TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION COURSE ROOM:

A critical sociocultural perspective*

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Abstract

This paper is a reconsideration of the nature of teaching and learning in the language teacher education course room. Drawing broadly on sociocultural perspectives of Lave and Wenger and Vygotskian models of cognitive apprenticeship, it considers how to design the course room as a learning environment. It begins with a critique of technical-rational discourses of teacher education, one of the implications of which has been to assert the primacy of the social construction of teacher identity. We present the case for the course room as a community of practice where teachers learn through engaging in activities and discourses, mediated through cultural artifacts. A community of practice is also shaped by larger systems of power, which are reproduced in the micro-context of the course room. Teacher learning is a site of struggle over activities, discourses, tools and identity because of its situated nature within institutional, historical and cultural contexts. A revised role for teacher educators in shaping an emerging course room culture is presented, acknowledging the realities of power and ideology that influence the daily practices in the course room.

Introduction

This paper reflects the experiences of two people. One has taught in postgraduate applied linguistics programs for over 30 years and has also contributed to the literature on language teacher education (LTE) (e.g. Richards and Farrell 2005). The other has had recent experience as a learner on such programs (Singh 2004), has recently commenced a career as a teacher educator and researcher, and is currently involved in school-based teacher development. We hope to bring our collective experiences and perspectives to bear on the discussion below by exploring both sides of the learning/teaching encounter in LTE, namely: what do we understand by learning in the context of post graduate in-service courses in LTE, and what do we understand by teaching? The paper is organized in three parts. In the first part we will outline the concerns that prompted this paper.

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The second part explores a sociocultural view of learning in the context of the LTE course room, including the identity work teachers do in this context. The third part examines the implications of this concept of learning for teaching in the LTE course room.

1.1. The problem as we see it

Lecturers on LTE courses spend much of their professional lives in course rooms (lecture theaters, classrooms, seminar rooms), seeking to provide a quality educational experience for their students (henceforth, *teacher-learners)* through a repertoire of course room practices that includes lectures, discussions, simulations, case studies and so on. However it is probably true in most areas of LTE that people who work as university lecturers see themselves primarily as subject matter specialists and do not have any formal study or qualifications in pedagogy, even less so in the field of adult or teacher education. Thus a typical MA TESOL program is taught by specialists in fields such as testing, SLA, reading, linguistics, discourse analysis, or methodology and who view their job as transmitting some of what they know to language teachers. This is done largely through intuition and experience – the process of doing so has hardly been mentioned in the lecturers own graduate education. Consequently discussion about course design in MA TESOL programs tends to focus on debate about content and to a lesser extent, how to deliver content effectively (e.g. Wallace 1991, Woodward 1991, Ur 1996, Richards and Nunan 1990, Bartels 2005). Good teaching, if it occurs, is viewed as a private matter, something that lecturers do in the privacy of their course room, and only rarely are colleagues allowed or invited to observe it.

While conversations about the content of LTE courses are common, discussions about LTE pedagogic practices in the course room are much less frequent. In general, our field has been grounded in the dominant technical-rational discourse of teacher education, which maintains that language teaching expertise can be acquired through content-based courses followed by a practicum or school-attachment. As such, practitioners have tended to view the problem of LTE course design and program implementation as one of how to enhance the uptake of subject and pedagogic knowledge by looking to improve the training model (Bax 1997, Hayes 2000, Wolter 2000, Waters and Vilches 2000, Bartels 2005). Unfortunately however, the findings of research on LTE courses suggest that they tend to be ineffective in changing teachers'

classroom practices (Tomlinson 1990, Lamb 1995, Roberts 1998). Focusing on designing courses has ignored how human learning is emergent through social interactions, and where context and identity play crucial mediating roles. For LTE courses, this means understanding how teacher learning emerges in the life of the course room, which this paper sets out to explore.

Another part of the problem as we see it is that teacher educators have tended to assume that learning on LTE courses is the teacher-learner's problem. It is the learner's problem to find ways of absorbing knowledge passed on by subject matter specialists and to learn how to cope individually with the demands of the course. Formal learning positions the "good learner" as someone who can master subject knowledge quickly and apply it in their course assignments or in their later classroom practice. The view of learning to be discussed here however is a somewhat different one. Drawing on sociocultural theory and identity construction we wish to explore how the social processes of the course room can contribute to professional learning (Moon 2001). From this perspective the location of teacher-learning – the course room – cannot simply be taken as a given. Instead, the LTE course room is viewed as having a rich life which unfolds over time, as events and processes interact, and shape the way participants think, feel and act. The question then is, how can teacher learning be provided for in an LTE course, particularly in contexts where in-service courses are viewed as little more than a survey of current teaching methods? We pose this question because, while like other teacher-educators who have to work within this institutional reality, we need to find ways of making the LTE course more developmentally - rather than training - oriented.

1.2 The issue of teacher identity

Learning to teach is a struggle not only around methods and content knowledge, but essentially, about who one is as a 'teacher'. It is common nowadays in LTE to speak of producing 'professional' teachers who are 'critical reflective practitioners' (Wallace 1991). Another view is that teacher development is seen as part of the process of "transformative re-imagining of the self" (Danielewicz 2001, 133). Both these views assume that carefully designed course programs will somehow "transform" participants into the kind of teachers the program envisions. Also, such views assume that teachers are autonomous agents, able to take a reflexive stance towards their teaching, to look

at their own practice critically. Instead, from a sociocultural and critical perspective, the change in teacher identity is seen to be socially constructed (Johnson 2001), as well as influenced by the powerful ideologies teacher-learners bring to the classroom with them and the discourses and activities that shape the practices of teacher education. Teacher- learners will not simply "convert" to a program's student-centered "progressive" pedagogy, as if this were a smooth, uncontested process. A good example is the conflictual positions between the passive learning approach favored by some learners and the trainer's expectation they become active, reflective learners on courses run according to progressive, liberal pedagogic principles. The challenge for teacher-educators is hence to shape a teacher's knowledge in the context of an LTE course, while being sensitive to the conflicts in agendas and expectations, the power and status asymmetries, and the implicit ideologies at work – all of which impact on the behavior and attitude of teacher-learners. *We therefore see teacher identity as 'woven' through the ideologies, discourses, contents and approaches of the course, and the individual teacher's own desire to find meaning in becoming a teacher.*

In this light, critical questions are: what sort of teaching and what kinds of learning experiences are needed to initiate the processes of teacher development? More fundamentally, what are these processes? We view these questions as important because there has been a critical lack of research into the lived experiences of teachers in LTE course rooms, and how teachers constantly negotiate their identities in relation to its' particular activities and relationships.

1.4. A critical sociocultural perspective

Adopting a critical sociocultural perspective on education, we believe there is a relationship between the micro-context of LTE – the course room – and the construction of teacher identity, which for us is a prerequisite for teacher learning. Sociocultural theories of teacher learning centre on the concept of learning as situated social practice, which includes mediation, discourse, social interaction and participation structures. These in turn are situated in ideologies – both the participants' own and that of the institution which is running the course – about what learning is and should be.

Our view therefore builds on the following precursors:
- Social and situated perspectives on LTE and teacher learning (Johnson 2001, Johnson and Golombek 2003, Hawkins 2004)
- Identity construction in teacher-learning and teacher education (Danielewicz 2001)
- Learning in a community (Lantolf 2000, Rogoff 1990, Lave and Wenger 1998)
- The classroom as a site where learners exercise their agency in identity formation (Norton and Toohey 2001)
- Classrooms as an ecology (Breen 1985), having a life to be managed (Wright 2005), and
- Identities-in-practice (Holland and Lave 2001).

While sociocultural theories address limitations in prior LTE research - which too often treats learning, teaching, content and method as discrete domains – they must be complemented by understanding learning as identity construction. Relating the micro-process of the courses room to the larger macro context in which LTE is situated, we conceptualise teacher-learning as the appropriation and resistance to skills and knowledge for the purpose of remaking identity. Therefore, we combine both approaches to study teacher learning as a dialogic relationship between the self and the social, the course room's daily encounters and the larger discourse community it is situated in.
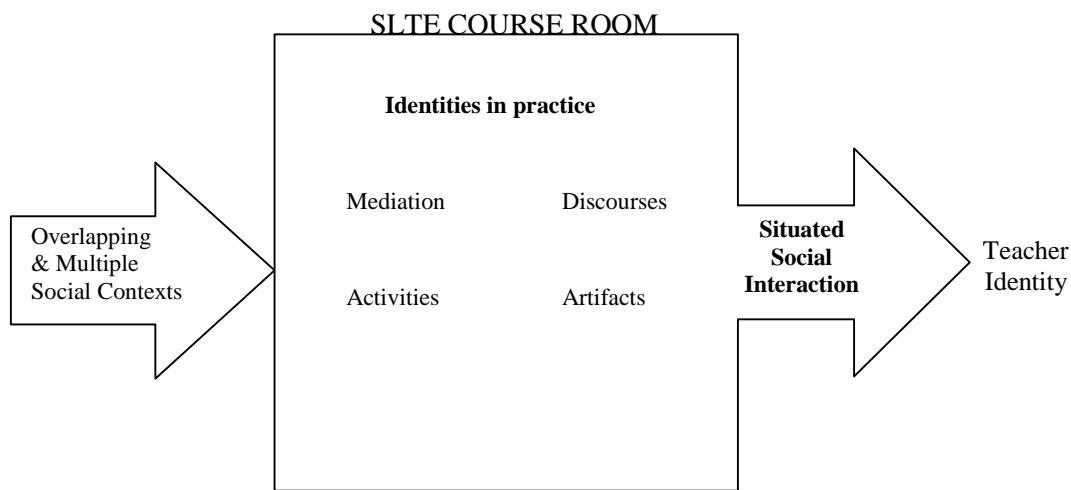
2.1. Learning in the LTE course room

We now wish to examine in more detail the processes of teacher learning in the course room. From the discussion above we take as axiomatic that:
- Before learning, there must be engagement, which includes the atmosphere and the climate of course room life (Wright 2005).
- the course room has social participation structures that can enhance or inhibit learning opportunity. This includes both the discourse and the activities of course room life, which affect how meaning is made and knowledge constructed. (Hawkins 2004, Wenger 1998, Lantolf 2000).
- Learning is also tied to artifacts, identities and the cultural space in which it is situated. These artifacts include whiteboards, worksheets, journal articles, videos and posters that learners produce, which give flesh to identities in practice (Holland and Lave 2001).

These perspectives reconfigure the course room as a complex ecological site in which unfolding events and processes in the classroom shape the way in which participants think, feel and act. A teacher-learner has to navigate these multiple layers in order to be able to participate in learning, which is a precursor to learning. Central to understanding these processes of teacher-learning are learning as situated social practice, induction to a community of practice, development of a new identity, acquiring a professional discourse, and developing a theory of pedagogy.

Diagramatically, this looks like:

Figure 1: The Course Room as a Community of Practice

SLTE COURSE ROOM

Identities in practice

Mediation   Discourses

Overlapping
& Multiple
Social Contexts

Activities   Artifacts

**Situated
Social
Interaction**

Teacher
Identity

2.2 Learning as induction to a community of practice

From a situated social perspective on learning, an LTE course can be conceptualized as an emerging "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger 1991). This shifts the focus to people jointly engaged in a mutual enterprise, with a shared repertoire of actions, discourses and tools (Wenger 1998). On an LTE course, these relations could include 'knowing how to design an ESP course', 'finding out the what, how and why of observation' or 'discussing the pros and cons of using textbooks'. While negotiation of meaning, knowledge and understanding are core to all of these, communities of practice grant a primary place to the social activities being engaged in. In this perspective, knowledge is distributed across the community and not possessed

individually. Thus, we come to view the LTE course room as a site for specific cultural practices, with participants immersed in a longitudinal experience, where everyone negotiates, contributes to and cares about the long-term outcomes: enhancing teacher's capacities to think about what they do, and how they do it. Through this immersion, teacher-learners deepen their understanding and perceptions of issues around pedagogic practice. In the process of doing so, the teacher-learner's identity can be reshaped when her/his experience is critically theorized, rather than taken as the truth. Teacher identity and the community of practice in the course room are mutually constituted through participation.

We view the course room as a site where participants are encouraged to try out new identities, e.g. as mentor, action researcher, curriculum developer, rather than simply sitting back and being a passive learner. Working collaboratively with peers creates social relationships in the course room, both formal and informal, that condition participants' relative success in learning: Experts are 'learning resources' and "the social process…subsumes the learning of knowledgeable skills." (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 29).

2.3. Learning as identity construction

Teacher- learning involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also *what it means* to be a language teacher. Identity seems to play a special role in teaching, as compared with other professions. Nias (1989, 202-3) comments: "[Teachers] self image is more important to them as practitioners than is the case in occupations where the person can easily be separated from the craft". Nias implies that there is an intricate relation between teacher identity and teacher knowledge. Teacher-learners construct their identity through the unfolding social interaction of a particular situated community, within the specific activities and relationships in context.

We lack studies of how teachers negotiate their identity through the interaction processes of the course room. The difficulty or impossibility of changing teachers' practices through INSET courses has been noted (Bailey 1992, Lamb 1995), and is often described in terms of resistance to change (Hayes 1995, 2000). Issues such as teachers' internal motivations and emotional attitudes to change, as well as the contextual conditions for change make the processes of initiating and sustaining

change difficult to capture, track and analyze. However what is often missing from this literature is an acknowledgement of the internal struggles and dilemmas teachers are confronted with when challenged to take on new practices, which may require the teacher to assume new identities and a changed mind set. Whether teachers have the agency to remake themselves through repositioning within the course room will determine if they engage with or resist the activities and discourses of a course.

2.4. Learning, identity and the non-native speaking teacher-learner

In LTE courses, learning to teach can pose special struggles for non-native speaking teacher-learners (N- NS- TL), particularly when they are in the same learning community as native-speaker teacher-learners. These struggles include:

- the feeling that the N- NS- TL may have a sense of inadequate language knowledge (Johnson 2001);
- language competence that may impede participation in group-based collaborative learning favored by the course lecturer, and
- The clash of cultures of learning. Teacher- learners from some cultures have culturally-specific expectations of the roles of teachers and learners (Singh 2004).

The above factors may hinder teachers from taking on the dispositions needed to participate as active learners in the LTE course room. Teacher-learners from traditional cultures of learning may have long, prior experiences of passive learning, of not seeing themselves as 'educated', thereby perpetuating their sense of dependency on Western experts. Their embodied sense of intellectual dependency created through prior passive, hierarchical learning experiences frequently make them uncomfortable with the work attempted by trainers to cultivate active learners. In such cases, the emerging community of practice in the course room may reproduce top-down, didactic practices despite a trainer's best efforts. Lecturers need to be sensitive to teacher-learners' histories of participation and the expectations they bring, when creating new communities to engage them.

2.5   Learning, community of practice and the wider context

The process of acquiring a new set of discourses and becoming a member of new, wider professional communities is hence inherently conflictual. This is because the LTE course room is not a neutral location, but a complex small culture (Holliday 1999), with overlapping personal agendas and course agendas, which include:

♦   Teacher-learners own perceptions of how to learn, based on their 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie 1975)

♦   Teacher-learners personal agendas – why am I here, what will I get out of this, how much do I have to contribute, will this advance my career in my school.

♦   Course aim and agendas – often set by ministries, decided by bureaucrats given the task of injecting innovations into educational systems to prepare future workers for the 'new knowledge economy'.

♦   Trainers own beliefs – about learning, knowledge, assessment, their roles etc.

♦   Institutional, country, professional-academic and course-specific cultures.

Although sociocultural theories of a community of practice focus on its social interactions, and activities, they fail to connect to larger system of power in which the community is nested. Taken together, the micro and the macro focus make the everyday processes of teacher learning both situated in discourse communities and shaped by power relations, which are reproduced and contested in the course room.

2.6   Learning, identity and social practices

The identity of teacher-learners is thus tied to the social practice in the cultural world of the LTE course room. While teacher-learners may initially enter this world at a marginal position, they acquire the agency to challenge this negative social position through interacting with cultural and social artifacts. Through their participation in the activities of the course room, teacher-learners grow into this world, gaining a sense of their position and standing in a community of practice. The ethnographic work of Singh (2004) on Chinese teachers on a British INSET course shows how the social construction of identity in the LTE course room offers an opportunity for teacher change, one person at a time. As teachers adopt the cultural artifacts of a world that is new but gradually becomes their home, and then rehearse them in a community of practice, they develop a sense of agency as the practice becomes meaningful.

The study of identity-in-practice posits a turn toward relational notions of identity in which the focus of analysis is not the individual her or himself, but the activity or practice through which the individual is being produced. In the case of LTE courses, therefore, we are compelled to consider not only individual case studies and personal accounts of identity formation, but also the space of practice where identity is formed. Whether this space leads to change, or obstructs change, depends on the activities, the individual teacher's dispositions, the ideology of the course, and the culture of the institution within which the LTE community of practice emerges.

2.5. Acquiring a professional discourse

The LTE course room is a site which develops its own discourse. Acquiring this discourse is essential for effective participation in the course room. By Discourse (Gee 1996) we include the following:

- the dominant discourse of TESOL (e.g. learner-centredness, learner autonomy, authenticity, genuine language, accountable learning, and some version of communicative methodology and the four skills);
- ways of acting and interacting (e.g. how to be a teacher-learner on an MA course in the US, UK, Australia or elsewhere);
- acquiring the appropriate cultural practices in the course room (e.g. how to write a term paper in the appropriate style and voice, how to pose questions and respect different points of view) and
- enacting the identity of a teacher-learner.

Becoming a member of a new community of practice is not just about learning new content but also about acquiring new practices, values, and ways of thinking which enable particular identities to be realized. Multiple discourses have to be navigated by the learner. Holliday (2005,42-43) points out that central to the professional discourse of TESOL is the notion of the four skills and a major aim of training programs, particularly for novice teachers, is to initiate teacher learners into being able to see and understand English language teaching through the framework of the four skills. Singh (2004) found that on an M.Ed course, new practices, initially something the teacher-learners felt alienated from, became second nature to them over the year long course through trial and error. These discursive practices included reflecting journal writing, valuing other course members' perspectives, working in groups, sharing thoughts in online discussion board, and critically reading texts. Discourses are a way of signalling identities. Teachers move between Discourses as they move between

different contexts. For example, the Discourses of teaching in a school are very different from those on an INSET course; the former tends to be about exam results and school achievement, the latter about learner-centered progressive pedagogy. Teacher-learning is thus shaped by Discourses and how they are used. The Discourses of LTE can have a powerful impact on teachers' identity development, for they look to the 'expert' lecturer as role-models of TESOL Discourses. Teachers start thinking of themselves as inquirers if the LTE course room discourse actively invites teachers to research their own practice (see Wright 1992). If we understand how identity is socially situated, we will better appreciate why is that teachers are often seen as not implementing innovations they are exposed to on INSET. This happens when teacher development and school development do not go hand-in-hand (Fullan 1991), such that the teacher has to make a choice between two sets of Discourses calling out to her or him. So, there are multiple discourses of being a teacher in different contexts, and it is more sensible to appreciate them rather than try and impose a dominant ideology or way of thinking about what TESOL should be.

2.6. Developing a theory of pedagogy

In teacher education research, there are many theories of the nature of teacher knowledge, and the part in-service courses play in developing it. We want to frame the teacher knowledge question differently. Instead of viewing teacher education as transmitting theories and practices from one context to another, we regard LTE as aligning a teacher's theory of pedagogy with the curriculum goals for students' learning. In the course room, teachers construct this theory from questioning assumptions about language and learning, through action research and reflection in a professional community of learners (Cochran-Smith 2000).

Alexander (2002, 2) explains the difference between teaching and pedagogy in these terms:

> Pedagogy I define as the discourse which attends the act of teaching. Teaching and pedagogy are not the same. Teaching is a practical and observable act. Pedagogy encompasses that act *together with* the purposes, values, ideas, assumptions, theories and beliefs which inform, shape and seek to justify it.

Developing a theory of pedagogy involves seeking answers to questions such as:

> What caused me to want to become a second language teacher?
> Do these reasons still exist for me now?
> What does it mean to be a teacher?
> Is the teacher I am the person I am?
> Where did the ideas I embody in second language teaching come from historically?
> How did I come to appropriate them?
> Why do I continue to endorse them now in my teaching?
> Whose interests do these ideas serve?
> Who has power in my classroom and how is it expressed?
> How do power relationships in my classroom influence my interactions with students?
> How might I teach differently?
> What is the nature of knowledge that guides my teaching of content?
> Who creates this knowledge?
> How did this knowledge emerge during the evolution of teaching?
> Whose interests does this knowledge about language teaching serve?
> How do/can I personally work to uncover the contradictions in my teaching?
> How does what I do affect the opportunities in life of students?
> What connections do I make with organizations outside the school or centre to demonstrate my active role in society?
> Do I wish to uncover the "hidden curriculum" – the inconsistencies – in my teaching?

> (From Bartlett 1990, 206-207)

In other words developing a theory of pedagogy involves examining not just the "what" and "how" of teaching – content knowledge and classroom methodology respectively - but the questions of "what kind of teacher am I and what kind of teacher do I want to become?" Grappling with these fundamental questions is part and parcel of becoming a professional. Alongside the technical procedures and skills of language and teaching, the professional language teacher has the capacity to reason and make sound judgments about what 'academic theories' are conducive to the moral and intellectual development of language learners. Brumfit (1997), for example, has developed a position advocating teachers as 'educational linguists', which includes the study and exploration of beliefs and role of language in society. But how is this to be done in the course room?

Much of what we do when we teach in LTE courses is to pass on information, ways of thinking, conceptualizing, talking, and being. It is part of the process by which teachers are encouraged to engage in personal theorizing based on their own experience, taking on or revising beliefs, values, and understandings. The exploration of these beliefs, values and theories is a central part of the conflicts that arise in the course room. In our view, rather than ignoring these conflicts, we can invite teacher-

learners to interrogate their and our assumptions about what teaching and learning mean, and why they cause us so much trouble.

Teachers develop their own theory by exploring classrooms and language (language awareness) through the cultural artifacts and social practices in the course room. Thus they are not simply seen as passive absorbers of functional knowledge about syntax, stylistics and semantics, but are actively engaged in developing their own understanding of grammar through inductive study by looking at corpuses of authentic textual data. Lecturers can model and demonstrate how to make students aware of the discourse features of a newspaper article, a business report, an advertisement, and also sensitivity to issues of power, gender and linguistic imperialism (Hedgcock 2002, Philipson 1992). In this way, teacher-learners develop an operational knowledge that can help them assist their own learners to become critical language users, not just functional ones. To counter teacher passivity and dependency, LTE courses must engage notions of what a 'language teacher' looks like, and elaborate the discourses and practices of such an imagined identity and world.

3.1. Teaching in the LTE course room

Given the view of learning as critical sociocultural practice outlined above, the role of the teacher educator is to manage the life on the course room as a space where learning is possible and sustained. The aim is to scaffold opportunities for learning, rather than transmitting 'pre-set' theories. Central to this role are modeling good instructional practice, dialogically organizing instruction, encouraging participation in multiple discourses and setting up collaborative learning. In short, teaching is not recitation of prior knowledge from elsewhere, but establishing the parameters and norms for guiding co-constructed understandings in the daily life of the group.

3.2. Modeling good instructional practice

A challenge for anyone teaching LTE courses is how well the teacher's and the course's instructional practices model the kinds of learning opportunities and dispositions that teachers are encouraged to create in their own classrooms. We have all heard jokes about lecturers who present a session on co-operative learning through a lecture. As Feiman-Nemser comments (2001, 1020):

The pedagogy of teacher education mirrors the pedagogy of higher education where lectures, discussions, and seat-based learning are the coins of the realm. Too often teacher educators do not practice what they preach.

Gaudart (1994, 85) similarly observes:

While advocating pupil-centred teaching, many teacher education classes themselves are more inclined to be teacher-centred rather than student-centred… If we stopped and looked at our own teacher preparation programs, would we find that it allows student teachers to develop, or would we find that it forces them into a mould which we have created for them?

Johnston (2000, 157) raises the same issue:

Increasingly, teacher educators are encouraging their teacher learners to take a reflective approach to their teaching and to use action research methods to gain a better understanding of their own classrooms: yet … teacher educators are rarely seen to be practicing what they preach, that is, conducting reflective inquiry in their own classrooms and sharing the results of this inquiry in the professional forum.

To practice what we preach requires teacher educators to have the appropriate ethical commitments, professional knowledge and pedagogical repertories they expect of their teacher-learners. Examples of three such approaches are presented below.

Hedgcock (2002) discusses a technique for using assigned readings in an LTE course in which reading tasks model the same reading strategies which teachers are expected to develop in their own students. That is, the activities the instructor uses with teachers-learners in relation to reading assigned texts are the same ones the teachers can in turn teach their students to use.

An example of a task of this kind is the following activity which develops genres awareness as well as content knowledge:

Text Analysis Task
Directions: With a partner, select a sample article or chapter from an applied linguistics source you know. Refer to the following prompts as you analyze your text.
1. Scan your text carefully. What are your best guesses about its
 a. topic
 b. *genre*, or textual category (e.g. research report, review article, essay, etc)
 c. primary argument(s) (i.e. thesis/es or central claim[s]?
 d. conclusions (including findings for/against research questions or hypotheses, support for a theory, implications, etc)?

2. Identify specific textual clues that you used to make the inferences you drew in a. above. Consider features such as the sample's topic and focus, the arrangement of its content, its formatting, and so on.
3. How would you describe the text's rhetorical structure (how the author chose to sequence information)?
4. What do textual signals tell you about the text's structure? Consider elements such as the abstract, heading, topic sentences, tables, figures, and so on.
5. For what audience(s) is the text written? Consider these formal elements: specialized terminology, reliance on the existing literature (bibliographic resources), style sheet, typographical conventions, and so on.

(Hedgcock 2002, 316)

Johnston (2000) describes a self-study project in which he examined dialogic features of his teaching in an MATESL methods course as he sought to implement a student-centred non-transmission approach to teaching. Data sources on his teaching included a teaching journal, audio recordings of class sessions, teacher-learners' journals and assignments, and other classroom data. Thought investigating his own teaching he sought to demonstrate a professional development activity to his teacher-learners.

> Generally speaking, in all my work in teacher education, I try to provide what Woodward (1990) calls *loop input* and enact in my own classroom the teaching principles I espouse. Conversely, I always offer myself up as a living specimen. I encourage teacher learners to think critically about my teaching, pointing out that if I am claiming to be able to tell them how to teach, I should practice what I preach.
> (Johnson, 2000, p. 160)

And thirdly, Wright (2002) provides another example of how good practice can be modeled – language awareness. A cycle of activities is organized using real texts (e.g. newspaper and magazine articles) that move from the 'user', 'analyst' to 'teacher' domains of language awareness. This process first exposes teacher-learners to language data, which they analyze, drawing on their previous experiences, and then a reflective stage follows. Here, participants share new insights gained about how language works, and work out rules that can help in their classroom teaching. In this way, participants move from considering language in use to working with language and how to teach it. They share insights, with the teacher-educator on hand to provoke, elucidate and clarify. Thus, teacher-learners' linguistic knowledge is linked to pedagogic application. Expanding analytical skills and acquiring the meta-language to discuss language points go hand in hand. The attitude of curiosity and openness towards language is one which both teachers and teacher educators can model for

their students, rather than depending on existing sets of grammar rules. Thus, LTE can be a site for initiating teacher-learners into a spirit of inquiry.

All the above three examples take place within the dynamic teaching-learning context of the course room. While modeling practice, in each case the teacher-educator also scaffolds learning. An 'expert' shows a learner the more essential moves in a new activity, such as how to teach a tricky language point, and then gradually hands things over to the teacher-learner as s/he becomes more confident. So, the trainer does not 'tell' but supports, while the learner takes on a more expert role, as his perspective grows and his skills expand. It is an evolving reciprocal relationship.

3.3   Organizing Dialogic Instruction

Many teacher-learners report that one of the most obvious benefits of attending an LTE course is not what the instructors say, but conversations and networking with other teachers, an opportunity that many teachers say they have little time for in their professional lives. Of learning through talking with other teachers, a teacher-learner comments:

> Talking in a seminar provides you with time to talk about your teaching and hear about the teaching of others and this in itself becomes confidence inducing. You know, you think stuff about your teaching all the time, but when you talk about it in public, with people who know you and where you are coming from, it becomes real. Through this talk, we know what we are doing, we know why we are doing it, we know what we do, and we can tell others why we are doing it.
> (Quoted in Freeman and Johnson 2005, p.85)

Through participating in group conversations around teaching and learning issues, teachers can come to validate their own knowledge and beliefs or reshape them through dialog with others. Dialogic teaching (Alexander 2004) is at the heart of a teacher's repertoire. It need not always involve spoken dialog and can take place through journals or on-line. Danielewicz (2001, 146) describes her use of letter writing as a dialogic activity. Teacher-learner write letters both to their peers and to their teacher, "focusing on issues and ideas related to teaching, drawn from the readings, discussions, and experiences in the course".

However, while discussion is a more coherent form of learning than recitation (Nystrand 1997), dialogic teaching can create a dilemma for teacher-learners who come from cultures where a transmission-oriented mode of teaching is the norm and

where the lecturer is expected to lecture and the students to listen and learn. Johnston (2000,157) comments that sometimes he received student evaluations that suggested he should lecture more and that students would like to hear more of his views and listen less to those of their peers. Dialogic modes of teaching thus raise issues if identity, power, and agency. Johnston suggests that dialogue in educational settings has at least three interrelated elements – participation, contingency, and negotiation.

> First, it requires the participation of the teacher and the teacher-learners. …The point is that both these sides are needed: There can be no learning if either one is missing. Next dialogue is fundamentally contingent. Because of the complexity of what the teacher and teacher-learners bring to the classroom, and the further complexity of their interaction in class, it is impossible to predict exactly what teacher learners will or will not learn. …Finally, dialogue involves contestant negotiation. Because of its contingency, truly dialogical relations can only be maintained through a constant moving to and fro between participants in the domains both of content (what we are studying) and process (how we go about it). (158)

Lave and Wenger (1990), in writing about situated learning, stress the importance of 'learning how to talk' to participate in a community of practice. Singh (2004) describes how on an INSET course in the UK, the course members did 'micro-training' sessions, had online discussions with peers doing the distance program from Mexico, and took part in an action learning (Baldwin and Williams 1988) set. Through these activities, he came to examine his own criteria for what constitutes 'progress', and came to realize how the way teacher-learners look at things is tied to their biographies and their contexts. Moreover, in the multiple practices that the course leaders had structured for the teacher-learners, he became aware how teacher learning happens not only through the content of activities, but also by each specific encounter and the authentic talk within it. As a member of an action learning set, he could only speak honestly to other set members because he was among people he could trust as co-learners.

Learning to share with others and listening without judgment but in the interest of furthering understanding thus make the processes of LTE just as important as the pre-planned content. Hence even experiential learning cycles (Kolb 1984) might not work if the sort of talk within it obstructs knowledge co-construction. Indeed, talk and learning are not separate from the individual, or from the group. Teacher-learners cannot talk about teaching without reflecting on what they went through as learners, while group learning adds meaning to the teacher's self-development as professionals. A key

challenge for teacher-educators is having the process competence to keep the spirit of collaborative learning alive, as well as recognizing that knowledge is not transmitted, but tentative, not prescriptive but constructive. In effect, it is not the written assignments that should be valued as the 'products' of learning, but the right kind of talk that initiates reflective review of unquestioned habits and ideas about language and learning.

Consequently, some questions for LTE practitioners to consider are:
♦ What is the relationship between how a LTE course is set up and the type of talk that results?
♦ In what way is talk related to the topics in the course?
♦ How can one provide a variety of opportunities to talk?
♦ How does talk relate to teacher-learners' engagement and participation?
♦ When does talk become assimilated into personal change?

3. 4   Encouraging participation in multiple discourses

A critical sociocultural view sees learning as the remaking of identity in a particular space, through the mediation of new discourses, and knowledge as the ability to use-in-practice (Hawkins 2004, 89). During LTE course room interaction, teacher-learner roles are largely shaped, if not assigned, by the roles the lecturer assumes through setting up activities, the questions asked and the responses to learner answers, tests and assignments. If teacher-learners are not to be merely passive empty vessels into which knowledge is poured, then they need to be able to shape the course of the talk. When they assert their agency, they remake their identity as they compete for access and control of the course room. Dialogic discourse is less predictable because it is negotiated, but all the more invaluable for teacher-learners. As Danielwicz
 (2001, 168) argues, the course room should be a site where teacher-learners create and experience different representations of themselves. Changing the talk, as well as the physical arrangements of people and spaces within the course room, helps redefine teacher and student roles.

The discourses a teacher-learner participates in within the course room are diverse: as an experienced teacher, teacher-learner, group member, peer, researcher, and a unique individual (Hawkins 2004). The language and behavior participants exhibit, for instance, towards lecturers and their peers in the course sessions are very different.

How many teacher-learners have the identity of an 'expert' or 'colleague' that would allow them to call their lecturers by the first name? Their ability to successfully participate in diverse social settings and roles relies on the ability to deploy multiple identities, and knowledge of attendant discourses for different purpose and times. This perspective, then, complicates teacher learning, and problematizes what we are 'teaching' participants in the course room.

Wenger (1998) has written about how successful members 'take on' the practices of a community of practice in their everyday life. But what was left out was how there is also a discourse attendant to participation in communities, as Gee (1996) points out. If we think of teachers as 'taking hold' of theories of language and education and also as acquiring pedagogical repertories, then LTE needs to be constituted accordingly. That is, rather than 'teaching knowledge, skills and awareness' for transfer to classrooms in schools located in other countries, it is the behavior, attitudes, tools and ways of engaging that participants will need to successfully demonstrate at the end of the course. These can be learnt through their apprenticeship into an identity of a successful member of a course community of practice. For instance, if we want language learning to be more than just about functional knowledge of language but also a tool for learners to participate in global society, we need to provide opportunities for teachers to explore what this means in terms of curriculum design and classroom pedagogies.

3.5   Developing collaborative learning

Teacher-learners collectively on a course bring a great deal of accumulated knowledge, skills, and awareness to many of the issues they will explore in a course. In a typical cohort some have taught abroad, many have considerable classroom experience, some have learned several foreign languages successfully, and some have worked as mentor-teachers and trainers themselves. Their collective knowledge and experience, together with the course content and the course-room artifacts, provide the resources through by which they learn. Danielewicz comments (2001, 141):

> Collaborative learning creates a social context that helps students negotiate entry into the academic discourse community and acquire disciplinary knowledge. But, at the same time, their joint efforts will produce new knowledge, and eventually lead to a critique of accepted knowledge, conditions, and theories, as well as of the institutions that produce knowledge.

From a Vygotskian perspective on learning, "cognitive development is a socially mediated activity" (Johnson and Golombek, 2003, 730).   Key concepts here are the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and mediation. These two constructs present a view of learning as a process of "apprenticeship", where apprentices collaborate in social practices with teacher educators as well as mentors, critical friends and peers to acquire and construct new forms of interaction and thinking (Vygotsky 1978). Crucial to the process is the role of mediating artifacts in constructing new meanings. In the LTE course room these include handouts, worksheets, technology, video, as well as the physical course-room layout (Singh 2004). For example the course might make use of videoed lesson segments or lesson transcripts to raise awareness of issues such as action zones, group dynamics, turn-taking, corrective feedback, teacher's role etc. When discussing a new concept such as focus-on-form, through a video analysis participants think about what they see and share and discuss it with colleagues. Through such discussions teacher-learners reveal their implicit understandings of the importance of grammar, acquisition versus learning, focus-on-form and so on.

Working in collaboration on classroom tasks offers many benefits. Johnson comments:

> At the course level, collaborative efforts emerge among cohort groups of teachers as they engage in the meaningful exchange of ideas and experiences based on their understanding of themselves as teachers, of theories and pedagogies presented in their academic course work, of the students they teach, and of the day to day realities of their teaching contexts. …. Whether occurring in face-to-face or via computer-mediated communication, such exchanges foster the emergence of a professional discourse, heighten a feeling of membership in a professional community, and lessen the isolation and irrelevance often associated with university-based professional course work (2000, 2-3).

An important decision has to do with how much collaboration, how much individual work and how much lecturer lead teaching will constitute the course (Johnston 1994). The balance will take different forms with different groups and with different content.

Again, we cannot assume that more collaboration, more inductive 'discovery'-based instruction will lead to 'more' learning as compared to lecturing and telling. We need to realize that whatever the chosen form of instruction, the course room is a contested domain, mirroring the tensions and complexities of society. Part of the learning process is the conflicts and bargaining teacher-educators and teacher-learners engage in to enable learning to take place. For example, some teacher-learners from a traditional culture of learning may overtly accommodate collaborative, active learning tasks while covertly opposing them. They may feel that they do not have the competence to do what is asked for them and it may take time for them to negotiate the rules and practices of a new community of practice.

Summary

Hawkins (2004, 6) poses the challenge that faces teacher educators in view of the shifts in beliefs about learning and teaching that are becoming apparent in the TESOL field. It means:

> A change not only in the content of what teachers learn through teacher education, but also in the process. For teacher educators, it becomes crucial to engage in critical, reflective practices as well, and to envision their work as creating learning communities within which they also participate as teachers and collaboratively negotiate new understandings of their profession and practices. Teacher educators, too, must establish new practices and take on new roles.

Teacher-learners and teacher-educators develop their practices and senses of themselves in relation to the course room world they live in. In this paper, we offered a nuanced reappraisal of teaching and learning in LTE, tying it closely to the space and practices of the course room. Previous studies have situated LTE in the sociocultural framework that includes concepts such as apprenticeship, mediation and modeling. A lot has also been written about how to foster a more inquiry-oriented developmental approach, and which tools and activities can do so. The concept of teacher identity construction both expands the sociocultural model, and augments our understanding of situated social practices. We argue that teacher identity is formed in relation to, and teacher learning embedded in, socially organized and complex ecological spheres of activity in the course room. Teacher learning is about how teacher-learners, as social actors, learn the meanings of certain practices and reposition themselves socially through the use of artifacts, and with the assistance of experts, thus creating a community of practice.

If an LTE course in a course room is to 'work' – to have its life survive and prosper to result in any transferable impact – we need to understand not only the individual components but the ways in which the patterns, and the ebb and flow of contacts and engagement result from and contribute to the whole. To achieve the objective of guiding EFL/ESL teachers into becoming critical language professionals in a 'TESOL learning community' through in-service courses requires more research on the conditions for supportive dialogic learning in the course room, recognizing the struggle teacher-learners encounter as well as the systems of power in which meaning making takes place on a daily basis. Managing an ecology of learning, its interactions and activities, and the related epistemologies to create a rich space conducive for teacher learning and identity construction is the challenge for LTE lecturers and course designers.

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