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A Novice Teacher's Journey Toward Full*er* Participation: Learning Through Change

■ By merging legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and action research (Nunan, 1992), this paper encourages teachers to question their pedagogical choices in relation to those of their teaching community(ies) of practice. This paper discusses two questions: (a) How can action research–based methods be used to highlight crucial differences between novice and expert instruction in the same teaching community?; and (b) how did the author's pedagogical decisions reflect legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and hence "situated learning," or full*er* participation in the teaching community in which the author's "bridge" class was situated. The reason for this twofold examination is to develop a dynamic understanding, or "meta-awareness" (Ramanathan, 2002), of how teaching choices were related to those of the local teaching community. Such "metaknowledge" is important in that it allows teachers to more effectively embrace or resist their teaching-community norms.

Introduction

Early in my MA TESOL career I became aware of how different academic writing's conventions could be as I made the shift from undergraduate English literature writing to graduate-level social science writing. As I made that transition, the shifts in writing conventions became an increasingly fascinating subject of research potential. Part of my MA TESOL training included being a novice writing instructor within a department of experienced instructors and I wanted to know how my writing class fit into the larger picture of the students' writing development. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how a self-reflexive approach to teaching can lead to an awareness of not only one's own teaching practices but also how such practices relate back to departmental practices and expectations. I will do so by drawing on Lave and Wenger's theoretical notions of legitimate peripheral participation (1991) with action research methodology (Nunan, 1992), which allow me to question my pedagogical choices in relation to those of my teaching com-

munity of practice. The intention of this paper is to shift the focus from any progress *students* make in their writing to a reflexive examination and questioning of the choices *an instructor* made teaching writing for one term. The questions that motivate this paper, then, are:

1. How can action research–based methods be used to show crucial differences between novice and expert instruction in the same teaching community? and
2. How did my pedagogical decisions reflect legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and hence "situated learning," or full*er* participation in the teaching community in which my "bridge" class was situated?

The reason for this twofold examination is to develop a dynamic understanding of how my teaching choices were related to those of the teaching community in which they played a critical role for my students. This understanding was an important attempt at developing the "meta-awareness" of our communities that Ramanathan (2002) asks of MA TESOLers, and it is an example for other novice instructors to emulate to know where their practices stand in relation to those of their community. Such knowledge has allowed me to more effectively embrace *or resist* my community's norms and can be a model for other writing instructors to not only develop a keener sense of their teaching community but, more important, to better teach their students within it.

Action Research

The methodology that allowed this study to truly focus on ancillary sites of academic writing, in particular my own bridge class, is action research. This method was chosen as it not only draws upon qualitative and ethnographically oriented research methods, which offer a nuanced view into a particular context, but it also draws heavily from (and even stems from) critical pedagogy, in which social change is an intrinsic part of the research's outcome (Nunan, 1992). Schneider (2005) used action research to demonstrate the ways in which he struggled to resolve a perceived disconnect between critical pedagogy and explicit instruction of grammatical forms. His study drew important links between the pedagogical importance and difficulty of both raising the students' awareness of their community and providing meaningful lessons that actually improve their language abilities. Cowie (2001) provides a different take on action research in his analysis of three years' worth of data collected on different ways in which he provided feedback to his students, emphasizing his "beginner" status both as teacher and researcher; both points shall be echoed here. These and similar studies lend credence to the validity of focusing on my own classroom as a place of research as well as highlighting the changes that happen within one classroom through time. Action research also provides both novice and seasoned researchers a method with which they can examine the contexts of their own classrooms in a manner that also can provide them a voice in their academic community.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

I draw from Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of "situated learning"—learning is contingent upon the particular community in which it is based: "Learning viewed as situated activity has as its central defining characteristic a process that we call legitimate peripheral participation. ... *It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice* [italics added]" (Lave & Wenger, p. 29). Their notion of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) reflects types of participation that increasingly reflect the norms of the community—the aims of LPP are arguably independence or full participation within the community. Lave and Wenger researched vocational novice-mentor relationships, concentrating on novice choices that increasingly reflected the practices of their mentors. Through a close look at the changing developments of my syllabus, one will see how, if at all, the pedagogical decisions I made moved me toward full*er* participation of the community in which my class was situated.

LPP happens within communities of practice, and I find an important metaphor to draw upon is Prior's notion of "lamination" (1998):

> that activity is laminated, that multiple activities co-exist, are immanent, in any situation. ...Viewing activity as laminated and perspectival makes it clear that neither situated activity nor systems of activity can occur in autonomous spaces. In any case, these kinds of complex dialogic models of activity systems offer alternative ways of envisioning discourse communities and disciplinary enculturation. (p. 25)

As this paper progresses, this metaphor of lamination becomes increasingly poignant and I think offers much to the notion of community(ies).

Situating the Study

In this public California university, freshman students who have been admitted yet who did not pass the entry writing requirement[1] *and* were labeled "ESL"[2] must pass each "ESL"[2] writing class,[3] after which they enroll in the freshman remedial-writing class (where other non-"ESL" students who have not satisfied the writing requirement go); passing that class's exit exam satisfies the original writing requirement mentioned above. All this must be done in a maximum of 6 quarters; failure to do so results in disenrollment. While this appears more than fair, many of the students who start in the lowest of the ESL classes need, at least, the full 6 quarters to bring their written abilities up to university standards. Furthermore, since not all three levels of ESL classes are offered each quarter, failing once can significantly jeopardize a student's continued participation in the university. As a safety net for the weakest of these students, several of whom do not pass the winter intermediate class each year, an unofficial bridge class is offered during the spring quarter.

While earning my MA TESOL degree, I was asked to be the instructor for such an undergraduate ESL writing bridge class. If the bridge class did not exist, these students would not only go both spring quarter and summer without a writing course but they would start the following year in the intermedi-

ate class of the series instead of the advanced; the bridge class served to progress students to the final class of the series. As a MA TESOL student, I was the primary instructor, including all in-class instruction, syllabus building, and office hours, but I did not actually grade the students' writing for this class. The coordinator, who assigned the final grades for essays and the class, did take my suggested grades into consideration. In the end, all my suggestions ended up being the final grades. This arrangement allowed the department to have an MA TESOLer teach the class yet still maintain official control of the students' progress. I happily accepted this teaching challenge, blissfully unaware of all the pressures, pitfalls, and eventual thesis that came about because of my decision. Having taught ESL classes to foreign graduate students thus far in my MA TESOL career, I found the reality of the undergraduates' proficiency indeed daunting—in essence, I was quickly overwhelmed by the teaching task that lay ahead of me.

Although I was offered guidance by the ESL undergraduate coordinator, the constraints of the quarter system became apparent and we rarely met. Struggling with graduate school deadlines and conferences, as well as creating innovative and instructive classes, made my schedule too hectic for her oft-needed advice. Fortunately, for me as much as for my students, I did receive weekly feedback, from a MA TESOL professor, on the progress of the class. While her comments were encouraging she refrained from providing too many suggestions, as an important part of the practicum was the struggle of learning from it. Throughout the quarter I struggled with my pedagogical choices and whether or not they were a benefit to my students. During the quarter of instruction I kept all class materials: lesson plans, syllabus, student writing, and handouts. After each lesson, I took field notes on what had transpired and kept all e-mail interactions. I also conducted interviews with my students and experienced departmental instructors on both my class and the academic writing process. The data I will discuss were then coded for how my original choices changed to become more similar to the pedagogical choices of more expert instructors. It is important that the findings emerged from the data rather than having been imposed upon the data. Finally, constantly engaging in self-reflexive analysis encouraged the flexibility to enact all the changes that resulted throughout the quarter.

Changes to the Syllabus

Three Essay Genres to Develop

In my earnest desire to impress the ESL writing coordinator with a dazzling syllabus, I chose three major genres of essay the students had to write during the 10-week quarter—comparison/contrast, expository, and critique. These genres stemmed from essay genres I had read about in my MA TESOL classes rather than being a focus on the one essay type (expository) that was required to pass the writing requirement. As I was told to "teach writing" and to have the students write three different essays in one quarter, I *thought* the best solution would be to move from one essay type to another. The comparison/contrast essay I thought was an easier type that would not initially challenge them; the expository essay was chosen because I thought it would pre-

pare the students for the Subject A exam; the critique was chosen because it seemed, erroneously, a synthesis of the two first essay types. Early on there were questions from a professor, who provided some feedback on my class, that indicated some discomfort with my choices: "... And how are you conceptualizing expository as different from critique?" (Field notes, DL). Since I was not working closely with the actual ESL teaching community, its members were not able to provide any good, or bad, feedback. I made these choices because I simply did not know what the departmental writing expectations were for the intermediate writing class.

A major problem with my syllabus was that, while I thought I knew the answer to the question posed above, I certainly did not know how to present such a difference to the students. My three choices of essay types, or genres, were designed to have the students critically discuss

> theories on spoken and written genres [to] make explicit the social conventions and insider knowledge that contribute to the particular forms of certain texts. These theories attempt to show, in part, what kinds of social contexts produce such texts and the overall meanings of these texts. (Ramanathan, 2002, p. 69)

The purpose of presenting three different genres was to raise the students' meta-awareness of several genres, in the hopes that they would better manipulate these genres and better express their own voices. The students, however, just wanted to pass the class. And, overreaching goals aside, I did not focus on the one essay type that they themselves were focused on; I was not, initially, aware of how focused these students were on knowing, enough to pass, one very particular essay type—the expository essay (Schleppegrell, 2004).

When introducing the comparison essay, I had the students discuss why one would write such an essay:

> The only answer they could give (besides "because you asked for it") was "to tell you which one is better" ... and I told them that it was not to persuade the reader, but to present a "whole picture" view through similarities and differences of their topic. (Field notes, DL)

In my desire to "teach" the students and to implement my syllabus, I overlooked the writing community in which the students were embedded; there was a practical gap between what I insisted upon giving to the students as essay types versus what essay type they had been and would be expected to produce in other ESL writing classes.

Fortunately, by the middle of the quarter, I saw the need for further development of the expository essay. Instead of continuing, as my syllabus had, from expository essay to critique, my growing awareness of the centrality of the expository essay to these students' ESL writing (brought about by—finally—discussing my syllabus with the ESL coordinator and other writing instructors) encouraged me to repeat the same essay type in order for the students to improve upon their first expository essay:

> If I could do this quarter all over again ... I would focus on one type of essay. Picking one interesting model, rich in context and linguistic resources, I could develop its various assets throughout the quarter. While I did this with only two [essay types], the transition from one type of essay was too abrupt. It felt like we were giving up, glossing over our initial attempts rather than really trying to strengthen their writing. As the expository essay is the primary focus of the Subject A exam, and most expected in academic writing, focusing on that would have centered the course nicely. In that fashion, we could build all our language skills and foci in the same direction, rather than skidding to a halt and speeding off in a seemingly different direction. (Field notes, DL)

This choice was a key moment in *conscious* conforming to, or legitimately peripherally participating toward, the norms of this community. Where my initial syllabus did illustrate my LPP as a novice writing instructor, this choice clearly demonstrates my move to a full*er* participation within the teaching community. This small move was important for me to feel I was helping the students' abilities more appropriately and, more important, it refocused my class on what the students themselves perceived as most important to their writing development, learning the conventions of the Subject A examination. The following sections will focus on the changes made to my syllabus's goals—changes that reflect an increasing awareness of my *assigned* role as novice instructor within the community.

Goal 1, Review of Modals

Based on feedback from other MA TESOL students, rather than ESL instructors, and heading the top of the list of instructional "goals" was modal review. I had learned that successful command of modality was a key feature to couch one's argument in academic writing. However, modals were avoided the first chance I was "supposed" to present them. My second class was supposed to begin with modal review but this did not coincide well with the class's main goal of introducing the compare/contrast essay and I simply chose to wait for a more opportune time in the quarter: "This [avoidance of teaching modals] is a little varied from my syllabus, as I really did not think we would have time for the modals ... I will fit in the modals as the course progresses" (Field notes, DL). Feedback from my professor, "I can't see the relationship of modals to comparison, anyway. ... Modals should fit well with the expository/critique essays" (Fieldnotes, DL), eased my mind in neglecting modals until *nearly the end of the quarter*. This example shows the tensions I felt between my MA TESOL "knowledge" and my novice instructor skills—I chose what I was more comfortable with, the more peripheral MA TESOL perspectives on writing, instead of language that the teaching community required of students.

I decided modal review was best incorporated into a lesson in which we reviewed their function within a specific part of their text—thesis statements. I provided them with nine different thesis statements—all statements were

either from students' first drafts or could have been (i.e., related to their topic)—as well as a brief list of modals (Locke, 1996, p. 213). The students discussed:

> What modals are used? What is the difference between them [the modals] and how do they change the meaning? ... They quickly commented how the stronger modals did not leave room for argument, and how the weak modals would not represent their argument strongly enough. (Field notes, DL)

My resistance to giving a generic modal lesson, even though that is what I originally had planned on the syllabus, was indeed a good choice; encouraging similar use of modality for both a comparison essay and expository essay would not have benefited the students. Avoiding teaching modality with a comparison essay and showing how they can serve as textual resources within a specific expository essay feature (i.e., the thesis statement) was, arguably, more productive for the students' writing ability.

This seemingly slight shift in choices shows a move away from the decontextualized presentation of grammar and an important pedagogical move *toward* developing a critical part of the expository essay. These pedagogical choices show LPP, a growth in my awareness for the textual resources my students *actually* needed to develop to help in their next "ESL" writing class. LPP is apparent through the combination of my growing awareness of students' needs within the larger writing community, the lesson that grew out of such awareness, and the feedback from my MA TESOL professor ("Sounds good!" vs. the initial modal feedback of "I can't see the relationship of modals to comparison, anyway" [Field notes, DL]).

Goal 2, Teach Nominalization as Textual Resource

This next goal for my quarter was, simply put, overreaching. The concept of nominalization was difficult enough for MA students to grasp, let alone developing writers. Again, the idea of nominalization stemmed from the MA TESOL classes' emphasis on functional grammar:

> In numbers 57a [the *measurement* of capacitors in microfarads ...] through 62a [Arthur's *possession* of a new car ...] not only are the processes represented by nouns but a good deal of the rest of the material in the clauses has been packed into the noun groups. What has been done here—packing the content of clauses into noun groups—is known as nominalization." (Locke, 1996, p. 60)

This method of "repackaging" processes (verbs) as complex nouns (nominalizations) is a tool employed by successful writers (Schleppegrell, 2004), and therefore, attempting to teach students how to turn their simpler verbal clauses into nominal forms seemed a pedagogically sound venture. Alas, this was another example of the MA TESOL classes' theoretically "exciting" me and of my taking this excitement into my bridge class—rather than looking more

closely at the students' actual writing levels (through discussion with their previous writing instructors) and better scaffolding my syllabus's goals.

When the "nominalization class" came up in the syllabus, it was subsumed into a vocabulary lesson as a word-form option of the verb presented (Table 1). Instead of focusing on different contexts where the successful use of nominalization is evident in a sample essay, I presented fabricated random sentences under each focal lexical item, first with the verb form and then with the nominalized form (thinking this would incorporate two objectives during one class):

Table 1
Nominalization of Verb Forms Lesson

Assess: Subject + Assessed + Noun Group, or, Noun Group + Passive Tense + by + Subject
    I (you, we, Jim, the author) assessed the situation ...
    The situation was assessed by me, you ...
    x, y, z, were assessed by the author ...
Assessment: Referrer + Assessment + (Modal) + to Be ..., or, Opinion on A + Assessment + But/Because/However ...
    The assessment is not correct because ...
    This assessment might not be very accurate if we look at other factors ...
    I agree with the author's/ This is a very good assessment but ...
Interpret: Subject + Interpret + Object
    The author interprets this text in one fashion but ...
    I interpret this article differently than the author because ...
Interpretation: Referrer + Interpretation + Is + Opinion + Reasons ..., or, (Dis)Agree With A + Interpretation + Because ...
    That interpretation is clearly wrong because ...
    The author's interpretations are incorrect because ...
    I disagree with this interpretation because ...

This next reflection, "I really do not know if my examples made it easier or just more confusing for the students" (Field notes, DL) is misleading; it *was* very confusing for the students. Such a demonstration as this isolates nominalization and simplifies it into simple word-form choices rather than demonstrating how a successful writer has employed such a tool within its specific context (or even better, an example from one of my own students' texts using this feature). My attraction to the theoretical implications that the control of nominalization can have on student writing was too strong for me to ignore; I pushed on through this lesson even though I could feel the students' confusion. While this was not a move to a fuller participation immediately, I think this topic is a rich one to be developed by writing instructors. Within this teaching community, however, this topic should wait until the advanced ESL class. It is important to note that this is a new theoretical concept to this teaching community. Sharing this lesson and its implications with other instructors in the teaching community[4] provides another avenue for

fuller participation for a novice instructor and it is only through reflection on my ideas that better articulation of them was possible.

Goal 3, Vocabulary Development

Initially, the third goal for the students was vocabulary development—finally, one that was emphasized by the undergraduate ESL coordinator. The vocabulary section of my syllabus was based on literature (Coxhead, 2000; Lowry, 1999) emphasizing such a need in the ESL writing classroom and upon practices that had been emphasized in the students' previous ESL writing classes.

However, the goals of my syllabus (i.e., introducing the vocabulary list at the beginning of the quarter) were simply not followed: "I only had time to hand out the Vocab. list today" and "Vocabulary continues to be a bane of my class. The handouts provided were improperly copied and the students did not have all the pages I had ... and hence not the words I wanted them to focus on" (Field notes, DL). Starting with the second class, I made the decision to focus on *outlining* over vocabulary as that seemed, to me, from where most of their writing struggles stemmed. When I did cover vocabulary:

> I had them paraphrase the definitions and use the words in a new sentence. Although they did produce some strong sentences, I was struck with the oddity of teaching seemingly random vocabulary. I can see them understanding in class ... and never thinking of those words again. I believe I might use some of their essay's contexts to further develop their word choices in next class." (Field notes, DL)

Introducing the notion of nominalization further confused this "oddity" by presenting the vocabulary in random sentences. While I did realize the need to continually review these new lexical items in order for the students to incorporate them in their own writing, I merely reminded the students to do so on their own rather than spending more class time developing them.

After this review of some of the most pertinent changes made to my syllabus, the next section will devote a little time to discussing how other, initial, pedagogical choices came to be changed.

Changes to the Writing Class

The manner in which an instructor should present feedback (i.e., evaluation) on his or her students' writing is highly contested (Canagarajah, 2002; Casanave, 2004), yet it needs to be a well-considered part of any class. The practicum in question, however, presented me a special dilemma; I was to "encourage" the students to write by writing comments that would facilitate a stronger draft that would then be submitted to the experienced instructor who was actually grading their papers. I was not, however, "grading" the student writing myself. This provided the flexibility for me to try several different approaches to grading with these students. Again, the choices I made later in the quarter, when compared to my initial choices, evidence a move to fuller participation.

Written Feedback

My initial feedback was inconsistent instead of providing a norm the students could have gotten used to, or even better, were already used to:

> Regardless of whatever repertoire of strategies teachers develop to provide feedback on student papers, students must also be trained to use the feedback in ways that will improve their writing, be it on the next draft of a particular paper or on another assignment. (Kroll, 2001)

Providing students with adequate and understandable written feedback is truly an acquired skill—one I struggled with all quarter. I had no previous experience grading tertiary-level writing, and my first attempts were more vague than helpful. In the students' first draft of their first paper, my feedback tended to be distracting rather than helpful. The following (Table 2) are examples of feedback that is unclear and does little to help the student improve the linguistic content of the paper:

Table 2
Examples of Nonproductive Feedback

a) addressing a thesis statement: "tell me how the essay will flow ... by looking at the sim./diff of these towns."
b) addressing the student's thought that "all [towns] look the same": "arbitrary"-!!
c) addressing a new topic of entertainment appearing in the student's conclusion: "you didn't mention entertainment before ..."
d) addressing a title: "try and have a catchy title"
e) addressing a thesisless introductory paragraph: "it seems like you need a topic sentence here to tell me what your essay is about."
f) addressing the student's (correct) assessment of two songs' being "against war": "maybe not" -!!

It is important to recognize here that not all my comments were "bad" or confusing. While it may seem as if I am focusing on the worst of my comments, I know my feedback benefited the students to some extent, for as their writing "motivator" I made sure to end each essay with positive feedback on their product and abilities. However, it should be very clear that I was struggling with the notion of truly productive feedback that would aid the students as they strove to write an improved draft.

Fortunately, before I went through the entire quarter providing novel types of feedback on each paper, I was introduced to the grading abbreviations that the students were already used to. During one of my MA TESOL classes an experienced writing instructor from the departmental teaching community was invited to give a seminar. Her seminar, and the fact that she had an actual system for corrections when I did not, was very helpful for me. Here, it was poignantly evident how, even though I had been teaching within a larger community, my practices were *outside* the community's practices. The

grading rubric I used for the rest of the quarter came from the text *Writing Clearly* (Lane & Lange, 1999, pp. xviii-xix), used in all the students' writing classes (and the one the instructor introduced us to in her seminar), and I began using symbols they were familiar with instead of my random symbols. Rather than focusing on minutiae (titles) or distracting the students with indirect suggestions on their writing ("it seems like you need a topic sentence here ..."), my later feedback became much more focused on the linguistic resources the students were actually employing in their writing and provided concrete examples for them to draw from. As I used the abbreviations provided in the text that the students had become accustomed to in other ESL classes (i.e., WF—word form, WC—word choice, VF—verb form, VT—verb tense, nonidiom, etc.), it became apparent how my comments had begun to focus students on the language itself. Also, when suggesting language for them to use, my later comments allowed them some choice within my comments themselves: "Think of a positive paragraph ending phrase ... 'On top of all this ...,' 'In addition to all the above'" (Field notes, DL). Finally, my later feedback also drew from the selection of language examples we had covered in class (i.e., "use argument phrases").

Of course, the manner in which I gave feedback still needed much more work; however, at least the students were now much more focused on *their* linguistic resources rather than interpreting my comments. I had to accept my role as an instructor within a larger community, a community with its own set practices, if I wanted my students to most easily benefit from my feedback. By engaging in LPP, such as accepting and using normative feedback symbols, I am accepting my role as instructor within a larger community, therein engaging in full*er* participation with this community. Acknowledging this conscious LPP in turn gave me an important situated perspective on how to develop lessons that would more appropriately develop my students' writing abilities.

Student-Suggested Change

Throughout the quarter it was important for me to strive for strong communication between the students and me. My assumption was that if their "affective filter" (Krashen, 1981) were lowered, they might better share what writing problems (in particular) they were having so that I might better benefit them with my instruction. I also thought that by encouraging e-mail communication, they might give voice to some thoughts they would not have ventured in class. Indeed, the major reason I started using my students' *expected* written feedback was due to the confusion my initial feedback had caused one of the students. The student sent the below e-mail expressing confusion he had not shared in class (where all the students claimed to understand, or be fine with, my feedback):

> Hi, for the coming about the essay, I found out that it is useful, but sometimes I'm confus on what should I do if I have the verb form error, since your comment wants me to have a clear thesis, and the Ms. Johnson[5] wants me to have a clear audience then have the thesis. (E-mails, DL)
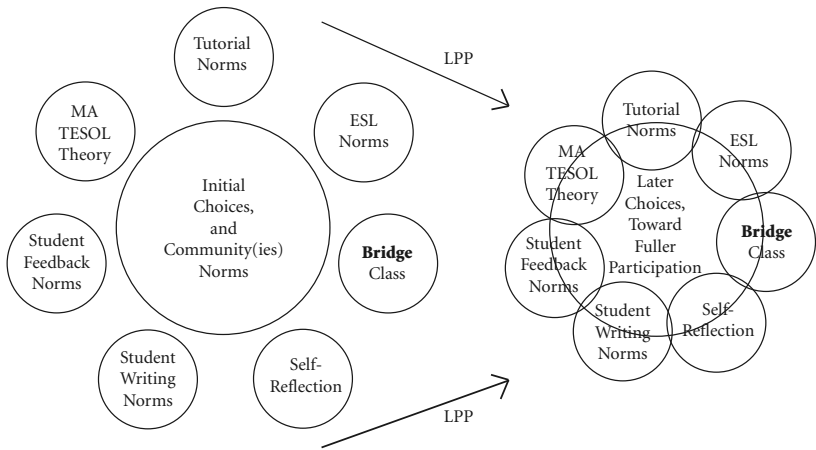
Another small manner in which these e-mails filtered into our classroom setting was to more fully address grammar. For example, one student, who had remained adamant that his problems were localized around his "gramma," suggested, "I think the gramma practice was a little not enough, I mean its too basic and not really helpful for writing an essay. I would like to do some gramma practice of fill in the blanks in a paragraph" (E-mails, DL). This e-mail highlighted another novice choice made in my choice of grammar lessons. The lesson I chose followed advice I had received in an MA TESOL class in which a number of grammar textbooks were examined for their explanations and content. The best textbook the MA TESOL class chose, even down to the same exercise we looked at in class, was chosen as a lesson for my students. Alas, subject-verb agreement, while somewhat problematic for the students, was *not* a major problem in their writing. After reading the above student's e-mail, I later incorporated his suggestion into a grammar lesson. It is important to note that I focused the students on a cloze exercise *from the model essay we had been examining* instead of the relatively unrelated grammatical exercises from a grammar textbook (even if a very good one). This cloze exercise focused the students on examples of verbs, and their tenses, that might be used in their own essays; this exercise was also built into our discussions of strengthening versus weakening thesis statements (or any statements in their essays) as well as future lessons of how to use "reporting language" and modal development in thesis statements.

These small examples of incorporating students' own suggestions into the class lessons by providing and encouraging e-mail communication throughout the quarter allowed me keener insight into the tensions between my class and their overarching goal of improving a specific standard of writing. Without addressing these differences, I would not be developing as a teacher nor providing students with the resources they needed to advance within this writing community. The reshaping of my syllabus based on student feedback is another example of the centripetal choices I made to truly make my class part of the local writing community. This example also shows another facet of the lamination of both my choices and my situated, full*er*, participation in this community.

Looking Beyond My Study

Through action research and critical examination of the changes implemented to my original syllabus throughout one quarter of instruction, I have been able to more fully appreciate how some facets of the local academic-writing community affected every one of these changes. This appreciation in turn allows me to recognize the "centripetal" (Lave and Wenger, 1991) nature of these choices that increasingly connected my class to the academic-writing teaching community that surrounded it. The left side of Figure 1 depicts the separation I felt, as a novice writing instructor, between the local teaching community's norms, my choices, my bridge class, and other surrounding facets of the community. Although I understood they were related, I did not necessarily see them as connected. The right side of Figure 1 reflects how I think all these "separate" facets had become interconnected through continual self-reflection on my progress. Without engaging in such critical analysis of

Figure 1
From Separation to Lamination

the changes I made to my syllabus, and where the impetus was for such changes, I would not have seen the sometimes-tenuous links my class made within the larger ESL writing community the students had been engaged in, nor would I have gathered much of an understanding of how such choices "fit" into the larger community. Figure 1 also provides a visual of the lamination happening with all these choices. They were not decisions I made on my own; they came directly out of contact with other participants in the community—the move toward full*er* participation in a community was not done alone but through *active* participation, or LPP. Through the journey of this very local analysis, a better metaknowledge of the complexities involved in a "simple" practicum becomes vastly apparent.

This study discussed novice-instructor development within a very local context. This decision was encouraged by Canagarajah's (2004) suggestions to research ancillary pockets of learning and Ramanathan's (2002) urging for MA TESOLers to develop an intimate awareness of their academic community. This paper sheds important light on the productivity of action research as a tool that novice instructors can use to investigate where their practices stand within those of their community. This process can stimulate discussions of pedagogical development/choices as well as the novice instructor's "place" in the teaching community. After this and similar studies, such discussions can be initiated, and even guided, by the novice instructor rather than by more experienced instructors. Thus, we can begin to view such classrooms as a dynamic place, or "praxis" (Pennycook, 2004), where novice instructors attempt to "reconcile three competing domains: the knowledge and ideas gained through formal study; the history, beliefs, and embodied practices they bring with them; and the constraints and possibilities presented by the particular teaching context" (Pennycook, 2004, p. 334). While each such study would indeed be local in practice, the subsequent collaboration can have much broader, rippling, implications for TESOL.

While the larger TESOL community may or may not have feelings toward "my" development or "my" successful practices, this study has more global implications when "novice teacher," "novice researcher," and even "novice teacher/researcher" replaces "my" perspective. Full*er* participation does not stop with being more in synch with, or seemingly conforming to, the local community's norms; that is simply the first step. Through a cycle of continued self-reflection and collaboration of individual and community practices, teaching communities will continue to be dynamic and most effectively help their students progress beyond them. It is to be hoped that such research will encourage novice teachers to challenge accepted "norms" of instruction, always with the goals of better preparing and empowering the students who are too often forced to look to us for guidance. Using novice teacher classrooms, their own choices and development as a site for research is an important perspective. Continued critical reflection of our own practices, as well as the practices of our community as a whole, can also, I hope, create an atmosphere of openness to change and development that is increasingly necessary in our global, multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural classrooms.

Acknowledgments

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A Canadian matrimonially tied to the US, Duane Leonard is working on a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, examining the impact that sociocultural/sociohistoric effects have on writing development and multilingual students' identity(ies). His methodological interests are ethnographic, systemic functional linguistics, and critical-discourse analysis. Language pedagogy and socialization are also key interests.

Endnotes

[1] The Subject A Writing Exam at the time of this study, now the Academic Writing Proficiency Test.

[2] When referring to these freshmen and their writing classes I have initially placed "ESL" in scare quotes to highlight that I am not comfortable with this label. Both are historically labeled "ESL" by the department.

[3] There are three: beginner, intermediate, and advanced ESL writing classes.

[4] Although such a sharing did not happen during this study, I was able to present these ideas in subsequent quarters.

[5] Pseudonym.

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