

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF
PEREZHIVANIE
IN CHINESE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS'
RECEPTION OF STUDENT-CENTERED
LANGUAGE TEACHING PEDAGOGIES

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OUTLINE OF THE TALK



1. Background



2. Theoretical
framework



3. Methods



4. Findings



5. Discussion

BACKGROUND

- Rao (2001): Large class sizes, preference for non-communicative activities
- Hu (2002): Conflicts between Chinese culture and CLT
- Badger and Yan (2008): Teacher-centered IELTS classes in China
- Zhou and Zhang (2014): Influence of previous education on international students' learning preferences

BACKGROUND

- Against this background, this study explores how personal histories and experiences of pre-service teachers from China influence their reception of Communicative Language Teaching and knowledge-making practices.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Vygotsky's (1978, 1981) Sociocultural Theory of mind
- Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky 1978)
 - *Perezhivanie* (Vygotsky 1994)
 - Third Generation Activity Theory (Engeström 2001)

ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

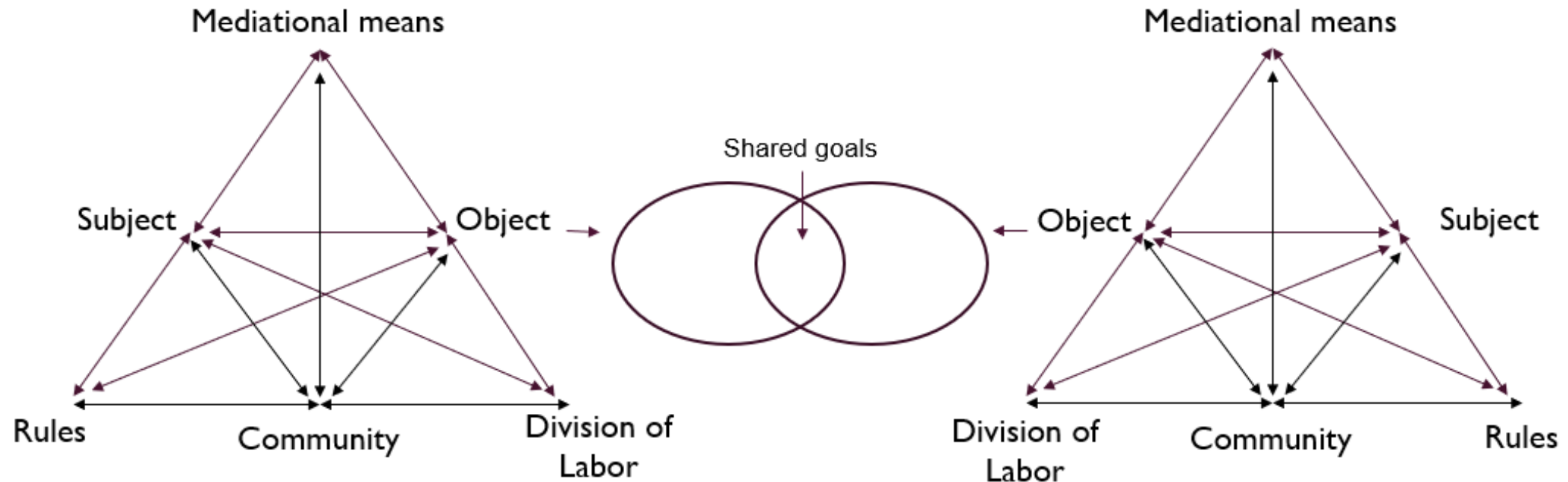
- “The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (Vygotsky 1978: 86)
- ZPD is a **co-constructed activity**. (Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman 2015).
- The expert and the novice must have **intersubjectivity**.

PEREZHIVANIE

- “Intensely-emotional-lived-through-experience” (Ferholt 2010:164)
- Dialectical unity of cognition and emotion
- *Perezhivanie* is a concept that “allows us to study the role and influence of environment on ...psychological development.” (Vygotsky 1994: 343)
- The Social Situation of Development
 - Individuals bring features of their own psychology to the environment. (Lantolf and Swain 2019)
 - The environment is refracted by each individual’s *perezhivanie*.

THIRD GENERATION ACTIVITY THEORY (ENGSTRÖM 2001)

- To capture dialectic between sociocultural historical contexts and human activity



INFORMANTS AND THE PROGRAM

- Three graduate students from China at a public university in Northern California, enrolled in the same Methodology class and Second Language Writing seminar.
- Graduate program: MA in Language Teaching with the option to obtain a TESOL certificate

Our focal participant: CELIA

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- Age: 27
 - College major: Marketing
 - Loves American movies and the American culture
 - Took ESL classes in the US
 - Wants to open a private English school in China

CELIA'S REASON FOR PURSUING AN MA DEGREE

*In Accounting and Finance they have CPA or CFA. These exams all require that your college major be Accounting or Finance. Since there's no professional certificate that I can get with the Marketing degree, I started to wonder if I should change my field of study for my Master's degree and get some professional certificates in the process, so that more opportunities would open up for me. Then I found out about the TESOL certificate. **I thought if everything went well, my mother could help me start a language school when I return to China. I would be able to use some of my marketing skills and my language teaching skills if I run a language school like this.***

METHODOLOGY

- Reading reflections from the Graduate Second Language Writing Seminar, Language Learning Autobiographies
- Semi-structured interviews in the informant's LI (Mandarin or Cantonese)
- Follow-up questions were sent to the informants on WeChat a year after the interview.
- Pseudonyms and adapted details protect privacy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does each participant's personal history influence their reception of student-centered teaching methodologies?
2. How does each participant's experience in the MA program influence their development?
3. How does each participant resolve contradictions in their developing pedagogical understandings?

FINDINGS

- I. How does each participant's personal histories influence their reception of student-centered teaching methodologies?
 - Welcomed CLT and other student-centered pedagogies.
 - Spoke negatively of the exam-focused educational culture in China
 - All three had firsthand experiences of learning English through communication.
 - Two experienced conflicts with the strong version of CLT taught in the teaching methods class.

EFL EXPERIENCES IN CHINA: MEMORIZE OR PERISH

*Oh well, [in China] they're completely focused on grammar and exams. It's **exam-oriented education!** If memory serves, at the end of the semester there was a conversation with the English teacher for a few minutes. But the phrases used were all memorized ahead of time, like "How are you? I am great!" [...] An essay is definitely out of the question. [...] The teacher just asked us to write a few sentences, usually using the grammar that we had learned before. [...] **Basically everyone wrote what they had memorized. Everyone always memorized before an exam.** (Celia)*

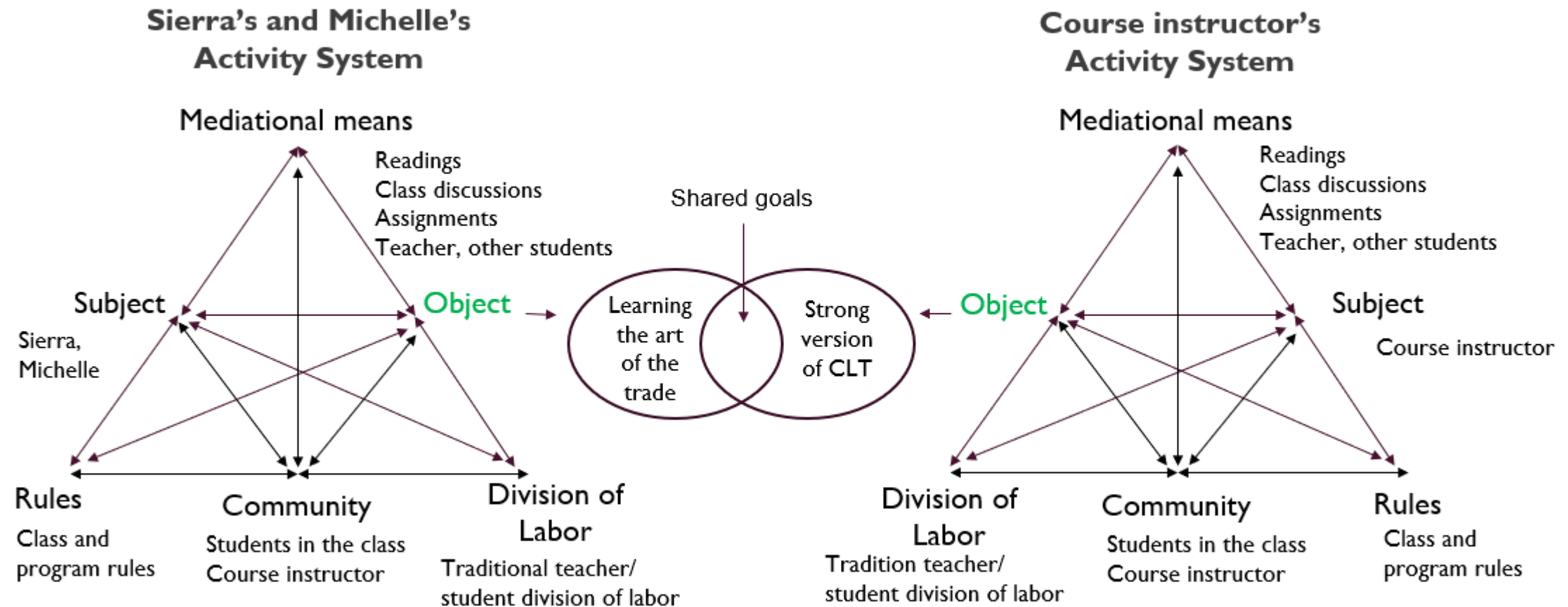
CELIA'S EXPERIENCE IN MARKETING CLASS

*The turning point came after I took a class in my major (i.e. Marketing), I felt that my English was improving so fast. All of a sudden I opened the door to a new world, and I encountered a variety of new words. **And the teacher kept reusing the same vocabulary every day, I naturally remembered what they meant. In addition, they had a lot of presentations and activities that allowed us to go up and speak to the whole class.** I got to hear a lot of local students advertise a product in the natural language that native speakers use, and I gradually realized “oh they use this expression when they describe this item!”*

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

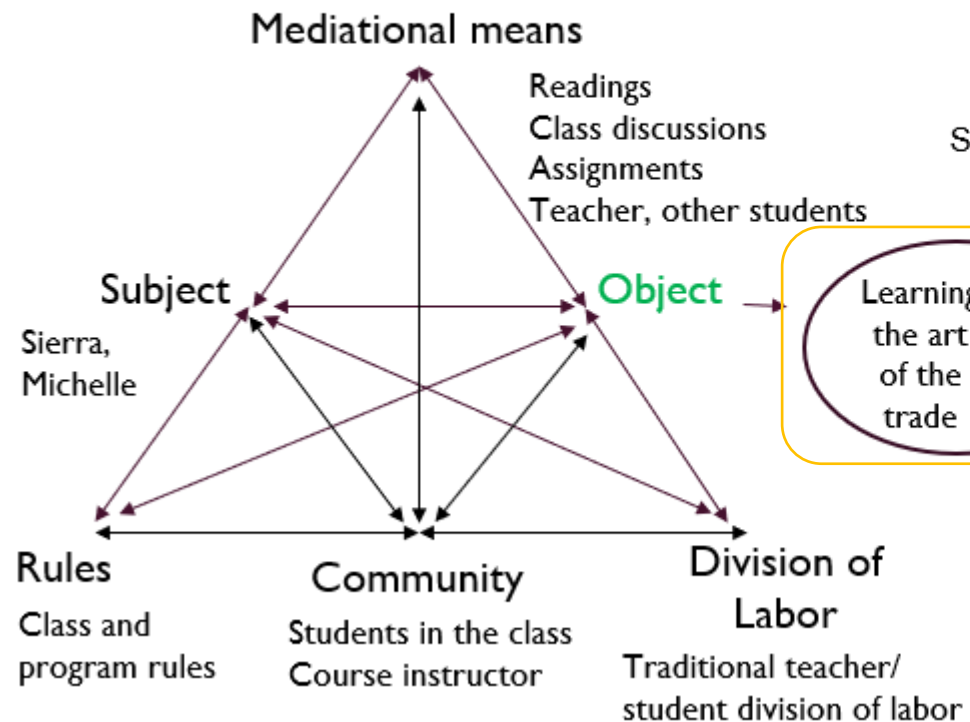
- How does each participant's experience in the MA program influence their development?

OVERLAPPING OBJECTIVES: SIERRA AND MICHELLE

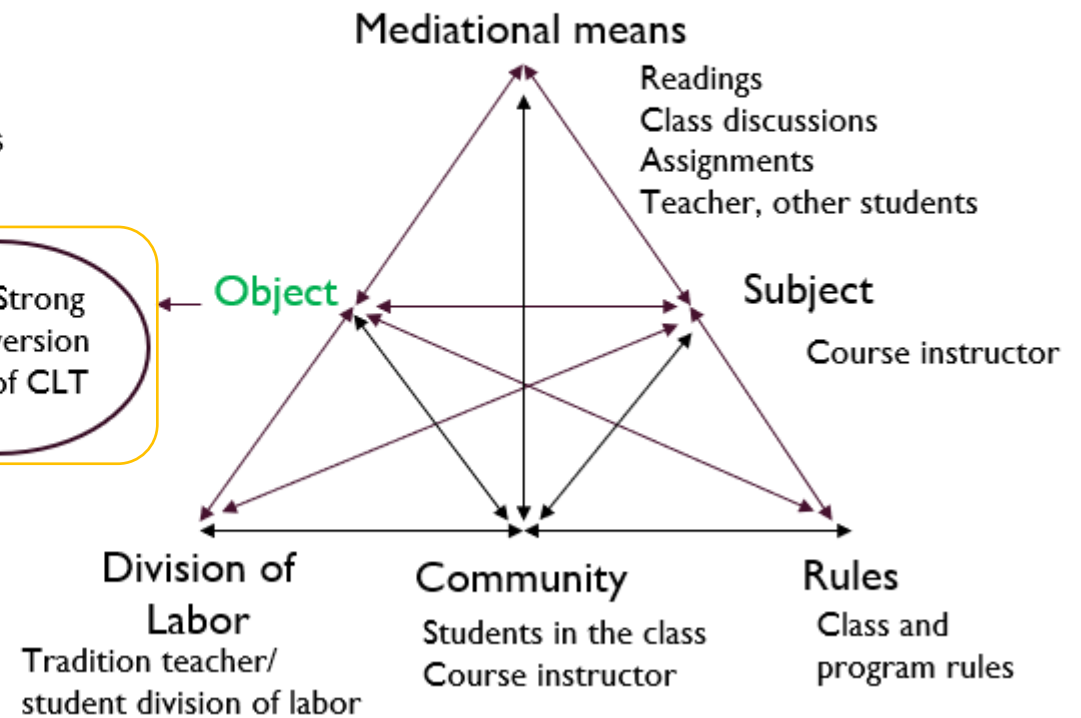


OVERLAPPING OBJECTIVES: SIERRA AND MICHELLE

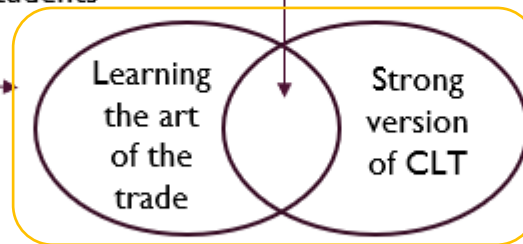
Sierra's and Michelle's Activity System



Course instructor's Activity System

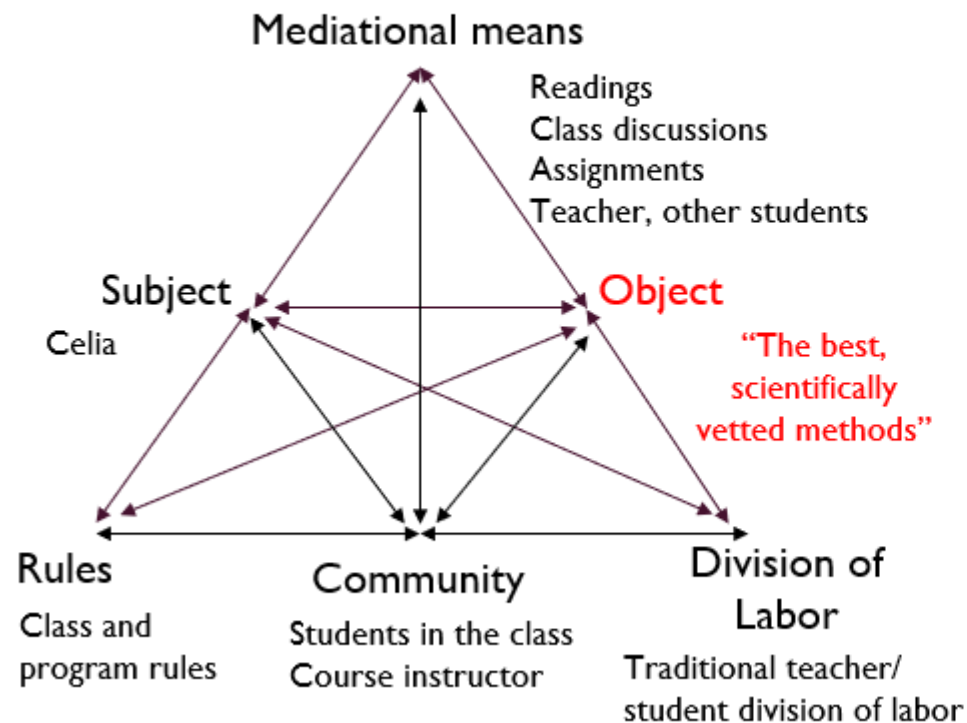


Shared goals

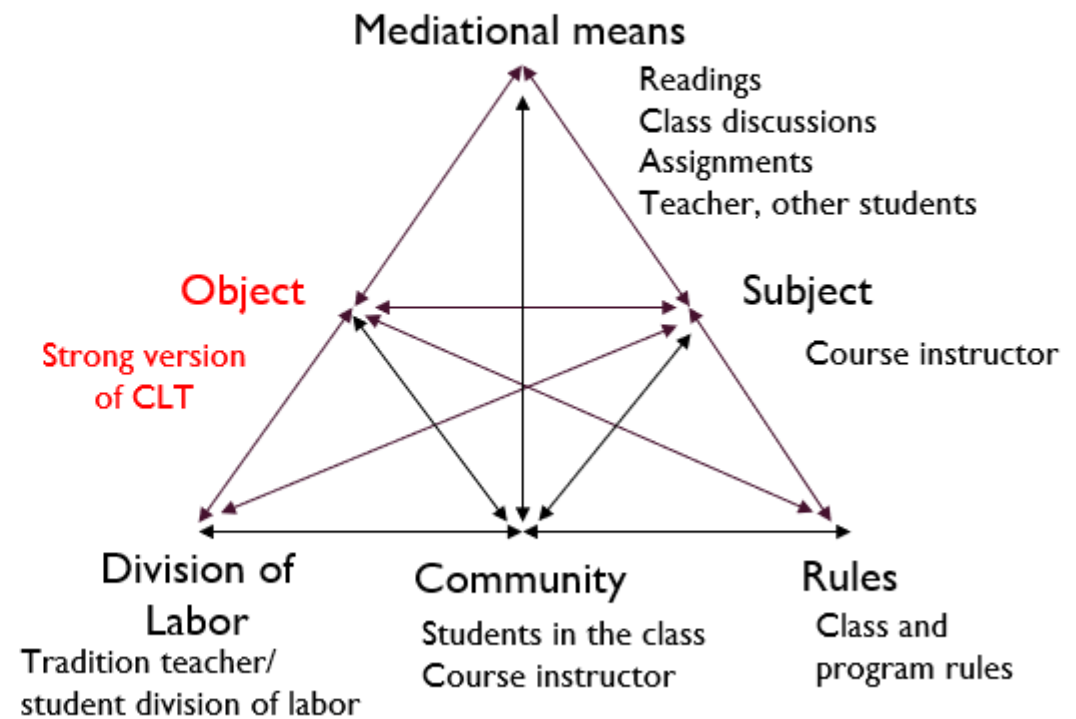


CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

Celia's Activity System



Course instructor's Activity System



CELIA: LOOKING FOR SPONTANEOUS CONCEPTS

- Seeks rules of thumb (*spontaneous concepts*).
- Mediation of *perezhivanie*

*It's [=CLT] too idealistic -- to the point of being unrealistic and impossible to implement in real life. For instance, **to this day still no one can tell me what percent of target language I should use in a beginner's level class.** (Celia)*

IMPACT OF CELIA'S PEREZHIVANIE FROM A LOCAL FL CLASS

“The problem was that [the teacher] was using the target language the entire time and we didn't even know what [they] wanted us to do. When we did practice exercises, we couldn't understand how to do them and what was expected of us. I don't agree with [their] philosophy at all. In the end, I felt like I wasn't learning a new language but I was punishing myself, and I think that's not good.” (Celia)

DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATIONAL CULTURE

“...For example, in the United States, classes are all capped at about 30 people, but in China and the rest of Asia there are probably 40 to 60 people in a class. How do you interact with students one-on-one? How do you give everyone an equal opportunity in class? I would find it really difficult to distribute equal time to each student. So I think I am still very, very fond of these ideas, but I think we need to find a way to execute them and make them more pragmatic. So I am a little disappointed in this profession.” (Celia)

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

- How does each participant resolve contradictions in their developing pedagogical understandings?

CELIA'S DILEMMA: AN UNRESOLVED CONFLICT

- Seeks other-regulation, but no ZPD emerges

*“I consulted different teachers and they all gave me different answers. A Spanish teacher finally told me “you don't have to dwell too much on this. On the exam, you just give an answer based on what your book tells you. **But when you're a teacher in a real classroom, you can make those judgments as you go.**” Not to say it doesn't make sense, but I was a little confused.”*

SIERRA'S DILEMMA: RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

- Question about how to implement strong CLT in a beginner's classroom

*I have always had a question about how to use the target language to teach the target language. [Our instructor] always says we must use the target language to teach the target language. **If their proficiency is at the intermediate high level, then using the target language throughout the class isn't a problem. It may even help them improve their proficiency. But if they are beginners, I don't know how to use the target language to teach the target language.***

SIERRA'S DILEMMA: RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

- The interviewer's response:

*Different teachers have different views on this issue. It also depends on what the L1 and the target language are. For example, it is easier to use CLT to teach German to English speakers because of the presence of cognates. The success of CLT is also bolstered by the success of ESL classes all over the world, but we know that a lot of learners in ESL classes are not true beginners. **As the teacher, you must choose the right teaching approach based on your own skill set and on your own classroom situation.***

SIERRA'S DILEMMA: RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

- A follow-up interview with Sierra evidences ZPD activity.

“I think it is important to determine the students’ purpose of learning the target language. For example, most students in China are learning English to pass an exam. In that case, I think I will use their first language more in the lesson. However, if they want to really use English and learn more about the language, I will use more English in the classroom if there is enough class time for us to practice. If I were to teach Chinese to Americans, I would use more English in the beginner’s classroom since Chinese and English do not share any cognates.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- New concepts formed a dialectic with existing concepts from China. Teacher educators need support in processing relationships between personal histories and course content.
- Teacher educators should address gaps between US and home educational cultures to help students to think through and resolve (or not) contradictions.
- Importance of educators querying their own biases and *perezhivaniya* to teach dialectically

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Merging *perezhivaniya* with graduate course content: Language Learning Autobiography and Auto-Ethnography as teaching/learning tools
- Consider student teachers' *perezhivaniya* and offer mediation when appropriate
- DEI: Importance of having a diverse faculty

THANK YOU!

Questions?

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References:

