EXPLORING EFL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
LESSON STUDY: AN ACTIVITY THEORETICAL APPROACH

A Dissertation in
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by

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ABSTRACT

This intervention study investigates the trajectory of English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher learning through participation in Lesson Study (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1997; Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2003), an inquiry-based professional development activity. It focuses on how a group of EFL teachers’ collaborative, teacher-directed exploration of a student learning issue promoted teacher learning. Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1987; 2001; Leont’ev, 1978; 1981) and Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978; 1986) were the theoretical frameworks used to understand the interaction among the EFL teachers, their students and the administrators of the school, and trace the teachers’ cognitive development. Developmental Work Research (DWR) methodology (Engeström, 2007) facilitated the creation of innovative practices that encouraged social transformation. In this study, three EFL teachers in a private language school in the Czech Republic participated in the fourteen-week project. The data consisted of transcripts of teacher and administrator interviews, teacher workshops, teacher journal entries, meetings with the school’s administrators, and the research lesson plan created by the teachers. The data were analyzed using a grounded content analysis (Bogdan and Bilken, 2007; Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and according to the principles of ethnographic semantics. The findings indicate that 1) school administrator involvement is necessary to effect school change; 2) outside experts might need to take a more active, longer-term role to help teachers adopt a critical perspective; 3) EFL teacher professionalization should include participation in professional development activities; 4) Lesson Study is a viable ‘second stimulus’ (Vygotsky & Luria, 1994) in DWR methodology that has the potential to provide teachers with an effective conceptual tool to mediate their learning
and bring about expansive transformation; and 5) sociocultural theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how teachers learn through participation in Lesson Study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. ix
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ x
LIST OF EXCERPTS ............................................................................................................ xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................................... xiv

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................... 1
  1.1. Context of the Study ................................................................................................... 1
  1.2. Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................. 5
  1.3. Research Questions .................................................................................................. 9
  1.4. Chapter Descriptions ............................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................. 13
  2.1. Sociocultural Context in Teacher Education ......................................................... 13
  2.2. EFL Teacher Sociocultural Context ......................................................................... 15
  2.3. Inquiry-based Approaches to Professional Development ....................................... 20
  2.4. Lesson Study ........................................................................................................... 21
     2.4.1. Overview ........................................................................................................... 21
     2.4.2. Origin of Lesson Study ....................................................................................... 22
     2.4.3. The Lesson Study Process ............................................................................... 22
     2.4.4. Two U.S. Lesson Study Case Studies ................................................................. 26
  2.5. Teacher Knowledge Production ............................................................................... 31
  2.6. Towards a Sociocultural Perspective in Teacher Learning ...................................... 31
  2.7. Inquiry-based Approaches and Practitioner Knowledge .......................................... 35
  2.8. Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory ........................................................................... 37
     2.9. The Constructs of Sociocultural Theory ............................................................... 39
        2.9.1. Mediation ......................................................................................................... 39
        2.9.2. Internalization / Externalization and Regulation ............................................... 39
        2.9.3. The Zone of Proximal Development ............................................................... 41
  2.10. Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory and Teacher Learning ....................................... 42
  2.11. Lesson Study Advisors and SCT Expert Regulation ............................................. 45
  2.12. Individual Action and Collective Activity ............................................................... 45
  2.13. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory ....................................................................... 46
     2.13.1. Social Transformation and Activity Theory ..................................................... 46
     2.13.2. Three Generations of Research ...................................................................... 47
     2.13.3. Third Generation Activity Theory ................................................................... 48
     2.13.4. An Example of an EFL Teacher – Student Activity System ......................... 50
     2.13.5. Expansive Learning Theory ............................................................................. 52
        2.13.5.1. Background ............................................................................................... 52
        2.13.5.2. The Process of Expansive Learning ........................................................... 53
        2.13.5.3. Expansive Learning in a Secondary School ............................................... 55
  2.14. Developmental Work Research ............................................................................... 56
     2.14.1. Background ..................................................................................................... 56
     2.14.2. DWR and Vygotsky’s Method of Double Stimulation ..................................... 58
     2.14.3. Studies Using DWR ....................................................................................... 59
2.14.4. The Second Stimulus ................................................................. 62
2.15. Lesson Study as Second Stimulus .................................................. 63
2.16. Sociocultural Theory as Theoretical Foundation for Lesson Study .......... 64

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY ............................................................... 66
3.1. Research Design ................................................................. 66
3.2. Role of the Researcher .......................................................... 66
3.3. Site of the Intervention ......................................................... 67
3.4. The Participants ................................................................. 68
3.5. Data Collection and Procedures Followed .................................... 69
  3.5.1. Interviews ................................................................. 69
  3.5.2. Teacher – Researcher Workshops ........................................ 70
  3.5.3. Teacher Journals .......................................................... 71
  3.5.4. Teacher – Academic Office – Researcher Meeting .................... 71
  3.5.5. Research Lesson Plan ..................................................... 72
3.6. Data Analysis ..................................................................... 72
3.7. Ensuring Trustworthiness ....................................................... 75
3.7. Transcription .................................................................... 76

CHAPTER 4. AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHER, STUDENT AND ACADEMIC
OFFICE ACTIVITY SYSTEMS ................................................................. 78
4.1. The Teachers ................................................................. 79
  4.1.1. Subject Collective: The Teachers’ History and Beliefs ................. 79
    4.1.1.1. Simon ................................................................. 79
    4.1.1.2. Lenka ................................................................. 82
    4.1.1.3. Dan ................................................................. 84
  4.1.2. Mediating Artifacts ........................................................ 87
  4.1.3. Object and Outcome ....................................................... 87
  4.1.4. Division of Labor .......................................................... 88
  4.1.5. Community and Rules .................................................... 89
4.2. The Students ................................................................. 92
  4.2.1. Subject Collective ........................................................ 92
  4.2.2. Mediating Artifacts ........................................................ 93
  4.2.3. Object and Outcome ....................................................... 93
  4.2.4. Community, Division of Labor and Rules ................................. 94
4.3. The Academic Office ........................................................... 94
  4.3.1. Subject Collective ........................................................ 94
  4.3.2. Mediating Artifacts ........................................................ 95
  4.3.3. Object and Outcome ....................................................... 98
  4.3.4. Community and Division of Labor ....................................... 99
  4.3.5. Rules ..................................................................... 99
4.4. Introducing New Mediating Artifacts into the Teachers’ Activity System .... 108
  4.4.1. Mirror Data and Lesson Study Process .................................. 108
  4.4.2. The Researcher as Expert Other .......................................... 109
4.5. Conclusion ..................................................................... 111
CHAPTER 5. EXPANSIVE LEARNING: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER CONVERSATIONS

5.1. Uncovering Conflicts between Teacher Beliefs and Practices ........................................ 113
5.2. Discussing the Lesson Study Process .............................................................................. 115
5.3. Using the Mirror Data to Explore Workplace Conflicts .................................................. 116
5.4. From Conflict to Contradiction: Choosing the Lesson Study Goal .............................. 118
5.5. Negotiation of the Research Lesson Topic ....................................................................... 121
5.6. Analyzing Past and Present Attitudes to Reading at the School ...................................... 126
   5.6.1. Analyzing the Student Questionnaires .................................................................. 127
   5.6.2. Analyzing the Teacher Questionnaires .................................................................. 128
   5.6.3. Analyzing the Conversation with the Academic Office Director ............................ 130
5.7. Creating Tools that Could Promote Greater Student Responsibility ............................... 136
   5.7.1. Creating a Reading Activity for Research Lesson .................................................. 137
   5.7.2. Adding Formulaic Language to the Research Lesson ........................................... 144
5.8. Completing the Research Lesson Plan ............................................................................ 149
5.9. Collecting Evidence During the Research Lesson .......................................................... 152
5.10. Analyzing the Outcome of the Research Lesson ........................................................... 155
   5.10.1. Simon’s Lesson ................................................................................................ 156
   5.10.2. Lenka’s Lesson ................................................................................................ 160
   5.10.3. Dan’s Lesson .................................................................................................... 163
5.11. Completing the Work of the Lesson Study Group ......................................................... 164
5.12. A Lost Opportunity for Expansive Learning ................................................................. 164
5.13. Summary ....................................................................................................................... 172
5.14. Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 174

CHAPTER 6. LENKA AND SIMON’S CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT .................................. 177

6.1. Lenka: Re-conceptualization of Student Agency, Motivation and Learning ............... 179
   6.1.1. A Teaching Conflict .............................................................................................. 179
   6.1.2. Externalizing the Contradiction with the Other Teachers ...................................... 180
   6.1.3. A New Approach to Teaching Reading ............................................................... 181
      6.1.3.1 Conflict in Teaching Reading ........................................................................... 181
      6.1.3.2 Re-evaluating Student Motivation to Read .................................................... 185
      6.1.3.3. An Emerging Understanding of Engaging Student Learning in Reading ....... 187
      6.1.3.4 Enhancing Student Agency through Choice .................................................... 190
   6.1.4. Internalization and Self-regulation ......................................................................... 192
   6.1.5. Summary ............................................................................................................. 194

6.2. Simon: A New Understanding of “Effective Learning” .................................................. 195
   6.2.1. Interest in Promoting Student Reading ............................................................... 196
   6.2.2. Definition of ‘Effective Learning’ ......................................................................... 196
   6.2.3. A Teaching Conflict ............................................................................................. 197
   6.2.4. Embracing Language Promotes Learner Responsibility ....................................... 198
   6.2.5. Measuring Responsibility ..................................................................................... 201
   6.2.6. Language as Mediating Artifact ......................................................................... 203
   6.2.7. Re-evaluating What ‘Effective Learning’ Means .................................................. 205
   6.2.8. Internalization and Self-regulation ...................................................................... 207
   6.2.9. Commitment to Teacher Learning ...................................................................... 210
6.2.10. Summary ........................................................................................................... 210
6.3. Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 212

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION ............................................................................................ 214
7.1. Sociocultural Context and Opportunities for Teacher Learning ............................. 215
7.2. Expansive Transformation ....................................................................................... 218
7.3. Individual Teacher Conceptual Development ......................................................... 224
7.4. Adopting a Researcher and Student Perspective ..................................................... 227
7.5. The Role of the Advisor to the Lesson Study Group ................................................. 230
7.6. Institutional Support for Lesson Study ...................................................................... 232
7.7. Lesson Study as ‘Second Stimulus’ to Facilitate Expansive Learning ...................... 232
7.8. Challenges in Sustaining EFL Teacher Professional Development ......................... 235

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION ......................................................................................... 238
8.1. Implications ............................................................................................................. 238
  8.1.1. Professionalizing EFL Teachers ........................................................................... 238
  8.1.2. Lesson Study Advisors as Expert Others ......................................................... 241
  8.1.3. Creating Partnerships Between Teachers and Administrators ......................... 242
  8.1.4. Lesson Study as Conceptual Tool ...................................................................... 244
  8.1.5. Sociocultural Theory and Lesson Study .......................................................... 245
8.2. Limitations ............................................................................................................... 246
8.3. Suggestions for Future Research ............................................................................ 247
8.4. Concluding Remarks .............................................................................................. 249

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................... 251

Appendix A: Initial Teacher Interview Questions ......................................................... 259
Appendix B: Student Reading Questionnaire ............................................................... 260
Appendix C: Teacher Reading Questionnaire ............................................................... 261
Appendix D: Artifact Created to Mediate Student Critical Reading .............................. 262
Appendix E: Research Lesson Plan ............................................................................... 264
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. The EFL Teacher Participants in the Study ................................................. 68
Table 4.1. Teacher Interview Questions ................................................................. 79
Table 4.2. Researcher Questions to Promote Teacher Critical Perspective .............. 111
Table 5.1. Interview Questions to Uncover Conflicts .............................................. 114
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. The Lesson Study Process ................................................................. 25
Figure 2.2. The Indirect / Direct Relationship between People and the World ..... 38
Figure 2.3. A Model of an Activity System ........................................................... 49
Figure 2.4. Shared Object Space in Two Connected Activity Systems .................. 52
Figure 2.5. The Expansive Learning Cycle and Contradictions ............................. 55
Figure 2.6. Schema of Change Laboratory Layout ................................................. 58
Figure 2.7. Lesson Study as Second Stimulus to Promote Expansive Learning ....... 63
Figure 2.8. The Relationship Among Theories, Methods and Analysis ................... 65
Figure 4.1. Inter-connected Teacher, Student and Academic Office Activity Systems .... 92
Figure 4.2. Mediating Artifacts Introduced into the Teachers’ Activity System ......... 108
Figure 5.1. Primary Contradiction Between Teacher and Student Activity Systems .... 121
Figure 5.2. Emerging Quaternary Contradiction Between Teachers and Academic Office ... 135
Figure 5.3. One of Five Tasks Designed to Potentially Mediate Student Critical Reading .... 148
Figure 5.4. Inability to Resolve the Contradiction Inhibits Expansive Transformation .... 172
Figure 6.1. Re-conceptualizing Student Responsibility Transforms Other Concepts ........ 178
LIST OF EXERPTS

Excerpt 4.1. Simon – Initial interview ................................................................. 80
Excerpt 4.2. Simon – Initial interview ................................................................. 80
Excerpt 4.3. Simon – Initial interview ................................................................. 81
Excerpt 4.4 Simon – Workshop 6 ................................................................. 81
Excerpt 4.5. Lenka – Initial interview ................................................................. 82
Excerpt 4.6. Lenka – Initial interview ................................................................. 82
Excerpt 4.7. Lenka – Initial interview ................................................................. 83
Excerpt 4.8. Dan – Initial interview ................................................................. 84
Excerpt 4.9. Dan – Initial interview ................................................................. 84
Excerpt 4.10. Dan – Initial interview ................................................................. 84
Excerpt 4.11. Dan – Initial interview ................................................................. 85
Excerpt 4.12. Dan – Initial interview ................................................................. 85
Excerpt 4.13. Dan – Workshop 11 ................................................................. 86
Excerpt 4.14. Workshop 1 ................................................................. 91
Excerpt 4.15. Research lesson plan ................................................................. 93
Excerpt 4.16. Petra – Initial interview ................................................................. 95
Excerpt 4.17. Petra – Initial interview ................................................................. 96
Excerpt 4.18. Petra – Initial interview ................................................................. 97
Excerpt 4.19. Petra – Initial interview ................................................................. 97
Excerpt 4.20. Petra – Initial interview ................................................................. 98
Excerpt 4.21. Academic Office and teacher meeting ........................................ 100
Excerpt 4.22. Academic Office and teacher meeting ........................................ 102
Excerpt 4.23. Academic Office and teacher meeting ........................................ 105
Excerpt 4.24. Academic Office and teacher meeting ........................................ 106
Excerpt 5.1. Lenka – Initial interview ................................................................. 114
Excerpt 5.2. Simon – Initial interview ................................................................. 114
Excerpt 5.3. Dan – Initial interview ................................................................. 115
Excerpt 5.4. Workshop 2 ................................................................. 117
Excerpt 5.5. Workshop 2 ................................................................. 118
Excerpt 5.6. Researcher – Workshop 2 ................................................................. 120
Excerpt 5.7. Research lesson plan ................................................................. 120
Excerpt 5.8. Workshop 3 ................................................................. 122
Excerpt 5.9. Workshop 3 ................................................................. 122
Excerpt 5.10. Workshop 3 ................................................................. 123
Excerpt 5.11. Workshop 2 ................................................................. 124
Excerpt 5.12. Research lesson plan ................................................................. 127
Excerpt 5.13. Lenka – Journal entry 9 ................................................................. 128
Excerpt 5.14. Workshop 4 ................................................................. 129
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This intervention study investigates the cognitive development of three English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers as they participate in Lesson Study, a collaborative, teacher-directed professional development activity. In Lesson Study (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1997; Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2003) teachers focus on a gap between teacher beliefs and student learning by creating a mediational space that encourages sustained dialogic interaction. Teacher exploration of student learning has the potential to promote greater teacher professional development by focusing teachers’ collective attention on shared student learning issues and facilitating their pursuit of jointly constructed solutions. This study also explores how the trajectory of teacher learning is shaped by the sociocultural context in which the teachers work. Specifically, it considers how the interaction between the teachers, the teachers’ students and administrators offers affordances and constraints to teacher learning, and leads to collective and personal conceptual development.

This introductory chapter describes the context of EFL teaching and the purpose of the study, states the research questions and concludes with an overview of the dissertation chapters.

1.1. Context

Every year thousands of people complete one-month certificate programs in teaching English and enter the profession. These programs are typically around 120 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of assessed teaching practice. The University of Cambridge, which
administers the largest certificate program known as CELTA\(^1\), estimates on its website that over 10,000 people complete their course worldwide each year (University of Cambridge, 2012), and Trinity College, which administers the other major certificate program CertTESOL\(^2\), states that each year over 3,500 people are awarded its certificate (Trinity College, 2012). In addition, thousands more complete similar one-month TEFL\(^3\) certificate programs in unaffiliated institutions worldwide. In spite of the large number of EFL teachers entering the field, there remains a “huge global shortage” of native-speaker teachers in many parts of the world (British Council, 2013, p. 9).

Most of these new EFL teachers take jobs in the private sector (Skinner, 2002). They tend to teach young learners, post-secondary school young adults who need to improve their ability in English to enter university or the workplace, and adults who need English for their careers\(^4\).

The number of EFL teachers who leave the field soon after entering is high. Although few studies have examined EFL teacher turnover, it has been estimated that 50% to 70% of EFL teachers entering the profession leave within three to five years (Philips, 1989 cited in Borg, 2008). In a study on career path trends of 250 graduates of a TESOL graduate program, Priddis et al. (2013) found that 7% of total career time was spent in an EFL context. This indicates that even teachers who had devoted more time and resources to teacher education by completing an M.A. degree also spent only a comparatively short amount of time in EFL contexts. In a study of 28 teachers who completed a TEFL certificate course in the Czech Republic and began teaching

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\(^1\) Certificate in Teaching English to Adults  
\(^2\) Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages  
\(^3\) Teaching English as a Foreign Language – There is no reference that I could find in the literature that provides an estimate of the number of people who are awarded these certificates. As a point of comparison, when I worked as a TEFL trainer in the Czech Republic between 2005 and 2007, the institution I worked for (in a city with 5 other institutions offering TEFL certificates) awarded around 200 certificates per year.  
\(^4\) Although there is no research that shows where EFL teachers typically work, anecdotal evidence and a search of EFL job sites such as Dave’s ESL Café (http://www.eslcafe.com/jobs) indicate that these are the students EFL teachers will typically have.
at private language schools, 14 quit after teaching for only one year (Tasker, 2006). This rate of attrition was confirmed by a director of a large private language school in the Czech Republic who claimed that about half of her expatriate full-time teachers quit after their first year of teaching, or sooner (Petra Novakova, personal communication).

Although thousands of EFL teachers enter the field every year, little is known about their professional lives (Johnston, 1997). Teachers typically enter the field with one-month certificates, and leave the profession after only a few years (or less); however, there is little research on the kinds of professional development opportunities available to these teachers and how they make use of them during their tenure. Given the short careers of EFL teachers, it is likely that the majority of adult EFL students are taught by teachers with little experience. A better understanding of the professional development EFL teachers receive and the institutions in which they work could illuminate the influence of teacher professional learning on teaching practice (Johnson, 2009), and lead to changes in in-service teacher programs that foster more and better opportunities for teacher learning in the workplace.

Perhaps due to the high rate of teacher turnover, there have not been many studies on the professional development of EFL teachers. A few studies have questioned the value of one-month programs (Borg, 2008; Brandt, 2006; Ferguson & Donno, 2003), but much of the research has centered on the experiences of novice EFL teachers (Farrell, 2003; 2006; 2008; Hayes, 2008; Skinner, 2002; Urmston & Pennington, 2008; Vo & Nguyen, 2010) or on teachers relatively new to the field (Johnston, 1997; Ting & Watts, 2008). The picture that emerges from these studies is that EFL teachers often work in isolating environments with few opportunities to interact with colleagues or engage in other forms of professional development, and this environment has a negative effect on their perception of teaching. Skinner (2002) argues that the commercial focus
of EFL teachers’ work leads to a heavy teaching load with no opportunity to pursue professional development. However, several of the studies indicate that EFL teachers who overcame isolationist environments by being pro-active in finding ways to collaborate with colleagues on teaching and student learning issues became more satisfied with their teaching and profession (Farrell, 2001; Hayes, 2008; Ting & Watt, 2008; Vo & Nguyen, 2010). While individual efforts to promote teacher education are admirable, establishing effective EFL teacher professional development programs require a commitment from teachers, content that teachers agree is relevant to their local contexts, and institutional support (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2006). To achieve these aims, it is essential to first understand the sociocultural context in which teachers work, and how it shapes teacher learning.

The sociocultural context includes the life-long teacher experiences that influence learning; the interaction between the values and norms of the institutions and the teachers in the classroom; and teaching activity as shaped by the norms of the institution and history of the teacher (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006). Institutions often determine the kinds of professional development activities and content that are appropriate for their teachers, what constitutes legitimate sources of that knowledge, and who the producers of that knowledge are. Institutions with top-down models of professional development encourage (or compel) teachers to adopt innovations without regard to how those ideas could be implemented into the teachers’ classroom practices (Johnson, 2006). In some of the ‘isolationist’ educational settings mentioned above, the professional development of teachers seems to have been neglected. However, some educational contexts are embracing alternative forms of professional development that are grounded in classroom practice and directed by teachers engaging in collaborative inquiry of teacher and student learning issues (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999)
These institutions recognize the classroom as a valid site for research, and teachers as legitimate producers of teacher knowledge. Regardless of the value an institution places on professional development, or how those activities are organized, teachers and teaching practice are shaped in part by an institution’s stance on the best way to promote teacher learning.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Inquiry-based approaches to professional development, such as Lesson Study, encourage teachers to collaborate in their investigation of the teaching and learning issues they identify. Lesson Study promotes teacher learning by encouraging teachers to examine a student learning issue, and then develop, implement and critically reflect on novel solutions to the issue in a ‘research lesson’ taught to their students. Ideally, the results of the teachers’ work are made available to the teaching community and can become part of the local teacher knowledge base.

Exploring issues that are relevant to teachers’ local context and embedded in their teaching practice are more likely to foster teacher commitment than participation in seminars and workshops on topics decided on by educators often from different teaching contexts, and can lead to significant changes in teaching practice. However, introducing inquiry-based approaches into educational settings needs to be followed by “systematic exploration into the kinds of participation these alternative structures engender, their impact on teacher learning, and the kinds of learning environments teachers in turn create to foster student learning” (Johnson, 2006, p. 244) to ascertain the effectiveness of teacher-lead professional development activities.

As mentioned above, most of the research on EFL teacher professional development has focused on either the transition of novice teachers from teacher education programs to their first teaching jobs, or on the professional development experiences of teachers in the institutions in
which they worked. Many of these studies report how teachers overcame lack of professional
support from their colleagues and institutions to meet the challenge of reflecting on teaching and
learning issues to improve classroom practices. The focus of these descriptive studies is typically
on how context influences teacher learning outcomes.

However, what is missing from these studies is an understanding of EFL teacher
cognitive development as it unfolds, and how that development is shaped by the social and
institutional context, particularly the norms and values of the institution, and how development
leads to changes in teaching practice. Having a clearer understanding of EFL teacher social and
cognitive processes as they learn more about teaching is crucial to informing how in-service
professional development programs in schools are developed. The current study addresses that
gap by exploring how the sociocultural context of a private language school shapes the trajectory
of EFL teacher development as they participate in a teacher-directed professional development
activity, and by tracing the process of how specific teaching concepts are transformed as teachers
work towards resolving a student learning issue they face. Analyzing the relationship between
the context in which these teachers work and their interaction while engaged in a professional
development activity as it takes place informs an understanding of 1) teacher professional
development at the school; 2) how the teachers’ collaborative effort resolves a shared student
learning issue; 3) the teachers’ individual conceptual development through collective, social
activity; and 4) how their conceptual development spurs changes in teaching practice.

By analyzing the interaction between teachers, students and the administrators, and how
that interaction both motivates and deters teacher professional learning, this study hopes to
inform research on fostering in-service professional development programs for teachers in the
workplace that promote teacher-directed collaboration and learning.

Johnson (2009) makes this argument about L2 teacher education in general.
The sociocultural context is analyzed using Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; Vygotsky & Luria, 1994) and cultural-historical activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999a; 2001; Leont’ev, 1978). Vygotsky argued that cognitive development is mediated (organized and controlled) by culturally constructed artifacts, the most significant being written and spoken language. Leont’ev argued that object-oriented human activity mediated development. However, both believed that cognition is generated by participating in socially meaningful activities through internalization, a negotiated, cyclical process in which a social set of meanings becomes personal(ized), and are then made available in new contexts in the social domain (Valsiner, 1998).

Third-generation cultural-historical activity theory (Engeström, 1987) is used in this study as a diagnostic framework for understanding the interaction between the teacher, student and administrator activity systems. The principles of activity theory are that the primary unit of analysis is minimally two interconnected activity systems, the activity is multi-voiced, develops through internal contradictions, and undergoes expansive transformation (Engeström, 2001). An activity system is comprised of the subject collective, mediational means, object, community, rules, division of labor and outcome. An activity system is distinguished from another activity by its object, the “problem space” the activity is directed towards (Engeström, 2001). Expansive transformation occurs when a contradiction between activity systems motivates an examination of existing practices and leads to the creation of novel solutions and a reconceptualized object of activity.

Used as a means to facilitate expansive learning in a workplace, Developmental Work Research (DWR) (Engeström, 2007) is an intervention methodology to assist participants in uncovering and addressing workplace contradictions, and then create, model and implement new
solutions to overcome the contradiction. DWR methodology is derived from Vygotsky’s (1978; 1986) ‘method of double stimulation’. After collecting ethnographic data about workplace conflicts, an interventionist-researcher presents the data as the ‘first stimulus’ to participants as a means to generate discussion of the problem. The researcher then introduces the ‘second stimulus,’ the conceptual tool the participants collaboratively direct to develop a new understanding of the problem and create potential solutions. The second stimulus should guide participants in modeling and implementing solutions, but also be sufficiently ambiguous so that participants are able to create their own content and pursue ideas to resolve the contradiction (Engeström, 2007).

In this study, DWR methodology is used to promote EFL teacher expansive learning. Ethnographic data collected from the teachers and school administrators are used as the first stimulus to generate discussion among the teachers about the student learning issues they face. The professional development activity Lesson Study is used as the second stimulus to mediate teacher-led exploration of a gap they perceive in student learning; create artifacts and new teaching practices to address the issue; implement their ideas in a research lesson; teach, reflect on and critique the outcome the research lesson after it is taught to their students; and report on the outcome to their colleagues.

This is a qualitative study that uses formative intervention methodology to investigate EFL teacher learning in a private language school in the Czech Republic. The data were gathered from teacher and administrator interviews; a series of eleven workshops; a teacher – administrator meeting; teacher journals; and the teacher-produced research lesson plan. The constant comparative method was used in a grounded content analysis (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to understand the interaction among the participants, their students, and
administrators. During the study, the data from the teacher interviews were used as the ‘first stimulus’ to explore student learning issues. The data were categorized according to activity system elements and Lesson Study (the second stimulus), and analyzed through an activity theory perspective.

This study is important because it addresses a gap in the EFL professional development literature by examining EFL teacher learning as it unfolds, how that learning is shaped by the social and institutional context of a private language school, and how teacher learning influences changes in teaching practice. In spite of the pervasiveness of EFL teacher involvement in adult English language education, little research has been done on the professional lives of EFL teachers and the impact their professional development has on teacher learning. This study hopes to inform research on how EFL teacher participation in professional development in general, and Lesson Study in particular, can transform teacher learning, and motivate improvement of in-service professional development programs in institutions where EFL teachers work.

1.3. Research Questions

This study addresses four research questions:

1) How does the interaction among the participant teachers, their students and administrators of the school impact teacher professional development?

2) Does the teachers’ participation in Lesson Study lead to expansive learning?

3) How does the sociocultural context influence the trajectory of expansive learning?

4) How is teacher conceptual development influenced by participation in Lesson Study?
1.4. Chapter Descriptions

Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to this study. The first part of the chapter considers sociocultural context in second language teacher education and EFL teacher education, and summarizes the research on the professional development experiences of novice teachers. The next part of the literature review focuses on inquiry-based approaches to teacher professional development, the process of Lesson Study, and the challenges of implementing Lesson Study in North American schools. After a discussion of the underlying epistemology of inquiry-based approaches, how Lesson Study aligns with a sociocultural perspective in teacher learning is discussed. In the following section, the shared constructs of the theoretical frameworks of the study, Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) are described. In this section, studies that have adopted an SCT perspective in teacher education are reviewed. In the next part, the research using third generation CHAT is addressed, and focuses on studies that encouraged expansive learning using Developmental Work Research methodology. The final part of Chapter Two explains how Lesson Study is used as part of DWR methodology to promote teacher expansive learning.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used in this study. The sections describe the research design, the site of the study, role of the researcher, participants, data collection and procedures and data analysis. The relationship between the formative intervention methodology used in this study and data analysis are described.

Chapter Four is an analysis of the data that addresses the research question on the impact of the interaction among the participant teachers, their students and administrators on teacher professional development. The data are interpreted according to the principles of activity theory, and organized according to the activity system components of subject collective, mediating
artifacts, object, outcome, division of labor, community and rules. In addition, the new mediational means introduced to the participants, Lesson Study and the researcher as temporary expert other, are addressed.

Chapter Five is an analysis of the data to answer the research questions of whether the teachers’ participation in Lesson Study leads to expansive learning, and how sociocultural context influences expansive learning. The chapter traces the teachers’ collaborative endeavor to understand the concept ‘student responsibility’ that begins with a contradiction they experienced between their beliefs about what students should be doing outside of class to learn English, and the actual student practice of doing little homework; continues with their sustained effort to create artifacts and change teaching practices that could promote greater student responsibility through improved critical reading skills; and leads to teaching (and critiquing) a series of research lessons to gage the success of their new model. An analysis of the interaction between the administrators and the teachers sheds light on the outcome of the teachers’ expansive learning.

Chapter Six is an analysis of the data that addresses the final research question concerning the conceptual development of the teachers as a result of their participation in Lesson Study. In particular, the focus is on the process of how two teachers transformed their understanding of their role in engaging student learning, student motivation and agency as they explored ways to promote greater student responsibility for learning. The zone of proximal development is the conceptual tool used to understand teacher transformation.

Chapter Seven addresses the answers to the research questions in more detail, and discusses the meaning of the analysis in Chapters Four, Five and Six. Expansive learning is compared to individual learning outcomes, and the sociocultural context of EFL teacher learning
is reconsidered. The effectiveness of Lesson Study to promote teacher learning is addressed, and a comparison of this study to other Lesson Study research and the challenges of introducing this activity in an EFL context is discussed. This study is also compared to other formative interventions using Developmental Work Research.

Chapter Eight presents the implications of the findings, discusses the limitations of the study and offers suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews research relevant to this study. In the first section of the chapter, the sociocultural context in second language teacher education and EFL teacher education is discussed. The second section of the chapter reviews inquiry-based approaches and their underlying epistemology, and then the process of Lesson Study. The third section explores the theoretical frameworks used in this study – Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) – and the fourth section reviews studies that have adopted an SCT or CHAT perspective on teacher learning, in particular studies that use Developmental Work Research (DWR) methodology. The final section examines how Lesson Study is used as part of DWR methodology to promote teacher expansive learning.

2.1. Sociocultural Context in Teacher Education

Understanding the sociocultural context of where teachers work, and how that context influences teacher learning is essential in developing effective teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Freeman (2002) states that “context is everything” (p. 11) in teacher education, and Johnson (2006) claims that located L2 teacher education begins by recognizing why L2 teachers do what they do within the social, historical and cultural contexts within which they work and from there works to co-construct with L2 teachers locally appropriate responses to their professional development needs (p. 246).

Freeman and Johnson (1998) view sociocultural context diachronically as ‘schooling,’ which is comprised of the influences that over time guide teacher development, and synchronically as ‘schools’, where teacher-learners do their work and integrate teaching theory
and practice. Schooling includes the influence of teachers’ socialization as students, and the influence of the norms and values of the institutions in which teachers work has on the development of teaching practice. Sociocultural context also includes the life-long teacher experiences that affect learning, and the influence the institution has on teaching activity. They argue that combining synchronic and diachronic views “create a rich, complicated, and textured view of the sociocultural contexts in which teacher learning takes place” (p. 408), and recognize that the teacher learning process is “normative and lifelong; it is built out of and through experiences in social contexts, as learners in classrooms and schools, and later as participants in professional programs” (p. 401).

Freeman (2002) argues that “the theory – practice gap…is one of connecting and integrating the social contexts of professional education with those of the classroom and school” (p. 7). School is also the place where teacher-learners become socialized into teaching and participate in professional development activities. Schools are powerful environments in which “some actions and ways of being are valued and encouraged whereas others are downplayed, ignored, or even silenced” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 409). Putnam and Borko (2000) examine the role the teachers’ discourse community plays in influencing how teachers work and how teacher learning takes place. They argue that schools are powerful discourse communities that “enculturate participants (students, teachers, administrators) into traditional school activities and ways of thinking” (p. 8). They claim that the culture in many schools does not support critical reflection of teaching practice and provides few opportunities for teacher growth. Although Putnam and Borko (2000) provide several examples of projects that strengthen their discourse communities through an emphasis on a co-construction of expert and teacher knowledge, the underlying problem of how to overcome school cultures that do not substantively
support teacher learning is not addressed. A local response to second language teacher education must begin with a “close examination of the way L2 teachers are constructed in their work settings and the relative status of L2 teaching in those settings” (Johnson, 2006, p. 247). Second language teachers who work in schools that undervalue teacher professional development often need to be pro-active in creating supportive, collaborative spaces to address their professional learning needs.

2.2. EFL Teacher Sociocultural Context

Understanding the sociocultural context of EFL teachers begins with taking into account the problems teachers face when they move from a teacher education program to EFL jobs. Skinner (2002) observes that difficulties arise as teachers leave a supportive, collaborative training environment for an isolated, ‘privatist’ environment with little peer support. She states they might be asked to adopt practices they have not been prepared for (e.g., excessive workload, no input into materials design, administration or course development). Implementing pre-service knowledge and practices can be a problem if the new knowledge does not align with the practices of the school.

Upon entering their first jobs, teachers soon realize that EFL “can be an unstable, marginalized, impermanent occupation” (Johnston, 1997, p. 707) and experience ‘reality shock’ (Farrell 2006, 2008) as their ideas about teaching are tested. In a study investigating the personal and professional discourse of 17 Polish and expatriate teachers in Poland, Johnston (1997) found that teachers in this context do not tell teacher life stories or present an overt teacher identity. Johnston concludes that teachers are unwilling to make a long-term commitment to EFL because they are underpaid, overworked, and have few opportunities to develop professionally. They do
not project a teacher identity because their options to develop professionally are limited, and they
do not perceive English language teaching as a career, but as a temporary situation likely to
change in the immediate future.

In this section several studies will be considered that focus on the professional
development of EFL university teachers, many of whom report working in unsupportive,
isolationist contexts. The first two studies indicate a connection between teacher professional
fulfillment and professional development opportunities, and the final three studies suggest that
the participation in collaborative professional development activities can help overcome the
isolation teachers often experience, foster their professional identities, and promote a greater
sense of being part of a teaching community.

Tasker (2006) investigated how EFL teacher attitude and the teacher professional
development they experienced in their workplaces influenced their length of employment in the
profession. Native English speaking EFL teachers (28 total) who attended a four-week TEFL
certificate program over a two-year period responded to an on-line questionnaire asking about
their attitude toward teaching and the kinds of in-service professional development they
experienced in their work at language schools in Europe and Asia. Half of the EFL teachers were
still teaching at the time of the questionnaire, and half had left the field. The former teachers had
taught for an average of about a year before quitting, and the current teachers had taught for over
a year and a half at the time of the study. Of the 28 participants, 25 had some or all of their
teaching experience in the Czech Republic. Many of the participants had additional teaching
experience in Japan, Korea, China, Germany and Turkey.

There were few differences between the former and current teachers in the kinds of
professional development they received: both groups rarely observed other teachers; wrote or
helped write course syllabi; submitted lesson plans; met with other teachers informally to share ideas or coordinate classes; read any professional materials; or were encouraged to attend workshops. Both groups felt they could only ‘sometimes’ exchange teaching ideas with other teachers, and ‘sometimes’ approach other teachers or supervising teachers for suggestions. However, the current teachers met with other teachers and supervisors in scheduled meetings significantly more often.

An analysis of the responses to the questionnaire’s open-ended questions demonstrated a wide divide between the former EFL teachers and school administrators. Although some teachers revealed they were only teaching English as a means to travel, many of the teachers revealed a tension between the way they perceived themselves (as new teachers who would complete their one-year contracts), and the way they believed management perceived them (as backpackers who would break their contracts). This tension was exacerbated when management (according to the teachers) refused to invest time and resources into professional development because they felt that the teachers would most likely leave early, and waste management’s investment. The former teachers, without the necessary resources to develop or the experience to develop on their own, became discouraged and eventually quit the profession, often breaking their contracts to do so. The current teachers told similar stories; however, most of them reported that they eventually found a school that treated and supported them professionally, and many cited that as one of the reasons they remained as teachers.

The data from the former teachers supports Johnston’s (1997) claim that EFL teachers do not present an overt teacher identity or tell teacher stories because they have so few options to develop professionally. However, once the current teachers started working in a more supportive
environment and receiving what they termed “more help” and “respect”, they began to project a
stronger teacher identity.

Borg (2008) also investigated how expatriate teachers adapted to EFL teaching after
completing a four-week Certificate in Teaching English to Adults (CELTA) by interviewing
three teachers during the course and asking them to complete a questionnaire after they began
teaching. She found that although one of the teachers had professional support from colleagues
and was happy with her teaching experience, the other two teachers received little support from
their colleagues and no additional training. While one of these teachers was able to adapt to a
difficult situation, the isolation the other felt lead to disillusionment with teaching. With all three
teachers, the possibility to interact with colleagues had an impact on their teaching experience.

Ting and Watt (2008) narrate Ting’s multi-year journey as an EFL teacher from
struggling to survive in an unsupportive teaching environment in an Italian university initially by
reading EFL journal articles and later by establishing a professional identity through action
research, personal reflection and collaboration using narrative inquiry. As an untrained EFL
teacher (and former biochemist) entering the field, Ting states that because she did not receive
support from her colleagues, she turned to reading journal articles as a means to access
knowledge about the field, eventually leading her to undertake action research. Publication of an
article gave her a sense of “alignment” with the teaching profession. Encouraged by her M.A
teacher, Ting used narrative inquiry as a way to explore her transition from a
positivistic, quantitative researcher to a situated, qualitative teacher-researcher. Ting’s success
exploring conflicts in her narrative supported her “full professional metamorphosis into an
enlightened EFL professional” (p. 138). Ting and Watt argue that while obtaining an EFL
certificate might signal membership in the teaching profession, only by reading the research
literature and conducting action research, case studies or narrative inquiry will teachers become full participants in the professional EFL teaching community. But teachers must first see themselves as part of the “knowledge-generating process” if they are to make their experience known to the wider community (p. 143).

Farrell (2001) reports on a ‘critical friendship’ between an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teacher and a teacher educator in a university in Singapore. They define a critical friendship as “people who collaborate in a way that encourages discussion and reflection in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning” (p. 369). The EAP teacher asked the researcher to observe her writing class to share his perspective on her teaching and interaction with students. Farrell comments that although he acted as a catalyst for the teacher to examine her teaching, she often raised the same issues as the researcher after a chance to reflect in a journal. As a result of their collaboration, the teacher made changes to her teaching to encourage more student-student interaction, and the researcher gained insight into the collaborative and reflective process of the interaction. Farrell stresses the importance of allowing enough time for both critical friends to reflect before meeting, arranging specific windows of time for reflection and meeting, and creating rules to help establish trust.

Vo and Nguyen (2010) formed a Critical Friends Group for four novice EFL teachers at a university in Vietnam to increase teacher collaboration and help them overcome an isolationist environment. They explored the teachers’ perception of how their participation affected their ‘teaching performance’. Critical Friends is a collaborative, inquiry-based professional development activity for teachers to explore teaching and learning issues. With one of the researchers as a facilitator, the teachers met regularly over a 10-week semester. Vo and Nguyen report that the teachers benefitted from their participation because it afforded them a “rare
opportunity to exchange their professional ideas” (p. 212) and learn from colleagues; a chance to get feedback on their teaching; and an opportunity to strengthen their sense of belonging to a professional community.

Apart from the Farrell (2001) research, the studies explored in this section seem to indicate that professional isolation and lack of professional development opportunities is widespread in EFL teaching contexts. While some of the teachers in the Tasker (2006) and Borg (2008) studies who received little or no professional support became disillusioned with teaching and left the field, the teachers in the other studies were pro-active in creating or participating in collaborative professional development activities such as narrative inquiry, a critical friendship and a Critical Friends Group to engage in peer and self-reflection and increase opportunities to receive professional support from colleagues.

2.3. Inquiry-based Approaches to Professional Development

A Critical Friends Group (Bambino, 2002; Key, 2006; Franzak, 2002; Poehner, 2011) is an example of an inquiry-based approach to professional development. Other inquiry-based approaches such as Collaborative Development (Edge, 2002), Teacher Study Groups (Dubetz, 2005), Peer Coaching (Ackland, 2000; Showers and Joyce, 1996) and Lesson Study (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1997; Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2003) are means for teachers to create mediational spaces to collaboratively explore questions about their students, their teaching practice and the relationship between teaching practice and student learning through dialogic mediation, and can include observation of teaching practice and an examination of teaching and student artifacts.
In the next section, the inquiry-based approach Lesson Study will be explored in detail. Lesson Study is the professional development activity the participants in the current study will engage in to explore student learning issues as a means to gain insight into their teaching beliefs and practices.

2.4. Lesson Study

2.4.1. Overview

Lesson Study is an inquiry-based professional development activity that encourages teacher investigation into student learning, which ultimately could promote teacher learning. It is a framework teachers use to explore a gap between where their students are now, and where they would like them to be, then seek ways to begin to bridge that gap by creating a research lesson. The research lesson focuses on re-directing student learning by changing teaching practices and designing artifacts that could begin to assist their learners in achieving the long-term goal they have established. Lesson Study is both “a systematic inquiry into teaching practice much more broadly defined, which happens to be carried out by examining lessons” (Fernandez, 2002, p. 394), and a process for “creating deep and grounded reflection about the complex activities of teaching that can then be shared and discussed with other members of the profession” (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002, p. 134). Teachers emerge from their sustained, collaborative effort to investigate one aspect of student learning with an increased understanding of their students and teaching practice. Lesson Study is

not only a systematic inquiry and collaborative process, but also a transformative system for learning from practice that requires particular supporting materials and knowledge, conditions, habits of mind, and institutional structures to flourish…[it] interconnects intimately with many local structures, both adapting itself to them and is also transforming them (Lewis, 2006, p. 12-13).
Like other inquiry-based approaches for teacher professional development, Lesson Study is a school-based, teacher-driven, collaborative investigation for teachers to ask questions about their students; their practices; the relationship between teacher practice and student learning; observe teaching practice; and examine teaching and student artifacts (Johnson, 2006; 2009).

2.4.2. Origin of Lesson Study

Lesson Study originated in Japan (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1997, 1998, 1999; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watanabe, 2002), but has become more popular in North America in the past fifteen years (Fernandez, 2002; Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002; Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2003; Hiebert & Stigler, 2000; Lewis, 2000; 2006; Lewis, Perry, Hurd & O’Connell, 2006; Stepanek et al., 2007). Although Lesson Study originated in Japan in the early 1900s, it did not become firmly established as a form of professional development (konaikenshu, in-service education in the school) until the mid-1960s (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). Konaikenshu-based Lesson Study was a grassroots effort until the mid-1970s when the Japanese government took interest and began to financially support schools. Teachers initiate Lesson Study but “may be sponsored by…schools, districts, professional organizations, and independent study groups” (Lewis, Perry and Murata, 2006, p. 4).

2.4.3. The Lesson Study Process

Japanese teachers often begin a new Lesson Study cycle by meeting to think about the school’s mission statement and what it means in terms of the qualities they would like their students to have (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). Teachers then identify gaps between where their students are currently, and where they would like them to be (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002). Pursuing a goal should be “conceived as a three- or four-year effort, so that a group has sufficient
time to obtain meaningful results and insights” (p. 129). Some examples of *konaikenshu* goals are “developing lessons that encourage students to learn from each other” and “using a Japanese language class to foster students’ ability to wrestle with topics they discover on their own” (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004, p. 12). Typically, academic goals are not included in these broad statements; however, teachers in a particular subject area will apply these goals to their own contexts (Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2003). Merging the *konaikenshu* goal with Lesson Study provides “a concrete process (i.e., working on study lessons) for thinking about how to bring a school’s…goal to life” (p. 13).

A Lesson Study group typically meets after school anywhere from once a week to once a month; has 4 to 6 teacher participants; and works on two or three lessons connected to the overarching goal per year. After teachers select an overarching goal they would like to work on together, the Lesson Study group decides on the content area they wish to focus on (e.g., math) and a specific topic they wish to address (e.g., solving for the area of right triangles). The teachers then create research questions related to their long-term goal, and collaboratively produce research lessons that address those research questions. The lessons themselves focus on the content and pedagogical issues that address weaknesses in the curriculum, or topics that are difficult to teach or learn.

Teachers in Lesson Study groups often invite outside advisors and experts to help them with the content or pedagogy in planning a research lesson. Advisors are chosen because they have strong content, pedagogical, and/or curricular knowledge that they can bring to the group. These experts are also instrumental in expediting a group’s access to information, particularly theoretical information or recent research findings, which might otherwise be too time-consuming or difficult for teachers to access on their own…Interestingly, however, the role of an advisor is not to take over the work of a group, which is meant to always remain teacher-led and responsive to the needs of the particular [students] served by the teachers in the group (Fernandez, 2002, p. 396).
Advisors who end up adopting a leadership role in a Lesson Study group could compromise the autonomy of the teachers (Puchner & Taylor, 2006).

In deciding on the content area and topic of the research lesson, teachers can investigate how that topic is addressed, for example, in the school’s textbooks, on exams, the professional literature, by outside experts, and other teachers in the school. After examining the history of how the topic has been taught, the group collaboratively produces a research lesson that addresses their overarching goal, and potentially begins to bridge the gap they have discovered in their students’ learning. Crucial to the process of designing a research lesson is deciding what would constitute evidence that the students are beginning to narrow the learning gap, and how that evidence should be collected. Typical artifacts such as transcripts of student interactions, examples of how students solve problems and written materials students produce all provide “evidence-based insights into students’ classroom and conceptual understanding” (Chokshi and Fernandez, 2004, p. 521). Once the lesson plan has been written, often by one or two teachers in the group, and the group has collaboratively revised it, one member of the group teaches the lesson to her class and the other members observe, taking detailed notes and collecting evidence with particular attention to the pivotal moments in the lesson that address the overarching goal, i.e., whether the new mediating artifacts they introduce or the changes they make in teaching practice produce the envisioned learning outcome.

Soon after the lesson is taught, the group meets for critical reflection and evaluation of the lesson. Based on the evaluation, the group then revises the lesson, and another teacher in the group teaches it to her own class, and the other members of the group observe the lesson, again taking notes and following the observation guidelines. During the second feedback session that follows, teachers once more evaluate how well the lesson achieved their aims and suggest how it
could be improved. When the teachers either complete the steps of one research lesson, or finish a longer cycle of several research lessons related to the group’s overarching goal, a reflective record of the entire Lesson Study process is often produced. Figure 2.1 shows the steps in the Lesson Study process.

Figure 2.1. The Lesson Study Process
1. Set an overarching goal
2. Identify a topic for the research lesson
3. Explore how topic is taught / learned
4. Create artifact(s) for the research lesson
5. Write the research lesson plan
6. Teach, observe the lesson
7. Critique the lesson
8. Make the knowledge public
9. The process repeats: Work continues on the same or a new overarching goal.

The research lesson plan is quite detailed and complex. The three sections are the introduction, information about the unit, and information about the lesson. The introduction includes a basic description of the lesson and unit, comments on the teachers’ thinking that guided their development, and describes the students in the class. The second section describes the unit’s goals, connects the unit content to the content of similar units in the grades beyond, and breaks down the unit by lessons, one of which will be the research lesson. The third section describes the research lesson in detail, and is organized into four columns: the learning activities and teacher questions, which includes the goals and steps of each part of the lesson, and teacher comments at critical transition points; expected student reactions to each step in the teacher’s lesson and their possible comments; anticipated teacher response to student reaction; and teacher evaluation of each step (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004).

When teachers either complete one research lesson, or finish a longer cycle of several research lessons related to the group’s overarching goal, a reflective record of the entire Lesson Study process is usually produced. This record should include not only the lesson plan, but also
the ‘focal themes’ of all the problems discussed throughout the entire process; in addition, the
report could include the lesson materials, observation notes and student work samples
(Fernandez, Cannon & Chokshi, 2003). Schools typically issue research bulletins which describe
the work the teachers carried out, and “teachers’ reflections about the key lessons learned from
the work” (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004, p. 15).

Japanese schools or districts may periodically hold an open house to present the work
being done by all the school or district’s Lesson Study groups. When an open house is held, or
when teachers finish a cycle of lessons related to a goal, schools release more extensive and
detailed research bulletins (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). In Japan, Lesson Study reports are also
published as monographs and research articles, and are readily available in bookstores. Japanese
teachers are “responsible for about two-thirds of such publications, thus producing more research
articles than do researchers” (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002, p. 133).

2.4.4. Two U.S. Lesson Study Case Studies

In the U.S., Lesson Study started to gain wide interest with the publication of The Teaching Gap
(Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Over the next four years, Lesson Study was initiated at
335 US schools in 32 states, and became the subject of a number of conferences (Lewis, Perry,
Curd and O’Connell, 2006).

Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi (2003) and Lewis et al. (2006) evaluate whether
participation in Lesson Study is an effective means of professional development for U.S.
teachers. In the Fernandez et al. (2003) case study, American elementary school mathematics
teachers new to Lesson Study worked closely with visiting Japanese teachers experienced in
Lesson Study for one year. They found that successful implementation of Lesson Study
depended on whether teachers were able to step outside their traditional roles, and adopt the perspectives of researcher, curriculum developer and student. Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi (2003) explain that when teachers adopt a “researcher lens,” as the Japanese teachers they were working with had, they see themselves as researchers conducting an empirical examination, organized around asking questions about practice and designing classroom experiments to explore these questions...in particular [there are] four critical aspects of good research: the development of meaningful and testable hypotheses, the use of appropriate means for exploring these hypotheses, the reliance on evidence to judge the success of research endeavors, and the interest in generalizing research findings to other applicable contexts (p. 173).

The researchers describe how the American teachers had difficulty adopting a researcher perspective; for example, they selected a goal for their study, but the discussion of the goal was never made explicit during the ensuing lesson planning process. The American teachers “first instinct was to focus on the lesson per se while the Japanese teachers focused on the research process” (p. 174). Other problems the teachers had in adopting a researcher perspective were as follows: trouble collecting classroom data accurately or sufficiently; difficulty connecting the classroom data to their research goals; problems maintaining the role of observer (they often helped the teacher); difficulty connecting the lesson to broader educational goals; and neglecting to write evaluations of their work.

The American teachers were also encouraged to adopt the perspective of a curriculum developer and the perspective of their students. They worked towards connecting study lessons vertically to previous and future topics, and horizontally to other topics in a unit. However, the American teachers missed opportunities to justify why they sequenced their topics the way they did. The teachers followed the lesson plan format, but avoided providing a rationale for the sequencing choices they made (Fernandez et al., 2003). Finally, although the Japanese teachers
stressed the importance of adopting the perspective of the students “by attempting to understand [their] thinking, anticipate their behaviors, and determine how to use this knowledge to build students’ understanding” (p. 179), the American teachers had difficulty moving beyond their more traditional role of considering only what they wanted the students to learn.

Fernandez et al. (2003) argue that implementing Lesson Study in the U.S. faces “substantial challenges that must be overcome to make this practice more purposeful and powerful” (p. 181). They stress that teachers new to Lesson Study will not be able to adopt the roles discussed above without the help of outside ‘knowledge coaches’, advisors who could assist teachers in acquiring the necessary expertise. But ultimately, and most importantly, teachers need to escape “the climate of passivity that has existed in U.S. teaching culture” (Chokshi and Fernandez, 2005, p. 678) and “exert more control over their own professional development by setting its direction” (p. 677) through critical discussions of their work with other teachers through Lesson Study. Chokshi and Fernandez (2005) state they see signs that American teachers are moving beyond the traditional patterns in which “outside experts impose experiences on teachers in a top-down manner” (p. 677), towards a teacher-initiated collaborative process of lifelong professional learning.

In the Lewis et al. (2006) case study, the researchers chart the successful development of Lesson Study at Highland Elementary School over a five year period. Like the teachers in the Fernandez et al. (2003) case study, the Highland teachers went through many of the same difficulties in the first year adopting the perspective of researchers, initially focusing only on the “surface features”, conceiving Lesson Study as a means of “polishing and disseminating lessons” (p. 274). In fact, their original plan was to distribute these perfected lesson plans on the district intranet. They also had problems creating data collection guidelines for observers, and
difficulty connecting the data they collected to their goals in the post-lesson discussion. The Highland teachers also failed to integrate their research lessons’ objectives into the wider curriculum, spending much of their meeting time on perfecting the lessons, and “far less time drawing out the implications of the research lesson for their future teaching” (p. 275).

However, Lewis et al. (2006) report on four changes that teachers underwent after this initial adjustment period: they came to realize that Lesson Study was “an opportunity for teachers to be researchers” and test their “knowledge of how…students think” (p. 274); they became better at guiding observations, data collection, and post-lesson discussion; they began consulting with outside content area and Lesson Study experts who have been instrumental in their progress; and they began to connect new Lesson Study cycles with the knowledge of student learning collected in past cycles.

Lewis et al. (2006) point to several aspects of Highland’s successful experience with Lesson Study that set it apart from other institutions where it did not work out. At Highland, Lesson Study quickly gained support from both the school administration and faculty, with most of the teachers joining a group by the second year. Funds for substitutes and training were provided by the district. Importantly, Lesson Study took the place of other school mandated programs for mentoring new teachers and adapting new standards into the curriculum. Lewis et al. (2006) state that Lesson Study has begun “to show signs of institutionalization” (p. 274). Another aspect that contributed to the success of Lesson Study was the faculty’s increasing willingness to appropriate the knowledge of outside experts while maintaining “internal ownership of the Lesson Study effort” (p. 278).

The teachers at Highland were successful in implementing Lesson Study, and it is entirely possible that the teachers in the Fernandez et al. (2003) case study were more successful
in subsequent years; however, there are several significant differences between the context in which Lesson Study is carried out at Highland, which might be construed as a ‘best case’ scenario in the U.S., and how it is carried out in Japan.

Highland had the institutional and financial support which is critical in successfully implementing Lesson Study, but unless the knowledge the Highland teachers produce is valued by other schools, teacher educators and university researchers, their collaborative professional development effort might well remain local. Lewis et al. (2006) argue that North American schools, like Japanese schools, could share the knowledge they gain through participating in Lesson Study with other teachers by conducting public research lessons, and distributing reports on the results.

Although both of these schools had considerable support, teachers in U.S. schools who wished to adopt Lesson Study would have difficulty challenging the mindset that professional development is something that takes place after the teachers’ work day finishes. Professional development opportunities which are scheduled during the workday, compensated, sustained over time and designed for teachers at a school from the same department are judged by teachers to be more successful (Garet, et. al., 2001). If Lesson Study is seen as an addition to teachers’ existing responsibilities of teaching all day, participating in school-mandated activities, planning lessons, developing materials and grading, with no additional pay or support, it is unlikely that many teachers will be interested in committing their limited amount of time to this activity. However, as the Highland example shows, replacing mandatory school activities with Lesson Study, offering teachers release time, and allocating money to pay for substitutes could potentially alleviate many of these obstacles and increase the likelihood of a commitment from administrators and teachers.
2.5. Teacher Knowledge Production

In Japan, teachers are regarded as legitimate producers of professional knowledge. Their production of research lesson demonstrations, Lesson Study reports, research bulletins, monographs and research articles is the clearly established route by which they contribute to the knowledge base. Teacher knowledge is seen to be created through participation in a collaborative, interactive dialogic process with other teachers, administrators, and outside experts. Bottom-up knowledge of local teaching practice merges with top-down expert knowledge to create teacher expertise (Kennedy, 1999).

However, in the U.S., though slowly changing, production of teacher knowledge is still mostly regarded as the purview of university researchers and teacher educators (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2005). Teachers are often seen as the recipients, not producers of this knowledge. As the teaching profession moves towards a sociocultural perspective, there has been a corresponding shift in what counts as knowledge and knowledge production, and who counted as a legitimate producer of teacher knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999a; Sleeter, 1999). In this section, after a brief account of the sociocultural perspective in teacher education, a description of how inquiry-based approaches generally, and Lesson Study specifically, align with this perspective will be considered.

2.6. Towards a Sociocultural Perspective in Teacher Learning

Over the past 30 years, research in teacher learning has increasingly focused on the interconnected relationships between teacher cognition and beliefs; the influence of teachers’ socialization as students (Lortie, 1975); and the influence of the norms and values of the institutions in which teachers work, become socialized into teaching, and participate in professional development activities (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).
During this period, the notion that pre-service teachers could be ‘front-loaded’ in their programs of study with the theory and methodology that would serve them throughout their careers was slowly being replaced with the idea that teacher learning is life-long and situated in the historical, social and institutional contexts in which they participated in the past and participate in currently (Freeman, 2002; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006).

This increased complexity, Freeman (2002) argues, has led to the understanding that teachers “possess a unique knowledge about teaching” (p. 8) and that they will “think about and know [their] teaching and…classroom differently from a non-teacher who spends time there, regardless of the parity, care, and thoroughness that the outsider may invest in the research process” (p. 9). Teachers bring an ‘emic’ perspective that researchers outside the classroom cannot. Teacher knowledge is valuable because teacher cognition is “shaped by the specific social activities in which [they] engage” (Johnson, 2009), which makes their insight unique.

Cognition, from a sociocultural perspective, is formed through participation in socially meaningful patterns of activities (embedded in cultural and historical contexts), as individuals appropriate symbolic and material artifacts that mediate (organize and control) the construction of new meanings. As idealized forms of these artifacts are transformed by into internal representation and become integrated into thinking activity, meaning that was once social is now personal, and unique to that person (Valsiner, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Tracing teacher learning as an interaction between cognitive processes and the social world could reveal how teaching concepts develop and “how this internal activity transforms teachers’ understanding of themselves as teachers, of their students, and of the activities of teaching” (Johnson, 2009, p. 13).

Agency plays a key role in this developmental process as learners decide for themselves what is salient and relevant in the social world, and actively select what to appropriate and
become “constructor[s] of new choices” (Valsiner, 1998, p. 114) in what is learned and how it is learned based on an “individual’s prior experiences, the sociocultural contexts in which the learning takes place, and what the individual wants, needs, and/or is expected to do with that knowledge” (Johnson, 2009, p. 2). Learners are intentional agents who do not react to their contexts; they are able to influence them (Mercer, 2011). In addition, agency can include the ability to collaborate with others to produce a stronger response to a complex problem, known as ‘relational agency’ (Edwards and Kinti, 2010).

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning takes place through past and present participation in social activities and through dialogic interaction (and negotiation) with others in communities of practice. They stress that learning and development occur as peripheral members of a community master the skills and knowledge and “move towards full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (p. 29). In schools, the members of the community with full participation are the competent teachers and experts who represent a relatively stable and well-defined center of knowledge. However, Engeström (2001) argues that much of what is learned in the workplace is not well understood ahead of time, so people often need to learn new types of activities as those activities are being created, which means there is no stable center or competent teacher to guide new members toward full participation. The center of learning activity that can lead to transformation of an organization does not necessarily come from the most central members of the community.

From a sociocultural perspective, teacher cognition and learning come from participating in social activities in the classroom and the school, based on their history, experience and knowledge of their students, knowledge of themselves, the curriculum and institution. Kennedy (1999) claims that teacher knowledge can be construed as ‘expertise’, a combination of ‘craft’
knowledge (“situated, strategic, narrative”) and ‘expert’ knowledge (“public, justified, propositional”) (p. 37). Expertise, then, is expert knowledge reconceptualized by teachers as craft knowledge, made meaningful through their participation in their local professional context.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999b) state that teachers learn when they “generate local knowledge of practice by working within the context of inquiry communities to theorize and construct their work and to connect it to larger social, cultural and political issues” (p. 250). Similarly, Johnson (2006) argues that

knowledge that informs activity is not just abstracted from theory, codified in textbooks, and constructed through principled ways of examining phenomena, but also emerges out of a dialogic and transformative process of reconsidering and reorganizing lived experiences through the theoretical constructs and discourses...valued within the communities of practice that hold power (p. 240-241).

Teacher learning emerges as (personally salient) theoretical knowledge is gradually reconceptualized through participation in an on-going process of dialogic interaction with other teaching professionals and through teaching practice, bounded by the sociocultural context in which the teachers work.

In teacher education, who is valued as a constructor of knowledge is shifting from the researcher to shared power among researchers, teachers and teacher educators (Freeman, 2002). The ‘outside/in’ perspective has widened to include teachers’ ‘inside/out’ perspective. Teachers are now seen as having “insider knowledge that includes the complex and multilayered understandings” (Johnson, 2006, p. 241) and are therefore legitimate contributors to the knowledge base of teacher education. Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler (2002) contend that the knowledge teachers generate, practitioner knowledge, should be part of the professional knowledge base in teacher education because it is specific, detailed and “integrated and organized around problems of practice” (p. 6). Recognizing teachers as legitimate contributors
and the work they produce as a valid contribution to the professional knowledge base would go some way in bridging what Johnson (2006) has called the epistemological gap between what is now known about teacher cognition and practice and the “positivistic paradigm that continues to dominate the public discourse” (p. 237) in second language teacher professional development.

2.7. Inquiry-based Approaches and Practitioner Knowledge

Although teacher-produced research such as teacher narratives “insert practitioners into public conversations about teaching” (Sleeter, 1999, p. 15), the dilemma still remains in “how to engage teachers in articulating…the complexity of teacher learning” (Freeman, 2002, p. 11), and how to create ‘public spaces’ for teachers to make visible how they combine expert knowledge and practitioner knowledge in their classrooms (Johnson, 2006). Inquiry-based approaches to teacher professional development have the potential to “make visible” this process.

Teachers engaged in inquiry-based approaches to professional development see themselves not simply as consumers of ‘expert’ knowledge, but also producers of local knowledge. Inquiry-based approaches, specifically Lesson Study, offer a means for teacher knowledge to become part of the professional knowledge base for teacher education. These approaches to teacher professional development align well with the sociocultural perspective in that learning about teaching and the social contexts in which that learning takes place are intertwined, and agency is enhanced because teachers choose the direction that learning takes. Teacher knowing comes about through participation in meaningful socially situated activities.

For locally produced knowledge that emerges from inquiry-based approaches to become a part of the professional knowledge base, it must be “created with the intent of public examination, with the goal of making it shareable among teachers, open for discussion, verification, and refutation or modification” (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002, p. 7). The
report issued at the end of a Lesson Study cycle could be an artifact that meets these requirements, the vehicle by which practitioner knowledge is made public and becomes part of the knowledge base (Hiebert et al., 2002; Chokshi & Fernandez, 2005). Recall that this report describes the entire process of one or more research lessons related to an overarching goal, often including the minutes from all meetings, the lesson plans, observation notes, student and teaching artifacts, and a summary of what was learned. Chokshi and Fernandez (2005) are optimistic that Lesson Study can help build a teacher knowledge base in North America because they have observed teachers moving beyond their own schools to report their findings, either through open houses or at conferences, and sharing their work extensively on-line. However, they caution that much of the information teachers are sharing with this wider audience is mainly procedural, and describes or gives advice about “the work without necessarily reflecting or examining the actual work itself” (p. 676). They also add that most of the materials that are available have been produced by only a small subset of teachers and researchers.

Another obstacle to practitioner knowledge that emerges from Lesson Study becoming part of the professional knowledge base is the “epistemological gap” (Johnson, 2006) that exists between the value placed in the U.S. on conducting ‘summative research’ over following a ‘local proof path’, in which “instructional knowledge accumulates through progressive advances in research lessons taught in various local contexts…rather than through large-scale or centralized studies” (Lewis et al, 2006, p. 6). The ‘local proof path’ is a bottom up approach whereby Japanese teachers, working with local and outside experts, analyze the learning and teaching process. This critical reflection can lead to changes in practice, and over time, lead to reconceptualization of “widely shared norms about teaching” (p. 6), made public in reports, open houses and conferences that “bring to life the local vision of the innovation” (p. 6). The teacher
and ‘experts’ engaged in this process are both considered researchers. Lewis et al. (2006) caution that U.S. educators preference for controlled experimental research focusing on whether Lesson Study ‘works’ could lead them to “dismiss locally initiated innovations” and “conclude that [Lesson Study] doesn’t work, and to move on to the next promising idea” (p. 10). They emphasize that ‘outside / in’ researchers could “add significant value to practitioners’ efforts by illuminating the innovation’s mechanism and design” (p. 8); however, for this to take place, the ‘local proof path’ needs to be “recognized as a legitimate route for research contributions to educational improvement” (p. 8).

To begin to achieve this goal, Lewis, Perry and Murata (2006) argue that Lesson Study research can be “used to test and expand our theories of professional learning” (p. 6) by using the data and artifacts collected during Lesson Study to “make visible some of the pathways by which teachers may learn during Lesson Study” (p. 5). If Lesson Study is to be used to inform a theory of learning, then that theory must not only describe who the subjects of learning are, why they learn, and what they learn, including content and outcomes, but must also explicate how teachers learn and what the main processes of learning are (Engeström, 2001). Vygotskian sociocultural theory and cultural-historical activity theory, described in the next section, are the theoretical frameworks that are used to understand the context in which teachers work, and have the potential to uncover teachers’ cognitive development and trajectory of learning as teachers participate in Lesson Study.

2.8. Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (SCT) is a theory of human development based on the writing of L.S. Vygotsky, an early 20th century Russian psychologist. Vygotsky’s (1978) revolutionary
concept was that humans control their “their behavior from the outside” (p. 40) by constructing and using artifacts that are directed inwardly to eventually achieve self-regulation of a process. In Vygotskian sociocultural theory, and later in cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), the constructs of mediation, internalization, regulation and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) are used to explain cognitive development (Engeström, 1987; 1999a; 1999b; 2001; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Leont’ev, 1978; 1981; Valsiner, 1998; Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; Vygotsky & Luria, 1994; Wertsch, 1985).

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and Vygotsky and Luria (1994) argued that there is a direct and indirect relationship between people and the world. He characterized the direct relationship between elementary (biologically determined) behavior and the world, such as instinctual reactions to environmental stimuli, as stimulus – reaction behavior, represented as the dashed line in figure 2.2. He also stated there is an indirect relationship between our higher psychological processes (e.g., memory, attention, planning and learning) and the practical activity in the world (object) that is mediated (organized and controlled) by culturally constructed artifacts. Symbolic and material artifacts such as spoken and written language, books, lesson plans, and technology are means to improve upon natural psychological processes (Van der Veer and Valsiner, 1991).

Figure 2.2. The Indirect / Direct Relationship between People and the World
2.9. The Constructs of Sociocultural Theory

2.9.1. Mediation

Vygotsky (1978) proposed that an individual’s higher mental functions are generated through participation in activities that are mediated by culturally constructed material and conceptual artifacts, the most prominent being spoken and written language. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) assert that “there are no uniquely human actions that are not mediated” (p. 63). As the two strands of development (biological development of elementary mental functions and cultural development of higher mental functions) become intertwined, they argue (as Vygotsky did) that mediation is often “hidden from direct observation as a consequence of internalization” (p. 61). Vygotsky developed a new methodology, known as ‘method of double stimulation’ (discussed later below), to uncover the process of cognitive development, not only observe the outcome of the process.

2.9.2. Internalization / Externalization and Regulation

Vygotsky argued that cognitive development proceeds as individuals participate in socially meaningful patterns of activity, at first relying on external material and symbolic artifacts to perform the action. Over time, individuals transform idealized forms of external artifacts into internal representation, eventually integrating them into their thinking activity though a process of internalization / externalization, resulting in self-regulation of the action, and development of the higher mental functions (Valsiner, 1998). Self-regulation means that individuals no longer need to rely on the external mediational means because those means have become internalized. In this process, every psychological function “appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level…the transformation of an interpersonal process
into an intrapersonal one” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Development progresses as the locus of control shifts from other- and object-regulated to self-regulated through a process of internalization (Vygotsky, 1978).

An example of the process of internalization is apparent in novice teachers who find it necessary to write detailed, step-by-step lesson plans to assist them in organizing their lessons. A lesson plan is both a physical and a symbolic tool that externally mediates their teaching processes. As teachers gain experience, external (social) teaching practices that once required detailed notes on a page to perform are gradually transformed into internal (personal) processes. Experienced teachers depend less on following a detailed lesson plan because many of their teaching practices are now internalized. Self-regulation of these practices means that they are able to focus less on teaching processes and attend more to students’ needs.

Internalization / externalization involves the movement from an external, social interactional reality, to “mastery of external sign forms” resulting in “the internal plane taking on ‘a quasi-social’ nature because of its origins” (Wertsch, 1985, p. 67). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) argue that internalization “describes the means of developing the capacity to perform complex cognitive and motor functions with increasingly less reliance on externally provided mediation” (p. 266). Valsiner (1998) describes internalization and externalization as

a cyclical, reciprocal process within which ‘personal sense’…leads the construction of meanings, which are made available in the interpersonal domain. Internalization is the process by which meanings that relate to phenomena, and that are suggested for the individual by ‘social others’ who pursue their personal goals while assuming social roles (p. 115).

Externalization “connotes activities by which the once social – but now personal – set of meanings is constructively moved into novel contexts within the social environment” (p. 115,
from Valsiner and Lawrence, 1996). An individual’s now personalized (internalized) understanding of a process is made social (externalized) though dialogic interaction.

It is important to note that internalization / externalization is not a process of direct knowledge transmission. People are “constructors of their own development rather than mere recipients of ‘social influences’ from others” (Valsiner, 1998, p. 103). The ‘brought over’ material is constructively modified by the individual in the ‘bringing over’ process (Valsiner, 1998). Lantolf (2000) argues that “novices do not merely copy the experts’ capabilities; rather, they transform what the experts offer them as they appropriate it” (p. 17). For example, in a second language learning classroom, over the course of a lesson, it is possible to imagine a group of students listening to the same information, reading the same texts, and performing the same tasks, but attending to quite different pieces of lexical, grammatical, phonological and cultural information depending on their proficiency in the language, degree of interest in the task, and the perceived utility of a language feature they notice. Even students who attend to the same language feature will often make sense of it in quite different ways.

2.9.3. The Zone of Proximal Development

The construct Vygotsky (1978) used to specify the relationship between social and personal worlds (interpsychological and intrapsychological functioning), and how that dialectical relationship guided an individual’s development, is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). He defined the ZPD as the distance between what can be accomplished independently and what can be achieved in collaboration with peer or expert others. The focus for Vygotsky (1978) was the process of development (the “buds or flowers of development”) not the end result (“the fruits”) of development (p. 86). An intrinsic part of learning is that it “creates the zone of proximal
development”, which means that learning initiates developmental processes that only function through cooperative interaction with others in a meaningful social activity. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). The process of learning precedes the process of development. A person’s forward-looking ZPD is constrained by that person’s current knowledge and abilities, and what that person could achieve through mediational means. An individual struggling with basic math concepts could not be expected to learn calculus no matter how much mediational support was available. Lantolf (2000) sees the ZPD “not as a physical place situated in time and space; rather it is a metaphor for observing and understanding how mediational means are appropriated and internalized…through collaborative construction of opportunities…for individuals to develop their mental abilities” (p. 17). Johnson & Golombek (2003) discuss mediational means in the ZPD as object-regulated (individuals are assisted by artifacts in some way), other-regulated (individuals are helped by peers or experts) or self-regulated (individuals “gain control over their cognition and activity” (p. 733)).

2.10. Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory and Teacher Learning

The constructs mediation, externalization / internalization, regulation, and ZPD are used to frame teacher cognitive development in a number of studies and books (Childs, 2011; Ellis and Orchard, 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson, 2007; 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; 2011; Verity, 2000; Wells & Claxton, 2002). Johnson and Golombek (2002) and Golombek and Johnson (2004) will be explored to demonstrate how teachers use narrative inquiry as mediational space to critically reflect on their teaching experiences and collaboratively construct new teaching practices and concepts drawing on their own past experiences recorded in their teaching journals, and on expert and colleague knowledge. Johnson and Golombek (2002)
conceptualize narrative inquiry “as systematic exploration that is conducted by teachers for teachers through their own stories and language” (p. 6; authors’ italics).

Golombek and Johnson (2004) investigate how teachers’ activity of using narrative inquiry acted as a “semiotic tool that facilitates teacher development and can document how teachers participate in and constitute their social reality” (p. 324). Specifically, they wanted to discover how teachers’ use of narrative inquiry helped both externalize teachers’ understanding of what they were learning, and then internalize that understanding in a way that integrated past teaching practice with the new conceptualization of that practice.

They analyzed three ESL teacher narratives (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). These narratives were chosen because they represented different points in the process of the teachers’ internalization, from “the emergence of idealized conceptualization of teaching” (Golombek & Johnson, 2004, p. 312) to the instantiation of the concept into teaching practice across contexts. Another criterion for including these narratives was that they illustrate these teachers’ conceptual development through mediational means, either on their own (self-regulation) or with the assistance of colleagues and experts (other-regulation).

The mediational means these three teachers utilized to transform their teaching practice were the creation of self or colleague as a temporary other, and the use of expert knowledge to re-conceptualize experience or rationalize changes already made to teaching practice. Golombek & Johnson (2004) argue that one teacher’s (Jenn’s) self-directed writing and reflection on that writing “allowed her to act as a temporary other” (p. 313) to bring to the surface the contradiction between her belief that teachers should be concerned about student learning and her practice of overvaluing student grades. Through her journal entries, she discovered this difference between her belief and practice. She used the discovery of this contradiction as a
catalyst for changing her practice so that it was in line with her belief that student learning should have precedence.

Jenn also drew on expert knowledge to re-conceptualize her experience. Golombek & Johnson (2004) describe a process in which Jenn examines an expert’s knowledge of a concept in her writing, and then re-visits her earlier narratives and uses the expert knowledge to make sense of her own related experience. This metacognitive awareness “of her historical and cultural situation, enabled her to create a ZPD, in which she appealed to expert knowledge” (p. 314). The expert knowledge helped her to re-frame her own knowledge, and this “reorganization provided a lens through which she interpreted her re-reading of her private journal” (p. 314), allowing her to internalize the constructively modified expert knowledge in a way that conformed to her own teaching practice.

Verity (2000) explores her loss of self-regulation as she began teaching in another culture, transforming from a self-regulated teaching expert in her native culture to what she described as a novice-like state in her new teaching environment, leading her to have “the emotions of a novice…the cognition of an expert” (p. 183) where “routine, suddenly failing me, had to be recoded” (p. 196). This contradiction between her emotions and cognition led her to seek self-mediational means, in the form of a teaching journal, to re-regulate her teaching practice. Externalizing in her journal her problems aligning her expert knowledge (what she felt to be right) with her lack of success with students (who were used to a different pattern of teacher-student interaction) initiated a process of development whereby she drew on her professional experience as an ‘expert other’ to mediate her current novice-like emotional state towards a future state where she regains her unconflicted expertise. The process she went through of externalizing the teaching dilemmas she faced and making sense of those issues with
the help of the temporary other she created where “the ‘expert-I’ offered philosophy, advice and opinions to the newly ‘novice-I’, musing on judgments she had made” (p. 186) helped her internalize a new appreciation for her students and transform her teaching practice to “be able to decode student response and, in turn, respond to it in a the new context” (p. 193). Through this transformation she resolved the contradiction by renewing her “investment in what had become an automatized, but unarticulated, expert style of work” (p. 196) and regaining a “newly authored expertise” (p. 197).

Jenn and Verity both illustrate how social and personal worlds interact in the internalization of new teaching concepts and practices through other- and self-mediational means while participating in socially meaningful activities. They were motivated to transform their teaching when they experienced a conflict between their teaching beliefs and practice which triggered a search for solutions that was mediated by expert and personal knowledge. Both arrived at new solutions that they believe resolved the conflicts they experienced, and report that they were committed to adopting these new practices.

2.11. Lesson Study Advisors and SCT Expert Regulation

In Lesson Study, advisors can assist a group by providing expertise in content, pedagogical and curricular knowledge, and access to theoretical knowledge and recent research (Fernandez, 2002). However, the Lesson Study literature does not explain how expert facilitation leads to teacher learning. As the studies above demonstrated, sociocultural theory provides a framework for understanding the cognitive processes of teacher learning and how that learning is often mediated by teacher appropriation of expert theoretical and practical knowledge that they can utilize to transform how they make sense of their classroom experience. Appropriated expert
knowledge provides the mediational means for the internalization and ultimately self-regulation of new teaching and learning concepts. Although Lesson Study researchers define how and when teachers make use of expert knowledge in their groups, they do not make specific claims about how this knowledge mediates teacher development.

2.12. Individual Action and Collective Activity

In Vygotskian sociocultural theory, the focus is generally on individual goal-directed action and culturally mediated cognitive development, as seen in the studies on teacher learning described above. Understanding the sociocultural context is crucial to comprehending how individual development takes place. Although foregrounding individual (acting with mediational means) action over collective activity is a productive line of research, the focus on the mediated actions of the individual might not reveal the nature of the collective activity the individual is engaged in. In Vygotskian terms, the individual’s sense of the action could be well understood, but not the collective meaning of the activity. Individuals act “in collective practices… [and] such collective practices are not reducible to sums of individual action; they require theoretical conceptualization in their own right” (Engeström, 1999a, p. 11). Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) is a theory of cognitive development which models collective practices and privileges object–oriented, artifact–mediated collective activity. In this paper, CHAT is used as the theoretical frame to understand and transform an EFL teacher context.

2.13. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

2.13.1. Social Transformation and Activity Theory

Vygotskian SCT and CHAT are more than descriptive frameworks to understand cognitive development. They are also used as a means to enact social transformation by
encouraging “engaged critical inquiry… [leading to] the development of material and symbolic–conceptual tools necessary to enact positive interventions” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 210). CHAT in particular has been used to promote innovation in a wide variety of contexts including second language education (Lantolf, 2000; Thorne, 2000; 2003; 2005); a postal service (Engeström, 2007), professional learning (Daniels & Warmington, 2007; Edwards, 2005; Edwards & Kinti, 2010; Leadbetter et al., 2007); healthcare (Engeström, 2001); and education (Ahn, 2008, 2011; Engeström, 1987; Y. Engeström, R. Engeström & Suntio, 2002; Lund, Rasmussen and Smørdal, 2010; Nocon, 2008; Sannino, 2008; Smolcic, 2011; Yamazumi, 2008). CHAT has also been used in conjunction with Developmental Work Research (DWR) methodology to intervene in workplaces to assist participants in creating new conceptual tools that have the potential to transform social practices into something qualitatively new. After a description of the history and principles of CHAT that follows, how DWR methodology is used in interventionist research will be addressed.

2.13.2. Three Generations of Research

Engeström (2001) states that activity theory evolved from what he calls the first generation of research, centered on Vygotsky’s work in the cultural mediation of action, expressed in his model of subject, object and mediating artifact. Engeström (2001) claims that “the limitation of the first generation was that the unit of analysis remained individually focused” (p. 134). The second generation of research, centered on A. N. Leont’ev’s work, “explicated the crucial difference between an individual action and a collective activity” (p. 134). Although Leont’ev, a student of Vygotsky, shared Vygotsky’s idea that human consciousness is generated through participation in meaningful social activity (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006), Leont’ev focused on practical activity (as action and activity) over culturally constructed semiotic systems as the
explanatory principle of human development (Kozulin, 1986). An activity is differentiated from another activity by its object. The object is the focus of collective activity and its “true motive” (Leont’ev, 1978). With an emphasis on activity, Leont’ev re-envisioned Vygotsky’s triadic representation of subject-artifact-object to include division of labor between participants in an activity. He argued that it was simultaneously possible to understand the actions of an individual but misunderstand his or her activity. For Leont’ev (1978), an individual’s actions represent intermediate steps towards achieving the object of activity. For a group of hunters, the desire for food is both the activity and its motive; however, individual hunters working within the group perform actions to achieve goals that are not directly aimed at obtaining food, such as beating the bushes to drive the animals in a certain direction. Individuals perform actions to achieve goals, and groups of individuals participate in activities to satisfy motives (Leont’ev, 1978). Engeström (1999a) argues that Vygotsky’s model “does not fully explicate the societal and collaborative nature of…actions” (p. 30), and the projected outcome of an action appears limited to the situation, and can obscure the true motive behind the activity. While an action has a fixed beginning and end, a collective activity reproduces itself and does not end. Goal-directed actions can appear quite similar and repeat often, but object-oriented activity continually transforms, and at times radically so (Engeström and Sannino, 2010)

2.13.3. Third Generation Activity Theory

In third generation activity theory, Engeström (1987) extends the triadic model of subject, object and mediating artifacts to include rules, community, and division of labor. Rules are “the explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain actions and interactions within the activity system” (Center for Research on Activity, Development, and Learning, 2014). The community consists of participants who share the same general object of activity, and the
division of labor is “the horizontal division of tasks between the members of the community and the vertical division of power and status” (Center for Research on Activity, Development, and Learning, 2014). Third generation activity theory “seeks to understand collective action, individuals, and goal-directed activity, as the focus of analysis and the key to transformation and innovation” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

Third generation activity theory can be summarized in five principles: an activity system, interacting minimally with one other activity system, is the primary unit of analysis; is multi-voiced; transforms over time; changes and develops through internal contradictions; and can undergo expansive transformations (Engeström, 2001). The interacting elements of an activity system are the subject collective, mediating artifacts, object, rules, community, division of labor and outcome. The subject collective are the participants in the activity, motivated to achieve an object, which is the focus of the activity. The subject collective works towards achieving the object of their activity through material and symbolic mediational means. The object refers to “the ‘problem space’ at which the activity is directed and which is molded or transformed into ‘outcomes’” (Engeström, 1993, p. 67). An activity system is distinguished from another activity system by the difference of its object, which is the focus of the activity, and its true motive (Leont’ev, 1978). Figure 2.3 shows an activity system model.

Figure 2.3. A Model of an Activity System

Source: Engeström, 1987
In figure 2.3, the object in the activity system above refers to the ‘problem space’ which is “characterized by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation, sense making, and potential for change” (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). Engeström distinguishes between the generalized object, associated with the societal meaning, and the specific object, connected to personal sense as it “appears to a particular subject, at a given moment, in a given action” (Engeström and Sannino, 2010, p. 6). The generalized object for the EFL teachers is student learning, but how individual teachers make sense of student learning is linked to the teacher’s history, knowledge, and beliefs about teaching as well as the teaching context and actions performed within that context.

The subject collective in an activity system shares the same object. Behind an activity “there should always be a need…thus, the concept of activity is necessarily connected with the concept of motive…Activity does not exist without a motive” (Leont’ev, 1978, pp. 98-99). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) state that “the motive is the cultural-psychological-institutional impetus that guides human activity toward a particular object” (p. 218), and Engeström (1999a) claims that the “projection from the object to the outcome…no matter how vaguely envisioned, functions as the motive of [the] activity and gives broader meaning to [the] actions” (p. 31). The projected outcome is not limited to the immediate situation; rather, “it consists of societally important new, objectified meanings and relatively lasting new patterns of interaction” (p. 31). Motive is visible in the object as the driving force of the group as it endeavors to achieve the shared object directed toward some future outcome.

2.13.4. An Example of an EFL Teacher – Student Activity System

An example of two inter-connected activity systems is a group of EFL teachers and their students working together in an educational institution. The teachers are the subject collective of an activity system, and the object of their activity is their students.
or more accurately, the relationship between students and the knowledge they are supposed to acquire. The students are for the teachers never merely raw material to be molded. They are the reason for coming to work, for agonizing about it and for enjoying it (Y. Engeström, R. Engeström & Suntio, 2002, 2002, p. 215).

The mediational means EFL teachers could use to achieve the object of their activity are an array of physical and symbolic artifacts; for example, peer collaboration, course books, lesson plans, expert knowledge from professional literature and workshops. The community is the wider circle of educators and administrators who share the same general object of activity, and the division of labor could be between more and less experienced teachers, and between teachers who have been assigned additional responsibilities like mentoring new teachers and conducting workshops, and teachers whose only responsibility is teaching. The rules that constrain teacher action include the policies and expectations of the administrators in the workplace, and the practices and norms that govern teacher interaction.

The students of the EFL teachers are the subject collective of an interacting student activity system. The generalized object is English language learning, but the specific object for individual students will vary considerably, and English language learning might conflict with other personal objects such as meeting a requirement or fulfilling parental expectations. The mediational artifacts students use to achieve the object of language learning include textbooks and materials, teachers, peers and technology.

Figure 2.4 shows the potential shared object space for EFL teachers and their students. Object\textsubscript{1} is the problem space (student learning and language learning). Object\textsubscript{2} represents how the teachers and students envision a specific feature of student learning. Object\textsubscript{3} represents the mediational space for teacher and student collaboration that has the potential to be collaboratively constructed by the teachers and the students which could lead to changes in teaching and learning (Engeström, 2001).
2.13.5. Expansive Learning Theory

2.13.5.1. Background

Two other principles in Engeström’s (2001) definition of third generation CHAT are that an activity system develops through contradictions, and can undergo expansive transformation, which is a cycle of internalization / externalization of new mediational means that potentially lead to reconceptualization of the object of activity. The expansive learning model is influenced by Davydov’s (1988) six learning actions, but differs in that Davydov’s model was based on learning outcomes in a classroom where the knowledge was already delineated (Engeström and Sannino, 2010). Another important influence on expansive learning theory is Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD), the distance between what can be accomplished independently and what can be achieved in collaboration with peer or expert others. Engeström (1987) redefines ZPD in expansive learning as

the distance between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to a double bind potentially embedded in the everyday actions (p. 174).

In expansive learning, double bind contradictions (opposed to conflicts) that are perceived by the subject collective of an activity system can become a motivating force for
change only when the group can envision a new object of activity. Without the possibility to imagine and collaboratively create qualitatively new solutions, the myriad conflicts experienced by individuals in a school or other workplaces do not become developmentally important contradictions (Engeström and Sannino, 2010). Expansive learning is a collective process that could result in systemic transformation through the search for solutions to a contradiction.

2.13.5.2. The Process of Expansive Learning

Engeström and Sannino (2010) describe expansive learning as a model that is “a heuristic conceptual device derived from the logic of ascending from the abstract to the concrete” as participants in the transformation experience a succession and resolution of contradictions within and between their own and other interacting activity systems. Engaging in the process of expansive learning could result in cognitive development as

the initial simple idea is transformed into a complex object, a new form of practice. At the same time, the cycle produces new theoretical concepts – theoretically grasped practice – concrete in systemic richness and multiplicity of manifestations” (Engeström, 1999b, p. 382).

At the beginning of the expansive learning process (see figure 2.5), a primary contradiction is perceived by a person or group of people within an activity system, which results in a reflective analysis of activity and collective questioning or rejection of the established practice(s). In the case of the EFL teachers, the contradiction could arise from the introduction of new policies, or long-standing conflicts that have become impossible to ignore (Engeström, 2001). The group’s critical reflection is externalized as a search for solutions to the contradiction, which involves both tracing the origin and development of the situation, which to Engeström (1999a) means “identifying the past cycles of the activity system” (p. 35), and an analysis to capture the inter-systemic relations of the situation. As the group considers new tools and
patterns of practice that have the potential to resolve the primary contradiction, a secondary contradiction between elements of the group’s activity system might emerge, e.g., between a new potential object of activity or a possible new artifact and already established rules and policies.

The next step in the learning cycle is modeling a new solution. At this point the group begins to internalize the tools and concepts that could potentially offer a way out of the contradiction. The next step is examining the model, a process which is dominated by individuals externalizing their perceptions and opinions of the new model. After that, the model is implemented, during which the group’s externalization reaches its maximum as the group continues to voice how the new practice(s) / meditational means will function. As the new model is implemented, a tertiary contradiction could arise between the newly conceived activity and the previous, established activity, possibly between the agents of change and those who prefer the established way of doing the activity.

The next stage in the expansive learning process is reflecting on and evaluating the process, which shifts the emphasis to the internalization of the new process. After the model is implemented, a quaternary contradiction might appear between the new mode of activity and other connected activity systems, which could be impacted by the new tools and practices adopted by the group. In the final step, “consolidating its outcomes into a new, stable form of practice” (Engeström, 1999b, p. 384), internalization is the dominant form of learning and development, and the new mode of activity becomes established.

At the end of the expansive learning cycle, the object of the activity has been reconceptualized through the collaborative creation and internalization of new mediational means. Cognitive development co-occurs with expansive transformation. Engeström (2001)
argues that “a full cycle of expansive transformation may be understood as a collective journey through the zone of proximal development of the activity” (p. 137).

Figure 2.5. The Expansive Learning Cycle and Contradictions

2.13.5.3. Expansive Learning in a Secondary School

In Y. Engeström, R. Engeström, and Suntio’s (2002) 11-month Change Laboratory (Engeström, 2001) intervention in a Finnish middle school, expansive transformation occurred because the teachers were able to break through the obstacles imposed by an autonomous and isolating teaching environment by critically reflecting on and working towards a solution to a contradiction they faced between the way they saw their students, as apathetic and interested only in grades, and the way they wanted to see their students, as motivated seekers of knowledge.

The Change Laboratory researchers used CHAT to help the teachers outline the historical roots of the problem area. The researchers and the teachers modeled the present activity including the underlying contradiction, modeled what future activity might look like, and devised specific recommendations for changes that would lead them there. The teacher-driven intervention was a collaborative, dialogic process of externalizing the contradiction leading to a
search for possible solutions and ultimately internalizing new tools and practices to transform activity.

One solution the teachers adopted was the introduction of a voluntary cross-disciplinary final project to be completed in the students’ final year of middle school. The students could select the topic of the project and were assigned a teacher as advisor. Students could request the project be used to evaluate their final grade. Although participation was voluntary, in the first year the project was offered 70% of the students completed the project, and in the second year 91%.

The middle school teachers collaborated with one another and the researchers to create a new artifact (student projects) and establish a new teaching practice (promoting project work and advising students) that transformed (re-mediated) their system of activity. The teachers’ former activity system was motivated by student achievement often measured in only in grades. The consolidation of the new practices in the school were the final part of the expansive learning process. The object of the new activity system remained student achievement, but was now reconceptualized to include the student-directed final project, an outcome more tangible than grades alone.

2.14. Developmental Work Research

2.14.1. Background

Y. Engeström, R. Engeström & Suntio’s (2002) school intervention is an example of the CHAT-informed approach known as Change Laboratory or Developmental Work Research (DWR) (Engeström et al., 1996; Engeström, 1999a; 2007). DWR methodology is used to guide participants in addressing workplace contradictions and creating new practices to promote
expansive transformation. Engeström and Sannino (2010) claim that there is an increasing demand in “work communities for support and facilitation in deliberate efforts at expansive learning to resolve pressing contradictions and to reach qualitatively new modes of work activity” (p. 15). CHAT with DWR methodology has been used in many contexts including education (Kilpatrick, Gallagher & Carlisle, 2010; Leadbetter et al., 2007; Virkkunen, Mäkinen & Lintula, 2010); and teacher learning (Daniels, Leadbetter, Soares, & MacNab, 2007; S. Edwards, 2007; Ellis, 2008a; 2008b; 2009; Y. Engeström, R. Engeström & Suntio, 2002; Sannino, 2010; Tasker, 2011).

DWR involves creating a collaborative space for participants and interventionist-researchers to explore workplace contradictions. Engeström (2007) describes an intervention as a series of weekly video-recorded workshops over a three-month period where participants face each other and three surfaces representing work activity. Each surface is represented as past, present and future activity (see figure 2.6). One surface, the ‘mirror’ surface, displays the participants own words and experiences related to conflicts taken from ethnographic data that is collected before the initial session from participant interviews, documents and observation notes. As the group works through these incidents, contradictions in their work activity emerge. On another surface, the model of activity theory is often used to assist the participants in analyzing the interconnections and development of the work place conflicts they are would like to transform. The third surface is reserved for the ideas and tools the group creates to help design a new model. Shifting among the surfaces mediates the participants’ exploration of the contradiction from uncovering the problem towards creating partial solutions and tools to implementing new practices that could transform their workplace activity. In other words, DWR methodology is a means to facilitate participant-led expansive learning in the workplace.
2.14.2. DWR and Vygotsky’s Method of Double Stimulation

Engeström (2007) states that DWR methodology aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) ‘method of double stimulation’ in that the participants are presented with a problem or contradiction (the first stimulus), and then are facilitated by a conceptual tool introduced by the researcher, but directed by the participants (the second stimulus), with the goal of developing new understandings and potential solutions. By observing how participants use the newly introduced conceptual tool into resolving the contradiction they face, the researcher is offered insight into the process of development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Vygotsky and Luria (1994) argued that

we do not limit ourselves to the usual method of offering the subject simple stimuli…to which we can expect a direct response; we simultaneously offer a second series of stimuli which must play a functionally special role, serving as a means by which the subject can organize his own behavior. In this way, we study the process of accomplishing a task by the aid of certain auxiliary means, and the whole psychological structure of the act thus proves to be within our reach over the entire course of its development and in all the variety of each of its phases. [This] way of bringing auxiliary means of behavior to the surface permits the
tracing of the entire genesis of the most complex forms of higher psychological processes” (p. 159).

Vygotsky gave participants in his experiments both a demanding task (the first stimulus) and a neutral artifact (the second stimulus) that they could transform into a personally salient mediating sign to increase their ability to perform the task and possibly re-envision the task. Giving the participants only the demanding task and observing its completion sheds light on the end result of development, but also giving them a neutral artifact allows the researcher to observe how they imbue it with meaning to aid in completing the task, which reveals the participants’ trajectory of development.

In Developmental Work Research methodology, the first stimulus is the ethnographic data of the participants’ problems and conflicts that is ‘mirrored’ back to them in a workshop. The second stimulus in many DWR studies (but not all) is the triangular representation of an activity system. With the assistance of the interventionist-researchers, the participants collaboratively fill the activity system with personal meaning through a collaborative process of considering the object and outcome of their activity; the tools they use in working towards the object; how division of labor, rules and community influence their activity’s outcome; how other the objects of other activity systems impact on their work; the contradictions that have arisen within and between the connected activity systems, and what new artifacts and patterns of practice they could create to re-mediate their object of activity that could potentially result in expansive transformation.

2.14.3. Studies Using DWR

Ellis (2008a) applied DWR methodology in a two-year study to investigate teacher learning in a secondary school – university mentoring program. Sixteen pre-service teachers and
their four English department mentors in four schools were introduced to a collaborative inquiry-based approach to mediate the participants’ work on their object of activity – promoting student learning. Ellis reports on the effort at one school where the English department decided that the initial focus of their inquiry should be on improving the results of borderline English students on the General Certificate of Education (GCSE). The four pre-service teachers, their mentor teacher and other teachers in the department interviewed the at-risk students and their teachers, collected student work, observed the students’ classes and analyzed the GCSE assessment criteria. In workshops facilitated by the interventionist-researcher, the participants determined that the department’s use of ‘writing frames’ that were “intended to provide individual writers with a sort of discourse ‘template’, conceived as scaffolding into unfamiliar academic genres” (p. 17) was problematic. Writing frames had been adopted by the department because higher level school authorities had mandated their use in schools, and now were used to meet “performance management targets” (p. 19). The participants believed that writing frames as a pedagogical tool were being misused, and advocated abandoning the frames and encouraging writing that fostered student perspectives.

Although the object of activity was to improve student writing, Ellis (2008a) suggests that the contradiction between the mediating artifact (writing frames) and a rule (use writing frames to meet performance targets) led to its misappropriation by the department and continued use by many teachers who would have preferred to abandon it. The findings by the participants led to further Change Laboratory work as the teachers at the school continued their focus on writing. Ellis argues that “professional inquiry demonstrates how the participatory DWR methodology has the potential to stimulate positive change over a period of time by working on contradictions within the activity systems” (p. 21).
Daniels, Leadbetter, Soares, and MacNab (2007) also used DWR to explore the professional learning of educators as they forged a partnership between their secondary schools and creative partners with the goal of promoting creativity in their students. The interventionist-researchers explored the evolution of learning practices within and among the schools, and between the schools and creative organizations. By working together to create tools to improve communication, overcome professional identity issues and manage conflicts, the participants were able to work towards defining their shared object of activity, and in the process of doing so, began to form new professional identities. Daniels et al. claim that with these new professional identities, the school coordinators were able to return to their own schools and begin to transform the learning cultures there.

Sannino (2010) led a research intervention in an Italian high school for 12 teachers to assist them in finding ways to better manage their classrooms during individual student oral evaluations, and consider alternative assessment practices. The teachers were asked to write autobiographical accounts that focused on specific problems they had in their classes during evaluations, which were used as mirror data to examine the contradictions between simultaneously attending to individuals and managing them as a group. Sannino traces the ‘participatory shift’ of the teachers as they move from resistance to exploration (‘experiencing’) of the conflicts. She reports that the second stimulus (an article on assessment that the teachers collaboratively evaluated) increased the process of externalization that moved at least one teacher from ‘experiencing’ to initiating change.

In these studies, DWR methodology provided the means for educators to explore novel solutions to entrenched contradictions in the workplace that resulted in new systems of professional activity and new understandings of professional practice. All three studies utilized
ethnographic data collected from the participants as mirror data to uncover contradictions. The Ellis (2008) and the Daniel et al. (2007) studies, the participants and the interventionist researcher used the representation of an activity system to model past approaches to the problems the participants uncovered; understand present experience and practices; and then project their vision of potential future solutions. Sannino’s (2010) participants rejected the second stimulus she suggested and decided instead to collaboratively evaluate an article to mediate their exploration of solutions to their assessment contradiction.

2.14.4. The Second Stimulus

The second stimulus must be something that participants can fill with personal meaning. For Engeström (2007), the second stimulus is something that has culturally appropriate general affordances but also sufficient ambiguity and malleability so that the subject will have to transform it into a situationally effective mediating device by ‘filling’ it with specific contents (p. 374).

The second stimulus needs to be ‘filled’ by the participants themselves with content they choose according to how they assess the situation. The participants, not the interventionist-researchers, drive the process of transformation. Figure 2.7 represents how the teacher-led process of Lesson Study (LS), as the second stimulus, initiates and then facilitates the teachers’ expansive learning.
2.15. Lesson Study as Second Stimulus

The Lesson Study process meets the requirements to be an effective second stimulus.

With Lesson Study, like an activity system representation used as a second stimulus in many studies, the participants ‘fill in the contents’ from their analyses of the history and present practices surrounding workplace contradiction, then work collaboratively to create solutions that have the potential to transform workplace practices. As the second stimulus, Lesson Study can be used to facilitate the expansive learning of EFL teachers, and offer the interventionist-researcher a window into the process of teacher conceptual development.
2.16. Sociocultural Theory as the Theoretical Foundation for Lesson Study

As discussed above, most Lesson Study research has focused on why teachers learn and what they learn, but has neglected to make clear how teachers learn and what the main processes of learning are. Vygotskian sociocultural theory and cultural-historical activity theory combined with Developmental Work Research methodology could provide the means for uncovering the entire course of teacher cognitive development as it unfolds through participation in Lesson Study. Figure 2.8 gives an overview of the connection among the theories, methods and analysis used in this study. Lesson Study aligns well with sociocultural theory because it shares a similar epistemological perspective (Johnson, 2009): Learning and knowing come from participating in social practices and context; social transformation occurs through critical inquiry and the development of conceptual tools; socially constructed meaning and personally appropriated sense come about through dialogic mediation with peers and experts; and critical inquiry enhances agency. In addition, Lesson Study and expansive learning theory are based on the dialectic of moving from the abstract to the specific in the creation of knowledge. Because of this shared perspective, sociocultural theory and cultural-historical activity theory could provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how teachers learn through participation in Lesson Study.
Figure 2.8. The Relationship Among Theories, Methods and Analysis

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory
Activity system = Subject, object, mediating artifacts, rules, community, division of labor
* Multi-voiced
* Develops through internal contradictions
* Undergoes expansive transformation

Developmental Work Research
* Promotes expansive transformation in the workplace
* Method of Double Stimulation
  a. First stimulus – ethnography of workplace conflicts mirrored back to participants
  b. Second stimulus – neutral conceptual tool participants can transform into an effective mediating device.

Lesson Study
* Professional development activity
* Create learning goal; identify research lesson topic; explore topic; create artifacts to achieve goal; write lesson plan; teach and critique lesson; publish results

Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory
* Internalization/externalization; mediation; regulation
* Zone of Proximal Development
* Method of Double Stimulation – method to uncover the entire process of cognitive development

Common epistemological perspective between theories and methods
* Social transformation can occur through critical inquiry and the development of conceptual tools
* Learning and knowing come from participating in social practices and context; the workplace is a site of professional learning
* Socially constructed meaning and personally appropriated sense come about through dialogic mediation with peers and experts
* Critical inquiry enhances agency
* Expansive Learning and Lesson Study are based on the dialectic of moving from the abstract to the specific

Grounded content analysis
* Coding scheme that emerged from participants and from the theory and methods used
Ethnographic semantics
* Meanings participants give to their verbal expressions is the focus of the investigation

* Influenced the kinds of categories that were created in the grounded content analysis.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design of the study in sections detailing the site of the intervention, the role of the researcher, participants, data collection and procedures, and data analysis.

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts qualitative research methods and formative intervention methodology (Engeström, 2007; Engeström and Sannino, 2010) to investigate the trajectory of EFL teacher learning at a language school. In formative interventions, the content and aims of the intervention are not known in advance by the researcher because they are formed, negotiated and decided on by the participants. Participant resistance and conflict are part of the process in generating new concepts that could be “used as frames for the design on locally appropriate new solutions” (Engeström and Sannino, 2010, p. 15). The goal of formative interventions is participant transformation and agency through a search for solutions to context specific contradictions. Qualitative research methods (interviews, transcripts of workshops, journal writing, etc.) are used to provide a full description of the interaction among the participant teachers, their students and administrators, and document the nature of the teachers’ transformation.

3.2. Role of the Researcher

In formative interventions, the researcher plays an active role in encouraging and sustaining the participant-driven inquiry and transformation. The researcher in this study facilitated the teachers’ inquiry by explaining the steps in the Lesson Study process,
summarizing earlier discussions, keeping track of the decisions the group made, and asking questions that guided the discussion towards completing each step in the process. A more detailed discussion of the role of the researcher can be found in Chapter Four.

3.3. Site of the Intervention

This 14-week study took place at a large private language school in the Czech Republic from August to December 2008. The school employed over 300 second language teachers, most of whom taught English as a foreign language, and offered a variety of language courses to adult students. About half of the teachers were non-native speakers of English. Most of these teachers were Czech, but the school also employed EFL teachers from central Europe, Asia and Central America. Most of native speakers of English came from the United States or Great Britain. All the teachers had either a CELTA, CertTESOL or TEFL certificate, or an education degree from a university.

The researcher contacted Petra, the Academic Office Director of the school, in May 2008, to find out if her school would be interested in being the site of a professional development project. The school was chosen because it was one of the largest in the city, and already had a teacher professional development program in place. The researcher was familiar with the school because he had lived in the city where the school was located for 10 years. After the school approved the project, the researcher began to recruit teachers by placing an advertisement in the school newsletter, and contacting the school’s Senior Teachers (through Petra) by email.

The school encourages teacher participation in professional development activities. Teachers are observed within the first three months of their employment, and twice a year thereafter. Teachers have access to a Senior Teacher for teaching support. The duties of most
Senior Teachers include being available as needed to mentor the 30 teachers in their group, observing teachers, and holding monthly meetings for their group to publicize information from the school Office and conduct “mini-workshops” on various topics. In addition to the observations and meetings, the school holds monthly workshops on “practical teaching techniques” and seminars on “more theoretical aspects of teaching”. Except for the initial observation in the first four months of employment, attending the meetings, workshops and seminars is voluntary. Teachers receive a small amount of money (around $5.00) to attend the monthly meetings.

3.4. The Participants

Four participants volunteered for the study, but one teacher dropped out during the third week because she was assigned a new course that conflicted with the workshop time. The three teachers who completed the project were Lenka, a Slovak female with four years of teaching experience, and a Senior Teacher at the school; Dan, an American male with six months of experience; and Simon, a Danish male with five years of experience, and a Senior Teacher (see table 3.1). Informed consent was obtained from the teachers, Academic Office administrators and students who were digitally recorded during the teachers’ classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality/Gender/Age</th>
<th>Educational Experience / Professional Development</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lenka</td>
<td>Slovak; Female; Late 20s</td>
<td>B.A./M.A. in English language and English language teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5. Data Collection and Procedures Followed

In this study, there were five types of data collected: interviews with the participants, Senior Teachers, and administrators from the Academic Office of the school; participant – teacher workshops; participant journal entries, a meeting with an administrator and the teachers at the end of the project, and the research lesson document the teachers produced. Asking teachers about their teaching and learning experiences; working with teachers on a student learning issue; and having teachers share both their reflections on student learning and thought processes offer a varied perspective on the participants’ teaching beliefs, practices and conceptual development.

3.5.1. Interviews

The teachers were interviewed before the first Lesson Study workshop and after the last workshop 13 weeks later. The initial interviews, around 40 minutes for each participant, were semi-structured in that questions determined before the interviews were mixed with questions that arose during the interviews. The teachers were asked about their teaching history, professional development experience, classroom activities, student learning issues, and teaching

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6 Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language: at least 130 hours including at least 6 hours of observed and assessed practical teaching experience (Trinity College London, 2012).
7 Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language: 120 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of observed and assessed practical teaching experience.
philosophy. See Appendix A for the list of the initial interview questions. In the final interview, around 30 minutes for each participant, the teachers were asked to reflect and comment on the parts of the Lesson Study process that stood out for them; the discussions during the workshops they found useful; what they found out about their students; and future professional development plans.

Three administrators from the Academic Office and two Senior Teachers who were not part of the study were interviewed to get an overview of teacher professional development at the school and develop an understanding of any professional development conflicts between the teachers and Academic Office. Each of these interviews was around 30 minutes in length. They were asked about education and work experience, their role in teacher professional development, and their perception of the overall strengths and weaknesses of the teachers they worked with.

3.5.2. Teacher – Researcher Workshops

The teacher – researcher Lesson Study workshops were the main source of data in the study. The teachers attended eleven workshops that ran from 60 to 120 minutes each week. The workshops were conducted in a school classroom and audio recorded. The three participants attended all the workshops. As described above, the role of the researcher was to explain the Lesson Study process, summarize the teachers’ discussions from previous workshops, and ask questions that encouraged the teachers to elaborate on their thinking.

Before the first workshop, the participants were asked to read two journal articles about Lesson Study\(^8\). During that workshop, the researcher explained the process of Lesson Study, and elicited comments from the participants that demonstrated that they had read and understood the

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\(^8\) The participants were given an article by Fernandez and Chokshi (2002) that gives an overview of the process of Lesson Study, and an article by Lewis et al. (2006) that shows how Lesson Study has been used in two U.S. schools.
two articles. During the fifth workshop, when the participants began to plan their research lesson, they were given a detailed example of Lesson Study research lesson with descriptions of what each section of the document should include\(^9\).

After the first workshop, each workshop began with a short summary of what the group had discussed the week before, and a reminder of the step in the Lesson Study process the participants would focus on during the current workshop. Options considered and unresolved issues from previous workshops were brought up by the researcher and participants were asked how they wanted to proceed. Although each decision point in the Lesson Study process was framed by the researcher (using the participants’ own words as much as possible), the teachers alone decided which direction the group would go.

3.5.3. Teacher Journals

The teachers were asked to write weekly entries in a journal to reflect on the work they were doing during the Lesson Study workshops, and send their entry to the researcher before the next workshop took place. The instructions were to write a paragraph each week about anything that resonated with them during the workshop. Each teacher submitted 9 journal entries (all on time), and the total journal word length for each teacher was 2311 (Dan); 2577 (Lenka); and 3054 (Simon).

3.5.4. Teacher – Academic Office – Researcher Meeting

Another source of data is from an audio recording of a meeting between two of the participants (Lenka and Simon), the Director of the Academic Office (Petra) and the researcher. The group met to discuss teacher professional development issues and the future of the Lesson

Study project. The group was given a selection of excerpts from one of the Lesson Study workshops, Senior Teacher interviews, and Academic Office administrator interviews that highlighted areas of potential conflict between the school’s teachers, students and Academic Office.

3.5.5. The Research Lesson Plan

As part of the Lesson Study process, the teachers were asked to collaboratively produce a lesson plan that described in detail the goal of the Lesson Study group, the background needed to understand the context, and lesson information, which included how the research lesson related to the Lesson Study goal, and the process of the research lesson. The teachers produced a 13-page document that provided the rationale for doing the research lesson and a step-by-step plan for teaching it.

3.6. Data Analysis

The constant comparative method was used in a grounded content analysis (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to develop an understanding of the EFL teachers’ conceptual world and interaction with their students, colleagues and school administration. In addition, particularly in Chapter Six, the teachers’ interviews, journals, and research lesson comments were analyzed according to the principles of ethnographic semantics in which the meanings that people give to their verbal expressions are the main focus of investigation.

The first part of the analysis took place during the study, and the second part after all the data were collected. Bogdan & Bilken (2007) relate that a theoretical approach can suggest the coding scheme that is used to make sense of the data. In this study, Cultural-historical activity theory, DWR methodology and Lesson Study constrained to some extent the kinds of topics that
were pursued with the participants during data collection and therefore influenced the kinds of categories that were created in the analysis. In this section, how the analysis of the data was conducted during the study will be explained first, followed by how the analysis was undertaken after the study was completed.

In the first week of the study, teacher interviews were conducted and transcribed. Following Developmental Work Research methodology, some of the questions asked during the interview (e.g., Is there anything that frustrates you about your students or their learning?) were part of a deliberate effort to elicit workplace conflicts the participants were experiencing. The category “possible teacher conflicts” was determined by the methodology followed. The transcripts were read and any use of emotive or negative language about teaching and learning issues were underlined, and comments about the issues were noted in the margins. Examples of emotive and negative language include “it can be frustrating” (Simon, initial interview); “it’s something I’ve had to come to grips with” (Dan, initial interview); “I think it’s a breaking point” (Lenka, initial interview). The three teachers’ transcript segments with the emotive and negative language were copied to a page (without my comments about issues addressed) and were presented to the teachers as ‘mirror data’ for group discussion during the second workshop.

A recording of the second workshop was transcribed and read by the researcher to identify the student learning issues that were shared by all the teachers. The category ‘possible teacher conflicts’ became ‘shared conflicts.’ In the next workshop, the teachers further discussed these conflicts, finally deciding on one conflict they wanted to work at resolving. The format of the DWR second stimulus, Lesson Study, delimited the discussions that were generated as the teachers worked through the process of investigating the past and current influence the conflict had on teaching and learning, and devising possible solutions to conflict; therefore, the kinds of
categories that emerged in data analysis after the study was completed reflect not only the research questions asked, but also the methodology and theoretical framework employed.

After the project was completed, the data were read and re-read, and key words and phrases were underlined as part of a cyclical, open-coding process when data is broken down for “the purpose of categorising, conceptualising, and comparing” (Richards, 2003, p. 276). The key words and phrases were grouped by theme, and these themes became categories. Although an effort was made to code all the data, many lines of data were simply labeled ‘off-topic.’ While some categories emerged by comparing salient phrases, several categories were introduced by the researcher as part of the Lesson Study process; for example, ‘possible overarching goals’ (from the category ‘shared conflicts’), ‘research topics,’ ‘history teaching topic,’ and ‘possible mediating artifacts’ to achieve the overarching goal. Examples of categories that emerged during open coding were ‘professional development issues’ and ‘conflicts with Academic Office’.

With repeated comparative analysis of the data, open-coding became axial coding, which involved “relating categories to subcategories and making connections between categories” (Richards, 2003, p. 276). For example, the researcher-named category ‘professional development issues’ began to be connected to several sub-categories created from participant language including “not a fan of collaboration” (Simon, teacher, workshop six); “it’s just recognition [for creating workshops]” (Lenka, workshop seven); “I’m not sharing it with anyone” (Lenka, teacher, meeting with Academic Office) and “teachers have to run their [workshop] outlines past me” (Petra, Director, meeting with the Academic Office). These sub-categories gave “context, dimensions…and relationship” (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 63) to the initial category ‘professional development issues.’
The categories were then interpreted in terms of the cultural-historical activity theoretical framework: subject collective, mediating artifacts, object, outcome, division of labor, community and rules. For example, the expanded category ‘professional development issues’ described above was re-envisioned as a central category called ‘rules’, which are the conventions and norms that constrain interactions within and between inter-connected activity systems (Engeström, 1987). The segments in the sub-category “teachers have to run their workshops outlines past me” become the activity system rule ‘professional development is top down’. The activity systems are analyzed in the next chapter.

3.7. Ensuring Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity of the research, as represented in the literature (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007; Shenton, 2004) was enhanced through triangulation, “thick description” (Geertz, 1973; Ryle, 1971) and member checking.

Triangulation involved using multiple data sources to ensure the consistency of the findings. Data sets from the teachers generated through interviews, their weekly journal entries, participation in weekly workshops, teacher creation of a lesson plan, a meeting with the director of the program, and from interviews with other teachers in the school and administrators were used together to compensate for the limitations of any individual source of data and promote their collective benefits (Brewer and Hunter, 1989 cited in Shenton, 2004).

Credibility of the findings was increased through a “thick” description of the participants, setting, and themes of the study. Beyond meaning and context, the description includes “interpreting participant intentions in their behaviors and actions” (Pontorotto, 2006, p. 541). Using cultural-historical activity theory as a framework ensured that interaction of the
participants, their students and the administrators within the past and present sociocultural context was well-documented and analyzed.

Finally, credibility and authenticity were strengthened through member checking during data collection. In the second week of the project, participants were asked to reflect on transcripts of the student learning issues they had raised during the pre-project interviews, and given the opportunity to clarify and expand on their comments. Because the researcher facilitated the workshops, the participants were often asked to reflect on opinions they had given, or positions they had taken, in an effort to ensure their individual and collective understanding of the topics under discussion were faithfully represented. In addition, the lesson plan written by the teachers articulated their understanding of student responsibility, motivation, agency and their role in the student learning process, all of which were central themes of the research.

3.8. Transcription

Pseudonyms are used throughout this study to refer to the teachers, staff and students of the private language school where this project took place to protect the privacy of the individuals who participated. The name of the school and the town where the school is located were omitted. The data excerpts are labeled to indicate the type of data (interview, workshop, meeting, journal entry or research lesson), the name of the participant when necessary, and the number in the series of when the data were collected (e.g., workshop five; journal entry nine). The numbers of the workshops correspond to the time (within a week) when the journals were written (journal entry five was written shortly after workshop five took place). An effort was made to maintain the language of the participants when the audio data was transcribed. The data excerpts were

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10 Asking participants for their reaction to the transcripts in the second workshop, and ensuring that the opinions they gave and positions they took in the eleven workshops were represented accurately by the researcher was part of research method used (from DWR and Lesson Study), and not explicitly to member check.
sometimes modified slightly to improve readability. The repetition of words (I I I think that…) and filler sounds (um, uh) were often removed when they did not add any meaning to the utterance. The transcription conventions are as follows:

Word in italics in the data excerpts are research identified salient comments by the participants
Words in italics in the rest of the paper indicate a salient comment made earlier by a participant in an excerpt
Quotation marks are used for non-excerpted sources
Inaudible words = (xx)
Short pauses (.5 seconds) are indicated by a comma
Words that are given special emphasis are underlined, e.g., “they don’t do anything”.
Text in brackets signals a clarification
CHAPTER FOUR

AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHER, STUDENT AND ACADEMIC OFFICE ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

The focus of this chapter is to explore the impact of interaction among the participant teachers, their students and Academic Office administrators on teacher professional development, and understand how new mediational artifacts, introduced by the researcher but directed by the teachers, are used to transform the teachers’ activity system. After the subject collective, object and outcome, mediating artifacts, division of labor, community and rules for each of the activity systems are discussed, the new mediating artifacts introduced into the teachers’ activity system (the ‘mirror’ data, the researcher as facilitator, and the Lesson Study process) will be explored to understand how intervention proceeded. Chapter Five will describe how the teachers use the new mediating artifacts to work towards collaboratively transforming the object of their activity, student learning.

Although the activity systems described below are referred to and analyzed separately, and often using the possessive (e.g., the teachers’ activity system), it is important to note that the participant teachers, their students and the administrators who interact with them are part of a shared system of culturally organized activity – the school. Comments like “the teachers’ activity system” refer to a heterogeneous construal of the activity system, which of course overlaps with the students’ and administrators’ perspectives.
4.1. The Teachers

4.1.1. Subject Collective: The Teachers’ Histories and Beliefs

The subject collective of the teachers’ activity system are Simon, Lenka and Dan. In this section, excerpts from the teachers’ initial interviews reveal the teaching history and beliefs of the teachers. Table 4.1 shows the interview questions they were asked to elicit this information.

Table 4.1. Teacher Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your experience as an EFL teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your educational background?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What professional development programs have you participated in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have these professional development programs influenced your teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think your students enjoy the most and the least in your lessons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think student learning takes place?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1.1. Simon

Simon had five years’ experience teaching English language. As a student in a B.A. program in English Language and Literature, he taught workshops on syntax and morphology. After he graduated, he attended a four week ESL certificate course. He spent a year teaching English in a language school in China; in addition to teaching, he led several workshops in that school’s TEFL certificate program. At the time of the study, he had taught full time at the language school in the Czech Republic for two years. In his second year at the school, he became a Senior Teacher and began directing monthly meetings for a group of 30 teachers, led several workshops and observed teachers twice a month. At the time of the initial interview for this project, he was in the process of applying to an M.A. program in education.

In excerpt 4.1, Simon discusses his experience and what he believes his students like in his lessons.
Excerpt 4.1. (Simon, initial interview)
I think my experience is good. I’m at a stage where I can really know what I’m doing and I don’t just randomly teach lessons. I actually know why I’m doing things that my, I’m professional I’m very committed to the field. I’m interested in developing. I do take teaching really seriously. I said earlier so I’m very structured very organized which I think a lot of students like, because they can see there’s a progression there’s this meaning with the lesson and actually moves somewhere it’s not just, hodgepodge of different things.

Simon projects the identity of a teacher: he is professional, committed to the field and takes his teaching seriously. His teaching has progressed to the point where he feels confident about what he is doing in the classroom, and his lessons are structured and organized, which he says his students like because his lessons are more than just teaching isolated points; they now move somewhere. In excerpt 4.2, Simon expands on his beliefs about teaching and learning.

Excerpt 4.2. (Simon, initial interview)
Learning is extremely complicated, it’s also extremely individual. So, and also you can’t say that anything you actually do in the classroom any teaching you do will necessarily lead to any learning, because there are so many factors that play into the whole process. You can only try and do what you can do so engage them as much as possible, motivate them with the tasks get them interested in the language personalize the language. Once that they’re all there I think you can, like, start trying to teach and then if learning takes place it’s a good thing if it doesn’t then you need to look at how you can do it differently.

Simon argues that what a teacher actually does in the classroom will not necessarily lead to any learning. He believes a teacher can only engage learners, motivate them with tasks, get them interested in the language and personalize the language. For Simon, the teacher is responsible for student learning. If learning does not take place, the teacher needs to look at how it can be done differently.

Simon also believes that changes in his teaching practice come about through researching the workshops he gives to the teachers in the school.
Excerpt 4.3. (Simon, initial interview)
I don’t only want the practical side of things I also want to understand why we’re doing things this way. So I think the biggest part of my development has been when I’ve researched the workshops and I’ve really gone into the literature and tried to imitate it in my own lessons and so, trying to find out a way to present it to the teachers so that they can use it. I feel that’s, that’s what has developed me the most.

Simon believes that reading the professional literature on teaching, doing research for his workshops and imitating what he learns in his own lessons has developed him the most. Reading the professional literature motivates Simon to apply what he has read to his teaching, and organizing that knowledge for other teachers in the school drives his professional development. However, Simon views the professional knowledge he gains as personal knowledge that he does not want share with other teachers.

Excerpt 4.4. (Workshop 6)
SIMON: I’m not going to give my ideas if I’ve spent a whole weekend researching stuff…we get paid the same thing so…I’m just not a fan of it.
RESEARCHER: [Laughing] You’re not a fan of collaboration, are you?
SIMON: No. No. Full stop.
RESEARCHER: No, but if it were equal?
SIMON: In an ideal world it would be equal but there will always be people who commit more and as long as you are paid the same thing I don’t, I don’t agree with it.

Simon’s beliefs about teaching include the idea that students prefer well-organized lessons that show a progression towards a defined outcome. The role of the teacher is to engage students by making the tasks and language learning interesting. Although he believes all students approach learning differently, he feels that learning can only take place if students are motivated to learn. However, it’s the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that the classroom environment and activities promote student interest in learning.
4.1.1.2. Lenka

Lenka had eight years’ experience teaching English language. She taught English part time while she attended a B.A. and M.A. program in English language, and became a full time teacher at the school after she graduated. As a student in the M.A. program Lenka completed a separate program in teaching English. After becoming a teacher at the school, she attended professional development workshops and some of the classes in the school’s TEFL program. Lenka has been a Senior Teacher for two years, and like Simon, leads monthly meetings and workshops for her group of 30 teachers. At the time of her interview she had just been accepted into a Ph.D. program in TESOL at a local university. She explains in excerpt 4.4 why she decided to become an English teacher.

Excerpt 4.5. (Lenka, initial interview)

*I think I found myself in teaching, it’s a combination of so many professions you’re a teacher but you’re a presenter you are an educator you um an entertainer too, to some point, actor magician whatever storyteller. You have to be very creative and, um you know you should and you (xx) psychologist or sociologist you should try to solve different conflicts so I like that about teaching that it’s not boring that it depends on the students every, every year I have new students and I’m, my teaching is different every year I think or it’s different class to class.*

Lenka also projects a strong teacher identity when she says she found herself in teaching. Teaching involves taking on many professions in an effort to be creative and solve conflicts. Lenka sees a strong connection between her teaching and her students, which changes from class to class, and is different every year. She talks about her relationship with students in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 4.6. (Lenka, initial interview)

*I have a really good relationship with my students. I know that my students are relaxed and they are not afraid to speak English they are not afraid to make mistakes which is I think is a very big advantage and especially with adults and Czech adults um the educational system was so different that the teachers well the students were punished for not knowing and uh so I try to motivate them*
positively and you know give them positive feedback and try to make them relax and many of my students tell me that they are looking forward to our English class because they forget about their everyday worries and they do something they like and they enjoy so that’s I think, well, my strength, a good relationship with students and I am I also well, I try to be, creative.

Lenka believes that having a relaxed classroom atmosphere where students are not afraid to speak and receive positive feedback fosters a good relationship with students. She suggests that enjoying a lesson in a relaxed atmosphere is requisite for learning to take place.

In the next excerpt, Lenka describes how she perceives the relationship between learning and teaching.

Excerpt 4.7. (Lenka, initial interview)
[Students] have to be in a good attitude to be open to learning…They’re not just passively absorbing what the teacher tells them but they’re actively working on learning which is an ideal case and the teacher, I think the teacher should be there to provide this possibility and will guide them the student as they acquire knowledge but or yeah the student the teacher should explain some, difficult points or question answer the questions and provide activities that would confirm, well I would say the ideas that students have created.

For learning to take place, Lenka argues students have to first have a good attitude and be open to learning. The role of the teacher is to provide an environment where students are actively working on learning and guide the students by explaining difficult points.

Lenka’s teaching beliefs center around the idea that teachers need to assume different roles to be creative and solve conflicts. Students must feel relaxed in the classroom so they are not afraid to make mistakes, and they must be actively engaged in classroom activities for learning to take place. The role of the teacher is to have a good relationship with students, provide material that students will enjoy, facilitate learning by assisting students on difficult points, and offering positive feedback.
4.1.1.3. Dan

Dan received a B.A. in Business Administration and worked for several years in a company in the U.S. He had 5 months experience teaching English at the school. After he finished the school’s TEFL program, he was hired by the school to teach full time. He mentioned in his initial interview that his main reason to come to the Czech Republic was to have a greater ability to travel in Europe and learn languages. At the time of the study, he was enrolled in Czech and German language classes at the school. He discusses his teaching experience in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 4.8. (Dan, initial interview)
[I’ve] been teaching here for 5 months mostly business mostly one-on-one or two-on-one and uh, so far my experience has been trying to use the library to find supplemental activities and things, use the book *quite a bit* too because I figured it the book they have *a lot more experience* teaching English and figuring out *what people need to learn* than uh I do. *I try to supplement the book* but, haven’t been to creative or too crazy or anything.

Dan is a novice teacher who relies on course books *quite a bit* because the authors have *a lot more experience* than he does. He occasionally tries to use the library to find supplementary material for his small business English classes. Dan talks about his relationship with students in the next two excerpts.

Excerpt 4.9. (Dan, initial interview)
Generally the students seem to like uh, things that are *unstructured* if we *just have conversation* for an entire lesson something interesting engaging.

Excerpt 4.10. (Dan, initial interview)
One of [my] strengths is…good personality. People like me which, you can, goes into a lot of different things like you’re less likely to, or a doctor who has good communication skills with his patients…a lot less likely to get a, lawsuit against him than a doctor that doesn’t talk to people. I realized that even though *I might be a bad teacher* that students like me so I’m *not going to get really complaints* necessarily.
Dan believes his students prefer lessons that are *unstructured*, when he and the students *just have conversation* about something *engaging*. He sees his *good personality* as a strength with his students, and states that because his students like him, he is *not going to get...complaints* even though he *might be a bad teacher*. In excerpt 4.11, Dan discusses the difficulty he had over the summer, his first three months teaching full time.

*Excerpt 4.11. (Dan, initial interview)*

[What] *I struggle with* and people struggle with is the motivation for teaching or why you’re teaching… because again as I’m sure you’re aware that you can put as much or as little time into teaching as you, *the more time you put into it the better teacher you are* so it’s *really easy particularly when there’s nobody around* and *there’s no development* just to, use the book and *flip through the book* and ok I know what I’m going to do and then go to class. When you do *actually plan lessons* they usually go a lot better and the students like them a lot more and uh, like most of the people that were around over the summer I did the TEFL with so we have really limited experience, *talking about is this a holiday is it a job*.

Unlike Simon and Lenka, Dan does not present an identity as a teacher, unsure whether teaching abroad is a *holiday* or a *job*. Although he struggles to find motivation to teach, he understands that putting more time into teaching will make him *better*, and that when he *actually plans lessons* they are more successful and students *like them a lot more*; however, he knows from his experience over the summer that it is *really easy when there’s nobody around* a to just *flip through the book* and go to class with minimal preparation.

However, Dan thinks about staying in the profession and developing as a teacher. In the excerpt below, he relates his response to a friend’s question about why he doesn’t consider English teaching as a career.

*Excerpt 4.12. (Dan, initial interview)*

I was like I don’t want to *do this forever* and she said why not. So I stopped and I thought, and so I made a list of like actually how is teaching English really good or hadn’t really considered it as a long term thing before but now I [was] starting to look at it as yeah *there’s a lot of potential* in a lot of different ways. My
original goal teaching English I want to learn other languages other need to learn about other cultures and this is just kind of a way to do that but, I didn’t really consider teaching as a, vehicle to achieving self-actualization or self-fulfillment or, personal goals but so I’m considering that more.

Like many of his friends who were also novice teachers, Dan believed he didn’t want to do this forever. After being challenged by his friend, he has started to consider if teaching has a lot of potential, and thinks about whether teaching might provide him with enough personal growth to remain a teacher in the long-term. Dan believed, or perhaps came to understand, that professional development should be a required part of being an EFL teacher.

Excerpt 4.13. (Workshop 11)

DAN: Basically it’s essential in the business world is that you’re going to have some kind of professional development,
SIMON: Exactly
DAN: things that you work on. (xx)
SIMON: And you should be aware of it and you should be aware of where you are in relation to this goal and you should have some kind of say in where you want to go and what you want to do
DAN: Instead you show up and get a schedule.

Dan seems unsure whether teaching will only be a means to travel and learn new languages or become a profession. His beliefs about teaching include the ideas that successful teachers spend more time preparing lessons and seek support from more experienced teachers. Although he believes students enjoy lessons more when the teacher prepares, he also believes an important part of teaching is having good communication skills and keeping students happy by teaching unstructured lessons. He also believes that being liked by students will shield him from complaints. Compared to Simon and Lenka, Dan does not have an established teacher identity but his decision to participate in the Lesson Study project shows that he is interested in continuing to develop as a teacher, and ultimately understands that EFL teachers need professional development.
4.1.2. Mediating Artifacts

The teachers discussed an array of artifacts they use to mediate student learning. Simon relies on the knowledge he gains from professional literature and developing workshops to inform his teaching practice. Lenka and Dan state that interaction with Senior Teachers, other teachers, and getting feedback from observations is vital to their development. All the teachers mentioned the importance of attending the school’s (voluntary) workshops to generate new teaching ideas, but only Dan talked about how course books and lesson plans were useful to assist him in planning and teaching his students. Simon and Lenka state that they reflect critically on the success of their lessons and made necessary changes for future lessons, and Dan mentioned writing in a teaching journal to “keep track of my student profiles, [and] what they need to work on” (Dan, initial interview).

4.1.3. Object and Outcome

Recall from Chapter Two that the object can be construed as generalized, linked to societal meaning, as part of an activity system that is historically evolving; or specific, linked to the personal sense of each member of the subject collective (Engeström, 1987; Engeström and Sannino, 2010). The generalized object for teachers is student learning; however, how teachers make sense of student learning is variable. The outcome of the teachers’ activity is student achievement – evidence that students have learned, however this is defined by the teacher or institution.

Simon’s object of activity is student learning, as evidenced when he argues that teachers should “engage [students] as much as possible, motivate them with the tasks get them interested in the language personalize the language” (Simon, initial interview). Lenka’s object is also
student learning, as is clear when she says that students should be actively working on learning, and that the teacher should guide them… as they acquire knowledge.

How Dan perceives student learning, and how he is motivated to achieve the object is in a state of conflict. Although he understands that the more time you put into it the better teacher you are, and sees student learning as process where students “get exposed to the tools and gradually see the tools” (Dan, initial interview), he also realizes he can just flip through the book before going to teach a lesson, and just have conversation with his students. He states that his original goal in teaching English abroad is to learn other languages and learn about other cultures and did not initially consider teaching as a vehicle to achieving self-actualization or self-fulfillment but he was considering that more. This statement (and Dan’s decision to participate in the Lesson Study project) shows that his motivation for teaching is perhaps shifting from teaching as a holiday and towards a desire to develop as a teaching professional, and focus more effort on student learning.

4.1.4. Division of Labor

There is a division of labor between the Senior Teachers (Simon and Lenka) and teacher (Dan). Senior Teachers teach full time, but also conduct monthly meetings for a group of around 30 teachers who are assigned to them. Dan was one of teachers in Simon’s group. During the hour-long meetings, the Senior Teachers provide their groups with information the school wishes to pass on to them, and lead “mini-workshops” on topics selected by the Academic Office Director. The meetings are voluntary, and teachers are paid about half of what they would earn for an hour of teaching to attend.
Senior Teachers should be available to their teachers for teaching advice or information about school policies. In practice, according to Dan, new teachers almost never seek out their assigned Senior Teacher, and Senior Teachers are not responsible for tracking down their teachers to see what they need. Simon and Lenka commented that new teachers hardly ever sought them out for advice about teaching.

Senior Teachers can also request to observe teachers. After the observations, the teachers fill out a self-evaluation form and meet with their Senior Teacher to discuss the lesson. Senior Teachers need to attend monthly meetings of all Senior Teachers and members of the Academic Office, and are also encouraged to give workshops that are open to all the teachers at the school. Simon had taught a few workshops the previous year, and Lenka taught her first workshop in the semester this study was conducted. Teachers are paid to lead the workshops (at a rate of 2 teaching hours), and teachers are paid a small amount if they attend (about $5). If teachers come to five workshops, they receive a certificate. Senior Teachers typically have more experience (and status) than teachers, and they have much more contact with the Academic Office, but many teachers who meet the qualifications to become a Senior Teacher choose not to do so.

4.1.5. Community and Rules

The community that shares the teachers’ object of activity is the Academic Office and the students in the school. The Academic Office’s main concern is with teacher professional development and student (and client) satisfaction with the teachers.

There are few implicit and explicit rules or norms of behavior that constrain the teachers’ actions. One rule is that teachers need to maintain school teaching standards, so teachers are observed twice a year and assessed, but only new teachers can lose their jobs if they do not meet
the standards. Petra, the Academic Office Director, states that “every teacher is observed in the probationary period to make sure that they teach in line with the policy because it’s also the product that we sell to the clients” (Petra, initial interview). Petra gives a general description of the standards in excerpt 4.20. New teachers receive a handbook of all the school’s policies and teaching guidelines, and if they have questions they are expected to ask their assigned Senior Teacher. In addition, teachers have access to course materials on the schools computers that go into greater detail how teachers can meet the school’s standards.

The Academic Office managers and some (trained) Senior Teachers are expected to do 30 or more observation per year. During the observations, observers follow a rubric to evaluate new teachers which covers lesson planning, classroom management, teacher language and skills and use of resources. New teachers who do not “meet school standards,” and teachers who have received complaints, are observed again within a month (Hana, Academic Office interview). The policy is that teachers who do not meet school standards the second time are fired, but in practice they are often given more opportunities to improve (Petra, final meeting).

The explicit rule for teachers is to do well in observation to satisfy the Academic Office requirement of meeting school standards, but the implicit rule is to keep your students happy. If several students complain and request a new teacher, the Academic Office will usually accommodate their request even if teachers are teaching in line with the policy. Dan mentions above in excerpt 4.10 his strategy of getting his students to like him by giving them what he thinks they want (engaging conversation) in an effort to avoid getting complaints. He seems to value student satisfaction (and being what others with more experience might call a bad teacher) over putting more time into becoming a better teacher.

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11 After an observation, new teachers have to fill out a self-assessment form with questions on similar topics before they meet with their observer.
Losing a class because of student dissatisfaction was also Simon’s concern even though he was an experienced teacher. In the excerpt below, during the first workshop, the researcher talks about arranging substitutes for the teachers around the eighth meeting (in two months’ time) so that the teachers could observe one another’s research lessons.

Excerpt 4.14. (Workshop 1)
RESEARCHER: I would, if we can get a substitute I would pay for during those times…to get you excused from your class. Does that seem possible to have a substitute for your class? It would be for two lessons.
LENKA: I think if we tell them in advance they will do it.
SIMON: Yeah I mean if it’s for an exam prep class, I don’t want a sub.
LENKA: Really?
SIMON: Yeah. Because what happens is when your sub says that, they can, like so much can happen they can fuck it up they can do a better job than you and they can say we want to change teachers,
LENKA: Yeah.
SIMON: There’s so much that goes on in the process of subbing so like I personally just prefer to like teach my own thing especially if it’s exam prep.
LENKA: Exactly.

Simon does not want a sub because they can fuck it up or they could do a better job and the students might say they want to change teachers. It is not clear whether Lenka agrees with Simon when she says yeah and exactly, but she does understand Simon’s logic for not wanting a substitute teacher for two lessons. When the time came for the teachers to observe one another’s research lessons, Simon did not accept a substitute for those two classes and so could not observe Lenka and Dan’s research lessons, which had an impact on the quality of the feedback Dan and Lenka received.

One other implicit rule governed how Senior Teachers shared the materials they created from the Academic Office Director’s outline when they led workshops. This rule was also part of the Academic Office’s activity system and will be discussed in that section below. Figure 4.1 shows the teacher, student and Academic Office activity systems.
Figure 4.1. Inter-connected teacher, student and Academic Office activity systems

Rules
1. PD is voluntary
2. PD is top down
3. PD is an additional responsibility for teaching
4. Creating PD materials is an individual effort

EFL Teachers

Subject collective
EFL teachers
Simon, Lenka, Dan

Division of labor
Senior Teachers, Teachers

Mediating artifacts
Attending workshops, meetings, seminars; course books; lesson plans; observations; journal; supplementary materials; professional literature; other teachers

Object
Student learning

Community
Students, Academic Office

Academic Office

Mediating artifacts
Workshops; meetings; seminars; observations; materials; Moodle

Subject collective
Academic Office
Petra, Hana, Helena

Object
Teacher professional development

Community
Teachers, students

Students

Subject collective
Adult EFL students

Division of labor
Higher / lower proficiency

Rules
1. Keep students satisfied
2. Maintain school standards
3. Creating PD materials is an individual effort

Community
Teachers, Academic Office

Rules
1. PD is voluntary
2. PD is top down
3. PD is an additional responsibility for teaching
4. Creating PD materials is an individual effort

Division of labor
Director - decisions
Senior Teachers - implementation

Community
Teachers, students

Object
Learning English

Rules
Attend class
Participate in class activities
Do homework

4.2. The Students

4.2.1. Subject Collective

All of the students in the teachers’ classes who participated were adults with intermediate to advanced English language proficiency. Simon’s general English upper-intermediate level students were between the ages of 19 and 60. They attended two 90-minute lessons each week. Lenka taught one section of a year-long intensive course for intermediate level students who had recently finished high school (aged 16 to 21) and were either preparing to take university entrance exams or find jobs. They attended two three-hour lessons with Lenka each week. Of the twelve students who attended the class, ten students were native speakers of Czech, one was a
native speaker of Vietnamese, and one a native speaker of French. Dan’s general English advanced level students were between the ages of 25 and 45. They attended two 90-minute lessons each week.

4.2.2. Mediating Artifacts

All the students had course books and supplementary materials supplied by the teachers. Student work was also mediated by student-student and teacher-student interaction. From the two classes the researcher observed for each teacher during the semester, the interaction during classroom activities were mostly student-to-student and small group, and teacher-to-student interaction. Dan relied more on teacher-student interaction than Simon or Lenka did.

4.2.3. Object and Outcome

Although the students shared the generalized object of learning English, how students made personal sense of why they are learning English (and the motivation that the individualized object generates) varied. Almost all the students attended class to learn English; however, each student had a specific reason for wanting to learn English. Simon writes about his students’ motivation for studying English in the research lesson plan.

Excerpt 4.15. (Research lesson plan)
They are all very keen and motivated students even though they have a range of different motivations for studying English. Some need it for their jobs or studies, others for travelling and then others just study for relaxing, their own enjoyment or to learn something new.

Simon writes that his students have a range of different motivations to learn English. Some of his students wish to improve their English to get a better job or improve their abilities in their current job; get in to university; travel; or for their own enjoyment. All his students want to
learn English, but what each student appropriates will depend on the personal object that directs that student’s learning.

4.2.4. Community, Division of Labor and Rules

The students’ community is the Academic Office and the teachers since both groups share the same object of activity – student learning (even though each teacher defined what this meant differently). For Lenka’s post-secondary class, parents are part of the community as well. There is a division of labor between students who are more proficient in English and students who are less proficient. Although the rules for the students were to attend class, engage in class activities, and come to class prepared, there were no consequences for breaking the rules (beyond teacher admonishment) since there were no grades assigned. Of particular concern to the teachers in the Lesson Study group was that their students usually did not do the homework assigned to them or come to class prepared.

4.3. The Academic Office

4.3.1. Subject Collective

There are three managers who work in the Academic Office of the school. Petra is the Director, Hana the manager of in-school adult language courses, and Helena the manager of teacher professional development and teacher training. The Senior Teachers are also part of this subject collective. Like the managers, they observed teachers and gave workshops. Senior Teachers are also responsible for passing on information from the Academic Office to the teachers during monthly meetings with the students.
Petra and Helena have university degrees and completed the DELTA\textsuperscript{12} program. Hana has an M.A. in teaching English and a law degree. At the time of the Lesson Study project, Petra was starting an online M.A. program in TESOL. All the managers have the additional responsibility of observing 30 teachers per year and conducting workshops. Petra describes her job in detail below.

*Excerpt 4.16. (Petra, initial interview)*

I’m the Academic Director of the school and I’m in charge of the English Department as well as all the other language departments that we have…the German Spanish French and Czech department. I’m also in charge of *ensuring the quality of the teaching* in the building so I *supervise, the observations* that are done throughout the year we do about three hundred fifty to four hundred observations a year of teachers and I’m also *in charge of training Senior Teachers* who are participating in those observations. I’m *organizing* the teacher development program workshops. I do workshops myself or I again supervise the workshops that are being prepared so if teachers actually prepare workshops for us they just *run them past me* to make sure they’re within the school, within the limits of the school’s policies.

Petra *ensures the quality of teaching* for all the in-school courses by observing teachers and training Senior Teachers to observe. When teachers prepare workshops, they need to *run them past* her for approval. Although there are two other managers in the office, Petra is *in charge* and is involved in all decision-making concerning teacher professional development in the school.

4.3.2. Mediating Artifacts

The Academic Office mediates teacher professional development through workshops, seminars, Senior Teacher meetings (and mini-workshops) with teachers, invited speakers,

\textsuperscript{12} Diploma of English Language Teaching to Adults – an advanced English language teaching certificate for teachers who have completed a CELTA course or the equivalent and have at least two years experience teaching English.
posting workshop materials on the school’s computers, observations of teachers twice a year, and more recently through an online Moodle platform for teachers to find and download documents related to teaching and student learning. Petra explains the difference between meetings, workshops and seminars below.

Excerpt 4.17. (Petra, initial interview)

There is one meeting which is scheduled once a month with the Senior Teachers where a certain group comes together…that meeting is used to pass on information from the admin side of the school and three quarters of that meeting are dedicated to a mini-workshop. So that’s one thing and the Senior Teacher is actually in charge of that they present the workshop they receive the materials they do all that so I don’t have anything to do with that.

Then twice a month we have workshops which aim at newly qualified teachers or teachers who are new to the Czech Republic who are new to the cultural background of the country and these workshops are very practical sort of trying out things trying out new ideas receiving new ideas that they can use in the classroom that they can immediately transfer.

Also twice a month we are now offering seminars which are more lecture like presentation of issues and they deal more with the why are we doing it so these are intended for either teachers who are interested in that level of teaching already or simply experienced teachers who want to receive…more theory.

Petra explains that meetings are run by Senior Teachers to pass on information from the admin side and lead a ‘mini-workshop.’ Although Petra claims that Senior Teachers are in charge of the meetings, the Academic Office tells the Senior Teachers the information they need to pass on to teachers, and they receive the materials for the mini-workshop from Petra. She makes a practice / theory distinction between workshops and seminars in that workshops aim at newly qualified teachers and are very practical and lead to immediate transfer to the teachers’ classrooms, while seminars are more lecture-like for teachers who want more theory.

In the next two excerpts, Petra discusses two other artifacts the school has adopted to mediate teacher professional development: Moodle and teacher observations.
Excerpt 4.18. (Petra, initial interview)
We’re trying to develop a Moodle platform that will allow us to actually upload stuff and allow teachers to actually access it from home. But sometimes you do simply get people who don’t need that kind of stuff…some of them just need less structured help simply because they find their way around and it just works they don’t feel the need to. We can’t, I would be against making everything compulsory for those teachers simply they it’s not everybody’s it’s just not everybody’s learning style when it actually come to learning how to teach.

Excerpt 4.19. (Petra, initial interview)
The ideal for us is that we observe every teacher twice a year…the biggest issue we have is that…a lot of teachers come and go throughout the school year. And also we do give teachers who have below average or below school standard observations a second chance to improve and sometimes they get two maybe sometimes three observations after that because we’ll still give them a chance.

Petra discusses developing a Moodle website that teachers can access from home, but says that some teachers don’t need that kind of stuff and need less structured help because they can find their own way around. Petra stresses that she would be against making everything compulsory. For Petra, teachers have to volunteer to participate in professional development activities. Volunteering for professional development activities will be discussed in the section on activity system rules below. Petra also mentions that they observe every teacher twice a year to insure instructors are teaching at school standard. Teachers who are below that standard are observed two or three more times to give them a chance to show they have improved.

By organizing (and leading) workshops and teacher meetings through the Senior Teachers, conducting teacher observations, and making materials available on Moodle, the Academic Office creates mediational spaces for newly qualified teachers to learn about, and practice using, new ideas that the Academic Office believes help teachers reach or exceed school standards. Although the Senior Teachers create materials based on outlines provided by the
Academic Office, the Academic Office is the producer of the content, the Senior Teachers are typically the deliverers of the content, and the teachers are the consumers.

4.3.3 Object and Outcome

The object of activity for the Academic Office is teacher professional development and student satisfaction with the courses. Although the Academic Office managers spoke of the importance of student learning, in many conversations with the researcher they indicated that student satisfaction and teacher professional development to maintain student satisfaction was more important to the school.

The outcome of activity is to have professional teachers who exceed the school’s teaching standards. Teachers need to demonstrate they are teaching at the school’s standards in observations twice a year. The meetings, workshops and observations are mostly geared towards assisting novice teachers reach or maintain those standards. In the excerpt below, Petra talks about what she expects from teachers at the school.

Excerpt 4.20. (Petra, initial interview)
It’s basically our interpretation of a weak communicative approach that we run here. It just tells teachers that we do expect to see pair work and group work to maximize student talking time for example. There has to be a balance between accuracy and fluency in lessons. Personalization stages should be put in to allow the students to actually use the language that they learn in the classroom. There should be revision activities resources should be used in an appropriate way so if there’s a whiteboard in the classes you should the teacher should actually make use of it. These kinds of things.

Petra describes some of the best practices she expects the teachers in the school to follow. The teachers are made aware of what they need to do in their classrooms to meet the school’s standards when they are hired and when they are observed. After teachers are observed, they are given a feedback form to reflect on these teaching practices, and write about how well they
demonstrated them in their lessons. Observation is the mediating artifact the Academic Office uses to assess whether teachers are achieving its activity system outcome (teachers meeting or exceeding school standards\textsuperscript{13}).

4.3.4. Community and Division of Labor

The community that shares the object of the Academic Office’s activity are the teachers and students in the school. The teachers are the focus of the Academic Office’s professional development effort, and the success of this effort is judged by whether teachers meet the \textit{school standard} when they are observed in their classes.

The division of labor is among the Director (Petra), the managers and the senior teachers. Petra organizes the teacher development workshops, and supervises the workshops that the managers and Senior Teachers prepare. All workshops need to be “run past” Petra to ensure they conform to school policy (Petra, initial interview). Additionally, Petra creates the outlines of all the workshop topics the school offers. However, Senior Teachers are expected to supplement the outline with ideas of their own, create handouts, and develop activities for the workshop participants. Petra also decides the topics for the mini-workshops the Senior Teachers lead as part of the monthly meetings with their students.

4.3.5. Rules

There are explicit and implicit rules and conventions that shape the Academic Office’s professional development actions and interaction with the teachers’ activity system. The two rules discussed below that apply to all teachers in the school are that professional development is

\textsuperscript{13} The researcher interpreted “exceed school standards” as the ability to meet all the basic teaching principles she mentions in excerpt 4.20.
voluntary and mostly top down. These two rules were apparent in the initial interview with Petra. Two other implicit rules concerned the Senior Teachers who sometimes led workshops at the school: 1) creating professional development materials for workshops and leading workshops are in addition to, not part of, the responsibilities of a Senior Teacher; and 2) creating professional development materials is an individual effort, and those materials are owned by the individual who created them. These two rules were uncovered during the later workshops and in a meeting at the end of the Lesson Study project.

The next four excerpts come from a meeting with Petra (Director), Simon and Lenka (Senior Teachers) and the researcher held in the final week of the Lesson Study project to discuss teacher development issues and the future of the project. In the meeting, excerpts from the teachers’ Lesson Study workshops, and interviews with other Senior Teachers and Academic Office administrators were used to stimulate discussion of the issues. In the excerpt below, Petra and Lenka talk about teachers who choose not to work on their professional development.

*Excerpt 4.21. (Academic Office and teacher meeting)*

PETRA: It is easy in a big school to just sort of hide. It is very easy but, if there are problems with teachers, we talk to them, and then they do it because they want to, because then they are motivated but if everything is, fine they are within the parameters that we say are school standard. I don’t believe that I want to force them…Recently I had a teacher who was below average who should go to workshops but is teaching at that time. Nothing I can do about it. Just have to accept that.

RESEARCHER: Any other comments?
LENKA: In [observation] feedback we give them handouts from previous workshops that they can read and again it’s up to them whether they want to read them.

PETRA: Exactly. We’ve got a Moodle website now where you put up the workshop material which is great but then, I do understand that it is added information from the school…Again I can’t force them. I can’t make it compulsory for every teacher to sign up for Moodle.
If teachers are within the parameters of the school standards, Petra argues that she does not want to force them to participate in professional development activities. Even teachers who are below average and should go to workshops are not compelled to go because Petra feels there is nothing she can do about it and just has to accept it. Lenka believes that teachers are responsible to review workshop handouts on the school’s computers to help them overcome teaching issues uncovered in observations, and Petra agrees. She adds that although teaching materials are available on Moodle, she can’t force them, or make it compulsory for teachers to visit the site. Petra believes “in having people volunteer for things because then they’re really there, their heart is really in it. And that I think is a lot of the stuff that we’re doing is actually based on that” (Academic Office and teacher meeting).

The Academic Office rule here is that pursuing professional development opportunities is voluntary and the responsibility of the teachers. Petra sees the role of the Academic Office (and Senior Teachers) as providers of teaching knowledge and materials, but she feels they cannot influence the attitude of the teachers to do more to develop if they choose not to participate. The Academic Office believes it is sufficient to create spaces for teachers to explore professional development issues; whether or not teachers choose to make use of those spaces is up to them. Petra clearly values giving teachers opportunities to learn more about teaching; however, she does not consider making professional development a mandatory part of the teachers’ professional responsibilities.

Since teacher development is a voluntary activity, the only professional responsibility the teachers at the school have is to teach at least 20 classroom hours per week. Teachers who choose to attend workshops, and Senior Teachers who volunteer to lead workshops, do so in addition to the hours they are teaching. Although Senior Teachers are paid to teach workshops
(and teachers to attend), there is no release time from teaching to attend or develop workshops because these activities are considered in addition to their jobs. The implicit Academic Office rule is that professional development is an activity apart from a teacher’s job. This rule could have consequences for how teachers perceive the profession, and the level of commitment Senior Teachers make to develop workshops, an issue that influenced the outcome of the teachers’ expansive transformation (discussed in Chapter Five).

A related, contentious issue that arose in the meeting was how much information Senior Teachers should share with one another and the Academic Office when they prepare workshops. Senior Teachers often re-visit workshop topics previously covered by other Senior Teachers. Petra had mentioned earlier in the meeting that the handouts the Senior Teachers prepare for the teachers who attend the workshops are made available to everyone on the school’s computers and Moodle. Petra, Simon and Lenka all agreed that Senior Teachers should only share the handouts with other Senior Teachers who wish to do similar workshops.

In the next excerpt the researcher questions whether sharing only the information from workshop handouts is sufficient for Senior Teachers to adequately develop their own workshops on the same or similar workshop topics. The group reads and responds to an extract of a comment Simon had made during the seventh Lesson Study workshop two weeks earlier:

Some [Senior Teachers] spend about, I don’t know three hours preparing on the Friday before they give the workshop…other people start preparing, personally I prefer to start like a month in advance and I probably spend fifty hours researching…and it just it doesn’t go together and I I don’t want to give my stuff to those kind of people (Simon, workshop seven)

Excerpt 4.22. (Academic Office and teacher meeting)
RESEARCHER: Senior Teachers are going out and developing these workshops from your [Petra’s] basic idea and, they teach it, and then it sort of goes with [the Senior Teacher], like it says here there’s a comment on,“I don’t want to give, I don’t want to give my stuff to [Senior Teachers] who don’t spend as much time as me preparing.”
PETRA: But that’s the thing that’s why we do have a handout and my, my policy for the handout is you give you give people enough information that they know what has been talked about.

[one minute later]
LENKA: In the handout you just basically, it’s a summary or the main points that were covered. And you don’t submit your activities or things you did so the, it’s your own, well own property you don’t pass it to other teachers you just
RESEARCHER: That’s what I’m talking about. This is the information that’s being lost. That would be my concern. If I’m an administrator.
LENKA: (xx) handout for teachers but I have my own personal outline with activities I want to do,
RESEARCHER: That personal outline,
LENKA: and I’m not sharing it with anyone.
RESEARCHER: That should be part of the database, for the next set of teachers.
PETRA: You see I don’t think so. I don’t think so, and I don’t think that is necessary. I don’t think that is part of, I can’t institutionalize people like that. I won’t, I still want people to feel that, they, I can’t just tell people you have to do this you must do this. But it’s the idea of you have to share your ideas you have to share your outline I mean everybody does it differently and I feel that I feel that if I actually [tell people] you have to you have to give your outline, I would feel bad about it I’m sure a lot of other would feel bad about it. I don’t mind sharing, I really don’t care about sharing my stuff but I also know exactly that a lot of people wouldn’t do it my way.

The researcher expresses a concern that the effort that it takes a Senior Teacher to develop Petra’s outline into a workshop is not passed on to other Senior Teachers, and refers to a statement by Simon said that he would not be willing to share this knowledge with other Senior Teachers because they did not spend as much time developing workshop ideas as he did. Petra replies that’s why we do have a handout, and implies that the information in the handout is sufficient information for Senior Teachers who would like to teach that workshop in the future. Lenka defines a handout as a summary or the main points that were covered, and adds that other knowledge, such as the activities the Senior Teacher did in the workshop, are not submitted to the Academic Office because it’s your...own property you don’t pass it to other teachers, and
adds that she’s not sharing it with anyone. The researcher states that this knowledge is being lost when Senior Teachers leave, and thinks it should be made available for future teachers.

Petra doesn’t think that is necessary, and says she can’t just tell people you have to do this you must do this. She argues she would feel bad about asking Senior Teachers to share this additional information with one another, and agrees with Lenka that any value added by the Senior Teacher when developing the workshop is the property of the Senior Teacher and does not need to be shared. The implicit Academic Office (and Senior Teacher) rule is that the professional development materials the Senior Teachers create is personal, and controlled by the producer of the materials. As with the rule discussed above that professional development is voluntary, Petra seems reluctant to ask teachers to do something she thinks they might not be comfortable doing.

The Academic Office and the Senior Teachers are the producers of teacher development materials, and the teachers in the school are the consumers. Some teacher knowledge, in the form of Academic Office produced workshop outlines and Senior Teacher produced workshop handouts, is considered public knowledge and shared with everyone in the school; however, some knowledge produced by Senior Teachers, such as workshop activities and research notes, are thought to be the property of the Senior Teacher who created it. Not requiring Senior Teachers to collaborate on workshop topics, and the refusal of Senior Teachers to share materials they create for workshops created a significant obstacle for expansive transformation to take place, a point discussed in Chapter Five.

Another implicit Academic Office rule is that professional development is generally top down. As discussed above, Petra usually chooses the topics for the teacher meetings, workshops, and seminars. She creates outlines for most of the workshops, and reviews the work of the Senior
Teachers before they give workshops. However, Senior Teachers who have given workshops in the past do not have to show their work to Petra. Senior Teachers (and teachers) can develop new workshop ideas, but they need to get their outline approved first. Petra maintains control over workshop development and scheduling because she is interested in quality management and needs to make sure Senior Teachers teach according to the standard and do not present ideas which “do not align with us” (Petra, Academic Office and teacher meeting).

When the researcher suggests giving Senior Teachers more control over developing workshops, Petra argues this is already happening.

*Excerpt 4.23. (Academic Office and teacher meeting)*

RESEARCHER: But that for me is where a collaborative group, a small group of dedicated teachers could help you out as a manager rather than it all coming from you. You know let them work with this and come to you with their ideas.

PETRA: [laughs] It’s happening.

RESEARCHER: It is happening.

PETRA: That’s what’s happening. There are people who come and talk to me about certain things and then I have to say rather yes or no. Yes we can do it we’ll look into it but, that’s just part of the daily work it’s not just, I can easily think of all those examples, that any given week when this is actually happening. But this is just happening because, it happens. It’s not because we ask for it.

When the researcher states that having teachers collaborate on workshop development could be preferable to the Academic Office coming up with most of the workshop ideas, Petra claims this is happening already. She explains that teachers come to see her and she has to say yes or no. If they can do what the teacher requests, they look into it. Petra appears to see meetings between teachers and managers in the Academic Office as a space for problem solving, not collaboration. Teachers come to her to talk about certain things, but the outcome of the discussion is determined by Petra. There is no need for the Academic Office to organize specific times to interact with teachers because this is just happening...not because we ask for it.
In the next excerpt, which followed immediately from the previous excerpt, the researcher tries to clarify what he means by collaboration among teachers, and how the Academic Office could lead that effort.

Excerpt 4.24. (Academic Office and teacher meeting)
RESEARCHER: The difference between what I’m talking about is, you’re getting concerned individuals coming to you, whereas this would be, the idea of collaboration where they’re working towards, again it has to be strictly defined on how they’re going to collaborate.
PETRA: We’ve also tried that.
RESEARCHER: How does that work?
PETRA: People within a company, people are satisfied or dissatisfied. If they’re dissatisfied, they do tend to go to management and talk to them. If management takes the approach of passing the ball back into their court and saying right, because basically that’s my approach I don’t just say right I’ll deal with the problem I think right, what are your suggestions have you thought about this. What would you do in this situation? I pass the ball back because I’d like to see if first if they really thought about it. And then when you do this what very often happens is that either they’re completely lost, because they really just thought about the central issue which is central to them. Or they’ll say I’ll get, I’ll think about it I’ll get back to you and they’ll never return, because they’ve figured out that it’s not the solvable [issue].

When asked again about teacher collaboration, Petra brings up dissatisfied teachers who come to talk to management about issues they have. Rather than deal with the problem, her approach with the teachers is to pass the ball back into their court. Teachers often become completely lost because they have only considered how the issue is central to them, or they never return because they realize the issue is not solvable.

For Petra, collaboration between teachers and management means asking teachers to reconsider the larger context of the issues they present to her. When they are unable to do so, or when they fail to return to her office to pursue the issue further, Petra considers the issue resolved. Again, Petra seems to view these meetings as a problem-solving space, and not a space for co-constructing solutions to teaching (or other) issues the teachers bring to her to discuss.
Petra not only determines which meeting and workshop topics to address, and which workshop outlines get approved, she also decides which teacher issues merit further attention. Her control over most aspects of teacher professional development exemplifies the implicit Academic Office rule that teacher professional development is top down. Collaboration among teachers does take place, but Petra feels it should not be directed by the Academic Office because “as soon as the school or the institution says this would be a good idea you would already have people who turn against it because it comes from above” (Academic Office and teacher meeting). Petra implies that the role of management is to help teachers solve problems and perform quality control checks on their work, not participate in or direct the collaboration among teachers, something that she believes is “just naturally happening” (Academic Office and teacher meeting).

It is clear that the Academic Office views collaboration as something that only takes place among teachers, and not between the Academic Office and teachers. The unwillingness of the Academic Office to collaborate with (minimally) Senior Teachers on professional development issues had implications for the Lesson Study group’s effort to add to the conversation on the way reading was taught at the school.

The Academic Office activity system rules that professional development is voluntary; in addition to teachers’ jobs; personal (unshared) knowledge; and originates from the Academic Office had an influence on how teachers mediated the transformation of their activity system object (student learning), and constrained their effort to implement a solution to the contradiction they faced that they could then share with the other teachers at the school. This topic is considered further in Chapter Five.
4.4. Introducing New Mediating Artifacts into the Teachers’ Activity System

The three new artifacts that were introduced into the teachers’ activity system as part of an intervention to potentially transform the teachers’ object of activity were the ‘mirror’ data from the teachers’ initial interviews, the Lesson Study process, and the researcher as ‘temporary expert other’ who guided the process (see Figure 4.2). The ‘mirror’ data, excerpts from the teachers’ initial interviews, were used to stimulate discussion of teaching and learning issues the group shared during the second Lesson Study workshop. Lesson Study was introduced to the teachers in the first group meeting. The researcher’s role was to encourage discussion of the student learning issues the teachers raised and facilitate the teachers’ transition through each stage of the Lesson Study process.

Figure 4.2. Mediating Artifacts Introduced into the Teachers’ Activity System

4.4.1. Mirror Data and the Lesson Study Process

As described in Chapter Two, Developmental Work Research (DWR) methodology is used in this project to first encourage the teachers to critically examine the workplace conflicts they have experienced. Statements the teachers made during their initial interviews about teaching and student learning issues are mirrored back to the teachers in the first workshop to
focus their attention on specific issues they could potentially begin to resolve. The teachers discussed the statements to first acknowledge the conflicts, and then try to reach a shared understanding of the conflicts.

The Lesson Study process is the mediational means introduced by the researcher, but directed by the teachers, to develop potential solutions to the contraction they identify. Lesson Study provides a meaningful framework and rules for investigating student learning issues that is used to guide teachers in the process of searching for solutions to the contradiction, but necessitates that teachers alone decide on both the focus and the course of their investigation. Teachers determine the content at each stage of the Lesson Study process from an on-going exploration of a student learning issue, to a search for and evaluation of possible solutions.

4.4.2. The Researcher as ‘Expert Other’

The role of the researcher was to guide the teachers through the process of Lesson Study by initially having them reflect on their own statements of the learning issues their students faced; asking them questions in each workshop that focused their attention on issues they needed to consider to create an overarching goal and research lesson that might begin to address the gap they perceived in their students’ learning; and summarizing arguments and decisions they had made in previous meetings to help them keep track of where they were, and where they needed to go, in the Lesson Study process.

As the teachers shift from a generally individual effort in attempting to resolve student learning issues to a collaborative effort to examine a student learning issue they all share, the researcher acts as ‘expert other’ who mediates the teachers’ transition to adopt a “researcher lens” (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003), a critical perspective that could result in their
making meaningful changes to teaching practice. The teachers lead the effort in defining the student learning gap and creating a research lesson; however, they need assistance in adopting a “researcher lens” (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003) to construct artifacts and activities that have the potential to mediate student learning in the research lesson they create that address their overarching goal; decide what evidence they need to collect that shows their students might be working towards bridging the learning gap they have identified; observe the lesson and collect data; use the data they collect to support their arguments when they critically evaluate the research lesson after it has been taught; and present an evaluation of their work so it can be shared with others.

Table 4.2 lists several examples of the kinds of questions the researcher routinely asked to encourage the teachers to think critically about what they wanted to achieve in their research lesson. As the ‘temporary expert other’ in the Lesson Study process, the researcher has the potential to mediate the teachers’ transformation in taking a more critical (and collaborative) approach towards their teaching practice. The extent to which teachers internalized this critical and a collaborative approach will be considered in Chapter Seven.
Table 4.2. Researcher Questions to Promote Teacher Critical Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Workshop</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So that’s one potential overarching goal then to encourage students somehow to…to get students to [do what?]</td>
<td>workshop 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again going back to the evidence, what can we gather before that would help us determine whether this is the way to go or not?</td>
<td>workshop 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So what does this tell us about the teachers here? Our original idea was to find out what teachers are doing with reading. What do you think of these results?</td>
<td>workshop 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could the students do, in the classroom with this reading they’re going to do outside of the classroom that would show to us that they’ve taken some responsibility for their own learning?</td>
<td>workshop 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are we going to observe? What are we looking for?</td>
<td>workshop 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So that was one of my questions, how well did our activity sheet, how well did it mediate their reading? Somewhat not at all, completely?</td>
<td>workshop 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4.5. Conclusion

The teacher and Academic Office activity systems share an object space of teacher and student learning that is motivated by an outcome of student satisfaction and improved student learning. The Academic Office promotes teacher professional development by creating several mediational spaces such as meetings, workshops and observations in which Senior Teachers and the Academic Office can deliver content and help teachers practice using the best practices the Academic Office has established as the standard of teaching at the school. Although Senior Teachers are encouraged to create their own content for the meetings and workshops, the Academic Office maintains control over choosing the meeting and workshop topics addressed and how often they are presented to the teachers. The Academic Office activity system rules seem to encourage a unidirectional flow of teacher knowledge, and tend to privilege ownership of knowledge over sharing, and problem solving between management and teachers over
collaboration. Although the Academic Office views teacher collaboration quite positively, Petra argues that this should not be directed by that office.

Introducing new mediating artifacts into the teachers’ activity system, and giving teachers control over how the artifacts are used, has the potential to transform how teachers conceptualize student learning, and leads to the creation of new tools that they introduce to their students to overcome a gap the teachers perceive in student learning. An activity system undergoing a transformation affects the activity systems that share the same object of activity. As intra-systemic contractions are addressed, inter-systemic contradictions could arise. The next chapter will explore how the teachers’ effort to resolve the student learning contradiction they were exploring led to a contradiction with the Academic Office that limited the scope of the transformation.
CHAPTER 5

EXPANSIVE LEARNING: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER CONVERSATIONS

Chapter Five explores two research questions: how the sociocultural context influences the trajectory of expansive learning, and whether participation in Lesson Study leads to expansive learning. Excerpts from the teachers’ interviews, journals, research lesson plan, a meeting between the Academic Office and teachers, and the eleven workshops the teachers attended demonstrate that the dialogic process of externalization and re-conceptualization the teachers engaged in begins to resolve a contradiction they uncovered between their teaching beliefs and practices. The teachers appropriation of the new mediational means – the process of Lesson Study, the researcher as ‘expert other’ and colleagues and their students as one another’s ‘temporary others’ – enable them to re-conceptualize and transform the understandings that inform their everyday actions to create a new form of collectively generated activity as they respond to a contradiction they share. As the teachers work through the process of Lesson Study, their progress through the expansive learning cycle – a series of collective learning moves from abstract sense-making to specific solutions, tool creation, and eventual transformation – will be considered. The teachers’ transformation leads to a contradiction with the Academic Office, which limits the possibility for expansive transformation.

5.1. Uncovering Conflicts between Teacher Beliefs and Practices

Before the Lesson Study group began meeting, individual interviews were conducted with the teachers to explore their work history, professional development experience, and ideas about how students learn. One set of questions (figure 5.1) was meant to uncover any areas of
conflict between teacher beliefs and practices (see Appendix A for all the interview questions). Excerpts of the teachers’ answers to these questions were included in a list that was used as the ‘mirror’ data that the teachers evaluated together during the second workshop. Recall that mirror data in Developmental Work Research typically represent workplace experiences that are frustrating or disturbing in some way to the participants (Engeström, 2007). Some of the conflicts the teachers raised in the individual interviews in response to these questions were student lack of motivation; the difficulty students had being creative while doing classroom tasks; over-reliance on the teacher; and repeatedly making the same errors. One issue that all three teachers bought up in their interviews was the unwillingness of students to do work outside of class. Excerpts 1 through 3 are examples of issues from the interviews where teachers discuss why this was a source of frustration. Table 5.1 shows the interview questions asked to uncover teacher conflicts.

Table 5.1. Interview Questions to Uncover Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<td>Which activities do you think your students enjoy the most and the least in your classes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you consider some of your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything that frustrates you about your students or their learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which language features do your students find the most challenging?</td>
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Excerpt 5.1. (Lenka, initial interview)
LENKA: they don’t realize that they won’t learn only in the classroom that they have a lot of learning has to be done by themselves that they have to spend time and energy on on English and sometimes they expect that it’s like a magic… so that’s very frustrating when you can’t see any progress.

Excerpt 5.2. (Simon, initial interview)
SIMON: I understand that people are busy but it can be frustrating especially as an exam prep teacher that they might not do their homework because they have other things to do.
Excerpt 5.3. (Dan, initial interview)

DAN: I put three hours into the lesson and it’s an amazing lesson but, then they go home ... if they don't ever do homework or they don't ever read or watch movies or anything in English that it doesn’t matter how much I put in [to the lesson] they have to put in [too].
(Initial interview)

The gap between the teachers’ belief that student learning should take place outside of class, and the reality that this wasn’t taking place is expressed explicitly as frustration by Lenka when you can't see any progress, and by Simon when students don’t do their homework. Dan’s frustration can be implied when he claims that it does not matter how much effort he puts in the lesson, students have to put in effort as well. These three excerpts, examples of the mirror data shown later to the entire group, reveal that the participants already shared a conflict. Although this conflict was one of several the teachers’ articulated during the initial interview, lack of student learning outside of class was the issue that generated the most frustration.

5.2. Discussing the Lesson Study Process

At the end of the interviews, two articles about Lesson Study were given to the teachers to familiarize them with the process: ‘A practical guide to translating lesson study for a U.S. setting’ (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002), and ‘Lesson Study comes of age in North America’ (Lewis, Perry, Hurd & O’Connell, 2006). They were asked to read the articles and be prepared to discuss them at the first workshop. During that workshop the researcher led the group in a discussion of the stages of Lesson Study.

The teachers’ comments during the workshop discussion and afterwards in their journal entries for that week indicate that they understood the Lesson Study process and were motivated to begin. Dan and Lenka were concerned that twelve weeks was not enough time to complete the
project. Dan was also worried that due to his “relative lack of experience…I have no idea what I’ll be able to contribute in regards to discussing potential gaps we want to try to address with our research lesson”, but was glad to be in an “environment were things like [this project] occur…where success is measured in terms of how much we learned” (Dan, journal entry one). Lenka commented that the first meeting helped her think about “the long-term and short-term goals I should set for/together with my students” (Lenka, journal entry one). Although Simon was skeptical that teachers with “different levels of experience” could provide “greater insight into the learning process”, and felt that the “expert perspective (discussed in the article) is rather important in order for the process to be as productive as possible”, he was “interested in seeing how that would work out” (Simon, journal entry one). Simon’s belief that only collaboration with experts (i.e., teachers with more experience than he had) could provide opportunities for learning, and Dan’s concern that his inexperience would limit his ability to participate were constant throughout the project and at times influenced the quality of the group’s interaction.

5.3. Using the Mirror Data to Explore Workplace Conflicts

During the second workshop, the ‘mirror’ data collected from the teacher interviews were presented to the group to mediate teacher discussion of the student learning issues they shared. The goal was for the group to decide on a long-term student learning goal they would like to focus on, the first stage in the Lesson Study process.

As the participants externalized their understanding of the excerpts together in the second workshop, several of the conflicts mentioned above between their teaching beliefs and practices were discussed, but the issue of student learning outside of class received the most attention. In
excerpt 5.4, the teachers’ conversation reveals the displeasure they feel connected to the progress of student learning.

Excerpt 5.4. (Workshop 2)
DAN: As teachers we go in we try to, teach them English and they go and do whatever else in their lives and if they come back, they come back whenever and they haven’t learned English they’re still making the same mistakes that we think somehow it’s a problem with us or we didn’t teach it well enough or something but uh it mentions in one [extract] people learning [articles] for twenty years and they still have problems with it so
RESEARCHER: So you’re not talking about just you teach something day one and day five they can’t do it you’re talking about something longer term?
DAN: the [extract] like uh said, articles…the idea that we’re going to work on this for a year and then they’re going to know it…articles sounds like a common theme there, in a couple of [extracts]
LENKA: it’s not just the articles it’s so many things that sometimes I feel all my effort was wasted that I don’t even have to go to classes because they don’t work with it at home they just sit there and they don’t do anything. No homework.
[two minutes later]
SIMON: I think it depends on the student and not the task.
DAN: yeah
SIMON: Some students will do homework no matter what the homework is, and some students will just not do it. But I think a lot of people are really busy. Czech people work hard and they work very long days and if they get home at 8 o’clock, you can’t really blame them but there’s this frustrating for example as an exam teacher…I mean especially for me like the FCE [and] CAE14 because I know they really have to do it and I know that they really have problems with it but they just don’t realize it until April or March,
LENKA: it’s too late
SIMON: and it’s just too late to work on it. So until then they just don’t hand anything in and then when you actually start giving them marks they realize oh fuck I should have been working on this but they haven’t.

The mirror data extracts concerning student learning outside of class mediated the teachers’ collaborative exploration and questioning of this conflict by encouraging them to externalize their frustration with lack of student learning progress. Dan states that his students haven’t learned English and that they’re still making the same mistakes, and Lenka reveals that

14 The Cambridge exams First Certificate of English (FCE) and Certificate of Advanced English (CAE)
all my effort was wasted when students don’t work with it at home. Although both agree that their students’ lack of progress is a concern, Lenka blames the students when they just sit there and don’t do anything in class because there’s no homework, whereas Dan feels that this is the teacher’s fault when he states that we think somehow it’s a problem with us or we didn’t teach it well enough.

Simon, after being silent for a few minutes, offers his reason why students do not do their homework, saying that some students will do homework no matter what the homework is and some will not because a lot of people are really busy. Simon does not blame them for not doing their homework; however, he finds it frustrating because as a teacher he knows that they really have problems but the students do not realize it until it is too late to work on it.

Although each teacher has a different understanding of why students do not do work outside of class, the opportunity to collectively externalize the frustration they feel with the lack of student learning outside class encouraged each member of the group to discuss this conflict in detail. Choosing to stay on this topic (as opposed to nominating other conflicts) indicated to the researcher that they shared this conflict and found it worth exploring further.

5.4. From Conflict to Contradiction: Choosing the Lesson Study Overarching Goal

Later on in the workshop two, there is movement away from framing lack of student learning outside of class as an intractable problem, and towards framing learning as something they could potentially encourage in students, a shift that is mediated by the researchers’ frequent comments to think about a long-term goal they could set for their students.

Excerpt 5.5. (Workshop 2)
RESEARCHER: So that’s one potential overarching goal then to encourage students somehow to...to get students to
LENKA: Be responsible.
Researcher: Do something.

DAN: Yeah

SIMON: I was actually thinking like connected to that but more in the sense of encouraging them to be more enthusiastic about the language so that they choose to read books they choose to read articles they choose to watch films they choose to listen to music,

DAN: mhm

SIMON: and it’s not you having to say ok now you have to do this now do this that they voluntarily go and expose themselves to English outside the classroom. I think that could be an interesting goal.

LENKA: Do this.

SIMON: have to do this now do this that they voluntarily go and expose themselves to English outside the classroom. I think that could be an interesting goal.

After a prompt by the researcher, Lenka advances the idea that students should be responsible. Simon sees this in terms of encouraging them to be more enthusiastic about the language and of choosing to do work in English. This represents a shift from the idea that students will not do the homework that is assigned them to the idea that students could somehow voluntarily go and expose themselves to English outside of class. Simon also remarks that student-directed learning could be an interesting goal for the Lesson Study project.

The shift in how they conceptualized the issue of student learning outside of class was mediated in part by researcher comments that directed the teachers’ focus away from simply problematizing student learning towards considering possible solutions to the conflicts they faced. Although both Simon and Lenka agree here that they should somehow promote student responsibility, only Simon interprets this as a need to foster student enthusiasm for language. Lenka does not respond to Simon’s comments here, but his belief becomes a point of contention between them later on (discussed below and in Chapter Six).

By making comments such as the one in excerpt 5.5 above and excerpt 5.6 below that remind the teachers they need to create an overarching goal for their students, the researcher acts
as an ‘expert other’ who attempts to mediate the teachers’ transformation towards adopting a more critical perspective\textsuperscript{15} to their students’ learning.

\textit{Excerpt 5.6. (Researcher, Workshop 2)}

Two things you need to think globally about what an overarching issue is, where we want them to be in a year, and how we can begin just begin to explore that issue in a single lesson, which is a pretty tall order I think. And it’s not something you solve in one lesson, it’s something you say, ok we’re on the right track let’s try this next time, still with that overarching goal.

After a few prompts by the researcher to encourage the teachers to think about what their overarching goal should be, the teachers decided that students’ taking responsibility for their learning would be the goal they wished to address in the research lesson. Although they discussed a few other potential overarching goals, this issue was the one they kept returning to because they all agreed that encouraging student responsibility had the most potential to influence student learning. Excerpt 5.7 is the final version of the Lesson Study goal written for the research lesson plan. It is important to note again that while the teachers agreed that promoting student responsibility could have lasting impact, each teacher had a different understanding of what student responsibility entailed.

\textit{Excerpt 5.7 (Research lesson plan)}

We would like our students to take more responsibility for their English language learning outside of class. We feel that this overarching goal, although broad and difficult to measure, will have the most lasting impact on our students’ English development in both the short- and long-term.

This conflict, one of several the teachers experienced on a daily basis, becomes a developmentally important contradiction because it acts as a catalyst for teachers to begin to question and reject existing practices and devise qualitatively new solutions. The group’s critical

\textsuperscript{15} As discussed in Chapter Two, the terms ‘critical perspective’, ‘researcher perspective’, and ‘researcher lens’ (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003) are used synonymously in this paper to mean an ability to create research questions; collect classroom data sufficiently and accurately; connect classroom data to research goals; maintain the role of observer; connect the lesson to broader educational goals; and write an evaluation of their work.
reflection on student learning evolved from ‘students need to work more outside of class’ to ‘students need to take responsibility for their own learning’. The contradiction that emerges, mediated by the discussion of the ‘mirror’ data and the comments of the researcher, becomes the overarching goal for the teachers. This contradiction is what Engeström (1987) called the latent “primary contradiction” that can occur between any two nodes in the activity system. Noticing a contradiction and deciding to work collaboratively to search for a solution has the potential to promote the expansive learning of the teachers. Figure 5.1 shows the contradiction between the teacher and student activity systems.

Figure 5.1. Primary Contradiction Between the Teacher and Student Activity Systems

5.5. Negotiation of the Research Lesson Topic

Having established the long-term goal they would like their students to achieve, the Lesson Study group turned its attention towards the skill area they would focus on in the research lesson. The discussion of the suitability of the topics was mediated by their long-term goal of getting students to take responsibility for their learning. In excerpt 5.8, the teachers discuss the possibility of having students conduct interviews with English-speaking tourists outside of class. Their discussion leads Simon to suggest reading as the focus of the research lesson.
Excerpt 5.8. (Workshop 3)
DAN: I would feel really personally I would feel really stupid just wandering up
LENKA: Yes.
DAN: to someone and saying hi hello I’m in an English class
SIMON: Then how would you feel afterwards if you actually managed to do it?
DAN: Yeah you made a connection had a good conversation. Yeah it definitely
could feel
SIMON: I mean yeah there’s, probably going to be difficult for a lot of students
probably going to be a barrier there so we can’t
LENKA: Yeah
SIMON: put when they actually get talking to them I think they’ll, but I’m I’m
not sure it actually moves anything in terms of taking responsibility because I
don’t think that having them do that one [interview] won’t actually get them to do
it again,
DAN: Right
SIMON: which I think is what we want to do we want to develop some kind of
habit.

Simon’s idea of having the students do interviews is met with skepticism. In thinking
through his own idea, Simon raises doubts that this activity actually moves anything in terms of
taking responsibility because he believes the teacher won’t actually get them to do it again.
Although this discussion does not move the group closer to deciding on a topic, it does show
how the long-term goal mediated Simon’s thinking about the efficacy of this speaking activity in
terms of getting students to take responsibility, and it does lead him to connect students taking
responsibility to getting students to develop some kind of habit, a point he takes up again in the
following excerpt.

Excerpt 5.9. (Workshop 3)
SIMON: I think for like in terms of skills I think reading would be the one that
would be easiest to develop a habit.
DAN: you could have them try to start a blog but or something like that
SIMON: yeah something like that but I’m not sure they would continue doing it
after class. I think reading would be probably the area they might actually
continue if you managed to develop an interest.
Simon’s argument that *reading would be the one that would be easiest to develop a habit* and an activity they *might actually continue* shifts the attention from discussing interviewing and blogging as possible research lesson topics to talking about reading as a topic mainly because of Simon’s opinion that students would be more likely to continue reading after the research lesson if the teachers *managed to develop an interest* in the students.

Later on in the same workshop, the researcher pushes the group to consider ways they could motivate their students to read. Simon raises the point that they need to do more than this.

*Excerpt 5.10. (Workshop 3)*

RESEARCHER: What would make them excited [about reading]? So that’s what we need to do, we need to bridge that, that’s the gap we need to bridge.

SIMON: Yeah what would actually get them interested in doing this.

RESEARCHER: And how can we encourage that. Those are the two big questions. So we again we need to find out what motivates them. What kind of reading would motivate them?

SIMON: Then I think it has to be tied in with some kind of, like *making them aware what they actually get out of it*. It needs to, then *awareness needs to be raised* so it's not just ok read another book, it’s read this book and *see what you get out of it*.

Simon now believes they must not only motivate their students to read more, they also need to make *them aware what they actually get out of it*. The students’ *awareness needs to be raised* so students do more than just read a book, they also *see what they get out of it*. Although Lenka never completely buys into Simon’s idea that they need to raise students’ awareness of language through reading (discussed in Chapter Six), she was equally committed to focusing on reading. Dan was initially more reluctant, arguing for writing and listening topics, but both Lenka and he were convinced by Simon’s argument that they could help students develop an interest in reading, which could lead to their taking more responsibility for learning.

Another influence on the group’s (particularly Simon’s) decision to focus on reading for the research lesson was that a new reading initiative was introduced by the Academic Office of
the school in the previous semester to promote student reading. The Academic Office offered teachers a workshop in how to use graded readers and posted the workshop materials on the school computers. They wanted the school’s teachers to encourage their students to buy graded readers from the school and use them in their classes, so they offered teachers a small bonus (about $5.00) if students in their classes bought at least 12 books. As the group learned more about the school’s interest in promoting reading through the new program, their motivation to pursue reading as the topic of their research lesson increased. Simon talks about the program below.

_Excerpt 5.11. (Workshop 2)_

SIMON: There’s an interesting point as well especially related to reading because before this semester started we introduced a reading program for all the in-school classes which means that [the teachers] can get discounts on, the graded readers. But I asked in the library, I’ve done this I’ve _introduced it in all my classes_ and the students all, so far they’ve volunteered to buy these books and _no other teacher has actually started doing it_. So it’s _not only coming from the students it’s also coming from the teachers._

RESEARCHER: So there might be some willingness on the part of students to do certain kinds of homework certain things that maybe they’re interested in=

SIMON: _but the teacher is not exploiting._

RESEARCHER: Why don’t you think the teachers are, for different reasons?

SIMON: I have no idea why. I’m _going to talk about it in my workshop_ because I think it’s _absolutely silly_. And teachers even get a bonus.

In discussing the Academic Office’s new reading program, Simon relates that while he has _introduced it in all my classes, no other teacher has actually started doing it_. He believes that the lack of interest in reading is _not only coming from the students it’s also coming from the teachers_ and he feels _it’s absolutely silly_ they are not participating in the program. Simon’s comments here convinced Lenka that she should also introduce the reading program. She wrote in her journal a few days after this workshop that she had been “thinking of [Simon’s] words a lot” and “felt a bit ashamed” that she had not participated in the program, and decided “to fight
[her] laziness and students’ lack of interest” and introduce the program to her students (Lenka, journal entry two).

It is clear from Lenka’s journal comments here that Simon encouraged her to re-evaluate her commitment to reading with her students. Lenka’s emerging contradiction between her belief that she should be doing more with reading in her classes and her current teaching practice which perhaps undervalues reading is explored in Chapter Six.

In the group’s many discussions that were focused on finding an appropriate topic for their research lesson, Simon acted as Lenka and Dan’s ‘temporary other’ by challenging them to consider how the topics they suggested moves anything in terms of taking responsibility, and by inviting reactions to his ideas that reading would be a good topic because it could help students develop a habit and raise their awareness of language and foster responsibility. Simon also connected the work they do in the classroom with the goals of the school for the first time here, which later served to increase the motivation of the group as they considered how this project might inform the school’s reading program.

However, Lenka and Dan do not seem to act as a ‘temporary other’ for Simon in the same way in the first few workshops. Although they occasionally challenged Simon’s ideas (e.g., his idea for students to conduct interviews), their comments do not appear to influence the way he conceptualizes student responsibility. At this point, simply attending the workshops gives Simon a context to work through his ideas by externalizing what he believes student responsibility means. In many of the group’s interactions in later workshops, Simon often took the lead in suggesting the direction the group should go in, and while Lenka occasionally challenged him (as will be seen below), Dan almost never did.
By the middle of the third workshop, the conversation shifted from considering different topics for the research lesson to discussing the kinds of reading activities students could do during the research lesson. Simon suggested that the group pursue reading as the topic for the research lesson several times and articulated many reasons why they should do so. Since Simon was clearly invested in pursuing reading as the topic, and Lenka and Dan had expressed interest earlier in reading, they agreed to his suggestion.

At this stage in the expansive learning cycle the teachers were beginning to collectively search for a solution to the student learning contradiction they faced by externalizing different research lesson topics that could begin to encourage students to take responsibility. The idea of what taking responsibility means mediates the group’s exploration of the acceptability of various topics, and this dialogic process helps them to further refine their understanding of responsibility. In other words, externalizing the conflict between their understanding of student responsibility as an ideal and simultaneously as specific student learning actions drives the teachers’ transformation at this stage.

Excerpt 5.8 is an example of the kind of critical reflection that the group was engaged in during an early workshop, and offers evidence of an emerging “secondary contradiction” between the group’s new object of activity (student autonomy) and tools they have used in the past (classroom activities they were already familiar with) to begin to resolve the contradiction.

5.6. Analyzing Past and Present Attitudes to Reading at the School

Once the teachers agreed that reading would be the topic of the research lesson, the researcher encouraged the group to think of ways to find out more about their students’ reading habits and other teachers’ experience with teaching reading. Collecting information about student learning and teaching practices is a crucial part of the Lesson Study process because it helps
further define the gap in student learning the teachers wish to explore (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002). The teachers developed a Student Reading Questionnaire (see Appendix B) and a Teacher Reading Questionnaire (see Appendix C) to find out more about reading practices in the school. In this section the teachers’ discussion of the results from their Student Reading Questionnaire (given to all the students who would participate in the research lesson); the Teacher Reading Questionnaire (given to 30 EFL teachers at a meeting); and the researcher’s discussion with the Director of the Academic Office are analyzed to uncover their students’ attitude to reading and the kind of activities they prefer doing; the teachers’ approach to teaching reading in their classes; and the Academic Office’s plans to promote the reading program in the school. Their analyses of the information they collected began to expose a potential quaternary contradiction between the teacher and Academic Office activity systems.

5.6.1. Analyzing the Student Questionnaires

In workshop four, the teachers discussed the student questionnaire responses from Lenka’s class at length. Simon and Dan’s questionnaires were discussed the following week; however, the teachers agreed that the answers from all three classes were quite similar. Although the teachers discussed the students’ answers in detail, they only make a few comments during the workshop about what the results meant in terms of their understanding of students’ attitude toward reading. However, the teachers revealed the insight they had gained a week later when they wrote their research lesson plan and several weeks later in their journal entries.

Excerpt 5.12. (Research lesson plan)
The answers in the distributed questionnaires show that all the students agree that reading outside the classroom helps improve their language skills. Their answers also show that they read regularly in Czech outside class (ranging from a few times a week to every day), whereas they read significantly less in English. Whereas they state that the main reason why they don’t read in English is a lack
of time, they also say that they would be interested in reading English-language novels and stories. The goal is important to see if some of the frequent reading they do in Czech could be substituted with reading in English.

The teachers discovered that almost all their students agree that reading outside the classroom helps improve their language skills and that they would be interested in reading English-language novels and stories. They also found out that their students often read in Czech, and wanted to know if the reading their students did in Czech could be substituted with reading in English. Lenka in particular found this information useful, as she mentions in her final journal entry several weeks later.

Excerpt 5.13. (Lenka, Journal entry 9)
Because of doing this project I have also learnt a lot about my students. I am glad we did those reading questionnaires where students wrote what they like to read. It was very positive that they all like to read in their mother tongue. It is a good starting point for turning their attention from Czech/Vietnamese/French to English.

Lenka’s comments that she felt very positive that they all like to read and believed this was a good starting point for turning their attention to English, and the statement from the research lesson plan demonstrate that uncovering the information their students like to read in Czech and occasionally in English encouraged the group to re-conceptualize their understanding of their students’ potential interest in reading in English outside of class from the main reason why they don’t read in English is a lack of time towards the idea that their students might be encouraged to devote some of their Czech language reading time to English language reading.

5.6.2. Analyzing the Teacher Questionnaires

The results of the teacher reading questionnaire were also discussed in the fourth workshop. The group found that although almost all the 30 teachers surveyed said they encouraged their students to read outside of class, only half did follow up activities in class based
on the assigned reading. In addition, the group noted that almost all of the teachers said that they would be interested in using graded readers if they learned how to use them effectively. Simon and Lenka comment on those two results in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 5.14. (Workshop 4)
RESEARCHER: So what does this tell us about the teachers here? Our original idea was to find out what teachers are doing with reading. What do you think of these results?
LENKA: Everybody is a reader everybody reads a lot, but we don’t really don’t do anything in classes or we don’t do any targeted activity, or we don’t focus on reading. This says that people don’t know how to use readers.
RESEARCHER: It sounds like they would welcome additional training so maybe they feel uncomfortable. We can’t really say that, but this suggests that maybe they do.
SIMON: But I would say before I went to that workshop [on using graded readers last semester], I didn’t feel particularly comfortable doing it and I didn’t actually know how to approach it, I mean your idea is oh I’ll give them this book, and they will read it but then what do I do.
LENKA: Yes
SIMON: So I think this is interesting but then the point is that last year that workshop was actually offered and
LENKA: Nobody came.
SIMON: only 5 people attended. So I mean yes
LENKA: We don’t care.
SIMON: we want to do it but then when it actually comes down to things we don’t give a shit and it I mean it needs a lot of work and it needs motivation to actually implement the program. And I’m not sure if people have that motivation I don’t know.

The researcher’s question prompts a discussion of what the teachers thought of their colleagues’ response to the questionnaire. The group discovers that although the teachers they surveyed don’t focus on reading, or do targeted activities when they assign reading, most of the teachers indicated they would be willing to use graded readers in their classrooms if they learned how to use them effectively. Lenka believes that teachers don’t know how to use readers, and Simon comments that until he went to the school’s workshop on graded readers, he didn’t really
know how to approach using books in his class. But Simon is not sure if people have the motivation to implement the reading program, pointing out that only five teachers attended the (one) reading workshop held the previous semester.

The groups’ analysis of the results of the student and teacher questionnaires mediated the teachers’ transformation in the way they perceived their students’ interest in reading and the way they understood how other teachers in the school approached reading. They found that they might be undervaluing their students’ commitment to reading outside of class, and that many of their colleagues lack the knowledge of how to use readers effectively in their classrooms. In the next section, the group’s interest in finding out the Academic Office’s goal for the reading program uncovers that the Academic Office has no further plans for organizing workshops to help teachers use graded readers in their classrooms. This discovery has an impact on the group’s motivation to inform the Academic Office of their results from the Lesson Study project.

5.6.3. Analyzing the Conversation with the Academic Office Director

When the group was discussing the kinds of information they should collect about teacher and student attitudes to reading, Simon suggested talking to Petra, the Academic Office Director, to gather information about the school’s reading program.

Excerpt 5.15. (Workshop 3)

SIMON: Is Petra involved? She was the academic contact person. Because it might be interesting to tie it into what the school thinks as well...what the school’s goal actually is
RESEARCHER: That’s an excellent idea.
LENKA: Yeah.
SIMON: where do they want to take this and what, how are they, because if this is our goal then how is the school going to support that because they I’m sure they would.
Simon suggested it *might be interesting to tie it into what the school thinks as well*, and discover not only what the school’s goal actually is for encouraging teachers to promote reading with their students, but also find out *how is the school going to support* the group’s Lesson Study work with reading. Simon is *sure* the school would support the group’s effort. After Simon made this suggestion, Lenka and Dan became motivated to explore how well the school’s goal for the reading program complemented their goal of promoting student responsibility through reading. This is significant because for the first time they consider how their work might influence not only their students’ (and their own) learning, but also how it might impact the school’s approach to promoting teacher development in classroom reading.

After the group discussed the results of the teacher and student questionnaires, the researcher asks the group in the next excerpt if they want to commit to using graded readers with their students\(^\text{16}\). Simon seems unwilling to agree until he finds out the plans the Academic Office has for the reading program. In the next excerpt, the researcher, using a transcript from his meeting with Petra, summarizes for the group the main points Petra and he discussed. The group, especially Simon and Dan, is disappointed to learn that the school has no plans to devote more time and resources to promoting teacher use of graded readers at the school.

*Excerpt 5.16. (Workshop 4)*

**RESEARCHER**: *Are we leaning toward readers? Or getting them to choose something on their own? So that’s the decision we’re going to have to make.*

**SIMON**: *Well what did Petra say about the readers?*

**RESEARCHER**: I asked [Petra] how she wanted to follow up on [doing one workshop on using graded readers, putting the workshop materials on the school computers and instituting the bonus for teachers if they order readers through the school]. Petra said she would wait and see what the activity is with these readers in the library. So if *they see lots of teachers using these readers with students then they’ll take that as an indication that there’s interest and they’ll have another*

\(^\text{16}\) The teachers had discussed using several types of reading materials: articles from the Internet, short stories and novels, and whether the material should be in the original language or graded. The teachers also considered who should choose the materials: the teacher, individual students or the whole class.
specific workshop on it. That will be sort of their alarm to do something more with it to encourage teachers.\textsuperscript{17}

SIMON: So there’s no plan to do a workshop?
DAN: That sounds backwards to me. People are already buying them and trying to use them then we’ll tell them how to use them. Yeah just sounds backwards.
RESEARCHER: [Petra said] there are so many things they want to do and they’re trying to not be reactive to teachers needs but more proactive and have their own cycle of workshops…and revisit these workshops as needed. But you’re right. If teachers don’t have that training then, they’re going to be less likely to do the books anyway. Do you think the same?
SIMON: Yeah I agree oh definitely…I don’t think [another reader workshop] is going to happen unless she wants to do it but it’s, this is all her own work.
DAN: It’s usually kind of, expect a pilot program, maybe to see, get people committed on board that, see and then they can have selling points instead of just here it is, go use it.

When the group found out that the Academic Office would not hold another workshop on how to use graded readers in the classroom until the school’s teachers started having their students purchase readers, Simon expressed surprise at Petra’s decision: So there’s no plan to do a workshop? To Dan, Petra’s reasoning sounds backward because people are already buying them and trying to use them then we’ll tell them how to use them. Earlier the teachers believed their Lesson Study work could inform, and be informed by, the Academic Office’s goals for the reading program. However, Simon now realizes that this will probably not happen because this is all her own work.

Collectively questioning and analyzing student attitude towards reading, teacher approaches to reading in the classroom, and the Academic Office’s goal for the reading program continues the group’s dialogic process of externalizing critical reflection as they begin their

\textsuperscript{17}The following quote is from a transcript of Petra’s remarks during the meeting with the researcher: “We’ve done the one [workshop on readers] we’ve got the material [on the school computers] there won’t be [another reading workshop] at the moment because…for me it doesn’t make any sense to do it right now unless…there are teachers who really showed an interest in it and actually they’ve already bought books from the library so I’m in touch with the library…I’m going to be informed when there are actually teachers asking for those books and when there’s enough demand we’re going to do it again. But currently a specific reader workshop is not planned at the moment.”
search for a solution to the contradiction they face between their belief that students should be more responsible for their own learning and the fact that this is not happening. The group’s discussion of Petra’s plans reveals a potential “quaternary contradiction” between the teachers’ emerging re-conceptualization of their object of activity and the Academic Office’s rule that professional development is top down. The Academic Office alone decides on the workshop topics and how often they are scheduled. In the following excerpt, during a discussion with the researcher on the reading program, Petra explains her office’s approach to scheduling workshops.

Excerpt 5.17. (Petra, Reading program meeting)
Our focus this year is to prepare to give workshops with more variety so that we can actually attract all teachers but not necessarily just reacting to what is immediately necessary at a given time for certain people. We try to use it more as a blanket.

Here Petra expresses that she is more interested in attracting all teachers with a variety of workshops than just reacting to what is immediately necessary for teachers. Maintaining a schedule for workshops takes precedence over identifying teacher learning issues as they arise and facilitating means to resolve them. Petra’s remarks here are another example of the implicit Academic Office rule, as discussed in Chapter Four, that professional development in the school is top down.

Figure 5.2 models the interaction between the teachers and the Academic Office and the emerging contradiction. The teachers’ object is to discover ways to teach students to use graded readers that could potentially lead to students taking more responsibility for their learning, and the Academic Office’s object is to increase graded reader use at the school. The shared object space (object3) represents the potential space for teachers and the Academic Office to collaboratively develop ideas about how to use readers effectively in the classroom.
The group’s discovery that the teachers they surveyed in the school also at least partially shared this object (using readers if they had further training in how to use them effectively) increased the group’s motivation to share their findings with the Academic Office to help promote reading at the school. However, upon hearing that the Academic Office was only interested in reacting to what is immediately necessary and did not want to schedule another workshop on using readers (until teachers bought more readers from the library), the group lost some of their interest in the possibility of working with the Academic Office on this program.

However, the group was still committed to finding ways to promote reading as a means to encourage students to take greater responsibility for their learning. Dan, discussing their plan to use graded readers, argues that it would be really effective. Although he does not believe the Academic Office’s approach to the reading program is the right way to go about it, he thinks that their project is worth trying to tackle and figure out what we can do.

Excerpt 5.18. (Dan, Workshop 4)
I think it’s something that would be really effective but as far as reading program as it is right now, just here it is you can use it if you want, and if you do use it then we’ll, provide workshops on it. I don’t think that’s the right way to go about it so I think it’s something that is worth trying to tackle uh trying to figure out what we can do.

The contradiction between the teachers’ belief that more involvement was needed from the Academic Office to promote using readers at the school, and the Academic Office’s disinterest in reacting to the immediate needs of the teachers illustrates the disconnection between the teachers and the Academic Office on how teacher learning was conducted at the school. The contradiction between the teachers’ reconceptualized object of activity and the Academic Office’s rules will be explored in greater detail below when the issue re-emerges after a meeting eight weeks later with the Director on whether to continue the professional development work the teachers were doing.
Later on in the fourth workshop the group committed to using graded readers in Lenka and Simon’s research lessons, and (unaltered) novels in Dan’s lesson because his students were more advanced. In excerpt 5.19, Dan points out that the students should be allowed to have a say in what they want to read.

*Excerpt 5.19. (Workshop 4)*

RESEARCHER: Are we going to use the readers? If we use the readers are we going to give them a choice?
DAN: [we need to] trust *them to make the right choice*
RESEARCHER: it’s up to them but that’s it we need to give them some,
LENKA: *Responsibility*.
RESEARCHER: some responsibility.
DAN: We also need to have some choice in it
LENKA: Yeah.
DAN: because we just force it upon them then like most things *if somebody tells you have to do it you’re less responsive* than if you say, if you *have buy in in some way*.
SIMON: Yeah I agree.
DAN: I personally *really love the notion*. 
Dan stresses the importance of giving their students *buy in* by letting them choose the graded reader they will read for the research lesson. For Dan, part of student responsibility is giving the students the right to decide what they read for themselves to ensure they’re invested in the activity. This interaction was one of the few times that Dan’s contribution to the discussion was acknowledged by Simon, and perhaps the only time that Simon openly agreed with Dan. As will be seen below, giving students choices at different points in the research lesson becomes a crucial feature in encouraging student responsibility for the teachers.

5.7. Creating Tools that Could Promote Greater Student Responsibility

From the third through the seventh workshops, the teachers’ effort was centered on creating a model of new practices and tools that could potentially lead to a resolution of the contradiction the group faced. For the teachers, this was a cyclical, dialogic process of proposing partial solutions, examining them, then adopting, rejecting, or simply setting aside the ideas they were considering. During this process, the teachers externalized their perceptions and opinions of the emerging model, and began to internalize the symbolic tools that might begin to resolve the contradiction. There is a constant tension between the group’s emerging understanding of promoting student responsibility and creating a new way of teaching reading that motivates the teachers to define in greater detail the kinds of reading activities the students could do that over time could lead them closer to their goal.

This is a crucial part of the Lesson Study cycle: turning the abstract idea expressed in the overarching goal into practical classroom tasks learners can do in a single lesson that potentially move them one step closer to achieving the goal they set. The researcher continued to mediate
the teachers’ transformation by asking questions and making comments that focused their effort on considering solutions within the scope of the Lesson Study process.

5.7.1. Creating a Reading Activity for the Research Lesson

In excerpt 5.20, Simon advances the idea that developing activities that promoted peer-teaching might encourage the students to develop a skill and become better learners.

Excerpt 5.20. (Workshop 4)

SIMON: I think it would have to be something like peer-teaching lexis or something that actually
LENKA: (xx) yeah
SIMON: develops some kind of skill in them. like for example um, preparing five lexical items to teach and then doing some kind of research on them on the internet or like in the dictionary or like making some kind of resources available to them that would make them, a better learner so that they might actually take these skills on. Because if we make it something really exam focused ok and I write an email
DAN: Yeah.
SIMON: and complete the task then it’s, I think it’s going to be more homework.
LENKA: mhm
SIMON: They’re going to see it more as something extra an extra workload they have to do rather than something that actually helps them become a better learner and I think that’s what we want.

Simon advances the idea that the activity the students do in the research lesson be something like peer-teaching lexis that actually develops some kind of skill in them. As he stated in the previous workshop (excerpt 5.10), Simon believes that the activity they introduce should raise students’ awareness of language so that they actually take these skills on and become better learners. He argues against more authentic tasks like writing an email to a character in a story as Lenka suggested earlier perhaps because he feels these kinds of activities do not develop skills, by which he means grammar and vocabulary. As before, Lenka and Dan do not comment on Simon’s wish for the activity to focus on language.
A short time later, Simon expands on the activity he describes above. He relates how doing this activity could help students focus on language form that would eventually lead them to be more responsible learners. Lenka disagrees.

Excerpt 5.21. (Workshop 4)
RESEARCHER: What could the students do, in the classroom with this reading they’re going to do outside of the classroom that would show to us that they’ve taken some responsibility for their own learning?
SIMON: I think the task that something like, ok choose I don’t know, any number of lexical items say seven. And then like I’m implementing this with the vocabulary cards for example. If they prepare vocabulary cards on say these seven words and they have to research synonyms antonyms, different parts of speech that could be relevant for FCE [and] CAE as well. They choose the words, they have to do the research, they have to find out how to do the research you can give them some tools, but ultimately they’re the ones doing all the work. And if these tools are new if these tools are some tools that they’re not actually using at the moment, I think that could take them, somewhere new.
LENKA: But with this task you would totally kill my interest in reading. that you know if I had to read something and then underline or choose five words and find out all these things [sighs] I don’t think I would really appreciate it or even motivate me to do it if you gave me this task, in the next lesson I would be totally bored and angry.
SIMON: That would all depend on how you present it. Have you tried this task?
LENKA: No
SIMON: So you don’t really know if it works.
LENKA: No but
SIMON: Yeah I mean that’s a that’s a completely fair point. That’s a fair point.

Lenka’s rejection of Simon’s vocabulary-focused activity is a pivotal moment in the group’s discussion of the kinds of activities they were considering. Up to this point Simon’s argument that the reading activities they create should be focused on language went unchallenged by Lenka most likely because she did not (or could not) articulate alternative ideas (see Chapter Six). Lenka’s comment that this task would totally kill my interest in reading perhaps serves to show Simon that he would have to accommodate Lenka’s opinions in creating
a reading activity. Simon seems defensive about her challenge to his idea for an activity but then recognizes that she makes a fair point.

However, in excerpt 5.22, towards the end of the fourth workshop, Simon seems frustrated about the group’s inability to establish a link between student reading and responsibility.

Excerpt 5.22. (Workshop 4)
SIMON: I’m just thinking about this whole responsibility I’m not I just don’t see it.
LENKA: [laughs] But how do you want to measure responsibility.
SIMON: I don’t know that’s the problem. That’s the problem I have.
LENKA: I don’t think you can.
SIMON: I think you can but you need to identify how you’re going to measure it. I think now it’s more about developing an interest in reading
LENKA: mhm
SIMON: rather than developing a responsibility for learning. And I think there’s a difference. I think one thing is
DAN: Yeah
SIMON: you could say developing an interest in reading is tied in with developing responsibility for your own learning but I don’t think they’re equal and I think what we’re working on now is developing an interest in reading.

Simon is concerned that developing an interest in reading is not the same as developing responsibility for your own learning. For Simon, measuring student responsibility in some way is central in gauging the success of the project. Lenka, however, never accepts Simon’s idea that responsibility can be measured, and continues to challenge Simon when he suggests the group find ways to do so.

At this point it is clear that the teachers’ conceptualization of student responsibility, and how to embody this idea in teaching activities, is not the same. Although Simon has led the group in many of the discussions, each teacher has singled out an aspect of what it means to become a responsible learner. Simon believes developing a habit, like reading more often, is
essential, as long as it not only develops student interest in reading, but also helps them develop grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Lenka agrees with Simon that they need to help students develop an interest in reading, but would argue that a crucial component is engaging students with the reading activities they do in class as well. Dan argues that students need to be involved in choosing reading materials to encourage a sense of buy in. In the remaining workshops, Simon continues to lead the group discussions; however, Lenka and Dan remain important voices in the collaboration.

In the fifth and sixth workshops, the group works to further define the kind of reading activity they could create for the research lesson that they believe would begin to promote learner responsibility. The group’s conceptualization of student responsibility, led by Simon, evolves over the course of these next two workshops.

Although the idea of having students do a variety of tasks connected with the reading was mentioned a few times before by all the participants, in the following excerpt Simon now connects this idea to giving their students a greater choice in the activities they could do with the reading.

Excerpt 5.23. (Workshop 5)

SIMON: Say we do that like the first fifteen minutes. So creating like small, I don’t know small groups so we say ok if you choose to work with grammar you can sit over here if you choose to work with
LENKA: Oh discussing
SIMON: summarizing sit over there
LENKA: oh
SIMON: If you want sit in vocabulary sit over there. This gives them like the choice. And some people might have chosen to do all of it if you say ok here’s a worksheet.
RESEARCHER: Oh I see.

Because Simon often contributed more to the discussion than the others, the researcher, as the facilitator of the Lesson Study group, had to elicit comments from Lenka and Dan occasionally to make sure they had a chance to express their views fully, and to ascertain whether the group really had consensus on each issue, and whether Lenka and Dan were not just acquiescing to Simon’s ideas about the direction the group should take.
SIMON: Here’s five here’s five parts, decide how much you want to do. And then ok come to class welcome to the class the first fifteen minutes we’re going to talk about the book, choose what you want to do. And then if we have them do it in the next lesson say ok again choose what you want to do, and see if they [did] more, or have they chosen to do something different.

RESEARCHER: We would give them a list of certain kinds of activities they could do
LENKA: They could bring home.
SIMON: So you’d give them a worksheet with
LENKA: Vocabulary.
SIMON: yeah one one section
LENKA: Summarizing
SIMON: one section with vocabulary one with grammar one like for language for summary one,
LENKA: Tenses.
SIMON: for discussion questions tenses whatever. And then you say ok how much of this do you want to do it’s completely up to you.
LENKA: Do one or five.

Simon proposes the idea that during the research lesson the students could work in small groups and choose the kind of reading activities they want to do. Simon states that these tasks would be on a worksheet, and Lenka adds that the students could bring this worksheet home. An important point for Simon is that students have the choice to do these same tasks in the next lesson so that the teacher could see if they did more or chose to do something different. For Simon, counting the number of tasks his students complete over a period of time meets his requirement that the reading activity the group creates measures student responsibility in some way.

The teachers believed that the reading tasks they would create for the research lesson could be modified and applied to other teaching contexts.

Excerpt 5.24. (Workshop 5)
SIMON: And this is something that could work across the levels.
DAN: mhm
LENKA: mhm
SIMON: And across the classes. It would just be a worksheet that would be the same I mean you could do with any class. And once you generate it it’s there and they can, if it’s general
LENKA: Yes
SIMON: enough use it again and, if this is something we get going then it’s something they can really use. And I think this could be some kind of, what would you call it
LENKA: outcome?
DAN: artifact.
LENKA: yeah mediating artifact
SIMON: mediating artifact, I think no?
RESEARCHER: yeah yeah exactly

In this excerpt it is clear that all the teachers saw the potential in using this kind of artifact for the other classes they were teaching. They started to believe that greater student choice and working with these kinds of tasks could begin to encourage students to become more invested in reading over the long term, which might lead them to take more responsibility for their learning. This is a significant realization because, for the first time, the teachers see beyond the research lesson to how they could implement this artifact to promote student learning.

Dan, who was mostly silent during Simon and Lenka’s conversation about the activity they could do for the research lesson, now contributes to the discussion.

*Excerpt 5.25. (Workshop 5)*
DAN: Over time they would just be tracked, some of the people that never did anything start doing stuff.
RESEARCHER: We’re going to be generating this atmosphere where other people are taking responsibility, and some aren’t, and does that encourage them.
DAN: That peer motivation.
SIMON: Yeah.
DAN: And you can even kind of do a training wheels at the very first. You don’t really give them that much autonomy but later on you let them decide, more and more what they’re doing or something like that.

The issue of where to draw the line between student choice and teacher facilitation became a frequent topic of conversation in the remaining workshops. The teachers agreed they
would develop the reading tasks for the research lesson. Simon suggested tasks that were more focused on form (grammar, vocabulary and summarizing), and Lenka proposed tasks that were more meaning oriented, requiring student discussion and opinions about the story. The teachers were satisfied they had a plan for the activity they wanted to do for the research lesson.

*Excerpt 5.26. (Workshop 5)*
Dan: That sounds *really* exciting actually
Lenka: Thanks Simon.
Simon: *It works for me now.*

However, the focus of the tasks the students would do during the research lesson changed once more. Dan argues that the set of tasks the students could choose to do should not be focused on language form, but on the character, plot and events of the story.

*Excerpt 5.27. (Workshop 5)*
DAN: So just the thing that occurs to me um, the students might be more interested might be able to do it that instead of giving them ok you can work on grammar vocab summarizing, you give them you can work on plot character events,
LENKA: mm
DAN: *design the tool* so it uses, one or more or all of these things. So if they they can pick the characters they can use [that activity] they use the vocabulary. Or something like that or if they do events then they use a timeline and then they kind of summarize uh
LENKA: mhm
DAN: their opinions of the events or whatever their opinions of the character. Something like that. So turning it kind of sideways
LENKA: Yeah that sounds interesting.
DAN: *So it’s kind of focused more on the elements of the story instead of the parts of language*
LENKA: mhm
DAN: but using the parts of language
LENKA: And *that makes more sense because they read primarily not because of grammar, for grammar and vocabulary but for the story.*

Dan’s proposal that the reading tasks should be *focused more on the elements of the story instead of the parts of language, but using parts of language* suggested a significant modification
of Simon’s idea for mostly form-based tasks, and challenged Simon and Lenka to consider shifting the focus to meaning-based tasks. Lenka’s realization that students read primarily not...for grammar and vocabulary but for the story, and Dan’s belief that students would be more interested in the elements of the story led the group to change the main focus of the tasks to character, plot and setting. Although Simon never explicitly agreed to Dan’s proposal, he went along with the group and adapted his contribution to the tasks he created to meet the new format. Of the five tasks the group finally decided on, one was form-focused and four were meaning oriented.

5.7.2. Adding Formulaic Language to the Reading Activity

As the teachers worked to further develop the reading tasks for the research lesson, they started to discuss adding formulaic language to the selection of tasks they would give to their students. Lenka, expanding on an idea Simon had brought up earlier, thinks they should add functional language to the task, and Simon talks about these phrases in terms of whether or not students will choose to use them.

*Excerpt 5.28. (Workshop 5)*

LENKA: Yeah even if they if we gave them [this task] people would probably have different opinions and they could compare opinions or exchange opinions after, or they could show [their answers] and, to each other and we could give them functional language like I disagree with you or ok um I agree but or to some extent.

SIMON: I think if you give them the choice I mean do you want to use these phrases or not. That’s also giving them autonomy. And the people who really take responsibility for their own learning will use those phrases, whereas the people who don’t give a shit they won’t.
RESEARCHER: right
SIMON: and then maybe if they come into class and they see ok these people are using this language I’m not, then maybe that’ll prompt them to do it in the next lesson.
[a few minutes later]
SIMON: I think also still it has to be has to be worthwhile I mean, we don’t just want them to read we want them to get something out of reading.

Although Simon and Lenka agree that adding formulaic language to the reading activity is a good idea, they could to be motivated to do so for quite different reasons. It’s unclear at this point if Simon continues to believe that students’ enthusiasm for learning language demonstrates that they are taking responsibility for their learning; however, they both understand that student use of formulaic language might help them complete the tasks.

Creating a possibility for students to get something out of reading is an important issue for Simon. He has stated more than once that taking responsibility for learning means more than just developing a greater interest in reading in English outside of class. He suggests that if students find value in what they are doing, they will continue the practice, and over time build a greater sense of responsibility toward their learning.

For the group, particularly Simon and Lenka, encouraging student responsibility entails more than giving students a voice in choosing reading material and the kinds of tasks they can do (or not do); helping students develop a habit of reading in English; and creating engaging tasks that mediate more critical reading. Encouraging responsibility now expands to include giving students formulaic language to assist them in articulating their responses to the tasks outside of class, and sharing their ideas in class. The teachers believe that encouraging student choice and helping them become more critical readers will eventually lead students to take more responsibility for their learning.
The group decided to add formulaic language phrases to all of tasks in the artifact to help the students complete the tasks. In the discussion below, prompted by a question from the researcher, the teachers express the idea that if students use the language as part of doing the tasks, they will discover they can get more out of the reading.

Excerpt 5.29. (Workshop 7)
RESEARCHER: Why are we giving them this useful language? What is the purpose of giving them this language?
DAN: Because training wheels?
RESEARCHER: Ok can you expand on that?
DAN: They’re never going to use the language unless they’ve seen it at least once. This is making sure they see it at least once. Ideally you know you mentioned they would start to use the useful language on their own but,
SIMON: Also it’s, if we give them this habit of reading then they will see that this is what they can actually get out of it so you can talk about (xx) you can talk about opinions you talk about you can get new words you can talk about characters you can summarize you can I mean you can pretty much do whatever you want this is just some of the things you can do and in the beginning when you read we’re going to show you this is what you can do at the end like you will know this so you can get this much out of the book when you read it.
LENKA: That’s what I try to say that they can they will be aware that a text is not just for pleasure but they can you know it’s a resource of information
DAN: mhm
LENKA: for them that it’s a resource.
DAN: Usually if you just read for pleasure you just see words for the purpose of entertaining and you don’t think what words would I use to describe this person but if you do that even for pleasurable reading we’ll start to care about maybe you’ll enjoy reading more because now you think about how you would describe the character.

Simon’s frequent comments that their students must get something out of reading to begin to become more responsible learners is now also articulated by Lenka and Dan.

Lenka believes that encouraging the use of formulaic language to complete the tasks is part of a process of promoting an awareness in students that reading is not just for pleasure but also a
resource for information, Dan similarly argues that if students develop the ability to describe characters, they’ll start to care and perhaps enjoy reading more.

This interaction shows that Simon, acting as a ‘temporary other’, has mediated Lenka and Dan’s understanding of the role critical reading can play in fostering student learning. Simon’s argument that the group needed to raise student awareness of language when they read challenged Lenka (and to a lesser extent Dan) to reconceptualize the way they perceived how their students should interact with texts, from simply exposing students to language through reading to having them interact with texts in a more substantial way. For Simon, this meant having students focus on vocabulary and grammar while reading to acquire language, but for Lenka and Dan this means having students focus on language to discuss the story, talk about the characters and give opinions, an approach Simon also seems to be including when he states that using formulaic language could help students talk about characters or pretty much do whatever you want. Regardless of what each teacher believes the students should achieve from reading a text, they all agree that by becoming more critical readers, their students might read more, learn more, and perhaps begin to take more responsibility for their learning.

One of the most challenging parts of the Lesson Study process was behind them: creating a classroom activity that instantiated the teachers’ conceptualization of how learners might begin to show they are taking responsibility for their learning. Figure 5.3 shows the final version of one of the tasks they included in the artifact (see Appendix D for all the tasks in the artifact).
As part of their research lesson plan, the teachers collaboratively created a description of what they hoped student use of the artifact would achieve. This next excerpt represents the culmination of the groups’ thinking about how the artifact they created could help their students eventually take responsibility for their learning. In terms of expansive learning, the teachers’ articulation of the effects that the artifact could achieve indicates that they are internalizing a new way of conceptualizing teaching reading that could potentially offer a way out of the contradiction by promoting greater student responsibility. This point is discussed in more detail in section 5.10 below.

Excerpt 5.30. (Research lesson plan)
The mediational artifact in the form of a reading worksheet is central to the lesson as it will provide the students with a tool to help them become more responsible learners. The document is created so as to make the students approach the task in a more focused way. The danger is that students might perceive the worksheet as a forced homework task. However, the image of the task will hopefully shift towards something they would like to do and find pleasure in doing through the nature of the task and by offering them choices in what exactly they would like to do with the text and choices would help them to take responsibility for the task, and thereby their learning.
5.8. Completing the Research Lesson Plan

During the sixth workshop, the teachers began discussing how the research lesson would be taught from beginning to end. Before the seventh workshop, the teachers created the research lesson plan, dividing up the work: Dan and Lenka wrote most of the background information sections to help future readers put the lesson into context and explain how the teachers hoped to achieve their Lesson Study goal. Since Simon would teach the research lesson first, the group decided he should write the student background information and the plan of what they decide they were going to do in class. The seventh workshop was devoted to evaluating the sections of the research lesson plan each of the teachers wrote, and making final changes to the lesson plan. The plan for how the teachers would organize the class time for their research lesson came together fairly quickly. In the next excerpt the group talks about how the students would be using the artifact in class.

*Excerpt 5.31 (Workshop 6)*
LENKA: So we ask them which activity, did you choose. And then I guess we, should we, arrange the chairs before the class starts or *should we have them, work in groups* or
RESEARCHER: How do you want to divide them up that’s a good question. Similar or different?
SIMON: I would have them do the same,
LENKA: Yeah
SIMON: like *people who chose the same [tasks]*. And then you could pair them up with someone else and ok now talk to, what did you do in your group for example. So you got people doing the same thing, and *then you split them up and have them with different people*.
DAN: So if three groups they did [tasks] one two and three, and then you do ABC ABC ABC [for the second group].
SIMON: Yeah

Lenka suggests that the students who did the same task at home work together in class and compare their answers. Simon adds that after the students talk about their tasks in their first
group they should be put in a second group with students who completed different tasks to have the chance to share what they have learned. In the next excerpt, the researcher asks the group to articulate what they want their students to achieve in the second group.

*Excerpt 5.32. (Workshop 7)*

RESEARCHER: So what is our expectation for the second group?  
DAN: Kind of the *opportunity to teach what they did* and what they talked about, in the group they just came from. Kind of *peer teach or peer share*.

The researcher’s question about the teacher’s expectation for the second group challenges the teachers to justify why they have structured the research lesson the way they have. Dan argues that having the students discuss their task in the second group as an *opportunity to peer teach or peer share* what they did in their first group. Simon and Lenka agreed that the students would benefit from explaining their answers again to a new group as a way to reinforce what they got out of the reading. Excerpt 5.31 above shows that after the reading artifact was created, the teachers were in complete agreement about how they wanted the research lesson to be structured.

Although work on the artifact was completed, the group continued to discuss how their students could be encouraged to use the formulaic language when they talked about the tasks in their groups. Earlier in the sixth workshop, Simon mentioned that with his exam preparation students he sometimes put formulaic language on cards, one phrase per card. His students had to hold the cards in their hand, and when they used the phrase during a conversation in their student-led groups, they placed the card on the table. In excerpt 5.33, the group discusses whether having the ‘useful language’ below each task on the artifact is enough to encourage students to use the language. They consider Simon’s idea to either put the useful language on cards, or have students tick each phrase on the artifact once they’ve used it in their groups.
Excerpt 5.33. (Workshop 6)

RESEARCHER: We’re not giving them the cards? Or do you want to give them the cards?
LENKA: They’ll have useful language boxes or something.
SIMON: Yeah, maybe do the ticking thing.
LENKA: Yeah. So I don’t want to overload them with too many things.
DAN: Here’s some papers here’s some cards.
SIMON: A second option could be, making boxes, next to the phrases, if they don’t use it next time if they don’t do the ticking. So we actually make space because sometimes if you say tick it, they just forget about it. So if there’s actually space on the worksheet for ticking, they might. And the next step could be if that doesn’t work then
LENKA: Yeah cards.
SIMON: cards
LENKA: I wouldn’t use cards for the first lesson.
RESEARCHER: ticking though?
LENKA: Ticking sounds good.

Experimenting with different ideas in successive versions of the research lesson, for example using cards or ticking boxes to encourage formulaic language use, is an important part of Lesson Study. It encourages teachers to decide which idea works best only after collecting and evaluating evidence from observing the lesson. The effectiveness of having students tick the phrases as a means of encouraging them to use the formulaic language could be evaluated after the group teaches / observes the research lesson the first time. The researcher suggested that Lenka and Dan observe whether or not Simon’s request to the students to tick the boxes next to the formulaic language as they used each phrase seemed to promote the use of the language. The question of how best to encourage students to use the ‘useful language’ was discussed after each teacher taught the research lesson.

Another part of the research lesson that the group would re-visit after the lesson was taught by Simon and Lenka is the “report back” part of the lesson – getting the students to tell the whole class what they found interesting or useful from their discussions in their first and
second groups. This stage in the lesson planned was referred to by the teachers as the ‘feedback’
or ‘follow up’ part of the lesson.

*Excerpt 5.34. (Workshop 6)*
RESEARCHER: How do the students report on it then? What’s the third step?
SIMON: I *try to keep that short* thought because otherwise you have this long…session.
LENKA: Exactly
SIMON: I *don’t like that.*
LENKA: Like one person speaking so well how do you do that?
SIMON: Well I *tend just try to keep the questions very short* what was the most interesting tell me one thing that was interesting about your conversation, or did you learn something new from the other person.

Simon states that he tries to keep the “report back” part of the lesson *short* because he does not like when it goes on for a longer amount of time. Excerpt 5.35 shows the questions they decided to ask their students in the first version of the lesson plan, before Simon taught the lesson.

*Excerpt 5.35. (Research lesson plan)*
Do you think anyone made some interesting points? Has anyone completed the homework in an interesting way? Would you like to do more tasks for the next lesson?

5.9. Collecting Evidence during the Research Lesson

To evaluate the success of the research lesson, the teachers needed to gather evidence to answer their research question, “Does this research lesson begin to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning?” As part of the Lesson Study process, any claim made about how successful the research lesson is needs to be substantiated by evidence collected during the teaching of the lesson and supported later in both the revised lesson plan and final report. The next two excerpts show what the teachers considered to be evidence that their students were beginning to take responsibility.
Excerpt 5.36. (Workshop 6)
RESEARCHER: What will be success for us? Because our overarching goal is learner autonomy, what will we say is a step in the right direction? They did this which means, for this one lesson they demonstrated this.
LENKA: I think if they do more, more than one activity, because we’ll say do one or more activities, and usually we tend to do only what’s specified.
DAN: So what they ranked and then what they did.

When the researcher asks the teachers to articulate how they will gauge the success of the research lesson, Lenka states that the lesson will be successful if students do more than one activity because students usually tend to do only what’s specified. Dan also thinks they should be evaluated on the number of tasks they complete for the lesson. They finally decided that the lesson would be successful if the students completed even one task. The language they used in the lesson plan reflected this decision: “Do as many tasks as you would like. Try to do at least one” (Research lesson plan).

Although Simon was silent during Lenka and Dan’s four-minute conversation on this point, his comments above that students should get something out of reading seem to indicate that he would not consider students’ completion of one task or more an indication that they were beginning to take responsibility for their learning unless they also acquired knowledge about vocabulary or grammar use. Excerpt 5.37, from the research lesson plan, reflects both Lenka and Dan’s shared understanding and Simon’s understanding about what would constitute evidence that the lesson had been successful. As will be seen below, Lenka was much less concerned than Simon and perhaps Dan about student use of the formulaic language when completing the tasks in gauging the success of the lesson (see Appendix E for the entire research lesson plan).

Excerpt 5.37. (Research lesson plan)
The goals and success can be evaluated according to two criteria: Firstly, the extent to which students are engaged with the book and the completed tasks in a communicative activity. Secondly, the accuracy and frequency of students’ use of the useful language in their discussion.
The second through the seventh workshops were dominated by a process of externalizing partial solutions to the contradiction the teachers faced that ultimately served to resolve the tension between the teachers’ understanding of student responsibility for learning and their understanding of a new way to teach reading that could promote responsibility. Some ideas were adopted with little discussion: the activity should develop a habit for learning outside class; and students should be able to choose what they were going to read, and how much they would read. Other ideas evolved throughout the workshops. Simon’s idea that the activity they chose should raise awareness of language in some way was challenged by Lenka early on, but later on, her (and Dan’s) understanding of what students could achieve through reading transformed to include the idea that reading could be a resource for information. Although Simon’s proposal that the activity they develop in some way measure student responsibility was rejected by Lenka, she and Dan eventually agreed that the number of tasks the students chose to do would be an indicator of success for the lesson.

Simon’s partial solution to have students choose reading tasks began a dialogic process of examining the model, and externalizing how it could be developed. Dan suggested making elements of the story the focus of the tasks, which Lenka accepted, but Simon never did explicitly. Lenka proposed adding formulaic language to the tasks, which the group accepted. As the teachers externalized partial solutions to the contradiction over several workshops, they began to internalize a new conceptualization of teaching reading to resolve the contradiction.

However, it’s important to note that what teachers might internalize and how they could be transformed by that process is individual. The mediational space shared by the teachers in the Lesson Study group created an opportunity to engage in a dialogic process of externalizing solutions to their contradiction, but what teachers choose to appropriate and choose to ignore is
determined by what they find personally salient and relevant, their prior experiences, the constraints imposed by the institution, and how they position themselves (e.g., as teachers in a career or as novices in a temporary job).

The transformation each teacher undergoes will be unique; what Simon might internalize will be quite different from what Dan and Lenka could internalize. While there is evidence to suggest that Simon might internalize the idea that increasing student choice could lead to greater student autonomy, it is unlikely that Lenka would appropriate the idea that student responsibility can be quantified in any meaningful way. This question of what Lenka and Simon internalized will be taken up in Chapter Six.

5.10. Analyzing the Outcome of the Research Lesson

After each teacher taught the research lesson, the group collaboratively reflected on and evaluated the lesson, which shifted the emphasis to the internalization of the new model, which was a new way of conceptualizing teaching reading. Their conceptualization, evident in their research lesson plan where they stated what they wanted the mediational artifact to achieve (excerpt 5.30), includes an understanding that the artifact would mediate critical reading by offering students a choice of tasks that interested them so they would approach reading in a more focused way that could over time promote student responsibility.

Although the teachers continued to externalize their ideas about which parts of the research lesson they observed were effective, this part of the expansive learning process is dominated by internalizing aspects of their understanding they believed had the potential to resolve the contradiction they faced. The process of internalization remains dominant as parts of the model become established in teaching practice.
As the teachers began to consider future possibilities for continuing collaboration on reading, student responsibility and other student learning issues, a quaternary contradiction arose between the teachers’ transformed object of student learning and the Academic Office’s rules on how teacher professional development should take place at the school. While there is evidence to suggest Simon and Lenka’s conceptual development continued after they completed the Lesson Study project, the opportunity for teacher-Academic Office expansive transformation was missed. In the next section, the outcome of the research lesson is discussed, and after that, the impact the quaternary contradiction had on teacher expansive transformation is addressed.

The research lesson was taught by each of the three teachers in successive weeks. During each research lesson, the other two teachers were expected to observe and collect data. After each lesson, the group met for an hour to critique it, and tried to find ways to improve it. The group had agreed that the observers should focus on how well the tasks mediated student critical reading of the story, how often the students used the formulaic language when talking about the tasks, and whether or not the teacher’s suggestion of ticking the box next to each phrase seemed to encourage student use of the language. The teachers also decided to observe if the students were responsive to teacher efforts to elicit student feedback on the tasks.

5.10.1. Simon’s Lesson

Simon taught the research lesson first, and Dan and Lenka observed. Simon’s students agreed to read the first 25 pages of the Penguin Reader’s adapted version of The Great Gatsby (F. Scott Fitzgerald). Out of twelve students in the class, nine attended the lesson. Eight of the students completed the reading and at least one of the tasks before the lesson (two students did
two tasks). In the following excerpt Simon comments on how he believes his students approached the tasks.

*Excerpt 5.38. (Workshop 8)*

SIMON: I’m *not sure they used the structure of the task* I think they were just talking about generally what *they got out of the [story]* and what they wanted to talk about. And I thought about it in the situation whether I should stop them and say ok now try to use more of [the useful language] but I don’t think that I think it *would have stopped their enthusiasm* because I think they got quite into it they *seemed to really enjoy it* and I think if I said no no no I want you to do this then they would have kind of *gone against what we want to do* so I decided against that. Um with hindsight I also thought about um *should I have called attention to the language* and asked them please look at the language again and please use it again.

Simon’s comments seem to reveal dissonance between his desire that students use the formulaic language when performing the task and his observation that they were enthusiastic about just discussing what they *got out of it*. He realizes that asking them to focus on the language during the activity *would have gone against* gauging student responsibility but wonders if he *should have called attention to the language* in some way.

Lenka and Dan respond to Simon’s concerns in the next excerpt. The researcher’s question about how well the artifact mediated student reading provoked a lengthy discussion between Lenka and Dan, but Simon remained silent and never answered the question.

*Excerpt 5.39. (Workshop 8)*

RESEARCHER: So that was one of my questions, how well did our activity sheet, how well did it mediate their reading? Somewhat not at all, completely?
DAN: From what I heard *not very*, like they didn’t use these structures they *didn’t use this language*.
LENKA: That’s *how we got them into talking* they had *something like a springboard* where they had to where they could start that was the basis for division into groups *so in those terms it worked*.
DAN: Yeah
LENKA: They did the homework I mean *the useful language wasn’t the key point* we wanted them to *do something with the text* and they did that.
RESEARCHER: Right.
LENKA: So I guess *it was successful* and maybe because of the (xx) I would say that they didn’t have that much time to prepare maybe *if there was more time some of them would have picked [more tasks]...*
DAN: yeah it *could have been time constrained*
[a few minutes later]
RESEARCHER: So the question about the useful language, [to Simon] you didn’t want to force them to [use this language]. Do you guys still think that’s a good idea?
LENKA: I think that would *kill the enthusiasm*
DAN: Yeah I think *they were excited* what they were talking about.
LENKA: And they were *talking a long time.*
DAN: It kind of seemed like if you did it if you just said read this we’re going to discuss it on, Thursday and didn’t give them this [task sheet] they would just come in and *give you blank stares* and (xx)
LENKA: yeah
DAN: They *felt comfortable* having something they know that they did.

Lenka (and later on Dan) believes the artifact succeeded because the tasks encouraged students to become engaged with the text. Lenka and Dan’s threshold for success of the artifact was that students get something out of the reading, not necessarily that they acquire the formulaic language associated with the tasks. However, Simon was reluctant to share his opinion about how well he thought the tasks mediated student reading.

Although it is possible that he did not think the tasks had succeeded as well as Lenka and Dan did because earlier in the project he expressed that the students needed to *acquire language* and not just discuss the text, his comments in 5.38 (that his students *seemed to really enjoy it* and that reminding them to use the language would have ended their enthusiasm for discussing the text) indicate that he thought lesson was successful. Simon believed that doing the tasks with students could be effective even though his students did not demonstrate that they used the formulaic language to complete the tasks, and claimed he *might do this every week with my class.*
Excerpt 5.40. (Workshop 8)
RESEARCHER: Anything else about the lesson? Do you think this will be effective?
SIMON: I might do this every week with my class at least something.

The group moved on to discuss the ‘feedback’ stage in the lesson, a whole group activity in the research lesson where the teacher encourages the students to share what they found interesting from their group discussions. However, Simon decided to change the question so that it focused on language instead, asking ‘what were some of the words you picked up’ at the end of the group discussions. Although the group re-visited their discussion on how to elicit student feedback to end the research lesson several times, they never came up with an activity to end the lesson that satisfied them.

Excerpt 5.41. (Workshop 8)
SIMON: I wasn’t very happy with the feedback and I knew it when I was in the plan I knew it was going to be difficult because I always try to avoid those oh what did you talk about,
LENKA: How do you feel now?
SIMON: any interesting words blah blah blah. But I don’t know how you do it differently
LENKA: I think you managed quite well.

Simon had mentioned earlier that he changed the prompt to elicit feedback because six of the eight students who completed a task chose to do the task in a way which focused on learning words and phrases from the story. But he still wasn’t very happy with this part of the lesson, but didn’t know how you do it differently.

In excerpt 5.42, after a prompt by the researcher to suggest changes to this part of the lesson, Lenka comments on the reasoning behind why Simon changed the feedback stage in the lesson plan.

Excerpt 5.42. (Workshop 8)
RESEARCHER: Let’s talk about [getting the student] feedback. What do we want to change there?
LENKA: That’s what Simon just said you can’t really prepare for that because you never know what happens in the classroom. So I just pointed out what was in the [lesson] plan was different that Simon didn’t answer those specific questions.

SIMON: I don’t know how you could change it.

LENKA: you kind of just have to be flexible and just react to what’s going on in the classroom.

The goal of critiquing the research lesson is to evaluate its success in terms of the overarching goal and make changes based on evidence from the lesson. The researcher tries to mediate teacher discussion of how to improve the lesson, but Lenka argues that a teacher can’t really prepare how you are going to elicit feedback because you never know what will happen in the classroom. She feels a teacher just has to be flexible and react to what’s going on.

Although the teachers talked at length about the feedback stage of the research lesson and how to encourage students to choose to use the useful language, no substantive changes were made to the lesson plan. The teachers decided to first observe Lenka’s lesson to collect more evidence on how the students used the tasks, and the formulaic language, to mediate their critical reading.

5.10.2. Lenka’s Lesson

Lenka taught the research lesson the week after Simon taught it. Dan observed the lesson, but Simon could not be present because he refused to accept a substitute for the class he was teaching at that time. Lenka’s students agreed to read a modified version of “The Dancing Men” (Arthur Canon Doyle). Out of eight students who regularly attended her class, six came to the lesson. Four of the students completed the reading, and three did at least one task (one

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19 Simon’s absence from Lenka and Dan’s research lesson limited the input he could provide on modifying the lesson plan. Since the role of the observers is to collect evidence to critique the lesson, Simon could only offer his opinion on the points Lenka and Dan raised in those meetings. It seems likely that Simon’s inability to contribute fully in the group’s discussion decreased the possibility for making meaningful changes to their lesson plan.
student did two tasks). The teachers met to evaluate the lesson a few days after Lenka taught it. Because Simon did not observe the lesson, he could not contribute as much as he had previously.

During the discussion, the teachers agreed to modify how they would encourage students to use the formulaic language to perform the tasks, and partially change how they approached getting student feedback. In excerpt 5.43 Lenka refers to an activity she created to get feedback from the students who completed the tasks focusing on new vocabulary. Again, the researcher tries to encourage the teachers to change the parts of the research lesson they are not satisfied with.

*Excerpt 5.43. (Workshop 9)*
RESEARCHER: Does somebody want to try to come up with some better idea,
LENKA: For the follow up?
RESEARCHER: For this follow up activity?
DAN: Yeah I’ll give it some thought since I’m going to be doing it.
RESEARCHER: I liked your vocabulary idea I think this is
LENKA: Unfortunately nobody picked that task.
DAN: Yeah you specifically asked are there any words you guys? And they were like a few but it was fine.
LENKA: They said the story was ok that they didn’t find too many difficult words. But with Forrest Gump I’m sure they will.

As an activity to get to end the research lesson, Lenka decided to have her students write new words on a poster on the classroom wall, which would stay there so they could refer to it during future lessons. However her students did not do the words and phrases task, and didn’t find too many difficult words in this text. She stated that when they started the graded reader Forrest Gump the following week she was sure they would find enough unknown words to complete the task. Although the teachers decided in the previous workshop that it was important to be flexible in their approach in how they would get feedback in the final part of the lesson, they agreed that a classroom word poster could be a good activity to finish with if most of the students did the tasks that focused more on vocabulary. The researcher suggested adding several
alternatives to how they could end the lesson, but the group decided to leave their original idea of asking for student feedback on the discussions they had in their groups even though they were not satisfied with that activity.

As in Simon’s lesson, the students in Lenka’s lesson did not often use the formulaic language when they discussed the tasks in their groups. In the following excerpt the researcher suggests that the teachers remind their students to use the language to complete the tasks as they work in their groups. Lenka brings up an idea the teachers previously discussed (see excerpt 5.33) of putting the useful language on cards so that students would have to hold the cards in their hands and ‘play’ them as they used the phrases in their group discussions.

*Excerpt 5.44. (Workshop 9)*

RESEARCHER: At the beginning maybe mention that, there’s that language in their activities. At least say try to use the useful language.
LENKA: I think Simon said that [in his lesson].
SIMON: I’m not sure. I think I forgot to say it but I think I meant to say it. I think it should be said.
LENKA: Yeah to remind them. I should have done that.
SIMON: I’m not sure it makes a difference. I mean I say that every time they do it.
LENKA: I might *bring those cards*. Because they will *feel the responsibility* and they just like the cards.
SIMON: I do find that that the *cards make a difference*. I mean I=
LENKA: =I think *that's a brilliant idea*.
SIMON: It’s a quite different thing giving them a sheet putting it on the board giving them the cards and the cards for some reason *they seem to be the most effective*. They seem to generate the most
LENKA: Yeah because they really have it in their hands and they should get rid of them

Although the teachers were not satisfied with student use of the formulaic phrases in Simon’s lesson, they decided to keep the same format (ticking the boxes next to the language as they used it) to see if Lenka’s students would respond more positively. Although Simon and Lenka believed it was important to encourage the students to try to use the language, Simon was not *sure it makes a difference* because he did this often with his students with limited success;
however, Simon and Lenka felt strongly that putting the formulaic language on cards that the students would ‘play’ as they used them would be more successful strategy for getting students to focus on and use the language. The group agreed that for the final lesson, instead of reminding students to use the language or asking them to tick the phrases as they used them, Dan would create cards with the formulaic language on them and have his students use them in their group conversations when he taught the lesson. As mentioned above, an important reason to teach the research lesson more than once is to give teachers a chance to try out competing hypotheses. Only after observing the lesson and gathering evidence should the teachers decide on the best approach.

5.10.3. Dan’s Lesson

Dan taught the research lesson the following week. Lenka observed the lesson, but again Simon was unwilling to attend because he did not want a substitute teacher for a class he taught at that time. Out of the ten students who regularly attended the class, seven students were present. All of them read either the first chapter of ‘Lucky Jim’ (Kingsley Amis) or the first chapter of ‘The Pelican Brief’ (John Grisham) but none of his students did a task from the artifact. Dan mentioned later that his students had not chosen to read either novel; however, he thought they might be interested because students have the option to write about either of these novels when they took the Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English Exam if they chose to do so. Because none of his students completed a task, he decided not follow the research lesson plan, so his students did not get a chance to use the useful language cards. As a result, no further discussion of how the group might change the research lesson plan took place during the tenth workshop.
Although the teachers individually altered the lesson plan in several places to accommodate student differences in their classes, the only substantial changes the teachers made to the lesson plan were to partially modify their approach to generating student feedback and ask students to use the useful language cards.

5.11. Completing the Work of the Lesson Study Group

A week after completing the project, the teachers presented their results at a Senior Teacher meeting. An important part of the Lesson Study process is making public the knowledge the participants gained. Most of the fifteen Senior Teachers at the school and three administrators from the Academic Office attended the meeting. After the researcher gave a short introduction to the Lesson Study process, the teachers talked about the work they did and what they learned about their students. A handout describing Lesson Study and the artifact the group created was given to the teachers.

5.12. A Lost Opportunity for Expansive Transformation

The ‘quaternary’ contradiction that emerged between the teachers’ reconceptualized object of activity and Academic Office rules limited the possibility for expansive transformation. The Academic Office rules, discussed in Chapter Four, that 1) professional development is top down (topics and scheduling are controlled by the Academic Office); 2) participation is voluntary and not particularly encouraged; 3) creating professional development materials and leading workshops is in addition to the Senior Teachers’ main responsibility of carrying a full-time teaching load; and 4) creating workshop materials is an individual effort (and those materials are personal property) ultimately deterred the Lesson Study group from collaboratively pursuing the topic of developing student responsibility through improved critical reading skills.
further or taking up other professional development topics at a later date. Only when the teachers considered making changes to how they approached teaching reading that extended beyond their own classrooms did they realize that they were limited by the policies and procedures of the Academic Office.

The teachers initially believed the Academic Office would be partners in helping them develop their ideas about promoting critical reading. Simon was sure the school would support the goal of the group (excerpt 5.15). However, the Academic Office’s activity system rules conflicted with the teachers’ expectations of how their project could proceed. The contradiction between the teacher and Academic Office activity systems began to emerge in the fourth workshop when group discovered that the Academic Office was not interested in developing the reading program further unless teachers in the school expressed more interest in using graded readers with their students. Simon and Dan expressed surprise that the Academic Office was not more proactive in working with the school’s teachers to educate them in using the readers effectively in their classes (excerpt 5.16). This lack of interest from the Academic Office lowered the teachers’ expectations for future collaboration with the Academic Office to promote reading at the school.

In the final workshop, the teachers discussed the outcome of a meeting that was held earlier in the day with the researcher, Petra (Academic Office Director), Simon and Lenka to go over professional development issues and the future of the Lesson Study project. For Simon and Lenka, the larger issue that arose in that meeting which further undermined the possibility of expansive transformation was the Academic Office’s apparent unwillingness to offer greater compensation, more professional recognition or a reduced teaching load to encourage Senior
Teacher involvement in leading professional development activities, and the Academic Office’s reluctance to collaborate with the Senior Teachers on professional development issues.

Excerpt 5.45. (Workshop 11)
RESEARCHER: Petra said she would be interested in...continuing something like a Lesson Study group next semester with a limited number of teachers...either working with our overarching aim...or focusing on some other issue that we raised.
SIMON: Is this something she is willing to invest money in?
RESEARCHER: I don’t know. That’s the question...would she be willing to pay you that extra money.
SIMON: Because what I thought was probably the most interesting thing about now doing this because I think in the form that it is yeah it’s been good, but the most interesting thing is seeing how you can actually adapt it and put it into practice in the school like this
DAN: mhm
SIMON: because I mean like for example like what I was trying to raise with Petra was this idea of having people who actually do the groups spend less time on teaching and more time on teacher development,
LENKA: mhm
SIMON: but she didn’t she said yeah that sounds good but she didn’t really bring it any further. Which is the point I thought, would have thought would be the most interesting to discuss in that meeting. I don’t know if you’ll set up another [meeting] with that aim.
[several minutes later]
RESEARCHER: Would you be more interested in doing something if they reduced your teaching hours to accommodate increased [teacher] training?
SIMON: Yeah I think it depends on what it looks like. I would have to have compensation. I wouldn’t just spend my time
LENKA: That would be ideal because when I prepare a workshop I have to do it at night. There’s no time during the day because they have a full schedule you have to prepare for regular classes.

Although Petra expressed interest in continuing the Lesson Study group with more teachers the following semester, Simon believes the most interesting thing would be to adapt Lesson Study and put it into practice in the school. It is possible that Simon’s internalization of a new way of thinking about teaching reading that led to his students completing tasks that helped focus their reading and choosing to read another book helped him see the value in encouraging other teachers in the school to participate in a Lesson Study group.
He argues that the people who lead the Lesson Study groups should *spend less time on teaching and more time on teacher development*, provided that this is something Petra is willing to invest money in. Simon and Lenka both agreed that devoting more time to preparing workshops would be possible if they had fewer teaching hours. Although Simon states here that he would prefer to *spend less time on teaching and more time on teacher development*, Lenka and he believed that compensation for teacher development would not be necessary if the school recognized their effort more, a point they had raised earlier in a discussion on sharing the professional development materials they created for workshops. In the following excerpt, Simon and Lenka relate under what circumstances they would be willing to share their workshop materials with other Senior Teachers who wanted to give a similar workshop.

*Excerpt 5.46. (Workshop 7)*

SIMON: If there was some kind of like *balance in pay* or balance in *appreciation* or where you *move in the school*.
LENKA: Yeah.
SIMON: Yes perfectly fine but if everyone is equal like Petra’s system this year is everyone is equal everyone is the same level we’re going to share [materials] so I mean that’s the way it works so RESEARCHER: Would you be more so what would I guess what would make you more inclined to [collaborate with other Senior Teachers] if there was some recognition of your effort I mean that would help, or payment obviously.
SIMON: But it *doesn’t have to be payment* I mean LENKA: It’s *just recognition* or SIMON: Yeah

Simon and Lenka argue they would be willing to share workshop materials if it were recognized by the Academic Office either through a *balance in pay* or by receiving *recognition* for their effort. Simon believes that Petra’s system has created an environment where everyone, regardless of the amount of additional work they do to develop workshops, receives the same compensation and *appreciation*. This conflict between Simon and Lenka’s belief that they should receive some kind of recognition for developing materials and the Academic Office’s practice of
not acknowledging or rewarding the extra work some teachers were doing to prepare for workshops is related to the Academic Office rule that creating professional development materials and leading workshops is in addition to their jobs as English language teachers.

The Academic Office’s only interest was in the creation of the workshops, not the amount of work that went into developing them, as Petra makes clear in the following excerpt when she talks about the difference between doing research for a workshop and what is taught in the workshop.

Excerpt 5.47. (Academic Office and teacher meeting)
PETRA: From a managerial point of view I’d have to say right how much of that is really necessary for the workshop for us and how much is your own personal development. And that is very difficult because whatever you do, whatever you read you only really use a fraction of that. There’s the absolute essence is in your workshop but you’ve developed so much more because you’ve got all the other ideas which you may use in the future. So the company sees only the workshop…how can I say that because somebody read a book he’s going to be more efficient in the FCE class

Petra values the end result of the Senior Teachers’ effort to create workshops, not the amount of work that went into creating them, or how much was your own personal development. For Simon, who probably spends fifty hours researching (excerpt 4.22) to develop Petra’s outlines into workshops, Petra’s comment means that it does not matter to the school how much work he does to create a workshop, his effort will not be rewarded with increased compensation, recognition or appreciation because everyone is equal, everyone is [at] the same level. By the end of the Lesson Study project, Simon and Lenka were reluctant to invest more time in leading future professional development activities because they felt undervalued by the Academic Office. Lack of recognition for the teachers’ work and release from some hours of teaching appear to be the heart of the contradiction between the teacher and Academic Office’s activity systems, and one reason why expansive transformation did not take place.
Another impediment to expansive transformation was how the Academic Office’s rules that professional development is top down and voluntary had a negative impact on collaboration between the Academic Office and the teachers. Although the Academic Office created many spaces for teacher professional development to take place, none of these spaces actively encouraged collaboration among teachers, between teachers and Senior Teachers, or between Senior Teachers and the Academic Office. The flow of information went in one direction: Petra’s workshop outlines informed the Senior Teachers’ workshop materials, which were then presented to the consumers of the information, the teachers.

As discussed in Chapter Four, Petra viewed interaction with teachers as problem-solving situations, not opportunities for idea sharing. Teachers who meet with her are seen as dissatisfied and she has to say yes or no to them, and she does not just deal with the problem; instead, she has them come back to her office when they have considered the issue more completely. Regardless of the outcome in her meetings with teachers, Petra would often exclude their point of view because “you make a decision for the company, make a decision for the school. This is the way we do it and this is what we want to do. Not to listen to everything and sort of discuss it” (Academic Office and teacher meeting). Collaboration between the Academic Office and teachers was not part of the school’s culture, so it is not surprising that the Academic Office would fail to see the benefit of collaborating with the Lesson Study group on developing the school’s reading program.

However, Petra was “quite happy” that collaboration was “naturally happening” among teachers because “people feel happy to talk to other people and share ideas”. She also felt that if the school encouraged more collaboration, teachers would “turn against it because it comes from above” (Academic Office and teacher meeting). Collaboration between teachers, as with
attending meetings and workshops, was seen as a strictly voluntary activity, as in the case of the Senior Teachers who were not expected to share the research, activities or notes they developed for the workshops they led. Petra felt that she could not tell the Senior Teachers you have to do this you must do this because she would feel bad about it and was sure a lot of [teachers] would feel bad as well (excerpt 4.21). As discussed above, Simon and Lenka would share their workshop materials with other Senior Teachers if they received more recognition from the Academic Office for their work, but thought this was unlikely to happen.

Figure 5.4 shows the contradiction between the Academic Office rules and the potential object for collaborating to produce qualitatively new patterns of practice that could potentially promote not only greater student responsibility through critical reading, but also encourage the exploration of other professional development issues. The environment that would foster inter-systemic collaboration, essential for expansive transformation to take place, was undermined by Academic Office’s implicit rules for professional development that limited the creation and flow of information to one direction; did not differentiate between Senior Teachers in the value they added to the workshops or the recognition they were given; and valued teacher volunteerism and non-compulsory sharing, but perhaps in some way relieved the Academic Office of the responsibility for teacher professional growth.

In the next excerpt, Petra’s comments to the researcher, made after Simon and Lenka had left the meeting, shows that while she supports teacher-led professional development activities like Lesson Study, she claims she already knows where the project is going to fail. Petra’s negative attitude towards the success of teacher-led professional development activities does not bode well for future efforts to build the collaboration and support necessary for expansive transformation to occur.
Excerpt 5.48. (Petra, Academic Office and teacher meeting)
If [Simon and Lenka] wanted to do something like this, I’d completely support it. I would definitely support it but I already know where the project is going to fail. But that’s the issue I really support it and I know both of them would be, they told me already that they thought it was very positive and that it brought up very good and interesting things, and they wish that something like this could be continued … I think over the years I’ve just become more pragmatic because I’ve just seen, things that we’ve tried things so many times from different angles and you always see them crashing at the same hurdle and you try and work around it you try to play with it so that’s why my approach to it, I do support it but then, I do not have great expectations in the outcome just because I know, I just know, what the nature is, of these things.

The Academic Office scheduled many worthwhile workshops, meetings, and teacher observations, made workshop materials available, and told teachers they could contact their Senior Teachers (or the Academic Office) for guidance, but seemed to work under the assumption that their teachers, most of them novice teachers, would be able to take responsibility for their own professional development and seek out opportunities to learn. What seemed to be missing was a more active Academic Office role that could include collaborating with teachers as partners in professional development, not simply presenting information to them, reaching out to teachers instead of waiting for teachers to come to them, recognizing and rewarding teachers who contribute more, and making professional development an integral part of the teachers’ responsibilities. This topic will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.
5.13. Summary

Although the collective activity of the teachers and Academic Office did not lead to expansive transformation, participating in a Lesson Study group did provide teachers with the dialogic space to externalize a contradiction between their teaching beliefs and practice, and collaboratively construct solutions to a contradiction they all shared: how do we encourage students who are making insufficient progress learning English to take more responsibility for their learning?

The teachers’ research question motivated them to analyze teaching and learning practices, and create an artifact they could introduce in a series of research lessons to begin to test their hypothesis that if students choose the reading material; decide on how (and whether) they would interact with the text; and elect to use the formulaic language to complete the peer-directed tasks in class, then they might, over a longer period of time, begin to take more responsibility for their learning. Observing and collecting evidence allowed the group to
meaningfully critique the versions of the research lesson and reach conclusions about what was successful (students choosing the material, and the tasks engaging the learners) and what was less successful (student use of the formulaic language, student feedback).

The teachers’ participation in Lesson Study was a success. The teachers internalized a new way of thinking about teaching reading that they believed could help students become more critical readers, and over time become more responsible for their own learning. Central to this new understanding was that they could provide the mediational means for students to focus their reading by offering them a variety of tasks that they could select according to personal interest. The teachers’ new understanding of teaching also included offering students a variety of choices: the text they would read, the number of pages they would read each week, and the tasks they would do at home and be responsible for in class. As the teachers worked to create a research lesson around an artifact and new teaching practices that could potentially address the student learning goal they set, each teacher internalized a different understanding of the connection between teaching reading and greater student responsibility, which resulted in self-regulation and changes in teaching practices. This topic is addressed in Chapter Six.

The teachers’ transformation in how they conceptualized teaching reading was mediated at times by the researcher acting as ‘expert other’ through statements and questions that challenged the teachers to consider the issues that moved the teachers through the Lesson Study process, and mediated at times by the teachers acting as one another’s ‘temporary other’ in focusing the group’s attention on issues that they believed were central to overcoming the contradiction they shared.

The teachers’ process of reconceptualization could be viewed as a collective zone of proximal development as they addressed a shared contradiction by appropriating mediational
means that transformed the understandings that guided their everyday actions into a collective response (the development of a concept and its instantiation) that had the potential to generate a new form of activity. However, without a commitment from the Academic Office, the possibility of systemic transformation was lost.

Although the use of Lesson Study as a second stimulus in Developmental Work Research methodology did not lead to expansive transformation, it succeeded in providing the teachers with a framework for collaboratively pursuing ideas to begin to resolve the contradiction they faced, creating their own content, and guiding them in modeling and implementing solutions. The use of examples of teaching conflicts from the teachers’ initial interviews in the first Lesson Study workshop were instrumental as ‘mirror’ data to uncover the developmentally important contradiction that became the motivating force for change as the group began to envision and collaboratively create new solutions.

5.14. Conclusion

Co-creating a reading program that encouraged critical reading in the school was no longer an option because the Academic Office was unwilling to provide incentives (or recognition) for the teachers to continue work on the project. It seems likely that the Academic Office did not consider offering the teachers any benefits for leading a Lesson Study group after the project ended because the Academic Office did not perceive this new approach to professional development to be useful in resolving any conflicts the school might have been experiencing with their current (top-down) teacher development program. From the perspective of the Academic Office, the professional development program they had was already successful in helping the teachers who chose to participate become better teachers. The Academic Office’s reading program was already established: Teachers could order graded readers from the library,
and materials from a workshop on teaching reading were available on the school’s computers, so perhaps the administrators believed this issue had already been resolved. This could explain, in part, the Academic Office Director’s (Petra’s) negative reaction towards discussing changes in the program.

An implication for teachers and teacher educators who wish to begin a Lesson Study group is that they should involve administrators responsible for professional development and other stakeholders to determine the student learning issues that are important for both administrators and teachers, and then have both groups agree on the overarching goal for the Lesson Study group. In the Japanese and North American Lesson Study research, discussed in Chapter Two, this is described as a common practice for successful Lesson Study groups, but it merits repeating here that stakeholders should be active participants, at least in deciding on the overarching goal and giving feedback on the research lesson, and not simply informed about the Lesson Study group’s activities as was the case in this study.

It seems likely that because the impetus for the intervention came from a researcher outside the school and not from a contradiction that arose between the activity of the Academic Office and the activity of the teachers, the Academic Office did not see the value in continuing the project. An implication for interventionist-researchers using Developmental Work Research methodology is that they should assist administrators in identifying a contradiction that could motivate expansive learning and lead to a reconceptualization of their object of activity. However, it is important that the teachers in the Lesson Study group experience this contradiction as well. Without a contradiction that impels both teachers and administrators to make changes to how they approach professional development and student learning, it is unlikely that any outside effort to facilitate expansive transformation will succeed, but such effort could
result in a transformation of how teachers understand student learning. The importance of identifying a shared contradiction between administrators and teacher is taken up again in Chapter Seven.

Although the opportunity for inter-systemic transformation was not realized, Lenka and Simon’s individual transformation progressed as their new understanding of teaching reading was internalized and became a stable part of their teaching practice. As the teachers collectively generated solutions directed towards re-conceptualizing the object of their activity, each teacher made sense of the work the group was doing in their own way. The personal trajectories of Lenka and Simon’s conceptual development is the topic of the next chapter.

20 Although there is some evidence to suggest that Dan’s conceptualization of student learning evolved over the semester, and that he contributed to group’s transformation, there is no evidence that the concepts the teachers internalized over the semester led to any changes in his teaching practice. Problems Dan had with the students in his class might have contributed to his difficulty in implementing new practices. In his final interview, Dan informed me that there had been several complaints about his teaching in the class, so the Academic Office assigned another instructor to teach one of the two weekly 90-minute lessons. Dan believed this was a “breach of trust” from the administration, and stated that teaching was not “the number one thing I do”. From these comments and others, I believe that in the last month of the Lesson Study project, Dan was more concerned about keeping his job than developing as a teacher. In the final interview he also mentioned that after the research lesson he “hasn’t approached reading with [his class]” because he believed they did not have time for reading, but he might use the artifact in the future to “help direct their reading”. Because Dan does not seem to move beyond an idealized conception of how he might promote reading with his students in the future, he was excluded from the analysis in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER SIX

LENKA AND SIMON’S CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter addresses the research question of how teacher conceptual development is influenced by participation in Lesson Study by tracing Lenka and Simon’s development as they work to understand and implement a new way of teaching reading as a means to promote greater learner responsibility. This focus represents a shift in perspective from the collective experience of the teachers engaged in the reconceptualization of their object of activity, as discussed in the previous chapter, to each teacher’s subjective experience as they make personal sense of their collaborative effort. Their individual development (embedded in collective experience) proceeds as the contradiction they face initiates a search for solutions that encourages greater student responsibility for learning. The teachers’ creation of the research lesson plan, the DWR ‘second stimulus’ conceptual tool, makes visible Lenka and Simon’s process of transformation as they engage in collaborative activity. Dialogic mediation with the other teachers, researcher and their students (the mediational means they individually appropriate), lead to internalization of new concepts and self-regulation.

By engaging in a dialogic process of externalization to seek ways to resolve the contradiction they face, the teachers’ comments, which become part of the social setting, are considered, rejected, or co-constructed by the teachers into a new understanding as each teacher simultaneously makes personal sense of the interaction. Their joint construction of shared social meaning through cooperative interaction and personal sense-making guide development as the locus of individual teacher control shifts from other- and expert-regulated to self-regulated.
Lenka and Simon’s process of coming to understand and implement a new way of teaching reading that promotes greater student responsibility drives their personal transformation of how they understand 1) student agency; 2) student motivation; 3) teacher engagement in student learning; and 4) student learning outcome (see figure 6.1). Their transformation, mediated by the other teachers and at times by their own students, who act as temporary others, and the researcher, who acts as an expert other, results in the (personally meaningful and unique) internalization of a new understanding of these concepts and self-regulation. The internalization of these new understandings become instantiated in the teaching practices Lenka and Simon adopt.

Figure 6.1. Re-conceptualizing Student Responsibility Transforms Other Concepts

In this chapter, several excerpts already discussed in Chapter Five are re-evaluated to consider the individual sense-making that diverged from group consensus. Lenka’s development is discussed in the first part of this chapter, and Simon’s in the second part.
6.1. Lenka: Re-conceptualization of Student Agency, Motivation and Learning

This part explores the trajectory of Lenka’s conceptual development of her understanding of student agency, student motivation, engagement in student learning, and student learning outcome in reading as she and the other teachers explore the connection between promoting learner responsibility and new ways to teach reading. Her transformation is traced from the conflict she experienced with student learning, and her perspective on the contradiction the group faced, to a search for solutions, which led to re-conceptualization and self-regulation, and changes in teaching practices. The following excerpt focuses on the conflict Lenka experienced with student learning in her classes.

6.1.1. A Teaching Conflict

Excerpt 6.1. (Lenka, initial interview)
We’re dragging on and on and we’re not doing any progress and they keep forgetting vocabulary because they don’t practice at home…they are busy they want to learn quickly but they don’t realize that they won’t learn only in the classroom that they have a lot of learning has to be done by themselves…and sometimes they expect that it’s like a magic thing that happens and I will teach them and they will learn. So that’s very frustrating when you cannot see any progress.

This excerpt, also discussed in the first part of Chapter Five, reveals Lenka’s frustration that her students expect to learn quickly, but are not willing to take responsibility for their learning. However, Lenka feels responsible for her students’ insufficient effort outside of class and blames herself for their lack of progress. In the next excerpt, she responds to the researcher’s question about her perceived weaknesses as a language teacher.

Excerpt 6.2. (Lenka, initial interview)
I’m not strict enough. I can’t really be angry with my students because I think they’re, well, well, it’s it’s, their business whether they learn or not I mean they’re paying for their course and I cannot force them. To some extent I guess that’s a
disadvantage that I should be more strict and check the homework and, uh I should have a system of punishment [laughing] or something just to motivate them so it would be to their benefit.

Here Lenka experiences a conflict between the amount of work she believes her students should be doing outside of class to succeed in learning English and the actual (insufficient) work they are doing. She blames herself for her students’ lack of progress. This conflict is one of many that Lenka experiences as a busy language teacher, all competing for her attention. However, when the Lesson Study group chooses this particular conflict to investigate, it becomes a contradiction that motivates Lenka (and the others) to restructure classroom practice in a way that begins to resolve the contradiction.

6.1.2. Externalizing the Contradiction with the Other Teachers

In an early discussion with the other teachers on the problem of students’ failure to do work outside of class, Lenka argues that the focus of the group’s work could be on getting students to be responsible for their learning (excerpt 5.5). A few days after this discussion, Lenka relates her thoughts about student motivation in her journal.

Excerpt 6.3. (Lenka, Journal entry 2)
The last issue was motivation or lack of motivation on the side of our students. It was nice to discuss this topic and see that I am not the only one dealing with this problem. I liked that we could see that it really is not always our fault that the students are not making (sufficient, expected) progress. It was very refreshing to hear other teachers’ stories and examples of their frustrations.

When given the chance to externalize her frustration concerning lack of student progress with Simon and Dan in the second Lesson Study workshop, Lenka is glad that they share her concern with students’ lack of motivation. Hearing the other teachers’ stories of frustration with their students’ motivation lead her to question whether student responsibility for learning is
always their own fault. Here Simon and Dan acted as ‘temporary others’ who help Lenka begin to mediate a new understanding that the onus for student motivation and student achievement resides with the students as well. This emerging understanding later helped Lenka focus not only on what her role in engaging student learning could be but also on how that effort could enhance student agency.

6.1.3. A New Approach to Teaching Reading

After the teachers adopted the overarching Lesson Study goal of promoting greater student responsibility, they decided that reading would be the focus of the research lesson. Their research question “How do we change our approach to teaching reading that encourages students to take responsibility for their learning?” mediated their search for solutions. The rest of this part of the chapter explores how a dialogic process of externalization with the other teachers and the researcher mediated Lenka’s transformation.

6.1.3.1. Conflict in Teaching Reading

The following two excerpts, the first from her initial interview and the second from a workshop a few weeks later, reveal Lenka’s understanding of her students’ motivation to read, learning outcomes, and how she engages student learning through reading in her classes.

Excerpt 6.4. (Lenka, initial interview)
What helps sometimes is um well um to I make them read because people don’t read generally I would say they don’t read in Czech they don’t read in English. So I make photocopies of short stories and then we work with them [and] they they read these graded simplified stories…and I keep telling them they don’t have to sit there with a dictionary and look up every work just please read it and, you know you’re exposed to language.
This excerpt shows that Lenka believes her students are not motivated to read, and her role in engaging student learning is to make them read and perhaps give them reading strategies to cope with unknown words. She implies that a learning outcome for students is achieved by just exposing them to language. In excerpt 6.5, a few weeks after the initial interview, Lenka and Simon consider how reading might motivate students.

Excerpt 6.5. (Workshop 3)
RESEARCHER: What motivates them…what kind of reading would motivate them?
SIMON: I think it has to be tied in with some kind of, like making them aware what they actually get out of it…awareness needs to be raised so it’s not just ok read another book it’s read this book and see what you get out of it.
LENKA: I remember what we did with readers when I was learning English that um sometimes our teacher would tell us to like read two chapters and then or (.) and finish the story or if there was a letter of uh what was it we had to pretend we were one of the characters and we were writing a letter to somebody else so we were actually using the vocabulary and explaining our reasons.
RESEARCHER: That’s creative I like that.
SIMON: I’m not sure the students well I don’t know if the students would respond to that.
LENKA: I guess mine would because
SIMON: They would?
LENKA: they are they are well you saw them they’re really active.
[one minute later]
RESEARCHER: What motivates them to read? What are reasons people read?
SIMON: And are they aware that there’s actually a reason that’s called read to learn…If you could somehow make them aware of how they learn through reading by doing something.
LENKA: When they read readers they complain that it’s too difficult and they spend too much time looking up words in the dictionary
SIMON: mhm
LENKA: and so they have these bad habits that they really sit there…and find translations but they say it takes them too much time and it’s boring to read and it’s very time consuming so I try to tell them about reading strategies that they don’t have to understand every word…they should first try to get the meaning from context…In my experience students don’t want to read because they don’t understand words so they’re very skeptical about the process…Maybe you should
teach them *how to read in English*, that we should help them to, well yeah *make it exciting*.

The researcher’s question, asked twice, about how reading could motivate their students encourages the group to externalize their understanding and make their views about this connection explicit. The question elicits quite different reactions from Simon and Lenka. Simon’s understanding, twice repeated, that motivating students to read entails raising their language awareness, leads Lenka to discuss her experience that students are de-motivated by reading. She believes that her students complain about and are bored by reading, and are skeptical that they will get something out of the process, perhaps due to her focus on vocabulary and strategies. Her strong reaction to Simon’s ideas reveals a conflict between the kinds of reading activities she does with her students and her belief that reading activities could motivate students by being exciting.

In this interaction the researcher acts as an expert other who encourages the group to consider the connection between reading and motivation, and Simon acts as a temporary other who helps Lenka articulate a contradiction she feels between her teaching practice of promoting reading strategies and teaching vocabulary to help her students become better readers, and her belief that perhaps she should introduce activities (as one of her English teachers did) that make reading more exciting. Although Lenka does not explicitly disagree with Simon that reading activities that raise student awareness of the language will motivate students to read, both of the times he states this opinion she seems to take a contrary view that student motivation is linked to doing activities that are exciting for the students. It is this contrast between their understanding of how students could be motivated by reading that helps Lenka externalize what her students do not like about reading and how she might engage them to develop more of an interest.
In the next excerpt, also discussed in Chapter Five, Lenka is more explicit about rejecting Simon’s approach to raising student awareness about language through reading. Again, Simon is instrumental in helping Lenka externalize the kinds of activities she does not want to do with her students. In this discussion, a week later than the discussion above, the focus of the workshop has shifted from finding out what could motivate students to discovering the kind of reading activities students could do outside of class that demonstrate that they are taking responsibility for their learning. Here Simon talks about an activity that would encourage students to investigate unknown words in detail using tools introduced by the teacher.

*Excerpt 6.6. (Workshop 4)*

RESEARCHER: What could the students do, in the classroom with this reading they’re going to do outside of the classroom that would show to us that they’ve taken some responsibility for their own learning?

SIMON: They choose the words, they have to do the research, they have to find out how to do the research you can give them some tools, but ultimately they’re the ones doing all the work. And if these tools are new if these tools are some tools that they’re not actually using at the moment, I think that could take them, somewhere new.

LENKA: But with this task you would totally kill my interest in reading…you know if I had to read something and then underline or choose five words and find out all these things [sighs] I don’t think I would really appreciate it or even motivate me to do it if you gave me this task, in the next lesson I would be totally bored and angry.

Lenka argues that doing Simon’s task would totally kill her interest in reading because in Lenka’s opinion these kinds of language-centered tasks would presumably not make reading exciting for her students and motivate them to read more probably because she herself would be bored by these kinds of activities. Simon’s explanation of his task helps Lenka externalize again precisely what kind of reading activities she would not want her students to do because of her orientation toward meaning-centered activities. The teachers’ Lesson Study goal of collaboratively creating a research lesson encourages a dialogic process that animates them to
define in detail reading activities they believe would promote greater learner motivation and agency and reveal something about their conceptual orientation to what is most valuable about language learning. Through this process of deciding for herself the kinds of reading activities that would not foster learner responsibility or increase motivation, Lenka moves towards articulating the kinds of activities she feels would do so. This transformation is discussed later below.

6.1.3.2. Re-evaluating Student Motivation to Read

As part of the Lesson Study process to investigate how the topic of the research lesson has been taught and learned in the school, the teachers decided to distribute a questionnaire to teachers to ascertain how reading was being taught at the school, and a questionnaire to their own students to find out the students’ level of interest in reading and the kinds of reading activities they enjoyed doing (see appendices B and C). In the following excerpt, Lenka reacts to the results of the teachers’ questionnaire, and in excerpt 6.8 she discusses her reaction to her students’ questionnaire.

Excerpt 6.7. (Workshop 4)
RESEARCHER: What do you think of these results?
LENKA: Everybody is a reader everybody reads a lot, but we don’t really don’t do anything in classes or we don’t do any targeted activity, or we don’t focus on reading…everybody says yes I encourage them yes we do these things but I mean if I were to fill it in I would say yes I encourage my students but in real life what do we do we just read in class and yes I tell them please read at home do this.

Lenka again externalizes the conflict she feels between her practice of promoting reading in her classes and her emerging understanding that she needs to engage her students by doing more activities that are relevant to the reading. She realizes here that she has to do more than
simply have her students read in class and at home, and this awareness increases her motivation
to search for a solution.

The questionnaire responses from Lenka’s students revealed that, contrary to her belief
that her students do not read at all outside of class, and find it boring when she assigns reading as
homework (see excerpts 6.4 and 6.5), almost all of her students enjoy reading in Czech and
English, and more than half read something for pleasure in English several times a week. In her
last journal entry, Lenka stated that she was “glad we did those reading questionnaires where
students wrote what they like to read. It was very positive that they all like to read” (journal
entry nine), which she expanded on in her final interview.

*Excerpt 6.8. (Lenka, final interview)*
I learned they like reading. I probably wouldn’t have done this questionnaire on
my own and I think that if I teach post-secondary studies next year I’m going to
give them a similar questionnaire about reading. So I learned they are interested
in reading they enjoy doing, well they enjoy reading at home…I was surprised.

Lenka’s surprise that her students were in fact interested in reading at home for pleasure
shows that her understanding of her students’ motivation has transformed. From workshop four
when the results of the student questionnaire were discussed to the final interview, it seems likely
that Lenka’s reconceptualization of her students’ motivation to read helped promote a
transformation in how she engaged student learning in reading. Because she came to realize that
her students were active readers in their free time, she believed she could play an important role
in developing their interest in reading and expect more from them. The results of the teacher and
student questionnaires, and the dialogic interaction with the group on the meaning of those
results, mediated Lenka’s transformation in how she understood her students’ motivation to read
and her role in the process of engaging students to learn through reading, a topic taken up in the
next section.
6.1.3.3. An Emerging Understanding of Engaging Student Learning in Reading

Lenka begins to shift from only responding to Simon’s ideas about how to foster student responsibility through reading towards articulating her own ideas about how this might be accomplished. In the next two excerpts, prompted by the researcher, the teachers discuss how reading activities could promote student responsibility. In the following excerpt, Lenka and Dan exchange ideas about possible activities, but Simon is not convinced that doing these activities would demonstrate that students are taking responsibility for their learning.

*Except 6.9 (Workshop 4)*
RESEARCHER: So when we say we want them to take responsibility…they’re going to have to do some kind of activity [where] they read and they come to class and do something with it.
LENKA: Act out the dialogue or something.
RESEARCHER: It can be lots of things.
DAN: Imagine what happens in the next chapter based on what happened in this chapter.
LENKA: Yeah write a letter to the character, give them advice or something like that.
SIMON: But how does that show they’re taking more responsibility?
LENKA: [sighs] That’s a good question.
SIMON: I just don’t think that meshes.

Lenka and Dan externalize their ideas about the kinds of activities they would like their students to do in the research lesson. This is the first instance of Lenka moving the discussion away from Simon’s ideas for activities (e.g., studying vocabulary and dictionary skills, grammar practice, summarizing) towards her own ideas for reading activities that she believes would be more interesting for students. Simon again acts as a temporary other by challenging the teachers to consider how those activities show the students are *taking more responsibility*. Lenka admits Simon is correct, but this interaction motivates her to think more about the connection between the kinds of activities that she believes would motivate her students to read more and how the
completion of these activities would demonstrate that students are beginning to take responsibility for their own learning. A few days after this workshop, Lenka writes in her journal about the difficulty in trying to measure student responsibility, the kinds of reading activities the group should create, and the connection between student reading and responsibility.

Excerpt 6.10. (Lenka, Journal entry 4)

I’ve been thinking about our last meeting and about our over-arching goal. I think we chose a very challenging area as it is very difficult (I would say even impossible) to measure learners’ responsibility...Our task now is to introduce reading to our students as something motivating and exciting. In my case (with the post-secondary group) also as something very cool :-) I think we should let our students choose what they want to read. This would go together with the idea of making them responsible for their own learning. The problem comes with measuring their responsibility for their own learning. We’ll never be able to assess whether they read because they feel responsible or whether they read because we told [them]. On the other hand, there’s no way we can force them to read so when they read, that’s already a sign of their responsibility. It’s up to us to prepare a lesson in which we’ll use the text in such a way that they will be motivated to do it (read) again.

This excerpt reveals how Lenka’s thinking about the purpose of reading activities (they should be motivating and exciting), student agency (they should choose what they want to read and how much) and teacher engagement in promoting learning (encourage student motivation) is beginning to evolve. Lenka now has an idealized conception\(^{21}\) that exciting reading activities will motivate students to read outside of class not because the teacher tells them to do so, but because they want to. Her understanding now is that promoting student agency by giving them a choice in what they read is linked to demonstrating student responsibility for learning. Her understanding of her role in engaging student learning has changed from making students read to expose them to language to introducing reading as something exciting.

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\(^{21}\) Idealized in the sense that she has a plan about how she wants to transform her teaching, but has not yet put these ideas into practice.
However, Lenka has yet to articulate what motivating and exciting activities might look like, and how they would promote learner responsibility. In the next excerpt, Dan outlines an idea for reading activities that shifts the focus of the discussion from primarily language-oriented to story-oriented activities. Lenka responds positively to the idea, and the group incorporates his idea into the artifact they were creating.

Excerpt 6.11. (Workshop 5)
DAN: So just the thing that occurs to me um, the student might be more interested might be able to do it that instead of giving them ok you can work on grammar vocab summarizing, you give them you can work on plot character events,
LENKA: mm
DAN: design the tool so it uses, one or more or all of these things. So if they they can pick the characters they can use [that activity] they use the vocabulary. Or something like that or if they do events then they use a timeline and then they kind of summarize uh
LENKA: mhm
DAN: their opinions of the events or whatever their opinions of the character. Something like that. So turning it kind of sideways
LENKA: Yeah that sounds interesting.
DAN: So it's kind of focused more on the elements of the story instead of the parts of language
LENKA: mhm
DAN: but using the parts of language
LENKA: And that makes more sense because they read primarily not because of grammar, for grammar and vocabulary but for the story.

As discussed in Chapter Five, this interaction was a pivotal moment for the group because it influenced the kind of tasks they finally created. The discussion was particularly meaningful for Lenka because it helped her define what she meant by motivating and exciting reading activities. Lenka realizes here that Dan’s suggestion of focusing more on the elements of the story instead of the parts of language (but still have students draw on language from the text) makes more sense for Lenka because students read primarily not...for grammar and vocabulary but for the story. When Dan externalizes his idea to create activities that students might be more
interested in, he acts as a temporary other who helps mediate Lenka’s understanding of the kind of activities that could motivate her students, and enables her to articulate the realization that the focus of the activities should not be on the language, but on the story. This demonstrates a shift in Lenka’s conceptualization of her role in engaging student learning. When the teachers finished the activities a few weeks after this workshop, Lenka writes in her journal that she thinks they “managed to produce a good-quality artifact with a variety of interesting activities…I think that each student will be able to choose an enjoyable activity” (journal entry six).

**6.1.3.4. Enhancing Student Agency through Choice**

As the group finished their work on creating the tasks, Lenka’s conceptualization of student agency and how that promotes learner responsibility evolves further. When Simon and Lenka discuss how many activities they think their students will do at home in preparation for the reading discussion in class, Lenka discusses the link between the activities students choose to do and student independence.

*Excerpt 6.12. (Workshop 6)*

SIMON: I do think though that everyone will do something [at least one of the reading activities]. For me it’s a matter of how much they will choose to do. I thought what we were planning was to give them that sheet and say ok do whatever you, what you want, but try to do something.

LENKA: If all the activities are on one sheet I think some of my students will do all of them and some will just do one. So that’s how we’ll see how independent they are and how much they’re willing to learn, how much they’re willing to work.

Lenka articulates the connection she sees between the number of reading tasks students choose to do and independence. For Lenka, students who choose to do more tasks demonstrate that they are more willing to learn. In the following workshop, Lenka expands on her idea that doing the tasks could eventually help students be more independent.
Excerpt 6.13. (Workshop 7)
RESEARCHER: How can we close this gap [between the work students are currently doing outside of class and the work they should be doing to succeed]?
LENKA: Provide them or show them the possibilities that exist out there. That’s what we’re doing we’re showing them these readers and what you can do with them so they’ll hopefully realize and make their own decisions. So we’re trying to show them so they’re not afraid and lead them towards more independence hopefully.

Lenka argues that by asking students to complete tasks that encourage a more detailed understanding of the story, they might begin to appreciate that they are learning more when they read, and this realization might eventually lead them towards more independence. They might become aware that “a text is not just for pleasure…it’s a resource for information” (Lenka, workshop seven). Students who choose to do more tasks might be demonstrating that they are motivated to get more out the reading, and that they are becoming more responsible for their learning.

In the initial interview, Lenka’s understanding of student agency included the idea that students should not be “just passively absorbing what the teacher tells them but…actively working on learning.” By the end of the Lesson Study project, she re-conceptualizes agency to encompass the idea that students need to be offered choices that engage them in reading if they are to develop. Giving students a choice of meaningful reading tasks they find value in completing increases the likelihood they will choose to do more of these tasks on their own, and over time, become more independent learners. Lenka’s effort to enhance student agency is linked to how she now understands her role in engaging student learning and what she considers a successful learning outcome in reading, which has transformed from viewing reading as a means to increase student exposure to language (excerpt 6.4) to viewing reading as a student-directed resource of information for students.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the dialogic process the group engaged in, in particular the
discussions on adding formulaic language to the tasks, prompted Lenka’s new understanding of her role in engaging student learning in reading. Her transformation was mediated by Simon, acting as a temporary other, who often argued that the connection between developing student language awareness and student responsibility, and by the researcher, acting as an expert other, who repeatedly focused the group’s attention on making the connection between reading activities and greater student responsibility for learning. Lenka seemed to accept Simon’s argument to include formulaic language because she could see how students might need this language to complete the meaning-oriented tasks.

Until Lenka began implementing the ideas developed in the Lesson Study workshops, her emerging understanding of the interaction between creating exciting and motivating tasks, enhancing student agency and promoting a more critical reading of texts as a learning outcome could be considered an idealized conception. Observing Simon’s lesson, teaching the research lesson herself, and continuing to use the artifact in her class after the research lesson leads Lenka towards internalization and self-regulation of these concepts and a consolidation of the new teaching practices, as evidenced by her evaluation of the success of she had putting these ideas into practice.

6.1.4. Internalization and Self-regulation of a New Approach to Teaching Reading

After Simon taught the research lesson, Lenka argued that the artifact was successful because it acted something like a springboard in that it got students to do something with the text (excerpt 5.39). After she taught the research lesson, she continued to encourage her students to do the tasks as they worked through the book they had chosen to read. However, as the next excerpt shows, Lenka decided she wanted to occasionally have the students do a task in class that she assigned.
Excerpt 6.14. (Workshop 11)
LENKA: I had 10 [students] today after a month because only 6 of them came regularly and I was surprised that even those who don’t come to class did the reading and I did a task…today and they really liked doing that and they want to finish the book by next week…So I’m going to, so after Christmas I’ll try to suggest we start reading something else or even now so it’s there. Because they wanted to read they were really interested in or some of them were interested in some intermediate books…[and] all of them do the activities.
SIMON: Do you give them the same tasks?
LENKA: I didn’t give anything…this week because last week I did and only two people prepared the character [task]. Again nobody chose new words or nothing else and they were quite, I think they were bored and it was, I should have been more creative and given a different task but this time…they were just supposed to read the next four chapters and we did an in-class activity today and that worked really well.

Lenka remarks that her students enjoyed reading and continued to do tasks from the artifact (when she asked them to), and remarks that they responded well to a task she did with them in class. After some success in encouraging her students to do the tasks at home, Lenka believes her students are now bored and less willing to do the same tasks, so she decided to require them to do a task in class, which she thinks worked really well. Although Lenka is perhaps less committed to the idea that allowing students to always choose the reading tasks they want to do is essential to enhance student agency, she is committed to engaging student learning by promoting the use of the artifact as a means to encourage greater interaction with a text, a point she argues in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 6.15. (Lenka, final interview)
RESEARCHER: do you think you’ll continue doing these activities that we developed in some form?
LENKA: Yes I would like to…when they just read a reader at home ok it helps them because they are exposed to language but they’re not really doing anything with the text so it’s only on the surface and I would like to I would like them to work with the text with language so I’m going to give them these some activities [from the artifact] to do at home so they…go back and look at the text more closely.
Over the course of the Lesson Study project, Lenka’s conceptualization of what a successful learning outcome in reading should be gradually transformed. She no longer believes as she did at the beginning of the Lesson Study project that the goal of having students read is to expose them to language because they are not really doing anything with the text. She now argues that having students do the tasks from the artifact at home encourages them to examine the text more closely. Lenka is committed to continue using tasks with her students that are motivating and exciting to assist them in getting more out the text they read outside of class, and to lead them towards more independence.

6.1.5 Summary

Faced with contradictions between her beliefs and practices that students should take more responsibility for their learning outside of class, and that reading activities should motivate and excite students, Lenka, the other teachers and the researcher engaged in a dialogic process of externalization in a search for solutions that led to Lenka’s new understanding of teaching reading that has the potential to encourage student responsibility for learning. As she worked to understand the connection between teaching reading and learner responsibility, her conceptualization of student motivation, student agency, her role in engaging student learning, and what the learning outcome in reading should be for her students transformed. The internalization and eventual self-regulation of these concepts led to the consolidation of new teaching practices. Lenka’s individual, personal transformation emerged from the group’s simultaneous social, collective effort to promote greater student responsibility for learning.

Simon, acting as temporary other, was the principle mediational means in Lenka’s transformation by continually challenging her to articulate how the ideas she had for reading
activities could lead to students taking more responsibility for their learning. Simon’s form-focused teaching ideas for promoting student responsibility often clashed with Lenka’s more meaning oriented ideas, which seemed at times to provoke her into expressing her ideas about exciting activities more clearly. Dan, also at times acting as a temporary other, helped Lenka come to realize how she could make reading activities potentially more exciting for her students – by providing tasks that focused on the story. The researcher also played an important role as expert other by encouraging Lenka to more clearly articulate how she understood the connection between greater student responsibility and her ideas about teaching reading. While the researcher encouraged her to externalize her understanding of teaching reading, Simon seemed to motivate her to develop her ideas further.

6.2. Simon: A New Understanding of “Effective Learning”

This part of the chapter traces Simon’s conceptual development of his understanding of his role in engaging student learning, student motivation and student agency as he (and the other teachers) explore ways to promote greater student responsibility by re-thinking how they approach teaching reading (see figure 6.1). Simon’s transformation is traced from a conflict he experienced with student learning to an exploration of what he considered ‘effective learning,’ which involved trying to understand the relationship between how he perceived his role in engaging student learning and student motivation to promote learner autonomy. His exploration of this relationship led to a re-conceptualization of his understanding of student agency by end of the Lesson Study project. His search for solutions, mediated by the other teachers and his students, acting as temporary others, and the researcher, acting as expert other, led to re-conceptualization and self-regulation of these concepts, and changes in his teaching practice.
6.2.1. Interest in Promoting Student Reading

Even before Simon joined the Lesson Study group, he was committed to increasing the amount of reading his students were doing outside of class. He was already participating in the school’s new reading program, and encouraged the students in all of his classes to purchase graded readers as a way to promote reading. He was also giving his students supplementary activities connected to the novel that each class chose. He believed that it was absolutely silly that other teachers in the school were not participating in the program (excerpt 5.11). Simon’s interest in having students read outside class influenced the group’s decision to pursue reading as the focus of the Lesson Study research lesson.

6.2.2. Definition of ‘Effective Learning’

In his initial interview, as discussed in Chapter Four, Simon argued that for student learning to take place, teachers had to “engage [students] as much as possible, motivate them with the tasks get them interested in the language, personalize the language” (excerpt 4.2). For Simon, student interest in language meant that they embraced vocabulary and grammar. This is evident from his remarks during several workshops describing the kinds of activities he liked to do with his students (e.g., excerpts 5.20 and 5.21). In the following excerpt, he expands on what he believes is necessary for effective learning to occur.

Excerpt 6.16. (Simon, Journal entry 2)
I personally think that motivation and a genuine interest in the language are key factors in effective learning and I try to encourage this in my students a lot, but find it difficult to assess how successful I have been. I think that improving skills or improving on errors would come automatically if students would really embrace the language. Possibly it requires a lot of learner training and a rethinking of homework tasks for this to happen, but obviously for many students there is a problem with time constraints.
Simon believes that the role of the teacher is to train students so that they become motivated to focus on language form. His comment that it is difficult evaluate how successful he has been indicates that he believes student motivation is something a teacher needs to develop in learners, as he argues in his journal, “the personality of the teacher has a large role to play here – some teachers have the ability to motivate their students and push them to do things that they didn’t know they could be interested in, others do not” (journal entry four). Simon seems to believe that the teacher’s role in student learning is to mediate student interest in language form, which if successful, leads to learning. From these comments, it seems that he does not believe that students play an important role in deciding for themselves what they learn and how they learn it, nor does he seem to take into account individual learning preferences.

Although Simon realized that students have *time constraints* that sometimes limit their ability to learn, he was often frustrated that students did not study more outside of class, as he states in the following excerpt.

### 6.2.3. A Teaching Conflict

*Excerpt 6.17. (Workshop 2)*

SIMON: *You can’t really blame [students]* but there’s this *frustrating* for example as an exam teacher…*I know they really have to do it and I know that they really have problems with it* but they *just don’t realize it* until April or March,

LENKA: It’s too late.

SIMON: *and it’s just too late to work on it.*

In a discussion with the other teachers on student responsibility, Simon mentioned that he was frustrated because his students often underestimated the amount of work they needed to do in his exam preparation classes until it was *just too late to work on it.* While he believed that teachers “cannot blame students for prioritizing their families or jobs or other hobbies,” he
argued that teachers had a responsibility to “be honest with [the students] about the consequences for their learning, of their actions and the possibilities available to them as learners” (journal entry nine).

The second workshop gave Simon an opportunity to externalize the conflict he felt between his belief that his students should be doing more work outside of class and the reality that they often choose not to do so. In a journal entry turned in a few days after this workshop, he mentioned that it was interesting that the other teachers had brought up the topic of student motivation, and that students should do more work outside of class; however, he construes their interest in this topic to be the same as his – a desire to help students develop an interest in language work (i.e., grammar and vocabulary) which, as discussed above, was not true of Lenka.

Excerpt 6.18. (Simon, Journal entry 2)

One thing that I found interesting was that more of us had brought up issues with motivation and developing an interest in doing language work outside class in our students, which are more to do with student behavior rather than language skills. I think it will be interesting to try and address some of the gaps we have talked about, and especially to develop some tangible tools that can be used in the classroom.

6.2.4. Embracing Language Promotes Learner Responsibility

In the next excerpt, the group’s discussion leads Simon to consider how teacher promotion of student motivation could encourage student responsibility for learning.

Excerpt 6.19. (Workshop 2)

RESEARCHER: So that’s one potential overarching goal then to encourage students somehow to...to get students to
LENKA: Be responsible
RESEARCHER: Do something.
DAN: Yeah
SIMON: I was actually thinking like connected to that but more in the sense of encouraging them to be more enthusiastic about the language so that they choose to read books they choose to read articles they choose to watch films they choose to listen to music,
DAN: mhm
SIMON: and it’s not you having to say ok now you
LENKA: Do this.
SIMON: have to do this now do this that they voluntarily go and expose themselves to English outside the classroom. I think that could be an interesting goal.

In Chapter Five, this excerpt demonstrated how the researcher’s comments helped mediate the group’s transformation from considering student learning outside of class as a problem to framing this learning as something they could promote in their students. For Simon, this excerpt also shows a potential new understanding of how he views the outcome of motivating students to more enthusiastic about language. He argued earlier (excerpt 6.16) that teachers need to train students to be motivated to embrace language form because a motivated student becomes a better language learner. Simon now extends this understanding to include the possibility that increased interest in language could lead to students choosing to engage in more activities in English outside of class and become independent learners. For Simon, it seems that the possibility that students can influence the contexts in which they learn can occur only after teachers motivate students to become enthusiastic about the language. Student agency develops as a result of how successful the teacher is in promoting student motivation.

He understands that his role in engaging student learning is to promote student motivation to embrace language form and thereby promote learner responsibility. Teacher directed extrinsic motivation leads to student intrinsic motivation to voluntarily go and expose themselves to English outside the classroom. Simon believes that pursuing this interesting goal with the other teachers could offer a possible solution to the contradiction that students are not willing to do the homework necessary to make progress in learning English.

This exchange with the researcher and other teachers in this Lesson Study workshop, and conversations in later workshops, gave Simon the opportunity to externalize his emerging understanding about the connection he saw between student motivation and student
responsibility to learn more about language. His exploration of this connection was mediated in part by the researcher directing the interaction with questions and comments that focused teacher attention on creating an overarching goal, and in part through a dialogic process with Lenka and Dan to create tangible tools they could use to begin to resolve the contradiction. However, the influence Lenka and Dan had on Simon’s transformation was limited because of Simon’s belief that he could not get much out of sharing ideas with teachers who had less experience than he did, a point he raised in both his first journal entry, and in the final interview.

Excerpt 6.20. (Simon, final interview)
RESEARCHER: What would you change [if you participated in another Lesson Study group]?
SIMON: I’ve said this a couple of times. With the mixed level of experience that’s something I don’t really agree with. I think that’s a good thing if the person who is superior in experience gets something out of it some other way but otherwise it’s really the experienced person giving ideas to other people. And yes it’s good to get feedback but I don’t think it’s as effective as if you have four people working together who have the same level of experience you get something out of it.

As Simon makes clear above, he found limited value in working in a group with a mixed level of experience. He argues that collaborating with teachers with less experience is not as effective as working with teachers who have the same level of experience. His belief that Dan (and to some extent Lenka) had little to offer him professionally possibly constrained some of their opportunities to engage in a dialogic process that could have potentially assisted in transforming Simon’s understanding of student responsibility if he had been more receptive to their ideas. His comments here also raise the possibility that the reason he gave for not observing Lenka and Dan’s research lessons (he didn’t want a substitute teacher for his classes) might be in fact due to his belief that he had nothing to gain from it professionally.

Perhaps more than the researcher’s comments focusing the investigation, or the dialogic interaction with Lenka and Dan, Simon’s understanding that motivating students to embrace
language could ultimately promote student responsibility mediated his search for solutions to the contradiction he and the group faced. Simon was not only concerned with creating an artifact that would motivate student interest in language but also wanted a way to measure whether or not students were beginning to take responsibility for their learning.

6.2.5. Measuring Responsibility

In Chapter Five it was argued that Simon’s interest in measuring responsibility was motivated by his belief that quantifying student learning was essential to gauge the effectiveness of the activity they would introduce in the research lesson. Simon wanted to “actually see how much this person has done and you can see that in the next lesson maybe they choose to do something different” (workshop five). His idea that the activity they developed had to both motivate students to appreciate language and be measurable across lessons influenced the kinds of activities he proposed to the group (see excerpt 5.21 for an example).

In the next two excerpts, Simon discusses how student responsibility could be measured in reading tasks.

Excerpt 6.21. (Workshop 3)
I think one way you could measure it is like after they finish this one will they voluntarily want to read another one or will they say no I’ve had enough. And if they choose yes I want to read another one then you might be able to say well then I mean you developed an interest in reading and if you measure it again after the next one would you want to read another one.

Excerpt 6.22. (Workshop 4)
SIMON: We don’t want to measure reading we want to measure reading as a means towards taking responsibility.
RESEARCHER: So when you say measuring do you mean just demonstrating? Like if they come to class and they do something that’s tangible with their reading to me that is, that’s evidence.
SIMON: I think that’s evidence that they’ve completed the task,
LENKA: Done the work yeah.
SIMON: It’s evidence they’ve completed the homework but is it evidence that they are taking more responsibility for their own learning?
RESEARCHER: There has to be a certain level of a certain amount of personal decision and choice in what they choose to bring to the class.
SIMON: So that would be I think my argument for doing something like, teaching lexis or implementing also like dictionary skills or something that actually forces them to do something, that they have to do as a learner and they can take that with them. So it’s not just completing this email, then corrected…finished. It has to be some kind of skill that they can take on, that you can measure ok after, 3 months then, they’ve been brought to this level. And the fact that they can write an email once to someone, I don’t think that shows…they can complete that task for the [CAE exam].
DAN: Yeah they can do a task.
SIMON: But it doesn’t show that they’re,
LENKA: They’ve learned something.
SIMON: yeah it shows that they might have learned something with that specific task but it doesn’t show that they’re taking responsibility for their own learning.

These two excerpts show the criteria by which Simon would evaluate the longer-term success of the artifact they would introduce in the research lesson: students choosing to read another book after they finished the book used in the research lesson, and mastering skills they could take with them such as teaching lexis to each other from the book or implementing dictionary skills. Simon believed that assessing student willingness to do and improve in these skills would indicate an increase in student responsibility for their learning because these students would see a greater benefit in participating in more activities in English, including reading. Here Simon also distinguishes between the importance of creating an activity for the research lesson that focuses on language form like mastering dictionary usage, and a task that focuses on meaning like writing an email in response to something the students had read. While he believes forcing students to work on language form could eventually increase their intrinsic motivation to learn, and ultimately lead to their becoming more responsible for their learning, he does not believe at this point that encouraging students to complete tasks that focus on meaning would do the same. However, as his understanding of the relationship between his role in
engaging student learning and student motivation begins to transform, his perspective on student agency evolves, and his belief that student responsibility should be measured changes.

6.2.6 Language as Mediating Artifact

In the fifth workshop, the teachers decided to create a list of tasks that students would be encouraged to do while they read outside of class. In the following excerpt, a short time after the group had made this decision, Simon begins discussing how they could give students formulaic language to help them complete the tasks, which represents a small shift in his thinking away from only asking students to investigate and present language from the text they are reading to also providing students with language to help them perform meaningful tasks associated with the reading.

Excerpt 6.23. (Workshop 5)
SIMON: There’s something in this [Penguin Reader Activities handout] about summarizing.... basically it just gives them some functional language for summarizing. And this this will also train them, and it will give them both new language and make them more capable of
LENKA: Expressing.
SIMON: completing the yeah expressing this learning task.
RESEARCHER: My question would be how much do we want to mediate the activities they do?
SIMON: There has to be some kind of input from the teacher. You have to train them somehow. You can’t just say now be free, do whatever you want. My experience is I’ve tried this. Like this ok now you teach these words, and it never ever works.
LENKA: Yeah
SIMON: Because they don’t know what to do. So I mean yes learner autonomy is excellent but you need to train them first and my point would be that if you do this in the first lesson.
RESEARCHER: So you might use these phrases to help them organize their discussion, give them four or five phrases under [the task]. Is that what you mean?
SIMON: Yeah. I mean yeah they have a choice because that is what often happens in class as well you give them language and then some people choose to use it some people choose not to use it. That’s also a choice but, from my perspective you’d have
to give them something. Like as a learner I would not respond well to this, do this. I would say yeah but you’re the teacher give me something to work with…and they don’t know how to summarize. That’s my experience.

RESEARCHER: So next semester then you could change this and say ok everyone has this language try this new language.

SIMON: Yeah you could ask them…do you feel like this mediational artifact helped you complete this…task? I think that would be a good question.

Simon’s shift towards understanding language as a mediational artifact emerges from the frequent discussions with the researcher that the activity they created would attempt to mediate student learning in a way that encouraged greater student responsibility for learning. Simon adopts the term mediational artifact here to mean that student use of formulaic language to summarize a text could assist the students’ effort to complete the task. Somewhat contrary to his thinking discussed above that student completion of an email task would not demonstrate that students were taking responsibility, he starts to believe that if students choose to complete tasks from the artifact they created (using the formulaic language), “this could really this could measure something because you can actually see how much this person has done” every week (workshop five).

Training students, the way Simon perceives his role in engaging student learning, expands to include giving them a choice in the kinds of activities they do (or not do). This means that student motivation might not necessarily come only from embracing language in texts through focus-on-form practice but could also come from having a choice of meaningful tasks (and language to complete those tasks). In the next excerpt, from a journal entry a few days after the excerpt above, Simon argues that student choice could promote learner responsibility.

Excerpt 6.24. (Simon, Journal entry 5)
This meeting increased my confidence in the project again. I feel that the mediational artifact that we have come up with might be effective in…giving students choice and equipping them for taking more responsibility for their own learning. I think the key will be how the worksheet is constructed and whether it will
manage to motivate the learners. The fact that they will have *a choice of how much* they would like to do and then *have to do something with it in class* I believe could be effective.

Simon seems to recognize here that students play a role in determining what they want to learn, so giving them a choice in the kinds of tasks they do could be an effective means to promote learner responsibility. Simon’s conceptualization of student agency here includes the possibility that student choice is part of the learning process. There is a corresponding shift in how he sees his role in engaging student learning, from assigning tasks he believes should motivate students to giving students a choice of tasks. It’s possible that his shift in thinking was mediated by the other teachers and the researcher during frequent discussions in the workshops that student choice plays an important role in fostering responsibility.

Simon’s understanding that giving students a choice to complete reading tasks at home, and asking them *to do something with it in class* could be effective in motivating students represents an idealized conception of how he could engage student learning and student motivation by changing teaching practices that could eventually lead students to take more responsibility for their learning. After teaching the research lesson, and continuing to use the artifact in all of his classes during the remaining five weeks of the Lesson Study project, Simon’s conception of the relationship between his role in engaging student learning, student motivation and student agency evolved further. The following excerpt is from the discussion in the workshop immediately after Simon’s lesson.

6.2.7. Re-evaluating What ‘Effective Learning’ Means

*Excerpt 6.25. (Workshop 8)*

SIMON: With hindsight I also thought about um should I have *called attention to the language* and asked them please look at the language again and please use it again.
RESEARCHER: Right
SIMON: I didn’t know that some of them were actually using it but I think it was more accidental than being really conscious about it. But then again I thought like I did something similar [with a different class] this morning with other functional language and before the activity started I said you have to use this language you have to tick boxes blah blah blah and none of them gave a shit anyway they just didn’t do it.

RESEARCHER: Oh they didn’t do it anyway.

SIMON: They didn’t do it anyway. So I often find that even though you say use the language if they really get into the task and if they just get into talking then they will ignore the language and it really doesn’t matter what you do. So I thought about again doing it at the end of the first grouping…now think more about the language or think more about the structure but I didn’t want to I didn’t want to ruin it for them I thought that really this was their time they they’d done something with the book so whatever they got out of it and I think some of them did actually use some of the language and they I think they might get more out of it this way rather than actually putting them into a box now you must use this sentence or you must use, it’s something which blah blah blah because they seem to get around that quite nicely.

RESEARCHER: mhm

SIMON: So I decided against it not like forcing it (xx) because I felt like you know they’re getting out of it what they should get out of it so I don’t see why I should have.

Simon’s comments here indicate that his understanding of what constitutes effective learning has transformed to include the possibility that student interaction with texts does not have to be completely based on acquiring grammar and vocabulary. After teaching the research lesson, Simon states that although his students did not use the formulaic language to complete the tasks they chose from the artifact, he thinks they might have gotten more from engaging with the book than they would have had he forced them to use the language. His realization that they got more out of it this way and were getting out of it what they should get out of it suggests a shift in his understanding of the relationship between his role in engaging student learning and student motivation. His role seems to be more than mediating student motivation to embrace language; it now includes providing students with opportunities to do something with the book they found interesting.
His comments also indicate that he places importance on students deciding for themselves what aspects of the book are worthy of discussion. His attitude could potentially represent movement away from seeing students as only reacting to his language input (and becoming motivated or not) towards viewing students as capable of influencing their own learning to some extent, which could demonstrate a change in his understanding of student agency.

Simon later observed that some of his students “responded positively towards the artifact expressing that it had in fact helped them focus their learning, while others saw it as more work” (journal entry nine). His students’ reaction to the artifact helped convince him of the benefit of having students focus on tasks related to understanding the text, and not necessarily on the formulaic language to complete the tasks, or the language of the text separate from its context. Effective learning now means giving students the opportunity to decide for themselves which reading tasks they do, and this choice could motivate them to do more tasks and help them develop to be more critical readers and ultimately more autonomous learners. However, Simon’s understanding of effective learning transformed somewhat in the final month of the project.

6.2.8. Internalization and Self-regulation

After Simon taught the research lesson, he continued to use the artifact the group created in all of his classes for the final five weeks of the Lesson Study project. Simon’s positive evaluation of the success of the project is evident when he claims that it “seems to have worked as the students requested to read another book without any kind of prompting” and believes that this is the “ultimate sign that something has changed – that the students choose to be exposed to more English” (workshop nine). Simon had stated in an early workshop that one way to measure
success of their work was if students chose to read another book (excerpt 6.21). In the following
excerpt, Simon mentions one student in particular he considers a success story.

_Excerpt 6.26. (Simon, final interview)_
I’m actually surprised how receptive they’ve been, all my classes to this idea especially the general English [classes]…they’re just keen to do it because they want to do it and I, that really surprised me especially like Peter I mentioned him a lot of times I think he is a success story I mean he never ever read a book in his life and now he’s reading and he’s willing to take on this extra work and he actually does it on his own. So I, I mean, I think that’s great.

Simon’s surprise at how receptive his students were to reading regularly and choosing to do tasks connected to the text offers further evidence that his understanding of student motivation and agency could include the possibility that students can be self-motivated to read on their own and self-directed in what they choose to learn. It appears that his students’ positive comments and general reaction to reading and doing the tasks contributed to the process of Simon’s internalization of how he conceptualized his role in engaging student learning and student motivation. Although the group’s dialogic interaction led to changes in Simon’s understanding of these concepts during the workshops, his students’ willingness to continue the reading project, and the effect the artifact had on focusing the learning of some students, seemed to have played a greater role in mediating Simon’s internalization of these concepts, and changes in his teaching practice.

Although he was pleased that many of his students were keen to do the reading because they want to, towards the end of the project Simon began to modify how he used the artifact with his students in a way that conformed with his emerging understanding of how it might ultimately encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.
Excerpt 6.27. (Workshop 11)
Consistently now we’ve done it for three or four weeks maybe and they’ve all read. And I haven’t used the artifact every single time but I’ve always done some kind of task with it, and they’ve always completed the task.

Excerpt 6.28. (Simon, final interview)
RESEARCHER: Do you think you’ll continue using the tasks or similar activities to the ones we developed?
SIMON: Yeah I think so. I’ve gone a little bit away from…the worksheet with like different activities and I’ve more, I have given them choice sometimes with questions which questions [they] find interesting…but sometimes I’ve just forced work on them and I do want to have that option. Because sometimes I think something is relevant and I want to bring it up.

Simon is committed to continue using the artifact with his students; however, like Lenka, he no longer seems to believe that offering students a choice of tasks to do voluntarily every time they read outside of class will in itself lead students to take more responsibility. Although he maintains, as he has from the beginning of the project, that students sometimes need to be forced to do work, his understanding of his role in engaging student learning has transformed to include the importance of offering students a choice, at least occasionally, of the reading tasks they do. He also seems to back away from his idea that counting the number of tasks students choose to do over time could measure their level of responsibility because now they do not always have a choice; he prefers to occasionally assign a task as homework to direct their learning toward an area he feels is relevant. In the following excerpt, Simon raises a point he made in earlier workshops that teachers need to guide students for a period of time before they become more autonomous learners.

Excerpt 6.29. (Workshop 10)
I think this whole idea of autonomy is good but do they have to know how to handle that autonomy, do they know what it means to be autonomous? And then in order to create that feeling they might need to go through a period where what we give them is really guided and then hopefully after that period finishes they will take that guidance and apply it in order to be autonomous. So that now it might feel like
homework and it might feel like this is something we have to do because the teacher is telling us but if we take this artifact away in two months does that mean that the tasks leave their brains? I’m not sure if [it will] still somehow be there unconsciously and they’ll think about the language because they’ve done this in the past and that’s probably more realistic.

His comment here represents a more nuanced view in how he conceptualizes his role in engaging student learning than he had at the beginning of the project. Alternating between giving students a choice in the reading tasks they do and requiring students to do certain tasks gives Simon greater control over the input the students receive. Simon in effect argues that teacher control of guided practice of these tasks could ultimately lead to a process of student internalization of a set of skills that promote critical reading so that when he takes the artifact away in two months, these skills might be there unconsciously (self-regulated) by the students.

6.2.9. Commitment to Teacher Learning

In the final interview, Simon discusses his plan for continuing his professional development, which shows that he is committed to continue his investigation of promoting learner autonomy in his classroom.

Excerpt 6.30. (Simon, final interview)
RESEARCHER: How do you want to continue your professional development?
SIMON: My professional development? Oh that’s a good question. Well I’m going to continue as I’ve done throughout my whole teaching career I continue to read books. I’ve just got a new book today which is very, very much on topic [reaches for a book in his bag].
RESEARCHER: Learner autonomy! [title of book Simon had just purchased]
SIMON: Yeah I mean it got me interested in it. I think it’s an interesting concept. That’s my next project looking more at how I can actually do it in the classroom.

6.2.7. Summary

How Simon viewed effective learning, the relationship between his understanding of his role in engaging student learning and student motivation, transformed over the course of the
Lesson Study project as he and the other teachers sought ways to promote greater student responsibility for learning by re-evaluating their approach to teaching reading. His exploration of effective learning led to changes in how he conceptualized student agency.

Simon’s conceptualization of his role in engaging student learning in reading and student motivation gradually transformed from an understanding that he should make all the decisions about the tasks his students do; assign mostly focus-on-form tasks connected to the texts he assigned; and personally motivate students to be interested in grammar and vocabulary towards an understanding 1) that there is value in having students make their own decisions (at least occasionally) based on personal interest; 2) that a variety of story- and language-related tasks should sometimes be offered; and 3) that student motivation might arise from completing and discussing story-related tasks. Simon came to realize that an increase in student motivation resulting from giving students a choice in how they interacted with a text was a significant factor in encouraging students to take more responsibility for their learning.

Simon’s acknowledgement that students are capable of making choices about how they interact with a text at home and discuss it in class indicates that he considers student agency an important part of developing responsibility for learning. His conceptualization transformed from the beginning of the project when he appeared to understand decision making only in terms of what teachers should do to foster student motivation and learning. However, by the end of the project Simon argues that always giving students a choice in the kinds of tasks they do might not adequately prepare them to be autonomous learners. He seems to believe, as he has from the beginning of the project, that student ability to make their own decisions about learning is something that takes place only after students have been adequately trained. Although Simon decided to only occasionally offer his students a choice in the kinds of reading tasks they can do,
he now understands that student agency is an important part of being a responsible learner and could promote effective learning.

6.3. Conclusion

As the Lesson Study group worked toward re-conceptualizing their object of activity, which shifted from student learning to a new way of thinking about teaching reading that would promote greater student responsibility, Lenka and Simon made sense of their collaborative exploration in unique ways. Although at the level of object-directed activity the group’s reconceptualization did not lead to expansive transformation, at the level of goal-directed actions that constitute the activity both Lenka and Simon re-conceptualized their understanding of the relationship between student responsibility and how they taught reading. Without the Lesson Study group’s social, collective, collaborative activity directed towards resolving a student learning contradiction they shared, personal transformation would not have taken place. The Lesson Study group succeeded because they achieved their goal of finding ways to promote greater student responsibility.

An implication for teachers and teacher educators is that the effort to create a Lesson Study group in less than ideal circumstances (e.g., the administration is indifferent) is still worthwhile because it provides teachers with a space to explore student and teacher learning issues that are important to them through a process of dialogic mediation with colleagues and outside experts, which could promote their conceptual development and lead to changes in teaching practices. Giving teachers a voice in determining the direction their professional development takes in a collaborative, supportive environment enhances teacher agency.
An implication for interventionist-researchers using Developmental Work Research methodology is that even though facilitating expansive transformation might not be achieved, using Lesson Study as ‘the second stimulus’ still provides a window into the process of teacher conceptual development as it occurs, and sheds light on the relationship among the teachers, students and administrators that could be useful in directing other intervention efforts. In addition, the transformation the teachers undergo as a result of their participation in Lesson Study could eventually lead to a new contradiction between activity systems that motivate inter-systemic change. These points are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN
DISCUSSION

In this study cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) was used to make sense of the collective actions of the EFL teachers, their students and the Academic Office. Through Developmental Work Research (DWR), a formative intervention methodology, an attempt was made to facilitate expansive transformation of the shared object of activity (student learning at the school, and then greater student responsibility for learning through reading) using Lesson Study as the second stimulus, which provided the researcher with insight into the process of the teachers’ development as it occurred. The inter-connected activity systems was the unit of analysis in the intervention, and the focus of the investigation was on the interaction between the (simultaneously occurring) collective drive to transform the object of activity and the individual efforts to transform goal-directed actions that made up the activity.

This chapter discusses several significant findings that emerged from the exploration of EFL teacher conceptual development through their participation in Lesson Study. The first part of the chapter considers how the sociocultural context of the school influenced the trajectory of the teachers’ collective learning and inhibited expansive learning, and discusses the finding that change may only come about through a commitment from the school’s administrators to participate in the process in a way that supports the teachers’ effort to bring about change. The next part focuses on individual teacher transformation and how the teachers developed a “researcher lens” (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003) through their investigation of a student learning issue. In the final part the effectiveness of Lesson Study as a second stimulus is
re-examined, followed by a discussion of the challenges in creating and sustaining an in-service EFL professional development program that fosters teacher collaboration and agency.

7.1. Sociocultural Context and Opportunities for Teacher Learning

The activity theoretical analysis described the interaction between the school’s values and norms concerning teacher education and the beliefs about knowledge production and knowledge sharing, and led to a greater understanding of how sociocultural context affected teacher learning (Freeman, 2002; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, 2006). One finding was that the Academic Office, shaped by their implicit and explicit activity system rules, encouraged some ways of teacher knowledge sharing and discouraged others. The implicit Academic Office rule that workshop and meeting topics, outlines and scheduling should originate in that office, and the rule that collaboration is something that takes place among teachers voluntarily and not between teachers and the Academic Office, reduced the possibility for the Lesson Study group to collaborate with the Academic Office to promote reading at the school and continue the Lesson Study project with other teachers.

While the Academic Office administrators valued creating spaces for teacher professional development and encouraged teachers to seek out assistance from one another, they did not seem to believe that teachers, as consumers of professional development knowledge (or in some cases deliverers of knowledge), could also produce knowledge that could inform teacher learning at the school. Meetings between Petra, the Academic Office Director, and the teachers were for problem solving, not sharing knowledge about teaching practice. When the Lesson Study group began to consider changes to teaching practice that had the potential to impact other teachers at the school, they found that while the Academic Office was interested in having the teachers share
their knowledge with other teachers, they were non-committal about collaborating with the teachers to develop their ideas. It is possible that because the Academic Office did not value teachers as legitimate producers of knowledge, they were not willing to give the teachers release time from teaching or even public recognition for their work leading professional development activities.

Another implicit Academic Office rule, that teacher knowledge is personal and owned by the producer of the knowledge, also influenced how knowledge was shared among teachers in the school. At a meeting with the Lenka, Simon and the researcher, Petra emphatically stated that teachers who produce materials for workshops are not required to share their knowledge with other teachers. Simon and Lenka both agreed with Petra, and had stated in two earlier workshops that they were not willing share the research and activities they created from the workshop outline they received from Petra. Simon claimed that he was worried that other teachers who led workshops would use his ideas without doing any work or giving him credit. The rule diminished the possibility of disseminating Senior Teacher knowledge, and had the effect of making the Academic Office the predominant source of public teacher knowledge in the school.

The school’s values and norms, reflected in the Academic Office implicit rules that valued top-down knowledge production and sharing, constrained the ability of the Lesson Study group to collaborate with the Academic Office and contribute to the teacher knowledge base of the school. The Academic Office supported a top-down professional development model but did not seem to be interested in how ideas (like Petra’s plan to encourage student reading in the school) were implemented by teachers in the classroom. In retrospect it is difficult to imagine how the Academic Office could have responded differently to the researcher’s attempt to introduce a collaborative, teacher-driven model that promoted teacher agency by encouraging the
teachers to explore the student and teacher learning issues that concerned them the most and work towards resolving contradictions they experienced with student learning. The top-down culture of the school did not support a critical reflection of teaching practice (Borko, 2002), and limited future possibilities for teacher-directed learning that could promote expansive learning at the school.

Perhaps more importantly, as discussed in Chapter Five, the Academic Office’s lack of interest in making any changes to their top-down professional development model to include working with the teachers on professional development issues could be due to the fact that the Academic Office did not experience a contradiction between their activity and the teacher’s activity that would motivate them to reconceptualize one of their objects of activity – teacher professional development. From Petra’s comments with the teachers, it seems that she did not see a conflict between the school’s reading program (making sets of graded readers available to teachers for student purchase; posting materials about how to use graded readers on school computers; and offering a reading workshop once a year) and the teachers’ claims that more could be done to assist the school’s teachers in using graded readers more effectively. Petra also did seem to see a conflict between the number of hours all full-time teachers were expected to teach and the Lesson Study group’s comments that it was difficult to find time to continue working on (teacher-directed) professional development issues.

Even if the Academic Office did experience these issues as conflicts, without the possibility to imagine new solutions, the conflicts do not become developmentally important contradictions that could lead to systemic change in the workplace (Engeström and Sannino, 2010). From the perspective of the Academic Office, the top-down model of volunteer
professional development was successful in helping new teachers meet the school’s teaching standards and keeping clients satisfied.

7.2. Expansive Transformation

A significant finding is that the formative intervention at the school failed to promote inter-systemic, expansive change. Transformation at the level of individual actions and goals that constituted the activity occurred (discussed below), but the group’s collective activity met with institutional resistance, and collaborative professional development practices that were encouraged through participation in the Lesson Study project were not sustained after the researcher left the school. In two other school-based interventions that used CHAT in their analyses to understand and facilitate school transformation, failure to bring about institutional change led to a search for the mechanisms that inhibited the appropriation of the innovations that were introduced (Sannino and Nocon, 2008).

Nocon (2008) led a four-year intervention in a U.S elementary school in collaboration with the school’s administration and staff to improve literacy and technology skills in an afterschool club, which ended when she left the project. Although some individual practices were transformed at the level of day-to-day action, she argues that the relatively short-term nature of the research effort could not be synchronized with the long-term activity of the school, and questions whether it is appropriate to look for evidence of educational change at the level of the institution. She suggests that a focus of the intervention should be on the level of goal-directed actions that constitute the activity. Transformation of actions and goals could lead eventually to the transformation of activity and object.

In another study on school change, Sannino (2008) explored why an intervention introducing a computer-mediated activity (the Fifth Dimension (5D) project) to promote
individualized student learning and teacher professional development at an Italian elementary school was not sustained after the researchers left. Sannino asserts that the 5D project, as an innovative practice “interwoven with everyday school activities and the participants’ motives” (p. 329) and meant to foster a more individualized response to student learning, was the teachers’ non-dominant activity. She argues that the interaction between the non-dominant activity (5D) and the dominant activity (e.g., whole class learning) led to participant ‘transitional actions’, sideway moves between the activities, which might be “oriented at enriching or changing the dominant activity from inside in small steps” (p. 337). Sannino believes that interventionist research cannot be evaluated on the acceptance or rejection of innovative practices. She argues that the conflicts that are generated at the level of activity will lead to individual transitional actions that could ultimately promote new dominant activities.

These two studies make clear that an essential part of intervention research should be to explore action-level outcomes of individuals that result from activity-level conflicts and contradictions. An innovation might not be sustained at a school, but individuals might appropriate elements of the innovation that could lead to personal transformation, and perhaps one day contribute to school change.

In the current study, the possible appropriation of a professional development model that included collaboration, teacher-led exploration of student learning issues, knowledge production and public knowledge sharing was constrained by a school culture (evident in its rules) that did not recognize teachers as legitimate producers of knowledge. Engeström (1998, cited in 2008) called rules the “largely invisible ‘motivational sphere’ of schooling” (p. 380). Simon and Lenka wanted to continue the Lesson Study group, but without recognition from the school that their work was valued, the project ended. Borrowing Sannino’s (2008) terms, the non-dominant
professional development activity, a teacher-directed approach to teacher development, conflicted with the dominant activity, a top-down approach. However, it seems unlikely that individual transitional actions between the two activities that might have been appropriated by the Lesson Study group (e.g., increased collaboration among teachers to explore student learning issues) would motivate school change as long as the Academic Office activity system rules remained that did not value teacher knowledge creation or give teachers release time from teaching to work with their colleagues.

The teachers’ exploration of the contradiction that arose between the dominant and non-dominant professional development models led to the ‘visibilization’ of rules (Engeström, 1999c) that often go unquestioned by teachers in spite of their influence on daily experience (Engeström, 2008). The Lesson Study group was mostly unaware of the school’s implicit rules governing teacher professional development until they became interested in discovering how the Academic Office wanted to promote reading and became motivated to collaborate with the Academic Office on using graded readers more effectively. The realization that the school was indifferent to their ideas served to make the rules visible, and illuminated the quaternary contradiction between the Academic Office and the teachers.

The finding that the Academic Office’s rules contributed to a school culture that impeded the expansive transformation of the teachers’ activity system is significant because it suggests that without a commitment to change from the school’s administration, interventionist efforts to effect change will not likely succeed. In the current study, the Academic Office welcomed the researcher and the Lesson Study project and provided all the assistance requested including advertising the project in the school newsletter, providing a classroom for the interviews and workshops, being available for interviews and allowing the Lesson Study group to present their
findings at a Senior Teacher meeting. However, being receptive to outside experts and their ideas for promoting teacher and student learning is not the same as being willing to make substantive changes to school policy and practices that might foster that learning. Petra, the Academic Office Director, stated in her final meeting with the researcher that she completely supported the project, but knew that it was bound to fail. She attributed this to lack of teacher interest beyond a few dedicated teachers, but did not consider the possibility that more involvement from administrators would be necessary for the teachers to succeed.

Because the Academic Office viewed EFL teacher professional development as a voluntary activity, and not as one of teachers’ professional responsibilities, the Academic Office did not create a workplace culture that expected all teachers to continue to improve in their jobs. In many ESL teaching contexts, teachers are often expected to set professional development goals for the year and are evaluated on their achievement of these goals. For the Academic Office, making professional development a part of teachers’ jobs in the school could increase the likelihood that teachers would expect those hours to take the place of teaching hours, an issue that Petra might not have wanted to address. Without a change in school culture that views professional development as an intrinsic part of being an EFL teacher, and helps teachers see the value in becoming more knowledgeable about their work, Petra is probably correct in believing that novice teachers are unlikely to volunteer for professional development opportunities.

While a commitment to change from those in school leadership positions might be a necessary condition, it is not sufficient to ensure that an intervention will lead to systemic, expansive transformation. Interventions with the goal of changing teaching practices in schools that were supported by a school administration (Y. Engeström, R. Engeström & Suntio, 2002; Sannino, 2008; Sannino, 2010) or through a joint university – school project (Ellis, 2008a, 2009;
Nocon, 2008) did not all succeed in achieving their aims. One important difference between the interventions that succeeded and those that were less successful (as judged by the authors) seems to be the degree to which the teachers in these projects determined the direction of the learning process. All of these interventions involved extensive collaboration between teachers and researchers and placed a high value on teacher agency; however, only the Ellis (2008a, 2009), Y. Engeström, R. Engeström and Suntio (2002) and Sannino (2010) interventions focused on the conflicts and contradictions experienced by the participating teachers, and facilitated a teacher-led process of exploring and modeling potential solutions. In the other interventions cited above, the conflict that motivated the intervention seems to have resided in non-teacher (and non-participant) activity systems. If the conflict is identified by a school’s administration and becomes the basis for an intervention, the teachers in the school, as the implementers of change, need to be able to collectively define the conflict in a meaningful way so that it becomes a contradiction that encourages a search for solutions through the creation of innovative practices. Interventions need to “respond to and build on the energy of contradictions in the affected activity systems” (Engeström, 2011, p. 609). Although the interventionist-researchers in these studies appeared to have the full support of administrators to try to facilitate expansive transformation in these schools, without a contradiction in the teachers’ activity there could be no motive to re-conceptualize the object of activity, envision a future outcome and create new teaching practices to align with it.

In the current study, the reverse was true. The teachers in the Lesson Study group, energized by the developmentally important contradiction they experienced with student learning, were motivated to try to bring about institutional change in how reading was taught in the school; however, as discussed above, the Academic Office was most likely not interested in
change because they did not see the need for it. They did not experience a contradiction that might have compelled them to explore ways to effect change in the reading program or consider changes in their top-down approach to professional development. For an intervention to have a greater chance of success in facilitating expansive transformation, both administrators and teachers would have to share a contradiction in the workplace that motivated them to reconceptualize the object of their inter-connected activity.

A finding in the current study is that the contradiction between the teachers’ and the students’ activity was the catalyst for their commitment to question and transform their beliefs and practices in an effort to resolve a student learning issue. Like the school interventions discussed above, collaboration and enhancing teacher agency were essential features in this intervention using Lesson Study. However, the Lesson Study process, like other inquiry-based approaches to professional development, ensures that the participating teachers are responsible for the direction the group takes to resolve the contradiction. It seems reasonable to conclude that collaboration among teachers and an interventionist-researcher, and a commitment to explore new teaching ideas, might not succeed in transforming established practices of an institution unless teachers lead the change effort, school leadership is both committed to change and willing to work in partnership with teachers, and the interventionist-researcher takes a supporting, expert role in assisting teachers to achieve their collective object.

This level of collaboration and commitment to change between teachers, school administrators and outside experts is common in Japanese elementary schools (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004; Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998b) and some North American schools (Lewis et al., 2006) engaged in Lesson Study. Lesson Study in these contexts has been a successful professional development activity because it is a constructive means for a small group of
teachers to realize a school’s (collaboratively produced) long-term goals in research lessons in a specific, novel way that addresses a student learning issue from the teachers’ classrooms, and therefore meaningful to the teachers’ beliefs and practices. In addition, more practically, Lesson Study has been successful in these contexts because the teachers were given time for professional development and lesson planning during their regular work day.

Although the Lesson Study group in this study did not have the long-term support from the Academic Office necessary to sustain teacher-led professional development, the teachers’ collective, collaborative effort motivated Lenka and Simon’s individual conceptual development as they worked to understand and implement a new approach to teaching reading in an effort to promote greater learner responsibility.

7.3. Individual Teacher Conceptual Development

A significant finding is that the collaborative investigation of a student learning issue using Lesson Study, and more specifically the group’s creation of the research lesson, led to Lenka and Simon’s conceptual development. As the group made progress collectively working towards re-defining their object of activity, the teachers began to make sense of the knowledge they produced in ways that deviated from their collective effort, and appropriated ideas that resulted in the transformation at the level of actions and goals. In other words, their collective effort made possible individual transformation.

As Lenka and Simon came to understand and implement a new way of teaching reading that had the potential to encourage greater student responsibility for learning, how they conceptualized teacher engagement in student learning, student motivation and agency, and student learning outcome gradually transformed. Their transformation was mediated by the other
teachers in the group and their students, acting as temporary others, and the researcher, acting as expert other. Lenka and Simon appropriated and reconstructed what they found to be personally meaningful, which resulted in internalization and eventual self-regulation of these new concepts and led to changes in their teaching practices.

Lenka and Simon came to understand that the group’s new approach to teaching reading could promote greater learner responsibility by encouraging students to choose the text they would read, how much they would read each week, and allowing them to decide for themselves which (if any) meaning-oriented tasks they would do at home and discuss in class based on personal interest. They believed that this process over time would transform their students into more critical readers and eventually more autonomous learners as they began to internalize the approach to reading (mediated at first by the artifact) that would help them focus their attention to a greater degree on the texts they were reading.

By collectively working towards instantiating the Lesson Study group’s ideas of promoting learner responsibility through reading in the research lesson plan, Lenka’s understanding of her role in engaging student learning transformed from teaching students reading strategies and making them read to expose them to language, to providing students with a choice of motivating and exciting meaning-oriented activities they could choose to do. Her understanding of student motivation to read was transformed when she discovered from the reading questionnaire that her students enjoyed reading in Czech and English. Her understanding of the link between responsibility and agency transformed from the idea that letting students choose their books would make them responsible to an understanding that giving students a choice of tasks would motivate them to look at the text more closely and become more independent.
Simon’s understanding of his role in engaging student learning transformed from motivating students to embrace language to offering students a choice of tasks in how they interact with a text. His understanding of student motivation transformed from seeing it as extrinsically provided by a teacher to help students *embrace language* form, to the recognition that students can be motivated by choosing from a variety of meaning-oriented tasks and deciding for themselves the direction their learning takes. His new understanding of his role in engaging student learning and student motivation transformed his understanding of student agency.

The finding that Lenka and Simon’s individual conceptual development evolved from their collective, collaborative effort to create a research lesson is important because it confirms that teacher investigation of a student learning issue promotes “deep and grounded reflection about the complex activities of teaching” (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002, p. 134) and that Lesson Study is a “particularly powerful process for guiding teachers towards novel practices and dispositions” (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003, p. 182).

At the end of the Lesson Study project, Lenka and Simon continued to make changes to the artifact, how often they gave the artifact to their students, and whether or not students had a choice in which tasks they would do each time the students read. This outcome is reflected in claims in other studies that the ideas teachers collaboratively produce in a research lesson continue to be experimented on and refined in the teachers’ own classrooms (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004; Lewis and Tsuchida, 1999). Lesson Study is viewed as an on-going process of teacher professional development. Finishing a research lesson is an opportunity for teachers to further reflect on how they can best implement the innovation. However, much of the teacher
learning that takes place when teachers engage in Lesson Study transcends the specific innovations created for the research lesson (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004).

7.4. Adopting a Researcher and Student Perspective

A finding in the current study is that an important factor in the success of the teachers’ transformation in their understanding of the connection between teaching reading and student responsibility resided in their ability to gradually develop a more critical perspective toward teacher and student learning. Adopting a critical, or researcher, perspective means the ability of the teachers to collect classroom data sufficiently and accurately, connect classroom data to the overarching goal of the group, connect the lesson to broader educational goals and write an evaluation of their work. Adopting a student perspective means “attempting to understand students’ thinking, anticipate their behaviors, and determine how to use this knowledge to build students’ understanding” (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003, p. 179). For teachers and teacher educators beginning to implement Lesson Study in their institutions, adopting the perspective of researcher and student is essential for the long-term success of the project (Fernandez, 2002; Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003).

The Lesson Study group demonstrated they were adopting a researcher perspective when they created the teacher and student questionnaires, analyzed the results, and made sense of the findings to support their decisions about the direction the group should take. The group’s ability to create a research lesson plan that provided a clear rationale for why they chose their goal, articulated the connection between the goal and how they would use the artifact in the classroom.

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22 As discussed in Chapter Two, the terms ‘critical perspective’, ‘researcher perspective’, and ‘researcher lens’ (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003) are used synonymously in this paper.
to begin to achieve the goal, and described in detail the context in which their research lesson took place also demonstrated that the group was adopting a critical perspective.

In several of the workshops, Simon in particular, and Lenka later on, seemed to adopt a researcher perspective with their ability to make explicit the link between the long-term student learning goal the teachers wanted to address and the activities they could introduce in the research lesson to help students achieve the goal. When one of the teachers proposed an idea for an activity the group could develop, Simon frequently questioned how their (or his own) idea would lead to learners taking responsibility for their learning. The teachers were less successful in their attempt to collect sufficient data during the research lessons to help them determine how closely the students followed the tasks they chose, and how often they used the formulaic language to help them complete their tasks; however, they were still able to connect the data they did collect to their research goal, and speculate on the implications of what the data could mean for students in their other classes.

It is also worth noting that Lenka had little difficulty adopting a student perspective in her effort to understand student thinking by considering how her students would react to the reading activities she and Simon proposed, imagining that they would be motivated by some activities and bored by other more language-focused activities. Simon, however, could not seem to see beyond what he wanted his students to learn, and not how they might react to his ideas, often commenting that learners needed to be trained to respond in ways he believed would promote learning.

Dan had difficulty adopting a researcher and student perspective during the project. Most likely because he was a novice teacher, he did not seem to communicate well with his students and could not anticipate their learning needs as evidenced by his comments towards the end of
the project when the Academic Office reduced his teaching hours in the class where he taught his research lesson.

The teachers’ transformation in taking on a researcher and student perspective can be attributed in part to the mediation provided by the researcher, acting as expert other, who often focused the teachers’ attention on issues central to the Lesson Study process by asking them questions, having them reflect on key comments they had made earlier, and reminding them of decisions they had already made as a way to stimulate further discussion and have them critically reflect on what they wanted to accomplish. Although the researcher maintained the practice of challenging the teachers to articulate their beliefs and ideas throughout the project, as the workshops continued the teachers seemed to rely less on his prompting to express their ideas, and in some instances demonstrated they were perhaps beginning to embrace a researcher and student perspective toward the end of the project.

The finding on how well the teachers in this study adopted a researcher and student perspective are largely consistent with previous research showing that teachers new to Lesson Study often have difficulty taking on these roles (Fernandez, 2002; Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003; Lewis et al., 2006). Fernandez et al. (2003) argue that the knowledge the teachers gain from investigating a student learning issue comes from being critically engaged in the research process, not on the mechanics of creating the research lesson, and that helping teachers make this transition can be accomplished by knowledge coaches, experts who advise teachers on how to conduct Lesson Study groups. In the Fernandez et al. (2003) case study, Lesson Study coaches worked with a group of public school teachers new to Lesson Study in an effort to help the teachers adopt “critical lenses” to examine teaching and learning issues. Although the outside experts encouraged the teachers to see themselves as researchers and students, and made frequent
comments and suggestions to promote this perspective, the teachers in the study had difficulty
developing the criticality necessary to achieve the most benefit from their Lesson Study
experience. It is possible that these coaches were less successful in helping the teachers adopt a
more critical perspective because the coaches were not part of the Lesson Study group, and may
not have wanted to overly influence the group by taking a more active role in the teachers’
development.

In the current study, the finding that the researcher, acting as ‘expert other’, mediated the
teachers’ transition towards a focus on the research process and adopting a more critical
perspective suggests that teachers new to Lesson Study might benefit from an outside advisor
who takes a more active role in questioning the participants in a way that encourages them to
externalize their thinking about the connections between the Lesson Study goal and the research
lesson, and between the evidence they collect while observing the lesson and the Lesson Study
goal.

7.5. The Role of the Advisor to the Lesson Study Group

It is important that the interventionist or outside advisor guide the group through the
Lesson Study process in a way that maintains the decision-making autonomy and collaborative
spirit of the group. The researcher tried to achieve this aim by asking the teachers questions that
focused their attention on the issues they needed to consider (e.g., “So what does this tell us
about the teachers here [in the school]?…What do you think of these results?”); summarizing
discussions and decisions from past workshops and addressing what they needed to achieve in
the current workshop; making sure that each teacher expressed his or her opinion at each
decision point in the process; and by maintaining a supportive and friendly environment. After
summarizing past discussions and decisions, the researcher made a point of eliciting confirmation from the teachers, and gave them the opportunity to re-visit an issue if any teacher wanted to re-consider an earlier decision. Because Simon often dominated group discussion, the researcher had to ensure that Lenka and especially Dan contributed to the discussion and were not simply acquiescing to Simon’s point of view.

In engaging the teachers to elicit their ideas, the Lesson Study advisor must be careful not to become one of the voices in the collaboration and “impose experiences” on teachers, or influence the direction the group chooses to go in by falling into traditional, top-down patterns of professional development where the teachers become the recipients of knowledge rather than producers of knowledge (Chokshi and Fernandez, 2005). However, teachers (especially novice teachers) could benefit from an advisor’s suggestions and help in finding professional literature on the topic the group is exploring.

In the current study, the role of the researcher was both outside expert and interventionist. As interventionist, the researcher became the motivating force who created the conditions for the teachers to meet regularly to focus on the student learning issues that they were most concerned about, and helped them interact with the Academic Office at the end of the project to explore common interests in student learning and professional development. It seems likely that without the researcher’s effort to sustain the Lesson Study process, the teachers probably would not have transformed their understanding of student and teacher learning. However, with greater support from the Academic Office and another semester of Lesson Study participation, it is possible that both Lenka and Simon would have acquired the expertise to become advisors for new Lesson Study groups at the school.
7.6. Institutional Support for Lesson Study

An implication for teachers and teacher educators is that considerable time and effort is required to create Lesson Study groups, as was the case with the two North American schools discussed in Chapter Two, both of which implemented Lesson Study in a multi-year effort (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003; Lewis et al., 2006). One important difference between the teachers in this study and the teachers in the North American case studies is the kind of institutional support they received. Lewis et al. (2006) argued that the successful implementation of Lesson Study at a school they worked with happened because the project had the support of the school’s faculty and administration, received district funds to pay for substitute teachers and training, and took the place of other school programs for adopting new curriculum standards and mentoring new teachers. Although the teachers in the current study had the full support of the school’s Academic Office to continue the work that they were doing with Lesson Study, the school failed to provide leadership in developing the project any further, and refused to provide funding or release time from teaching to sustain their effort. As a result, the teachers were not willing to continue their commitment to the project. This outcome supports Lewis et al.’s (2006) contention that without adequate support from an institution’s administration, teacher involvement with Lesson Study might be brief.

7.7. Lesson Study as ‘Second Stimulus’ to Facilitate Expansive Learning

Another significant finding in this study is that Lesson Study is a successful second stimulus in DWR methodology because it is an ‘ambiguous’ artifact (Engeström, 2011) that had the potential to promote expansive learning, and provided a window into the entire course of the teachers’ conceptual development (Vygotsky and Luria, 1994). The process of Lesson Study was
an effective second stimulus, meeting the five criteria below suggested by Engeström (2011): it was constructed by the teachers and filled with increasingly specific meaning the longer the teachers engaged in the process; led to a stable, material representation in the form of the research lesson; succeeded in addressing the teachers’ contradiction that emerged from engaging with the ‘first stimulus’ (the mirror data); promoted the interaction between (and the evolution of) the two stimuli as the intervention proceeded; and spurred the teachers’ concept formation of ‘student responsibility for learning’ through modeling solutions, an effort distinct from the modeling of the second stimulus itself - the research lesson plan.

Lesson Study is a sufficiently ambiguous conceptual tool in that it specifies the creation of a long-term goal that addresses a gap in student learning, which may be collaboratively decided by teachers, outside experts and administrators in a school, but the teachers themselves determine how the goal becomes instantiated in the research lesson plan based on teaching history, beliefs, practices and context. In this study, the ‘first stimulus’ mirror data mediated the process that led to the teachers agreeing on the student learning goal they would pursue. The dialogic process of externalization the teachers engaged in during the workshops led to the creation of a collectively constructed seven-page research lesson plan that served as the material representation of the innovation they would introduce to their students to begin to resolve the contradiction. The effectiveness of the second stimulus was evaluated by the teachers themselves when they met to critique how well the research lesson succeeded in demonstrating the potential to promote greater student responsibility through improved critical reading skills.

The effectiveness of having participants in DWR interventions develop the second stimulus as the mediational means for concept formation and eventual reconceptualization of the object is consistent with previous studies. In an intervention at a Finnish middle school, Y.
Engeström, R. Engeström & Suntio (2002) initially presented the triangular representation of an activity system as a means to facilitate modeling of past, present and potential future teacher activity; however, as the teachers developed an alternative means of assessment they believed would help students take more of an interest in learning, it became the teachers’ second stimulus, the mediational tool they filled with meaning to overcome a student learning contradiction they faced. In an intervention study at a Finnish hospital, the participants proposed and gradually created their own second stimulus, a new organizational structure for a unit in the hospital, before the researchers had an opportunity to introduce their own framework as a mediating conceptual tool (Engeström, 2011). A final example of participants creating their own second stimulus is from a DWR intervention for a group of early childhood teachers in Australia. The teachers were introduced to the discourse and conceptual tools of sociocultural theory to challenge their beliefs about early childhood education while “simultaneously developing a comprehensive philosophy document aimed at describing pedagogical imperatives of teachers in the region” (S. Edwards, 2007, p. 87). Although not described by the author in this manner, the participants’ creation of the philosophy document seemed to be the material representation of the second stimulus that had the potential to mediate a new understanding of teacher beliefs about early childhood learning.

In the DWR methodology applied in these interventions, the second stimulus that the participants created were unique to the contexts and the contradictions they faced. When new contradictions arise in these activity systems, novel conceptual tools might have to be created to mediate a new understanding of their objects. In contrast, Lesson Study is a conceptual tool that can be used to mediate a range of on-going school change efforts that address student and teacher learning issues. This point is taken up again in Chapter Eight.
7.8. Challenges in Sustaining EFL Teacher Professional Development

Another finding in this study is that sustaining a long-term in-service professional development program that recognizes teachers’ contribution to the EFL knowledge base probably cannot be accomplished without active school administration support and leadership. As discussed above, the Academic Office maintained a top-down professional development program that did not recognize teachers as legitimate producers of teaching knowledge, and did not feel it was their responsibility to promote teacher collaboration because it was believed that collaboration already took place informally among teachers. The professional development spaces that the Academic Office created were intended for transmission of teaching knowledge, not knowledge sharing among teachers. Because school is the place where teachers become socialized into teaching (Freeman and Johnson, 1998), and teacher knowledge is constructed in part through participation in a community of practice that values some practices and discourages others (Lave and Wenger, 1991), it is likely that if the school does not actively promote collaboration among teachers, and between the Academic Office and teachers, teachers will not see collaboration as a practice they need to adopt to develop as teachers. If there is no expectation from the Academic Office that the teachers should seek out and collaborate with Senior Teachers and administrators, and no realistic means for them to do so, many teachers in the school will choose not to participate.

Encouraging EFL teacher collaboration in professional development activities can help alleviate feelings of isolation novice teachers often experience, cultivate professional identity, and encourage a sense of being part of teaching community (Borg, 2008; Tasker, 2006; Ting and Watt, 2008). Teachers can overcome isolationist environments by being pro-active in finding way to collaborate with one another and develop professionally (Farrell, 2001; Hayes, 2008; Vo
and Nguyen, 2010); however, it is unclear how long these efforts could last in the face of school norms and values that do not support their work, especially considering the pressure teachers experience from administrators in trying to meet the expectations those schools do value. Simon and Lenka were not willing to continue the Lesson Study project after the researcher left because the school did not support their commitment with release time from teaching or even offer public recognition of their work, and because they could not teach full time and maintain the effort required to participate in a long-term professional development activity. By valuing a full teaching load over teacher development and individual participation over collaborative participation and knowledge sharing, the school undermined the teachers’ efforts to determine the direction their professional development should take.

Without the Academic Office’s support for co-creating and sharing teacher-produced knowledge, the innovations the Lesson Study group implemented are a lot less likely to be appropriated by other teachers in the school, and probably disappeared when the teachers in the Lesson Study group moved on to other teaching jobs. Innovation that is imitated by others can have a ‘ratchet effect’ as an artifact becomes a stable part of an activity system and ultimately serves as the basis for future innovations (Tomasello, 1999). As personal knowledge is collaboratively reconceptualized as social knowledge and made available to others, it can act as a catalyst for future knowledge creation. However, the teachers in this study, due to lack of interest from the Academic Office, did not have the opportunity to readily promote their work with other teachers beyond the one Senior Teacher meeting when the group presented its results.

The results from this study suggest that to sustain an EFL professional development program like Lesson Study, school administrators need to go beyond creating spaces for teacher development to take place and unilaterally deciding the topics teachers should address. They
need to create conditions that will encourage teachers to collaborate to determine the teaching and student learning issues they themselves wish to examine critically. Those issues must evolve from a conflict between the teachers’ beliefs and practices; otherwise, it seems unlikely that they will be invested in pursuing solutions that could lead to expansive transformation. Although teachers must lead the change effort, schools can develop and implement policies that make expansive learning possible (Engeström and Sannino, 2010). Administrators need to value the knowledge teachers produce and facilitate ways to make that knowledge available to other teachers. Teachers who lead professional development groups should be given release time from teaching so that they have time to prepare adequately and meet regularly with their groups. Granting release time also sends a signal to teachers that administrators value teacher development. Administrators should also publicly recognize the effort teachers put in to researching student learning issues and developing materials that can benefit all the teachers in a school.

For a teacher-led EFL in-service professional development program to succeed, administrators need to reject top-down only approaches to teacher learning that constrain teachers’ ability to collaborate and devise solutions to the teaching and learning issues they face in their classrooms, and recognize that teachers are legitimate producers of teaching knowledge. By creating an environment that promotes these values, administrators can influence how EFL teachers are socialized into the teaching profession, and perhaps foster greater teacher agency and a stronger teacher identity that could contribute to the professionalization of EFL teachers.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

This final chapter addresses the implications of the research, a discussion of the limitations, and suggestions for further research.

8.1. Implications

Several implications from the findings of this study can be drawn that could inform the professional development and school change efforts of EFL teachers, school administrators, teacher educators and education interventionist-researchers. The implications are related to professionalizing EFL teachers, understanding the role of advisors as expert others, creating partnerships with administrators in school change efforts, using Lesson Study as a ‘second stimulus’ to trace the trajectory of teacher learning, and adopting sociocultural theory as the theoretical framework to describe how teachers learn through participation in Lesson Study.

8.1.1. Professionalizing EFL Teachers

This study has provided evidence to support the claim that school administrators should actively promote the professionalization of EFL teachers. Short-term interventionist-researcher effort can support this process by encouraging all stakeholders to participate in professional development. However, a longer-term effort to enhance EFL teacher professionalization is required and needs to be guided by the leaders of the institution.

This could begin by creating a community that understands that professional development is an essential part of being an EFL teacher. The school administrators is this study
believed that teacher attendance in meetings and workshops should be voluntary, arguing that they could not compel teachers to participate if they were already meeting the school’s minimum teaching standards. From discussions with the administrators and Senior Teachers, it was clear that most of teachers chose not to attend. In contrast, in many ESL teaching contexts, participation in professional development activities is considered part of being a teacher, and often a required part of the job. Attending meetings and in-service workshops, submitting syllabi and student evaluations, and serving on departmental committees are typically expected, and attending conferences and workshops outside the institution are often encouraged. It seems unrealistic to assume that most new EFL teachers, many of whom will most likely leave the profession within a few years (if not sooner), will see the value in voluntarily participating in these kinds of activities; therefore, EFL school administrators should articulate professional development expectations when teachers begin work at a school, and assist teachers in making the transition from teaching as a job towards teaching as a profession.

Unfortunately, administrators in the EFL private sector face substantial challenges that could make these ideas to professionalize teachers difficult to put into practice. Administrators might have to cope with a staff of mostly novice teachers and a high rate of teacher turnover while striving to meet the high expectations of corporate clients and students. Moreover, novice teachers might resent the requirement to participate in professional development activities in addition to completing their ‘regular’ duties as teachers. In cities where EFL teachers are in high demand, these expectations for development at a school might reduce the number of candidates who apply. In spite of these challenges, this study has argued that the benefits of increasing the professionalization of EFL teachers could ultimately lead to lower teacher turnover and more satisfied students.
In addition to requiring participation in teacher development activities to promote professionalization, administrators should create spaces for development that foster knowledge sharing and knowledge creation among administrators, teachers, and those who lead workshops, and recognize that teachers should have a voice in determining the direction their development takes. Knowledge sharing involves giving teachers opportunities to articulate their beliefs and experience about language teaching and language learning, and how they integrate new ideas into their teaching practice. Teacher knowledge that is generated, for example, through developing or participating in workshops should be willingly shared with the wider community, and lead to further collaboration to resolve teacher identified student learning issues. Novice teachers could produce knowledge that is appropriate for other novice teachers in a similar context, and more experienced teachers might contribute to the knowledge base of the school.

EFL schools with top-down models of professional development by design exclude teacher-produced knowledge that could shape further development efforts since the flow of knowledge is unidirectional, from administrators to the teachers. The idea that knowledge from less experienced, peripheral members of a profession could inform the learning and development of members with more experience undermines the notion that there is a relatively stable center of knowledge held by experts within a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Since part of becoming a teaching professional includes sharing teaching experience with others and making that knowledge public, denying teachers this opportunity sends a message that the knowledge they have gained is not valued.

A challenge for administrators in larger schools could be the logistics in creating and managing an adequate number of spaces so that most, if not all, of their teachers could participate. To address this issue, administrators might have to rely on their more experienced
teachers to facilitate knowledge creation and sharing with smaller groups of teachers, but still be available whenever possible to participate in these groups. Creating professional development spaces in which teachers are given, at a minimum, input into which teaching and learning issues are addressed, and recognizing the knowledge they create as a result of this process is legitimate, contribute to a work environment in which teachers are viewed, and view themselves, as EFL professionals.

8.1.2. Lesson Study Advisors as Expert Others

This study has shown that participating in Lesson Study encourages teachers to create and share knowledge, but as this and many other studies discussed above have demonstrated, guidance from outside advisors plays an important role in the success of a Lesson Study group. An implication that can be drawn from this study is that advisors, as expert others, play an important role in mediating teachers’ transformation towards adopting a researcher and learner perspective, an essential element in the success of a Lesson Study group (Fernandez, Cannon and Chokshi, 2003). In this study, the teachers’ partial success in their ability to focus on the research process of devising, modeling, implementing and gathering evidence on their proposed solution to a student learning issue was attributed in part to the researchers’ frequent use of questions and comments to begin to mediate their transformation. However, it became clear that the teachers would need continued support to develop the criticality necessary to lead their own Lesson Study groups and advise other groups new to Lesson Study.

The amount of time and support needed to assist teachers in adopting a researcher and student perspective to investigate student learning issues effectively and bring about significant changes in teaching practice has implications for those who wish to create Lesson Study groups
at their schools. Although teachers need to lead the process of deciding which student learning issue to investigate and how that issue could potentially be resolved, outside advisors invited to assist new Lesson Study groups might need to take an active role to assist teachers in devising meaningful research questions, collecting appropriate evidence and interpreting their results. Taking an active role might mean encouraging teachers to articulate in detail how the changes they are considering making to their teaching practice would promote student learning, and helping them identify the kinds of evidence they would need to collect to demonstrate that the changes they made had an effect on learning. Since adopting a critical perspective appears to take longer than one Lesson Study cycle, teachers, advisors and administrators should have realistic expectations about how soon a new group could become skilled at independently managing the process effectively.

8.1.3. Creating Partnerships Between Teachers and Administrators

In addition to prolonged assistance from outside advisors, Lesson Study groups need the partnership of administrators to bring about longer-term school change. Inviting administrators to Lesson Study group workshops would potentially give them insight into the student learning challenges their teachers experience, how teachers collaboratively address those issues, and how teachers devise and implement practical solutions in their classrooms. By contributing to the collaborative effort, administrators would have a vested interest in the success of the project. Furthermore, observing the problems teachers have implementing and sharing new ideas with their colleagues due to the constraints imposed on them by the school’s implicit and explicit rules could help to make these rules visible to the administrators as well. In developing a teacher
perspective, administrators might become aware of policies and practices that could discourage teacher professional development and student learning.

In the absence of leadership and support from administrators, teachers should persevere in their efforts to develop professionally and find ways to collaborate with colleagues to improve student learning. Shared workplace contradictions can be powerful motivators for teachers to meet together to address issues and search for solutions, which could lead to expansive transformation. However, because EFL teachers often work (and perhaps are expected to work) autonomously, it can be argued that teachers rarely experience the kind of contradictions that brings about a crisis and a need to make substantive changes (Y. Engeström, R. Engeström & Suntio, 2002). As in this study, teachers confronted with a contradiction that motivates them to search for solutions with colleagues might not be imbued with a sense of urgency that leads to collective transformation. Whether or not teachers feel that their collaboration was successful, they always have the choice to retreat back to their classrooms and maintain the beliefs and practices that have served them throughout their careers.

For expansive learning to take place in an EFL context, teachers and administrators need to co-construct the long-term goals of a Lesson Study group. Teachers could benefit from the experience and ‘big picture’ viewpoint of those in leadership positions. Administrators can make teachers aware of new and existing school policies and goals, helping them link policy to practice, and teachers can use Lesson Study to make sense of and implement those policies in their classrooms (Chokshi and Fernandez, 2005; Lewis et al., 2006), as the teachers in this study attempted to do when they discussed the Academic Office’s new reading program. Administrators could also give advice about how best to disseminate new ideas to other teachers in the school and beyond. Teachers and administrators working collaboratively to improve
student and teacher learning at a school would reduce the isolation EFL teachers often experience, and increase the likelihood that the knowledge teachers create would be valued and shared with other teachers.

However, in this study, the administrators did not see the value of continuing the interventionist research as a means to address teacher-identified professional development conflicts, most likely because the administrators did not experience these issues as a contradiction they felt compelled to resolve. An implication for interventionist-researchers interested in EFL teacher professional learning is that they might need to focus their initial DWR intervention efforts on convincing administrators of the value of an intervention to bring about school change. This could entail an exploration of conflicts that administrators experience with teachers (e.g. a high turnover rate) and teacher professional development (low attendance in workshops). The initial conceptual tool could be a visual representation that provides administrators with a framework they would fill with meaning to make sense of the inter-connected activity of the administrators and the teachers and encourage them to create the means (e.g., a new policy for administrator-teacher knowledge creation) to bring about expansive learning. This type of initial stimulus might encourage greater administrator – teacher collaboration, which is imperative for Lesson Study to succeed.

8.1.4. Lesson Study as Conceptual Tool

Another implication that can be drawn from this study is that Lesson Study as a conceptual tool can be used to trace the course of teacher development and has the potential to facilitate teacher-led expansive transformation. Interventionist-researchers could gain insight into the process of teacher concept formation by exploring the teachers’ dialogic process of
externalizing the tension they experience between the student learning contradiction they face and their effort to model solutions using the process of Lesson Study, and analyzing how the teachers’ creation of a research lesson instantiates their resolution of the contradiction. Lesson Study succeeds as a conceptual tool because it promotes an interaction between the two stimuli (the student learning issue and the research lesson plan), and is filled with meaning by the teachers themselves.

As teachers become experienced participating in Lesson Study, and succeed in adopting researcher and student perspectives, change efforts could be sustained indefinitely as new long-term goals are collectively agreed upon between teachers and administrators, content experts are consulted, and local research lesson plans continue to be disseminated to wider audiences. Lesson Study is unique as a conceptual tool in that it not only can mediate the teachers’ reconceptualization of their object of activity, but also simultaneously mediate a transformation of their critical perspective, from teachers who are motivated to identify gaps in student learning to researchers who are effective in investigating ways to overcome the gap. As Lesson Study participants develop a researcher perspective, they could bring their expertise to other Lesson Study groups to help them explore new contradictions in student learning, create and share teacher knowledge, and contribute to the EFL knowledge base. In effect, these teachers could become interventionist-researchers who collaborate with teachers and facilitate expansive transformation.

8.1.5. Sociocultural Theory and Lesson Study

One final implication of this study is that Vygotskian sociocultural theory and cultural-historical activity theory offer Lesson Study a theoretical foundation for understanding teacher cognitive development through participation in Lesson Study. Sociocultural theory and Lesson
Study share the epistemological perspective that learning comes from participating in social practices and context; transformation occurs through critical inquiry; and meaning is socially constructed and personally appropriated through dialogic mediation with colleagues, students and experts; however, sociocultural theory adds the dimension of how participation, context, critical inquiry and the construction of meaning lead to cognitive development. By providing empirical evidence that participation in Lesson Study can lead to development, this study demonstrates that sociocultural theory can give teachers and teacher educators who wish to adopt Lesson Study at their school a powerful framework to go beyond describing what teachers learn and address how they learn.

8.2. Limitations

The limitations of this study are addressed in this section. It is important to note that the activity system of the teachers’ students was not explored directly – the focus was on the teachers’ perception of student activity. It is possible that a better understanding of how the students’ object and outcome of activity influenced teacher – student interactions and teacher decisions during the Lesson Study process, through interviews and observation, would add insight into the evolution of the teachers’ conceptual development.

Another limitation of the study is that two of the teachers in this study were not representative of the teachers in the school or EFL teachers in general. Simon and Lenka both had M.A. degrees that focused on English language and pedagogy, and more years of experience than many EFL teachers who work abroad. Administrators and teachers interested in starting a Lesson Study group at EFL schools could face substantially different challenges if the participants have less teaching experience, and they could require more guidance.
One final limitation, alluded to above, is that the Academic Office administrators were not involved in the discussion of the relationship between the Academic Office’s approach to professional development and the group’s vision for continuing Lesson Study after the researcher left until the last week of the project. During the 14-week project, Petra (the Director) was regularly informed of the progress the Lesson Study group was making, and was enthusiastic and supportive of their work. The researcher mistook her support for a willingness to consider ways to give the teachers a voice in the shape and direction the professional development program would take at the school. Previous research with Lesson Study groups stresses the importance of inviting school administrators to attend key workshops, observe the research lessons and give feedback. In Development Work Research, having all stakeholders present in the Change Laboratory is crucial in facilitating opportunities for expansive transformation. Bringing the administrators and teachers together earlier might have encouraged greater collaboration and a different outcome, or at least given the teachers an opportunity to present their ideas and concerns about how the project could be implemented at the school and proceed without the presence of the researcher.

8.3. Suggestions for Further Research

The findings and limitations of this study provide direction for future research. More studies adopting a sociocultural perspective are needed to explore how Lesson Study promotes teacher learning in EFL contexts. It is important to gain a better understanding of how the relationship among teachers, administrators and students in an EFL school influences the trajectory of teacher learning and knowledge creation, and how that knowledge is shared. Of particular concern is how context, in particular the norms and values of an institution, shapes
EFL teacher and student learning, and how changes in teacher learning impact on student learning.

Because developing a researcher perspective appears to be critical to the long-term effectiveness, and therefore success, of a Lesson Study group, studies are needed to explore the conceptual development of teachers as they transition from teacher to teacher-researcher, and how this transformation could be better mediated by outside advisors, administrators and researchers. Research in this area could provide insight into creating a methodology for working with teachers new to Lesson Study that gives them the support they need to develop a researcher perspective that maintains their independence in the search for solutions to the student learning issues they choose to pursue.

Intervention studies using Developmental Work Research methodology are needed to further investigate the effectiveness of using Lesson Study and other inquiry-based approaches to professional development as second stimuli in mediating the expansive transformation of teachers. The focus could be on the process of how the activity-level contradictions of EFL teachers leads to the creation of a second stimulus, such as a research lesson plan, ultimately results in collective activity-level transformation of school practices and individual action-level changes in teaching practices.

Also needed is a better understanding of the interaction between the implicit and explicit administration activity system rules and teacher change efforts. The question of whether contradictions in teacher activity can lead to expansive transformation in the face of school rules that might impede their work should be explored further.
8.4. Concluding Remarks

This study shows that Vygotskian sociocultural theory and cultural-historical activity theory provide a powerful framework to make sense of the interaction among teachers, students and administrators. Developmental Work Research, a formative intervention methodology, not only offers the potential to facilitate expansive transformation, but also makes visible the trajectory of teacher cognitive development as it unfolds within a social and institutional context. Lesson Study, as a conceptual tool, has the power “make visible some of the pathways by which teachers may learn” (Lewis, Perry and Murata, 2006). A better understanding the process of teacher development could help teachers, teacher educators and researchers improve EFL in-service professional development programs in the workplace.

This study provides insight into EFL teacher professional development, demonstrating that although teachers who collaborate to create and share teacher knowledge can promote their own learning, sustaining a long-term teacher-driven in-service development program could benefit from greater cooperation with administrators. This research also suggests that if school administrators placed greater importance on teacher-led professional development, EFL teacher isolation could be reduced and teacher professionalization could be increased. To achieve these aims, several steps could be taken by EFL school administrators: 1) require that participation in activities like Lesson Study be part of a teacher’s job responsibilities; 2) offer teachers release time from teaching to attend, create and lead workshops; 3) provide guidance to teachers by articulating (or better: co-construct with teachers) a clear vision of desired student learning outcomes; and 4) give teachers space to collaborate and devise ways to implement these outcomes in their classrooms and assess the results of these activities on their own learning and student learning, and finally, 5) recognize that EFL teachers are legitimate producers of
knowledge. Helping teachers become EFL professionals could lead to greater teacher commitment to student learning and teacher learning, and longer tenure in the field.


Appendix A
Initial Teacher Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience as an EFL teacher.

2. What is your educational background?

3. What professional development programs have you participated in?

4. How have these professional development programs influenced your teaching?

5. Do you feel there are any obstacles to your professional development?

6. What kind of collaborative activities do you do with other teachers?

7. What are some of the typical activities you do in your classes?

8. What do you think your students enjoy the most and the least in your lessons?

9. Is there anything that frustrates you about your students or their learning?

10. How do you think student learning takes place?

11. How do you know if student learning has taken place?

12. Do you use any technology in your lessons?

13. What strategies do you think are best for learning a foreign language?

14. Do you encourage your students to adopt any of these strategies?

15. What language features do your students find the most challenging?

16. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?

17. What are the best ways for teachers to become better in their jobs?
Appendix B
Student Reading Questionnaire

1. How often do you read for pleasure in Czech outside class? E.g., every day, 5 times a week, never, etc.

2. What kinds of things do you read? E.g., novels, short stories, magazines, articles on the Internet, etc.

3. How often do you read for pleasure in English outside class?

4. What do you read?

5. Do you read more now or in the past? What has changed, if anything?

6. If you were asked to read something in English outside of class, what kinds of things would you like to read?

7. What would make you read more outside class?

8. Do you believe that reading in English outside of class develops your English language skills?

9. After you read something in English, what kind of in-class activities do you find the most useful or enjoyable? Circle one, two or three activities that you find useful / enjoyable:

   a. DISCUSSING THE TOPIC       b. GRAMMAR       c. NEW VOCABULARY
   d. WRITING ABOUT THE TOPIC     e. SUMMARIZING THE CONTENT
   f. DISCUSSING YOUR / OTHERS’ OPINION ABOUT THE TOPIC
   g. OTHER _______________________________
Appendix C
Teacher Reading Questionnaire

1. Do you encourage your students to read outside class? [IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 4]

2. If yes, how do you encourage them?

3. If yes, what kinds of activities, if any, do you do with students in class based on the reading they’ve done outside of class?

4. Do you read outside class yourself? How much/often?

5. Are you currently using, or are you planning to use, the Penguin readers in any of your classes?

6. If no, why not?

7. Would you be more likely to use these readers in your classes if you learned how to use them effectively?
Appendix D
Artifact Created to Mediate Student Critical Reading

_____ 1. Opinions

**Before class:** Choose 2 questions below and think about your answer.

**In class:** Give your opinion to your classmates and ask for their opinion. You can use the use language below.

a. Which character in the book do you dislike most? Why?
b. Imagine a different ending to the book / chapter you have read. What would you change?
c. Do you know anybody who resembles one of the characters in the book? Describe how.
d. Would you like to visit the place where the book takes place?
e. What do you like and not like about the book so far?
f. Many well-known books have been made into films. Do you think the book you are reading would make a good film? Why?

**Stating an opinion**
- As far as I am concerned ...
- I would say that...
- I believe that...

**Asking for an opinion**
- What do you think?
- What are your thoughts on that?
- What’s your opinion?

**Reacting to opinion**
- I think that’s an interesting point, but don’t you think that ...
- I’m not so sure about that. I think...
- I would agree with that; however ...

_____ 2. Setting

**Before class:** Pick a setting from the story (house, city, countryside, etc.), and then think of 5 interesting adjectives you would use to describe the setting. You might need to use your dictionary. Using those adjectives, either compare the place you selected to another place in the story, or compare a place in the story to a place you’ve been to. You can use the useful language below.

**In class:** Compare the two places for your group. Then ask the group for their opinion of the places you compared, or other differences / similarities between the two places.

- X is quite a bit more _________ than Y because...
- X seems to be less _________ than Y because...
- Y is not nearly as _________ as X because...
- I would say that X is far more _________ than Y because...
3. Words and phrases

**Before class:** Choose 5 new words or phrases from the story. Look at the sentences in which these words were used and try to replace them with a synonym or similar phrase. You can look them up in the dictionary (http://dictionary.cambridge.org/).

**In class:** Read your sentences to your group and have them try and guess the word from the story.

Example: The rabbit took a **watch** out of his pocket = The rabbit took a **thing which tells us the time** out of his pocket. In class you might tell your group, “It’s something which tells the time.” You can use the language below.

- It’s something which...
- It’s a place where...
- It’s somebody who...

4. Summary

**Before class:** Make a timeline of some of the actions/events that happened in the chapter(s) you have read.

**In class:** Summarize the part of the story you have read for your group using your timeline and the useful language below. Then ask your group to predict what they think will happen next.

- The first thing that happens is ...
- After that,...
- Then...
- Next...
- In the next part of the story...
- The last thing that happens in this part is...

5. Characters

**Before class:** Pick a character from the story, and use the space below to draw a picture of him or her. Next to your drawing, write down 6 interesting facts about the character (role in the story, personality, job, age, relationship with another character, etc.).

**In class:** Don’t tell your group who your character is! Read the facts you found to your group and ask them to guess who the character is. Then ask them **either** to talk about other facts they remember about the character **or** tell you their opinion of the character (do they like the person? Why or why not?)
Appendix E
Research Lesson Plan
Created by Dan, Lenka and Simon

Goal of the Lesson Study Group

The students at the school are a broad and diverse group. Primarily these can be divided into many different groups: in-school vs. in-company students; individual vs. group classes; general English, post-secondary, business or test preparation courses. Accordingly the students vary as well from very motivated individuals who see a clear benefit from improving their English and reliably completing out of class activities and participating during lessons to students who are nearly impossible to engage.

However, for the lesson study group we are primarily focusing on in-school courses. The students vary in ability from roughly intermediate to advanced. In general they are making some kind of compromises and sacrifices to attend lessons; the most basic and common among all of them is the additional time commitment of attending lessons. The students respond well to in class activities but as they range in age from young adults to mature adults they face a number of demands on their time outside of class.

Unfortunately this means that the time they spend interacting with the English language, for homework or in other ways, is often neglected. As teachers we realize that part of this may be due to the notion that homework is boring and has little personal relevance. Therefore, we are looking at ways to encourage our students to take a more personal responsibility for their English studies outside of class. We feel that this topic, although broad and difficult to measure, will have the most lasting impact on our students English develop in both the long and short-term. Since we are in the Czech Republic, most of our students are primarily Czech natives and their out-of-class life is naturally conducted in Czech. However, the more time they spend using
English the more they improve. The specific vehicle we are planning to work with is reading, based on a suspicion and supporting evidence that many of our students read outside of class in the Czech language and it’s our opinion that this time could easily be transferred to English.

**How reading is covered in the curriculum**

As our students read in every single English lesson (instructions, articles, comprehension questions), reading is an inseparable part of learning English for them. In the classroom, students practice various sub-skills (reading for gist, skimming, scanning).

This unit should help our students to realize how much they can benefit from reading outside their English lesson. Students will read a book/short story/article they chose and they will choose one or more activities they will work on. By doing these activities, students will practice previously learned sub-skills (skimming, scanning) and they will also learn more about the structure of the language.

By focusing on vocabulary and grammar structures students will become more aware of a text as a resource for their own learning. As students work with vocabulary and grammar in greater detail, they will start noticing patterns which they can use in the future.

Discussing questions about the text in class should help students to become more careful and critical readers. By frequent discussions in class, students will practice functional language (expressing their opinions, agreeing and disagreeing) which is needed in real life as well as at the international language exams.
Our focus on reading

The answers in the distributed questionnaires show that all the students agree that reading outside the classroom helps improve their language skills. Their answers also show that they read regularly in Czech outside class (ranging from a few times a week to every day), whereas they read significantly less in English. Whereas they state that the main reason why they don’t read in English is a lack of time, they also say that they would be interested in reading English-language novels and stories.

The goal is important to see if some of the frequent reading they do in Czech could be substituted with reading in English. Research shows that exposure and extensive reading greatly enhances all your language skills, and as the students are all quite motivated to study English but haven’t yet developed a solid habit of reading in English for pleasure it hopefully working with the readers trigger an interest, which could develop into a reading habit, which – with training and teacher guidance – would create a more autonomous learner who would have the tools to take responsibility for their own learning outside class.

The meditational artifact in the form of a reading worksheet is central to the lesson as it will provide the students with tools to help them become a more responsible learner. The document is created so as to make the students approach the task in a more focused way. The danger is that students might perceive the worksheet as a forced homework task. However, the image of the task will hopefully shift towards something they would like to do and find pleasure in doing through the nature of the task and by offering them choices in what exactly they would like to do with the text and choices would help them to take responsibility for the task, and thereby their learning.
Simon’s Class

There are 11 students enrolled in the course and there is a core of students of about 8-9 who attend every lesson, while the rest have a relatively low attendance due to their work or studies. The age span of the students ranges from 19-year-old students to working people over 50. They are all very keen and motivated students even though they have a range of different motivations for studying English. Some need it for their jobs or studies, others for travelling and then others just study for relaxing, their own enjoyment or to learn something new; mental exercise if you like. Despite the differences in reasons for learning English, they are a very homogenous group, who work very well together, have fun together and get along very well with each other. Four of the students have been studying together for several years at the school, so they know each other very well and often go to the cafe after the lesson.

The students like to speak a lot in class, but they are really keen to do any kind of work or task that I give them and they seem open to trying new approaches and techniques. The level of the course is upper-intermediate, but there are some very strong students (especially Helena, Jiri and Simona), who will sometimes dominate, as well as a few rather weak students (Mirek and Hana). This has, however, not led to any kind of conflicts. The stronger students are understanding and willing to help and work with weaker students, who also are not afraid of participating or trying. Everyone is quite busy with their work or studies, and they have expressed that they have limited time to work with English outside class.

At the end of the lesson I would like the students to walk away having enjoyed working with the book in class and feeling that they would like to go back and read more, not because I tell them to but because they have the options and choose to do it themselves. I would like to students also to feel that they have language tools to be more autonomous learners and
potentially walk away with a greater awareness of how reading can help your language skills, i.e., what you can take from a text, be it skills practice, a generator of discussion, noticing and consolidating grammar, and discovering new language.

The Lesson Plan

| Time: Thursday November 13, whole lesson 16.20 – 17.50, study lesson component approximately 16.20 – 17.00 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aims:** At the end of the study lesson the students will have used their prepared homework in a communicative activity with their peers. The learning outcome will depend on which and how many of the 5 tasks the student has chosen. The students will have the options of practicing grammar (comparative structures), summarizing, discussing opinions, describing settings and characters. It is the hope of the lesson study group that at the end of the lesson the students will walk away feeling engaged and challenged by the reading of the book and preparing for the class as well as working with the book in class. In addition, we hope that it will be the first step in encouraging in the students more of an interest in reading as well as an awareness of what benefits you might have as a learner by working outside class in terms of language and skills and thereby taking responsibility for your own learning. Furthermore, the students will have been provided with useful language for each task and will have been given the opportunity to utilize this language. Another goal is therefore that at the end of the lesson the students will have practiced some of the useful language, depending on the task they chose to work with. **Learning tools:** Graded reader (*The Great Gatsby*) and worksheet with 5 tasks. |

Procedural notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps and timing</th>
<th>Student activities</th>
<th>Teacher activities</th>
<th>Goals/method of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-research lesson (10 – 15 min)</strong></td>
<td>In pairs students talk about the people in the picture and make predictions based on the cover and the description on the back of the book</td>
<td>T monitors Teacher elicits from groups what they have been talking about Teacher assigns homework: ‘read the introduction. Rank the activities on the worksheet from 1 – 5 according to how interesting they are to you. Do as many tasks as you would like. Try to do at least 1. Check instructions</td>
<td>The goal is to get the students engaged and create an interest in the reading task It is difficult to evaluate engagement apart from looking at whether or not students seem to be enjoying the activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement Assignment of task</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1 (3 min)</strong></td>
<td>Students write their names on the board in a box that represents each task</td>
<td></td>
<td>The goal is to set up the class effectively for the task</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Set up for group work</strong></td>
<td>Students group themselves so that they work with people who have done the same task(s) as them</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 2</strong></td>
<td>In groups students share with their peers how they have completed the task(s) at home. They compare and discuss their answers.</td>
<td>T: ‘Talk to your partners. Compare your ideas. Tell them how you have completed the homework. Ask your partners for their ideas.’ Check instructions Teacher monitors, assists and makes notes for feedback (including correct or incorrect use of the useful language provided to bring up as needed). If needed address any observed language problems to prevent students from making the same mistakes in the next group work</td>
<td>The goals are and success can be evaluated according to two criteria: firstly, the extent to which students are engaged with the book and the completed task in a communicative activity. Secondly, the accuracy and frequency of students’ use of the useful language in their discussion. Are they engaged? Are they challenged? Do they use the useful language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicative practice in talking about the book, Information comparing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Same as above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 3</strong></td>
<td>Students re-group so that they now work with people who have done a different task In groups students share with their peers how they have completed the task(s) at home. They compare and discuss their answers.</td>
<td>T: ‘talk to your new partners. Tell them what you talked about in the first group. Ask your new partners for their opinion.’ Check instructions Teacher monitors, assists and makes notes for feedback (including correct or incorrect use of the useful language provided to bring up as needed).</td>
<td>Did they enjoy the activity? Did they use the language? How keen do they seem to continue reading?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicative practice in talking about the book, Information exchange</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 4</strong></td>
<td>Students move to a whole-class circle format</td>
<td>Q: do you think anyone made some interesting points? Had completed the homework in an interesting way? Would you like to do more tasks for the next lesson? Bring up language problems or other problems as needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITA

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