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The mediating role of talk-in-interaction in guided lesson planning in a pre-service TESOL training course: an ethnomethodological and activity-theoretic perspective

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Introduction

In this paper we adopt a sociocultural perspective on second language (L2) teacher learning in investigating the interaction between teacher educators and student teachers in one activity within a teaching practicum on a initial TESOL teacher education programme – guided lesson planning. We are particularly interested in how the participants jointly accomplish the lesson planning activity through their talk-in-interaction, and in how the activity of guided lesson planning reflects conficting motives within the wider activity of L2 teacher education.

We begin by briefly outlining a sociocultural perspective on teacher education, particularly the "sociocultural turn" in L2 teacher education. Within this persective, we describe some features of guided lesson planning as a site for teacher learning on initial teacher education programs. We then go on to describe the methodological tools we used for the study: ethnomethodologically-informed conversation analysis (CA) and an adapted stimulated recall procedure. We then use these tools in the analysis of a single case, in which one teacher educator works with a student teacher in planning a lesson. Using the lens of activity theory we suggest how different motives for the activity of guided lesson planning may lead to differences in the 'rules' for conducting the activity in the interaction, and to different constructions of the 'object' of the activity. We conclude by suggesting some implications of the study for the practice of guided lesson planning within the overall activity of L2 teacher education.

A sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher learning

According to Edwards *et al*. (2002), student teachers are learning to teach in a climate marked by political, economic, cultural and philosophical uncertainty. In such a climate, "the challenge is to avoid notions of a 'knowledge-base' which are synonymous with simple fixed certainties, but to consider how teachers relate to the contestable and shifting knowledge available to them." (p.7). "Cognitivist" models of teacher learning and expertise, in which teachers are seen to acquire the "fixed certainties" in teacher education programs and then apply them in the classroom may not be adequate to this task. An alternative view of teacher learning is provided by one version of sociocultural theory, in which learning is seen, broadly, as increasing participation in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

According to Kelly (2006), such a perspective holds the following key assumptions: knowledge is not seen as located exclusively within individuals, but as distributed across teachers and students; learning is mediated by both conceptual and material artefacts; learning is situated, i.e. closely linked to the activities and practices and their associated ways of thinking in which learners participate; learning consists to a significant extent in the trajectory from marginal or peripheral to full participation in the activities of a community of practice; changing participation in practices has important consequences for participants' identities. Although it is possible to over-emphasise the participatory and situated nature of learning at the expense of what learners take away from the experiences for use in other contexts (Sfard, 1998; Edwards, 2005), this sociocultural perspective presents a powerful challenge to existing models of teacher learning and practices in teacher education.

The effects of this "sociocultural turn" (Johnson, 2006) have been felt within the field of interest to this paper – second language (L2) teacher education. Hawkins (2004) provides a clear statement of what this perspective entails:

> Learning is seen as a social apprenticeship to the practices (including language practices, activities, values and belief systems) of specific situated communities. Thus the work of teachers is framed as establishing and supporting classroom communities in which learners collaboratively engage in situated (socially sanctioned) activities (with guidance and facilitation) to come to new understandings and take on new practices (learning). (Hawkins, 2004: 5).

Freeman (2004) points out that taking a sociocultural perspective not only on teacher learning, but on language itself, can "drive deep changes in the operating system of second language teacher education – and indeed teacher education more broadly – which will be very productive." (p. 169). Such a view is in direct contrast to current models of L2 teaching in which fixed and stable "subject-matter technologies" are packaged and transmitted using an 'architecture of instruction", with a resulting "false sense of clarity" in which "content is key" (Freeman, 2004: 171).

Adopting such a sociocultural perspective has important implications for language teacher educators, who must must "establish new practices and take on new roles" by engaging in critical reflective practice and seeing their work as "creating learning communities within which they also participate as teachers and collaboratively negotiate new understandings of their profession and practices." (Hawkins, 2004: 6). One way of doing this is to focus attention on the processes which take place when teacher educators and student teachers work together on common objects of activity in the course room. As Singh and Richards (2006) point out, there has been a "critical lack of research into the lived experiences of teachers in language teacher education course

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rooms, and how teachers constantly negotiate their identities in relation to its particular activities and relationships." (p. 152).

Such research is needed to answer critical questions about the types of intervention and sharing of meaning in these contexts which may have ramifications for student teachers' development as professionals. Sites in teacher education programmes where experts and novices work together on objects of real practical importance offer challenges both for the learner's capacity to recognise and act on affordances in the situation, but perhaps even more so, for teacher educators in deploying the interactive skills necessary for handling such situations. One such setting in which teacher educators share interpretations and negotiate identities is guided lesson planning in preparation for practice teaching on pre-service courses.

From a sociocultural perspective, guided lesson planning can be seen as a 'discursive problem-solving' (Edwards *et al.* 2002: 114) action carried out in a specific setting whose social structure has been developed through historical, culturally-grounded actions (Grossman *et al.*1999). It can also be seen as what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as "legitimate peripheral participation", a form of learning in which 'newcomers' gain gradual access to the knowledge, skills and identities of "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998) by doing genuine productive work and interacting with more expert practitioners.

Guided lesson planning can be seen as 'legitimate' in that it consists of preparation for real teaching, but 'peripheral' in that full responsibility for the eventual plan is shared between the novice teacher and the expert. However, as the course progresses, guidance

is withdrawn, and students become fully responsible for planning their own lessons. In this sense it can be seen as a form of scaffolding, in which assistance is gradually withdrawn as the student gains increasing control over the activity.

On the type of practicum referred to in this paper guided lesson planning has a double function - it both serves as an example of genuine practice (a real lesson is prepared for real learners) and as an arena of instruction, where the expert's role is to intervene directly to facilitate the newcomer's learning. In activity theory terms, the action of guided lesson planning takes place within an activity setting (teaching practice) in which there may exist conflict between multiple desired outcomes (Grossman *et al*. (1999). This is what we set out to explore using the tools of conversational analysis (CA).

Method

With its roots in Garfinkel's (1967; 2002) ethnomethodology, conversation analysis (CA) aims to explicate the competences of 'members' as they make sense of their everyday social and institutional activities. Researchers' or analysts' terms are not used to account for participants' behaviour. Thus, in carrying out the CA phase of the study (the recording, transcription and analysis of the lesson planning interaction) we did not set out to explain participants' behaviour *a priori* by reference to their status as 'student', 'tutor', 'expert' or 'novice' but only used these labels where there was evidence in the data that the participants themselves were orienting to them. Following Heritage (2004: 225), we began by describing the overall structure of the interaction, and then carried out a detailed analysis of features of sequence organization, turn design, lexical choice and epistemological and power asymmetry. Only then, did we

attempt to relate what we had learned to the overall activity system of guided lesson planning, the programme, and the wider social issues that were of importance to us.

In order to elicit participants' accounts of what they claimed was going on in the interaction, we carried out an adapted stimulated recall procedure in which they were played back the recording of the lesson planning session and were asked to comment on sections chosen by us as particularly significant in terms of the issues we were pursuing. The purpose of this technique was not to reconstruct the processes occurring at the time of the interaction (Lyle, 2003), but to generate insights into aspects which might have been 'hidden' in the interaction. In this sense, the stimulated recall technique responded to our wider agenda, and indirectly to what could be seen as a weakness of CA from this point of view – i.e. that phenomena not visible in the interaction cannot be an object of analysis.

Our next move was to incorporate the findings from the CA and stimulated recall phases of the study into our analysis using an activity theory framework. Thus we were able to gain a view of how language in interaction mediated the activity of joint lesson planning, and also enabled us to depict the activity system or systems more fully with their inherent tensions and contradictions.

Setting, participants and data

The data were collected on a short CELTA (Certificate in English Language teaching to Adults) course offered at a UK university. The CELTA course is a teaching qualification awarded and externally moderated by the University of Cambridge. It is widely regarded as an initial step to becoming a fully qualified English language

teacher. This particular CELTA course was offered part-time over a period of three months. Students attended sessions on methodology and language description twice a week for the whole period with breaks for the teaching practicum. This took place in two two-week blocs – the first after the students had received four weeks of input and the second towards the end of the three month period. The twelve students on this course were divided into two groups of six for teaching practice lessons. These lessons lasted for two hours each day, with three members of each group teaching for forty minutes each. Most of the learners who attended the practice lessons were already studying English in the university Language Centre and the majority were hoping to begin degree courses in a variety of subjects the following year.

Each day's practice lessons were followed by a feedback session in which the students discussed their lessons in depth with the tutor. Feedback sessions lasted about forty-five minutes and were followed by a similar amount of time on guided lesson planning for the following day. During the first bloc of teaching practice, in which we were also involved as tutors, all guided lesson planning sessions were recorded and transcribed.

The overall structure of the guided lesson planning sessions

In each session the participants were the tutor and the group of five or six students. The tutor worked in turn with the three students who were teaching the following day. They had already been assigned materials and were expected to have done some preparation at home, so that they would come to the session with their own ideas about how to teach their part of the lesson. The students were encouraged to cooperate, as each forty minute 'chunk' needed to fit together to provide a coherent two hour lesson.

The sessions took the form of a kind of 'consultancy' with an overall structure consisting of three main stages, which we labelled 'establishing joint understanding', 'negotiating' and 'resolution'. Other minor stages were 'opening', in which the tutor established whose turn it was and elicited what the student was planning to do, and 'closing' in which the tutor wound up the session. Rarely, there was a 'coda' in which an issue arose after the 'resolution'. This overall structure remained fairly stable throughout the sessions recorded, but as the course progressed there were subtle shifts in the nature of the negotiation and resolution stages.

A single case analysis

In this section, we present an analysis of features of sequence organization, turn design, lexical choice and epistemological and power asymmetry in one episode between a tutor (one of the authors) and a student teacher, who we shall call 'G'. In the interests of coherence, and maintaining the 'narrative' of the session, we deal with these aspects of the interaction as they arise rather than dividing the analysis into sections.

In this particular session, the students had been assigned material related to the theme of jobs from an upper-intermediate level coursebook. The first student (H) was going to do a reading exercise on 'the perfect interview'. This was to be followed by the second student's (M) teaching slot in which the learners planned and performed a job interview role play. G's task was to follow this up with a vocabulary extension and short writing activity.

The episode begins, as did all the episodes in the data, with an opening in which the

tutor establishes whose teaching slot is to be dealt with and elicits what the students

have been assigned to do[1]:

1	TT	ok and then who's last?
2	G	me
3	TT	ok G what are you doing?
4	G	uh well I only found (.) I wasn't here on Friday so I only found
5		this out this morning [from J what
6	TT	[this is an excuse
7	G	I'm meant to do it's not ((laughing))
8	H	the function is excuse
9	G	I'm doing this vocabulary bit here on page 41
10	TT	ah ha right ok
11	G	erm and I think that's =
12	TT	= this has got a nice jobs [sort of] (.)
13	G	[yeah]
14	TT	theme running through it

The session begins on a slightly wobbly footing as the student points out that she had

missed the previous session, with the implication that she might not be as prepared as

she should be. Even though there seems to be some admonishment in line 5, the

atmosphere is light-hearted (see the jocular use of terminology by another student).

What is perhaps more important for the development of the whole session is the

evaluative comment in lines 12-14. It is an early indication of something that emerges

throughout the encounter – the tutor's assessment of the material as useful and as

something which will work without too much adaptation. In terms of sequence

organisation however, it appears to cut off the student's turn, just as she was beginning

her 'problem presentation' (cf. Robinson and Heritage, 2005: 481). In this sense, it is a

'marked' placement of an evaluative comment in the sequence, as generally throughout

the data, such evaluative comments are withheld at these early stages in the student's

presentation of what they planned to do. The interaction then moves into the first main

phase, that of 'problem presentation':

15	G	→	but erm yes so hhh (2.0) help me on this one ((laughs))
			((some lines omitted))
16		→	but I've kind of got these photographs of different jobs (.)
17		→	and they're not very clear like that ((showing them))so
18		→	I would just like start off so you know there's (.)
19			I would split them into three different groups
20			and so that's like a traffic warden a hairdresser (0.5)
21			and (.) doctor nurse kinda thing (.)
22			<and then just get them> erm (1.0) to describe
23			what this job is <u>like</u> (.) what it is where it is
24			and <how that person would do that job>
25			(2.0)
26		→	erm but because my main focus is on vocabulary
27			you see (.) <I was thinking I could do vocabulary>
28			and (.) you know say ok so vocabulary erm (.)
29		→	ticket car uh machine <do you know what I mean>
30		→	but I mean I can't go into it like that [at all
31	TT		[uh huh]
32			so I think (.) I think the main the main vocabulary
33			<I've just got to concentrate on> is just different jobs
34			and <u>what</u> those jobs involve

As was usually the case with this phase in the data, it consisted of long turns by the

student, with the tutor only producing continuers (line 31). It is clear from line 15, the

opening line of the turn, that it is designed as a request for advice about the 'problem'

she is about to present. The problem emerges in line 16 - she has a collection of

photographs that she would like to use in the lesson, but they are 'not very clear'. From

the rest of the turn, it is ambiguous whether the photographs themselves are not very

clear, or whether she is referring to a lack of clarity about what to do with them.

From lines 18 to 24 she describes how she would manage the activity. In terms of

lexical choice, she uses methodological terminology ('split into groups') and gives

examples of the actual vocabulary items she plans to teach ('traffic warden',

'hairdresser', 'doctor, nurse'). She ends this section with a two second pause, which

seems to indicate a shift towards the more problematic aspects of her lesson, indicated

by the choice of 'but' (line 26). Her lexical choices further indicate the problematic

nature of what she is planning in line 30 ('I can't go into it like that'). In line 29 she

broadens the vocabulary focus to items connected with the different jobs, but then

rejects this in favour of concentrating on jobs and their duties.

The database overall shows that at this stage the tutor tended to make clarification

requests to establish joint understanding before moving to the phase of negotiating the

actual content of the lesson. However, in this case, he takes up the theme he had

established in the opening section, that of a positive evaluation of the materials as they

were in the book:

35	TT	→	yes. I mean look it seems to me it's <u>rea</u>lly straightforward here G
36			you've got a (.) there's a wee slot that's two clear bits to it
37			bit one jobs and their duties (.) bit two write a job description
38	G		well yeah hmm hmm that's right =
39	TT		= and that's it and they will have had an example from M
40			so maybe you could pick up on M's job description
41			maybe he can text it to you later on tonight yeah?
42			and that can somehow be
43			ok let's look again at M's job description everybody
44			you know something like that (1.5)
45		→	nice woven together integrated lesson

Rather than responding to G's problem presentation with a request for further

information, the tutor designs his turn as a positive assessment (the choice of

'straightforward' being significant here). Assessments, as first pair parts in adjacency

pairs make relevant as second pair parts either agreement or disagreement (Schegloff,

2007: 16). In this case, G produces an agreement second pair part, and although the

tutor's prior turn is not overtly designed as advice-giving, her response can be seen as an 'unmarked acknowledgement' (Heritage and Sefi, 1992), which can imply passive rejection or, at best only minimal agreement with the assessment.

Another plausible interpretation is that G is orienting to her role as a novice, and the tutor's as expert, in deferring to his superior knowledge. This may be borne out in turns further ahead in the interaction, where this expression of agreement with his assessment of the materials does not seem to be supported by her ongoing attempts to negotiate the content of the lesson. From line 40, it is clear that the turn is being designed as advice-giving. The tutor moves into a concrete suggestion as to what she could do (link her lesson with her colleague's previous slot). This suggestion ends with another positive assessment, this time of the coherence of the whole two hour lesson.

As the session moved into the negotiation phase, different activities in the book, methodological options and uses of materials became the focus of attention. It seemed that the lesson was not so 'straightforward' after all, as a lot of give and take had to occur before the final plan for the lesson finally emerged. In this negotiation, the tutor at times accepted G's suggested changes to the sequence of activities as presented in the book:

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46   G     →   I mean I'm just sorry but I wasn't just wasn't too sure I don't like
47               number two at all I don't  think I could =
48   TT        = number two is just sticking something in for the sake of sticking
49        →   it in I think you're right to drop that [it's
50   G                                                    [yeah
51   TT        just the pronunciation of the 's'
```

In line 46 there is further evidence of orientation to power asymmetry as G apologises for wanting to drop a pronunciation activity. However, the trainer supports her in this, and in the overlapping 'yeah' G delivers the preferred second pair part (agreement to the assessment) at the first possible transition relevance place. This placing is probably significant in that it is a response to a statement of competence on her part by the trainer.

However, just a few lines further on, a suggestion by G to include a role play in the lesson is met with a blunt rejection:

52	G		I was thinking you know to get more towards the freer practice at
53			the end again maybe even do a bit of like role play I was thinking
54		→	this is where maybe you we've crossed a bit erm
55	TT		((gruff disapproving noise)) no don't go don't go into role play =
56	G		= ok

However, she sets herself up for this rejection by admitting that by introducing a role play she has 'crossed' (line 54) with the previous slot, which also included a role play. The rejection of this idea is quite forthright, followed by a straight 'no' and the repetition of the negative imperative. Its effectiveness may be attested to by the latched 'ok' it produces from G.

Towards the end of the negotiation stage, an issue which G had originally presented as problematic, the use of her pictures, was finally resolved. Interestingly, at no time did the tutor say outwardly that she should not use the pictures, but it was finally G herself (lines 57-58) who suggested that they might not have the prominent role in the lesson she had originally intended:

57	G		hm hmm so do you think like these ((indicating her pictures)) I

58		→	don't really need I shouldn't really bother with things like that? =
59	TT	→	= you mightn't need quite as much of that =
60	G	→	= I could just maybe do one of them
61	TT	→	yeah I mean you always want to do one of them yeah =
62	G		= yeah =
63	TT		= so yeah

It is interesting that this delicate stage in the negotiation process, the eventual dropping of resources which G may have painstakingly collected, is managed at the level of lexical choice and turn design with a good deal of modality ('don't really need', 'shouldn't really bother', 'mightn't', 'could', 'maybe'). In terms of epistemological asymmetry, the tutor seemed to have the power to make his suggestions stick (G assented to each one) but in the case of what may have been the most difficult aspect of the negotiation (getting G to drop the pictures), each displayed a high level of tentativeness in the lexical choices and design of the turns through which they negotiated this process. There may be a 'ritual' dimension to what was going on here, with the 'concession' of allowing G to use one picture having more to do with issues of face (Goffman, 1967), than of pedagogic expediency.

 In the final main stage, the 'resolution', as generally throughout the data, the tutor 'runs through' the lesson plan as it has been negotiated. It consists of a step-by-step description of the procedure, and includes, as optional elements, examples of what the student teacher can say to the class, and an overall evaluation of the lesson. In this session, these elements were visible:

64	TT		so each job this'll be it'll like ok coalminer
65			so it'll be like M-I-C erm R <you know whatever it is>
66			and then you do the first one for them
67		→	you say ok here are some well known jobs everybody yeah
68		→	what I want you to do is to put the letters in the right order (0.5)

69			yeah and that's their little that's your little warmer your little fun
70			intro
71	G		hmm
72			((some lines omitted))
73	TT	→	and <u>then</u> (.) moving on to <ok let's have a look again at M's little
74		→	job description> now we're going to try and do a similar thing (.)
75			and (.) write the job descriptions but they mustn't mention the
76			name of the job we're make it really clear we're going to (.) <u>read</u>
77			each other's job descriptions and try and guess from the duties
78			(0.5) what the job is. (.)
79	G		[hmm hmm
80	TT	→	[you know
81			(0.5) I think that could be really nice

The tutor 'gives' G the lesson, beginning with a jumbled letters warm up activity (lines 64-70), through to the main activities, which are writing a job description and getting the other students to guess what the job is (lines 73-78). He describes the procedure even to the level of detail of suggesting that G 'do the first one for them' (line 66) and also gives examples of what she could say in the class (lines 67, 68, 73-78).

As was frequent with this stage throughout the data, the speech exchange system in terms of turn-taking has been reversed, with the tutor having longer turns and the student producing continuers (lines 71 and 79), which may indicate a rather passive acceptance of his ideas and not a great deal of involvement. The resolution sequence ends with the tutor giving a positive assessment of the lesson he has just summarised. As a first pair part, this assessment makes relevant either a preferred response, which in this case would be agreement about how 'nice' the lesson is, or a dispreferred response, which would be disagreement with the tutor's assessment.

It is interesting that G does not produce the sequentially relevant second pair part, but instead produces a question, and one that is not strictly relevant to the concrete detail of

the lesson just described:

82	G		so what's like the general structure for a vocabulary lesson then?
83			or is there not really a set one you just =
84	TT		= well sometimes you see sometimes you're going to be
85			doing vocabulary on its own this is like this is like a kind of
86			segregated vocabulary slot that's focusing on jobs and duties
87			that's related to the theme of the lesson erm but
88			sometimes vocabulary's going to be like in in whoever's
89			doing the reading (.) in H's where it's linked very much to the
90			reading that's coming up [yeah
91	G		[mmm mmm
92	TT	→	erm but I don't think there's any <u>one way</u> to (0.5) necessarily do
93			something yeah
94	G		°OK°
95	TT		I mean I would certainly see your vocabulary slot as being
96			very closely linked to the writing that they're going to do in the
97			last part of the class =
98	G		=OK

G's question sparks a 'coda' to the lesson planning sequence. The resolution stage has been completed with the emergence of the step-by-step procedure of the lesson as it was negotiated. G's question moves the discourse from the level of a blow-by-blow sequence of how to stage a lesson to that of a 'general structure' for a vocabulary lesson. This question makes an answer sequentially relevant, and, to be topically relevant, the answer will need to be pitched at the same level of generality as the question. Thus the response is a long turn which contains much more general pedagogical content about how vocabulary teaching can fit into lessons. In line 92 the tutor makes a general point about approaching classroom activities ('I don't think there's any one way to necessarily do something'), which takes the content to a higher level of generality, and with the stress on 'one way', may be more salient for not only G, but all the participants as a 'lesson' about pedagogy.

In this single case, then, we have seen a lesson plan emerge as a joint production of the two main protagonists. Through a process of give and take, and some delicate

negotiation, in which epistemological asymmetry was evident throughout, a blueprint for what G would eventually do in the classroom was produced. However, the coda, in which G's question moved the discourse to a more general level, may raise some doubts about the usefulness in terms of her own development of the joint lesson planning process. To probe this kind of question, we need to move away from the actual interaction of the lesson planning session, to the stimulated recall data in which both participants produce accounts in response to excerpts from the recording.

Participants' accounts in stimulated recall interviews

The participants were interviewed separately a week after the lesson planning session (by the other author). The data highlight the importance of epistemological and power asymmetry, in which delicate 'facework' (Goffman, 1967) plays a significant role for both participants, and the nature and extent of the student's concerns which remain hidden in the interaction.

The tutor's recall underlines his assessment of the appropriateness of the material for upper-intermediate language learners and focuses on a theme which is common in studies of novice teachers' concerns (e.g. Fuller and Bown, 1975; Rutherford and Hall, 1990; Conway and Clark, 2003) – namely, their own survival:

> I'm sort of trying to say think about the students stop thinking about yourself let's give them what I think they need or what I as a more experienced other think they need.

Here the epistemological asymmetry evidenced in the lesson planning interaction emerges clearly. And in order to 'shape' the lesson to meet what he sees as the learners'

needs, the tutor explains his willingness to bargain with G on the pronunciation activity:

> Well I suppose I'm trying to show that I think she's on the right path yeah? I think she's made a wise decision, so yeah, that's what I'm trying to do there and I'm making an issue of it so that I can get her to do the thing that I now know she doesn't want to do.

His positive assessment of her decision to drop the activity can thus be seen as pre-emptive facework, making resistance to the possibility of a face threatening act ('drop the pictures') more difficult. G also refers to this asymmetry in her comments on this sequence. When asked why she apologised for dropping the activity, she responds:

> Erm perhaps again because this this was really my first lesson where I was sticking much more to the book and so but I had taken a decision and it was still very early on in my teaching practice it was my third lesson and so and I had taken the assertive position to cut something out.

However, her subsequent comment reveals this is not simply a matter of apology:

> but I had decided and I didn't really want to change my mind about doing number two so I didn't really want him to say erm no but I think two would be a good idea so I was kind of like erm sorry I apologise if you're just about to say this but I don't want to do number two so I was kind of pre-empting maybe him saying number two would have been a good idea

The data here support the argument that the epistemological asymmetry in their respective positions (experienced trainer, novice teacher), while contextually relevant, is not an impediment to this student doing what she wants. In this sense, her 'sorry' is not an indication of humility, but a display (with an eye to 'face') that even though these 'rules' exist and they both orient to them, she has decided to break them.

At the same time, it is significant in terms of the overall thrust of this paper that three important pedagogical issues only emerge more clearly in G's stimulated recall. The

first is the integration of pronunciation with other activities – on the subject of the much

negotiated pronunciation activity, G elaborates on her decision making:

> I didn't really feel that that incorporation of pronunciation … was fitting in with
> the flow of the rest of the lesson.

However, the notion of flow as a feature of a lesson was not voiced in the planning

session. The second is the role of metalinguistic knowledge in language teaching - a

common concern shared by many novice language teachers:

> I think with number three … I remember thinking I wasn't really too sure how I
> would even explain you know because I mean some of the endings become like
> psychiatrist becomes psychiatry, journalist becomes journalism, but there's no
> dead set rule like –'ist' becomes something …

In fact the feedback sheet for the lesson which G subsequently taught shows that she

modified her lesson plan to omit this activity completely – something which may be

related to her lack of metalinguistic knowledge. And finally, another common concern

of novice teachers - the problem of timing a lesson:

> I was still working with this for forty minutes and I was maybe still unsure
> whether that was enough or too much

Again the feedback sheet shows that G did, in fact, have problems with the timing of the

lesson she subsequently taught. On the issue of the coda, G clarifies what she meant by

her question about a 'general structure' for a vocabulary lesson. She relates this to the

relatively fixed template for receptive skills lessons that she had met elsewhere on the

course. In the following extract she seems to accept the idea that there is not a 'general

structure' for a vocabulary lesson, while recognising that such a template would help

her generate further lessons.

> I suppose for me was kind of like OK that's that's a good thing to know for for general knowledge erm but maybe maybe I wanted the answer yes there is an actual structure that you should always follow but as we know you know or as we've been taught you know there's not there's not a structure that should be followed for any particular one you know adapt it so

On this point, it is significant that the tutor, in his interview, also pointed to the difficulty of maintaining a balance in 'training' courses between giving student teachers fairly fail-safe survival recipes and promoting a more reflective attitude to teaching:

> I mean it's very difficult isn't it on a training course where you're training people to do one thing and at the same time you're also trying to say you know at the same time there's more than one way to skin a cat

Such reflections point to the contradictions inherent in the lesson planning activity which we shall explore in the next section.

An activity theory perspective on guided lesson planning

Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) was originated by Vygotsky and in its original conception centred around the idea of mediation of actions between subject and object by cultural artifacts (see van der Veer and Valsiner, 1991). Leont'ev (1978) extended this into a consideration of how individual actions needed to be understood in the context of collective activity, and the motives for that activity. Subsequently Engeström (1987; 2001) expanded on these ideas to depict a model of a collective activity system, in which subjects' tool-mediated actions on objects are embedded in a collective activity system in which rules, community and division of labour play crucial roles.
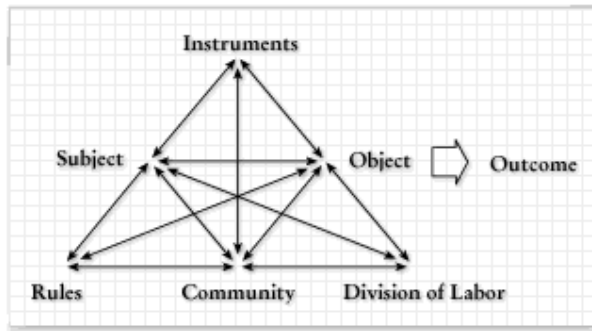
Figure 1. Structure of an activity system (Engeström, 1987)

Applying Engeström's model to the guided lesson planning sessions we can say that the subjects were the tutor and the student teachers and the object was the lesson being planned. According to Engeström *et al.* (2003: 308), an object should be "understandable as the trajectory from raw material to product in the emerging context of its eventual use by another activity system". Thus, the 'lesson' underwent a trajectory from relatively vague ideas about how a set of pictures could be used to teach some vocabulary, to "a nice, woven, integrated lesson", the plan for which became a mediating means in another activity system, that of the lesson itself. The instruments which mediated the activity included the coursebook material, the set of pictures, and concepts relating to L2 pedagogy.

As far as the rules for the activity are concerned, there was a sequential rule in that each student's section was dealt with in chronological order, and while there were no explicit rules about forms of participation, participants oriented to a structure in which each student presented a 'problem', followed by a stage of 'give and take', leading to a 'resolution' in which the 'product' – an agreed plan – emerged.

The community who shared the same general object and desired outcomes included not only the tutors and the student teachers, but also the language learners for whom the lesson was being planned, all of whom had a stake in 'successful' lessons being produced. The division of labour refers to the way in which the student teacher was responsible for preparing as far as possible the lesson in her own time, and for coming to the session with some ideas, and, where appropriate, some extra materials. The tutor was responsible for understanding what the student wanted to do, and using his or her expertise to help the student improve the object by producing a viable and effective lesson plan. However, the trainer was also responsible for promoting the student's development as a teacher, not just someone who could 'jump through the hoops' by bringing off one lesson or lesson type. It is in this task that the data raise some doubts.

In leading the planning sessions, we were aware of a feeling of dissonance in that we could feel the pull both of trying to help the students 'get through' the lesson and the course, and of the need to equip the teachers to be thoughtful and flexible practitioners able to develop throughout their professional lives. This raised the question, in activity theory terms, if there were not in fact two activities taking place. One in which the object was the construction of a 'pass' lesson which ticked all the boxes, another which had as its object the development of what Edwards *et al*. (2002) refer to as a 'theorising' teacher, flexible enough to respond to uncertainty and happy with the idea that there is more than one way of doing something.

Alternatively, following Kaptelinin and Nardi (2006: 148-49) we could see the activity as having one object (the lesson plan in its trajectory from a bunch of vague ideas to the 'packaged' deal), but with a number of different motives responding to different needs.

This we took to be the most plausible analysis. From this perspective, guided lesson planning is an activity system with one object (the lesson plan) and desired outcome (a successful lesson), but the meaning of these will differ according to different motives. One individual may try to pursue different motives at the same time, or the motives could be represented by subjects in the activity system (*ibid*: 157).

Our analysis above suggests that the tutor was attempting to pursue two different motives at the same time, motives which respond to institutional pressures in the CELTA programme. On the one hand, there is the motive to tick the right boxes by producing a 'pass' lesson, in which the student displays competence in presenting, for example, a piece of new language and providing for controlled practice of it. On the other hand, there is the motive to use the affordances in the situation of practice teaching in helping the student to develop an ever greater capacity to respond to contingencies in the classroom, and to theorise her own practice. Foregrounding either one of these motives will lead to changes in the activity system, most notably in the rules which govern it, and these effects will be seen in the details of the interaction, as revealed by CA.

So, the first motive above, which we can call M1, will lead to RULE 1: make the lesson as straightforward as possible by doing what is necessary to get the student teacher to produce the 'right' behaviours in the classroom. In order to do this, provide 'directive help' (Lantolf 2000: 10) by 'giving' them activities, strategies for carrying them out, what to say in the classroom.

The second motive, M2 will lead to RULE 2: take the opportunity of working on a discursive object-directed activity to expand the student's capacity to respond to the classroom events and to take advantage of learning affordances, and to cope with uncertainty. Provide 'strategic help' (Lantolf: *ibid*) directed at scaffolding not only this lesson but providing tools for future development.

As we can see, the different rules lead to different kinds of 'help'. Studies in the CHAT tradition show that the kinds of support that more experienced people offer to novices varies according to what the motives of the activity are seen to be. For example, Wertsch *et al.* (1984) found differences between dyads consisting of rural mothers and their children and urban school teachers and their students in the 'help' provided in constructing a farmyard scene from a model. Briefly, the mothers provided much more 'directive' help, for example by telling the children where to put the model animals. In contrast, the urban school teachers provided 'strategic' help, getting the children to look at the model, encouraging them to figure out where to place the animals, and allowing them to make mistakes.

Wertsch *et al.* (*ibid*) concluded that the explanation lay in the ways in which the mothers understood the task in terms of activities with which they were already familiar. They oriented to the task in ways which were congruent with the kinds of activities children were taught in the home, where the consequences of erroneous performance could have economic implications for the family. For the teachers, the aim was to enable the children to become more independent (and to learn from their mistakes) by taking control of actions themselves.

Such an activity-theoretical explanation can provide insight into the help the tutor provided in the case we analysed. The help provided is predominantly directive (with the exception of that provided in the coda) and part of the explanation for this, we suggest, is linked to the nature of short courses, where time is at a premium (CELTA students have six hours of observed teaching practice) and the opportunity to learn from failure is restricted.

Conclusion: towards a re-definition of the object of language teacher education

Guided lesson planning is only one activity within the overall activity system of L2 teacher education. At the level of the programme as activity system, the object or 'problem space' being worked on is the student teacher herself. In the life of the programme, and beyond, it is this object that moves from 'raw material' to 'product'. Kaptelinin and Nardi (2006: 150-151) suggest criteria which could be applied in designing 'high-quality' objects in activities, such as the one in this study, which have multiple motives.

One such criterion is flexibility, which refers to the need for a redefinition of the object of an activity if, for example, motives or available resources change. We argue that with the 'sociocultural turn' in L2 teacher education, new needs and motives have emerged which call for such a redefinition of the object (i.e. the student teacher). This object is no longer a deliverer of subject-matter technology, but a 'theorising' teacher (Edwards *et al.*, 2002), able not only to participate fully in a set of pre-existing practices, but with the potential to transform them (Edwards, 2005).

We have seen that, as an activity within the wider activity system of TESOL education, guided lesson planning is sensitive to and reflects the wider contradictions, or what Johnson (2006) calls 'epistemological gaps' between current sociocultural views on teacher cognition and current practices in teacher education. We would argue that guided lesson planning as a mentoring activity, preferably within a 'co-teaching' approach, can contribute to overcoming these epistemological gaps, as one setting in language teacher education where the redefinition of the object can realistically begin to take place. Clearly this would involve a rethink of the ways in which many short pre-service TESOL courses are delivered.

1. Note on transcription conventions

The transcription conventions used are based on ten Have (2007).

(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a 'micro-pause' within or between utterances.
(1.5)	Numbers in parentheses indicate pauses in tenths of seconds, so (1.5) is a pause of one second and five tenths of a second.
word	Underlining indicates stressed syllables, through pitch or amplitude.
=	An equal sign at the end of line and the beginning of the next indicates that there was no gap between the lines. These are called 'latched' turns.
[	Square brackets indicate overlapping talk.
?	A question mark indicates rising intonation, not necessarily a question.
( )	Empty parentheses indicate that the transcriber was unable to hear what was said.

(word)   Words in parentheses indicate that the transcriber is dubious about the identification of the word.

(( ))   Double parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions of extra-linguistic or contextual features.

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