degree of tertiary socialization before going abroad had increased gains in intercultural learning as compared to those with little previous experience with otherness. Unlike other participants in this study, Anna had undergone a process of tertiary socialization early on as a child and adolescent. As she acted within the program and made sense of the experience afterwards, Anna had the cognitive schemata and positive attitudinal resources available to her to build upon in her process of intercultural learning.

6.1.2 Cultural Noticing
Growing up in a bicultural community in Quebec and then moving as a high school aged student to a largely monocultural area of the U.S. may have created a heightened sensitivity toward other cultures for Anna. She draws frequent comparisons between the culture she is immersed in, her home culture and other cultures she has experienced in her past. In one of the pre-departure courses, she is
introduced to a framework for understanding specific aspects of the target cultures (D.I.C.E - Description, Interpretation, Checking, Evaluation) and she attempts to use the process to understand the values/history that underlie certain cultural practices that she observes enacted by the Ecuadorian people around her. She expresses curiosity about many aspects of her host family’s life and explores issues such as gender roles in the family, the degree to which the family values education, the family’s participation in religious events, and how race and class intersect with social privilege in the Otavalan community. Her cultural explorations seem to involve both observing and asking direct questions to the host mother or other cultural informants. Her host family is the primary source for her cultural explorations. When I ask her how she would describe her host family, she says,

Highly educated. Um, very intelligent and very, very close. Very close. They’re always together, they’re always hugging and kissing each other. Even the empleada [housekeeper] came in at the end of dinner when the soccer game was on and was sitting and hugging one of the family members. Although she did eat in the kitchen.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. There’s a place, huh?
Yeah. But she seems to be more family than a lot of empleadas [housekeepers] might be. (during immersion, p. 4).

Anna interrogates the familial role of a live-in housekeeper in a middle/upper class Latin American family. In our pre-departure interview, when telling me about her previous visit to Panama, the same topic comes up:

There were indigenous people everywhere selling their crafts and I couldn’t get enough of it. And I found out that I’m very good at bartering. And that’s very much a part of their culture. And, of course the family, being a middle-class family, still sent their kids to a private school and still had a---what’s the name in Spanish for maid? And they actually sort of adopted her as a member of the family, but in the books that I’ve been reading it says that’s how it is. And yet, you know, you’re [the maid] never equal with them.”(pre-immersion, p. 12).

In both of these excerpts, Anna considers class as a critical element in interpersonal relationships within the target cultures, however, she describes the cultural groups in an essentialist national culture way. In her first visit to Panama, she also defers to the “expert” knowledge of what books say about the Panamanian culture.
The relationship Anna builds with the Ecuadorian host family is an emotional anchor for her throughout the immersion experience. The importance of the interaction with the host family cannot be understated. In a few weeks time, it is hard to imagine Anna getting equivalent exposure to the host culture in any other manner. She enjoys daily observation of family life, is very willing to ask questions (despite her limited L2 proficiency) and puts energy towards developing personal relationships with family. Further, Anna experiences the family as caring and with a genuine interest to make her comfortable, and in turn, she seems very willing to be flexible to fit into the rhythm of their home life. She says,

It’s obvious that they really like me to be here and that they want to make sure that I’m happy being here.” (during immersion, p. 4).

We’re friends. Friends. I mean I’m not gonna be as close as family at all, but uh, they’re accepting of me and I’m accepting of them. And it’s like, whatever they want me to do, I’ll do (chuckle). But they’re very-It’s like, when I said I was going tomorrow, that was fine with them. (during immersion, p. 5).

She offers evidence of their caring by explaining special things that they do for her and how they go out of their way to care for her when she is sick at home. When I ask her what is the event, experience, person or thing that has had the most impact on her so far during the first two weeks, she says,

No, that one’s easy. It’s been the conversations with Laura [host mother].
INTERVIEWER: uh-huh, and why?
Um, because she is so warm and friendly and so giving of herself and so accepting; and it just-and I’m learning so much Spanish from her. (during immersion, p. 37).

6.1.3 Tension & Discomfort within the “Third Space”

Juxtaposed to these expressions of enjoyment of a place of difference, Anna also acutely feels the discomfort of being within a new cultural framework. Interestingly, the narratives that demonstrate the difficulties that Anna encounters in this new cultural context are primarily expressed in journal entries (which the researcher did not read until the program’s completion) and rarely in face to face interviews. This substantiates Ehrenreich’s (2006) observation that there seems to be a positive bias in reporting about difficult intercultural aspects of a study abroad program. While she does not
explore reasons why, Ehrenreich (2006) notes that her study participants were less likely to speak (in interviews) about difficulties in their intercultural experiences and tended to gloss over failures in order to make the study abroad experience appear generally successful.

In a journal entry, Anna writes of an evening shortly after arrival to Otavalo when her host mother fails to show up at the agreed-upon time at the university.

Today I finally felt like I was lost in a place where I had no language, no sense of place, no protection. The only security I had was seeing Maria [local coordinator] near another building. **I felt abandoned. I was frightened. Where was my host mother? Was she on Ecuadorian time? Was there a miscommunication? Did she just forget about me? I waited, knowing there would be an OK outcome, but I don’t ever wait well.** At first, I waited with feelings rising inside me. I was already upset because of the disagreement with Carrie [co-teaching partner]. Questions in my mind…what should I do? Everyone walking past is going to steal my backpack. Should I wait? Should I try to find my way? Should I call? …**Here I am 59 years old, unable to navigate my way home. I felt so dependent, but with no one to depend on. …I felt like a child lost in a maze.** Even the police I asked for help laughed and could do nothing. Abandoned again…..such relief to see Elena and Negrito. And it really wasn’t so bad after all—I had the wrong street! (during immersion, journal, p. 9).

Then during the second week in Otavalo, she writes,

The noises in the night are different from the night noises in Woodsville. The day I was sick, I was sleeping. I heard a familiar noise. It was the bang, bang of either firecrackers or guns. When I was half asleep and my family had gone out for a little while—I was alone—the noise could have been the start of a revolution. I ponder for awhile—should I get under the bed? I was a little frightened. Why? Because it’s a new culture and from Maria’s [local coordinator] lectures it really could have been a revolution. **But at home, I would not be afraid. Here everything is different. I didn’t know how to interpret the noise and the difference between guns and firecrackers is pretty significant. There was no one to talk to!** (during immersion journal, p. 22).

Anna seems aware that her fears are not rational, but the emotion related to being without a set of cultural cues leaves her feeling lost, out of control and dependent. Additionally, there is stress resulting from the combined fatigue of interacting in an L2 in which she has only beginning ability and the pressures of an intensive educational program.

**I’m also tired---tired of speaking Spanish, tired of no time alone, exhausted at the end of a 10 hour work day preceded and followed by long conversations in Spanish which are incomprehensible. My style has always been flight. The feelings of being overwhelmed make me want to escape---to go home to the safety of husband, pets, computers. I have no choice---going home is not an option! So now I have to fight. I have to fight the feelings of**
being overwhelmed, of homesickness, make myself happy (self-talk) and keep going, one reflection at a time, until each task is done! (during immersion journal, p. 23).

For Anna, incidents in which she feels lost or anxious within the new cultural environment are related as bounded experience that have a distinct beginning and ending. The anxiety of having to act without cultural cues is not a constant condition, but seems to surface in relation to specific situations (i.e. when someone doesn’t meet her expectations or when she is home alone at night) and the incidents in which she expresses anxiety are not particularly long in duration. Significantly, these low points seem to be offset by her determination to learn the language and culture, the strong relationship Anna develops with her host mother, the general caring and welcoming environment she enjoys within the host family.

In contrast, the conflict that develops between Anna and her practice teaching partner, Carrie (pseudonym), is an ongoing theme throughout the program. In the post-program interview, when I ask Anna about some worst moments, she cites the relationship with her co-teacher, “dealing with Carrie that would be the number one worst thing.”(during immersion, p. 12).

While both Anna and Carrie live in similar, neighboring communities in Pennsylvania, they are of different generations (Anna is 59 and Carrie is 21) and different socio-economic backgrounds. Interestingly, Anna’s discomfort with Carrie are rooted in value differences. Similar to interactions with local Ecuadorians, we can view Anna’s interactions with her teaching partner as an intercultural encounter and learning experience.

As co-teaching partners, they worked closely together both in planning and delivering lessons to the Ecuadorian English learners. During the immersion program, when I ask Anna about any new awareness about herself personally, she says,

You know… I’ve, you know, done a whole lot of that kind of investigative thinking into my own-self. But the one thing that I had never realized before was after the first teaching class…and I realized I want control. I don’t like to share anything. I want to be in charge. [what made you aware of that?] uh…working with Carrie and how difficult it was not because of Carrie, but just because you know we have to think of everything together and then sort out who’s gonna do what and I want to help her do hers and she wants to help me do mine. And for me life is way easier if I just do it myself. (during immersion, p.52).
In a journal entry as she interrogates her first teaching experience to English language learners and her awareness of the desire for control, she writes,

> Having never team-taught, I was uncomfortable with sharing my success or failure with anyone. I didn’t think I could depend on Carrie to want to be prepared. It made me very uncomfortable, wondering if, for her, preparing for the class was less important than dance class, or bars or partying. Before we taught, I realized that Carrie was as worried as I was—about the same things. That made me feel more “motherly” toward her, and less like we were competing for turf. So I felt out of control. **Since I had to share preparation and responsibility, and to accept some of Carries ideas (which were good), I did not have total control over the situation. Why do I need to be in control?....When I insist on being in control, I can’t give opportunities to anyone else.** I need to be liked by everyone--not realistic intellectually, but I feel like an emotional sponge, filling up, emptying, life being squeezed out, then fill up again, getting squeezed again. If I’m in control, the sponge stays full and my feelings stay hidden---from me! (during immersion journal, p. 20).

Towards the end of the program, Anna decides that a lot of the discomfort around her relationship with Carrie has to do with Carrie displaying similar personality traits to Anna’s mother—a person with whom Anna has had a lot of conflict during her life. In this excerpt her past comes alive in her present experience. Below Anna describes an incident involving Carrie that occurs on the last day of the program in which she “names” Carrie as her mother.

> ….that not only bothered me just because of what she did because the girls [their Ecuadorian students] went running to her while I just walked inside…**that is my mother--that is the way my mother behaves, has behaved all my whole life** [sort of attention getting] attention getting, um, not sensitive to other people, um you know she’s 45 minutes late, it’s too bad, everybody has to wait for her, I mean that’s been her whole life…it wasn’t just Carrie that was bothering me, it was all those buttons that were being pushed from my past and you know….I was unable to be who I am because she was being my mother! (post-immersion, p. 14).

And later in another journal entry, she relates what she has learned from this new personal awareness.

There is evidence here that the process of working intimately with the co-teacher put Anna in a position where she was able to acknowledge Carrie as “different,” accept, and to some degree, appreciate the value differences that were uncovered in that individual. I propose that Anna’s close and continuous interaction with the ‘other’, in this case another program participant from the same region where Anna resides, seemed to bring about both conflict and acknowledgement of that person’s differences. The key factor here seemed to be the shared activity of the teaching practice.
which forced the two individuals to share ideas, develop teaching materials and plans, and enact them as a team. This shared activity created dissonance and that dissonance pushed Anna to a greater awareness about working with people of difference.

The success of our class was not my success: it was our success, so I don’t have total ownership of it. Again—loss of control. But, I learned more than teaching ESL. I learned to work with someone whom I didn’t particularly like. And I found some really good qualities I didn’t expect to find. Ceding control allowed ideas to flow and change. Together, our class was better than it would have been individually. We have discovered that we can work together, so I won’t have to “walk on eggs” at the beginning of our next meeting. (during immersion journal, p. 21).

**Working with her forced me to at least acknowledge her, and you know see more to her than I had seen before but, um there’s, she just a totally different person from me um, I guess her values are not the same as mine at all?** (post-immersion, p. 13).

### 6.2.0 Direct & Personal Interactions with the ‘other’

The immersion experience offered three specific experiential learning opportunities that mediated Anna’s learning: 1) host family interaction and contact with host culture “informants”; 2) second language learning, in this case, Spanish, and, 3) practice teaching of Ecuadorian English language learners. Activity theory acknowledges that the relation between any two elements of a field of activity (i.e. subject, object, artifacts, rules, community and division of labor) is mediated by a third element of the system. Of particular value to this study are the rules of conduct that structure the field, for example, expectations that the program establishes for interaction within the host family situation. Participants are explicitly taught ethnographic techniques for gathering cultural information and are asked to use the host family context as a place for cultural learning. Cultural exploration is assumed to be a continuous activity participants engage in during their time in Ecuador. Journal entries and one in-depth cultural topic of investigation along with weekly in-class discussion provide a chance to hear stories of other families and work towards collective understanding of cultural values and norms. Thus, the role of the teacher learner in Ecuador is mediated by rules which support particular pedagogical approaches; here an emphasis on direct experiential learning of the target culture relying on host culture informants (the host family, Ecuadorian students, Ecuadorian staff.)
Our purpose is to enlarge the subjective positions available to teacher learners and therefore, gradually over time, broaden the range of concrete actions available to teachers as they interact with English language learners in classrooms.

Specific program activity related to cultural learning include: 1) a specific weekly journal entry in which participants are asked to write about what they notice about Ecuadorian culture or cultural learning; 2) application of an ethnographic process for investigating cultural practices; 3) completing an in-depth exploration of one aspect of Ecuadorian culture and presenting that to the class during the last week in Otavalo; and 4) twice weekly talks by Ecuadorians on the region’s history, indigenous culture, politics, music, and economy. These activities and the people involved in them mediate Anna’s intercultural learning.

But her personal motivations to explore the cultures of Otavalo are also clearly implicated. In comparison to other participants, Anna has a richer cultural history, refers to culture much more consistently, and makes more frequent cultural comparisons. Her bicultural history growing up in Quebec and ongoing experience of cultural ‘otherness’ with exchange students has made culture a visible thread of the fabric of her life which she continues to investigate while in Ecuador. Anna is determined to complete the program and highly motivated to learn from it. For Anna the object of the activity system is clear and held firmly in her mind. Building on her previous language learning experiences and sojourns in other cultures, she demonstrates a high degree of intentional exploration of the target language and cultures. This is expressed clearly in a culminating paper she writes after returning to the US.

I had some understanding of cultural differences before taking the TESL program. Growing up in French Canada made moving to the US an adaptation into a new culture. I was forced to move away from my friends, my French culture, and my wonderful climate. I lived with a family in Paris for 2 weeks, and lived with a former exchange student and his family in Panama for one week. I was prepared to learn about culture, and really open to the idea of learning to understand a culture through an extended homestay. Being immersed in an Ecuadorian family, and choosing to spend a lot of time with the family, has given me a good beginning of understanding of Latin American culture. I devoured the culture lectures. In Ecuador, I began to understand the acculturation process and I picked up Spanish more quickly than I ever thought possible. I worked hard at
observing, interpreting and clarifying everything I found around me, particularly in my family. I even checked to see how my family differed from other families. (post-immersion reflection, p. 23).

In a post-program reflection paper, she states the importance of the direct experiences she had with cultural ‘others’ and the relationships she developed with individuals during the brief time period in Ecuador.

Because of the culture lectures, living with a family, and having Maria and Luis [local program staff] as consultants I was able to learn about Ecuadorian culture (and get a feel for Latin American culture). I felt the closeness of a Latin[0] extended family. I feel privileged to be so accepted and so much a part of the family. I was proud of knowing that toilet paper went into the waste basket and not the commode. I watched Parcheesi played with excitement and enthusiasm, with language flying fast from everyone at once. I was part of family enthusiasm (dozens of roses brought home from work, 7-year old Daniela going to the shore for a week with a friend, fireworks to celebrate the Virgin, Laura’s brother returning home from Germany with gifts for the whole family, Elena returning from Ibarra with a new car.) I was part of family sorrows and family difficulties….

From Maria and Luis, I learned of the social class structure in Ecuador, of the political situation, of the class system, of the treatment of the indigenous people…of the admiration of the Latin American people for the system of government in the US (but not Washington), of the corruption in the upper class which consumes all the money and leaves the country without the necessary infrastructure.

From my own experience, I learned how vital language is. To understand a culture, it is necessary to communicate with the people---to ask questions, to build relationships, to understand the values, to learn rituals. (post-immersion reflection, p. 21).

6.2.1 Scaffolding for Language Learning

As mentioned previously, Anna’s host family was a critical aspect of her cultural exploration and source of emotional support during the program. Not only does Anna see the host family as an important source of emotional support and information, but the family reciprocates with warmth and personal interaction. The family also actively supported her language learning. The family has experience hosting previous international students and perhaps has developed particular strategies to support communication with L2 speakers. The following example illustrates how Anna’s host family mediated her Spanish learning. During the first week of the program, I ask her how Spanish is going and she replies,

It’s really comfortable, because nobody criticizes me, nobody’s laughing at me when I practice and the-I know my grammar’s not right. And it’s like it doesn’t matter, as long as I communicate, that’s what’s important. And at the beginning, I understood about half of
what Laura [host mom] would tell me and I’m finding now that, when she and I are talking—she slows down—and you know, I’ll question a certain word, she’ll find another way to say it. And I am understanding 95% of what she says. (during immersion, p.18).

…fortunately, I had a host mother and a host family that was really willing to work with me and to refuse to allow me to talk English unless it was like a crisis kind of situation which almost never happened. We had one crisis I couldn’t-she couldn’t tell me how to-she needed my dirty clothes that day and I couldn’t understand her so we got someone to translate and that took care of that and after that it was either drawing pictures or she just made me talk. (post-immersion, p. 4).

Thus, it is clear that the host mom’s circumlocution, slowing down of speech and willingness to negotiate meaning were aspects of the daily life within the host family that pushed along Anna’s developing L2 proficiency. In this immersion situation, the authenticity of the communication, an exchange of meaning that both Anna and her host mom are committed to was a key factor in Anna’s language learning. In a final paper, she summarizes:

In my host family, there was comprehensible input and I attended to the conversation completely giving myself up to the experience. With the input alone, I would have learned very little. It was the conversation—the authentic conversation—that gave me a chance to practice my Spanish, correct myself, learn new words and phrases (scaffolding), and talk to my host mother about interesting concepts such as the construction of the Panama Canal, Ecuadorian fruits and vegetables, soups, farming, flower farms, recipe sharing and so on. We were not only talking in Spanish, we were exchanging information. (post-immersion, p. 15).

6.2.3 Objects of Activity System Coincide: Applications to Teaching ELL’s

By the time of our final interview several months after the program concludes, Anna is clearly aware that the object of the activity system and her personal goals for cultural learning coincide. There is also evidence that she relates her immersion experience to the situation of English language learners in the US context.

…our trip to Ecuador was designed to be an understanding of and immersion into a new culture. For me, culture turned personal. Using the D.I.C.E. [description, interpretation, checking, evaluation—a framework to identify and analyze cultural practices], I was able to observe, interpret, and check my interpretations. Evaluations were positive, noting differences and similarities—what they were didn’t matter, because I wasn’t there to change the culture—only to absorb as much as possible. In Ecuador, I was trying to accomplish tasks using their set of rules. And I didn’t know all the rules. There were cultural rituals with deep meaning, and I didn’t understand the deep meaning behind everything I saw. But I asked!
For ELL’s in the US, the same issues would exist. They are trying to fit into a culture which they do not understand and which they may or may not be trying to absorb…..As an ELL teacher, I will encourage them to discuss their own cultures while also helping them to understand US culture. (post-immersion reflection, p. 20).

Anna understands that the cultural practices of Ecuadorians around her are rooted in deeper cultural values and has taken up a strategy taught to help students avoid making immediate judgments based on their particular cultural views. She says that her evaluations of the Ecuadorian culture were positive or neutral, “noting differences and similarities.” I suspect that if Anna were to spend a longer time period in Ecuador, she may have faced more cultural “rich points” in which her reaction would not be as consistently neutral. Moreover, Anna is able to transfer her personal experience of immersion in another culture to empathize with the experience of ELLs in the U.S. and expresses an intention to explore the process with future learners.

In the next excerpt, Anna describes an incident with her Ecuadorian English learners and seems to become aware of their communication based on authentic negotiation of meaning similar to what she experiences with her host family in Spanish. She uses “expert” discourse of second language acquisition (i.e. output, communicative competence, dialogic opportunities) and relates it to her experience in the practice teaching experience. It seems that her lived experience with the students brought clarity for Anna of what these terms mean.

The [mentor] teachers emphasized that isolated output is not authentic language. To have communicative competence, language must be practiced in situations where there are alternative answers and dialogue opportunities. Sharing needs to be real sharing. In the mini-school, I had planned a ten minute break for Coke and a snack. The students and the teachers sat together and chatted, mostly in English, about dogs and cats and brothers and sisters and food…the conversation was going so well that we scrapped the rest of the lesson and kept on chatting. The students were using authentic language. As 5:30pm rolled around, the students were in no hurry to leave. Our suggestions that they go home were ignored. It wasn’t until [Maura, a mentor teacher] came at 6:00pm that the students reluctantly left their seats and headed home. It was my first experience with real, authentic language. I finally understood what that meant. (post-immersion reflection, p.14).
While Anna claims understanding, this example is more at the level of an “idealized conceptualization,” or an awareness that as of yet, has not become an actual teaching or instructional practice that Anna has internalized and can claim as her own.

6.3.0 Reinterpreting a Life: Contradiction and Transformation

A strength of the theoretical perspective of activity theory is its inherent dialectical sensitivity to human agency and the structural aspects of human activity. And as pointed out by Roth & Tobin (2004), “human beings act not because of structural aspects in an abstract world (revealed by third-person analysis); rather, they act because of structures as they experience them in their lifeworlds” (p. 170). Agency is defined in terms of the potential to act, or in other words, the potential for a range of possibilities for action within particular situations. An activity theoretical view conceptualizes human agency as more than just the potential to act in response to given conditions, but allows for and expects changes in the conditions themselves. On an individual level in personal and professional ways, Anna’s experiences in the program seem to change her views of herself. The duration of this activity system (3.5 weeks) is quite brief and any claims to enduring transformation of self and professional abilities must be taken up cautiously. That said, in our final interview, Anna’s speaks directly to a sense of accomplishment and building of self-confidence through participation in the activity system of the program.

It just really shoved my self-esteem way up like I feel like you know I can do anything and so I just turned 60 last weekend and…it’s like you know I still have a whole life to live out there. I don’t feel like I’m old. I don’t feel like I need to retire. I just feel like I’ve discovered so much about me and about learning and about culture that I can just build on all of that. (post-immersion, p. 3).

I worked hard and to get that reward at the end was so exciting and then I set myself a goal. I wanted an “A” in everything….just learning, that even being this old I can still learn and learning Spanish. I mean I went in there having studied for three weeks a set of flash cards and how to conjugate in the present tense…and I could just go in there and start talking and fortunately I had a host mother that was really willing to work with me...(post-immersion, p. 4).
At another point Anna talks about how the “expert,” theoretical knowledge that she explored as a part of the activity system and how those mediating artifacts substantiated ideas about teaching that she had already adhered to.

I always thought of teaching as being enabling learning rather than teaching. I mean that’s always been a part of what I thought, but oh, the—it was Palmer [Parker Palmer, The Courage to Teach] where he said you have, what was that, um that interaction that you’re not the teacher, you’re a learner as well and that you’re interacting as learners. All you’re doing is enabling the conversation and that just really spoke to me and it put into words everything I already believed, but it was so incredible to see it written out like that, it’s right there, that’s it.…(post-immersion, p. 22).

6.3.1 Identity Spaces: Am I bilingual?

During the experiences of the program and then afterwards, Anna seems to move toward an awareness of herself as a multicultural person. Anna was raised in Quebec and began learning French in school in 3rd grade. When I ask her about exposure to “otherness,” she describes her early life in Quebec as, “it wasn’t racial [otherness] so much as cultural because of the French culture and the English culture. And you’re in and out of both of those all of the time.”(pre-immersion, p.16). While she has taught French and claims good language abilities in French, Anna does not initially see herself as bilingual or bicultural.

I never did at all, because—-but yet, when I read about people that consider themselves bilingual and they’re not totally. I assumed it was totally fluent in two languages. Yeah, so I guess I’m going to have to say, ‘Yes, I consider myself bilingual,’ but I didn’t ever. Thinking about it with this [the TESL program] has changed a lot of my thinking…(pre-immersion, p. 33).

Ironically, while Anna has had considerable exposure to additional languages and cultures throughout her life, especially French, she has not taken on a bilingual, bicultural identity. Perhaps this is due to the context of her daily life—over the past 30 years Anna has lived in a monolingual and largely culturally homogeneous community where there may not have been the possibility to enact or acknowledge a bicultural bilingual identity. Anna is exploring the topic however, during the program, she comments, “I really wanted to do [my research paper], there was a paragraph in one of the readings about all the ways monolinguals are different from multilinguals and I wanted to explore
that in a whole lot more detail.” (during immersion, interview 2, p. 10). I propose that Anna’s immersion experience and growing self-confidence combined with the *mediating artifact* of the program’s “expert” knowledge (bilingualism as a variable range of proficiency), provide an awareness which allows Anna to adopt a bilingual bicultural identity.

After the program’s conclusion, there is evidence that Anna reinterprets her past history and moves closer to a bilingual, bicultural identity.

…the whole culture thing [learning while in Ecuador] was just amazing, my sister and I were talking this weekend and she was talking about culture shock moving to the US and until I took this class it never even occurred to me that I went through this major culture shock moving to the States [as an adolescent] and when I reflected on that in one of the papers that I wrote, I was like, Wow!, you know, that was a huge thing in my life….it just sort of passed me by…it was a very big thing that happened to me that I dredged up and sort of re-lived. (post-immersion, p. 2).

When I ask her what she has learned about culture, she says,

First of all every single person is unique, I mean you have to start with the individual and then you have to understand the person within their perception of their culture, so really understanding the person is the most important part of it. (post-immersion, p. 20).

And later in the same interview, she remarks,

I could go anywhere I think and with the language being the biggest variable, but if you pick up the language even to a minimal level people will accept you and they just love it that you try…and that’s the key to the culture…

My culture keeps changing every time I interact with somebody who is different. I become changed by that person…sometimes you drop little pieces off too because they are not useful anymore. (post-immersion, p. 21).

The idea that a bilingual bicultural social identity is a choice is demonstrated by the empirical data of Pavlenko & Lantolf,

…we would like to suggest that while a person may become a functional bilingual either by necessity or by choice, as an adult she or he becomes a bicultural bilingual by choice only…it is through intentional social interactions with members of the other culture, through continuous attempts to construct new meaning through new discourses, that one becomes an equal participant in new discursive spaces… (2000).

In the professional context of the public schools, the bicultural resources that Anna has available to offer her students are not visible to her, and therefore, are not likely to be expressed, nor
are they useful to others. However, as an actor in the TESL program, both through the direct experiences of being abroad and because of readings about bi- and multilingualism, she gradually takes on a multilingual (and multicultural identity). In the final interview she says,

I know smatterings about a lot of cultures, but I realize that I have never actually come to understand American culture really well...and I guess I realize even more, I mean, I've always known I was sort of unique and different, but I learned it even more in Ecuador...like more reinforcement of who I am, and acceptance of that, it's OK to be more different from everybody...(post-immersion, p. 7).

6.3.2 Contradiction: Who I Am and What I Want

“A dialectical approach depicts the current state of an activity system as a possibility space for its own transformations” (Roth & Tobin, 2004, p.175).

Contradictions exist in an activity system as the locus for learning and change. Roth & Tobin (2004) argue that teachers (as subjects in an activity system) need to become aware of and understand the components of the activity system in order to locate the contradictions that may limit their possibilities or their effectiveness in facilitating the learning of students.

In recent years, standards-based reform and calls for increasing accountability in the public schools propose to set clear standards for all students as a way of minimizing the role of race and class differences in students’ access to an academically challenging curriculum. A pervasive ideology in the U.S. is the rhetoric of educational failure and reform which began in the early 1950’s and continues to breed cynicism and top-down mandates for greater control over teachers and their classrooms (Alsup, 2006). This ideology and the political and educational actions that result from it are a source of frustration for Anna as she talks about her work in the public schools. In our first interview she says,

Well certainly NCLB [No Child Left Behind] is a big political mess. And all of this testing is, it just wastes time. You know, four to five tests a year for a lot of kids. I just know if my kids were in school now, I would not let them go to school on the testing days....I just don’t think it’s right to subject them to that kind of stuff at such an early age. What is the point? Whose progress are we really measuring? And yet, if I teach in any of the school systems, it’s a reality, you have to deal with it, whether you like it or not. (pre-immersion, p. 22).
Later as Anna tells me about her current position working as an emotional support teacher in an inclusive classroom,

...and so it’s like OK if the kids in my classroom now are taking a test. I am not allowed to help. I can’t stand sitting there! There might be ten kids with hands up and she [the classroom teacher] can only handle one. I’m not allowed to talk to any but my kid. I’ve already been chastised for it many times, but I still keep doing it. So today she [Anna’s student] had her hand up. She has a test and she—I mean, I hate multiple choice tests. I think they’re terrible so everything they do is multiple choice tests and she’s got this one and she knows the answer. I mean she’s telling me the answer, but none of the four choices match her answer and she asked me about this one word, what did it mean...You know, [if] she just had to-had a sentence there and had to fill in the-finish the sentence kind of thing, she would have been fine. (post-immersion, p. 23).

For the culminating project of the program, she decides to write a research paper on the impact of NCLB on the assessment of ELL’s.

I had always thought that NCLB was awful, but I didn’t know why...somehow there was some gut instinct. I knew nothing about it, so that was the reason that I chose to do my paper on it. I figured OK, if I’m going to work in public education I better know what this is all about. (post-immersion, p.5).

The TESL program within which Anna acts has taken a critical stance toward public school ideologies concerning accountability and standardization of instruction. Perhaps this leads Anna to differentiate the teaching practices of the program from that of “the rest of the world.” She remarks,

I always had these beliefs about teaching that did not quite fit in with the rest of the world’s, but then, here’s what I already believed and then, here’s the TESL course and it took all of what I already believed and said you’re right, you’re right, this is real, this is the way to do it, plus, giving me a lot of hands-on ways to do it...(post-immersion, p. 24).

Contradiction is an impetus for change in any activity system. From the perspective of an individual, the expansion of action possibilities is dependent on the ability to find the location of and remove a contradiction (Roth & Tobin, 2004). However, responding to contradictions at the lower micro-level of individual action does not address the root of an existing problem. Since the publication of C. Wright Mill’s The Sociological Imagination in 1959, the challenge to understand the interplay of agency and social structure is a driving problematic of social science analysis. The
“sociological imagination” that Mills (1959/2000) had in mind was a new way of seeing the world that recognized links between widespread societal issues and individual private troubles.

Anna’s private trouble is her discomfort with the reigning ideologies of the public school system. The program activities, particularly her research for the paper on NCLB, mediate her thinking and provide intellectual substantiation of what was initially a mostly emotional response to NCLB. In order to resolve the contradictions she is now able to identify and articulate, she decides that leaving the teaching profession is her only option. In the final interview, while Anna enthusiastically claims to have learned much that she would apply to a future ESL teaching situation, she also had decided to apply for positions in other professional areas.

I would have so many ideas to pull from…teaching strategies, the whole thinking process about teaching is different for me now. Every time I learned about another piece, I said, “Wow! I can teach better if I do this, I can teach better if I do that.” (post-immersion, p. 22).

…and so now what I am doing, I’m looking at becoming the director of the historical society. I have to get out of what I’m doing. I can’t do it…and if I don’t get this job, I’m going to have to quit anyway. (post-immersion, p. 25).

Unfortunately, for the field of teaching, by the end of the period of data collection, Anna has left her job in the public schools and has happily accepted a position as the director of the local historical society. Rather than seeking to identify and address the contradictions at a systemic level, the costs have been taken up by the individual. From one perspective, perhaps the subject of the activity system (Anna) needed guidance and support to understand relations within the larger societal and educational system in order to appropriately locate and mitigate the contradictions that limited her ability to teach in the way she valued. From another perspective, perhaps the growth in self-confidence and personal clarity arising from Anna’s participation in the activity system transformed her goals and vision for her future professional life. In this view, Anna’s object itself was transformed as she moved through the activity system.
Summary

An immersion program in another linguistic and cultural context provides a different range of experience than traditional university courses. First and most significantly, the activity system offered multiple opportunities for direct personal experience with the “other,” and secondly, the tools (mediating artifacts) to engage in and discover the processes of language learning and language teaching while at the same time participating in those activities (Spanish classes, practice teaching). In this chapter, I have shown how the specific characteristics of a short-term immersion situation, interact with one’s individual’s motives, past history and unique persona. While the actual immersion experience is very brief, we can clearly see that Anna has been transformed through her interactions within the activity system.

Anna’s clear and determined desire to accomplish her object, “a new life” is critical in her story. She transforms her view of herself from a monolingual to a bilingual/bicultural person and decides to resolve the dissonance she feels about the current “standardization” ideology of the schools by leaving her teaching position. The mediatonal means that are crucial to her development during this experience are the positive affordances of the host family (their care and friendship, as well as their support for her L2 learning), the “expert” knowledge of course readings, and the personal interactions with ELLs in the classroom. Meanwhile, the conflictive working relationship with the co-teacher leads to self-analysis, and through a process of looking at her past history, Anna’s understanding of self is deepened. Interestingly, because Anna’s primary motive is personal (expressed as “a new life,” not as a new career or new job opportunity), her learning is also very personal. The data analysis shows little uptake or in-depth investigation of specific instructional strategies and most of her exploring relates to culture or to her own identity or persona.

As will be demonstrated in later chapters, Anna was unique among participants in the clarity of her motives for this program and the richness of her cultural (and lifetime) experience. I expect other individuals with different personal histories, and perhaps distinct motives for participation, to
move along differing trajectories of learning. The following chapter will investigate the experience from the perspective of the last focal individual, Alex, a younger pre-service teacher.
Chapter 7

Shifting Identity Positions and Objects that Coincide

I see teaching as a challenge, but I see ESL teaching as something that can change the world….because right now I see it as being somewhere that it really needs change….proactive teachers and people who actually believe in it can really change things. I just want to be part of something that is meaningful.

_Alex, pre-service elementary/ESL teacher_

Introduction

As Alex embarks on a journey of learning about teaching, we can hear her idealism and desire to make change in the world. In this chapter, I describe Alex’s learning about teaching diverse learners within a seven-month TESL certificate program. She is the third and final focal participant in this study. The primary analytic effort is to explore the general disposition to learning that Alex brings to the teacher education program and just as importantly, the dialectic relationship that develops as she interacts with the qualities of the activity system and the system interacts with Alex. The research base examining the process of language learning in study abroad demonstrates that the nature of student interaction depends to a large degree upon their particular goals and interpretations of the study abroad experience (Ginsburg & Miller, 2000; Kinginger, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998).

Concurrently, the study abroad experience is critically shaped by how students are received by institutions, individuals and the social context they encounter during their sojourn in another country (Kinginger, 2008). In this study, I focus my analytic lens on a specific subset of students within the study abroad literature, teacher learners as they experience short-term immersion and a teaching practicum in Ecuador. Moreover, the emphasis of interest focuses on intercultural learning (as
opposed to an emphasis on language proficiency), as well as a specific understanding of teaching practices that are particularly useful for instruction of ELLs in public school classrooms.

**Alex: A Descriptive Profile**

At the time of the first interview, Alex is 20 years old and is the youngest participant in the TESL program. She belongs to the white, middle-class, Anglo-American societal group that is representative of the majority of teachers today in the U.S. When she begins the TESL program in February, Alex is completing her teacher certification program and junior year of study in Early Childhood and Elementary Education at the same liberal arts college as Nora. She participated in a study abroad program in Athens, Greece for the first semester of her junior year, studying Greek, but also taking general education courses in English with other study abroad students. Alex has completed several semesters of Spanish study during her college years and several years during high school.

From the time that Alex was small her parents were separated, and consequently, she lived with her father during the school year in a rural area of Pennsylvania and then spent summers with her mother in urban areas in Florida and later Ohio. She is an only child. When she was in junior high, she moved to a different area of rural Pennsylvania to live with her grandmother. Based on my (and other staff) interactions with her, Alex shows a tendency toward emotional stability and was consistently good-natured and content during the program. She describes herself as “a shy person who likes to listen more than talk when she first gets to know people.” (during immersion, p. 10).

She is motivated to learn Spanish because she sees it as an important skill for teachers to have given the growing Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. She says, “I almost felt like it was a necessary part of being American.” (pre-immersion, p. A3). Additionally, she feels some intrinsic desire to learn Spanish and claims that students need to have a reason to learn a second language “that they can feel in their heart…it’s something I enjoy and am passionate about.” (pre-immersion, p. A5). Alex was discouraged by her high school Spanish instruction and feels her teachers “didn’t push us
beyond the comfort zone….as learners we were not challenged” (pre-immersion, p. A4). In contrast, she credits the motivation of her college professors for helping her to learn Spanish, “they encourage us to work hard and really seem to care about our success in learning the language.” (pre-immersion, p. A5).

Alex is unsure about what she wants to do when she graduates from college and she sees the TESL program as a way to explore possibilities for a future teaching career. The Peace Corps is an option she is considering. She remarks on her lack of teaching experience compared to others in the group who are experienced teachers, expressing some concern about not having anything to offer (except opinions) and being “behind.” She refers to her lack of pedagogical knowledge and says that “I don’t really know how regular teaching is different from ESL teaching…”, but she also seems to see the teaching practice part of the TESL program as an opportunity to “try out” what it is like to be an ESL teacher. While her perspectives on teaching, ESL instruction, second language learning and the place of immigrants in our society are not fully developed, she demonstrates some insights that show that she considers societal structures outside of herself and her own life.

**Alex’s Learning about Diversity: A Conceptual Mapping**

Alex’s participation in the activity system of the TESL program arose from a grounded analysis of interviews, journals, field notes and course papers. Appendix G offers a mapping of the activity system as experienced by Alex. As *subject* Alex brings to the activity system a particular history, identity and motives that interact with other components of the system. First, she is an inexperienced teacher still working on her certification as a college student. Secondly, a childhood in which she lived for parts of the year with each parent in different states is an aspect of her history that influences how Alex views difference—as interesting and not threatening. Further, the mobility of her childhood that was not the norm for children in her home community allows Alex to see herself as different from other members of her family. Thirdly, while Alex comes from a working-class family and her family members do not easily relate to her interest in overseas travel and other languages, she
nevertheless has the support of her parents in pursuing her interests. Alex seems to accept that her family does not share her interests, but at the same time, she can count on their support. Therefore, there is minimal tension between her working-class roots and evolving professional identity.

The objects that motivate Alex’s activity in the system are: 1) to explore the field of English language teaching as a possible career path; and 2) to learn how to teach English as a second language. Learning Spanish is a secondary motive, but it does not appear as central to Alex as it is for the other two focal participants.

The mediational means that are critical to Alex’s development as she participates in this program include:

- Being immersed in a second language and culture
- Direct experience with ELLs in the teaching practicum
- Her lack of teaching experience and time as a constraint
- Negotiating meaning along with co-teachers to develop lesson plans
- Observing the cultural experiences of other participants
- Interaction with the host family and especially conversation with the host father
- Reflective practices required by the program and course readings

Some of the rules that appear critical to Alex’s learning in the program originate from the activity system and others come directly from Alex. “I listen and then contribute,” is one of the rules by which Alex defines her participation in the program. Other rules came from the program rationale or actors within the program, but several seemed to have been taken up by Alex and guided her trajectory of learning and development. One rule that Alex attributes to the program faculty, but which she attempts to follow is: “don’t be judgmental about cultural difference; try to leave your own cultural assumptions aside.” A second program rule that Alex takes on as part of her experience is: “question your teaching beliefs and assumptions.” As for any learning experience, while the program has both implicit and explicit working norms that influence the way in which tasks are accomplished, each participant may take up some rules and ignore others.

The community of the activity system includes people that are relevant to Alex’s particular experience. For Alex, the Ecuadorian host family, her family at home, the other program participants
and the Ecuadorian English language learners all were important actors. Several aspects of the division of labor, or the ways in which activity is organized to mediate between the community and the object, have an impact on Alex’s participation in the program. First, is the role of the teaching mentor who offers advice and guidance to Alex as she and her co-teachers carry out the activity of lesson planning and teaching a group of children that they know very little about. At times, Alex clearly wants more guidance and at other times, she actively resists the advice of the mentor. A second relationship that creates tension for Alex is sharing the teaching responsibilities with her co-teachers and the need to negotiate new concepts about teaching language with them.

7.1.0 Positioning of Self: What Alex Brings With Her

Any learning experience is dependent not just upon a student’s disposition towards learning, but also the student’s ongoing construction of identity. Of equal interest is the social interaction with the actors of the activity system. The teaching ESL program experience that I examine here involved significant local contact: with an Ecuadorian host family; local English language learners; other teacher-learner participants; teacher mentors; and course instructors, among others. Thus, the quality of the experience for Alex (what she learns and how she develops) is directly related to the social identities that she takes on, as much as her positioning in the moment by moment interaction with respect to others in the system.

7.1.1 I’m Different: Growing Up in Two Worlds

Alex sees herself as independent because of having had to “switch families and places so often that traveling wasn’t scary for me,” but at the same time, laments the distance that this mobility created from everyone who is close to her (pre-immersion, p. 5). Due to the split parental situation, she sees herself as being different from other members of her extended family and less tied to a particular place or home community. When I ask her whether there is anything in her past history that awakened her interest in the study of other languages and cultures, she says, “No, not really, I can’t really think of any one situation or any situation really because my family is very different from me.
like my dad never travels, he probably hasn’t been west of Ohio….” (pre-immersion, p. 5). She contrasts her desire to travel with the plans of her cousins whom Alex describes as being locally attached and focused on the place where they grew up, which in turn, makes them less open to other ways of being. She remarks,

I feel like what I’m going to do isn’t going to fit exactly the mold that most of them have like fit into…she [a cousin] applied for a job at this company that is right down the street from where we live…like the company’s here, there’s the cornfield and then (laughs), my aunt’s house, my grandma’s house…they’re all very close which is one thing that I loved about living there, because its like, awesome, but then, its also like, they never thought of something different. It’s not that I would have a problem living a life [like that], like I could do it easily, but then it would also compromise whether that was what I really wanted to do and so I feel more like exploring and they sort of either know what they wanted to do or just decided from like the options they had right around them, that’s what they wanted to do. (post-immersion, p. 38).

Adopting aspirations distinct from those of her rural, working-class roots means that Alex doesn’t receive the understanding or explicit appreciation from her family regarding her interest in language teaching, learning and travel abroad. Through the example of a cousin who goes to college, but returns home each weekend, she asserts,

I was never like that and I don’t think I could ever be like that and I’m really glad that I’m not like that. I like to see other things and it kind of saddens me actually that they don’t have the interest I do to see all these things because then I feel like. Oh, I’m going here, I’m doing this, but it’s not appreciated by anyone else. (pre-immersion, p. 6).

Her motives for participating in the TESL program relate, in part, to this desire for family approval. She remarks, “and they [her family] can’t share it with me so I think that might be one reason that I’m excited about being in ESL because it’s kind of different and kind of not too many people have that job and maybe they’ll see that this is something that is part of me, not just some vacation I’m on.” (pre-immersion, p. 7).

During the pre-departure interview, Alex acknowledges the potential cost involved in moving beyond the working-class norms and ideology of her family roots. She expresses reluctance to talk about her international interests with her family because of possible negative repercussions from family members and implies that choosing a profession that is beyond the expectations of her family
may distance her from them. In reference to her past experience abroad, she says, “Yeah it’s just not the same whenever it’s just you telling your story to them and then I don’t even want to tell them my story because, I don’t know if they are really interested.” (pre-immersion, p. 7). Alex is also aware of the potential to inadvertently position herself as superior “I’m afraid of that too, I don’t want to slam it into their faces that I’m doing all this stuff.” (pre-immersion, p. 7). Then, she voices her response to their perceived attitude, “I’m like, you can do it too….It’s not like doing something outrageous.” (pre-immersion, p. 8).

By the time of our final interview, four months after the TESL program ends, Alex has decided to go to Korea to teach English after graduation, but is hesitant to talk with her family about the idea. When I ask if they might disapprove, she responds, “No, no, they wouldn’t think it was bad, they just wouldn’t think that’s what I’m going to do next year until I tell them and they’re going to be like, you’re what?!….oh, my crazy cousin is going to Korea, that’s what she says?...” (post-immersion, p. 39). Thus, there is contradiction in what Alex aspires for her future and what her family expects of her. In some ways, her participation in the TESL certificate program is a way to find a legitimate path, an international path, to move outside of the boundaries of her home community. After graduation from college, Alex chooses this path and spends the next two years teaching English in South Korea.

7.1.2 Cultural Relativism: I Don’t Know What You Mean by ‘Intercultural’?

Interestingly, Alex’s view on culture and cultural difference seems to be informed by her childhood living arrangement that made her different from the norms of her home community. While Alex was raised largely within a rural community she had to physically and periodically move beyond the boundaries of that rural place to spend summers in urban areas because of her parent’s separation. So, her experience was an individual variation within the norms of the home community. Early on during the immersion experience, when I ask her to make some observations on the culture(s) she encounters in Ecuador, she responds,
I think the culture varies with each family, not just as a whole country. It’s just—I think that’s how it is in every country, and so, I don’t really view a country as having one culture and so it’s hard to say what—you can’t just say, “Oh well, Ecuador’s like this. I find that I feel like that about everything, not just culture...(during immersion, p. 12).

Thus, Alex’s personal experience growing up as different makes individual difference found within cultural groups salient for her.

Alex seems not to see culture as something that can be generalized. And while she interacts easily within the C2, she does not seem to make much effort to reflect upon cultural practices that are new to her and her home culture. During the sojourn in Ecuador, the teacher-learners are asked to complete an ethnographic-like investigation of some aspect of Ecuadorian culture and share these observations with the class. When I ask her how valuable these discussions are, she says,

I think…with a few exceptions, I think that a lot of the stories, the, um, observations were very—were very, um—might not have been usual. They were just—[exaggerated examples?] either exaggerated or a personal observation, and so you can’t really take a whole lot from that. And so, it’s hard to look at the whole culture as…(during immersion, p. 14).

Alex is one of the only participants to stay with an economically-privileged Otavalan family and she sees that her experience with this family is somewhat unique compared to those of the other students in her group. This seems to bolster her view that there is too much variety within a cultural group to allow valid cultural observations. Put in other words, Alex seems to see culture as so fragmented through individual variation that the concept of culture itself is called into question. She expresses this in a post-immersion reflection paper, stating,

As I begin to express my thoughts about my own interaction and understanding of the term “culture” I must explain that this idea is very deep and impossible to fully understand…..I believe it is impossible to fully understand the network of cultures, subcultures, and personal differences that make up the world. The best effort that I can make is to understand that culture exists within every person in every part of the world. (post-immersion reflection, p. 4).

Alex appears to disregard the notion of culture as a community of shared meanings and seems to make little effort to observe and understand the collective meaning and values of cultural practices of the Otavalan community. While she interacts easily with the host family and is encouraged through the coursework to observe and analyze the cultural practices of the community she is living within,
she rarely makes culture-specific observations and seems to attempt little cultural analysis. This is congruent with her view that culture is impossible to analyze and understand, “I’m not good at picking out the big patterns, so I don’t even try.” (during immersion, p. 14).

7.1.3 Opening Up the World to My Students

Alex talks about a long-standing interest in cultures and languages because it is “exciting,” but she cannot point to where the interest originates. She expresses a personal goal, “I want to learn Spanish for me,” but for Alex the motivation to learn Spanish as a “necessary” skill for teachers of the future is a way to open doors to more varied teaching positions. Alex expresses excitement about the immersion experience and the language and cultural learning it will involve, but seems to extend that desire to other people as well. She says, “I’ve always really been interested in other cultures and other languages and so since it’s like kind of exciting for me to experience this, it’s-I want other people to be able to experience it…” (pre-immersion, p. 4). After the program is concluded and Alex is participating in her pre-student teaching in a kindergarten class of a rural elementary school, she tells me about a lesson she taught in which she dresses in Otavalan indigenous dress and talks with the kindergarten students about a typical day in the life of an Otavalan child of their age. She explains,

I know some of them have been to different places…but I do feel like some of them are like, know here the best, more than that, they don’t really know anywhere else, which is not really, that I want to-, I don’t care whether they’ve seen [other places] before, I just want to talk about it…I just want them to have the knowledge that there’s other places than here and there are people different than here and people are the same as here, we all have similarities and differences and just because someone lives far away doesn’t mean they’re a lot different...(post-immersion, p. 16).

Then later, when I ask a general question concerning what was significant to her about the Ecuador experience, she explains her fears of propagating cultural stereotypes through the lesson with the kindergarten class. She says,

I notice, I think I notice things, I don’t know if I noticed them before, I probably did, but I’m not sure, I think a lot more about stereotyping just because even when I taught the lesson about, trying to get the kids to think about how people from other places are different, so I was dressed up in one way, so they saw one thing, but are they going to think that
**everyone in that country**…?, you know, you can’t unless you dive deeper into that, they’re not, it’s going to end up being that way…(post-immersion, p. 34).

Despite Alex’s lack of explicit cultural observation and analysis during the immersion experience, she values diversity enough to care about exposing her students to cultural difference. It is through the activity of developing a lesson on Ecuador after the program is complete that she has arrived at some clarity of the potential stereotyping that can arise from presenting culture as a flat, homogeneous entity that is the same for each individual. She expresses it this way, “I think that’s one thing I think about a lot its just like by teaching those, by teaching about another culture or about different lifestyles or about different things you need to be aware that you could be causing stereotypes, not on purpose, and so that’s something I try to be aware of....” (post-immersion, p. 35).

To summarize, there are several aspects of Alex as a subject in the learning system that strongly influence how she interacts and develops in the program: 1) tensions and contradiction surrounding the expectations of her working-class family and her future professional identity; 2) a construction of self as “different” due to childhood mobility which influences her view of culture—that culture is impossible to analyze or understand because of its infinite variation; 3) seeing herself as different contributes to her interest in other languages and cultures and produces a desire to broaden the view of the world for her students.

### 7.2.0 An Immersion Experience as Meditational Means

Many researchers have highlighted the importance of direct interaction with otherness to the process of cultural and language learning for teachers (Cooper, Beare, & Thorman, 1990; Gomez, 1996; Mahan & Stachowski, 1990; Merryfield, 2000; Suarez, 2003; Zeichner, 1996). While the immersion experience in which Alex participates is brief (3.5 weeks), it is designed to make personal interaction with individuals of the host culture easily accessible to teacher-learners. Alex lives with a host family, works in the classroom with a group of twelve 4th grade Ecuadorian children, studies Spanish with an Ecuadorian instructor and participates in lecture/discussion sessions with locals to learn about Ecuadorian music, environment, economics and history. At the same time, she is taking classes on
ESL pedagogy in English with other U.S. teacher-learners (taught by U.S. faculty). However, in Otavalo, the indigenous language, Quichua is heard much more frequently than English and the Otavalan culture is vibrantly visible as many of the Otavalans wear native dress. The geographic setting is also dramatically exotic. The city of Otavalo is nestled at the feet of two volcanoes each with a reach of over 17,000 feet into the Andean clouds—there is no mistaking the fact that one is not at home.

7.2.1 Authenticity of Immersion: Personal Interaction and Direct Experience

As she begins the homestay, Alex tells of several incidents with her host family in which she participates in home activities, even though she is uncertain of her role in the family and unclear about expectations as a visitor in an Ecuadorian household. In describing her first day with the host family she says, “All the children were very—like had sort of overtaken my time when I was there the first day. And I didn’t want to offend them or not play with them. I wanted to get to know them, so I spent a lot of time with them.” (during immersion, p. 4).

And despite her initial limited ability to converse in Spanish, she demonstrates a willingness to interact with the family. In addition, in the following excerpt we can see how in Spanish, Alex is concerned with being able to successfully act out her persona, an image of self projected in public (A. Pavlenko, 2006). The intent to be active and cooperative with the family’s children seems to relate to her desire for the family to see her as “a fun person,” and she is clearly willing to participate in what comes up. She says,

I just wanted to be willing to do whatever they [the host family] were doing. I want them to see me as a fun person and not see me as like this shy, little, quiet person, just because I can’t talk as much. I don’t want them to think that I’m shy and not outgoing, or not interested in them or not interested in Ecuador. So I wanted—like whenever they wanted to play soccer, I was like, “Yes, let’s play soccer.” And whenever the kids wanted to jump on the trampoline, I said, “OK” And even though I can’t understand everything they say at the dinner table, I like to sit there for as long as everyone sits there and just take it all in. (during immersion, p. 8)

According to Byram (1997), attitudes that are a condition for successful intercultural interaction must be more than simply positive, but need to include a curiosity, openness and a willingness to analyze
one’s own beliefs and behaviors from the viewpoint of others with whom one is engaging. One of the most striking examples of Alex’s ability to self-reflect is how she uses her current experience with the host family in Ecuador to revise a prior impression she had of an international student she knew previously at college. In the following excerpt, she explains how it felt to arrive to the host family and communicate with limited L2 proficiency,

At first, I just felt like, I dunno how I felt (laughs). I just felt like…like a nobody sort of, because I couldn’t communicate. I could communicate, but just not how I’m used to being able to communicate (laughs), so it’s just strange and I feel like this little tiny person. They’re not going to see me as me, I feel like…(during immersion, p. 16).

She goes on to explain that she felt as if part of her personality is “chopped out” because she doesn’t have the communicative abilities to express herself. “A big part of me is [that] I always have to have those little comments and the little jokes in there and stuff and so I can’t do that now and that’s very different for me.”(during immersion, p. 5). This new experience of struggling to communicate in Spanish causes her to revise her previous opinion of a Mexican ESL student, Ricky, who she met at college. She says,

We went salsa dancing together one night and I was with Tomás most of the time because I just thought that Ricky was like shady. I didn’t understand because he would like look at you, but he would never talk and all the rest of them talked a lot. So I didn’t really understand—I don’t think I understood why. So, now I completely understand…..He [Ricky] would help me with my Spanish a little bit and I would help him with his English a bit. But never to the extent where I like---could talk to Tomás. And so Tomás and I were much better friends and I think that would have been a lot different, if I would have just realized that it was just the lack of communication. (during immersion, p. 6).

Byram (1997) further proposes that the process of discovery and interaction within a new culture is less likely to cause psychological stress when an attitude of openness and curiosity is in operation.

As she moves into the second and third weeks of the program, Alex becomes more comfortable with her host family and notes an improved ability to use Spanish. She expresses a feeling of accomplishment that her Spanish is improving and because she is now more emotionally at ease with the family, she is more talkative. She summarizes,

I think the most beneficial thing was being at home, and my family was really good about making me feel comfortable using Spanish and I wasn’t—so I’ve gotten a lot more
talkative with them, and, like at first I commented about how I felt like I’d lost part of my personality, because I didn’t have Spa— I didn’t have any language. And I did have some, but not enough to really say anything that I was feeling. But I’ve gotten more comfortable and I’ve gotten, like, I think some of the things that—I’ve learned some things and been able to—I’m a lot better at deciphering exactly what they’re saying and not just (chuckle) I used to sorta tune it out—not on purpose—but it would just…. (during immersion, interview 2, p. 9).

Specifically, the authenticity of communication in the L2 with L2 speakers in an L2 context is a critical aspect of the experience for Alex in her L2 development. She emphasizes the contextualized language instruction and access to fluent speakers of the immersion situation,

I really liked taking the classes there because we talked about things that were relevant to us at the time… whenever we were saying it we were saying it to someone who only knows Spanish and (laughs) so if you did mess up she would just look at you like (laughs) you were crazy and… you were surrounded by only people that knew Spanish and you weren’t expected to speak English ever… (post-immersion, p. 24).

As further evidence of her increasing capacity to communicate in Spanish she tells me about having lunch at the university with several Ecuadorians,

Like the other day at lunch, um, there were—we only talked in Spanish during lunch. And I didn’t really talk that much, just because, well, I’m not—I’m not good still at… Well, there were two native speakers and Karin knows a lot of Spanish, so I was sort of—I was—I couldn’t jump in fast enough to really—I couldn’t slow down the whole conversation to— “Let me think, I wanna say something!” But I could understand what they were saying and the points they were making. And I could shake my head and nod and make [Or laugh when you’re— when it’s appropriate!] Yeah, I could—I could get their jokes and things like that, but not really, not really put a lot of input into it. (during immersion, p.11)

Within the host family situation, Alex develops a close connection with her host father, perhaps mirroring her childhood in which her father was the primary caregiver. She remarks, “What I have with my dad here, I feel a lot- I feel pretty safe with him… like he takes the time and sort of slows things down for me whenever I need them to be slowed down. And so, I’m more open with him, and we have conversations about bigger things than…” (during immersion, p. 11)

Thus, while the time within the L2 context is brief, the relationships that occur with the host family interact positively with her motivation to learn Spanish and openness to the local people and result in a self-perceived boost in L2 confidence and comprehension.

I still felt like I had something accomplished by that because, at the beginning of the month, I would’ve just been totally lost the whole time and I would’ve caught a few things here and
there but only really simple things and still wouldn’t have understood what was the points in between. **Yeah, just the fact that I could comprehend was a big accomplishment for me.** (during immersion, p. 11).

### 7.2.2 Working Together: The Experience of Others

The fact that Alex takes this journey into a new culture and language context along with a small group of other teacher-learners is a significant meditational means that supports her development. The teacher-learners spend substantial time together: they are in a large group for three to four hours daily in class sessions, and several hours more each day in subgroups for co-teaching or language instruction. The day in Otavalo starts off with a daily “check-in” that allows the teachers to share their emotional reactions or reflections of the previous day’s activity. Specific C2/L2 obstacles and triumphs are the topics most often brought up and discussed. Alex acknowledges the unusual learning situation of a wide span of ages in the teacher-learner cohort (from age 20 to 60) and the benefit of hearing their often divergent viewpoints. As Alex observes the range of individual response to the new environment of Ecuador, she puts together a composite picture of emotional reactions of an individual facing a new linguistic/cultural environment.

I think one of the best parts about it was just to see and hear how other people were affected by the culture because some people weren’t affected by the culture as much as others, some people were didn’t have difficulty with the language some people had a lot of difficulty with the language some people were affected by missing their families some people weren’t so much, some people had got sick, some people could eat everything, and it was nice to see the whole range of that and over different age groups you could see how the young as down to the kids how they were affected or weren’t affected, **and so, like it sort of gave you an idea of more--of what it would be like for someone to [come to] America because you could sort of pull all those things together and be like oh, they might be experiencing this and it might not be something that you experienced but you saw other people experience it, so.** (post-immersion, p. 13).

Consequently, because the other teacher-learners’ experience of C2/L2 immersion is intentionally brought into the classroom dialogue, it becomes a part of Alex’s immersion experience along with her own. She clearly realizes that her individual response is not the only possibility. The collective experience of a diverse group of people faced with immersion in a C2/L2 environment is a resource that allows Alex to empathize with the immigrant experience. When we develop empathy for another
human being, the other person takes on “depth and substance, meaning and complexity, value and beauty beyond what we had projected onto them” (Peterson, 2001). And, beyond the level of individual relationship, teacher attitudes can and do influence student learning.

**7.2.3 Co-teaching and Negotiating Meaning to Develop Lessons**

Conversely, the process of co-teaching with other teacher-learners and a mentor is another meditational means which in some ways constrained, rather than supported, Alex’s development as a teacher of ELLs. Developing the first lesson plan was a particularly difficult and lengthy process for the group of three teacher-learners. From field notes, the teaching mentor attributes the difficulties to one of the teachers being particularly inflexible as well as to the lack of experience of two of the teachers in this teaching group. In addition, this teaching group may have benefited from more active guidance by the mentor in the initial class planning process. Further, a group of three people working together to create and teach a lesson introduces so many ideas and variables to the process that it makes the necessary movement through the planning, teaching, reflection, and feedback difficult to carry out in the brief time allotted for the cycle. (For more recent cohorts, organizing the teacher-learners in pairs has proven to be less problematic.) The interpersonal strain among the three teacher-learners caused their attention to be directed more to each other and to their lesson development process than to the actual learners and learning process of the classroom. In a final reflection paper, Alex explains how the small group work forced her to move out of a comfortable space and respond to what she describes as her intuitions about teaching.

I feel like a group of people can usually come up with a larger variety of ideas from which you are able to choose what you feel will work the best. I’m not usually a leader type, however during our team-teaching experiences we all took leadership roles and made important decisions. I am a very indecisive person, but **at times I felt like I knew what we needed to do to make our lessons better. Having those feelings forced me to step out of my comfort zone and do what I thought someone needed to step up and do.** (post-immersion reflection, p. RP 5).

The limited extent of the overall teaching practice (four, one and a half hour classes over a three-week time period) was also a constraint for Alex. As a novice teacher, Alex was able to develop awareness
of instructional practices she thought were important in working with ELLs, but there was not always sufficient time to reflect upon new ideas and work towards applying and appropriating them into her individual practice of teaching. Nevertheless, as is shown in the following sections, Alex develops some clarity about what is important in regard to teaching English language learners.

7.2.4 Reflection: Towards Development of a Teaching Philosophy

One goal of the program was to encourage teacher-learners to articulate and consider their beliefs about “good” teaching. Since Alex is a beginning teacher, her beliefs were somewhat less formed than those of more experienced teachers. However, she seems to be aware of the “apprenticeship of observation” that she has lived throughout her years of schooling (Lortie, 1975). In a journal entry written before departure for the immersion experience she writes,

I will obviously bring with me the ideas about teaching that I have learned during my time in college, however, in such a foreign environment [Ecuador] I am wary as to how what I have learned will correlate with the local trend. I am interested to see what will happen. I will have to assess my current belief, that methods of teaching ESL in America can be used equally as well in Ecuador, later in the summer, when my eyes are opened to this new culture. (pre-immersion journal, p. J13).

In this excerpt, Alex questions whether her previous experience of schooling will prove useful in the new cultural context of teaching English in Ecuador. Moreover, she displays an openness to examine her beliefs and how they will fit this new context. As the program unfolds, a combination of the mediating means of teaching Ecuadorian learners, collaboration with co-teachers, and reflective practices seem to move Alex along in her consideration of teaching ELLs. When I ask her if she has learned anything about herself during the TESL program experience, she says,

…um, like a lot of- there was a lot of reflection during that time and just issues that you never really thought about you sort of got to make your own decision about and it wasn’t like someone telling you this is how you have to feel [like what, for example?]….like we were given all the information and then we were or we would go through the experience and we each had our own viewpoints on what happened or what we felt or um…like what we got out of it and what we were going to take with us, what we saw using in our classrooms, like what was going to be effective for us and no one was really like saying, well you need to use this or this is really important or I mean we heard that things were important but it was more like it was more like how-how do you view yourself as a teacher?…. like how are you going to teach ESL students?, it was more brought up to us as a question and we had to answer it somehow. (post-immersion, p. 22).
Alex goes on to contrast a *rule* of this activity system (that she question her assumptions about teaching) with the more controlled and teacher-directed practice in her public school pre-student teaching experience:

…whenever I’m supposed to be teaching lessons for student teaching I have to write them up in a certain form and… it has to be like this goes first and this goes next and this goes last and it doesn’t leave open… what if-what if, I don’t know what’s going to happen because I’m letting the kids do some of it on their own and what if I’m not-don’t have, like I might have the answers like a guide, but I don’t have-well I’m going to say this and then I’m going to say this…and I think that’s one thing that makes it less like a learning experience and more like a teacher telling you.”

INTERVIEWER: *so you learned that in Ecuador?*

I don’t know, I just think I thought about it more-I thought about the way that like I don’t- I thought, I learned to question things *[because we asked you to question it?]* yeah, because you asked us to question things, you asked us to question our own thoughts and our, like you asked us to be reflective and so I think I learned a lot about like trying to figure things out for my own and not just listen and actually get what I wanted to get out of it sort of—does that make sense? (post-immersion, p. 22)

### 7.3.0 The Teaching Practice: Learning Through Experience

Alex has not yet participated in a teaching practicum as part of her teacher preparation program and consequently expresses uncertainty about who she will be as a teacher and especially the “how” of going about the activity of teaching. She is aware that she lacks “pedagogical content knowledge” which Shulman (1986) describes as the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized and represented for instruction—a type of knowledge acquired through direct experience. However, as she begins the TESL program she expresses curiosity about how teaching English language learners will differ from “regular” teaching. As Alex looks forward to the month abroad, what she is most excited about is the opportunity to work with English language learners in the classroom.

### 7.3.1 Developing Pedagogical Content Knowledge: Alex’s Intentions For Her Students

As we arrive in Ecuador and Alex begins to engage in a process of lesson creation and teaching along with her co-teaching peers, she begins to develop “pedagogical content knowledge” specific to teaching ELLs. While many instructional practices for teaching English language learners were
explicated in course readings and class discussion, particular language teaching practices resonated with particular teacher-learners. As we have seen in previous chapters, for some teachers, the ideas about how to teach ELLs presented through program experiences remained as “idealized conceptualizations,” in other words, they were not interpreted and internalized as transformative intentions by the teacher learner. On the other hand, the data allow us to see that at times Alex makes her own interpretations of the knowledge offered through the program, reconceptualizes it in her thinking about teaching (of ELLs and in “regular” non-diverse classrooms), and begins to act upon it in her pre-student teaching experience in a kindergarten public school classroom.

For Alex, the experience of working with her co-teachers to teach English to a group of Ecuadorian 4th graders at a beginning proficiency level is the primary activity that stimulates her exploration of conceptual understandings around teaching ELLs. I have categorized the concepts that came up repeatedly in our interviews, her journal writing and during the feedback/reflection process during the teaching practicum. They are: 1) shape classroom instruction so that it is comprehensible and relevant to the home life and backgrounds of learners; 2) respect the cognitive abilities and background knowledge of ELLs; and, 3) engage in the sociopolitics of teaching ELLs. The first two concepts were explicitly taught to help teacher-learners understand how and begin to teach both academic content and to develop language proficiency of ELLs (as part of an approach called “sheltered instruction”). The third concept arose from course readings and class discussions.

These issues surfaced and were considered during the immersion experience, but Alex refers to many of them again in relation to her experience in a kindergarten classroom where she is a pre-student teacher during the time period of our final interview (four months after program completion). It seems that Alex continues to explore some of these issues within the context of the kindergarten class, so that her developmental process is not temporally limited to the end of the TESL program. We can see it living on in her thoughts and continuing experiences as a teacher-learner. In the
following section, I have highlighted excerpts from the data that give a sense of the meanings that
Alex attributes to these concepts.

7.3.2 Make Instruction Comprehensible and Relevant to the Home Life and
Backgrounds of Learners

At different times and in several ways, Alex voices a concern that class instruction and specifically
the language taught in classrooms, be connected to learners’ home lives and life experience. During
the final teaching practice (post-observation) conference, we review how a class activity played out in
which the learners made a paper boat and then determined how many paperclips they could float in it
before it sank. This activity is followed by the class making a simple graph to compare the number of
paperclips floated among the class members. The co-teaching team viewed the activity as a
beginning-of-class warm-up as students arrived to the classroom. In our conference in which we
discuss the lesson implementation, I ask Alex what she would have done differently in that class if
she were to do it again. Alex remarks on the high involvement and cooperative activity of the
learners in the boat activity and suggests that the entire class period could have evolved from this
activity. She comments,

…we really got them involved at the beginning of the class and with making the boats and
stuff and I thought that it could have been a whole lesson just somehow spawned from
that…and used more language…I think we could have gone, deeper with that and then,
let them use real language and talk about like, whose boat and what why-why it held
more….they could have talked about different things like, different types of boats, who
likes to-to like, I don’t know who’s seen a boat or you know things like that and they
could have really gone off on that. (during immersion post-observation, p. 5).

Alex goes on to suggest that the confines of the teaching practicum (a lesson plan developed
collaboratively with co-teachers and then reviewed by a teaching mentor) limited what she might
have done in comparison to the imagined autonomy of action in her own classroom. All the same, she
seems to refer here to a desire to connect the class activity to learners’ lives, to bring their personal
experience into the classroom. Further, a bit later in the same post-observation conference, she points
out the importance of making her language comprehensible to ELLs.
INTERVIEWER: ...summarize one thing you’ve learned and or that you noticed with that particular class

um... having... a lot of visuals and different props to like, go along with what you’re talking about and not just standing there and talking is something that I realized is very, very, very important (laughs) and you can like never almost never have too many, it’s not possible and...um, using-finding ways to let the students use, language that comes from them and not try to create language that they’re going to use during the class...(during immersion post-observation, p. 9).

Months later, as she is describing her pre-student teaching experience in a kindergarten classroom,
she tells me that she would like to see more localized knowledge and world issues incorporated into class content. Her observations of the daily routine of the kindergarten class are commented upon.

I feel that’s it’s—it’s in a routine and I’m not there every day of the week and I already know that this is the routine and this is what we’re going to do right now, right then, and it doesn’t change and...not that I feel that routines are not really important, especially for younger students, but I feel that teachers need to-um change it up, I mean a lot of the things aren’t brought to something that’s like contextual, something that’s real life, like it’s something that’s made up or a matching type of thing, something that we do this in school but it’s not something that you really-something that the kids are really going to be like, oh I did that at home today...(post-immersion, p. 19).

In a final reflection on her teaching beliefs, Alex writes,

Another important part of teaching ELLs is the context, including both the context that language is used in and also the context of the classroom. First of all, as I planned lessons and taught in Ecuador I realized that the lessons seemed more comprehensible to the students when we used language in context. For example, it would be more fulfilling if the students used English to tell a story that they created or to tell about a personal experience they had than if we asked the students to use generic language to fill out a worksheet. I feel that it would be easier for students to learn vocabulary when they have used the words to relate them to their own lives. I believe in the idea of having a student-oriented classroom that relies on student generated language which reflects their thoughts, opinions, and ideas. (post-immersion reflection, p. 9).

Thus, largely through the mediating means of the teaching practicum which asks her to externalize her thinking about the teaching the Ecuadorian learners, Alex appropriates the teaching principle, “make instruction and classroom language relevant and connected to the cultures and home lives of students.” The concept is internalized partly through our conversation about the class, as she rethinks what she might have done differently with the Ecuadorian learner. Again later, she applies this concept to another context, a kindergarten class, making note of a missing connection to the learners’
lives and suggested, albeit vaguely, how the class could be differently organized. Finally, she makes this concept a part of her teaching beliefs regarding how to be effective as a teacher of ELLs.

7.3.3 Respect and Build Upon the Cognitive Abilities of the Learners

As we look back and discuss the activity of her first lesson with the Ecuadorian children, I ask Alex if she has noticed anything that stands out as a new awareness for her. She says, “one thing that I’ve learned is that being natural with the student is best, not to—to act like (chuckle) they don’t know anything, not to act like they need to really—you need to have really high expectations for them and not dumb things down at all.” (during immersion, p. 2). Through actual classroom experience with ELLs, Alex becomes aware of the challenge of offering instruction at a beginning English proficiency while engaging the learners at an appropriate cognitive level and respecting the knowledge they already possess in their L1/C1 world. Alex expresses this challenge as she talks about developing the lesson with her co-teachers.

that was one of our issues with trying to write a lesson and….cause we didn’t—cause it was so—it was hard to figure out what, what was appropriate to do with them, since—since they don’t have a lot of language skills, but they have a lot of intelligence. So it’s a huge gap, and it’s like, how do you—how do you mesh that into one?...(during immersion, p. 3).

Then later as Alex and I talk about the last lesson (of four) that she taught with her Ecuadorian learners. She summarizes,

In my opinion I think it would be hard because I’m so used to just the discussion-type things that we have in college and things like that but um…younger students can have the same thing just on different levels and I think that that’s something to think about and not dis-discount their intelligence and think that they can’t discuss things and have opinions about things and stuff…so I guess just remembering that they’re human and they have intelligence and not just because they’re not—they can’t express themselves doesn’t mean its not in there, and they want to express it, so it’s just trying to find a way to let them do that I guess. (during immersion post-observation, p. 10).

Again, through Alex’s activity in the teaching practicum she seems to have arrived at a challenge that she will need to resolve in her future teaching of ELLs. At this point, it does not appear that Alex has been able to incorporate this issue into any specific action or teaching practice; it remains as an “idealized conceptualization.” In the final interview, I ask about application of knowledge
concerning ESL teaching to the actual on-going experience of her pre-student teaching. She responds,

I don’t know, the thing I think about the most is like, incorporating meaning, like talking about meaning, I think about that a lot more and we really don’t do that yet in kindergarten….I feel that’s something you should talk about all the time, but just, that seems to be how my teacher is planning it or something. (post-immersion, p. 14).

Her remarks can be interpreted as an intention to respect and to take up “meaning” (i.e. cognitive and/or cultural schema) that learners bring to the classroom, but she has not yet had the opportunity of classroom experience to operationalize and make this concept a part of her teaching practice. The idealized conceptualization is expressed as:

Teachers need to be aware of preconceived notions and assumptions about the level of intelligence of their students. ELLs may not feel safe trying to speak English at first, however, if teachers make their classrooms feel safe for students to learn and express themselves in, students will be more likely to put down their guard and become more responsive. (post-immersion reflection, p. 18).

7.3.4 Engaging in the Sociopolitics of English Language Teaching

As we begin the program the teacher-learners read several articles that uncover social and political issues surrounding the teaching of English language learners in U.S. public schools. “White privilege” and racism are explicitly explored in a pre-immersion program course. Alex expresses the belief that teachers of all kinds (not just ESL teachers) should be particularly sensitive to the race, cultures and home languages of their students. She asserts,

Teachers need to reflect upon themselves to find out how they really feel about including ELLs in their classrooms. **If their attitudes are not positive, then something needs to change.** How often does someone who is bitter, even unconsciously, treat that person with the respect they want and deserve? Every student should be given the same level of respect…(post-immersion reflection, p. 18).

Thinking about her own future teaching of ELLs, she is concerned about the possibility of unknowingly offending students because of cultural differences or creating barriers that interfere with their learning process or their motivation to learn about “American ways.” For Alex, the ESL teacher is responsible for helping English language learners take the first step in their border-crossing to American culture which she sees as a process of acculturation. She says,
I also think that you just need to get them accustomed to American ways. Not that they need to change, but that they need to know that these are the American ways….I mean they might change; **but it’s not your job [as the teacher] to change them, it’s their job to change themselves.** (pre-immersion reflection, p.19).

She speaks for the value of a comparative analysis of both language and culture. Specifically, she states that ESL teachers should understand language and culture enough to be able to predict which aspects of the English language and American culture(s) might prove difficult for students from particular backgrounds. From her personal experience in the TESL program, she points out the benefits of having had access to staff who know both the American and Ecuadorian cultures because “they can tell you what’s different, and they can tell you these different things that otherwise, you probably would have never found out because your [host] family wouldn’t think to tell you because they might not know that it’s different.” (during immersion, p. 29).

In addition to her views on teacher attitudes towards student diversity, Alex is also considering issues outside of the classroom. She calls societal views towards ELLs in the U.S. “gray.” She tells of her father’s perspective toward undocumented workers who believes that they unfairly use social services, like the school system, without paying taxes. Alex disagrees with his stance and says,

> I don’t think that’s fair and I don’t thing there’s any way to tell whether they are paying taxes….they have to be given the same rights as everyone else…I just think that right now the ESL program [in a local school] is looked down upon by a lot of people **because a lot of people see ESL students as just being this minority problem we’re having right now or something and that’s not what it is, it’s an education problem.** It doesn’t have anything to do with anything else, it’s an education problem. (pre-immersion, p. 33).

By the end of the program, she has begun to internalize a role as advocate for ELLs. In our final interview when Alex is back at college, I ask her if her fellow education students and professors ask her about the experience of being in the TESL program. She says,

> Well, sometimes whenever we have classes and I don’t see anything in the books, a lot of them actually do address things about ESL, but like if we’re talking about something and we don’t—it’s not actually addressing ESL students or something, and I might see a problem with like using ESL students, I might say something, and I’ll be like, I don’t think that would work with ES-like that would be great if all of your students in your classroom were from the same place, but if you had an ESL student I don’t think that would work
very well…I think that gets, like the teachers start thinking about that but then they start-start like making you feel different (laughs) not really that you feel different, just not on purpose even though they’ll just say like because some people in here are interested in ESL, like instead of addressing ESL as an issue that everyone needs to talk about, you know. (post-immersion, p. 32).

In speaking about her education classes, Alex seems to have taken on the voice of an advocate for ESL and implies that her professors view teaching ELLs as a special interest, while Alex sees it a general need for all teachers. Later, she explains that she believes the professors don’t have experience with ESL and, therefore, can’t say much more about it than what is in the textbook. This relates to the rural context in which her university is situated and a general lack of experience with immigrant students. The theme comes up again when she is discussing her experiences in pre-student teaching in a local school. Alex tells me that she thinks many of the teachers in the school would be resentful if they had ELLs in their classrooms because they don’t have sufficient preparation, are already over-burdened, and would view it as another demand from the school administration without adequate training and support. In contrast, she tells me that she would be one of the teachers that would volunteer to have ELLs in her class because she enjoys diversity. She says,

...just the fact that Woodsville doesn’t have any [diversity] like it’s sort of frustrating in a way because a lot of times that’s what we talk about…especially in college classes we talk about what-do you do with diverse learners? and I mean maybe that will be an issue after college, but at this point it seems like I don’t get to deal with it and so I’m sure that a lot of stuff that we learn about I’m going to forget…now like everything I hear and like oh, I could do that in-like it works for me because I’m applying it, so that sort of, you know that sort of makes me think about….it’s like I’m having a learning revelation of my own, I went to college or high school and I wasn’t really using stuff and it’s not like, I don’t know, I feel like we can’t always give them things that they’re going to apply outside of the classroom, but maybe we can help them apply it as much as possible in the classroom. (post-immersion, p. 28).

Thus, Alex seems to realize that a lack of direct experience of diversity within the experience of her teacher education program is an obstacle to her development. She points out that learning “about” something without actual application of the concepts, is not sufficient for her to internalize ideas and teaching practices. This seems in line with Vygotsky’s (1987) argument that instruction in principles alone will not result in the development of a concept, but that knowledge of abstract and
systematically organized ‘scientific’ knowledge and ideas must come in conjunction with empirical demonstration and/or situated activity. Alex reports that she has come to a “learning revelation” and relates this idea to her future teaching and a desire to help her student make applications for their learning that they can use in their lives. In regard to our class sessions on racism, Alex asserts,

I grew up in a community of mainly white middle class whites. I don’t recall people teasing other people about their race, but was that because it didn’t happen or was it because I didn’t notice it? I’m guessing that it did happen, and I didn’t take notice. That is one reason that this session [on racism and white privilege] was good for my learning progress. **I want to be aware of these things. Teachers need to understand social situations enough to make students feel equal and accepted for who they are.** It is also important for teachers to help students understand other cultures in order to help them understand each other. We have to help people care about each other through knowledge. (during immersion journal, p. 21).

In sum, even though this program is Alex’s first exposure to instructional practices and the sociopolitical issues surrounding English language teaching, she takes on an advocacy role in her education courses and more importantly, seems to recognize how societal structures and norms impinge upon school learning.

**Summary**

As a college student preparing to be a teacher, Alex comes to the TESL program with interest in second language study and having recently completed a study abroad program in Greece. Her primary motive for participation relates to her desire to “try out” ESL teaching as a possible career path. Since the program offers an English language teaching practicum, it is likely that all participants come to the program understanding that they will engage in the “how” of ESL instruction. However, Alex is the only one of three focal participants who explicitly articulates a desire to learn “how” to teach ELLs. Her object corresponds to the object of the activity system in this regard.

Alex acknowledges that the TESL certificate program was not sufficient preparation for her to act as the ESL specialist in a public school. She says,

I feel like I would feel comfortable having an ESL student in my classroom and I would know how to address that, but I can’t just get out of college and do the ESL right away, I feel
like I’d have to get a Master’s…before I felt comfortable really teaching it as a main thing. (post-immersion, p. 9).

Interestingly, her view of program outcome is parallel to that of program staff who believe that the program is too short to offer the background that they need to act as ESL specialists. One faculty member advises the participants that the 12-credit certificate is only the “seed that the teachers need to continue to nurture and allow to grow through further practice and study.” Paradoxically, the need for further ESL background seems to apply only to the U.S. context, as shortly after graduation, Alex chooses to move to Korea to teach English where she spends two years before returning to the U.S. with interest in completing a graduate program in international education.
Chapter 8

Learning and development through cultural and linguistic immersion: A cross-case activity analysis

Introduction

The activity analysis outlined in the previous three chapters grew out of the actual day-to-day experience of teacher learners within an international immersion program. A grounded analysis of the data afforded an exploration of the activity system from the individual perspective of each learner, beginning with the first weekend course on the college campus and extending to several months after the actual activities of the program had come to an end, a longitudinal view of a year-long period. The data analysis brought the teachers’ personal motives, life history, individual capabilities and particular interactions to the surface. It illustrated the ways in which the teacher learner intersected with various mediational means, community, rules and division of labor, some of which were intentionally built into the teacher development program, and others unplanned, arising out of the experience itself.

In this chapter, I investigate the TESL program as a collective experience. I have synthesized what was uncovered through the fine-grained analysis of each case study to discern overall patterns that can provide answers to the following questions:

1) What ontological development occurred for the teacher participants of this TESL preparation program with its particular set of objectives and an embedded 3.5 week immersion program in another country?

2) What are the critical elements of the activity system that afford or constrain teacher learning in this learning situation?
My goal in this chapter is to identify and discuss the teacher development observed within the collective interactions of this activity system. The programmatic implications for teacher education and learning will be outlined in the concluding chapter. Additional sources of data complement the picture already developed through the words of the three participants and deepen the analysis according to an activity theoretical perspective. These data sources include my notes as researcher-practitioner, interviews with three instructors who were active participants in the program as teachers and as mentors, an interview with the local Ecuadorian coordinator and interviews with host families.

In order to answer the first question, I consider the outcomes of the activity system for the three focal participants in the study. Several threads are apparent and consistent among all three participants and further echoed in the interactions and observations of the program staff over the years the program has been enacted in Otavalo. The threads are:

1) participants underwent some type of personal or professional identity repositioning or reconfiguration as they experienced the program

2) teacher participants developed empathy and moved towards ‘political clarity’ about the immigrant experience in general and the situation of ELLs in the public schools in particular

3) teacher participants developed “idealized conceptions” of effective instructional practices for ELLs, but were not able to internalize and embody these practices in the brief time span of the practice teaching.

The outcomes arising from the activity system analysis are significant considering that the actual time on the ground within the immersion experience (three and a half weeks) is brief, and further that the entire program is a 12-credit certificate program and not full ESL certification, nor a Master’s program. Concomitantly, it is important to understand the immersion experience as embedded within the structure and learning activity of a larger seven-month program as well as the past and future events of an individual learner’s life history and forward-looking goals and motives.
8.1.0 Shifting Social Identities

Wenger (1998) has defined identity as, “a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (p. 5). The analysis presented in previous chapters has brought into sharp focus each teacher participant’s ‘personal history of becoming’ and offers evidence of the shifting subject positions that a learner inhabits as she moves through a cultural and linguistic immersion experience. It demonstrates that there is a growing awareness for each individual of her own cultural identity, but also a struggle between competing expressions of social identity which sometimes involve contradictions between working-class and professional or university discourses.

In the case of the younger, pre-service teachers (Nora and Alex), social class comes to the surface as they negotiate contrasting expectations and values of their working-class family and future professional moves. The analysis illustrates how an individual is mediated not only by symbolic and material tools, but also by social formations like the immediate community of practice and even distant and ‘imagined’ communities (Anderson, 1993; Thorne, 2005; Wenger, 1998). In the case of Nora (described in detail in Chapter 5), we saw her working-class identity begin to destabilize as she repeatedly positions the viewpoints of her extended family and boyfriend in opposition to the perspectives she is exposed to in the course readings, her experiences at the street level in Ecuador, and a new interest in raising a bilingual family. At one point during the program, she remarks,

…but it’s not like I get into fights with my parents or anything like that, just cause I’m more liberal its-its more along the lines that I-I do have a different outlook on things compared to my parents and my sister…. 
INTERVIEWER: And what does all that have to do with this program and being here?
I think it’s probably the political aspects of like the language and the educational system just cause I’ve gotten into debates with my sister and even my boyfriend about, you know, how language plays a role in the schools and I’m-I’m really interested in finding out how to make ESL programs even better…(during immersion, p. 20).

She is referring to the reading and discussion she engages in courses on the sociopolitical aspects of English language teaching and the public school systems. Further, as Nora talks about her experiences in Ecuador after returning to the U.S., she points to new awareness for her own life that
comes about because of her social interaction with the children of the program faculty during the immersion experience.

I kind of came to the awareness of it, because here in PA we-or at least I, haven’t come into contact with very much bilingual education. But while we were down there, I saw all-all of you guys’s kids and it just made me so aware of, you know, how much they’ve learned in a bilingual [environment].….It-it just intrigues me a lot and I thought of doing my research paper on bilingual programs….and I think, even at one point, I was going ummm to my boyfriend, I was saying---well, what do you think of sending kids to a bilingual school? And he was like, well, okay. (laughter). (post immersion, p. A13).

Thus, Nora’s informal interaction with the families of the faculty (who are raising bilingual children) is a mediational means, albeit an unintentional one, of the activity system that influences her desires for her future. The program activity seems to offer ways that Nora can reflect upon and then reconstruct her role within her own family as she re-connects with her Mexican-American heritage.

In this process, the dissonance of the cultural and linguistic immersion is a meditational means to facilitate Nora’s identity transformation. The border-crossing experience creates a space where Nora is not able to easily rely on the cultural and linguistic cues of her home upbringing, and therefore, puts her into a place less-connected to the known and brings her self-identity more clearly into focus. Additionally, during this short time period she is asked to dive into teaching English language learners without a “toolkit” of general teaching skills and strategies, contributing to the dissonant space that she calls “an out of body experience.”

The part I have trouble with is actually remembering to use the stuff we learn in class while I am on the spot in the classroom. I feel very out of my element here and feel like I didn’t know where I was or what I was doing while I was teaching. Looking back now, I feel like while we are here, I am having a very out of body experience. I hope that when I am in a normal classroom, I do not do some of the things I did here. Such as forgetting to use what we’ve learned. Maybe the true problem is that not everything has really connected for me yet. (during immersion, teaching reflection # 2).

The dissonance that occurs when one is thrust into a place of being the cultural and linguistic “other” coincides with Cochran-Smith’s proposal of moving teacher learners to critical dissonance. By accessing localized or “applied” cultural and historical knowledge the intent is to disrupt existing teacher beliefs about how children experience schooling and raise questions about common school
practices (Cochran-Smith, 2004b; Thorne, 2005). Thus, while the immersion experience in Ecuador is a tangible, physical journey, for Nora it is also a psychological journey where the possibilities of new subject positioning are more easily stepped into.

The level of dissonance and stress is less explicit for Alex, but she is clearly enacting identity negotiation in the framing of her childhood upbringing as ‘different’ and her hopes for future international work and travel in contrast to the expectations of her working-class family. Perhaps because she has ‘grown up in two different worlds,” Alex seems more accepting of the tensions between the goals she strives towards in her professional career and what her family expects of her.

As a mature learner, Anna’s identity negotiation has more to do with how the experience of the program allows her to choose a multilingual identity and less with class-based identity positioning. But, like the other two learners, Anna also re-evaluates her past history and life experience, resulting in a new resource or identity space that she can now inhabit---that of a bilingual person. The identity transformations for these three individuals seem to hold increasing self-awareness and acceptance of conflicting value orientations. Significantly, this type of awareness was only revealed over time (brought to the surface during interviews up to seven months after the program was completed) and not during or immediately after the experience.

However, another possible immediate response to the dissonance of immersion, which might be more visible within a larger sample of participants, is resistance leading to possible further entrenchment in one’s own cultural perspective. When I asked the teacher mentors whether they noted resistance from the participants, Maura responds,

> I felt like there was more resistance in the sense, sometimes more in the sense that, when people get overloaded, they get paralyzed. And I think that there were a few of them who were overloaded, so they weren’t resisting because they wanted to, I think they just couldn’t process it all. And I think some of that is youth and some of that is um, scared. I think when you’re scared and there’s fear, you do that. But, I think we broke it down, I think the program’s pretty well thought out in terms of having all the different aspects, of dealing with the affective, dealing with the sociocultural, dealing with the pedagogical or the personal…(post immersion, Maura, p. 6).
Thus, Maura points to the mediating processes within the program, “having all the different aspects” that were intentionally built into the immersion experience and which include various strategies to bring about self-reflection, the externalization of new awareness, and the chance to work through new conceptualizations of a teaching practice for ELLs and social interaction with others.

At this juncture, we might consider how these personal changes might translate into benefit for the future students of these teachers. Within the limits of this research project, there is not a clear answer and further longitudinal research following teacher learners back into their classrooms is needed. However, the data offer detailed and compelling evidence to substantiate the findings of previous research which emphasizes the importance of direct, personal experience of being the “other,” or alternatively, of witnessing the reality of asymmetrical power relations across social groupings for teachers to develop ‘political clarity.’ (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Gomez, 1996; Merryfield, 2000; Sparrow, 2000; Suarez, 2003; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). The individual case analyses of Chapters 5, 6, and 7 chart a journey through dissonance, identity destabilization, reflection, self-awareness and identity reconfiguration as a developmental process within an immersion experience. The immersion context itself is one of the meditational means that provides alternative ways of defining cultural resources and simultaneously offers opportunities to form social relationships with people of different cultural and linguistic frames. And significantly, the activity system offers various forms of guidance, another meditational means, to move participants through this journey. Weekly meetings with interculturally-experienced mentors, journal writing to reflect on daily culture, L2 and teaching experience, and group discussion to share varied individual experiences of local interactions mediated the teachers’ understanding of their own cultural grounding, their knowledge of the cultures of Ecuador, and global sociopolitical realities of unequal access to economic resources. Thus, we can see these meditational means as strategies for developing new “subjectivities” for participants. In sum, the immersion experience opens up for teachers a new social, cultural and language environment that is not necessarily available within the confines of a
traditional university classroom, and which leads to a type of personal transformational learning that is critical for teachers working with students different from themselves. As a theoretical lens, activity theory forces our attention beyond the intended outcome of the activity system----ESL instructional practices as a learning goal---to a view of possible new social roles and identities that teacher participants can construct over time (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This notion is clearly expressed by Roth (2004) in his overview of activity theory in education, “…the individual not only produces outcomes, which are distributed, exchanged and consumed, but also, in the same process, produces and reproduces him or herself as a member of the community”(p. 1). Anna refers below to the “outcomes” of the learning experience, but seems more affected by how the experience moved her to see herself in a different light.

I learned so much just about good teaching practices um I learned about oh the whole culture thing was just amazing, um, my sister and I were talking this weekend and she was talking about culture shock moving to the States and until I took this class it never even occurred to me that I went through this major culture shock moving to the States and when I reflected on that in one of the papers that I did I was like wow, you know, that was a huge thing in my life…yeah I mean she had noticed right away it was culture shock and it just sort of passed me by, that was a very big thing that happened to me that you know I dredged up and sort of relived…yeah it made me realize that a lot of things in my life have been more difficult than I gave-you know, have thought of and that I’ve conquered way more than I ever thought I did and I just sort of thought I just plugged along at life but I’m thinking that I’m a much better person than I thought I was. (post-immersion, p. 2).

8.2.0 Political Clarity: Developing Understanding and Empathy for the Immigrant Experience

Implicit within the project of preparing teachers to be effective teachers of diverse learners is the notion that teachers need to develop an awareness of the historical grounding of their own social and cultural frames of reference, both as individuals, and in the collective sense of class, national, ethnic and racial groupings and related histories. Thus, teacher education programs, and in particular, programs that prepare teachers to instruct English language learners, need to be concerned with helping teachers to examine their own cultural assumptions and inquire into the background of their students. This aspect of intercultural learning is emphasized in the literature on the theory and
practice of developing intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Shaules, 2007). And specific to
teacher education, a recent report recommends preparing teachers to be “cultural brokers,” who
understand different cultural systems, know how to interpret cultural symbols, and can establish links
between cultures in their teaching (J. Banks et al., 2005, p. 243). However, it is not only
understanding oneself as a cultural being that is required, but also examining the ideological
dimensions of our beliefs, assumptions and unconscious perceptions and how they interact in the
larger society. Bartolomé and Balderrama (2001) urge researchers and practitioners to “name” the
ideology of schooling and to discuss it in explicit terms so that beliefs upholding the existing social
order and reflecting dominant ideologies can be evaluated and resisted. Echoing this sentiment, Moll
(2001) asserts, “Any analysis of cultural diversity in schools, therefore, must contend not only with
pedagogical issues, namely, how to turn diversity into an asset for instruction, but also with issues of
ideology” (p. 14). Therefore, it follows that teachers who will work with non-White, non-middle-class,
minority language students need both to critically examine their own cultural beliefs, but also the
ideologies of the society and schools in which they work.

The educational program investigated here attempts to structure such a critical examination
through a border-crossing experience in which participants can become cognizant of issues of
subordination and unequal power relations across nations and across cultures. Pedagogical activities,
such as writing a linguistic autobiography, class analysis of institutional and individual racism, and
ethnographic cultural inquiry in Ecuador combine with personal interaction with Ecuadorians who
frequently have stories of their own family members’ migration experience to Spain or to the U.S.
because of economic need.

All three teacher participants in this study seemed to develop a strong connection to their host
families in the short time period of the immersion program. In Chapter 5, Nora speaks of being
conflicted about whether she should stay on after the program for a family wedding and cries as she
says goodbye. Chapter 6 includes data excerpts in which Anna tells of the detailed discussions that
she engages in with her host mom about family history, politics, emigration, the town of Otavalo, education, and many other topics. And in Chapter 7, Alex reports feeling especially close to her host father. She misses her flight back to the U.S. because the family insists that they take one last trip on the day of departure to the family’s weekend home and the mountain fog makes the drive to the airport longer than expected. The family drives her back and forth to Quito (a several hour trip) twice in two days. Kinginger (2007) reminds us that the quality of a study abroad experience is crucially dependent on both the ways students position themselves and how the students are positioned by others in interaction. Naturally, the interpersonal relationships in a host family situation are not always positive, however, in a short-term program such as this one, it seems important that some type of “authentic” communicative and interpersonal space be constructed in which participants can interact, using the L2, exploring C2 cultural practices and being emotionally cared for.

Besides the host family interaction which is an intentional meditational means of the program, other serendipitous encounters had definite impact on the conceptual and emotional thought processes of the participants. Notably, the analysis uncovered specific incidents that lived on as the participants made sense of their experience months afterwards. To name two instances, in Chapter 5, we saw Nora’s on-going deliberation of how to respond to children living on the streets of Quito which she brings up again in post-program interviews. In Chapter 7, Alex reframes her opinion of an international student who she knew at college as a result of her own experiences feeling like a diminished version of herself as she struggles without strong L2 proficiency. Both of these examples illustrate how human ontological development is socially mediated within the settings in which people interact. It also underscores the power of narrative (in this case, the spoken telling of the stories to the researcher) to externalize and then internalize understandings that might otherwise go unnoticed. At the same time, the findings highlight the need for adequate preparation, for inter-group discussion as a way to access differing individual experiences, and reflection during and after the program to help learners make sense of new self-awareness and learning about cultural others as it
develops over time. Additionally, previous research into the profiles of highly interculturally experienced individuals has shown that self-discovery and awareness of one’s own cultural frame plays out over the long-term as a life-long learning process. (Merryfield, 2000)

The authenticity of second language communication afforded by the immersion experience was also noted by the participants. It took place primarily with host families because coursework and practice teaching were carried out in English. While second language instruction was a small part of the overall experience (3 one-hour classes each week), the need to use the L2 in daily conversation with host families to fulfill basic needs, desires and plans seemed to increase the self-confidence of the teachers as language learners and clarified their on-going analysis of second language learning processes. Consistent with on-going program assessment over the five years the TESL program occurred in Otavalo, the three focal participants established positive connections with their host family. The following excerpts give a sense of the role the families played in the teachers’ learning and the emotional connections that were formed. Alex comments on her relationship with the family and their role in her Spanish language learning:

INTERVIEWER: So do you feel accomplishment?
Yeah, just the fact that I could comprehend was a big accomplishment for me. And, um, I mean what I have with my dad [host father] here, I feel a lot—I feel pretty safe with him. Like he takes the time and sort of slows things down for me whenever I need them to be slowed down. And so, I’m more open with him, and we have conversations about bigger things than—
INTERVIEWER: —than what you ate or what you did today uh huh
Yeah, than just that. So it’s nice, and that’s the kind of thing that—that’s what made me really like this experience, I think was just that I had a good homestay family who made me feel comfortable and made me feel like I learned something—that I got a little better at Spanish, even if I’m not great...(during immersion, interview # 1, p. 11).

When I ask her about prominent feelings that come up when she thinks back to the Ecuador program in our post-program interview, Nora comments:

…whenever I was at their house [host family], I think I remember feeling like, you know they kind of accepted me into their family so it was like my own house, so, and then it was just a nice warm place to be. I think I remember the first living room because the colors in the room were warm….and then the kitchen was bright and we would have lively conversation in the kitchen that brings back funny memories. (post-immersion, p. 2).
In the post-immersion interview, Anna remarks:

…and with the host family, the last meal we’re all sitting around the table and somebody says, “put up your hand if you vote for Anna to stay here” and everybody put their hand up…it was like you know, I don’t think that’s something just any family would do, it was like the bond with that family was just incredible and I feel like they’re friends forever…
(post-immersion, p. 7).

Further, the day-to-day experience of living as a linguistic and cultural “other,” while class discussions and readings drew attention to the challenges that ELLs face in US classrooms prompted expressions of empathy for the immigrant experience. Sparrow (2000) suggests that empathy is a natural part of the process of developing personal relationships and argues for relationship building with cultural others, rather than disembodied cultural awareness, as essential for intercultural learning. The suggestion that prospective teachers need an “othering” experience of their own in order to develop positive attitudes towards diverse learners has been noted in the teacher education literature for over a decade (Cooper, Beare, & Thorman, 1990; Mahan & Stachowski, 1990). For White, middle-class teachers, the experience of discrimination based on race or ethnicity is not likely to occur in their daily lived experience. Neither are they likely to witness a lifeworld that is not inextricably linked to materials goods, technology and everyday convenience. Significantly, interaction within the context and community of Otavalo makes visible the discrepancy in access to economic resources between the average person in the U.S. and Ecuador, as well as the large economic differences that exist among social classes within Ecuador itself. Not only are the economic inequalities starkly visible, but the influence of the United States in effecting the current geopolitical reality is also scrutinized from the perspective of Ecuadorian professors and community leaders and offered to the participants in twice weekly lectures. Thus, a critical meditational means to bring about global awareness and ‘political clarity’ is the particular context of Otavalo where this experience plays out. For the teachers examined in this study, it is not only the short-term immersion abroad, but importantly the particular context which exposes causes of global migration and allows learners to develop empathy for the immigrant experience. Within the immersion experience it is
clearly both the intentional pedagogical interactions such as focused discussion and written reflection on sociopolitical aspects of immigration to the U.S. along with personal interaction with emigrating individuals which combine to mediate the learners’ development of empathetic dispositions towards ELLs. Alex (Chapter 7) comments here on the diversity within the teacher group and her growing empathy for the immigrant experience.

INTERVIEWER: How about some of the best pieces of the experience, good memories or things you feel good about?

I mean the first, the very first thing that comes to my mind and I can’t think of anything specific to say about it, but just the fact of having all the… the age groups in our learning, er in our classes, just like the range from over 70 to me being the youngest at age 20 and just hearing everyone’s opinions and I mean that wasn’t something that we usually get… it was nice to see the whole range over different age groups, you could see how the young as down to the kids [children of instructors] were affected [by being in L2/C2 environment]…and like it gave you an idea of what…of what it would be like for someone to come to America because you could sort of put all of those things together and think they might be experiencing this or it might not be something that you experienced but you saw other people experience it so…(post-immersion, p. 12).

8.3.0 Learning About Effective Instructional Practices for English Language Learners

Consistent with what might be expected from a short-term teaching practice and intensively presented courses in second language learning and ESL instructional practices, teacher learners do not complete the program feeling ready, nor confident as ESL teaching specialists. During a brief three week period, they observe experienced mentor teachers teaching English to Ecuadorian children and then after several classes, step in and take over the classes, co-teaching just four lessons. Thus, much of their attention focuses on observing the dynamics of classroom interaction and then trying to model the teaching techniques of the mentor teachers. In such a brief period of time, participants grew in awareness, in other words, they developed “idealized conceptions” of effective teaching practices, but in most cases didn’t have sufficient time to develop teaching skills-in-action. As they practice-taught, they tended to direct active energy toward only one or two aspects of teaching ELLs, and this was encouraged in the observation-feedback process. As Leah, one of the mentor teachers, asserted,

they [the teacher learners] thought…I can’t do what she does, I can’t sing and all that stu--., you know, but of course she can sing, Anna, but, it’s a little overwhelming…like wow, I can’t
do what she’s doing, but then we’re not expecting that and that’s what they think…that we expect them to be able to be ESL teachers like immediately and that’s… I think we did an okay job telling them that’s not what, you know we don’t expect you to be- **we just expect you to move along** and I think they got that idea and I think that was important. (post-immersion interview, p. 12).

So, “moving along” in building knowledge about teaching diverse learners is expected, but overall competence is not a realistic expectation for this learning program. Time is one factor that constrains the degree to which the teachers can adopt new teaching practices. Leah reports,

> I know after talking to many of them, they said, “Oh, wow, if I knew now what I-I mean if I had known in the first class what I know about the students and their ability, I would have been a better teacher, or if I could have gone on and taught another week knowing what I know now, I just feel so empowered,” and they feel kind of a little bit cheated because there’s no more time to show what they now can integrate…(post-immersion interview, p. 1).

The data analysis highlights four aspects of the TESL program that are critical to teacher learning about instructional practices for ELLs: 1) the **division of labor** which requires that teachers develop lessons and **co-teach** as pairs; 2) **embodiment of the role of L2 teacher** with second language learners in the classroom as a **mediational means**; 3) the program **rule** which asks everyone to **question their beliefs and assumptions about teaching**; and 4) **analysis of the sociopolitical aspects** surrounding ELLs in the public schools as well as accessing the immigrant experience from the viewpoint of emigrating families in Otavalo.

### 8.3.1 Co-teaching

For different reasons and with differing results, all three teacher learners find tension within the co-teaching experience. Anna comes to “name” her co-teacher as her mother with whom she has had a conflictive relationship, but the shared activity of co-teaching ends in Anna recognizing that others, even within her own national culture, can operate from different value systems. In Anna’s words, “dealing with Carrie forced me to at least acknowledge her and you know see more to her than I had seen before...” (Anna, post-immersion, p. 13). By the program’s end, she says, “…we connected, we had the same ideas, we wanted the same things for the kids, we worked similarly with the kids, um she has so much energy and she has some really good teaching ideas...” (Anna, post-immersion, p.
15). Through engagement with another in the co-teaching activity, Anna is able to appreciate and work successfully with someone who she sees as different from herself. Likewise, both Alex and Nora discuss how the ideas of their co-teachers, and equally their collective actions in the classroom push them towards greater awareness of the consequences of their teaching actions and of learner needs. Thus, the co-teaching activity becomes an important personal and professional learning space for the teachers in which they negotiate and jointly produce knowledge.

8.3.2 Embodiment of L2 Teaching Practices: Interacting with Learners

Teaching Ecuadorian elementary and secondary level students with beginning English proficiency is an important meditational activity that becomes a problem space for most, if not all, of the teachers. The ESL methods course offers awareness-raising activities to help teachers to modify speech and other classroom language to make it comprehensible to beginning learners, however, gaining awareness and modifying established teaching behaviors are clearly not the same thing. The opportunity to embody the role of an English language teacher along with structured feedback on their performance of that role is critical to their development. In this regard, the Ecuadorian learners play a major role in mediating the teachers’ learning process.

Patterns of teacher development seemed to concentrate in several areas. Firstly, there was a growing realization that the cognitive level of the learners exceeds their ability to communicate what they know in the L2 and thus, instruction must not be simply gauged to English proficiency, but needs to engage with the conceptual knowledge that learners already possess. Both Nora and Alex explicitly refer to this teaching challenge. As Nora reflects back on what she learned about teaching ELLs, she writes,

> While in Ecuador, I learned that even if they do not know the vocabulary, it doesn’t mean that they do not understand the concept of what you are teaching. In my experience while there, we developed a lesson that concentrated heavily on opposite words. The lesson would have been appropriate for a 1st-2nd grade classroom, however, we were teaching 4th and 5th graders. I found out that it is very important to consider what they know already in their own language…. I became aware of this because of the lesson we taught. (post-immersion reflection, p. RP1).
And Alex remarks,

I’m so used to just the discussion-type things that we have in college and things like that but um... *younger students can have the same thing just on different levels and I think that that’s something to think about and not dis-count their intelligence and think that they can’t discuss things and have opinions about things and stuff*...so I guess just remembering that they’re human and they have intelligence and not just because they’re not-they can’t express themselves doesn’t mean its not in there, and they want to express it, so it’s just trying to find a way to let them do that I guess. (during immersion post-observation, p. 10).

Secondly, as they move into the classroom, teachers quickly realize that they cannot simply teach, but need to modify their verbal output as well as compliment their words with visuals, the written word, gestures and facial expressions that they make comprehensible to the learners. While awareness may happen immediately, the teachers often need time to adopt a new classroom discourse style and may struggle to adopt strategies to provide comprehensible input during the remainder of the teaching practice. For in-service teachers, this process involves modifying well-established teaching behaviors and perhaps teaching styles; for pre-service teachers it means becoming more aware of the important role that language and culture play in the classroom. An example that demonstrates a mediational tool employed in the teaching practice and observation is captured in detail by an account of one of the teaching mentors,

I wasn’t really paying a lot of attention to content and sequencing, I was really trying to think, “Are they actually trying to be *aware of themselves as teachers*?”...which is really tough....and one person in particular, um she really just couldn’t reduce teacher talk time and couldn’t simplify it and couldn’t reduce the amount of um wording and then after she saw the verbatim that I wrote down and she took that as an assignment. She took the script actually and made it simpler, you know, we talked about that and we talked about her actually scripting what she was going to say when she gave instructions for activities, so actually writing it down, not just sort of saying well this is what I’m going to do.” (Leah, post-immersion, p.7).

Next, I asked the teaching mentor, Leah, for more specifics on how she helps the teacher participants to become aware and adopt new strategies:

Well, sometimes as I mentioned, just simply writing down cold facts as you observe and sometimes they’re verbatim, you know, teacher said this, children did...when I did that with this particular person she just said, “Thank you for bringing it to my attention. I had no idea, I couldn’t see myself cause I was so busy I couldn’t see myself” [so its sort of like evidence?] yeah, cold evidence...cool, hard evidence or something like that, you can’t argue
with it and then when I did the observation for the third class and we talked about it she said, “oh, oh you didn’t even write one page,” you know she was very impressed and she said, “How about volume?” because that was one huge thing, that she was actually shouting and she was totally unaware she was shouting and the second time I observed she was very quiet and it--she was talking so normally and naturally that I simply didn’t--I wasn’t aware of it and at the post conference she said, “Well, how about volume?” and I said, “it was so natural I didn’t even notice I put a big happy face because I didn’t even notice it. (Leah, post-immersion, p. 9).

8.3.4 Reflective Practices: Questioning Teacher Beliefs and Assumptions

A rule that affects the operation of the program and mediates the learning within the activity system is that teacher participants (including mentor teachers) articulate assumptions and teacher beliefs that underlie their actions in the classroom. A conceptual orientation to reflective teaching based on Dewey’s framework (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) as well as a process to engage in reflective practices are presented to be enacted by the teachers. The program demands much reflective writing, sometimes focused on self-exploration (daily journal, linguistic autobiography) and other times on teaching activity going on within the program (exploration of lessons taught). In addition to written reflection, opportunities to verbalize individual thoughts and experiences are built into the program. For instance, each week in Ecuador, teacher participants meet with an “advisor” whose primary role is to listen and explore aspects of the experience outside of the teaching practice and class work that might be of interest or cause conflict for the participant. One of the instructors, Karin, comments on what she learned by participating in the advising activity:

…and also helping people through cross-cultural difficulties and my advising role and just learning more about what problems people face, and to get them to talk through them and also knowing that I can’t solve problems in an advising session necessarily, but just listening, you know, giving them ideas maybe is enough, so I think it would serve me well if, you know I took students abroad myself to other countries. (Karin, post-immersion, p. 12).

Additionally, the on-going meetings with the researcher became a meditational process important to help teachers to externalize what they noticed and considered in the teaching practice and the immersion experience. All three focal participants pointed this out, as did the researcher during an interview with one of the teaching mentors,
...it was good I think that I happened to choose these two young people [pre-service teachers] for this research because in that process of sitting for an hour and talking-asking questions, I think they came to things they wouldn’t have [oh I agree] necessarily [I agree, I agree] and you know, I-so that also makes me think, well, next year if there are inexperienced teachers and no one’s doing research, you know, it puts more of a burden on them. (Maura, post-immersion, p. 33).

Finally, while the rule existed within the activity system to reflect on practice, in reality the intention was often difficult to achieve. In particular, one teacher mentor, Maura, felt that time constraints of the intensive program limited her ability to offer the quality of mentoring that she aspired to offer.

She was disappointed in the perceived lack of energy and time that the teaching mentors put into their reflective practice, both as individuals and as a group. She gives an example of what she expected in terms of examining our teacher mentoring process, “I think it’d totally be a really interesting discussion to have about when we’re mentoring, are we prescribing what they do or are we giving them the tools to then flop and succeed?, you know, even if it’s at this risk, that’s at the expense of the students, what’s the philosophy?” (Maura, post-immersion, p. 24). She then summarizes what she feels is missing,

...I think it’s why you’re in a field like this, my passion has always been, it’s because I think learning is so fascinating. And again, I think one thing you said about graduate study...And that’s what I-we just wanted to do to all these people, force them to think in a way they’ve never done before [right]. And when you can’t do it after a while, you either give up or you retreat or you [get frustrated or] frustrated or you turn it on yourself [yeah]. And so, I’m just someone who I always do that, I mean probably too much, but I didn’t feel here like there was really ever that process for it. so it ca-you know it’s a little lonely, it’s a little isolating...it’s more of a culture of it, if-if it’s [yeah, I know what you mean] what we would want to mentor with everybody else for the culture is that. (Maura, post-immersion, p. 28).

In an indirect way, Maura is saying that the program failed to model reflective practices as teaching mentors. She is also correct in pointing out that there was no explicit process to allow this to happen. Clearly, this is a change to the program that would have potentially transformative effects for both participants and mentors.
8.3.4 Sociopolitical Issues: Immigration, Geopolitics, Racism, Social Change

Otavalo is a bicultural/bilingual community in which the indigenous Quichua-speaking “Otavalan” population has recently won economic and political power. In a marked departure from centuries of outright oppression of the indigenous, the town has elected an indigenous mayor and many businesses are now owned by Otavalans. Globalization has come to Otavalo mainly because of the entrepreneurial talents of the Otavalans in producing and marketing their handicrafts worldwide. The local context offers a thoroughly engaging case study of the historical and racial roots of social inequality as well as the factors that bring about social change over time. The Otavalan community acts as a window to understand social oppression, racism and global interaction.

One pedagogical activity of the program guides teacher participants to carry out a small-scale ethnographic study on a topic of their choosing and the experience of migration which is common to middle and lower-class Ecuadorian families is often a topic of investigation. The economic, historical and political factors that conspire to bring about high levels of migration out of Ecuador to bigger, more-developed economies like the U.S. and Spain are easily visible in Otavalo (and most other communities in Ecuador). One of the initial experiences we have in Quito during the first days in country is a visit to a privately-funded school in a marginal neighborhood of Quito. The school serves a population of students being raised by grandparents, aunts and uncles because the majority of parents are absent (temporarily or not) to work abroad. We observe classes and talk with the school director about social difficulties that the learners face growing up without their parents. Visits to rural communities outside of Otavalo allow teachers to witness the socioeconomic conditions which motivate family members to emigrate to the U.S. They have the chance to hear personal stories of emigration from their host families and hear local experts describe the historical, environmental and geopolitical conditions that cause emigration. They meet Otavalan artisans who spend years traveling through Europe or the U.S. selling their textiles at street fairs. Thus, teacher learners have the
opportunity to view firsthand the experience of emigration from the viewpoint of the migrating peoples.

Therefore, the community that is critical to teacher learning and development in this experience encompasses both what we might call the “primary” actors (teacher participants, teaching mentors, English learners), but significantly also encompasses the context of Otavalo with its Ecuadorian learners’ families, host families and various other local people. It is difficult to imagine how a similar learning experience might occur without the benefit of this setting which relates very directly to the situation of immigrant students in the U.S.

8.4.0 Activity Theory: Individual and Social Transformation

A foundational premise of Vygotskian theorizing about concept formation is the idea that human development is based on the active transformation of local environments and the creation of new ones through collaborative processes of cultural mediation, or using symbolic and materials tools that mediate the human experience of the social, political, and material environment. Activity theory embraces this notion while broadening the analytic focus of learning practice to include communities of people, power relationships and regulations norms that influence activity. Included within the activity theoretical analysis is the historical and social life experience of the learner (the subject). It also includes within the theoretical spotlight the motives of individuals acting within an activity system and the motives of the system itself in ways that other research approaches are not equipped to do. The activity theoretical analysis was beneficial in that it revealed general observations that can be applicable to any learning situation. These insights follow:

8.4.1 Subject Histories Interact with an Activity System in Unique Ways

A learning system cannot be fully explained without inclusion of the historical, social and individual capabilities of the learner. The analysis foregrounds the necessity of a dynamic methodology that can account for current abilities, goals and shifting motives of the learners. Subjects involved in the same task are not necessarily involved in the same activity, as has been demonstrated by Coughlan &
Duff (1994). Building on this previous work, Roebuck (2000) argues “for an awareness of subjects as individual agents involved in shaping their activity based on their particular goals, motives and sociocultural histories” (p. 94). Further, Storch has demonstrated in her study of dyadic interaction in an ESL classroom that it is the learner’s definition of the learning situation, their perceived goals and motives, and how they interacted with others to produce distinct patterns of interaction” that can help to explain variability in human performance (2004, p. 474). And, finally, in relation to the process of empirical research, the analysis clearly demonstrates the ways in which the activity of human development extends beyond the temporal and physical frames of the learning situation, providing further evidence of Thorne’s (2000) work showing the limitations of a bounded unit of analysis.

8.4.2 The Object of the Activity System Differs from the Object of Its Subjects

The object of the activity system for a particular individual may not coincide with the object of the activity system as a whole, leading to tension and contradiction which may in turn be an obstacle to learning. The analysis brings this point to light particularly well in Nora’s experience whose motivations for participating in the program (getting in touch with her Mexican heritage) differ from the motives of the activity system. The dynamic nature of motives and the potential for conflict between an individual’s motives and that of an educational program have also been demonstrated in research on teacher professional development in which teachers’ motivations for professional development are often misaligned with school districts and universities as providers. According to Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild (2006), the misalignment results in tension and an obstacle to change in classroom practices.

8.4.3 The Object Changes Through Interaction within the System Itself

The object which a teacher participant brings to the learning experience may change in the course of interaction within the activity system as do the component parts of the activity system itself. The data analysis tracks changes in Alex’s motives for being involved in the program that occur over time as she participates in the activity system. As another example, the collective activity system of the
program has altered its motives of working towards teachers adopting new teaching practices in its beginning (5 years ago) to more realistic goals of self-awareness, idealized conceptualizations of teaching practices, cultural learning and building a disposition towards personal transformation and social change.

Summary

Stetsenko & Arievitch (2004) have forcefully argued that the key concern of the Vygotskian project was how to create psychological processes that set individuals free, rather than following the traditional bend of psychology which attempted to observe and explain existing psychological processes. In other words, the goal of Vygotsky and his colleagues was to create a new psychology and turn it into an instrument of social transformation and change. A central premise of both Vygotskian (sociocultural) theory and its outgrowth, cultural-historical activity theory, is the perspective that humans learn and develop while acting within the social, material world. In the process, they create radical alternatives to the conditions of social existence and thus, in the activity of learning, are changed and liberated themselves (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004). Thus, a key motivator for activity theorists in general, and this project in particular, is uniting theory and practice.

In his work to understand second language learning and to advance an understanding of activity theory, Thorne (2005) espouses a view of activity theory as an applied methodology which should necessarily lead to innovation and provide tools to allow enactment of positive interventions. What is uncovered through the application of the activity theoretical analysis will be put to work to transform the on-going social practice of the TESL program and hopefully generate new activity in which knowledge and activity are blended. The concluding chapter will outline those specific programmatic transformations.
Chapter 9

Programmatic and Pedagogical Implications

Introduction

In this chapter I describe specific aspects of the learning activities that have implications for program development and the pedagogy of preparing teachers to work with English language learners in public school contexts. The pedagogical activity that I highlight might be useful for other teacher educators either in similar programs abroad or within courses delivered “traditionally” on a U.S. university campus. Additionally, from my stance as practitioner, (program director and instructor/teacher mentor in the TESL certificate program), the insights uncovered through this dissertation are an invaluable resource (a mediating artifact) to improve the specific teacher education practices that this program carries out.

9.1.0 Program Change and Innovation

In line with assumptions of Vygotskian-inspired sociocultural and activity theory, an activity system analysis should lead to practical, programmatic innovation and change. Application of the activity theoretical analysis made visible specific qualities of the experience that are important to maintain and changes that might lead to an enriched learning situation or enhanced possibilities for further learning. Program changes were not only uncovered through this research, but also arose out of an annual process of questioning and evaluation in which program staff and instructors engaged as they completed their work at the end of each summer. Some changes were identified both through the process of research and the in-situ evaluation process. Other innovations were made visible only through the in-depth activity system analysis and will be undertaken as the program continues its future evolution. Within the relevant sections, I describe programmatic innovations that have come
about as a result of this research project. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the limitations and future directions for this research.

9.1.1 Teacher Preparation: Learning About Diversity

The analysis in previous chapters describes teacher learning and development within this ESL certificate program coalescing within three broad categories: 1) **personal transformation** related to identity positioning around home culture(s) and language background, social class, and interculturality, 2) **increased empathy and ‘political clarity’** concerning sociopolitical issues of immigration, educational equity, and racism, 3) **concept development concerning instructional practice with ELLs**. The activity system analysis has shown how the threads of learning interrelate and vary according to learners’ individual life histories and capabilities. While they are described below in a linear fashion, they are not meant to be viewed as mutually exclusive categories.

9.2.0 Personal Transformation

In this study, we saw participants who experienced identify shifts, re-conceptualized personal histories and negotiated (or re-negotiated) a professional identity, educational goals and familial roles. In Chapter 3, relying on the notion that language and culture are interwoven (*languaculture*), I proposed that teachers engage in a process of languacultural learning as part of their own personal and professional development. Because personal identity is tied up with second language and culture learning, we can expect that learners will experience some type of re-negotiation of identity as a part of the process. Consequently, teacher learners need both conceptual models to understand culture and language learning *and* exposure to a lived experience of languaculture in order for these processes to play out. From a pedagogical point of view, two types of learning, conceptual (theoretical) and experiential, should be incorporated into teacher education that strives to prepare teachers to work with diverse populations. Asserting that “the relationship between in-class and out-of-class learning deserves much more attention that it gets” (2000, p. 257), Ginsberg & Miller come to the same conclusion in their mixed methods study of 85 study abroad students in Russia. Considering the data
presented in previous chapters, it can be argued that even during a very brief sojourn in another culture and language context, the potential for personal transformation exists.

As outlined previously (in Chapter 3), conceptual learning about language and culture has been articulated by researchers concerned with preparing teachers for diverse classrooms. A broad range of topics might be included in this professional arena including defining culture and languaculture, second language learning theories, bi- and multi-lingualism, processes of cultural adjustment, intercultural competence, language ideologies, racism, educational equity and social justice within education. While personal transformation is cited as a goal by some (see Nieto, 1999), insight on how this might occur and how to guide such a process is less often encountered in the literature. For this reason and because the program under study was intentionally designed to encourage second culture and language learning, I will focus on strategies to encourage experiential learning about additional cultures and languages.

9.2.1 A Lived Experience of Languaculture

Providing opportunities to develop personal relationships with linguistic and cultural “others” is a key component of an experience of languaculture. In all of the three case analyses, the teacher learners reported positive emotional connections to their host families and their Ecuadorian students. There were numerous examples of ways in which the host families offered support for second language learning. Certainly there is variability in host family experience, both within this program and elsewhere around the world, however, a family willing to offer time and support during a teacher’s international sojourn is a valuable mediational means offering a safe space to explore languaculture. Selection of suitable families by a member of the host community is useful as well as a structured family orientation offered jointly by the local family coordinator and program staff. After the sojourn has begun, periodic contact with host families is critical to solve problems and answer questions. Recruiting a university student as a conversation “buddy” might be another source of engaged cultural contact for program participants. (This idea was attempted, but failed to be initiated in the
previous year of the program due to differing cultural expectations and difficulties in communication.)

9.2.2 Reflecting on the Experience

While the host family can be the setting in which cultural experience unfolds, reflection and dialogue on that experience are the mediational means to bring about new awareness and learning. Verbally relating host family (and local community) experiences to peers and more-culturally experienced staff provided the opportunity for teachers to notice the variability among host families and thus within the larger national culture. Dialogue to understand less obvious cultural patterns or values is also critical. In the Ecuador program, a daily “check-in” discussion created a time when teachers could externalize their individual experiences, express frustrations and emotion, and hear about the experiences of others in the group. Topics were self-generated and the interaction structured with a different goal each day, for example, “Share one thing you are noticing about how your host family supports (or doesn’t support) your L2 learning.” This session was accompanied by daily journal entries which were read and commented on (weekly) by one of the staff, the designated ‘advisor’ for a subgroup of teachers. Advisors also met individually with each teacher once a week with the particular goal of listening to the participant talk about non-academic concerns, feelings, and interpersonal interaction.

In sum, to be productive, a lived experience of culture and language learning must be complemented with strategies to help learners to externalize and then internalize the experience and have access to the guidance of more interculturally competent others. Some of the reflective processes, for example, the daily “check-in,” were actually not implemented for the purpose of providing a vehicle to externalize languacultural experience, but rather as a way to build community among the group of learners. The analysis illustrates, however, that providing multiple ways of objectifying personal cultural and language learning experience were important mediational means towards teacher learning. Thus, the on-site staffing and careful planning of interaction during a short-term sojourn abroad is consequential to how these mediational means might be made available to teacher learners.
For example, in this particular program, partially due to requirements of one-on-one teacher observation and mentoring, there are four full-time instructors on site interacting with a group of 14-18 teachers along with a part-time local coordinator.

9.2.3 A Life-Long Learning Process

Whether the primary interest is second language acquisition or intercultural learning, researchers have noted that advanced competence requires a long-term investment of time and effort and must be seen as a life-long learning process (Byram & Alred, 2002; Kinginger, 2008; Merryfield, 2000). Thus, for those teacher learners who have some L2/C2 experience, continuing along a trajectory that explicitly focuses on languaculture development is appropriate. And for other teachers who have more limited cross-cultural or second language learning experience, the process is just as important while expectations for learning may differ. For example, using Byram’s model of intercultural competence, learning for novice ‘languaculturalists’ might occur more in the areas of attitude shifts or concrete knowledge of other languacultures. Meanwhile, more culturally experienced teachers may begin to take a more critical look at their own culture and global interrelationships. When the data analysis revealed that some teachers (see Chapter 6) did not consider their goals or reasons for enrolling in the program, a process to support teachers to articulate personal and professional goals for the experience was begun. Helping learners to assess their current status as intercultural learners and formulate realistic goals for the length of the sojourn abroad is an important programmatic activity that should begin at program’s inception and continue throughout the program.

Secondly, study participants indicated that their understanding of their learning became deeper as time passed after program completion and sometimes changed based on new experiences in classrooms and daily life. For example, in our final interview in January 2007 (5 months afterwards) I ask Nora what were some of the things she had told friends and family about, upon her return to the U.S. She responded,

I had a lot of people ask me and I think in my mind at that point I was still trying to figure, like you know, you think about it…so they’d ask and I’d be like, oh yeah, it was a
lot of fun and I just would be like, I don’t really know what to tell them… (post-immersion, p. 12).

And later in the same interview, I inquired about changing personal awareness or learning about self. She remarked,

I think that took a little and I think its still happening, um but I that has taken me a long time to think about because you know you would, if you would have asked me right afterwards I would have said it’s a wonderful life changing experience and that would have been all I would have been able to tell you (laughs) I wouldn’t have been able to explain it… (post-immersion, p. 20).

Several of the focal teachers also claimed that they began to see teaching practices differently once they returned to the classroom. Therefore, extending the dialogue and reflection about the learning related to the sojourn once teachers are back in their classrooms would be beneficial. In a Master’s program, perhaps this could take place as part of a course that follows the international sojourn. A similar suggestion has been proposed by those examining study abroad experience (Jackson, 2008). In this program, an annual weekend ‘reunion’ was proposed to bring together all previous cohorts and continue work on particular teaching issues. It was organized once, but institutional constraints and demands prevented further meetings.

9.2.4 Pre-Sojourn Preparation

For teachers in this program, preparation for the international sojourn began during courses that took place on campus during the spring semester. Their preparation was thus not confined to a few hours of orientation before departure which is often the case in study abroad programs (Jackson, 2008). Details about the structure of the experience in Otavalo were discussed during the first course and participants were asked to write about their personal and professional learning goals. These goals were taken up again during the advising sessions in Ecuador. Ecuador-specific cultural information was offered in the last course before departure and again in a four-day orientation in Quito before traveling to Otavalo. Information on cultural adjustment and how to conduct ethnographic investigation was offered as part of the pre-sojourn courses. Thus, preparation for the immersion experience was incorporated into the work of several courses in order to build knowledge over a
period of time and to provide conceptual tools to explore the teachers’ own cultures as well as observe other cultural patterns.

9.2.5 Dissonance and Self-analysis

The data show the dissonance that can result from a brief immersion in another culture and language. Being disconnected from emotional support systems, home language and cultural cures can cause discomfort, stress and emotional fatigue. Significantly, in the context of Otavalo, international cell phone use is expensive and Internet access in the university and families is not readily accessible, so maintaining a constant electronic connection to home was not possible, unlike many of today’s study abroad sites. This disconnection and its resulting dissonance, along with guided reflection and dialogue, can be a vehicle for self-analysis and seeing one’s own cultural context and roles within that context more clearly.

9.2.6 Developing Awareness of One’s Own Cultural Identity and the “other”

Helping teachers to externalize their own cultural background is the first step in this process. A written linguistic (or cultural) autobiography can help to launch this process. Many U.S. teachers equate culture with ethnicity and assume they have no culture if they cannot track their cultural heritage back to ethnic ancestors. Others are aware of cultural practices, but need guidance to begin to uncover the values that underlie those practices.

As described in the study, several strategies can help move teachers along their particular trajectory of intercultural learning. For example, practice observing and describing cultural practices before making interpretation and judgment were completed with cultural incidents (or scenarios) and then the process applied in Ecuador with actual observation of cultural events in the family or community. Talks by Ecuadorian faculty and community leaders about Ecuador and Otavalan society offered the group a local perspective on the historical antecedents, concerns, and resources within the community of Otavalo.
Ethnographic investigation into local culture(s) has been proposed as a technique to facilitate second language and culture learning (Roberts, 2001). In Ecuador, an introduction to ethnography and interview techniques was offered during the first days in country. Participants chose a topic, made observations and interviewed local people. The teachers met twice per week to share information they had gathered and brainstorm other sources of information or interpretation of what had been discovered. Topics ranged from shamanism, host family history and typical religious practices. The project culminated in a written paper as the program came to an end in August. In the future, teachers will be offered alternative ways to present this information, using multi-media resources, thus enabling the sharing of the results electronically.

In an international context, local resources to gather information are readily available; however, courses in U.S. university classroom can also guide teachers to investigate other cultures. Schmidt (1998) has developed a model for teachers to explore their own and other cultures through writing and analyzing their autobiography and that of a cultural other. Schmidt’s ABC model (Autobiography, Biography, Cross-Cultural Analysis) can be applied in any classroom and has been investigated by other researchers (Assaf & Dooley, 2006; Dooley, 2008) for use in several types of teacher education courses.

9.3.0 Increased Empathy for the Immigrant Experience

The program this study explores unfolds in a country which loses a large percentage of its adult population to more ‘developed’ economies because work and decent wages are not easily found in Ecuador. Paradoxically, while the program designers were aware that large numbers of Ecuadorians emigrate to the U.S., this fact was not considered in the decision to select this site for the program. (As the Ecuadorians tell it, Queens (NYC) is the second largest city of Ecuador!) Nor was this aspect of the community highlighted in local lectures or cultural information offered about Otavalo during the program’s first years. However, hearing about participant experience with host families in which emigration is a typical condition as well as the analysis of data for this study unveiled Otavalo as a
window to understand Ecuador’s out-migration. Talks offered to the group by locals began to explore the national and global factors that cause emigration and the impacts on the local and national societies. We visited a school where 90% of the children are without both parents and being raised by grandparents or other relatives. The economic conditions and lack of opportunity that cause people to leave their home countries were revealed at an individual and personal level. Consequently, a deeper awareness of global interrelationships and increased empathy for the immigrant experience was one of the consistent themes the data analysis demonstrated.

Some of this empathy was channeled into action. In 2006, the teacher participants decided to contribute money to create a scholarship fund for an Ecuadorian student in need. In 2007, the cohort elected to contribute additional money to the fund and instead of a scholarship to benefit a single student, began planning for a new English program to benefit the children of Otavalo. The program, called Camp English, now offers summer intensive English instruction to 24 children from a local school in a lower-income neighborhood. The curriculum was developed and classes are taught by two previous “graduates” of the TESL program who desire to return to Ecuador and want additional practice teaching English. Camp English will continue in 2009 with the theme, “Exploring My World,” and includes weekly excursions to natural and cultural sites of the region that the children might not otherwise get to visit. Camp English has become a way that program participants can give back to the community of Otavalo and illustrates the human connections developed between the two communities. It also provides additional English teaching and languaculture experience for those teachers that are motivated to return to Ecuador for a second summer.

9.3.1 Political Clarity

Class discussion of the sociopolitical factors related to English language teaching in U.S. public schools is the starting point to develop an understanding of broader macro-social issues that impinge upon ELL learning and how schools respond to student needs. Readings and a class debate on the English Only movement, political opposition to bilingual education, and analysis of the trend towards
school accountability as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act are important topics to explore. Awareness of how welcoming a particular community might appear to immigrant families can be developed through conducting a home community survey. Calls to libraries, banks, social and medical service providers to ask about interpreting services or social services that might be of help to an immigrant family reveal how easily a family might accommodation to a particular place.

Race and white privilege were topics of exploration. The cohort viewed, discussed and then wrote about the film, *Last Chance for Eden*, which expresses the emotional pain that people of color suffer because of racist acts and attitudes and the often insensitive White response. Much of this reflective work was initiated in a pre-sojourn course that focused on culture and language learning, thus teachers were learning about ways to facilitate L2/C2 learning of their students while they were engaging in those processes themselves.

Over the past years of this research study, the ethnographic investigation that teachers completed during their sojourn evolved from non-critical observation of cultural practices to a more critically-focused analysis of white privilege and global inequity. I attribute the increasing criticality of my practice (as instructor for the course) to my own movement towards political clarity because of readings and discussion in doctoral program courses and my own reading of the literature for this study.

The following are some examples of some possible cultural exploration tasks that teachers completed in Ecuador and then expanded upon for a final project upon return to the U.S. in the first years of the program:

**Task 6: A Child’s Eye View: Learning About the Students’ Community**
Walk through the neighborhood where you will live (or where one of your students live), and note what students see everyday that can connect to curriculum concepts being taught in the mini-school. For example, if the content of your class is science-based, then what kinds of plants, animals, or landforms are students likely to be familiar with? Even better, take a neighborhood walk with your students and encourage them to act as tour guides. They will give a students’-eye view of the community and talk about not only what is there, but what interests them, what they notice and what kinds of connections they make or wonder about. Summarize what you notice or hear that can help to inform your teaching in the mini-school.
**Task 9: A Local Family**

Conduct an interview with a member or members of a local family. Ask questions that will give you insight into the life history of this family. Write up the interview in a question-answer format. What surprised you? What unexpected information came up? What values or events are critical to the culture of this family? What are key events of the past? What are key events or situations of the present?

In contrast, by 2007 the assignment has taken on a much more critical perspective:

**Final Project:** Identify and ask a question about some aspect of social inequity that you genuinely do not have an answer for and want to investigate in the Ecuadorian context. Your research question might relate to Ecuadorian (or global) culture, ethnicity, race, social class, and/or gender. **Attempt to answer the question from the point of view of the group of people that the question is about.** The goal is to construct an interpretation of what you find out through a minority position (out group) perspective. Some examples of questions participants have explored in past years:

- Why do so many Ecuadorians leave their home to go abroad to work, often illegally?
- What are the impacts of such a move?
- How do the Spanish-speaking (non-indigenous) Ecuadorians view the indigenous political movement? Has it benefited their country? Why or why not?
- How do Ecuadorians experience the daily use of the U.S. dollar as their country’s currency? Why or why not?
- What is the role of medicinal plants and shamanism in mainstream Ecuadorian society?
- What is the role in indigenous communities? What is the cultural, historical or economic role of “natural” plant-based healing?

**9.4.0 Teaching Language and Content**

One of the most obvious obstacles within this learning experience is the constraint of time. The immersion experience offers many opportunities for learning, but it is only 3.5 weeks. After data collection in 2006, a decision was made to extend the time in Ecuador. During 2007 and 2008, the program ran for 4.5 weeks. This gave teachers several opportunities to observe mentor teachers and six class periods with ELLs in the classroom. This was sufficient time to raise awareness on some basic instructional practices for ELLs. Teachers identify their own ‘teaching focus’ which usually arises from the first lesson they teach. Typical themes in which teacher chose to engage include monitoring their own speech and reducing teacher talk time, increasing comprehensible input through gestures, visuals, facial expressions, developing content and language objectives and becoming aware of the cognitive capabilities of the learners despite their beginning English level. Teacher mentors
noted small changes in practice and awareness on these issues, but as reported previously, there was no evidence that teachers had made these practices part of their teaching repertoire. As I describe in the following section, one of the study’s limitations was not following the teachers back into their classrooms to see which instructional strategies became part of the teacher’s on-going practice.

9.5.0 Limitations of this Research Study

To be of most use to other researchers interested in teacher preparation for diverse classrooms, intercultural learning and immersion experiences abroad, it is useful to delineate the generalizability of this study. While the data from the three focal participants was triangulated and collected longitudinally over a period of one year, the small number of participants limits how the findings can be generalized to other contexts. Secondly, because of technical difficulties the videotaped data of classroom teaching with ELLs and stimulated recall was not usable data. A view into the classroom accompanied by teacher explanations would have offered much insight into teacher learning about instructional practices. Finally, while the data set offers a window into the learning process during this teacher learning and immersion program, it cannot speak to how enduring that learning will be as teachers continue to interact in classrooms and communities. This study is an initial foray into understanding the affordances and constraints that teachers experience as they learn about teaching diverse learners in an immersion context. As such, it is not an attempt to evaluate the program’s overall effectiveness.

9.6.0 Future Directions for Research

In this study, a focus on teacher learning and teacher preparation obscured the role and perspective of the Ecuadorian learners. I did not explore the Ecuadorian students’ classroom experience and how they viewed their language learning process. These data would add a valuable perspective and perhaps useful insights into the design of both the teacher education program and the sheltered instructional model implemented in their English classes.
Activity theory was a useful frame in which to consider and analyze data while Vygostskian-inspired principles of learning and development explained ways in which learning unfolded. In this way, activity theory was understood and applied by the researcher, but was not used intentionally within the activity system as way to bring about innovation—as an interventionist strategy.

Sheltered instruction (S.I.O.P.) is a model that helps teachers to connect language and content instruction to move ELLs more quickly into mainstream classes while providing the recommended language support they need. While the model is implemented increasingly in public schools, the TESL certificate program borrows only some aspects from the model to demonstrate and articulate effective teaching strategies for ELLs. Activity theory would be a useful interventionist strategy to simultaneously investigate and bring about program innovation in teacher preparation programs or in public school situations where instructional models such as S.I.O.P. are implemented to bring about more effective teaching to ELLs.

Lastly, after such a brief time period in another country, the data showing identity shifts and reconsidering of personal subjectivities and life histories was surprising. Do these new ways of looking at oneself endure or are they a condition of the immersion context and fade away once an individual is back in the home culture? A longitudinal study which would periodically gather data from a cohort of teacher learners who have completed this experience over 10 or more years would provide interesting data on the development of interculturality over the long term.
Appendix A

Teaching ESL Certificate: Program Rationale

Our View of Teacher Learning

The TESL certificate program is designed to provide a solid understanding of the language learning process and an opportunity for teachers to examine their own teaching beliefs and practices. An important goal of the program is to immerse ourselves in an Ecuadorian community (Otavalo) that offers a cultural frame that is quite different from the mainstream culture of the public schools and our home communities of the U.S. We believe that valuable awareness can arise from moving out of our “home” cultural frameworks and can increase our empathy for English language learners and other learners from diverse backgrounds. We view learning as situated in a social context and, therefore, awareness of cultural, social and institutional factors that affect the learning process is critical to good teaching.

Teacher learning begins with past experiences, personal histories and beliefs, but new concepts and ideas about how to implement and organize instruction most often originate in interaction among people. Learning to teach or learning new ways to teach is not principally a technical endeavor, but instead a transformational process that involves a community of teacher-learners. In this program, we hope to establish and support such a community.

Participating in this program will involve reflecting on your own beliefs about teaching and learning as well as being open to the perspectives of others. The following are some key threads that will help you to understand the learning environment that we hope to create.

1. We have built into this program an expectation of reflection. As an experiential adventure, this program asks that you constantly examine yourself as both a learner and a teacher and challenge your previous assumptions. To help you realize this reflection as much as possible, we will engage in reflective journal writing, discussions with your classmates, and continuous feedback on what you are experiencing.

2. We all have a rich history of being a learner that we bring to the activity of teaching. Our group is diverse in experience, age, perspective, cultures and needs and goals. Enjoy the idiosyncrasies that you encounter along the way.

3. This is an interactive and intensive program. The aspects that make it unique (overseas intercultural immersion) can also make it stressful. Everyone will go through some degree of culture “shock”. This is a normal process and one that we can anticipate.

4. In the next months, you will be exposed to a tremendous amount of information, research, ideas, models, etc. Take what you can from all you are learning, but don’t expect to become “experts” in all these areas. We are planting seeds…

5. This is a PROCESS that has the potential to transform you personally and professionally. Be open, allow previous notions to be challenged, respect the paths that others follow, be willing to share.
Overall Program Goals
Over the past few years, we have developed the following goals to guide us in offering this program. We will ask that you develop your own personal goals (both teaching and personal) as a direction for your learning over the next months.

The program will guide participants in developing a teaching practice that encourages successful learning for English language learners. Specific outcomes include:

- Develop an awareness of our own beliefs and assumptions about teaching/learning and develop teaching practices that are effective with learners of English.

- Understand how the English language works as a system (and how it might differ from other languages) and what is relevant about the system for teaching English language learners (ELL’s).

- Be able to communicate effectively with second language learners, implement teaching strategies specific to second language classrooms and evaluate learning of ELL’s.

- Build awareness of the pedagogical, cultural and social services and obstacles that exist for English language learners (ELL’s) in the U.S. school context.

- Develop an understanding of the second language and cultural learning processes through experience and research-based knowledge.

- Gain insight into how the social structure, values and history of another country (Ecuador) operate to create a unique set of cultural norms and values that may differ from that of other culture groups.
## Appendix B

### Overview of Data Sources and Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus within Activity System</th>
<th>Vehicle for Data Collection</th>
<th>Frequency of Contact</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Researcher Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (3 focal teachers)</td>
<td>Statement of goals, intentions for learning w/in program</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>Written and submitted first week of program</td>
<td>Teaching beliefs; past history; expectations for program; understanding of language/linguistic concepts</td>
<td>Program administrator, observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing: Feb-April</td>
<td>On-line discussion board postings</td>
<td>1 x week for 7 weeks</td>
<td>Feb - April</td>
<td>Language analysis and awareness</td>
<td>Program administrator, observer (course taught by another instructor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course # 1 – (one weekend and on-line instruction)</strong></td>
<td>Journal (10 teachers)</td>
<td>1 weekly</td>
<td>Feb – April</td>
<td>What participant is learning; self-generated topics</td>
<td>Program administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistics ED/ESL 460</strong></td>
<td>Interview w/ instructor</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Instructor’s view of learning experience of course; “rough spots” &amp; rich points</td>
<td>Program administrator, colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (3)</td>
<td>Timing: May Course # 2 – (one weekend) Culture &amp; Language ED/ESL 461</td>
<td>Autobiographical narrative – focus on culture</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>Pre-course assignment</td>
<td>Personal culture/pedagogy; stereotyping, racism, white privilege; language &amp; culture in classroom; awareness of cultural adjustment processes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Journal (10 teachers)</td>
<td>3 entries</td>
<td>Before, during and after May weekend session</td>
<td>Tasks, group presentation and reflection completed in Ecuador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnographic cultural discovery tasks; presented orally in pairs and followed with written reflection</td>
<td>2 different tasks; one presentation and reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers (3)</td>
<td>Timing: May to mid-July Course # 4 Teaching Practice ED/ESL 463</td>
<td>Visual (Teaching) Metaphor Assignment – photos &amp; written text</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>Written before departure and discussed first class sessions in Ecuador</td>
<td>Development of teaching practice for ELL’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual pre-departure assignments &amp; intensive class sessions in Ecuador</td>
<td>Journal (10 teachers)</td>
<td>Daily (3 weeks in Ecuador; some logs are prompted to reflect on)</td>
<td>Written in August, 2 weeks after return from immersion experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching philosophy statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers (2 out of 10)</td>
<td>Classroom teaching practice observation</td>
<td>2 x each focal teacher</td>
<td>Once during 2nd and 3rd week of teaching practice</td>
<td>Discussion of teaching, challenges/successes</td>
<td>Teaching mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher (3)</td>
<td>Lesson plans; self-evaluative reflection on class taught; response to feedback of mentor</td>
<td>4 x</td>
<td>Two times each second and third week of program</td>
<td>Self-awareness as lang. T.; learning goals for T; self-discovery as T</td>
<td>Teaching mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (3)</td>
<td>Journal (10 teachers)</td>
<td>Daily (some were prompted to focus on content of this course)</td>
<td>Completed before departure for Ecuador in June</td>
<td>Awareness of L2 learning preferences; L2 learning &amp; teaching process</td>
<td>Program Administrator; colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing: May to mid-July</td>
<td>Course # 3 SLA ED/ESL 462</td>
<td>Pre-course assignments – reaction papers</td>
<td>3 papers</td>
<td>Understanding of affective, psychological, cognitive factors in language learning; literacy development; language policy in US based on selected readings</td>
<td>Program Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (3)</td>
<td>Community inventory</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>Completed before weekend session</td>
<td>Awareness of policy, institutional factors that impact ESL instruction in US schools; school district processes &amp; legal requirements; NCLB; instructional program models</td>
<td>Program administrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timing: August; one weekend</td>
<td>Course # 5 School, Home, Community ED/ESL 464</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers (3)</td>
<td>Final research paper</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>Completed by end of August</td>
<td>Teaching resources; research; professional orgs; technology in lang. teaching; ways to transfer learning to colleagues w/in school</td>
<td>Program administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing: August One weekend</td>
<td>Course # 6 Building a Professional Community of ESL Practitioners ED/ESL 465</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Gathered Outside of Instructional Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Faculty (4 program instructors)</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>Once at end of immersion program</td>
<td>Their perspective, their learning, view of overall program</td>
<td>Program administrator and colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Ecuadorian Program Staff (language instructors, site coordinator)</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>1x</td>
<td>Once during last week of program</td>
<td>Their perspective on effect of program on community or university, their observations on teacher learning/experiences</td>
<td>Program administrator and colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host Families (2 of focal participants)</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>1 x</td>
<td>Once during last week of program</td>
<td>Their perspective on experience</td>
<td>Program administrator</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Participant teachers (3 out of 10)     | Semi-structured Interviews | 5 times | 1) once after program begins and before departure for Ecuador  
2) twice during 3 weeks of immersion program  
3) twice (Sept & Dec) when program has been completed and T’s back in classrooms | Integration of learning experience, advisor, developing and carrying out learning goals | Program administrator and teaching mentor/advisor |
Appendix C
Interview # 1 - Questions

Background
1. How long have you been teaching?

2. Tell me about how you decided to become a teacher.

3. What sparked your interest in learning about English language teaching and ESL instruction?

4. Why did you decide to enroll in this program?

5. How do you think our (U.S.) society (educational institutions, government, general public) views ESL instruction and English language learners?

6. What are your thoughts about the program now as you are finishing the first course and looking toward the experience in Ecuador?

Experience with “otherness”
7. Have you studied or traveled abroad? If so, tell me something that was important for you in those experiences, where? When? What did you learn from the experience?

8. Have you interacted with second language learners in a school or classroom situation? Explain the context and your interactions?

9. How much experience have you had in your life with diversity (cultural, racial, language, social class, etc)?

10. Try to think back on a place and time in your life when you interacted with someone that was different from you in significant ways (social class, race, language background, religion, sexual orientation, etc), if a particular person or incident comes to mind, tell me about it. Or tell me generally about your experiences with people that are different from you.

11. What are your thoughts about going to live with a host family and being immersed in a new country and culture?

Teaching Beliefs and Attitudes
12. What are some things that you really like about teaching?

13. What are some of the difficult parts of being a teacher?

14. (If I could ask them) how would you like your students to describe your teaching?

15. For you, what are some of the most important aspects of English language teaching? What kinds of knowledge or skills should a good ESL teacher develop or possess?
16. Tell me about an experience that you have had as a learner that impacted you in some significant way.

**Learning and Language**
17. When you are in the learners “seat,” what are some factors or things about the teaching/learning context that help you to learn? How do you like learning to happen?

18. What are your past experiences learning additional language(s)?

19. What do you know about yourself as a language learner?

20. What are your feelings and views about the English language in particular?

21. How do you like learning in an on-line format? What is positive about the experience of the on-line course? And what don’t you like about it?

22. What are some things that you hope to learn from participation in this program?
Appendix D: Activity Analysis Mapping of Nora’s Experience

**Subject**
Nora
Expectations from past study abroad
Inexperience as a teacher
Working class identity

**Object**
Keeping Spanish in my life
Getting the ESL certificate "under my belt"
Opening up to the world

**Rules**
Reflection on teaching practice is expected
Share experiences through talk with researcher

**Community**
Host family
Other teacher learners
The researcher
Ecuadorian English learners

**Division of Labor**
T’s collaborate, co-construct lessons they teach
Mentor/mentee relationship

**Mediation Means**
Verbalization/externalize thinking
Emotional/cognitive dissonance
Practice teaching: interacting with ELL’s
Host family interaction
“Expert” knowledge
Time constraints of program
Reflective thinking about teaching

**Outcome**
- Identity shift – valuing of familial relationships
- Empathy for ELL’s
- Idealized conceptions of teaching diverse learners
- Future career goal – bilingual special ed. teacher
Appendix E: Activity Analysis Mapping of Anna’s Experience

Mediating Artifacts
- Host family interaction
- Theoretical "expert" knowledge
- Modeling of teaching practices
- Practice teaching with co-teacher
- Second language learning (in-class & community)

Activity Analysis
Anna’s Experience

Subject
Anna

Object
The "need to move on"
Making friends
Desire to learn Spanish
ESL teaching experience

Outcome
- Intercultural Learning
- Self-discovery
- Bicultural identity
- Career Change – rejection of school ideology

Rules
- Program expectations i.e. reflection, learn by doing, culture exploration

Community
- Host family
- Program faculty & staff
- Other teacher learners
- Ecuadorian English learners

Division of Labor
- Collaboration in teaching practice
- Mentor/mentee relationship
Appendix G: Activity Analysis Mapping of Alex’s Experience

Subject
Alex
Growing up in 2 worlds
Inexperienced T
“I’m different”

Object
Explore & experience ESL as future career path
Learn how to teach ELLs

Activity Analysis
Alex’s Experience

Mediating Artifacts
Host family interaction
Immersion situated L2 learning
Practice teaching with co-teachers
Other participants’ C2 experiences
Course readings
Reflection: questioning my beliefs

Community
Host family
Family at home
Other teacher learners
Ecuadorian English learners

Division of Labor
T’s collaborate & co-construct lessons they teach
Mentor/mentee relationship

Rules
Listen, then contribute
Be objective about C2
Question teaching beliefs
Learning can be applied to life experience

Outcome
• A “beginning” experience teaching ELLs
• Develop a teaching philosophy
• Empathy for ELLs
• EFL teaching in Korea
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