"A LITTLE OFF BALANCE": EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH

A NEW CURRICULUM IN FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

THROUGH TEACHER INQUIRY

by

CYNTHIA C. LEWIS

B.A. University of British Columbia 1970

M.A. (Education) Simon Fraser University 1986

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Name: Cynthia C. Lewis

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Examining Committee:
    Chair: Michael Manley-Casimir

                                Kelleen Toohey
                                Associate Professor
                                Senior Supervisor

                                Celia Haig-Brown
                                Assistant Professor

                                Allan MacKinnon
                                Assistant Professor

                                Diane Dagenais
                                Instructor

                                Judith Scott
                                Assistant Professor
                                Internal/External Examiner

                                Stanley M. Shapson
                                Professor
                                Faculty of Education
                                York University
                                North York, Ontario
                                External Examiner

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"A Little Off Balance": Exploring Teachers' Experiences with a New Curriculum

in French as a Second Language through Teacher Inquiry.

Author:

(Signature)

Cynthia C. Lewis

(Name)

(Date)

ABSTRACT

In this thesis the author articulates an interpretation of the understandings of a group of nine French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers about the implementation of a communicative-experiential curriculum in their classrooms. This self-selected group of nine teachers, all women and all experienced teachers from one school district in British Columbia, participated voluntarily in a research group formed to investigate issues which they identified related to this new curriculum during a period from January 1993 to January 1994. The researcher and the participants explored understandings about this curriculum which emerged from the participants' discourse about their beliefs, theories and classroom experiences, gleaned from transcriptions of five group meetings, a series of three interviews with each participant, and classroom visitations.

The first purpose of the study is to contribute to understandings about FSL teaching and learning from the perspective of teachers' lived experiences. The author re-examines current assumptions about the theory and practice of second language curriculum, which are dominated by theoretical viewpoints somewhat removed from the voices of teachers themselves. The second purpose is to understand more about the ways in which opportunities for the construction of knowledge in collaborative settings may support teachers' work. The results of the study are presented from three complementary perspectives: accounts of the experiences of the individual teachers involved, a case study of the workings of the research group as such, and an analysis of the two unifying themes of the study, risk-taking and engagement in second language teaching and learning.

Within the contexts of this research group and their own lived classroom experience, the participants examined assumptions and constructed understandings about the meaning of the communicative-experiential curriculum for themselves, their practice, and especially for their students. The interpretation of these teachers' experiences in their classrooms and in the inquiry group contributes to second language teaching and learning by disrupting certain assumptions about the relationship between theory and practice, and acknowledging the importance of teachers' critical awareness of the implications of the curriculum for her students. The conclusions underscore the importance of the view of teacher development as a process of inquiry which is ongoing, exploratory and complex, and which may be supported through creating contexts where teachers may examine underlying assumptions about curriculum and their own practice in collaborative settings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

A. An Overview of the Thesis

> We want to maintain that flexibility. The only way we do is when
> we are a little bit off balance and we're not quite sure. We have to
> maintain that feeling of the moving target. (June, Group Mtg.#3)

In this thesis I articulate an interpretation of the understandings of nine female French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers and myself as a participant researcher, as we made sense of a new communicative-experiential second language curriculum for ourselves and for students over a period spanning two school years. The above quotation, spoken by June, one of the participants, provides an appropriate introductory thought for this thesis and the inspiration for its title, in that it encapsulates the understandings that were explored by these teachers as well as the spirit in which they were explored. Within the context of this research group and their own lived classroom experiences, the participants examined their beliefs about the value of the FSL curriculum, their past experiences, and their personal theories about learning and teaching in an ongoing process of exploring and constructing knowledge which was not always linear and orderly, but rather often problematic and contradictory.

These teachers made sense of these experiences in the midst of certain tensions around what I interpret as two principal themes: risk-taking and engagement for teachers and students. In Miller's (1990) long term study of her

collaborative research with five teachers about teaching and learning, she introduced three themes which she observed, around time, multiple layers, and uncertainties, early on in her text, so that readers would be able to trace the appearance and reappearance of these themes throughout the study. I introduce the central themes which I see in this study at this point for the same reasons. It is important to provide a working definition of the concepts of risk-taking and engagement at the outset of the study, so that readers may follow the demonstration of these themes throughout the thesis.

By risk-taking I mean the capacity to venture out, to put oneself in contexts where outcomes are unsure, and one is not guaranteed to be fully in control of the situation. Another comment by June during one of our group sessions captures the significance of this theme of risk-taking for the teachers in this group.

> An emerging theory is that teaching is not a safe place to be.
> We can't enter it thinking that we're going to be safe; it
> has to involve risk-taking. [Everyone laughs.] (Group Mtg. #3).

The second predominant theme I have called engagement. By engagement I mean the act of involving oneself, of interacting with the learning experience, of becoming a participant. This notion of engagement seems to have two facets in second language classrooms. First, there is engagement in the knowledge construction underway in the classroom about the language, and second, there is potential engagement with the cultures and the worlds of the speakers of the language through the use of the language. For the teachers in this study the nature of engagement is seen as problematic for teachers and students in FSL

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classrooms. The comments of another participant, Carole, helped me to understand the challenge of this engagement.

> Pour moi l'enseignement d'une langue c'est plus que
> l'enseignement d'un système ou de points de repère grammaticaux,
> et ça demande tout un investissement, autant pour l'enseignante que
> pour les étudiants parce que y'a toute une composante émotive aussi.
> C'est pas seulement étudier, mémoriser, et faire le test dans deux
> semaines. C'est aussi, on sait ça, on lit ça dans beaucoup de
> recherches, si l'étudiant aime la langue, il va apprendre beaucoup plus
> facilement, il va être beaucoup plus motivé, beaucoup plus intéressé par
> le cours, et là toute ma question, on va en parler plus loin, mais c'est un
> peu tout ce qui va rejoindre ma question de recherche, au niveau de la
> motivation et de l'implication des étudiants. Comment , puis ça, je pense,
> c'est le défi des profs de langue. (Carole, Int.#1)

Understanding the ways in which these teachers went about exploring these themes and demonstrating their importance is the work of this thesis. The results of the study are presented from three complementary perspectives: accounts of the experiences of some of the individual teachers involved, a case study of the workings of the research group as such, and an analysis of the central themes of risk-taking and engagement which are interwoven throughout these accounts.

B. The Nature of Knowledge in This Thesis

During the research process and the writing of this thesis I have struggled with the contestable nature of the concept of knowledge. It is important early on in this thesis to lay out the following working definition which reflects the way in which I conceived of knowledge during this research. The central premise underlying this research is that knowledge, that which we hold

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to be true based on evidence, is made up of meaning given to experiences, and is constructed by human beings through internal and external discourse and in interaction with others, both consciously and unconsciously (Wells, 1991; Bakhtin, in Britzman, 1991; Belenky et al.; 1986). Language is a tool for the construction of such meaning. This understanding of the nature of knowledge underlies this study in several ways. What is called knowledge in this study are the understandings which have been jointly constructed from the lived experiences of the participants and the researcher through interactions in various collaborative settings. This newly generated knowledge is arrived at through the interaction of the already constructed beliefs of the participants, the constructed understandings which I bring to the situation as researcher, teacher and participant, the constructions about second language teaching and learning shared by the students with whom the teachers are working, and the formal constructions of knowledge about the curriculum as documented by research reports, theoretical arguments and Ministry of Education treatises.

C. The Purpose and Rationale of the Study

The teachers and I, as we explored our experiences with this curriculum and constructed this knowledge within the research group, were dealing with teaching and learning on multiple levels. First, we examined the learning of the students and the role of teaching in the classrooms in which these teachers were working. Second, we examined the learning that the teachers themselves were experiencing about teaching within this new curriculum. Finally, as the principal researcher I examined the learning that I experienced as I shaped and

was shaped by the directions in which the research directions developed during the course of the study. It was my purpose as the principal researcher in this study to understand the knowledge constructed by the teacher participants as it contributes to the existing theory and practice of second language teaching and learning, and teacher development. In this thesis I contribute to this existing conversation about theory and practice by identifying and articulating an interpretation of the understandings that these teachers constructed from making sense of their own experiences. The strength of this study lies in its commitment to representing issues from the point of view of the teachers themselves. Focussing on the experiences of a small group of teachers allowed me as the researcher to represent the contextualized nature of the understandings constructed by the participants in much of its complexity (Polkinghorne, 1988; Miller, 1990). The central argument that runs through this research is that it is important to examine the voices of discussions that stem from traditional research paradigms through the lens of the meaning that teachers themselves construct based on their own particular, highly contextualized experiences. Teachers have been viewed as having the tendency to reject "theory" and to rely uniquely on their own sense of "what works" (Lortie, 1975). This simplistic view of teachers' relationships with theory and practice is challenged in this thesis. As a starting point for this study I believed that through the talk that took place in the research group and in the interviews, the teachers would construct meaning from their experiences, making sense of an existing body of theory in the light of practice, and vice versa (Wells, 1994). I set out in this study, as Britzman (1991) justifies, to

investigate what could be learned from listening to teachers in the process of this sense-making, both theoretical and practical.

> The investigation of personal practical knowledge results in narrative accounts of how particular teachers come to know and understand classroom life. These accounts are useful because they authorize meanings, forms of theorizing that suggest a sense of ownership and voice in the theorizing process. (Britzman, 1991, p.51)

Articulating my reasons for wishing to conduct this research has forced me to reflect upon the expectations and assumptions with which I entered the study. First, I hoped to contribute to ongoing discussion in two research domains, second language teaching and learning and teacher development. The results of this study of a particular group of teachers will not be prescriptive for the theory and practice of others, but they will make more space for understandings of these issues from the point of view of teachers themselves, demonstrating that collectively held knowledge can be made up of the particular, and can be treated like a conversation. I also hoped that the experience of participating in the research group itself would contribute to the development of the teachers involved by engaging them in examining their own teaching and learning processes. Finally, I hoped that the experience of working closely with this group of teachers would help me to examine my own understandings of second language teaching and learning, which in turn would allow me to refine my practices as a teacher educator who works with teachers in collaborative and supervisory roles.

During the proposal stage of the research process, I identified certain preliminary foci which helped me to formulate tentative research questions.

These foci included a desire to document and interpret the effect of the curriculum changes in question on the practices of teachers, and a motivation to understand more about the value and processes of teacher research as a vehicle for teacher development. I initiated the study with these orientations in mind, but because the study was designed to be shaped by the lived experience of the participants and account for emerging theories that were unknown at the outset, the initial foci became refined as a result of the contexts and theories that emerged during the process of the study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As a result of this process of refinement and adjustment based on the experience of the research process itself, I have arrived at the following two complementary research foci which guide this thesis. The first focus is on procedural knowledge, on understanding how the teachers went about making sense of their experiences and constructing knowledge from these experiences. The second focus is on the propositional knowledge which results from the study, on understanding what these teachers know as a result of their experiences and what that knowledge contributes to the theory and practice of second language teaching and learning. The knowledge constructed by these teachers was not only practical, but was characterized by both conceptual and empirical arguments in an ongoing dialectic of theory and practice.

D. Contributions to the Theory and Practice of Second Language Teaching and Learning

The impetus for this study was the introduction of a communicative-experiential curriculum for FSL in British Columbia (Ministry of Education, 1992;

1994). This curriculum moved away from an emphasis on the mastery of language as a fixed body of structural elements and vocabulary towards a process-oriented view where language is valued as a resource for communication and the construction of meaning as well as a source of insight concerning cultural diversity and world views. The introduction of a new curriculum provided an opportune moment for this study because the advent of change engaged teachers in re-examining their beliefs and practices. This study will contribute to understandings about how the theoretically formulated intentions of the new communicative-experiential curriculum were challenged and transformed by these teachers in their practice. I contend that understanding what these teachers come to know and how they come to know it contributes to and sometimes challenges existing knowledge about second language teaching and learning.

Changes in the directions of second language education in Canada form part of the larger context of this study. The goals and objectives of second language curricula and their instructional implications have undergone significant changes in the last two decades at the international (Legutke and Thomas, 1991) and national levels (Stern, 1983, Lapkin et al., 1993). For example, the publication of the National Core French Study (NCFS) (LeBlanc, 1989) was the result of a large study undertaken by Stern and others in conjunction with the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT). This comprehensive study, published in seven volumes, recommended the implementation of a multi-dimensional FSL curriculum (Stern, 1983: LeBlanc, 1989), where the content of the curriculurn was to be

rooted in the fields of experience of the students themselves, and where language study, cultural and general education strands were to be integrated within a communicative-experiential framework. This study influenced new curriculum guides in several provinces, and resulted in the production of a whole new fleet of commercial programs which claim to reflect this multi-dimensional orientation.

The teachers in this study were involved in making sense of the theoretical perspectives of the new curriculum, the content of the new curriculum guide, and the content and organization of the materials which they were being asked to use in order to implement this curriculum. At the outset of the present study FSL teachers in British Columbia had received new documents outlining curricular changes based on this communicative-experiential orientation and on the recommendations of the NCFS, as well as new materials appropriate to the implementation of these curricular changes (Ministry of Education, 1992; 1994). But the documents and the materials revealed nothing about how teachers would interpret these changes or how teaching and learning FSL would be actually transformed in classrooms. This lack of literature about the knowledge and understandings that second language teachers hold about the communicative-experiential curriculum as it is played out in their classrooms has been identified as a key concern by numerous researchers and theorists (Legutke and Thomas, 1991; Allright and Bailey, 1991; Bartlett, 1989; Fanselow, 1990; Pennycook, 1989; Nunan, 1990; Smith, 1991; Lapkin et al., 1993). I have found that the understandings of these teachers disrupted to a certain extent the existing knowledge about the

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communicative-experiential curriculum as found in this literature.

The proscribed new curriculum was significantly different than its predecessor. The 1980 FSL Curriculum Guide for British Columbia (Ministry of Education, 1980) was organized around scope and sequence charts of grammatical points in a simple to complex structural breakdown of the language. No recognition of the complexity of language as a tool for the construction of meaning or of the role of the teacher in helping to support that meaning-making is evident. The new Core French Curriculum Guide (Ministry of Education, 1994) describes the shift in emphasis in the new curriculum as follows:

> Until recently, Core French students were required to master basic linguistic structures before they were given the opportunity to explore ideas or engage in activities using the language. New methodologies, such as Immersion and the Communicative/Experiential approach, recognize that students' limited linguistic capacities do not diminish either their ability to acquire and process new information or their ability to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving. When students are actively engaged in making sense of the language and creating their own meaning, they become not only successful language learners but strategic problem solvers and risk takers- essential skills that can be transferred to other areas of life and learning. (1994, p.7)

I find it interesting that terms such as "risk takers", "engaged", and "creating meaning" echo the themes and processes which are central to this study. The rationale surrounding the new curriculum heralds the goals of constructing knowledge of the language through its active use in meaningful contexts, and the study at hand will provide an understanding of the complexity of these goals within the lived experience of teachers and students.

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These new goals for the FSL curriculum and the new materials provided more space for teachers' personalized planning and response to a diversity of students' communicative needs, within a broad organization focussing on age appropriate themes for learners, where the patterns of the language are introduced within the context of meaningful communication. The new curriculum guide described broad expected learning outcomes in terms of what the students will be able to do in the target language, such as "exchange opinions and beliefs on topics of interest" and "view, listen to and read creative works ... and respond to them through drama, visual arts, music and writing" (Ministry of Education, British Columbia, 1994, p.11). Language is viewed as a practical tool for "communicating, for acquiring information, for experiencing original cultural expression, and for understanding cultural influences" (1994, p.9). But the significance of this new communicative-experiential curriculum for teachers and learners lies not so much in the statements in the documents but rather in the meaning given to the curriculum by classroom teachers in their individual contexts. How do FSL teachers interpret these curricular changes and evaluate their success for themselves and their students? How will this new curriculum affect the theory and practice of teachers, and life in classrooms for teachers and students? Rather than focussing on proving whether the communicative approach "works" or whether teachers have successfully "implemented" the changes, the significance of the study lies in trying to understand the meaning constructed about this curriculum from the point of view of those who are the most closely engaged in it.

A richer understanding of FSL teaching and learning from this point of

view will help to correct the present imbalance caused by what Pennycook calls the "tyranny of decontextualized theoretical language teaching constructs and methods over what teachers come to know, contemplate and act upon in the contexts of their practice" (Pennycook,1989). Methodological prescriptions have not proved to be very helpful in understanding second language classrooms. The same issues about second language teaching and learning have existed under various names for at least twenty-five centuries (Kelly, 1969). Priorities for teaching aims, recommendations about appropriate methodologies, and teaching approaches have gained and lost favour within the sociopolitical contexts of various historical periods (Kelly, 1969). Many past and present theoretical works have taken up much space in attempts to list and analyze all the possible considerations to be aware of in planning second language teaching (Stern, 1983; 1992). Yet second language teaching is so complex and multi-faceted and takes place in such diverse contexts that it is not sufficient to take a catalogue approach to what teachers should think about when planning and evaluating their practice.

Breen and Candlin (1980) in their pioneer article about the communicative approach wrote that "language learning may be seen as a process which grows out of the interaction between learners, teachers, texts, and activities". This suggests that to reach a deeper understanding of second language teaching and learning, both academics and practitioners need to work together to document contextualized examples of teachers' theories and practices in all their complexity and tentativeness. Lived curriculum in classrooms is complex and tentative because of the myriad of factors that

influence teachers' frames for teaching (Barnes, 1992; Aoki, 1984). The beliefs that teachers hold about teaching and the background experiences teachers bring to curriculum affect their perceptions of it (Barnes, 1992; Freeman & Richards, 1993). The complexity of the decisions with which teachers are faced and the nature of their meaning making about curriculum need to be valued and understood rather than evaluated and judged. In addition, teachers construct and live the curriculum in dynamic contexts, because of the ever shifting characteristics of their students, their staffs and their communities. Each teacher operates in constant interaction with others who impact on what she perceives as desirable or possible within the curriculum. Each context for the individual teacher is unique because of the ways in which learner, teacher and program factors interact (Smith, 1991). In this research I have set out to highlight the particular and the contextualized and to value the emergent and tentative nature of the knowledge of these teachers, thus respecting the complexity of lived curriculum in second language education.

E. Contributions to Understandings about Teacher Development

What contribution does this study make to understandings about teacher development? By teacher development I mean the field of knowledge concerned with creating the conditions and facilitating the means by which teachers are able to evaluate their own practices and proactively pursue their commitment to meeting the educational needs of their students (Cochran-Smith, 1994). I set out at the beginning of the study to create a teacher research group and work collaboratively with the participants in order to understand how

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knowledge was constructed within such groups, and how the process of constructing knowledge within teacher research groups both contributed to the professional growth of the participants themselves as well as to the body of knowledge about the field of research in question, in this case second language teaching and learning. The contribution of this study to the domain of teacher development lies in the examples of the ways in which the particular teachers in this study, including myself, demonstrate evidence of increased understanding of themselves, their students and the curriculum which they teach as a result of participation in the group.

Interpreting how this group of FSL teachers worked together in this setting contributes to understandings about the actual workings of teacher research groups where the focus of discussion is second language teaching and learning, and consequently builds on work which has already begun in this genre (Schecter and Ramirez, 1992). This knowledge is of use to second language educators interested in pursuing such teacher research approaches as a form of teacher development. Schecter and Ramirez (1992) found there was little literature within teacher research that actually described the workings of such groups, especially amongst second language teachers.

Studying the sense that the individual participants and the teacher research group make of their experiences provides other teachers, as well as teacher educators and administrators with insights into the ways in which teachers may be supported in their meaning-making and decision-making processes. The first premise underlying this view of teacher development is that the more that teachers understand about their own meaning-making within their

own practice, the more effective, the more judicious and the more sensitive to the educational needs of their students they will be. Wells et al. (1994) assert that

> The change that is the goal of practitioner's action research may appear first, therefore, as a change in the teacher as learner as, in one way or another, he or she discovers that the only personally valuable answers to questions of how to be an effective teacher are the ones that one constructs for oneself. (1994, p.4)

The second premise is that teacher development is a career long process. Preservice and inservice teacher educators no longer view teacher education as a technical preparation but rather argue for the absolute necessity of encouraging a set of dispositions that view teaching as a lifelong inquiry bent on improving the life chances of children (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993). It is significant to this study that the women who volunteered to participate were all experienced teachers, most of whom had taught for over ten years. This study fits into this view of teacher development because of its interest in teacher-initiated questions about second language teaching and because of its examination of the use of the teacher researcher group as a context for this kind of lifelong inquiry so necessary to the continuous re-examination and renewal of curriculum.

The teachers in this study participated in this research during a period of so called curriculum implementation, where a new set of external expectations were prescribed for them. Previously accepted theoretical constructs about curriculum implementation and change which dominated curriculum theory in the past are being questioned (Fullan, 1991). Ten years ago Aoki (1984) called

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for curriculum implementation to be viewed less as a technical installation of a prepackaged teacher proof program and more as an opportunity for teachers to come to a deeper understanding of the curriculum, therefore transforming it and themselves. This view of curriculum implementation as praxis (Aoki, 1984) makes space for teachers as thinking individuals capable of critical reflection and principled action. In this way Aoki's notion of curriculum implementation supports the view of teacher development as an ongoing critical pursuit. As the researcher who initiated the idea of the teacher researcher group I hoped that through their participation the participants, including myself, would have opportunities to examine their practice, thus "understanding and transforming it" (Aoki, 1984). The purpose of the group was therefore not only to provide "data" for the researcher, but also to create opportunities for teachers and myself to share and examine understandings about our theories and practices with other colleagues in a setting which valued and attended to our contributions. Examining beliefs, practices and experiences within a teacher research group provides an opportunity for teachers to participate in "critical venturing" within a community of professionals (Aoki, 1984). This research is intended to value the insights that come from the participants themselves and the process of knowledge construction in which they were engaged. Examining the process of constructing teacher knowledge amongst one such community of professionals contributes to existing understandings about how such processes may be a vehicle for teacher development. Miller provides a rationale for the allocation of resources for such teacher research groups when she says:

To interrupt the "taken-for-granted understandings"of our daily work as teachers, to turn our "practical" understandings of curriculum and teaching to the underside of theory, requires, I believe, both space and a research orientation to our work. (1990, p.11).

F. Organization of the Thesis

In this first chapter I have outlined the purposes and rationale for this study and have presented an argument for the contribution of this study to knowledge in two domains: second language teaching and learning, and teacher development. There are several bodies of literature pertinent to this study: those informing its qualitative methodology, second language teaching and learning, teacher research, and teacher development. In Chapter Two I provide an overview of the existing literature pertinent to second language teaching and learning, as a way of situating the study and demonstrating the inadequacy of current theory in this domain in the light of the findings of this study. In the third chapter I address the epistemological assumptions upon which the design of the study rests, the processes of knowledge construction employed throughout the study, and the evolution of the methodological decisions made during the research.

In the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the study I illustrate and articulate my interpretation of the understandings explored during the study and I trace the unifying themes of risk-taking and engagement from three different perspectives. In Chapter Four I present three accounts of individual participants' lived experiences with the curriculum, which I summarized from my involvement with the research participants. These three accounts tell the stories of the experiences, perceptions and reflections of these individuals, and demonstrate

the understandings about second language teaching and learning that each person came to hold and how they came to hold them. The purpose of including these case studies in the results is to demonstrate the personal, particular and contextualized nature of teachers' knowledge, and to trace the process of knowledge construction from the point of view of individual teachers' experiences. The fifth chapter is intended to demonstrate the ways in which the teacher participants constructed knowledge and made meaning of their experiences in the collaborative setting of the research group. After briefly reviewing pertinent literature about teacher inquiry, I summarize the process of knowledge construction at work in the group as a whole during the five group meetings. The nature of the feminine discourse sometimes used in the group is also examined. In the sixth chapter I elaborate my interpretation of the themes of risk-taking and engagement as they emerged during the study. The ways in which these themes challenge the existing body of theoretical knowledge about of the theory and practice of second language teaching and learning are demonstrated. These three chapters, the individual accounts of teachers' experiences with the new curriculum, the examination of the process of constructing understandings within the group itself, and the discussion of the themes that emerge from the study, work together to provide an understanding of the nature of these teachers' knowledge about second language teaching and learning, and the importance of this knowledge for the domains of second language education and teacher development. In the final chapter I suggest certain directions for research based on these interpretations, and I discuss the implications of these conclusions for both second language educators.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE PERTINENT LITERATURE ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

A. Introduction

I have divided this review of the pertinent literature into two parts: an overview of current theoretical frameworks for a communicative-experiential second language curriculum, and a consideration of pertinent research and theoretical discussion about the role of teacher knowledge in what has been termed the "postmethod condition" of second language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). My purpose in this chapter is to lay out existing theoretical perceptions of the vision of the multi-dimensional communicative-experiential curriculum, upon which the curriculum guide and the commercial materials used by the teachers in the study are based, and also to problematize this existing literature to some extent, in order to pave the way for the results of the thesis presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six, which challenge this knowledge to some degree. In addition, the literature on teacher knowledge and development within second language teaching and learning is described, with a view to illustrating how the present study builds on this work.

B. Theoretical Frameworks for a Communicative-Experiential Language Curriculum

The shift in viewing language as a body of static knowledge to be mastered to viewing language as a dynamic resource for learners, through which they have opportunities to make sense of the world, characterizes the general movement in language education towards a view of language as a tool for the construction of meaning (Vygotsky, 1962, in Wells, 1983; Heath, 1983).

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In second language education the call for this shift is represented in the theoretical literature by the promotion of the communicative approach to second language teaching and learning. The notion of the communicative view of language itself stems from among others, the work of Dell Hymes in the area of the ethnography of communication in the early 1970s.

> The term "communicative competence", first used by Hymes in deliberate contrast to Chomsky's "linguistic competence", reflects the social view of language ... Various trends and the concept of communicative competence have merged in the idea of communicative language teaching as a central focus for new thought and fresh approaches in language pedagogy in the early eighties. (Stern, 1983, p.111)

This view of language was a reaction to the objectivist models of the previous decades, where language had been viewed as a fixed body of skills and vocabulary which teachers doled out in measured sequences.

> By aiming at the operationalization of predetermined goals, the objectivist models had turned the classroom into a hierarchically structured, teacher-dominated arena of knowledge and skill transmission. (Legutke and Thomas, 1991, p.2)

Breen and Candlin (1980) are credited with outlining one of the first communicative curriculum frameworks for the second language classroom, based on a view of knowledge as collaboratively constructed, and language as a resource for learning about the world.

> Within the communicative classroom, the classroom- and the procedures and activities it allows, can serve as a focal point for the teaching-learning process... and it can become the meeting place for realistically motivated communication-as-learning, communication about learning, and metacommunication. It can become a forum where knowledge is jointly offered and sought, reflected upon and acted upon. (Breen and Candlin, 1980, p.98)

On the Canadian scene the Immersion program, in which language is learned through subject content within the social context of the micro-world of the classroom where French is the language of communication, adopted this communicative view as its pedagogical base during the 1970s (Stern, 1983). In the early 1980s Stern (1983) modified Allen's three level structural, functional, experiential proposition for second language curriculum and proposed a multi-dimensional language curriculum for FSL or Core French contexts. Stern proposed (1983) that second language curriculum should be composed of, on the one hand, structural, functional, and sociocultural aspects, studied analytically through language study and practice, and, at the same time, the experiential aspect, introduced non-analytically through language use in authentic contexts (Stern, 1983). Innovative practitioners on the Canadian FSL scene took Stern's notions as the impetus for a new conception of the FSL curriculum. A national project was launched in the form of the National Core French Study (NCFS) (Leblanc, 1989), whose recommendations mapped out four syllabi in a multi-dimensional curriculum: the experiential syllabus, the language syllabus, the culture syllabus, and the general education syllabus. Curriculum development work has gone on in all provinces at the provincial and local levels during the last decade to involve teachers in the creation and application of thematic curricula based on the NCFS. Its guiding principles for curriculum development have become the basis for the generation of new commercial materials currently in use.

This multi-dimensional view of second language curriculum encourages teachers to take a comprehensive, integrated view. Starting with the experiential syllabus (Tremblay, 1989), which is considered to be the organizer

for the rest of the curriculum, themes are chosen based on common age appropriate "fields of experience" of the learners themselves (LeBlanc, 1989). The content and the processes of these units of instruction are intended to be driven by the real life experiential goals with which the students become engaged in the contexts of these themes. These meaningful needs for language use are meant to guide the selection of elements from the language, culture and general education syllabi.

At the same time, however, the language syllabus is composed of structural and functional language elements for analysis and practice, and although they are laid out in a simple to complex progression, it is unclear how the teacher is to proceed with the natural blending of language components with experiential components. Some research has gone on to try to illuminate criteria for judging what communicative language teaching looks like in action (Allen et al., 1990). Allen and others developed (1987, in Allen et al., 1990) and used the COLT (communicative orientation of language teaching) observational tool in a pilot study in FSL classes in Ontario to try to distinguish more communicative from less communicative classes. Two classes out of the nine studied were rated as communicative, but the unexpected result was that out of these two classes, one was clearly qualitatively superior to the other in terms of activities observed and in test results from students. Allen et al. recognized the limitation of their instrument in identifying the nature of the quality of the interactions in the classroom that would lead to such differences, and they suggested further research be done in this regard. Rather than paying more attention to the coding of classrooms as more or less communicative, Allen at al. point the way to more ethnographic studies of interactions in second language

classrooms, and the study of the interplay of other factors as directions for further research about what influences successful communicative classroom practice.

The other two syllabi of the multi-dimensional curriculum, those of culture and general education, are less structured than the language syllabus. Emphasis in the cultural syllabus is on comparing and contrasting everyday elements of culture found in the culturally authentic documents and texts studied with one's own and other cultures. The close link between language and culture is meant to be emphasized through the study of primary resources, such as texts from Francophone cultures, as opposed to materials contrived solely for second language practice. Elements of the general education syllabus include information about languages in general as well as an ongoing emphasis on meta-analysis and language learning strategies. There is much more emphasis on group work and collaboration within this curriculum, as these experiential goals are pursued within the social contexts of the classroom. The NCFS has presented a formula to practitioners for the development of multi-dimensional curricula, which gives the impression that all the answers to the complexity of second language teaching and learning have been provided, if only teachers would master their craft. The present study challenges those assumptions, and provides a much needed close-up view of how teachers, along with their students, do the complex work of constructing knowledge within the framework of this curriculum.

On a more international level, the movement towards a communicative-experiential approach to second language curriculum over the last twenty years is evaluated and documented with classroom examples in Legutke and

Thomas' <u>Process and Experience in the Second Language Classroom</u> (1991).
Legutke and Thomas provide us with a tidy list of what they call the "paradigm
shifts" that have supposedly occurred as a result of this communicative view of
language. These include a shift from viewing language as form to viewing
language as communication, a movement towards the concept of the
communicative task as the pivotal component of classroom design, a shift from
seeing learners as passive recipients to seeing learners as active constructors
of language, an emphasis on learners as members of social groups, an interest
in authentic texts and literature as sources of language and culture, a view of
curriculum as negotiated between teachers and students, emphasis on learning
processes as well as outcomes, and a rediscovery of the educational and
political dimensions of second language learning. After exhausting readers with
these principles, documented from a massive body of literature, the authors
affirm that unfortunately, very little evidence of these shifts can be found in
classrooms. Nunan, in his study of classrooms taught by experienced teachers
committed to the communicative approach, found that "communication rarely
happened, form was more important than message conveyance, and accuracy
issues always dominated fluency concerns". (1987, in Legutke and Thomas,
1991, p.6)

Sounding discouraged by these findings, Legutke and Thomas frame
the present challenges for the field by asking the following questions:

> Is it possible to turn L2 (second language) classrooms into whole
> person events, where body and soul, intellect and feeling, head,
> hand and heart converge in action?...Can L2 learning be a
> satisfying activity in itself, in the here and now of the classrooms?...
> What needs to be done to regain creative potential in the L2
> classroom?...What needs to be done to create situations and
> scenarios where communication in the target language is more

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> meaningful?...What needs to be done to develop in learners a capacity for critique? How can they become co-managers of their own learning and participate in their own teaching?... Can cultural awareness be taught? What forms of teaching and learning would be most suitable for such an endeavour? (1991, pp. 7-10)

Although their book is dedicated to examples of classrooms around the world where teachers are living proof that these goals are achievable, these questions presume that teachers should be able to make linear progress towards this ideal, given the right dispositions. In order to further understandings and perhaps challenge the assumptions of these elusive goals, more attention must be paid to the ways in which teachers construct and work through ongoing tensions within the curriculum for themselves. The discourse of the participants in the study at hand provides some understanding of the complexity of the issues involved around the realization of this vision.

C. The "Postmethod Condition" of Second Language Teaching

Communicative second language teaching methodology and the role of the teacher in the communicative-experiential curriculum has been amply discussed and summarized in theoretical literature over the last two decades (Stern, 1983; Kumaravadivelu, 1994). Recently, some of those writing about second language teaching have criticized the concept of prescribing particular "methods" for the communicative curriculum, these prescriptions being disempowering to teachers, rendering them uncritical (Pennycook, 1989; 1990). Kumaravadivelu (1994) proposes instead a framework of macro-strategies for the "postmethod" condition of language teaching. He defends a view of teaching as "principled pragmatics" governed by a sense of plausibility developed through experience, and professional and peer consultation. The

macro-strategies he proposes include:

> 1. Maximizing learning opportunities, (negotiation, continuous feedback, balance between planners of teaching acts and mediators of learning acts),
> 2. Facilitating negotiated interactions,
> 3. Minimizing perceptual mismatches (cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, procedural, instructional, attitudinal),
> 4. Activating intuitive heuristics,
> 5. Fostering language awareness,
> 6. Contextualizing linguistic input
> 7. Integrating language skills,
> 8. Promoting learner autonomy,
> 9. Raising cultural awareness, and
> 10. Ensuring social relevance (1994, pp. 40-42)

Kumaravadivelu suggests that this framework of macro-strategies serve as a starting point which teachers might use to guide their own investigative endeavours, based on research in their classrooms. Kumaravadivelu supports the rationale for each of these strategies with references to work going on in each area by researchers, but he calls on teachers to add to and to modify these principles based on understanding their own experiences. He supports the processes that "strategic" teachers already use in their teaching.

> Strategic teachers spend a considerable amount of time and effort (a) reflecting on the specific needs, wants, situations and processes of learning and teaching, (b) stretching their knowledge, skill and attitude to stay informed and involved, (c) exploring and extending macro-strategies to meet the challenges of changing contexts of teaching; (d) designing micro-strategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom; and (e) monitoring their ability to react to a myriad of situations in meaningful ways. (p.43)

The study at hand provides a forum for the exploration of the process of building such complex knowledge amongst teachers.

There are some examples in the literature of studies which emphasize the processes that Kumaravadivelu recommends. An article by Enns-Connolly (1990) described a case study of a department of second language educators working together in this "postmethod" context, during the implementation of a multi-dimensional communicative curriculum in the department of Germanic and Slavic Studies at the University of Calgary. This case study is interesting because of its similarity to the present study. Enns-Connolly maintains that teachers recreate the curriculum through an ongoing dialectic between theory and practice. She makes the argument from Breen (1984, in Enns-Connolly, 1990) that teachers inevitably recreate the curriculum, and so do learners, in relation to the personal meaning they find within it. Through this dialectic between theory and practice, classroom instruction may be viewed as dynamically unfolding. In her article Enns-Connolly documented how the staff in question, working together, created an overarching framework for a four year course in second language education based on the multi-dimensional curriculum (Stern, 1983). Teachers then fleshed out the content themselves and maintained the shared vision through a thread of informal and formal activities. Enns-Connolly reported two important assumptions in operation in her project: first of all that each teacher had a contribution to make, and second, that the support system created allowed each teacher to give expression to individual talents. She concluded that teachers stand at the intersection of the curriculum, the system and the students. Interaction with colleagues is a key component in the dialectic process, as teachers find energy from contributing to the greater whole. In this study as well I draw attention to the ways in which the participants individually and collaboratively recreated this curriculum through such a dialectic between theory and practice. I believe, however, that the

present study goes beyond Enns-Connelly's account in its attention to the problematizing of theory and practice by the participants, rather than simply presenting a success story.

The importance of the particular, the complex, the contingent and the personal in second language teaching, the orientation of this thesis, has been defended from several points of view (Allright and Bailey, 1991: Bailey, 1991; Bartlett, 1989; Fanselow, 1990). In this discussion I wish to highlight two recent articles and two empirical studies which defend this orientation. First, in a response to two other articles on theory and practice, Bell (1993) calls for the role of the teacher to be viewed as "the bridge from program to practice". She stresses the impact of teachers' personal backgrounds and experiences on their practice, claiming that "the stories we hold about literacy in the target language affect the way we teach and what we hold as important". Many FSL teachers are also FSL learners themselves, and they hold many personal stories about formal and informal situations of language learning which have an impact on their view of their role as a language teacher. Evidence of this is noticeable in the upcoming accounts of individual teachers' experiences.

An article by Freeman and Richards (1993) also informs this discussion. They explored possible conceptions of teaching that second language teachers could hold and the implications of these conceptions for practice and for teacher education programs. They claim the existence of three competing conceptions: that teaching is scientifically based, that it is theory and values based, and that it is an art/craft, shaped by teachers themselves in an ongoing fashion. Freeman and Richards tentatively conclude in their article that the most promising view from which to work in preservice and inservice teacher education would be that

teaching is akin to an art/craft, personalized and ever in development, but informed by a critical and self-critical stance and a concern for the needs of the learners. The central importance of the nature of the students to the experiences of the teachers in this study attest to this orientation.

Empirical studies conducted in collaboration with second language teachers in the last five years also attest to the interest in gaining more understanding of teachers' lived experiences with curriculum. An empirical study in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (Smith, 1991) demonstrated that the classroom practices and decisions of second language teachers are shaped by their beliefs, their practical experience and their understanding of learners' contexts, rather than by strict adherence to any one methodology of second language teaching and learning. Smith worked with nine practising English as a Second Language teachers in three different college level contexts to understand more about how instruction was planned and carried out, through the process of reviewing videotapes of these teachers' classrooms with them in post-observation conferences. As a result of her study, Smith concluded that "the finding that teachers modify theory for practical needs suggests that theorists need to take into account the role of the teacher... and the factors that influence their decisions (Smith, 1991, p.256). The teachers in Smith's study put more emphasis on the affective components of the language classroom than on the defence of any one methodological perspective. In this sense her conclusions are mirrored by those of the participants in the present study. She recommends that "there has to be a concerted effort by researchers to gather empirical evidence on how 'real' classrooms function and the types of decisions teachers make for classroom lessons" (Smith, 1991, p.257). The study at hand will contribute to the realization of these recommendations, and

will further examine the relationship between formal theory, and second language teachers' theories and practices.

Some recent research is, therefore, challenging the unproblematic view of theoretical constructs of second language teaching. A further study which contributes to the exploration of the complex nature of second language teaching is reported by Donald Freeman (1992). Freeman collaborated with a FSL teacher, Maggie Brown Cassidy, in a series of interviews and classroom observations to try and uncover the nature of the knowlege about language constructed in her classroom: "how authority and control were distributed, through pedagogy and interaction, to build a shared understanding of French" (p. 58). The nature of the curriculum in Brown Cassidy's classroom, explored by Freeman and Brown Cassidy in a collaborative relationship in this study, is very pertinent to the central themes of risk-taking and engagement highlighted in this thesis.

> Maggie recognizes the intimate connection of risk, success and enjoyment in learning. 'I don't know how you can learn a language if you're not enjoying it. It's so risky and it's scary and it's hard work'. Maggie's pedagogy lies in transforming the raw energy of social risk-taking in the class into the risk-taking of speaking the second language. (p.64)

In summary, then, this literature clearly supports the need for understandings of the complexity and the tensions of second language teaching within the communicative-experiential curriculum from individual teachers' perspectives. The vision of the communicative-experiential curriculum presented in the literature does not seem to allow for investigation of its conceptual underpinnings or for the recreation or transformation of the curriculum into multiple lived curricula (Aoki, 1994). Some of the literature on the nature of second language teaching in the "postmethod" condition,

however, paves the way for dealing with the issues raised in this study. In the chapters dealing with the results of the study I will demonstrate the contribution of the teachers' understandings of their experiences in this study in disrupting the unproblematic assumptions of the communicative-experiential curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

As Miller (1990) laid out in the methodological discussion around her collaborative research with teachers, the methodology that guides this study is aligned with the views it represents of knowledge, curriculum and teaching as constructed in practice. In contrast to the quantitative orientation that "independently existing social reality can be described as it really is", Miller maintains that

> Qualitative research, although reflecting a diversity of traditions and methodologies, is rooted in a phenomenological paradigm which holds that reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of the situation. (Firestone, 1987, in Miller, 1990, p.13)

The knowledge created as a result of these interactions is thus highly contextualized, and tentative. It is also knowledge constructed by the researcher, acting as an active participant in the constructions, not as a neutral gatherer of information. Within this view, the researcher must take a reflexive stance in understanding and declaring her "interest" in the research, her investment (Britzman, 1991). She must also pursue her inquiry with "methodological humility and caution" (Narayan, in Britzman, 1991, p.12), always mindful of the fact that she is entering the lives of real people and asking them to give up their knowledge for her use. This requires sensitivity to the boundaries of privacy and vulnerability (Britzman, p.16) of the participants.

This chapter is organized around the following guiding questions. What kind of knowledge is produced through these methods and why should it count as knowledge? These are the epistemological questions addressed. How did the people involved, researcher and participants, go about constructing the knowledge represented in the study? What methodological decisions were made along the way and why? These are heuristic questions. How are issues concerning the trustworthiness and moral responsibility of the research resolved within the context of this study? This is an ethical question.

B. Epistemological Questions

Many researchers defending naturalistic research methods make distinctions between the nature of knowledge produced using methods borrowed from the natural sciences and those that have evolved and are evolving in the human disciplines (Guba & Lincoln, 1985: Polkinghorne; 1988; Lather; 1991; Bruner; 1987; Miller; 1990). The major sources of information upon which I draw as the researcher in this study are the transcriptions of a series of individual interviews and of the meetings of the research group, as well as my own field notes and observational notes made during classroom visits, which were in turn shared in discussion with the participants. All three sources of information, the interviews, the meetings, and the discussions about classroom visits, were conversations of theory and practice. During the ongoing work with the participants, I continued as the researcher to grapple with how I would write up the study to do the most justice to the participants' lived experiences, to represent the complexity of the study and to make the findings

accessible to other educators who cared about the research questions I had identified. I decided towards the end of this field based phase that the most salient question which emerged from the study had to do with how these teachers and myself made sense of our experiences and our knowledge in conversational settings. Stories and anecdotes from the classroom and from previous professional and life experiences were often present in the discourse of the teacher participants in this study. These interpretations served as the starting point for the problematizing of theory and practice, and they were shared between participants as a means of making collaborative sense of their experiences and of the curriculum.

The methodological approach of this study deals with two levels of interpretation. On the first level, I demonstrate that the participants construct meaning from interpreting their experiences within conversations of theory and practice. On the second level, in my role as the researcher I analyze the participants' interpretations found in their discourse and present them to the audience of the study as a second level of interpretation- my version of their version of the meaning of their lived experience. The results of the study take the form of accounts of the individuals in the group and a telling of the story of the workings of the group as such. In addition, I analyze the themes that are woven through the discourse of these teachers and comment on how these themes inform the larger conversation of theory and practice about second language teaching and learning. Merleau-Ponty maintains that

> Truth is not a natural property of the world in itself...
> Consciousness discovers truth in contact with the world. Truth is
> inseparable from the expressive operation that says it; it does not

precede reflection but is the result of it. (Merleau-Ponty, 1969, in Polkinghorne, p. 30)

In this way these interpretations will yield truths that are particular to the context of each participant, and intertwined with previous professional and life experiences of the participants and the researcher. In this research I was concerned with articulating clearly my interpretation of the nature of the knowledge that was constructed by participants, within individual experience and in relation to larger contexts, rather than being concerned with defending the objective single "truth" value of these interpretations.

It is my role as the researcher to make meaningful, or bring to understanding, the participants' sense making of lived experience. Polkinghorne (1988) clarifies the purpose of such understanding.

> The goal of research into the production of meaning is to produce clear and accurate descriptions of the structures and forms of various meaning systems. The outcome does not provide information for the production and control of human behaviour but provides the kind of knowledge which individuals and groups can use to increase the power and control over their own actions. (p.10)

The work of the researcher in this genre implies an understanding "from the native's point of view" (Geertz, 1974). As human beings we order our experiences and give meaning to them through the ways in which we talk about them (Polkinghorne, 1985: Bruner; 1987). Geertz claims that it is one of the "jobs of the ethnographer (to my mind, the most important) to pay attention to the means by which people put their experiences into 'graspable form' "(1986, p.373). When researchers claim to represent experience "from the native's point

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of view", they collect "thick description" of what the participants think their experiences are all about.

> We cannot live others' lives but we can listen to what, in words, in images, in actions, they say about their lives- it is with expressions, representations, objectivations, discourses, performances, that we traffic. (Geertz, 1986, p.374)

The first step towards "understanding" is then to gather as complete information as possible about how those in question construct their worlds of experience. Simply reporting this "thick description", however, is to remain within what Geertz refers to as "awash in the immediate" (Geertz, 1974). Geertz maintains that the researcher in this genre develops understanding through relating the "experience-near" concepts of the participants, those concepts which they "effortlessly define" as what their fellows see, feel, think or imagine, and "experience-distant" concepts, those concepts which specialists would employ to "forward their scientific, philosophical or practical" aims (1974). This requires a "continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure" (Geertz, 1974). The understanding developed by the researcher is thus by Geertz's definition "interested" because the researcher in her work relates the experience-near concepts of the participants to the researcher's own aims or research questions. These experience-distant concepts are thus being informed by the "thick description" of the experience-near concepts. The experience-distant concepts that I treat in this thesis are those concerning second language teaching and learning, and teacher development. These concepts are informed, or made richer and more meaningful, by the experience-near concepts found in the discourse of the

participants.

It is also important to include the contribution of Paul Ricoeur (1981) to this discussion of the role of explanation and understanding. Rejecting Dilthey's claim that explanation is the job of the natural sciences and interpretation the tool for understanding in the human sciences, Ricoeur (1981) argues for the place of both explanation and interpretation in understanding "text". "Text", according to Ricoeur, is "discourse fixed by writing". This definition is important to the study at hand because the principal sources of information are the transcriptions of the conversations of the teachers involved as they described their experiences. Their discourse, which was originally oral, has become fixed in the texts of the transcriptions, and then refixed in this thesis. Ricoeur's argument is that the notion of "text" demands a reciprocity between explanation and interpretation, the ultimate aim of understanding being to "recover meaning". To explain is to analyze the structure of the text within itself. It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide as complete, comprehensive and accurate explanation as possible, so as to not distort or misrepresent the "experience-near" concepts of the participants. But to remain at the level of explanation is to play a "sterile game" (Ricoeur, 1981). Meaning is only recovered through interpretation, going beyond the text "to follow the path opened by the text" (Ricoeur, 1981). The paths of interpretation chosen are dependent on the explanation found in the text itself, but also dependent on the readers of the text. The distancing of the text from its author through writing is the first level of reading. The interpretation of the text by the researcher is the second level of reading, where the researcher chooses to link the text to certain

"experience-distant" concepts related to her research interests. At yet a third level are the multiple readings of the work by the audiences that read the completed research, bringing to it personal experiences and previous knowledge completely out of the control of the participants and the researcher. Ricoeur (1981) claims that the process of interpretation culminates in the self-interpretation of subjects who, through interaction with the text, henceforth understand themselves better, understand themselves differently, or simply begin to understand themselves.

Because of these layers of possible readers and readings of the text, the responsibility of doing justice to the text through the careful process of description and explanation becomes all the more important. The arbitrariness of this process of appropriation of meaning is checked insofar as it is still within the bounds of the recovery of that which is at work in the text. It is important to be able to define grounds for claiming better or worse treatments of the topics on the basis of fidelity to the text. There must also be possible ways to agree or disagree with the values expounded in the text, but questions of whether the text is the definitive truth or not miss the point. The process of understanding and interpreting lived experience, therefore, is not intended to lead to an argument for claiming the prescriptiveness of the conclusions of the study. The value of the knowledge produced through such methods lies in its potential to become part of the discourse around the topics at hand, either as part of the intrapersonal discourse of each reader of the work, part of interpersonal discourse of a community of readers that share reaction to the work, or part of the larger conversation of theory and practice in that domain.

B. Heuristic Questions: The Design of the Study

The Contexts of the Research

The study took place within the FSL teaching community in a large school district in British Columbia, which serves about 50 000 students from a diverse socioeconomic and cultural population in a variety of suburban, semi-urban and rural settings. It is important to understand the various contexts in which the teachers and myself as the researcher were embedded at the outset of the study. Contextualizing the study acknowledges the situated nature of knowledge, and allows those involved, participants, researchers and readers, to come to understand their own points of view more completely and critically (Aoki, 1984; Hornberger, 1991). The study began part way through the first year of the implementation of a communicative-experiential FSL curriculum in the district in which the participants and the researcher worked. Beliefs and understandings had been constructed and certain events had transpired before the start of the formal research phase which textured the discourse heard in this study. It is useful at this point early on in the thesis to describe briefly the events and factors which, from my understanding, form a sort of prologue to the story of this research. This prologue also includes a self-portrait of who I was as the researcher in this study.

Within the school district where the study took place FSL had had official status as part of the common curriculum in grades 5 through 8 since a school board decision to adopt the program in 1989. District support personnel for French programs had worked since that time to provide inservice and resources

for this program. In 1990 the district struck a committee of secondary and elementary teachers to investigate the latest trends in FSL curriculum and methodology and to identify new materials with which to support a communicative-experiential curriculum. This committee finalized their recommendations in June 1992. New materials were purchased and delivered to all grade 5, 8 and 10 teachers in September 1992, followed by materials for the grade 6, 9 and 11 levels during the school year of 1993-1994. As helping teacher for French programs in the school district and a doctoral candidate, I initiated the teacher research group in question in the late fall of 1992 with the view of supporting the practices of teachers who were just beginning to implement the new FSL curriculum and learning from their experiences. Other activities to support implementation that took place during the 1992-1993 school year included an optional Summer Institute to introduce the new curriculum, fall inservice for all teachers, and regular meetings with secondary school department heads and the district committee to gather feedback. In the fall of 1992 I also supervised a group of 12 teachers in a self-directed university course based on the principles of teacher research following the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Comet course model. Six of the teachers involved in the Comet course later became participants in this study.

My dual role in this research must be made explicit. In my role as helping teacher I was embedded in the very process which I was studying as a researcher. This dual role was both helpful and problematic to the study. As the helping teacher during the implementation year I was responsible for seeking input from the teachers of the district regarding directions for implementation,

responding to teachers' questions and requests for materials or support, and planning inservice activities related to the implementation. I was therefore in a position to be able to add rich background information to the study and to keep field notes during many activities related to the implementation. On the other hand, although the materials that the teachers are using to implement the curriculum were chosen by a teacher committee before my arrival in the district, I was concerned that some teachers would perceive my role as being one of defending the wisdom of these curriculum changes and therefore filtering their concerns. I held more power and authority in this context than they did and I was potentially part of what Foucault calls the "gaze" of privileged "power/knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, in White and Epston, 1990). In order to deal with this potentially problematic situation I tried to be sensitive to situations where my dual role might have affected the contributions of the participants and to maintain a reflexive stance towards my interest in the study. This reflexive stance implies that research is a form of praxis (Lather, 1986), and includes "a willingness by all involved to risk and to be changed by the research process itself " (Miller, 1990, p.13). In Chapter Five of this thesis, in which I recount the workings of the research group, I discuss the points in the study at which I noticed that certain assumptions with which I entered the study were challenged, and where my theory and practice changed through my involvement in the research process.

In January 1993, participants were invited through an open letter to join the research group (See Appendix One). Some financial assistance for teacher release time for the research group meetings was made available through a

grant from the Ministry of Education to support FSL teachers in the implementation of the new curriculum. It must be recognized explicitly that the teachers who volunteered shared similar dispositions in their interest in exploring their own theories and practices. It may be assumed that the participants felt that the study offered them something of value before they volunteered. The initial size of the group was six secondary and four elementary teachers. As of the end of June 1993 one person had dropped out of the group due to illness. All the group members turned out to be female, and all had more than five years teaching experience. The duration of the field work phase of the study was from January 1993 to January 1994, spanning the first two school years of the implementation of the new FSL curriculum in the district. The particular time period was chosen because I thought that after an initial orientation period from September to December of the first year of implementation, teachers would be interested in sharing their experiences during implementation and in bringing forward issues for discussion. The group continued during a second school year in order to explore differences in perceptions between starting up the program for the very first year and continuing in the second year.

Sources of Information

Three sources of information were used during the study in the effort to formulate interpretations from several perspectives and to respond to the criterion of triangulation in naturalistic research (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). These sources of information included individual interviews, research group activities,

and classroom visits by the researcher. The activities of the research group and the sources of information for the study are summarized in Table One.

TABLE ONE: ACTIVITIES OF THE RESEARCH GROUP

DATE	ACTIVITY	SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Jan. '93	1st group mtg.	Transcription, field notes
Feb. '93	1st interviews	Transcription, field notes
Mar. '93	2nd group mtg.	Transcription, field notes
April, May '93	Visits to one another's classes	Reports at 3rd mtg.
May '93	3rd group mtg.	Transcription, field notes
May, June '93	2nd interviews	Transcription, field notes
Sept. '93	4th group mtg.	Transcription, field notes
Oct. '93	Workshop presentation	Video, field notes
Nov. '93- Jan.'94	Classroom visits	Observational notes
Dec. '93- Jan. '94	3rd interviews	Transcription, field notes

The Nature of the Interviews

Transcripts were prepared by a clerical assistant of half-hour to hour long interviews with each teacher participant, conducted at the beginning, at the midpoint and at the end of the study. The rationale for this approach was to tap into each teacher's individual sense-making processes about classroom experiences with the curriculum at several points during the first year to year and a half of its implementation. Participants received copies of their transcripts following each interview so that they had an opportunity to further comment on or edit the texts. This process was intended to allow for the construction of knowledge that took place in the study to be a collaborative activity between myself as the researcher, and the participants, for as long as possible in the research process (Lather, 1991). Rather than taking the attitude that allowing the participants to tamper with the data after the fact would contaminate the results, including this step was part of the collaborative process of this research, which served to make the results credible for the participants and others, and which potentially allowed the process of the research itself to transform the participants, including the researcher (Lather, 1991).

Based on Mishler's view (1986) of the research interview as an occasion of shared construction of meaning between the interviewer and the participant, the schedule of questions for each interview session remained flexible enough to allow teachers to determine the issues which they wished to discuss and therefore direct the interviews according to their own concerns (See Appendices). In this way the knowledge constructed by the teachers was

generated from their own reflections and lived experiences rather than being imposed by the researcher. I used adaptations of the open-ended questions that Werner (1988) composed for his study as the starting point for my first round of interviews (See Appendix Three). Questions in the first interview centered around each participant's personal and professional background, her goals for her students, her personal teaching styles in FSL, her opinions about the new curriculum for FSL, and her experiences, opinions and issues around the implementation to date. Each participant was also asked to identify a personal research question or issue upon which she was presently focussing in her practice.

In the second round of interviews (See Appendix Six), which took place in May and June 1993, participants were asked to comment on the transcripts from the first interviews and on their lived experience with the curriculum to date. Were they still experiencing the new curriculum similarly to what they had described in the first interview? They were also asked to summarize their conclusions about their personal research focus for the year, and to identify any new issues that seemed to be arising for them. It is interesting that in each successive interview, the degree to which I prepared questions and directed the discourse through these questions decreased. The second and third interviews were much more like conversations than the first, for two reasons, I believe. First, a higher level of understanding existed during the second and third interviews because the relationship between the participants and myself as a participant researcher had been established over time. Second, through an ongoing reflexive stance towards the research process, I had come to realize

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that the information that was most important for the participants would come from their own agendas, and that I would learn more about their experiences by directing the questions less. As Mishler pointed out (1986), as the balance of control over the interview shifted towards the participants, they produced more narrative accounts rather than answers to questions that had been conceptually framed by the researcher according to her assumptions about what would be important about the participant's experiences and knowledge. It was after the second interview and after three meetings of the research group that I recognized that the nature of the information collected to that point lent itself to a methodological approach that favoured the interpretation of the knowledge produced in the study as jointly constructed through conversation.

The third interviews took place in December 1993 or January 1994, part way through the next school year (See Appendix Eight). I had prepared and sent to each participant in advance a first draft of my account of her experiences during the first year of implementation, based on the first two interviews and the research group activities. These accounts were discussed with each participant during the final interview, again with the intention of maintaining the collaborative nature of the research activity. In addition, I shared my observational notes from the two classroom visits which had preceeded the interview, and the classroom events which took place during these visits were discussed. Finally, I asked the participants to share their impressions about the second year of this curriculum in their classrooms as compared to the first, and to reflect on the experience of being part of the research group as a whole.

Three meetings of the research group took place between January and May 1993. A fourth meeting and the workshop prepared and presented by the group took place the following Fall (See Appendices Two, Four, Six and Seven). The initial purposes of the meetings were to give the teachers involved an opportunity to hear about one another's issues and to generate questions about the implementation of this communicative-experiential curriculum, to share classroom experiences and practices, and to identify common areas of concern for discussion and problem-solving. Participants also had the opportunity to visit the classroom of one other person in the group, and reporting on these experiences became part of the group discussion in the third group meeting. The existence of the group took place over a year, in order to allow the teachers to reflect upon their evolving perceptions of the curriculum, to build trust within the group and to allow for different issues to crop up and to be explored over time (Miller, 1990). I demonstrate these processes in my account of the workings of the group during their meetings in Chapter Five of this thesis.

During the Fall 1993 meeting the participants prepared a presentation based on their experiences for a workshop which the group gave at the 1993 Conference of the British Columbia Association of Teachers of Modern Languages. This event provided a vehicle for the group and its participants to share the knowledge constructed from their experiences with an audience of colleagues. It also provided a form of closure to the formal life span of the research group. The classroom visits and the final set of individual interviews

took place after this event, and focussed on summarizing experiences with the curriculum and with the research group. After the field work phase of the research was completed in January 1994, the participants in the group and the researcher continued to maintain contact through ongoing professional activities in the district. This allowed me as the researcher to continue to seek input into the writing up of this study. In the Fall of 1994 the first draft of the complete thesis was distributed to participants. Individual and collective reactions were noted, and a follow-up meeting of the group was held in December 1994. Some participants volunteered to take part in a workshop to present the research at the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers National Conference in May 1995.

As the study progressed, I was at the same time reviewing literature related to the methodology and topics of the study, but I did not offer these readings to the group or share my reactions to these readings during group discussions. Neither did the participants talk much about professional reading that they might have been doing, or refer very often to documents such as the Curriculum Guide (Ministry of Education, 1992) or the National Core French Study summaries (Tremblay, 1989; LeBlanc, 1989). This lack of attention to theoretical knowedge outside the group was an interesting phenomenon. For my part, I believed that any attempt by me to refer the group to readings or outside versions of what the curriculum should be would have jeopardized the intent of the study, which was to concentrate on the understandings that the participants constructed for themselves during the period of the study. This is not to say that these teachers denied the usefulness of theoretical literature in

other contexts.

Classroom Visits

At the fourth meeting of the research group I suggested that it would be helpful for me to spend some time in individual classrooms in order to get a better understanding for the context of each participant's experiences. The participants agreed; some commented that they would welcome this opportunity to compare their perceptions with mine, as a follow-up to the activity the previous year where they had visited one another's classes. This discussion is documented in Chapter Five, the story of the group. During these visits, one or two hours in length on two different occasions, I took observational notes in the form of an anecdotal record of the proceedings in the classroom. These observational notes were distributed to the teachers involved and discussed holistically during the third interview, based on issues that the teachers raised related to the events in the classroom during these visits. Some participants directed the conversation in this last interview mostly towards their interpretations of the events that had taken place during my visits, and some did not. In any case, my experience of observing and participating in the life of each participant's classroom became part of the discussion that took place in the final interview rather than standing alone as a part of the results reported in this thesis. I have incorporated my perceptions stemming from these observations into the individual accounts of the participant's experiences so as not to detract from the central approach of this thesis, which is to build understandings of the experiences of the participants from their points of view, rather than from my

own.

Treatment and Organization of the Results

My concentration on the interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants and on the directions in which the research group evolved has enabled me to reflect the complexity of the factors which affected the ways in which each teacher made sense of the curriculum in her classroom and to respect the nature of the discourse which is evident in the interviews and the research group. It has also allowed themes and issues to emerge from the information generated as the study progressed (Glaser and Strauss,1967), respecting the directions identified by the participants themselves and allowing for modifications in methodology in response to emerging information. In this thesis I have interpreted the information gathered from three different perspectives. First, I have included individual accounts of teachers' experiences, prepared in a narrative style which reflects how the teachers themselves constructed their knowledge of theory and practice about the new curriculum and made meaning of their experiences. Second, I have recounted the workings of the research group as a whole, adapting the methodologies of other studies interested in the construction of knowledge in teacher research groups (Miller, 1990; Schecter and Ramirez, 1992; Colgan-Davis, 1993). The self-selected group in this study turned out to be all women. This situation opened up an important additional factor in this chapter, that of looking at the way that the style of discourse used in the group was sometimes indicative of a particular style of feminine discourse (Minister, 1991).

As a third way of interpreting the information in the study, I have analyzed

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the information that I collected throughout the study and I have identified two central themes which I found were woven through the discourse of the participants. As well as demonstrating the presence of these themes in the individual accounts of the teachers' experiences and in the story of the workings of the group, in Chapter Six I discuss these themes in an "experience-distant" manner, in order to situate them within the broader context of FSL teaching and learning. The process of arriving at these two unifying themes was ongoing throughout the field work period and during the writing up of the thesis. I analyzed each transcription of individual interviews and group meetings as well as my field notes to try and identify central themes. I went through several phases of categorizing and conceptualizing related themes, and during this process it was very helpful to review the major themes as the participants discussed them at each successive group meeting. At the meeting where the group prepared their workshop for other teachers, each participant identified two themes that were important for her. As I worked on the writing up of the thesis, I circulated two drafts of the complete version for comment by the group. I also discussed drafts with my supervisory committee. All these processes helped me to arrive at the two themes as they are expressed in this the final version of the thesis, having respected the understandings of the teacher participants and represented their knowledge in a comprehensive and authentic fashion.

D. Ethical Questions

As the researcher I have a crucial ethical and epistemological responsibility to do justice to the events of the study and to respect the

experience and knowledge of the people involved. I do not intend that anyone enter into the reading of this study with the idea that my interpretation is one of many other possible interpretations, but rather with the view that the interpretation offered should account for the experiences and perceptions of the participants in a comprehensible manner, and in a manner that renders these experiences meaningful and valuable for teachers and researchers in second language education. The contribution of this study to FSL theory and practice will lie in the depth and the complexity with which issues important to the teachers are treated. The usefulness of such conclusions will be that they may serve as points of reflection and comparison for other teachers. It is hoped that this research will be accessible and useful to FSL teachers because of its authenticity and its complex treatment of theoretical and practical issues in the field from the practitioner's point of view.

In this discussion of the ethical issues surrounding the study, I draw on Krall's (1988, in Miller, 1990, p.474) definition of good research to situate the question of criteria setting for quality research in the human disciplines.

> By "good" I mean that it (research) should bring deeper meaning into our daily lives without controlling the lives of others. It should not reduce the complexities of human interaction and learning to simple formulas but should rather elaborate and accentuate their richness. As a result of our research, we should become more consciously intentional of our actions and more thoughtful and reflective of their consequences (Krall, 1988, p.474 in Miller, 1990, p. 162).

Having accepted this general stance, how are questions concerning the trustworthiness and moral responsibility of this research resolved within the

context of this study? As qualitative researchers maintain (Guba & Lincoln,1985; Polkinghorne, 1988), the knowledge claims made within the human disciplines must be evaluated using different definitions of validity, significance and reliability than in forms of research modelled on the natural sciences. Davis (1992) maintains that because the qualitative research tradition assumes the existence of "multiple constructed realities", in order to demonstrate "truth value", "researchers must show that their reconstructions in the form of findings and interpretations are credible to those being researched, credibility being the salient test of reality" for qualitative researchers (1992, pp. 605-606). Polkinghorne defends the view that in such qualitative research, "valid retains its ordinary meaning of well-grounded and supportable" (p.174). By its very nature "the results of narrative research cannot claim to correspond exactly with what has actually occurred" (p.176) and therefore the concept of verisimilitude replaces that of accuracy. Reliability likewise takes on the more general meaning of dependability and significance the more general meaning of importance (Polkinghorne,1988). It is up to the researcher as the author of the tale to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the version of the events and the meanings she puts forward by demonstrating the verisimilitude, the dependability and the importance of the research. I have attempted to do this in the following ways.

Treatment of the Discourse

I recorded on audiotape the discourse of the group meetings and the interviews which, although incomplete as a way of capturing the total flavour of

the interactions, did allow a return to what was actually said. I have tried to use large portions of the actual text of the participants in constructing the narratives and the understandings in the study, to allow the stories to be told in the words of the teachers themselves. There were, however, limitations which I encountered with this approach of attempting to recapture the free flowing nature of the discourse, which I had to resolve as my work progressed. It is important to explain certain decisions I have made in working with the transcripts so that readers will be fully aware of what is represented by the quotations of the participants.

I have used large blocks of text so that the participants' words can remain within the context of the experiences or perceptions described. These blocks of text are presented as if the speaker is carrying on a monologue. Interspersed phrases from others in the group and from the interviewer such as "uh, hum, ok, I see, yes, you know" have been left out so as to conserve space and make more coherent blocks of text in print. Where the interaction between the speaker and others is more significant the blocks of conversation have been left in tact. The following code was used to systematize the presentation of the oral text in written form:

• [brackets] - words in square brackets supply references where meaning is unclear.

• ...- three dots indicate that a section of the text which is not pertinent has been removed.

• -- - a long dash indicates that in the original transcript the speaker did not complete the thought.

In addition, in reviewing the transcripts, either the participants involved or I have made certain adjustments to the syntax and grammar of the text for the sake of clarity, knowing all the same that there existed the risk of changing the initial meaning of the utterance. The source of the difficulty was that the conversation in the group meetings and in the interviews took the form of oral discourse which was then transcribed into a written text. Oral discourse by its nature is free flowing, tentative and interactive. It is very difficult to represent the nature of this oral discourse through the transcription process which turns what was said in a highly dynamic, social context into static written form. The transcription process turns discourse where contextualization meant everything into arbitrarily assigned sentences and paragraphs that can appear incoherent because they may become decontextualized. Another source of difficulty was that the transcriptions of the conversations that took place were prepared by an assistant from an audiotape that could not sometimes fully capture the interaction of remarks because of the distance of the microphone at times, particularly in the group setting. Taking this into consideration, I reviewed and edited the transcriptions in conjunction with my field notes to ensure as thorough a representation of each person's utterances as possible.

Analysis

When analyzing the results of the study I tried to remain sensitive to the notion that what one chooses to leave out of the discussion is as significant as

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what one chooses to include. For example, the quotations chosen for inclusion and even the three case studies in particular which make up Chapter Four can only be representative of themselves, not of that which took place but is absent from this final version of the story. In addition, I have tried to demonstrate the complexity and the inherent contradictions in the stories of the participants, as to not render them too tidy or straightforward, because the process of knowledge construction through oral discourse is a by nature tentative and exploratory . As the researcher one must be conscious of the need to balance the necessity for selectivity with the danger of rendering the results overly simplistic, therefore denying the complexity of understandings constructed from lived experience.

Reciprocity

Given my concern as researcher that my version of the research be trustworthy as well as ethically responsible (Lather, 1991; Clandinin, 1992), I wished my account of the experiences of the individual teachers and of the group to be satisfactory to the participants as well to myself and to potential academic and teacher audiences. Transcripts of the interviews and the drafts of the case studies of each teacher were discussed with each participant at various points during the research. I continued the involvement of the participants in the interpretation of the findings by maintaining ongoing contact with each person during the drafting of the thesis. Participants were encouraged to revise specific parts of the transcripts if they wished to refine or change what they had said, and to discuss the accuracy of the interpretations that I had given to their experiences with me. Some participants rewrote parts of their transcripts

to make them more coherent in their written form. They also took some opportunity to clarify what they said or occasionally, reflect on what they had said if their interpretation had changed since the time of the interview. Several participants commented on the uniqueness of the experience of seeing their oral discourse, which is by nature tentative and exploratory, being fixed by transcription, rendering it somehow more important and authorized. Some found it interesting to review their own words as a way of understanding themselves better. It was my hope that these teachers would find participation in the research group a valuable form of development for themselves. This spirit of reciprocity is part of the ethical responsibility of this sort of research, not to just take away knowledge from participants but to create a context where they themselves might gain in self-understanding from involvement in the research. This reciprocity entails opening up the interpretation of what the participants said about their experiences to revision. Because the study is concerned with the sense that the participants made of their experiences rather than on the analysis of the experiences themselves, this sort of process strengthens the notion that the construction of knowledge in this context is tentative and ongoing.

In summary,in the third chapter I have defended the epistemological claims of the methodology employed in this study and the research processes which flowed from it. The next three chapters of this thesis will present the results of the research from three different but complementary perspectives.

CHAPTER FOUR:

INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

A. Introduction

In this chapter I present accounts of individual participants' lived experiences with the curriculum in their classrooms during the period of the research. The perspective provided by this case study approach attempts to respect the unique context and complexity of each individual's experiences, and to acknowledge the ways in which each teacher's previous life experiences, beliefs and theories contributed to her sense-making process. Although each teacher's story is different, the central themes of the study, which speak to the complexity of risk-taking and engagement for second language teachers and students, are evident within these accounts. This chapter, along with Chapter Five, in which I examine the research group as a source of procedural knowledge about teacher research, and Chapter Six, in which I analyze these themes as the knowledge constructed during the study, present the results of the study from three complementary perspectives.

Before presenting individual accounts, it is appropriate to describe the pertinent characteristics of the nine teachers who participated in the study. These volunteer teacher participants were all women of European descent who had grown up and been educated in Canada. Six members of the group were teaching at the secondary level at the time of the study, and three at grades 5 through 7. So amongst the approximately sixty-five secondary FSL teachers in the district dealing with the first year of the new curriculum, six, or approximately ten percent, enrolled in this group. Those three teachers who joined the group, from the potentially more than two hundred who taught FSL at the elementary

level, taught in generalist contexts where French was one of several subjects for which they were responsible. It is interesting to note, however, that these three elementary teachers all had life circumstances that gave them a personal interest in French language and culture. Although no information is available about reasons for these levels of interest in the group, the response may be indicative of the lack of familiarity with teacher inquiry as a mode of professional development.

Seven of the nine teachers in the study speak French as a second or additional language themselves. One secondary teacher, Carole, is Francophone from Quebec, and used French as her principal language of communication in her personal and professional interactions with the group and with me. One elementary teacher, Linda, from a French Canadian family, grew up in a French minority community in British Columbia and attended an elementary school where French was the language of instruction. English is presently her principal language of communication. This situation contrasts with that of the Immersion teaching population, where the vast majority of the teachers in the district are Francophone. This factor of ethnicity is brought up by two of the teachers in the study, Carolyn and Carole, as significant to their experiences in different ways.

With regard to gender, of the approximately sixty-five secondary FSL teachers in the district, fewer than ten are men. This is an indication that second language teaching is a vocation that calls more women to it than men, even in the secondary setting where more teachers are men. The participants who volunteered to become part of this group were all women. A discussion of how the style of discourse in the group might be viewed from a feminist perspective

is included in Chapter Five, the story of the group.

Table Two provides a summary of the grade levels, years of experience, and initial research foci of the group members. The fact that all the participants were experienced, many with over ten years of teaching, is also interesting. The initial research foci have been listed here as they were first expressed by the participants, but it must be understood that these foci changed and evolved for these teachers throughout the study. From my analysis of these evolving foci and the discourse of the participants I was able to identify risk-taking and engagement as the two unifying themes about second language teaching and learning which emerged from the study. It should also be noted that after discussion of the issues related to the diffusion of the results of the study, the group decided to identify themselves fully in the text of this thesis. Their full names are listed in the Acknowledgements.

TABLE TWO:

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

	YRS. EXP.	LEVEL	INITIAL FOCUS
Carole	+ 10	Grades 8-11	Student engagement in learning
Carolyn	+ 10	Grades 8-11	Authenticity of classroom learning
Elaine	+ 20	Grades 8-10	Teacher and student reactions to change
Janey	+ 10	Grades 9-11	Transition to and organization of the new program.
June	+ 10	Grades 5-7	Learner and teacher comfort level and risk-taking
Linda	+ 5	Grades 5-6	Motivation, student and teacher comfort level
Marina	+ 5	Grades 8-10	Student accountability, maximizing the use of French
Pat	+ 10	Grades 5-7	Evaluation, accountability
Sally	+ 20	Grades 8-11	Risk-taking and change for herself and her students

The discourse of all nine women in the group is integrated throughout the discussion of the workings of the group in Chapter Five and of the themes in Chapter Six. Because of the length of the individual case studies, however, I have chosen to include in this chapter only three of the nine individual accounts that were actually prepared and shared with the participants. Although these accounts only stand for themselves and are not representative of others, I wished to provide for the varied perspectives of both secondary and elementary, and Francophone and non-Francophone teachers in this thesis. I have chosen therefore to include the case studies of Sally, an Anglophone secondary teacher, June, an Anglophone elementary teacher, and Carole, a Francophone secondary teacher. There are interesting and complex stories to tell around all the participants' experiences. Among the three case studies which are highlighted here, readers will glean a comprehensive understanding of the diverse and contextualized nature of the personal and professional life experiences, beliefs and perspectives that teachers bring to the curriculum as well as being introduced to the emergent themes of the study.

All three of these stories demonstrate how issues related to the curriculum are not easily separated from issues related to self. Schecter and Ramirez (1992) found the same within the research group of second language teachers with whom they worked. The complexity of these teachers' experiences and the juxtaposition of the personal and the professional is reminiscent of the women in Bateson's stories of herself and three other "professional" women in Composing a Life (1989). When reading each of the these accounts of lived experience, readers are invited to compare the experiences, beliefs, theories and practices of these teachers with their own. In

this way new understandings are potentially constructed by every reader.

B. Sally

Sally had been a secondary teacher for more than twenty years, with experience teaching in small rural communities as well as in the large suburban district where the study takes place. At the time of the study she was teaching in the FSL program in a large high school in a predominantly upper middle class area of the district. She had also taught English and Social Studies in the Immersion Program. Sally had grown up in Winnipeg where she recalled the presence of French in the community as exciting. She was trained as an English teacher but her love of the language drew her to teach French. Sally spoke at length in our first interview about her beliefs about the contribution of second language learning experiences to the education of her students. Her convictions stemmed from her own personal and professional experience as a language teacher, a lover of travel, and a person who had experienced living in other cultures. The notion of participating in additional languages and cultures as a way of broadening one's life experience was very important for Sally.

> I somehow think I am giving kids a key to opening up a really
> special and different life. I don't even know what it could be, but it
> is just really opening onto things they haven't had. (Int.#1)

> Tolerance of another culture is really important to me. Learning
> about such a thing as ethnocentrism by comparing it with the fact
> that something else is different, that people do things a different
> way. I guess it's almost a Social Studies approach to language that I
> really like. I also really like the communications idea, allowing you to
> communicate with somebody else with a very different background and
> a whole different set of experiences. It is kind of a magic code. It has a
> little specialness to it to me that way. Cultural goals are really important to
> me. (Int.#1)

Sally relates the goals of second language learning to developing a spirit of risk-taking and a way of being in the world which is related to understanding and appreciating multiple world views.

> And I have travelled enough to know that often when you travel people will allow you to speak in your language and they can speak in their language, because they will use the language of comfort. So I think you learn to understand somebody speaking in that other language and to not feel threatened by it. You have made a major major shift in terms of culture. Number one you probably have a more positive feeling towards that culture; you don't feel why on earth are they speaking French. Instead you feel like you are going to pick up the gist of it. And you are going to feel positive towards those people. (Int.#1)

Sally's beliefs about second language education value both the process of learning, the experience of participating in a language and culture, as well as the product, second language competence as a lifelong skill. She understands the interrelatedness of the emotional and cognitive dimensions of language learning personally (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) as she has lived the experience of being a participant in another language and culture.

As an experienced teacher who had lived through at least two other previous second language curriculums approaches, Sally was nevertheless enthusiastic about the new curriculum. She had volunteered more than two years before the official beginning of the district implementation to be part of a committee formed to study the foundations of the communicative-experiential curriculum and to make recommendations concerning materials and professional development needs for the district as a whole. Sally was therefore integrally involved in the process of FSL curriculum change at the district level from the start. The semester previous to the beginning of the research study, she had participated in the SFU Comet course on the implementation of the

FSL curriculum. Sally appreciated these opportunities to focus on the implementation with a group of colleagues, and hence decided to continue with the research group in the new semester.

> I would say the one [aspect] that has most affected my change has been the workshop last summer and the continuing course in the Fall. That was an enormous help to me. I find it would have been really difficult for me even though I was on the committee to have been left alone in my classroom with this pretty book with all these ideas which are now becoming manageable, but at the beginning they were quite--. Doing it and having the support of going back and listening to other people. This is how I figured it out. (Int.#1)

It is striking that even though Sally was a member of the district curriculum committee which had studied the meaning of the communicative-experiential approach in theory, she felt that it was only through living the experience of putting the curriculum into practice that one could begin to make real sense of its meaning. In the first interview she spoke about not being sure of what to expect. This indicates that Sally viewed the real curriculum in terms of what would happen with the students in the classroom rather than in terms of the statements in the curriculum guide or directions for using the commercial materials. She expressed the feeling of tension about not really knowing how it would all work out. This was a period that demanded a high degree of risk-taking on her part.

> Even though I was on the committee, I must say I have a real difficulty predicting the future. I mean, I really don't know what I expected until I started it. I guess I wanted something more interactional and I expected we'd get that. I wanted something where the information was more up to date... And I certainly have a lot of material, but making a decision about what is effective for whom, I didn't always want to make. So I was wondering what it was going to be like. (Int.#1)

Although Sally's beliefs and participation on the district steering

committee attested to her commitment in the goals of the new curriculum, the lived experience of the first semester was for Sally a time of transition and tension. It seemed she had an implicit set of expectations about how the communicative curriculum should be and was judging herself against this theoretical image, as well as remaining concerned about what she was supposed to cover in terms of the language syllabus.

> I had a vision that it was going to be a real--. Each little group of students was going to have a sort of project, and they were going to carry through that project, and they were going to present that project at the end of each unit. I had this idea. Quite frankly, I have not been able to carry that off with every unit. It has just been too much for me to do. I am starting a new semester next week, and I am wondering if I will be able to do more of that because the kids sure like it. I find myself getting bogged down again in covering what I feel I need to cover. Rather than letting go and having the experience be what they need to do. I think that might be quite common among teachers. (Int.#1)

Sally's thinking about the implementation was very much affected by the reactions and the opinions of her students. Despite her feelings of being at risk, Sally noticed the benefits of the new approach for the level of motivation and comprehension of her students. Her evaluation of the success of the new approach was guided by her goal that the curriculum should provide experiences which engage the students in learning the language.

> And when they try, they all try. This is an immense difference with me. (Int. #1)

> And, the kids really do try to speak French, and obviously there is a big difference between comprehension and production. But they are still trying. (Int. #1)

On the other hand, the particular backgrounds of the students with whom Sally was working led to some unexpected complications. The school where

Sally was teaching also offers the French immersion program and consequently in her grade 11 classes Sally found that typically one third of the students had previously been in the Immersion program. This scenario was common for the school, as a significant number of Immersion students transfer from Immersion to the regular program at this level (Lewis, 1986). Many of these students are at ease with the language at this point, usually demonstrating excellent comprehension skills and an ability to converse, read and write somewhat fluently. In traditional FSL programs with a sequential grammar driven syllabus students were not called upon to use their oral communicative skills frequently. In the context of the new communicative curriculum, therefore, several complications arose. The purely FSL students felt particularly threatened by the ability of the former Immersion students to deal with the comprehension and oral aspects of the new program. When Sally suggested the former Immersion students do more complex projects because of their abilities, some felt they were being asked to do more work than the others. In small group work the former Immersion students dominated. Ironically, the fact that a significant number of the students in the class actually spoke French became problematic instead of beneficial for the social dynamics of the class. Issues about who was privileged in the context of the new curriculum had an impact on the reactions of the students.

> They [the grade 11 students] were very nervous a lot of them about this. They were up in arms. Of course, the grade 11s tend to be up in arms about things anyway. But they were up in arms that this was going to be more of an oral approach; they were up in arms that they had so many French Immersion kids in their class that this would be so unfair because these kids could speak, and they had never practised speaking before and now they were going to be expected to do the same things that these kids had already learned. How were they going to pass? And these tapes were all impossible, and the books had all this reading in them that they had never had before. They just went on and on. (Int. #1)

In general, Sally found that the new curriculum involved changes in expectations about the nature of the engagement with learning asked of students. Some of the senior students found that being asked to communicate and collaborate in the language classroom was not what they were used to, and they found the new expectations confusing. They interpreted this discomfort as threatening to their academic standings. It seems the secondary school system still operates very much as a market economy.

> They hear this university business coming down; you have to get
> As or at least Bs... My grade 11s are quite suspicious of being
> co-operative rather than competitive. (Group Mtg. #1)

> Some students as well are really resentful of the fact that they are now
> going to have to speak French and not just have to write sentences that
> up until then have been getting them As. It is a much more unknown
> territory for kids who had control over the idea before. They
> thought they could memorize things; they knew they could get As
> by memorizing. They now cannot get As necessarily in the   same
> way, so different kids may end up with the marks. The marks may
> sort out a little differently. (Int#1)

Sally learned from the experience of teaching with this curriculum in the first semester that there can be a significant gap between the curriculum as represented in the documents and as it is lived out with real students. In this first semester of working with the program she spoke frequently of her ongoing discussions and negotiations with the students in her attempts to make sense of the shifts in expectations with them. At the same time, Sally and her students experienced stress related to clashes between the spirit of the new approach and the constraints of the secondary system. In the old program, comprised of discrete exercises and homogeneous expectations, success was predictable and easy to measure with paper and pencil tests. Sally became concerned that the traditional methods of summative evaluation, including the semester end

formal exam schedule, were a betrayal of the spirit of the new curriculum. Her strong commitment to the goals of the curriculum led her to feel disappointed with herself.

> It is semester exam time. Which is in effect frustrating, because this whole program is not directed towards an exam, whereas the other programs have been. And I guess I feel a little disappointed towards the end here, that that is my last thing with them is to be talking about the exam. And it feels like I am not quite doing what I said I was doing. I feel like I've let myself down. (Int.#1)

This concern is expressed in a feeling of of personal disappointment that, after all, the system would force her to distort the spirit of the communicative curriculum, to which she had become committed in her belief that it had the potential to offer a richer educational experience to students.

> I am taking it on myself when I really shouldn't. But I wish there were a way of coping with this thing, which there often is with French. Of an academic subject versus a subject where you are developing at your own rate. Like when I talked to the grade 11s today at their interviews. I said to one girl, "Your French, the way you speak it, it is lovely but it is at a quite a lower level than some of the others. But you have a really good basis. It doesn't sound like you have really spoken French before very much, but you have a real good potential for it." I wish I could leave it at that, instead of giving her 16 out of 30 or something... It [success] has to be compared with the other kids and with the system in general. But for herself she just has made an enormous change and she is going to Quebec this summer travelling, and she says she is just so excited to go and practise this French that she has learned. You know, which to me, is all I want to hear. That to me is the exam, a trip to Quebec (Int.#1)

I pause in this account at this point to comment on how the two themes of risk-taking and engagement emerge in Sally's interpretation of her experiences. Issues around risk-taking became important because both she and her students were faced with the unknown, and experienced tension in trying out a new way of viewing second language learning. New rules for what counts as knowledge

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in the classroom and who has control over that knowledge were being negotiated. Also, the nature of the engagement in learning assumed in the new approach changed the expectations made of students, and conflicted with assumptions about the nature of learning as a commodity in the secondary school setting. Within the research group each member was asked to identify for herself a research focus related to the new curriculum. Faced with the realization that this change in approach to the teaching and learning of FSL within a secondary school system was very challenging for teachers and students, Sally's research focus became a self-monitoring process to prevent herself from, as she put it, "falling back". This focus represented a search for personalized self-knowledge on Sally's part, a challenge to herself to follow through with her engagement with the new curriculum. She explored what she meant by this during our the first interview. She sought support in the research group because the group was composed of teachers who were interested in engaging with the new curriculum.

> Well, mine [research focus] initially was about not going back to the way I used to do things. I can see I am having a bit of a problem with that, but after having talked to you and other people about it, I think some of that is okay. (Int.# 1)

> To keep going forward with the program, not to again fall back into--, because really in our school I feel there is not a lot of support for this new approach. For all sorts of reasons, it is easier for people if I would just please stick to what has always been done. Exams. Structured classes. Giving percentages. Giving them their marks out of the computer. Why can't you do this? Everybody else does. It is just easier to go along with what has been happening. And that is why the report [the Comet assignment], and the groups [Comet group and teacher research group] I was in are so important to me. (Int.#1)

Within the context of this focus, there were elements that pulled Sally in

two conflicting directions. She believed in the new approach, so felt the need to do things the way they were supposed to be in theory, to be true to the method and so as not to disappoint herself. On the other hand, she realized the need to listen to the students' reactions and to take their perceptions into account.

> I think maybe I have toned my thing down a little bit, and I think maybe I am disappointing myself a bit, but also the grade 11s in a way I think are happier with it [balancing the communicative activities some direct work with grammar]. I think I have learned more in a way what the grade 11s are about because of teaching this course. I think I am learning that they really think. They really do not want to do what is called baby stuff, and they really want to learn what they think Is important to them. (Int.#1)

Life Moves On: Second Semester

Because Sally's school followed a semester system, the second half of the year was distinct from the first. There were new classes, a new beginning, and Sally found the attitude of her new students radically different!

> The implementation in the second semester was not a challenge in any way to me. It was a real change. And whether it was that I don't have the 11s but I have 10s. But I don't think so. The 10s seem to have just bought this, whereas I was constantly challenged by the last class. (Int#2)

I found it tempting in my interpretation of Sally's experience to consider this change as progress towards the perfect implementation of the curriculum. Here was a success story. But without detracting from Sally's capacity as a teacher to have dealt with uncertainty, to have listened carefully to her students' perceptions and to have found ways to introduce the principles of the new curriculum skillfully and with sensitivity, the happy situation in the second semester should not be interpreted as an indication of a linear progression

towards a fixed end. The fact that in the second semester students arrived with a greater degree of readiness, in my opinion, means that the dispositions of students towards the kinds of learning expected in any classroom play a crucial role in how knowledge ends up being constructed in that classroom. Throughout the discourse of all the participants highlighted in this thesis readers will see the impact of the nature of the students on the feelings of the teachers about their abilities to carry out the principles of the curriculum, and therefore on their research issues.

In this way the context of the second semester made a difference for Sally's research focus. Initially she was concerned about "not falling back". Towards the end of the year she found that this focus had evolved in interesting ways. First, Sally moved beyond concerns about the right way to do the program and, for example, decided to take an approach that included some direct grammar teaching, without feeling that she needed to apologize for her own judgement as a teacher. She began to take more control of the curriculum for herself.

> My focus has been on change, the dynamics of change and I feel like it is getting sharper with the second semester, and I think the semester system has really helped me. I also observed my own educational philosophy emerge a little more clearly, being tested by the new system. (Group Mtg.#2)

> I'm really glad I focussed on it [not falling back]. I learned a lot about that idea, and about myself and about the way things go. Number one, I think fear is often worse than what is actually going to happen. Especially if you understand that you have a fear about something. That likely you're going to look after it. I learned how to categorize certain things. And maybe it's a rationalization, but I learned that I am not giving up certain things for any program. And that is I am going to do some grammar with the kids, period. (Group Mtg. #2)

Sally's concerns about testing and evaluation within the secondary system begin to resolve themselves in the second semester as well. She began to include the students more readily in the decision-making process about grades. She seemed to have reexamined her assumptions about the role of summative evaluation in the communicative curriculum.

> Exams. There were issues around exams. I've changed that somewhat in my mind since the first semester. Students are very happy, I'm finding, to have chapter tests that are similar to what they've done in class. They don't seem to upset them. The marks seem to be pretty much the same as what they're getting all along the way. And they do have their projects to do anyway. And, I've asked them, "Okay, what do you guys want for your percentages? You know, what are the things we're going to be looking at, and how do you want to divide the percentages up?"... That's fine. I'm happy to do things that way. I guess I'm not as worried that I've failed if I give them a test. I don't feel that way now. (Int.#2)

By the middle of the third semester of using the new approach Sally's knowledge about evaluation issues in her classes had evolved to consider including future learner-centered strategies such as student-led parent conferences based on student portfolios. In this way she set herself up for new unknown territory. By the end of the study Sally had evolved from seeing the challenge as "not falling back" to seeing the process of implementation as "moving towards" what she valued about the new approach, relying on her judgement as a teacher for guidance. She began to concentrate more on the value of project work in the experiential-communicative curriculum. She had changed from feeling overwhelmed by the project concept to seeing it as an important vehicle for engaging her students. She recognized this way of working as demanding a lot of engagement and a certain risk for herself, but she also recognized the power of this approach in increasing student

investment in the curriculum.

> The projects themselves have really helped the implementation. Now that I'm convinced that the projects are something that's worthwhile in terms of time because they do take quite a bit of time. The kids like them so much but they are very demanding. Like we haven't been able to get the VCR. I didn't know enough about the video camera for some of the grade 8 projects at the time when they needed to do them. They needed to redo them, and they just did it. ...It's not me chasing after them. But the implementation is coming from them as well as from me which I did not expect. So I'm being supported by them as well. (Int#2)

In addition, Sally began to see the project approach as more inclusive of students who previously showed little interest in FSL. This increasing enthusiasm for the learning opportunities that the students experience through the project approach continued to be reflected in Sally's description of significant events in her classroom in the third and final interview. She gave an example of how projects became the vehicle for students to bring artifacts and knowledge from their own lives into the French classroom.

> This research project with grade 11s. I haven't done that much before. And I'm happy with it. You know, I'm happy with where it could go. You know, this is the first time. So you know, each time you learn how to do a little bit better and you learn how you have the projects of the other kids to show... Like that little boy bringing that booklet from the Punjab in English and the map that he found in French. And... Dave? Bringing the Indian food that he's going to bring and they're copying out the recipes and translating them [from English to French], and there's not this attitude that you see, you know, dumbness. That they seem to be really appreciating it. I mean, that means enormous amounts to me. I mean, it makes me feel like the job of teaching French finally is coming around to the kind of job I want. (Int.#3)

This ongoing process of implementation for Sally was guided by a sense of the excitement about language learning that can happen when students take risks to communicate authentically using the second language. These moments

for Sally are "alive" and full of "electricity in the air" (Group Mtg.#3). Practising flexibility to be able to work with students to create contexts for this kind of language learning where the curriculum is jointly constructed became increasingly more important to her.

> The flexibility that we are getting I feel is coming from the students. Because I sort of hand the same stuff out and I get different stuff back. I can't keep teaching the same way. They will do projects and I am just so amazed by that. It forces me to change and get with it. So there is a real exchange of ideas and I think it's very influenced by the students. (Group Mtg.#3)

Sally came to evaluate the success of the curriculum through the reactions and input of her students. Student engagement and personalization of the language became the central notions of what makes this curriculum "better" for the long term, and Sally integrated this understanding with the assurance that students will still come to understand the structure of the language at the same time.

> And the fact that language is learnable, you know, and the respect thing. Like those grade 11s, they, as you can see, are tricky... It's a ground up kind of thing. It's a respectful way of doing things I think. It draws in a lot of people and allows them to offer what they have. Which I think really goes well if we can continue you know, and get that idea. And as for the grammar part, I think the grammar is going just fine. (Int#3)

These events and Sally's sense-making process around them are part of a larger story, that of Sally's ongoing lifelong construction of knowledge as a teacher. The end to the story imposed by the end of the research period is artificial. At the start of the study Sally sought to duplicate a theoretical construct of the communicative curriculum which she held, but wasn't sure about how to put into practice. By the end of the study she came to see her teaching as "moving towards" the new curriculum at the same time, realizing that there was

no perfect program to be achieved. She learned about the importance of the dispositions of the students in the whole process. The realization that curriculum implementation is continuous and never perfectly achieved seems at once reassuring and disquieting for Sally. She likened the experience of being a teacher sometimes to that of being a single mother like herself (Int#3). One battles feelings of isolation and powerlessness, and guilt when things are less than perfect. She also comes to understand that she has become engaged in a continuous process of asking herself questions, and of problematizing her practice.

> Well, I was asking myself this morning- what would it take for me
> to be satisfied with what I was doing? (Group Mtg.#3)

An important part of Sally's conclusions about her experiences also included her reflections about being part of the teacher researcher group. Sally sought out opportunities during the implementation process in the school district to become part of teacher committees and groups such as the research group because she found that these groups provided her with support in what she described as a period of uncertainty. She saw herself as part of a community of teachers who were interested in one another's practice and in one another's learning. Sally described this experience as a welcome antidote to the isolation she often felt as a teacher. Her comments indicate a renewed sense of engagement with teaching and a sense of participation in a teaching community.

> But I do know that I've got more energy for teaching than I've had in
> a good ten years. That the students I'm relating to really nicely. And
> part of it comes from and I think this is really crucial for me, a lack of
> feeling of isolation. When I go and listen to other language
> teachers' stories..., I am so impressed by the backgrounds of the
> different people and where they have got their interest in the language,
> where they have built up their experience, and their humanistic view of

life. So that has been really nice for me in terms of validation of my own belief system. I think the hardest thing about teaching, I'm going to repeat it, is the isolation. ... I love the kids, there is no problem with that. I love them. But at the end of the day it's really great to have somebody who has some in depth knowledge of what you're doing and that is rare. Because everybody, we're all in our own classrooms, we're all really busy. And we just don't have the time to sit down and say oh, I've been doing this or that... And I wish it were something that were more built in to our system in general. I wish that we had more of a professional development long term, instead of more of a survival mode, which is what it is a lot of the time. (Int.#3)

Summary

In this section of each of these accounts I summarize what I consider to be the contribution of each teacher's understandings constructed from lived experience to the central themes about teaching and learning identified in this study. As a result of this period of implementation of a communicative-experiential curriculum in her practice, Sally came to understand that within her teaching she was not prepared to abandon completely one set of priorities for another. She developed strategies for living with the tensions inherent in a multi-dimensional communicative curriculum. In her evolving understanding of the curriculum. Sally shifted from feeling guilty about not living up to a theoretical construct of the curriculum to defending the preservation of some conventional grammar teaching as a viable part of the students' understandings about language and culture. At the same time she became more engaged in the process of a project-driven curriculum, helped by the context of the second semester where her students demonstrated greater levels of engagement themselves in language learning through this approach. The project approach proved to be more inclusive of students because it facilitated personalized language learning. By balancing the goals of the curriculum and paying close

attention to her students' learning, Sally went beyond "the tyranny of the method" (Pennycook, 1989; Legutke and Thomas, 1991; Kumaravadivelu, 1994) to a more in depth understanding of her own joint construction of the curriculum with her students.

Sally's understandings also contribute to the notion of the negotiation of meaning in the communicative curriculum. Sally became more and more willing to negotiate the content and processes of the curriculum with her students, both in regards to aspects such as criteria for evaluation and in the choice of projects and communicative activities. This allowed both herself and her students to heighten their engagement in their own learning. She interpreted the curriculum quite differently with different groups of students, and was beginning to view this process of negotiation in a positive light, not as a problem but as an opportunity to create meaningful experiences for everyone. As Sally continued to reexamine her own beliefs, the more she seemed to value the importance of creating conditions where students gained a sense of ownership over their second language learning experiences (Stevick, 1980 in Legutke &Thomas, 1991).

> So it's not a matter of nobody caring, it's a matter of a lot of people caring. (Int.#2)

During one of my visits to Sally's classroom, I was struck with how excited Sally became about her grade 11 students talking about their childhood toys, because they took some real risks and stretched their language skills to talk about their personal lives in the classroom. Sally seemed increasingly positive about the feeling of ownership that students were experiencing from being able to communicate about real things that mattered to them in another

language. Even though Sally was part of a committee which studied the theory of the communicative-experiential curriculum and prepared for its implementation, she only came to grips with its meaning through experiences with her students. Sally recognized that the nature of the students in each teaching and learning context shaped the curriculum, and that she also shaped the curriculum through her engagement with it. In this way she transformed the curriculum by making meaning of it for herself and with her students (Aoki, 1984; Ruddock,1984).

This account of Sally's experiences should not be considered an example of the linear implementation of theory into practice, however. Reshaping curricular goals can throw the system, teachers and students off balance. Sally experienced a period of transition where she felt uncomfortable and where she struggled to regain control, to understand and to be able to defend what she was doing. Towards the second year of implementation, however, Sally was prepared to give up control once again and continued to try new innovations, based on increased confidence in the knowledge she had constructed of the communicative-experiential approach and a desire to make learning contexts ever more powerful for students. This notion of teaching as maintaining an ongoing tenuous relationship between feeling in control and giving up that control by putting oneself in situations where one feels at risk is demonstrated by Sally's story. Sally learned to integrate her own beliefs, to attend to her students' learning and to view the process of implementing curriculum as a continuous moving target.

C. June

June is an experienced teacher who, at the time of the study, taught in the Early Intermediate (Grades 4-6) program in a large triple track (English program/Francophone/Late Immersion) school in the north of the district. During the first year of implementation of the curriculum June elected to teach FSL to a neighbouring Grade 6 class as part of her assignment. During the second year she taught FSL in her own Grade 5 class. June's personal and professional background contributed to her enthusiasm for including second language learning experiences in the common curriculum at the elementary level. June had spent three years of her adolescence in France. She had majored in French at university and had completed her teacher education program as an elementary generalist teacher with an interest in FSL. June's perspective on Canadian language policy stems from her experience of having lived in several regions of Canada and in Europe. She believes English and French, besides being the two official languages of Canada, are important international languages as well.

> I think French is valid. I think it is valid all across Canada because
> it is a part of our national heritage. A part of our Federal heritage. I
> don't think it's enough, but it is a start. And there are lots of children who
> who will go on to learn a Pacific Rim language. Or who will maintain their
> mother tongue, or who can retrieve it at a later date. I don't think French is
> a substitute for someone's mother tongue. I think that the other
> languages are very valuable, but in Canada, having lived all the way
> across Canada and lived in Quebec, and lived in France, and around
> Europe where lots of people know four languages and just don't bat an
> eye, French and English are still more important. (Int#1: 65)

June's beliefs about language education included broader issues than just classroom concerns. June was able to clearly articulate beliefs which combined the educational aims of second language education with a sensitivity

to issues of language and culture in the increasingly diverse community which the schools in the district served.

> Well, I know that a language is a way of thinking. That speech is a
> way of thinking about the world, a way of perceiving the world. And
> I think that flexibility is very very important in thinking. And if you
> learn a second language it increases the flexibility of your mind.
> And it also can't help but increase your multicultural tolerance. It can't
> help but do that because you are seeing things from a different point of
> view and you experience the world in some very subtly different ways. I
> think it is really exciting to learn another language because there is a
> whole other group of people that you can communicate with. I don't think
> that dealing with the Japanese in English is like dealing with them in
> Japanese. I can't imagine that it would be the same. We're dealing with
> these kids, that we've got, in English. It is not the same, we are dealing
> with their parents in English. It is not the same as dealing with their
> parents in Punjabi. I'm sure. It [language] is just is a bond that brings
> people together. (Int#1: 65)

An important part of June's teaching context included her involvement in the bilingual ambiance of her school. She felt that the FSL students benefited from the models of the language with which they had contact through the Francophone students. For June personally, she understood what it meant to take risks as a language learner and to engage in the culture of the speakers of the language, even in the context of the staff room.

> And there is another benefit too. And that is that I learn more
> French every day. Because I sit with them [the Francophone teachers] in
> the staff room. At first I tried very hard, but it took me four months to
> acknowledge that I actually could speak French after I was here.
> ...And at first I'd look at people and try to understand their conversation,
> and finally I gave up doing that and I thought ,oh well, you know, I'll just
> occasionally, when I feel like it, sit and have lunch with them. Mind my
> own business, and sit and have lunch. And it sort of went in one ear and
> out the other and gradually I improved and developed my confidence so
> that I could practise, and people are very respectful about my practice
> and about other people's practice and they'll teach me and they are
> very generous. The French folk are very generous about helping
> us. (Int.#1; 125)

June was at one time in her career a Faculty Associate with the teacher education program at SFU, where she worked in a team of Faculty members and Faculty Associates responsible for a module of student teachers. During this time she was introduced to the work of Gattegno (1972, in Stern, 1983) in Mathematics and Foreign Languages. Gattegno was a theorist and practitioner who developed an approach to second language methodology called the Silent Way. In our first interview June acknowledged the part that Gattegno's ideas about learning had played in the formation of her own theories.

> Gattegno is dead now. He was really interested in what's basic to learning. He was really interested in the teacher looking at themselves as a learner, not flying above the students, trying to stuff their throats, but really to draw out awareness. He was really interested in developing the awareness of a student; he was really interested in building on the skills a student already had. If you were working on counting, you always have your fingers with you. And we have had them since we were born, and we have used them since we were born for all kinds of things. So he was interested in people using their fingers as tools, you know, that kind of thing. He was interested in using our awareness of language of our mother tongue, And studying, he taught teachers how to study how they learned the mother tongue, and then using those tools and strengths that a kid already has in learning a second language. So really developing a strong sense of self and working out... You're starting with what you know and working out instead of imposing your will on a student. It was very much acknowledging, engaging and respecting the will of the student and engaging that person's will, and building on that. (Int#1)

When asked about her personal approach to teaching FSL, June explained that she had more or less made up her own program in the past, based on her understanding of Gattegno's Silent Way approach. She demonstrated the confidence and the knowledge to be able to create her own program.

> I did throw out the old program last year, because I found that after two years of working with "avoir", nobody understood it. Nobody was able to use it. If I didn't have a program I would go to the Silent Way. As much as I could. And I would have kids

building sentences and working on structures. And working at the
same time on reading and speaking and writing as much as they
could with as little language as possible and reading it. And have
it as much as possible based on what they know, things around
them that they know. So it would be developing of sounds
and being able to use the sounds to express the meaning in their
environment. (Int#1)

Despite her application of this personal approach which she found valid

the previous year, June was interested in learning about the new

communicative-experiential curriculum, and elected to become a pilot teacher

of the new materials. Because of her personal theoretical base and her

experience she had high expectations of what a good FSL program should be

able to offer to students. She personalized the goals of the curriculum with her

own present FSL learners in mind.

Well it has been a really positive experience. I had goals when I
set out, my goals were not to train kids to be completely bilingual.
That was not one of my goals. And I haven't achieved that. ...I wanted
them to get to grade 8 and want to take French. I wanted them to not say
"I don't do French". So I wanted them to be positive; I wanted them to feel
good about it. And I wanted them to learn some language, be able to
read some and write some, and speak. And with "Les animaux de
compagnie", [the theme she was teaching at the time], that was
achieved. They are all very positive about French, they enjoy it. I don't
know if they look forward to it, but they certainly accept it. And they don't
growl. I go in and there is definitely a really positive atmosphere in there.
And it is just a thrill. (Int#1)

June measured the success of the implementation not so much in terms of the

outcomes in the curriculum guide but rather against what she had observed

about the affective engagement of this particular group of learners, based on

their comfort level with the activities.

This is to a Grade 6 class, half of whom had exceedingly little
French... You know, they don't get anxious. They don't say what
does that mean? They are more relaxed with it and these are, I

mean, those kids are just so different from what they were when they first started. (Int#1)

June gave examples of the ways in which these communicative activities drew upon the students' life experiences and engaged students emotionally. It was also evident that June's skills as an experienced teacher played a role in making the activities accessible to her students.

"Les animaux de compagnie" was a wonderful introduction to these guys. Because I brought my dog in, I brought my gerbil in. And they all visited with my dog with the gerbil. And it just softened them right up. It is so close to their hearts, they just love it. You know, they need, it was like home; they could discuss something that they loved, they loved their pets. And so it was something very close to their hearts. Something very very real to them. So that's one, the topic, was close to them, very important, very student- based. The activities were slow. They were slow moving and carefully done so that the kids got, they were interested in finding out what they had to do....Like if you had to go to somebody and say "Tu as un animal preféré? Qu'est- ce que c'est?" And if you had to do that around the whole class 30 times and you had to write it on a class sheet, they are very interested in what everybody else thinks. And so they really care. That's very important to them. You are giving them something to do which is very important to them. They will be with you. They'll do it. They want to do it. They want to participate in that. It is very important to them. (Int.#1)

June was aware that she had chosen to nurture attitudinal goals at this point, realizing that the affective side of the FSL curriculum needed careful attention before the structure of the language would matter to the students.

Well I am not really sure how much language they really acquired. I know they have some things like "j'aime", they know "tu aimes", I mean they do or they don't, They know "emission preférée", I'm not too sure how much they know. They recognize it. When I say it to them. I'm not sure how much they can reproduce.... But there is a lot of comprehension and there is a real relaxation with the language which to me is of prime importance at this point. I am not as interested in mastery of structures as I am in attitudinal things. If they are open and willing to learn it, they are going to be willing to take it in grade 8. And follow

through with it. And it is not going to be frightening for them. They will have already have experienced success. (Int#1)

June felt that what gave the program its strength was the opportunity for the students to personalize the language. Although she described the class that she taught the first year as "difficult", she worked together with the classroom teacher to provide a structured and caring environment. Her goals for these students included general social skills as well as language learning.

> Well it is very much student-based. What is happening is very much student-based. It's very much student-directed because the structure of the whole unit is based on what the students are interested in.... It very much involves their whole bodies because they have to get up and do actions to rap songs, and you know they have to move around the room and talk to each other so it is very much teaching social skills too. Because they have to, and they have to work in partners a lot. So, partner work, where they have to interact with other kids, and develop those social skills is really important...So when you touch them with music, and you touch them with pets, and you touch them with caring about them and structure and careful discipline so that they know where the boundaries are, they feel safe and they can respond. (Int.#1)

Although she was an experienced teacher who cared deeply about the goals of second language education, June nevertheless problematized her practice in the first year around "risk-taking" and "suspending judgement".

> Okay, two issues which I feel are important for me and my students. One that you already know of, that is risk-taking. Taking a risk with the unknown for me, and hoping like crazy that they are going to bite and that I am going to engage them in dynamic learning. And two, suspending my own judgement about the curriculum, not jumping to conclusions about it on the first view, and jumping in, taking my time and coming to conclusions about it. (Group Mtg. #1)

One of the most vivid anecdotes that June recounted about her classroom experiences encapsulated the issue of risk-taking for herself and her students.

Through this anecdote she illustrated how both she and her students experienced the feeling of being at risk in their learning.

Can I tell you about one of my things with risk-taking? I go to this class and was trying to get them to do this like frame rap song where they have to substitute different things into their little thing and they're in groups and they have to read it , and they have to present it with some kind of synchronized movement. Well, here they are, working on it, and they're feeling really uncomfortable. While when their discomfort level is high, I just seem to know it and my discomfort level goes up. So I've got 3 kids in the corner who are really struggling and saying: "Oh, this is gay, I don't want to do this, this is gay" and I know right away that they're 3 hulking boys who are really concerned about their emerging sexuality. Like right away, they want to be doing something that is not going to be construed as homosexual because they're not really sure what they are, right? I mean this is a big issue to them. So when the Principal walks in, there's those 3 in the corner, struggling with this discomfort, and I know that and one of them is throwing his shoe up in the air, like this, O.K., and I know what he's doing, but he is on task but it is not visible. So, she breezes through and I freak out. And the next thing I know the Learning Assistant who is the Principal's buddy, is lounging in the doorway watching these kids doing their-- , and different kids are in the corner doing stuff, and these kids are in the corner throwing their shoes in the air and they're working; and then 2 kids who are working on their movements and are going up and down like this in the classroom, [demonstrates] one little, one big, and they're back to back and they link arms and they're lifting each other onto each other's back while they try to get something going and the big one drops the little one on his head. So I have to take him down to the first aid person. Boy, if anybody comes in, is this out of control??? I have to keep asking myself. So I say to them: "I want everybody to sit down and stay there until I come back". So I go back, you know, to the class. I go in; they're all sitting there, waiting for me. All under control, you know. Behaving. All of this has caused me to reevaluate and if hadn't been coming here today, I would have scrapped that thing and I would have gone on to something else. But I'm working on risk-taking; they're all still on task, they're all sitting there, they're not out of control, you know. I know what those boys in the corner are doing. It's a valid thing; they're struggling with real issues that I can see and so I continued. And now they're starting to pull it together. And I've got some groups who are going to do some fine

stuff on Monday. But, man, you know, you get to that discomfort level and lots of people will say, "It didn't work". (Group Mtg.#2)

In the research group, June maintained a sense of humour and an openness about what it was like to feel "out of control", which contributed to the openness of the group as they discussed issues around comfort level. She told many stories from her classroom, and was able to theorize about what it was like to be a teacher based on her experiences.

> We need a panic work sheet for the teachers, I'm panicking ...
> where's the panic worksheet? O,K, check, check, checklist, are
> they on task? O.K. they're on task. Are we disturbing anybody
> else? No, we're not disturbing anybody else. The group in the hall
> is still where you sent them! Yes, they're still there! (Everyone laughs!)
> (Group Mtg.#2)

> An emerging theory is that teaching is not a safe place to be. We
> can't enter it thinking that we're going to be safe, it has to involve
> risk-taking. (Everyone laughs) (Group Mtg. #2: 649).

June's contributions to the group were very open and frank. Towards the end of the first year June confided to the group that because of her energy level and the atmosphere of the class at the end of the year she had returned to "safe" activities in FSL as opposed to continuing with the same level of risk-taking. She called this period, where she lowered her expectations of herself, "taking a break". During this time June was also able to reflect back on the year's implementation and her reactions to its challenges. In the following remark, which is the inspiration for the title of this thesis, she reinforces the tension within which teachers work. This tension of "being a little off balance" is both demanding and necessary.

> We are much more flexible than we would have been say eight months
> ago. There's no question in my mind that all of us here are much more
> flexible. We want to maintain that flexibility. The only way we do is when
> we are a little bit off balance and we're not quite sure. We have to

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maintain that feeling of you know, the moving target. (Group Mtg.#3)

Part Two: The Second Year

As in Sally's case, June's context for implementation changed dramatically in the second year of the study because she was enrolling her own grade 5 class and therefore was teaching French in her own classroom. In addition, she had kept most of her own grade 4 students from the year before, and felt she really knew them well. She was pleased with the learning environment that she had established in the class, and felt that she already had in place an atmosphere of risk-taking and acceptance which facilitated the goals of the second language curriculum. At the same time, June pointed out that she had several special needs students in her class, including a severely disabled student, whom the whole class had learned to integrate into the life of the classroom. When I visited in June's classroom on two occasions, I noticed the strong sense of community in the classroom. June noticed that the differences in issues for herself between the first and second years of using the new materials were related to the students' readiness to engage in learning as well as her familiarity with the program.

> Well, this year I see much more mastery than I saw last
> year. And this year, it's smoother. There is, you know, we
> talked so much about risk taking last year.There's less
> risk. These kids are not, they're not taking risks as far as I can
> tell to the same extent. They're not freaking out. You see, I had
> twelve of these students, including Laura [the disabled child], last
> year. So there are eleven of the same kids that I had last year.
> When they came in they were relaxed. And they set the tone for
> all the other kids. It really made it a lot easier...There's a certain
> rapport and relationship that you establish; they just are
> relaxed. So, I mean you heard Andrew. I mean he said "I
> don't know why but I understand everything you said".
> And they're not frightened. (Int.#3)

With regard to the new curriculum, June identified that success was partially due to quality of the new materials, and partly due to her application of her own knowledge as a teacher. The elements which she attributed to the materials include the choice of potentially engaging themes, the built in opportunities for reinforcement, and the activities which provided for social interaction. Elements which June attributed to her own theoretical and practical knowledge of teaching included sensitivity to the students as individuals, application of some of the principles of the Silent Way, the transfer of techniques which she used in English Language Arts to the FSL context, and the ability to inject an essential element of fun for the teacher and the students. June pointed out that she was not as concerned with tangible products and projects as she was with the processes of second language learning. June felt that the judgement necessary to understand how all these elements fit together comes from an in depth understanding of the role of the teacher. In evaluating the new approach, June identified an issue for herself revolving around the role of the teacher in a learner-centred curriculum. The following is an example of her theorizing about this issue.

> Well one of the aspects that I think is really quite significant in this new program is the fact that it is student-focused, and I think that is wonderful, that's great. But at the same time I think that we have to have a balance and not go extremely, you know, to completely student-focused. You know, there is a place for teacher-directed vocabulary teaching when the kids come and say I need more vocabulary so I can say what I want to say. I mean, that is still student-directed, but it is teacher-directed afterwards. And I don't think we need to feel ashamed or that somehow we are failing by providing or meeting that need. I think there would have to be a real balance. You can't throw out what we already know well, and can do well in favour of that; there has to be a balance. (Int.#1)

June summarized this ongoing search for balance and judgement as "careful

teaching", gained through an in depth understanding of teaching and a sensitivity to the engagement of the learner.

During the period of the study, June found that the research group provided a sort of community of professional interest which she had come to value.

> I'm reading a book on community and reformation of community,
> and it, to me that's sort of what we have... I mean certainly our
> concerns and the issues that we are dealing with together... establish a
> sense of community there. So I think that's what you are talking about.
> It's something really valid for all of us. (Int.#2)

She saw the ongoing nature of the research group as providing a different sort of learning opportunity for teachers than typical inservice.

> One issue would be, you know, how to establish that kind of
> community in the inservices, when they're short. So that people
> feel that they can let their guard down, they can take risks,...they can
> express their real concerns to make it productive for them. So that it is
> productive for them. (Int.#2)

In reflecting on the discussions that transpired in the research group, June felt that the major common issue around implementation shared by the participants was risk-taking. She was convinced of the importance of the kinds of discussions that transpired, even though they were difficult to describe in straightforward terms.

> I don't know what I would say to anybody. I mean, it sounds like a,
> what does it sound like? It sounds hokey and sentimental, but sometimes
> when you discuss these things that are very real, you're talking about
> vulnerability. You know, It does have an emphasis of fakeness; it sort
> of might sound like fake, oh, touchy feely stuff. But if you are really getting
> down to the nitty-gritty about what it means to do something new ... these
> are genuine issues. (Int.#2)

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Summary

June provided us with many examples of how, through her ongoing process of constructing knowledge, she maintained a dialectic relationship between theory and practice which contributed to a deeper understanding of children's educational needs. June integrated previous learning experiences, primarily with her own language acquisition and with Gattegno's theories, into the development of her own theory and practice about the communicative-experiential curriculum. June used this evolving knowledge to evaluate her lived experience as a language teacher and learner. June's practice within the broad framework of the communicative-experiential was highly personalized, and, as in the experience of the other participants, somewhat dependent on the dispositions of the students in each individual learning context .

June spoke with conviction about the most important goal for her in the FSL program, that of engaging the students in learning the language through experiences that involve their emotions and their individual life experiences. For June, creating the conditions for this engagement to take place meant putting aside concerns for mastery until this engagement was somewhat secure. Creating these conditions was a very delicate and complex challenge. Although June clearly placed value on the goals of the communicative-experiential curriculum, she used her teacher judgement to balance "student-centered" activities with "teacher-directed" aspects of her teaching.

June spoke frequently about curriculum implementation as risk-taking. She understood what this meant for her students and herself. According to her, it took courage to leave one's comfort zone and pursue an new ideal which

cannot be fully understood in advance. She supported her students in their risk-taking by carefully considering their readiness for activities. Her role as teacher in mediating the curriculum was crucial. As a teacher she felt supported in this challenge by her participation in the research group, and valued the role of the group in creating conditions where teachers are encouraged to trust their judgement and use their knowledge in constructing the curriculum. June theorized that an essential element of teaching is remaining "just a little off balance", continuously involved in evaluating the best way to proceed towards goals which are ever open to scrutiny. The commonplaces of curriculum, the learner, the teacher, the subject matter and the milieu, are ever shifting in character in second language education, and so must the curriculum as lived and constructed in the classroom. June likened her experience in the research group to participation in a community. If curriculum is best viewed as an ongoing process of meaning-making and risk-taking, then creating spaces for teachers to construct knowledge from their experiences and try on their ideas in groupings sanctioned for these purposes becomes essential (Miller, 1990; Lieberman, 1994).

D. Carole

Carole is a Francophone teacher who was teaching FSL in a large secondary school in the south end of the district at the time of the study. In the 1992-1993 school year she returned from completing a Masters Degree in French Education at a Quebec University to teach FSL 9, 10 and 11. Carole had very broad experience in second language teaching, having worked in the Immersion program in Northern Quebec and in B.C., at both the elementary and secondary levels, as well as teaching FSL at the secondary and post-secondary

levels. Carole and I normally converse in French and so our interviews were conducted in French. Carole joined the research group because of her desire to learn about the new program, and because of her interest In second language pedagogy and research in general.

> Je n'étais pas trop au courant du nouveau programme et, pour moi c'est
> une occasion de réfléchir et puis de prendre le temps de me voir aller
> enseigner ce nouveau programme-là, donc de faire une réflexion
> avec d'autres professeurs au-sujet de ce nouveau programme, et
> c'était aussi pour pouvoir échanger avec d'autres professeurs, au
> niveau de ce programme aussi, mais aussi au niveau de la
> pédagogie de la langue seconde en général. (Int#1)

In the first interview Carole articulated very comprehensively her goals for FSL education. She saw herself in agreement with the aims of the new curriculum. She explained that her personal approach to teaching was to try and involve the students as much as possible in their own learning and to provide opportunities for them to participate in the cultures of the speakers of the language. In this sense Carole's goals were concerned with engagement with the language and culture.

> Oui, ça se rejoint, les buts! Le principal but de nos
> programmes ce serait de vraiment enseigner la langue ... mais
> pas la langue comme un système à enseigner avec les formes
> grammaticales. Il faut aller au-delà de tout ça, faut
> vraiment enseigner la langue comme plutôt une façon de vivre et
> aussi d'essayer de partager la culture avec les étudiants, leur
> faire comprendre et leur faire aussi un peu vivre, en autant qu'on
> peut, cette culture, la culture de la langue seconde, et une bonne
> façon de le faire c'est d'organiser des échanges ou de pouvoir
> être dans un pays ou une province francophone. (Int.#1)

The example Carole gave about exchanges quickly came to mind for her as she had just completed her Masters' thesis on the value of cultural exchanges. Due to her knowledge of theory and practice constructed from academic and

teaching experience, Carole attached great importance to engagement in language learning and teaching. She identified the role of the teacher in facilitating this engagement as her research focus.

> Oui, donc pour moi l'enseignement d'une langue c'est plus que l'enseignement d'un système ou de points de repère grammaticaux hein, et ça demande tout un investissement, autant pour l'enseignante que pour les étudiants parce que y'a toute une composante émotive aussi, c'est pas seulement étudier, mémoriser, et faire le test dans 2 semaines. C'est aussi, on sait ça, on lit ça dans beaucoup de recherches. Si l'étudiant aime la langue, il va apprendre beaucoup plus facilement, il va être beaucoup plus motivé, beaucoup plus intéressé par le cours, et là toute ma question, on va en parler plus loin, mais c'est un peu tout ce qui va rejoindre ma question de recherche, au niveau de la motivation et de l'implication des étudiants. Comment, puis ça, je pense, c'est le défi des profs de langue, comment faire pour motiver leurs étudiants, vraiment les amener à être de bons apprenants. Ca rejoint aussi en gros, le nouveau programme, le "FSL Curriculum and Assessment Framework", ça rejoint aussi tous ces objectifs aussi. (Int.#1)

When I asked Carole about her personal approach to language teaching, she reiterated the ways in which she tried to value participation in the process of learning as much as the results, through her priorities for grading and through her emphasis on project work. She also found this belief in engagement a great challenge to put into practice, however, in the context of the FSL classes she was presently teaching. She sensed that these students thought that second language learning was for an academic elite who intended to go to university, because this was the message that was transmitted through the Grade 11 second language university entrance requirement.

> Je veux qu'ils comprennent qu'ils ont la chance d'apprendre une langue, que c'est pas seulement pour l'élite d'apprendre une langue seconde. C'est pas seulement élitiste, parce que, ça aussi c'est un peu un mythe, je pense, qu'apprendre une autre langue, c'est seulement bien pour les bons étudiants. Et ça je veux qu'ils comprennent que tout le monde peut apprendre une langue et que finalement ce qui est important, c'est que tu aimes, que tu

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aimes apprendre cette langue-là et puis que tu veules et que tu
sois motivé. Donc, ça c'est un peu mon approche et j'essaie.
C'est ça. Toute ma méthodologie est un peu orientée vers comme tous
ces projets-là qu'ils font. (Int#1)

When Carole returned from her leave of absence in Quebec to her
assignment in FSL, she was enthusiastic to find that the district had chosen new
materials and was beginning to implement a curriculum which was more in line
with her beliefs and which reflected the current theories about second language
acquisition that she had been studying in her Masters Program. She thus began
the year with the new program. At the time of the first interview in February,
Carole was feeling frustrated by the fact that after expecting that the new
program would be so much effective, there seemed to be problems in the area
of student involvement. She felt perplexed that she wasn't understanding her
students well enough to deal with their reactions. She had used many
communicative activities with adult learners, and knew them to be powerful.
She felt she lacked experience with this age of learner in this particular context,
and had already drawn strength from the support of her fellow department
members in reflecting on this problem.

Les autres profs qui ont plus d'expérience que moi eux ont tout vu ça
avant et je pense qu'ils ont été moins surpris que moi. Et moi,
j'suis encore sous l'effet du choc parce que je continue à penser
que c'est une méthode extraordinaire; je continue à penser qu'il y
a des idées fantastiques dans cette methode-là, que je trouve ça
intéressant tout ce qu'il y a dans la méthode. Mais les étudiants
embarquent pas toujours, les etudiants sont pas toujours
enthousiastes, les étudiants sont loins d'aimer la méthode puis
j'me dis "Oh!" Ca me fait remettre en question beaucoup. Mais, en
même temps, on va peut-être en reparler plus tard, mais on en
discute ici dans l'école et puis je pense qu'avec les autres
profs, on est arrivé à la conclusion que c'est tout un changement
pour les étudiants et je pense que là aussi, la différence avec moi
c'est que pour moi, c'est pas vraiment un changement, parce que
j'ai beaucoup enseigné comme ça. Quand j'enseigne à UBC,

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j'enseigne comme ça aussi. C'est pour ça que quand j'arrive
dans ma classe de 10e et que j'essaie de les animer là, de
vraiment les motiver, puis que je sens qu'il faut presque que je
deplace des murs des fois pour essayer de leur faire faire des
choses. J'trouve ça difficile, je trouve ça vraiment difficile. (Int#1)

Carole had thus become interested in understanding more about her students'
reticence and in finding ways to help them to become more engaged with their
learning. First she analyzed the perceived problem. Carole learned that the
students were not accustomed to talking about their real lives in French class,
and that they did not associate learning French with talking about things that
were really important to them. Also, they were under the impression that all this
talking going on in small groups wasn't really important because what had been
important in the previous curriculum was written structured work. They were not
associating oral and group work with what counted for grades. Carole felt that it
was understandable that the students resisted changes in what it meant to learn
French in the classroom.

Je leur ai demandé, je leur ai posé la question. Je leur ai fait faire
des évaluations de l'unité et puis, ce que j'ai compris, ce que je
sens c'est que ils ne trouvent pas ça important. Toute cette
implication-là personnelle parce que c'est du travail oral
principalement. Donc, c'est toute une autre attitude, je veux dire, ils ont
été habitués , puis ça c'est aussi un peu notre faute, avec l'autre
méthode, ils étaient habitués seulement à écrire, puis à étudier, puis à
faire des tests, puis ils parlaient très peu. Très peu. Quand ils parlaient,
c'était des jeux. Tandis que là on leur demande vraiment de s'impliquer
puis de parler et puis ils trouvent pas ça important parce qu'on n'a pas
valorisé ça non plus tellement avant; c'est assez récent qu'on valorise
ça, je pense, dans le système scolaire. L'autre raison aussi, je pense, et
puis je vais le voir bientôt parce que j'ai changé mon approche. C'est
que, pour eux le travail oral n'est pas noté. En tous cas, pas aussi
facilement que le travail écrit. Donc, pour eux, si je leur demande de faire
une interaction et ils vont travailler pendant 5-10 minutes, ils vont peut-
être faire une ou deux questions, et puis après ça ils vont commencer à
jaser. Puis, c'est fini! C'est pas plus sérieux que ça. Y'a rien qui paraît,
y'a rien qui est écrit, y'a rien que je ramasse, y'a rien que je note! (Int#1)

Because of her experience of feeling resistance from the students about their willingness to become engaged in the goals of the curriculum, Carole's research focus was to understand the reactions of her students and to find ways to help strengthen their engagement in their learning. She began by implementing a system of points for participation which rendered the necessity to participate orally more concrete for the students. In addition, Carole found that some of the students who used to receive lower grades in the grammatically based program had raised their grades through participation in the new program. On the other hand, those who memorized the grammatical rules easily and could get As in the old program had resisted the more participatory activities of the new program. She wondered whether the new approach appealed more to what she termed a "different learning style" and whether as a result the more academically oriented students would become alienated. Those who were privileged in the old system were likely to object. This leads Carole to wonder if the communicative-experiential approach addressed all, as she termed, "learners' styles".

Depuis janvier-février je pense que c'est avec le nouveau
système de participation, mais aussi j'ai aussi discuté avec eux et
puis aussi les notes ont parlé, parce que les étudiants qui étaient des
'A' l'année passée se sont retrouvés avec des 'B'. Et ça a été
très clair. J'ai dit: "Ecoutez! votre participation, les projets, c'est
pas seulement les tests-là, c'est plus seulement les tests
Et aussi parallèlement à ça, y'avait des étudiants qui avaient des
notes moins intéressantes l'année passée et qui se sont
retrouvés avec des 'B' cette année. Ils étaient très contents. Eux,
ils aiment la méthode; ils réalisent que ils ont plus de chances
de participer, plus de chances d'augmenter leurs notes parce
que c'est plus oral, c'est plus des activités. Mais j'ai vu ça,une
résistance, chez certains étudiants qui étaient vraiment--. Je sais
qu' ils réussissent, c'était des 100% dans les tests, mais ils ne
participent pas presque. Puis, ils n'aiment pas travailler en équipe
ceux-là. Donc, c'est un autre style d'apprentissage ça c'est sûr. Et

ça m'amène ... à remettre en question un petit peu la méthode.
Si j'ai une critique à faire au sujet de la méthode ce serait à ce
niveau-là. C'est que je me demande, peut-être qu'il y a un moyen
d'adapter aussi, mais je me demande si vraiment elle rejoint
tous les styles d'apprenants. Parce que c'est sûr qu'il y a de
l'écriture, qu'il y a un peu de grammaire, mais y'a beaucoup
d'activités orales, y'a beaucoup d'activités d'interaction en
équipes, puis ça aussi faut penser qu'il y a des étudiants qui
n'aiment pas autant, ou sans qu'ils aiment pas autant mais qu'ils
apprennent pas aussi bien de cette façon-là peut- être. (Int.#1)

So during this first year Carole asked herself difficult questions about
engagement, and how to deal with the complexity of wanting to respect the
learning styles of the academically successful students as well as stressing the
process-oriented and co-operative activities of the new curriculum. In this way
she problematized both her own and the formal theoretical assumptions
underpinning the curriculum.

Carole implemented several tentative strategies to deal with her
concerns. Feeling the continued resistance of her Grade 10 classes to talking
about thier personal lives in front of the class in French, Carole wondered if the
curriculum could ever truly motivate students to share their really personal
thoughts with others in a classroom situation, and she wondered whether this
would even be appropriate. Respectful of their reactions, one solution that she
tried was to have students answer these kinds of questions in smaller groups
rather than in front of the large group.

C'est pour ça que je les fais travailler à deux ou à trois parce qu'
à ce moment-là, ça les oblige pas de le dire devant toute la
classe. Mais là encore je rencontre souvent ces étudiants qui
prennent ça plus ou moins au serieux; ils sont pas toujours
intéressés avec tout le monde. Je pense aussi qu'il y a
un élément comme artificiel dans tout ça, tu sais, de parler de ce
que tu as fait en fin de semaine ou de ce que tu vas faire devant
toute la classe puis de partager ça avec ton prof. C'est comme

> ..."j'vais l'dire à un ami peut-être, mais à toi???" C'est que,
> finalement, c'est assez personnel puis je peux comprendre
> l'étudiant qui n'est pas intéressé à le dire devant toute la classe
> aussi. Je pense que c'est comme la limite. On essaie de les
> impliquer, on veut qu'ils soient vraiment personnellement
> engagés, mais en même ternps, il faut quand même
> respecter jusqu'à un certain point leur vie personnelle. (Int.#1)

Carole asked herself very complex questions about how to encourage students
to engage in the curriculum through talking about their own life experiences,
and remained sensitive enough to the reactions of the students to re-examine
the appropriateness of this goal. She was trying to understand student reactions
to the changes in the curriculum from their point of view, and at the same time
find ways to bring the goals of the new curriculum to pass, because she
believed they could lead to a more exciting, engaged second language
learning experience.

Part of the theme of engagement in Carole's experience has to do with
her engagement in the process of trying to make the curriculum the best it can
be for her students. In order to achieve this Carole regards herself as a learner.
Carole really appreciated that the FSL teachers in her school formed a support
group of their own volition and met Friday afternoons for the first part of the year
to share implementation strategies, successes and concerns. She was part of a
department who viewed themselves as a community ready to learn from one
another in an ongoing process of building theory and practice.

> Les professeurs, nous, on se rencontre en moyenne une fois par
> semaine..., puis ça je trouve ça très stimulant; je trouve ça très
> nourissant comme rencontre parce que, finalement, on n'est pas
> tous rendus à la même place, mais on se demande comment a été
> telle activité, qu'est-ce que t'as fait. Puis les impressions, les
> commentaires. Puis ça donne beaucoup de support parce que
> finalement tu te rends compte qu'une activité qui n'a pas bien été
> pour toi n'a pas été nécessairement bien pour l'autre prof, puis

que peut-être y'a une façon de la faire mieux, de l'organiser mieux, ou une activité que tu veux faire mais tu ne sais pas trop comment t'y prendre, alors tu demandes des idées, tu demandes de l'aide. (Int.#1)

In our research group meetings as well Carole shared her research focus and her concerns openly with the group. In the following excerpt from the first group meeting Carole explained her anxiety about project work and the responsibility she felt in supervising her students' use of time. The following conversation provides an example of how the group supported Carole as she took the risk of sharing her anxieties about letting go of a certain amount of control over timelines in her class.

Carole: When you assign a project, I find my stress level goes up right away because I'm always thinking it takes too much time and I cannot figure out the time that it takes just to think and this is a lot to ask them. Often I mention the project one class before and ask them to think about that but you know, they come to the class after and they didn't really think about it so they start fresh and by the end of the class somebody didn't write something. I said, "Did you work?" "Oh yes, we talked about it" "Oh, you know the presentation is in 2 classes" ... "Oh, yes, it's O.K., it's O.K.". But my stress level just goes up. It's all about time and it's all about seeing the work done, it's not easy when you supervise.

Sally: We're so geared to having an output.

June: We need a panic work sheet for the teachers, I'm panicking, where's the panic worksheet? O.K. check, check, checklist, are they on task? O.K.,they're on task. Are we disturbing anybody else? No, we're not disturbing anybody else. The group in the hall is still where you sent them! Yes, they're still there! (Everyone laughs!)

Carolyn: I think we should have a video of you doing this. That's when they're looking like they're doing nothing ...

Cynthia: Personally, that's one of the most stressful times for me.

Carolyn: I was just thinking that probably even though you haven't got--, you can't see them doing that, you have that expectation of them having it finished in 2 days and that increases

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students' self-responsibility, right? So really it isn't your problem anymore, it's theirs.

Cynthia: Yes, that's right. Since when did we feel like that?

Carole: I feel always a little bit responsible at some point, so I feel responsible to remind them. "Remember the presentation is in 2 days; you know that you just have this class time and next class time half of the class only". And you know, I set times and I'm always surprised because when it's the presentation time, most of them can do it, you know. And there is few exceptions. But still, I know what you mean, I think we should give them more responsibilities. (Group Mtg.#1)

Carole also stressed the importance of the opportunity of visiting to Marina's classroom as part of her own learning. First, she saw first hand how Marina dealt with some of the aspects of the program such as the teacher using only the target language, the organization of time, group work and the use of the listening tapes. Second, she was able to compare the level of participation in her classes with Marina's and feel reassured about her own classroom. This visit to Marina's classroom also triggered new issues to consider for Carole. The first new question revolved around the fact she was Francophone and most other FSL teachers in the district were Anglophone. Rather than assuming being a native speaker was an unqualified advantage, Carole's perception was that Anglophone teachers, at least Marina, were able to simplify their language more and identify with the English speaking students more easily when explaining grammar points, because they themselves had learned French as a second language. Second, visiting Marina's classroom in a more diverse cultural and economic area of the district than her own school caused Carole to wonder if her own students' life experiences growing up in a homogeneous unilingual community made them less receptive to the value of other languages and cultures in general. Marina's students seemed more open to participation,

perhaps because they were more accustomed to living in a community of richer linguistic and cultural diversity. These two questions that Carole raised are examples of the ongoing problematizing of teaching and learning which occured as Carole sought to construct the meaning of the curriculum for herself and her students. They are potential research questions for broader study, as well.

During the first year Carole grappled with several issues around the new curriculum which had emerged as a result of her careful attention to students' reactions. She viewed this time as a learning experience for herself, as she sought feedback and insight from her students and her colleagues. At the end of the first year Carole reconfirmed her commitment to understanding the new curriculum from the point of view of the students and to making adjustments accordingly. She saw it as the responsibility of the teacher to remain sensitive to the understandings that students hold about the curriculum.

> Ca fait que je sais pas, je me pose vraiment des questions, je me
> dis que peut-être il faudrait avoir comme une latitude, une
> flexibilité pour permettre à ces étudiants-là--, parce que je me sens
> responsable d'eux aussi. Je veux dire, je suis très contente de la
> méthode puis je trouve qu'elle a beaucoup d'avantages, mais en
> même temps ces étudiants-là ils se sentent perdus. (Int.#2)

Thinking back about her strategy of giving marks for participation, Carole felt she would continue to try out explicit ways of showing the students that involvement is important by valuing all the ways in which students show they care about their own progress, such as giving marks for homework, projects and small group work as well as quizzes and tests. An additional benefit of evaluating students on a daily basis for participation was that Carole found she was more focussed on what the students were actually saying and how they

were saying it when they were working in their small groups, which in turn demonstrated to the students that she was interested in the content of their discussions.

> Donc, eux [ils] trouvaient ça important aussi. Puis quand j'ai commençé à donner des notes, toutes les activités là en équipe d'interaction, ils les faisaient. Puis je partais avec mon "pad" là ou j'écrivais mes notes puis je les écoutais. Puis je me suis faite un devoir de les écouter aussi parce que c'est facile pour le prof pendant ce temps-là de faire les présences ou de faire autre chose, de répondre à une question d'un étudiant et de pas écouter leur travail. Et finalement, ce qu'on leur dit non verbalement c'est qu'on n'est pas intéressé tellement à les écouter. (Int.#2)

When asked at the end of the first year about future directions for her practice, Carole summarized that she would begin the next year by discussing openly with the students what the curriculum valued in terms of learning. She would also concentrate on building an atmosphere of trust in the class. In addition, she would continue to include more traditional activities like grammar exercises and quizzes, so as to balance the kinds of activities offered for different learning styles and to balance learning experiences that require more and less risk-taking on the part of students. The notion of the increased inclusiveness of the new curriculum, that it left more space for more than just academic students to have positive learning experiences with second languages, led Carole to a further issue to consider for herself. She was interested in making the FSL curriculum more inclusive of a broader range of student abilities, and saw the challenge for herself as a teacher in learning how to do this.

> J'aimerais peut-être faire quelques cours en "Learning Disabilities", parce que ces étudiants-là, y sont pas faciles à repérer. Souvent, moi, on est porté à les juger facilement. Je suis portée à penser bon, ils

travaillent pas, ils étudient pas, ils sont paresseux, ils sont pas motivés,
ils sont pas--. Je pense de plus en plus qu'ils ont des problèmes
d'apprentissage. Mais ils savent pas comment étudier une
langue; ils ont des difficultés et je leur viens pas en aide parce que
je les diagnostique pas assez vite, parce que j'ai pas aussi le
temps, ou les ressources. Puis je me dis parallèlement, tu sais, si
on ouvre le programme à plus d'étudiants ou à différentes
catégories d'étudiants, qu'il faut équiper les professeurs aussi.
(Int.#2)

During this first year, therefore, Carole seemed to embody June's notion that
teachers needed to view the curriculum as a moving target, as she continued to
challenge her own and theoretical notions of the curriculum, and test out
different strategies to deal with her questions.

The Second Year

Carole had announced her second pregnancy early on in the life of the
research group. She had made plans to take her maternity leave from the
beginning of September when the baby was due, and then to return in the
second semester to a part time position. In spite of the advanced state of her
pregnancy the following August she attended the district's Summer Institute as
well as the research group's meeting in the Fall. She took part in the group's
presentation at the Conference in October, bringing along her newly arrived
little girl to delight us all! Carole also signed up for the Fall self-directed Comet
course, but waited to implement her classroom project until she returned to
school in the second semester. She chose to study the theoretical literature
about learning strategies in second language education and then, after taking
an inventory of students' present learning strategies, to teach several of these
strategies to her Grade 11 class. Her students reacted positively to these
strategies, and Carole intended to continue with this focus in the future. This

initiative on Carole's part was part of her ongoing process of making sense of the curriculum for herself, and of continuing to seek ways of helping students to engage positively in their own learning.

After her maternity leave Carole returned to a half time teaching assignment. I admired Carole's ability to juggle home and school priorities. Nevertheless, she found the transition of returning to an assignment in the middle of the year difficult for the students and herself. She was concerned that her senior students should get through the course and be prepared for the school wide examination at the end of the year, so she spent a considerable amount of time on review. She focussed on getting to know her students and their needs at this time. In addition, Carole was dealing with different grade levels from those in the first year of the implementation. She worked with the Grade 8s on learning to work effectively in small groups. A further issue that Carole raised at this point was the challenge of effectively integrating the grammatical component of the program. During the implementation period there had been much discussion from many teachers in the district about how much emphasis to put on or take off grammar in the communicative context of the new curriculum. Carole became concerned with helping students to clearly understand the grammatical points that were practiced in the context of communicative-experiential activities. As Carole thought about the future for herself as a teacher of this curriculum, one important factor for her professional growth was to be able to stay with the same grade levels for more than one year at a time. She felt that that so far she had just survived and had not really had time to refine her teaching. She looked forward to feeling more at ease and to being able to personalize the curriculum more.

> Donc, je pense que j'aimerais perseverer encore plus mais
> j'espère que j'ai encore les mêmes années ou que j'ai au moins la 8me,
> la 10me ou la 11me. J'veux pas enseigner la 12me ni la 9me. Je l'ai
> jamais fait et j'veux pas qu'on me donne encore un nouveau programme
> et là je suis encore en train d'essayer de survivre pendant une autre
> anneé. Je suis tannée d'essayer de survivre [elle rit], et c'est ce qui se
> passe souvent dans les écoles secondaires. Mais ça va, j'espère
> que ca va replacer dans quelques années peut-être qu'on pourra dire
> qu'on connaît les programmes et qu'on pourra les enseigner avec
> aisance et en venant ajouter, parce que c'est là où ça devient intéressant
> quand on ajoute et qu'on apporte notre touche personnelle, ça devient
> intéressant. (Int#3)

So in the second year of the study, Carole's life was complicated by her maternity leave, the sense of urgency to catch up with her students upon her return, and new grade levels to teach. In the midst of all this Carole continued to define the curriculum for herself in terms of her students' needs.

Summary

As an experienced teacher who demonstrated a high degree of engagement with the communicative curriculum, Carole struggled with her goal of involving her students in their own learning and in the cultures of the language. She faced the challenge that some students' motives for enrolling in FSL classes at secondary school are to fulfill the language requirements for University, and so these students do not begin their study of the language with high degree of intrinsic engagement. It was not likely that these students would be motivated to want to talk about what was important to them in their personal lives in the second language. The old program, characterized by grammatical study, did not demand a personal engagement from students in this way. It earned and protected its status as an academic subject by treating language as a fixed body of knowledge to be mastered. It was perfectly comprehensible that the transition from one set of expectations to another should be difficult for

students and teachers. Teachers like Carole, passionate about the cultural goals of second language learning as a way of understanding the world, find themselves in an ideological struggle, neither supported by the students with whom they are working or the system of expectations that dominate in secondary schooling. They feel themselves on shakey ground, off balance. As Carole points out, the strength of such a communicative approach lies in its inclusive nature and in its potential to engage students in participating in language and culture, but at the same time it creates more complex roles for teachers.

These kinds of tensions about wanting to include a broader base of learners without punishing those that have learned to meet conventional academic expectations, or wanting to introduce innovative learning activities but risking resistance from students, are typical of the kinds of teacher dilemmas that Lampert (1985) describes in her case studies of teacher practice. Carole used her knowledge of theory and practice to try and make sense of these mixed messages about what the FSL program is really about and who it is for. There are no easy answers, and any sense to be made of what is best to do cannot come from a new curriculum framework or a new set of materials. This process for Carole involved an ongoing problematizing of theory and practice. Carole listened attentively to student perceptions about learning, sought out discussion with colleagues, and continued to view herself as a learner in her endeavours to construct knowledge about the new curriculum which would guide her in her practice.

Carole was committed to the principles of the communicative-experiential curriculum but did not demonstrate a slavish fidelity to

decontextualized recommendations for practice. Rather, she contextualized her practice and sought to understand how the students understand their learning (Grimmett, 1994). Carole saw herself as a teacher involved in lifelong professional learning (Lieberman, 1994). She recognized that growth in her control over her teaching is not linear and is interwoven with the other parts of her life. Her professional strength is drawn from her capacity to see herself as engaged in professional learning that will continue over her professional life span (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993). Her learning is her research in that she demonstrates the capacity to examine and re-examine both theoretical constructs and the information which she collects from closely observing and listening to students talk about their own learning.

E. Conclusion

In these three accounts I have demonstrated how these teachers' contexts and processes for making meaning of their experiences and for constructing knowledge about FSL teaching and learning were unique to each person, bound up with past personal and professional life experience, and ever dynamic. The central themes of risk-taking and engagement for teachers and students are woven through these accounts. It must be remembered too that these accounts represent stories in progress. For Sally, June and Carole, as for the rest of these teachers, the period of implementation during which they participated in the research group was an intense time of feeling off balance, of making sense of a new curriculum and a new set of expectations for themselves and for students. These accounts seem to indicate, however, that this feeling of being off balance, of problematizing the curriculum, never ends for those teachers committed to making the learning the best it can be for students.

The first lesson I learned from interpreting these teachers' lived experiences with the communicative-experiential curriculum is that no matter how noble the aims of the curriculum or how innovative the strategies, the work of the teacher is crucial in mediating this curriculum for students. Second, context was all important for these second language teachers, and the factor which changes conditions the most significantly seems to be the dispositions of the students themselves. Finally, these teachers were engaged in examining their assumptions about and re-constructing both theory and practice at the same time. As Miller (1990) points out in what she learned from working with the teachers in her research, assumptions about linear, uni-directional relationships between theory and practice, thought and action, and the personal and the public are devoid of meaning because they are oversimplified and do not hold up to evidence in teachers' lived experience (Miller, 1990, p. 96). In the following chapter, the story of the group, I recount the workings of the group as such, in order to understand and to bring to attention the conditions which this teacher research group provided for the exploration and construction of knowledge on the part of the participants.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE STORY OF THE GROUP

A. Introduction

The story of this research group demonstrates how the process of making sense of their experiences through group discussion has provided a forum for these teachers to construct personal and collective understandings of the curriculum as lived in their classrooms with students, enabling them to act with an increased sense of the possibilities of their ever evolving practice (Greene, 1986, in Britzman, 1991). In this chapter I examine the ways in which these teachers interacted in the setting of the inquiry group. This group defined itself during its meetings, and after having analyzed the course it took, I consider it to have been similar in nature to what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) have termed the genre of collaborative oral inquiry within teacher research.

> During oral inquiry, teachers build one another's insights to analyze and interpret classroom data and their experiences in the school as a workplace...For teachers, oral inquiries provide access to a variety of perspectives for problem posing and solving. They also reveal the ways teachers relate particular cases to theories of practice. (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993, p.30)

Understanding the process of constructing understandings of the curriculum in the context of collaborative inquiry groups will contribute to knowledge about the ways in which such groups engage in "teachers' self-conscious and often self-critical attempts to make sense of their daily work by talking about it in planned ways" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993, p.32).

As an introduction to this chapter I briefly review some pertinent literature related to collaborative oral inquiry and teacher research which will be useful as a reference point from which to understand this account of the workings of the group in this study. In addition, part of the story of this group is related to the fact

that all the participants were women. The discourse within the group sometimes reflected what have been identified as particularly feminine ways of constructing meaning among North American women (Minister, 1991). In the second part of the chapter, therefore, I address this circumstance as another perspective which contributes to understanding the process of inquiry within the group. In the main body of the chapter I recount the proceedings of the group meetings themselves, in order to construct understandings about the process of collaborative oral inquiry which will contribute insight to others who are involved in such work. The discourse which I cite as examples of such processes also contributes to understandings of the themes of risk-taking and engagement as they emerge in the story of the group. During this account I take several opportunities to remark on my role as the researcher and facilitator in the group, reflecting upon how my own process of sense-making as both a participant in the discussions and the principal researcher both shaped what went on in the group and was shaped by the life of the group in return.

B. A Review of the Pertinent Literature

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) claim that collaborative oral inquiry is a legitimate and particular genre of teacher research. In the process of oral inquiry the participants do not collect explicit classroom data as a basis for discussion, but rather recount stories and anecdotes about experiences with individual or groups of students as a way of constructing understanding around a common focus. Although other forms of teacher research may be carried on individually, oral inquiry is by definition a collaborative activity (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993). The notion of research in this context lies in the process of the group's construction of understanding rather than solely in written research

reports produced as a result.

It is useful at this point to compare the case study of our research group with that of another oral inquiry group that worked for two years around the theme of "learning about learning diversity" (Colgan-Davis, 1993). Colgnan-Davis documented the story of a single staff group of teachers who met once a month for two years to share perceptions and problem-posing about learning diversity. The value of the group lay in the process of building understandings that would benefit their students in small ways and then in much more deep rooted ways as the members' individual and collective understanding grew (Colgan-Davis, 1993). Some teachers described their experiences in the group as a process of uncovering and examining assumptions, and one described the experience as "almost like therapy" (Colgan-Davis, 1992, p 168). Colgan-Davis, the facilitator of the group and the author of the report, commented:

> The fact that this was "almost like group therapy" attests to the trust
> and sense of community that were created. No handbook on "how
> to teach diverse learners" came out of the group's work. Rather,
> increased understanding of the complexity of learning and a
> deeper appreciation of the importance of what we do were two
> of its most important results. (Colgan-Davis, 1992, p.168)

Other empirical studies have taken a similar interest in the process of collaborative oral inquiry amongst teachers. Miller (1990) invited a group of graduate students to work with her over two years as well, around the topic of the writing process. She focussed on both the stories of the different contexts of teaching and learning brought to the group by the individual participants, and also on what she and the participants learned about collaborative research from their time together. Miller introduced the emergent themes of her study early on in her text as I did, following these themes throughout the stories of the participants and the story of the group. Her theme of "uncertainties" is akin to the

notion of being a "little off balance" in this thesis. The participants in her study, herself included, found the process of research in the context of collaborative oral inquiry to be non-linear, challenging of assumptions, sometimes contradictory, and sometimes frustrating. Her study was particularly useful as a reference point for me concerning the process of teacher inquiry and the issue of reflexivity for the researcher.

A significant number of first and second language researchers have proposed models of working with preservice and inservice teachers in ways which value teachers' belief systems and the understandings they construct through critically examining their practice (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Nunan, 1990; Wells, 1994; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). The work of these researchers acknowledges the usefulness of such teacher research as a vehicle for teacher development for those involved as well as its contribution to the larger conversation of theory and practice about language education. One case study of a teacher research group of second language teachers which is particularly closely related to the study at hand is the one documented by Schecter and Ramirez (1992). They posed three questions in their research, which serve as an orientation for this chapter as well. They were concerned with:

> (1) the kinds of support teachers need if they are to conduct
> classroom research, (2) the effects of becoming a researcher on
> teachers' views of classroom practice and of themselves as
> professionals, and (3) the kinds of knowledge teacher research
> can provide, and the ways in which teachers working as
> researchers represent and structure that knowledge in oral and
> written text. (Schecter and Ramirez, 1992, p.193)

Several characteristics of their account provided guidance in understanding and writing up the account of our group in the study at hand. First, Schecter and

Ramirez acknowledged what they called the "historically bounded" nature of their group and the particular characteristics of the participants. Second, they found it important in their written account of the research to describe the workings of the group itself. They attended to both findings about the group as a whole and how it functioned, and to the stories of individual teachers and their research focusses. In analyzing the discourse of the group they found an interesting interplay between informal teacher to teacher language and formal research language, and between narratively constructed knowledge and findings constructed to satisfy the norms of formal research. In addition, they commented on the role of the group leader and on the importance of the group analyzing its own process. Schecter and Ramirez encouraged others to undertake "meta-studies" of teacher researcher groups, and in this way this chapter of the thesis builds on their work.

> Close observation of the workings of such groups can reveal the
> significance and value of teacher research as perceived by
> teachers, and it can help pivotal actors in teacher research
> projects to take appropriate actions (1992, p.205).

This chapter is such an account of this "close observation" of the group in question which will in turn contribute to other teacher research projects the way that Schecter and Ramirez' case study contributed to this one.

C. A Feminist Framework for Understanding the Group

An understanding of the workings of this all female, Euro-Canadian middle class group of teachers may be enriched by acknowledging the discourse of the group as being conversation that has taken place in a group comprised entirely of women. Minister (1991) asserts that it is time to listen to women's talk from the point of view of a feminist framework of understanding

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discourse. Based on her description of a "general female sociocommunication subculture", she recommends that feminist researchers acknowledge and work towards ways of talking amongst women that "women would intuitively like to see when talking with women" (Minister,1991, p.28). One flaw in her thesis is that Minister claims to be talking about commonalities in these ways of talking that exist regardless of race, age or class, in North America at least. Despite her over-simplification of these matters and her generalization of clearly evident differences in women's discourse, I found some of the characteristics of the discourse of our group to be similar to the one that Minister describes.

In order to consider what this feminist frame for discourse might look like and sound like, Minister asks readers to imagine a hypothetical videotape of women talking. I was particularly attracted to Minister's interpretation because I was looking for a way to talk about the atmosphere of the research group so as to reflect its particular nature. The atmosphere of any group interaction is most always captured more comprehensively on audiotape or videotape than by the print transcriptions of speech. The audiotapes and videotapes made of this group captured the tones of the voices of the participants, the nature of the turn taking, the way the group structured itself, and especially how laughter was an integral part of the communication. Minister's description of what she thinks such feminine discourse would look like gave me a starting point for making sense of certain qualities about our group.

In order to demonstrate how Minister's framework was sometimes evident in the group, I punctuate this summary of her argument with a recounting of some incidents in the group. The characteristics of feminine collaborative discourse which Minister describes are: the use of eye contact and body language, the predominance of personal anecdotes as evidence for

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knowing, the dedication of time in the group for developing a sense of caring, the use of paralanguage, the construction of collective explanations, and the use of apology and humourous self-criticism as a way of building cohesiveness in the group. Within the group in question, the body language used by the participants attested to Minister's suggestion that in all female groups there would occur a significant amount of nonverbal nodding, sympathetic facial expressions and inclusionary body language, used to build a sense of intimacy in the group. For example, in the fall 1993 meeting, the first item on the agenda was to hear about everyone's summer and how September start-up had been. One participant shared news of the death of a close relative. The silence of the group, the touch on the arm and the nonverbal reaction of the group was a demonstration of support and empathy. Minister claims that often time is spent in womens' groups nurturing communication and showing empathy. The time on our agendas for personal professional updates often took half the meeting time, but there was no way of hurrying the process up because the personal anecdotes that were told during that time were clearly as important to the participants as the formalized part of the agenda where I attempted, often unsuccessfully, to frame the discourse in more formal research talk.

The way the group went about constructing meaning was supportive and collaborative. It meant that sometimes people didn't finish sentences or finished one another's sentences. Once the members, as Minister terms, "got on the same wave length", they practised "intersupport" rather than "taking the floor" (1991, p.33). The women in our group often built their stories on someone else's rather than making their story an individual performance. In this way the stories that were collectively constructed become valued for their typicality, not their exceptionality. Their purpose was cohesiveness, not control. Sometimes,

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what Minister terms collaborative "free-for-alls" erupted, where everyone seemed to be talking at once. Paralanguage, as Minister calls the nonverbal oral language evident in such groups, (1991, p.33) was part of the meaning that was being constructed; the laughter, "MMMs", and "uhhuhs" were ways of showing empathy and inclusiveness. Laughing at oneself and inviting others to laugh with you was another way of expressing one's experiences or feelings.

Minister (1991) shares some recommendations which group facilitators might consider when coordinating such groups. These sparked my own thoughts about how I found myself reacting to my role as researcher and facilitator of the group. Minister suggests that time for mutual self-disclosure be allowed before the central content of the agenda is introduced. As the meetings progressed I came to understand the importance of this time. Minister also recommends that the interviewer should disclose her personal interest, her investment in the research to the group. I found that I did this in interviews and group meetings in spite of my initial understanding of the role of the researcher as trying to say as little as possible so as not to take over the discourse. I learned that if I imposed too much formality on the group, the participants tended to just go through the motions of giving polite, tidy answers.

In addition, Minister suggests planning for no preconceived list for discussion, allowing for the dialogue to take the conversation where it might. During the first two meetings in particular I tried to impose the discussion of research foci and data on the group in my attempt to have the discourse look like what I thought the group should be about, but I learned by analyzing the transcripts that these were the times that the discourse was the least passionate or strongly felt, where perhaps the participants were trying to frame their knowledge into the language that they thought I wanted to hear. The more

animated, fruitful parts of the meetings seemed to occur when the questions that I asked were phrased as open-ended invitations to talk about recurring issues, where the participants were able to build on one another's remarks, and where the talk proceeded at what Minister calls a "leisurely pace".

The claim I wish to make about the nature of this group is that it often demonstrated characteristics considered by some researchers as particularly indicative of feminine discourse (Minister, 1991), and that a sensitivity to this notion helps in understanding the workings of the group. Some of the discourse highlighted in the rest of this chapter is indicative of this feminine style of discourse, and some is not, however. During the description of the life of the research group that follows, I demonstrate how at different points in the conversations a variety of styles of discourse were used for different purposes. To say that this all female group often engaged in a feminine style of discourse is not to suggest that they interacted in only those ways.

D. The Story of the Group

In this section I present an account of the workings of the research group by summarizing the nature of the discourse and the topics discussed during each meeting of the group. I demonstrate, through the use of mostly multi-turn excerpts from the conversations, the process of constructing understandings about the curriculum as it was lived in the context of the group. I have highlighted excerpts of the conversations which demonstrate what it means to be a "little off balance" for these teachers, and which highlight the themes of risk-taking and engagement. I also comment on points in the proceedings where I examined my own assumptions about my role as facilitator, participant and researcher in the group.

The first meeting, in January 1993, was structured by myself according to the agenda I had laid out in the letter of invitation to join the group (See Appendix One). The first item I had put on the agenda was to complete the application for support funding for the group, which was an important step in making the purpose of the group publicly recognized and valued. I had an idea at that point that the group members would be identifying research foci for their classrooms, about which they would collect data, producing some sort of group report at the end of the study. The work in the group at this point was not collaborative but rather directed by me. The group only really came to life when I invited participants to share with the group what for them were the emerging issues with which they were grappling during the first year of implementation of this new curriculum. One of the first collaborative exchanges had to do with the shifts in roles and expectations for teachers and students. The participants asked several open-ended questions for themselves about what it meant to redefine expectations for students and teachers. Some were concerned about redefining "standards", and changing the implicit rules through which some students, the academically oriented, had been more privileged in the FSL classroom. In this excerpt, Elaine summarizes this discussion and the questions it raised for her. I see the themes of risk-taking and engagement embedded in her comments.

> The most significant aspect of the new curriculum was that it is more student-centred, and that they had to take more responsibility than they maybe used to before. And I find that for some of them it has been a difficult adjustment, although I would agree with Carolyn that it has also allowed for the students who haven't been successful in French to be successful... But then I feel the same way as Sally does, concerned for my students who will be moving on, and there are teachers in my school too, who are trying to implement the new curriculum and doing a really good job out of it too, but still because of their background and because of their training and because of their philosophy or whatever it is,

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including myself, want to go back to that "Okay, it is either right or wrong", even with grammar because they find it hard to make that adjustment, you know. (Group Mtg. #1)

When I as the group leader moved the agenda along to ask individual teachers what their research foci would be, the discourse continued to be exploratory, tentative rather than definitive. I framed the discourse as research questions but the participants constructed more personalized, open-ended questions for themselves than I had envisaged. In this way they continued to problematize their practice.

> Cynthia: Maybe we can move on then, out of the issues into the focuses. Some of you people have already mentioned that because of such and such an issue, this is what I am interested in focusing on in my classroom. One of the things I heard was to promote risk-taking as a student responsibility. Willingness to be involved. Motivation. How to do that. Anybody else like to talk about their.....?
>
> Elaine: I just put down, [in her notes] what I would like to do more research on is how to do grouping effectively. I mean I have a lot of good ideas and some of them work for me and some of them don't. And I have done a lot of different things, and I find that the grouping concept is something I would like to work on.
>
> Marina: Yeah, same thing for me. And making each student accountable. I find that in a lot of the group activities, one kid will draw, one will do the French, but to me I would like to see them all using the language. And basically they are all being creative. But that accountability. I always feel like that I have to put that in. Discussions for group activities.There is just not enough accountability there. I want to see them trying to use the language to the best of their abilities.
>
> Janey: I like the spiral effect of the program, seeing what the connections are between the language use and the [unheard] that I am familiar with. I do a lot of intuitive evaluation. But I want to do more specific evaluation. (Group Mtg. #1)

The first meeting concluded with this discussion of what individuals in the group had identified for themselves as research foci. These research questions were worded as very broad concerns rather than as firm hypotheses that would be able to be proved or disproved in a neat research design.

At the beginning of the second meeting I asked the participants to review the transcript of the first meeting as a way of re-examining issues (Jardine & Field, 1991). Trying to make sense of the transcript prompted a discussion about the nature of the discourse in the group as oral, tentative and exploratory, and therefore difficult to read as text. Some participants talked about how the words on the paper didn't capture the tone or the atmosphere in the group and how so much had gone on in the context of the group that, as Janey put it, "didn't need to be said". Carole's suggestion that I as the author of the final text would be entrusted with explaining "what people meant" gave me an opportunity to verbalize my understanding of the way this participatory research process would proceed so that the participants remained active in the construction of the meaning of the study for as long as possible.

> Carole: I think the big problem here, and as a researcher, it depends on when it will be used and what you will do with it, but the big problem for us is all the difference between the spoken language and the written language. When you read yourself, you're expecting the same thing as when you do a work for a University and it's not the same type of communication, you know, when you speak. So I think we are too severe on ourselves and we have to have some confidence in Cynthia. I don't think you will use that like--. I think you will be able to interpret in a way that you can explain what we wanted to say ...

> Cynthia- By the fall, after the 2nd round of interviews, after the summer, I should have a skeletal--, ... something that shows the way that the final piece of work will look. And after the group stops meeting I will continue to be in contact with you in terms of sending you drafts, so right up until the very end you will have control over your pieces, your parts of it. (Group Mtg.#2).

Carole's comment caused me to reflect upon the ultimate responsibility I had as the eventual author of the text of the study to interpret what the participants "wanted to say". Throughout my work on this thesis I have been concerned about the tenuous line between wanting to respect the meaning constructed by the participants in this thesis by reporting their words without tampering with them, and taking on the responsibility as the researcher to interpret the events and the discourse of the study so as to render them accessible to the readers who weren't present during the experience, as well as significant to the larger conversation of theory and practice.

When we moved on to reviewing the transcript of the first meeting the group brought out the emerging issues from the first meeting and elaborated on them. Here is an example of this process of knowledge construction, where Janey picks up on the issue of the role of the teacher from the first transcript and then elaborates her thinking from there, using examples from her own classroom. It is interesting how Janey distances the group from the text by saying "it [the transcript] talked about" rather than "we talked about".

> Janey: It [the transcript] talked about getting to know the students because the program itself is personalized and so you can get to know the students a lot better now ... with the collaborative learning. And again the teacher is not "Nostra Damas" so the students and teacher work together and that's a part of the comfort level and the students eventually overcome the risk thing because the teacher also is looking things up in the dictionary. So, it does take time in some ways to overcome that. (Group Mtg. #2)

As a result of reintroducing and building upon the issues that emerged in the first meeting by reviewing the transcript, the group constructed their knowledge of these issues collaboratively.

Sometimes these discussions led to individual participants initiating

requests for help in personal problem-solving situations in their practice. In the following excerpt Linda initiated this kind of interaction. The group reacted with similar narrative examples from their own practice to demonstrate empathy for the dilemmas involved. This conversation may be interpreted as a sort of a problematizing process about teacher risk-taking. Advice is offered indirectly and non-authoritatively. I see this excerpt as an example of the building of "intersupport" that Minister (1991) describes. Linda is thrown off balance because she feels like the program is forcing her to take risks that she is not comfortable with, in changing the parameters about classroom learning and what it should look like. June, Sally, Janey and Pat tell their own stories of coming to terms with this feeling. The themes of risk-taking and engagement for teachers and students are embedded in the meaning given to the events by these teachers. The contradiction between expectations that teachers are always "in control", and the need to be a little "out of control" when trying to effect curricular change is brought out in this conversation.

> Linda: You have such a hubbub going on in your class. Maybe I
> need somebody to come in and watch my class... But they're really bright
> kids, you know, but put them together and I can't--, when all the hubbub
> is happening I can't see that there is some constructive work
> happening. It just seems that they're really off task, and they're
> not learning anything here and it's all out of control and people are
> going to think: "Well, she can't control her class". And I do, I do
> panic and say: "Everybody sit down" ... I can't see it but you
> sound like, June, that you can see it, and you can evaluate ... but
> I can't ...
>
> June: See, when their discomfort level is really high, I've learned
> something about myself; my discomfort level goes shooting up, you
> know.
>
> Sally: See, this is what I think I'm so impressed by what
> you've just said. For one thing I've been very suspicious all my
> adult life about what learning is. Because, as teachers, here we
> have "I give you a worksheet, you do two sides .... you have learned

it." You know, and some other students are staring out the window. "Ah, you failed". Whereas I really think that the greatest thoughts that have ever been thought on the earth are from people staring out the windows or under a tree or whatever, and we're so afraid of real learning and not being in control all the time.

Janey: You know last week I was stressed and overworked and I came in and I rearranged the seating plan of my grade 10 and I put them so they would not be talking to anyone that they're normally in these groups with and everything. And I said: "Now, when I'm teaching you're going to be in this seating plan and we're going to do "renforcement" when you do group work. Well O.K. that's it. Attila the Hun reappears! ... But actually they weren't at all comfortable with that. Wow! They were upset and angry. And it was because I was stressed that I didn't want the noise and the sitting and rocking in their chairs and everything. When I'm relaxed, I can handle it a lot, a lot better. So, that's important too!

Pat: This rap [song and dance] thing that you did, the kids that I deal with too were fairly stressed about having to do this rap, having to get up in front of the class and make a fool of themselves, the way that they saw it. And the initial reaction of them was sort of like "Ah! Oh no, we can't do that" but to relieve some of their stress, and to avoid grouping problems, I used the class list. They had to be in a group of five according to the class list which solved the grouping problems of them getting together with their little cliques and we didn't do the actions, we only did the singing. They insisted on using the tape, and overrode the song on the tape with the different individual groups... I sort of was negative about it as well. How am I going to do this? You know!!! So, not feeling well all through this time as well with colds and flu and what not. Anyway we managed to hack it and I would say that finally in the end, that everyone felt good about it. They enjoyed the self-marking, not the self-marking, the peer marking and it worked out O.K. Somewhere in here is a theme about trying something even though you think it's not going to work for you and having a little bit of faith in the program, or faith to try some of the ideas, risk-taking on the part of the teachers, I guess. To try some of the things ... and I would say in the end that I was happy with what happened but it was stressful. (Group Mtg.#2)

When asked to describe more formally developments with their research foci, some of the participants spoke of how their focus was shifting because of evolving events in their classrooms and as a result of the discussion in the

group. These teachers' sense-making processes often involved thinking about more than one issue at a time.

> Linda: My original focus was student enjoyment. Coming here, I'm realizing that it's not solidified, it's becoming more diverse. I'm getting into evaluation, is my approach student-centered, and something that really struck me today especially was with risk-taking. (Group Mtg.#2)

My need to structure the discussion of research according to the expectations that I personally held as the researcher as I tried to elicit conventional empirical evidence from the participants was sometimes a mismatch with more tentative, open-ended, yet critical questions which the group members raised. Carolyn, for example, talked about her question of why, despite the communicative structure of the curriculum, her students still did not seek out opportunities to really use French as their language of communication. Her style of investigation was to share her questions with her students. She talked about this problem as if she knew that profound solutions were unlikely within the academic context of FSL courses in the secondary school. Her discourse was exploratory, and she seemed to be struggling with unresolvable tensions. When Carolyn says below "they have to feel there is a reason", she opens up the issues of the nature of risk-taking and engagement for students in the somewhat artificial social context of the FSL classroom.

> Carolyn: I was fascinated by everything cause I'm that kind of a person, but as I've been sort of going along with second semester, one of the things that really probably irritates me more than anything else is that the kids don't take risks in regular kinds of language. ... I'm trying to get them to become more reflective of what they're doing. Why they don't want to do that? Why can't they ask me for a pencil? Why can't they try and take a risk with each other and say, you know, give me this, pass me that, do this, do that. Like let's do this, let's try, like try, and we talk so much about using language in real context and we talk so much about, about you know, getting them to be not afraid of using a language. Like it doesn't have to be perfect and all that kind of

stuff, but they still want to use it just for the class. They have to want to do it and they have to, it seems to me they have to feel there is a reason. And I'm not sure whether it's because they don't feel safe; I'm not sure what it is. I really don't know. They said to me, they feel like they're dumb, they sound squeaky, they sound this, they sound that, and so, you know, they wouldn't want somebody to see them in that kind of context so, even to ask me, they don't want to ask me. Well, I said: "Why don't you want to ask me? You know how." (Group Mtg. #2)

To summarize, in the second group meeting the group took over most of the meeting by using the discussion of the first transcript as a jumping off point for a sharing and problem-solving session about their immediate and ongoing classroom concerns. This process of problematizing practice was the research of these teachers.

According to the original plan of the research group, the participants paired up and visited one another's classrooms between the second and the third meetings of the group. In this third meeting, which took place in May, the recounting of perceptions from the classroom visits provided an opportunity for the group to reconfirm the value of these shared experiences as a form of support. Some participants found it useful to compare the curriculum as lived in other classrooms with their own. After the sharing of the experiences of the peer visits, the direction of the discussion again turned to the personal concerns teachers were living in their classrooms. Another circumstance that affected the discourse of this May meeting was that time was edging towards the end of the year. June spoke of "taking a break" from the stress of trying to always do new things, and returning to some tried and true activities that were less stressful at this point of the year. The honest expression of this feeling by June was an acknowledgement of the notion that teachers' self-perceived levels of engagement can vary according to levels fatigue and stress, and that it is all

right to say so in public. Again, time was invested by the group into accepting what others were saying and showing empathy.

In the second half of the meeting I turned the discussion back to the results of the research foci so far. Two teachers, Janey and Carolyn, began a debate about the meaning and efficacy of the spiral organization of the program. The tone of this debate demonstrated that a different style of discourse than Minister's (1991) feminist variety was possible within the group. Reviewing the transcript of this meeting caused me to recall Miller's (1990) experience with her group, where she concluded that her group took many meetings over a considerable amount of time, two years, to arrive at a point where directly challenging one another's assumptions became a comfortable thing to do. This debate was the first occasion that I noticed in our group where this sort of challenging took place. This debate led to a discussion of the role of a grammatical scope and sequence within the communicative curriculum in which several participants took part. In this way the oral inquiry of the group, although constructed around highly personalized and concrete examples, provided opportunities for the exploration of more decontextualized theoretical dilemmas. For June, this debate over what should or should not be done in theory reinforced her notion these sorts of decisions can really only be resolved by the teacher within the context of her own practice. What the program suggests or the curriculum guide espouses is someone else's idea fixed on paper until each teacher interprets it according to her best judgement.

> June: Okay, that's another issue then. The issue of making
> choices and the responsibility we have to make those decisions
> about yes, I am going to do this, or no I'm not going to do that. So,
> you know, so that the program has to have space for us to be
> flexible that way, to take what we can from it and do it whatever way we
> think. It's still a static program until it's used by the teacher, and that's

what makes it dynamic. (Group Mtg. #3)

Related to this, Carolyn spoke of the nature of experiential learning for herself as a teacher, of not understanding the curriculum until you've lived it, and of the importance of continuing to ask oneself critical questions. As Britzman (1991) points out, this process is more than just learning from experience, and involves a strong evaluative component.

> Carolyn: We've always got to think, what's not here, what's missing for me? And you almost have to do it cold though. Like I've found that the only way I can have a real sense of what's missing is to really, like, do it. (Group Mtg. #3)

The discussion in the third meeting became almost a synthesis of the meaning that had been constructed by the group over this first year of implementation. It was at this point that June spoke of the challenge of viewing the curriculum as "a moving target", and of remaining "just a little off balance" as an uncomfortable but necessary disposition to maintain as a teacher.

> June: There's no question in my mind that all of us here are much more flexible. And you, we want to maintain that flexibility. The only way we do is when ...we are a little bit off balance and we're not quite sure. We have to maintain that feeling of you know, the moving target. (Group Mtg.#3)

The fourth meeting of the group took place the following fall, at the beginning of the next school year. The feeling of new beginnings was strong in the group. As the participants arrived, the room was abuzz with news of the summer, new assignments and new classes. Many stories were exchanged about the summer holidays and the challenges of the year ahead. The arrival of Carole, despite being on maternity leave and one day overdue, was particularly celebrated. Minister's (1991) feminist framework for discourse was evident here. The summer updates at the beginning of the meeting were an important way for

the participants to reconnect and to explain how their individual teaching contexts had changed. Participants who had changed schools remarked on the impact of the change in context for their practice. For example, Carolyn, who was one of the teachers in the group with the most experience with the communicative-experiential curriculum, felt frustrated by the resistance she was feeling from working with a new group of students who were less than convinced about the value of the new approach. She felt thrown back to square one, off balance. Her focus for new school year would certainly reflect this change in context for her teaching,

In this fourth meeting of the group I shared my summer work on the study, and asked permission of the group to visit them in their classrooms as a way of complementing my research so far. The discussion around the purpose of these visits was informative for me. I had been struggling with how to approach the question of wanting to spend some time in individual classrooms to get a first hand view of the issues that the participants were raising, without giving the impression that I would be judging the individuals involved. The following excerpt demonstrates the way in which the group and myself made sense of my request.

> Cynthia: But it would be very much, it would be very much collaborative, ... I happen to have spent some time in Elaine's classroom last year which I will build into the thesis because we taught one of the themes ... or we team-taught one of the themes together. It's not necessary to go as far as that unless you want that, you know, to set up a team-teaching situation for one of the themes for example.

> June: You mean, we'd have to make sure we're putting our money where our mouth is sort of thing. Scary!

> Cynthia: That's the danger, that is exactly the danger that the assumption is all of a sudden, oh, this person is going to come in and see whether I do what I talk about, or this person is going to come in and judge me, as long as people recognize that if I did come into classrooms that please, it

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is not to see whether you do what you talk about. It is not that judgement, it's simply that O.K., I have actually spent some time in the context about which this person is talking but the control over what is observed is still yours, you know. What is said about that time that I spent with you is still your version, not my version.

June: One of the things that has been constant, I think, Cynthia, is that you're non-judgemental ... . I think when I said that I'm feeling that personal thing, I'm going to have to be taken--, I'm accountable then, now for--. O.K. I said this, now look what I did. O.K., I said this, now am I acting--? You know, do my actions match my words? So it would accentuate, I think, the accountability and the self- examination if we were to do that but it ... under no circumstances would I think you're judgemental, quite the contrary. It would be good.

Marina: You have to say these things [in the thesis]; well, you have to see them I think for yourself when you're doing your thesis. I think that it will help you, you know, when you see something rather than hearing it. (Group Mtg. #4).

In the light of this discussion two visits to each participant were organized in conjunction with the third individual interview. During these visits I sometimes participated in the activities of the classroom or behaved as strictly an observer, depending on the types of activities in progress. I kept observational notes of these visits, and each participant and I shared what we had noticed in the classroom activities as part of the final interview.

This September 1993 meeting also served as an opportunity to plan the workshop which the group had committed itself to presenting at an upcoming provincial conference of second language teachers. This planning discussion served as a way of focussing the group on summarizing the knowledge they had constructed and on reflecting on the value of the research group experience. The group discussed the difficulty they would have in describing the non-concrete nature of what they had learned, but felt it was important not to

present a view of their research on curriculum change as simplistic or straightforward. The following excerpt from this lively discussion demonstrates the animated way in which the group dealt with this topic. The trust level in the group was such that individuals like June allowed themselves to be quite forceful. At the same time there was an good-humoured tone. Through this conversation the group collaboratively made sense of what sort of message they wanted to transmit in the workshop.

> Sally: The context for them [the teachers who would attend the workshop] probably is that they are also are likely to be asked to make a change right now. Because probably most French teachers in the province are being given more--, yes, more likely being asked to make change themselves. And this was our experience of it and it's possible that your experience will be similar or will have, you know,...

> Marina: I think it's good too if it is also general, like not specifically our materials, because I know in all we encountered the same, you know, similar struggles ...

> Sally: See, that would be an important thing to say.

> Marina: Yeah! For teachers who are working with another series, we want them also, and another program, we're talking about a communicative approach in a way as well, I think it would be wrong if we focussed exclusively on ....

> Cynthia: And it's very important that 2 members of the group were not starting the implementation at all, they had been implementing a communicative approach for 3 years.

> Marina: That's right!

> June: It doesn't say the publisher, it says around the implementation of the FSL Framework, and I think all of this talking is boring, I don't think we should do that! (laughter)

> Cynthia: Oh oh!

> Unidentified speaker (US): How could we not? No way. No, but June, it would be ...

June: It's boring. You'll never catch them. They'll be sitting there; they'll be bored; they'll go to sleep.

US: Well, what are we supposed to do June?

June: Razzle dazzle time! See Ya! We'll have something more fun than that!

US: Like what?

June: They're coming to a conference, they want to know something!

Cynthia: O.K. So, some sort of introduction...

June: No you don't. You can have an introductory activity, if you don't have to have an introduction. Well, let's start with having them walk around and talk to us individually....or let's make them or give them a challenge. Somehow they have to change ...

Janey: So I think that you should be telling us that story. I think that you should be telling us--. Oh, what could I remember

Sally: We could tell stories like the...

June: I think I should tell you the story about the day I went in ... (laughter) Or the one about the mouse hole. No?

Sally: Oh, I was just going to say maybe we need to mention something about, and maybe it's already up there, the relief of having a group like this? To go and be silly. Like now it's sort of coming in my mind if we did the silly stuff to begin with ,and I don't know whether we want to do that, but we might. Then you go, you know, what a relief, a stress release to be able to go, to be able to tell your absolutely worst nightmares...

Cynthia: So that benefits the process?

Sally: And then you're able to go on and become more directed towards what it is that you are working on. (Group Mtg. #4)

Through this exchange the participants were able to make tentative sense of the meaning of the research group for themselves as well as exploring how to get

this meaning across to an audience who hadn't experienced what they had. In this way the process of preparing the presentation brought their collective research to the point where they were faced, like I would be in my research process, with the challenge of interpreting the meaning of the experience for an audience. The final agenda that the participants agreed upon for the workshop was the following:

1. A sponge activity where the audience was instructed to circulate and ask one another questions about where they were with their changes in curriculum.

2. An excerpt from a humorous video from a Comedy Show on TV showing the way teaching French used to be.

3. A brief history of the implementation of the new curriculum in the district and of the teacher researcher project.

4. A two-minute presentation by each of the nine members of the group recounting their own research issues.

5. Time for the participants to ask questions and to circulate to displays of student work that some people had brought.

The presentation of the workshop, which was recorded on videotape, proved an effective way to bring closure to the group. Participants continued to see each other and stay in contact through other district events. I continued to review transcripts with individuals, visit classrooms, conduct the final round of interviews and discuss ongoing issues for the remainder of the 1993-1994 school year. I sent each participant a copy of the draft of this thesis in the fall of 1994, asking for feedback. In December 1994 the group reconvened at the request of the participants, as they put it, "just to have a chance to get together again". During this meeting the group shared their impressions of the draft of the thesis which I had sent to them. I also asked those interested to help me plan a

presentation of the study at the National Conference of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, scheduled for May 1995 in Vancouver.

E. Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated the nature of the process of sense-making, theorizing and problematizing that took place in this teacher inquiry group. The conversations often reflected characteristics which were indicative of what has been termed "feminine discourse", where meaning was collaboratively constructed, as well as other styles of debate and discussion. Before leaving this analysis, however, I must also comment on some instances where the nature of the discourse in the group might have served to create its own norms and actually might have served to silence some individuals who tried to engage in a different kind of discourse. I noticed that some people spoke more often than others. Some people are more listeners than talkers in groups, perhaps, but some might have been waiting for a break in the discussion that never came. Putting people on the spot and forcing the turn-taking didn't seem effective, either. In some parts of the meetings a "round table" was structured, so that participants were obliged to speak one after the other in order. I noticed that some people sounded awkward at these times, obliged to say something that would make their experience sound similar to the rest, even if it might not have been. In my analysis of the group meetings I found that there wasn't a lot of room for people to challenge by directly disagreeing or by telling about counter examples, because the underlying purpose of the conversation seemed to be to build solidarity. For example, one group member commented on her sense of being different from the rest of the group in the way she viewed the issues that

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she had been exploring. Consequently, she felt uncomfortable about some of her experiences as a member of the group. She had talked about this feeling with another group member, but had not taken the opportunity to raise this issue in a group meeting.

> Carolyn: I remember at that presentation thing we did at the conference, I felt really left out. I kept saying to Marina, am I saying something? What am I saying that is so irritating, like, is what I'm saying about this stuff, is it negative, is that it? ...Like Marina said, they just don't know what to do with what you're saying... It just doesn't fit into some kind of box for them or something like that. But I found the hardest thing about all of this is that I felt sometimes like I didn't know whether what I was thinking was too simplistic. (Int.#3)

It is interesting that Marina uses the analogy of "it doesn't fit into some sort of box" to describe the source of this dissonance. One of the members of Miller's group (1990), Marjorie, used the analogy of a "carton of knowledge" to describe the dissonance with which she struggled about the way teachers were supposed to be in control of their practice, rather than examining their assumptions. Carolyn perhaps felt at odds at this point because she was pushing some of her assumptions further than some of the other teachers in the group. Miller describes Marjorie's discomfort like this:

> Marjorie continued to wrestle with the implications of the carton of knowledge... She began to view the carton as a symbol of her continuing struggle with her layers of assumptions about the issues of prescription and about compliance with others' expectations in her role as teacher. (Miller, p.97)

What I learned from listening to Carolyn's remarks here was that the process of research within the group did not have the same outcomes for everyone. I did notice, however, that as the group grew to know each other better, participants took more opportunities to disagree or to challenge others. Miller (1990) describes a similar evolution of the group with whom she was

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involved in <u>Creating Spaces and Finding Voices</u>. Miller emphasized the long term nature of the group and the trust building and reflexive process that needed to take place before her group became challengers. Perhaps our group was still in the process of arriving at that more critical point. After reflecting on the story of the group, I have decided that something I would do differently in facilitating subsequent inquiry groups would be to take the time to invite the participants to trace the evolution of the nature of the discourse in their group, and to encourage the group to stay together over a even longer period of time in order for the trust level in the group to evolve to a point where issues such as Carolyn's come out for discussion. I have come to understand that risk-taking and engagement were also themes which applied to being a part of the inquiry group itself.

What other conclusions may be drawn about the nature of the sense-making processes that went on in this research group which would be useful to other educators interested in such teacher research contexts? First, the characteristics of this group as all female did seem to matter for the kind of discourse which was used amongst its members. That is not to say, however, that other kinds of discourse did not occur, or as pointed out in the last example, that all members felt comfortable with that discourse all of the time. Second, the group relied on anecdotes and events from their lived experiences in their classrooms as the predominant mode of generating and exploring their research questions. These questions evolved and shifted during the period of the study, and most of the participants did not bring closure to the issues they had raised. The research that took place was much more a form of problematizing than of formulating and proving or disproving hypotheses. Third, the group found common themes within their individual contexts around the

issues of risk-taking, engagement, and what it felt like to remain "a little off balance" in an ongoing tentative process of making meaning as a teacher. As the principal researcher and also a participant in the group, I formed these conclusions in the midst of conducting this research, analyzing the discourse, struggling with the text of the thesis, and reflecting upon it. My way of approaching the group and trying to understand it was altered through the experience of being a part of it. At the outset of the research I held expectations about a more formal paradigm of research in which the participants would engage. As the life of the group progressed, I learned to direct the group less according to this preconception and to try to understand the discourse more as a conversation of theory and practice constructed from meanings given to lived experience. In the next chapter I will interpret the understandings that have been constructed from these teachers' experiences in the form of the two unifying themes of the study, risk-taking and engagement.

CHAPTER SIX:

TEACHING AND LEARNING OFF BALANCE

A. Introduction

In Chapters Four and Five I have presented accounts of the experiences of some of the individual participants in the study and an account of the workings of the group itself, as ways of demonstrating the complexity of the factors which influenced these teachers' experiences with the curriculum, and the meaning that was made of these experiences. I also introduced the ways in which the two central themes of risk-taking and engagement for teachers and students were woven through these accounts. The purpose of this chapter is to examine these themes in their own right, as the knowledge which has been constructed as a result of this study. These themes about second language teaching and learning played themselves out in the experiences of the participants as ongoing tensions within which these FSL teachers lived and taught. In this chapter I analyze the discourse of the participants during the study in terms of these themes as they relate to second language teaching and learning. I relate what may be learned from these teachers' discourse back to the literature about the communicative-experiential curriculum and second language teaching, in order to point out where the knowledge constructed in this thesis disrupts or challenges some of the assumptions of this theoretical view. The analysis of these themes is meant to contribute to a larger dialectical conversation of theory and practice, as a point of comparison or reflection for practitioners, researchers and academics who interact with the issues by reading this thesis. The result of such a process is a richer understanding of how teachers themselves explored their experiences and constructed

understandings about second language curriculum in the context of this study, which in turn informs the larger conversation of theory and practice on those matters.

I have synthesized the common threads running through the discourse of the participants into two themes: risk-taking and engagement in second language teaching and learning. Selected quotations from the transcriptions of individual interviews and the group meetings demonstrate these themes. These quotations from individuals are not meant to represent the thinking of everyone in the group, nor are the themes discussed meant to be applicable to other contexts. They are meant to be illustrative of these themes, and the two themes taken together are meant to account for the knowledge which the teachers in this study have to contribute to the theory and practice of second language teaching and learning.

B. Risk-taking

> Teachers must act in an imperfect world. We have no choice but to risk ourselves. (Huebner, 1987, p. 26 in Miller, 1990, p. 104)

By risk-taking, as I explained in Chapter One, I mean the capacity to venture out, to act in contexts where outcomes are unsure, and one is not guaranteed to be fully in control of the situation. The arrival of the communicative-experiential curriculum in their FSL classrooms brought with it many complexities for these teachers. The new FSL curriculum (Ministry of Education,1994) had stated broad principles and learning outcomes rather than prescribing lists of what should be taught, encouraging teachers to choose themes and language appropriate to the communicative needs of the students, and to contextualize the language learned within the lives of the learners.

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While the teachers saw this as an opportunity to involve students in negotiating and personalizing the curriculum, some encountered resistance in the reactions of the students themselves. For example, Sally mentioned that even though she had been a part of the committee who planned for the implementation, she hadn't really known what to expect in the real world of students in her classroom. Several of these teachers, as has already been demonstrated by the remarks of Sally, Elaine and Carole, recognized that in the context of the previous curriculum, students had understood language learning and how to succeed at it as dealing primarily with fixed knowledge about the form of the language. In the following excerpt from the first Interview with Marina, she explained how the changes in the perceptions of what the curriculum valued made language learning less straightforward and more risky, demanding a different sort of attitude about language learning.

> Marina: The smartest students, the students with really good grades, found it very difficult. They felt very frustrated because they didn't really know what they were learning. They couldn't measure it as precisely as they could before and that frustrated them. So, whereas I tried to tell them it is a global type of learning and really you know more than you realize, a couple of them said "Well I know verbs, I know 'aller, être', and I learned how to use prepositions and pronouns whereas with this approach you learned about animals."You know, it was hard for them to specify exactly the language and I think that wasn't as organized and cut and dried for them, as systematic and they couldn't just go home and memorize a bunch of vocabulary. They had to really participate in ways that they hadn't before. I think for a lot of them that was different, to be asked to communicate with their peers or to be asked to do certain activities; they weren't used to be asked to work In groups. Sometimes they were just used to working by themselves, to memorizing grammar and then using their texts. And that is not good enough anymore. They have to be able to use what they learned in real contexts,in people oriented activities.
>
> The weaker students, they liked it. They found it less threatening in a way. Although speaking all French all the time, I really had to encourage them, and give them skills to learn and remind them to listen for key words. I am still doing that now."Les mots clés"- and

look for words, people words, that sound like English words. And
then they realize that they can. Some of them just blanked out.
Really all French? Everything they do In French? They panicked, right?
(Int.#1)

Marina worked hard to understand her students' reactions and to help them

take the risks necessary to use the language meaningfully. She devised ways

of structuring the new processes that she wanted to emphasize in order to make

them concrete for students, thereby reducing the sense of risk for herself and

the students.

Marina: I think just the whole area of accountability. Just what I
was saying, making sure that language is maximized. I find some
of the tools that we are given to use are a little bit airy fairy, even
the evaluation sheets. I find it better to make my own up. I find that the
evaluation, when the students evaluate each other or they evaluate
themselves, that's a change for me still. I've adopted portfolios this year
and I am dying to figure out how to use them, so that is something I am
working to right now. What to do with them. (Int#1)

For Marina, part of encouraging risk-taking with the use of the language meant

equipping students with the strategies necessary to make sense of the

language for themselves. This strategy on Marina's part is an example of what

Kumaravadivelu (1994) calls "designing micro-strategies to maximize learning".

Marina: I mean the big difference now between using the
communicative approach and the grammatical approach
is kids are now so accustomed to seeing authentic
documents that when they're presented with a new one,
they're not intimidated. They have the tools and skills
necessary for comprehension, so they have no problem,
you know, understanding a passage or a text. They
are used to looking for context clues, key words, pictures,
etc. Whereas the old program, you'd often hear
comments like I don't understand, you know, period. (Int. #3)

I found a similar theme in Janey's description of her interactions with her

students about their reactions to the new program. Janey also spent time building understanding with her students about the goals of interactive work and negotiating criteria for evaluation. In this way she was reducing the sense of risk for her students and herself.

> Janey: I asked them what differences are there in this new approach to second language learning for you, you know, for the students? And they had this whole bunch of stuff they wanted me to write down. Some of them said that they needed a partner, they felt they needed a partner and could not do anything on their own. Then, after we went through all the negative, we came back to on that same note of having a partner, after all this negative stuff, they came back with well it's also an advantage to get to know the other students in the class... And, now I thought that the most important thing for me was probably accountability. Like how I was going to really justify passing some kids, you know. Making them accountable, feeling that I could subjectively mark... They really liked the idea that they participate in the marking, with the class marks it is not all left up to me. That they have a say. When we talked about the marking, making each student accountable... They liked the idea that there was no final, and that there were fewer tests. But then on the other hand, they didn't mind having verb tests and vocabulary tests last year because they felt that they learned something. So I said, well I could do that if they wanted. I give out all the "vocabulaire de base", and I said "You know, I am perfectly happy to test you on that if that is what you want." (Int.#1)

Carolyn was concerned that students gained a sense of control so that they would be comfortable enough to take risks with the language. For Carolyn, it was important that students understand the patterns of the language as a resource through their own eyes, so that they feel in control of their own learning. The challenge for teachers is to integrate teaching of grammatical concepts as to help students to gain control over them, so that an understanding of the form of the language becomes a resource. Carolyn's issue demonstrates a search for a deeper understanding of the multi-dimensional curriculum in practice.

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> Carolyn: It [the curriculum] shouldn't be focused around that
> [grammar] but it should be like part of the whole thing. Like it's,
> it's this big web altogether and I don't think the grammar should
> drive the answer, anything should drive anything. But they all
> should be like the engine of a car kind of working together, but if
> you don't have any gasoline, you know , I could go on forever.
> (Int.#3)

For Elaine, part of the process of living with these ongoing tensions was learning to give oneself permission to take cues from the students' needs for communication instead of focussing only on a preconceived notion of objectives to be covered.

> Elaine: I still have that fight between, do I really have the
> permission, do I have to--, you know. Because I have to
> remind myself that I really do have the permission and I
> forget the kids sometimes, you know, and who they are and
> what, where they're at. And what they want to talk about, what
> they want to do. Versus what we should be doing, you know, and
> I know that. (Int#3)

Elaine was exploring the idea that it is through the process of building in choices for students that ownership and enthusiasm for learning is developed. Her comments demonstrate that the role of the teacher as orchestrator and diagnostician in this process is crucial, observing closely to understand the ways in which students construct their learning. Sometimes students' ways of learning don't match teachers' theoretical constructs. This process of negotiation is not clear cut, and can be contradictory and risky for teachers, too.

> Elaine: But, they really like getting in there and doing the
> thing... This is one thing that I see as different now. You
> know, like, in unit two we voted on what the class wanted
> to do with the project. They had a list of things they could chose
> from. And then they could make their own suggestions, right?.
> And we voted on it, what they wanted to do, which was an
> interview on jobs. Um, and I said ," Okay, now, since you want to
> do that, I'm going to make my choices [of activities] around that.

That we're going to be interviewing or something. It's going to
be oral. I insisted that the project had to be oral because I
wanted them to speak more. Because we've done so much
writing in Unit One, I felt. So, okay fine. We did all of that. We
did all kinds of talking exercises that they enjoy. And I
even gave them supplementary questions. But when it came
down to actually doing the interview, and I wanted to brainstorm
the questions they could ask their star, they asked me all these
things in English and I thought at this point, they should be able
to ask the same questions [in French]. We've done all these
questions in class before. Like I found that really bizarre.
... I don't know what the solution to that is! (Int.#3)

In spite of the difficulties, Elaine was encouraged by the level of risk-taking of

the some of her students during the project process, because of the flexibility

they were afforded to personalize the language in these situations. Students

seemed to take more risks in these contexts over which they had the control of

the communication. In this excerpt the risk-taking for the teacher and the

students pays off.

Elaine: I gave Block A an extra day because they worked
harder. And I thought, here we go. Gonna do these
presentations right. And I figured nobody would be ready
in Block C. Or I'd have a lot of them. They were ready.
They were ready, and they weren't half bad. Some of
them were excellent. One group who did miserably on
the test, they put in special effects. They were interviewing a TV
star or a rock singer, or some star. And they did it on cassette.
They recorded it. Okay, and they put in special effects. They
taped off of, ads, you know, in French ads, and they spoke
clearly. They changed the--; they put expression in their voice. I
could understand them. And I'm thinking, hey, you know, they
used imagination... But the fact that they did that on their own,
like they had to do all of that outside of class and be
ready. (Int#3)

In summary, then, within this theme of risk-taking teachers explored the

nature of the learning that the communicative-experiential curriculum asks of

teachers and students. Language learning within this framework means taking

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risks to use the target language as resource for making meaning. Living with the tensions created by this need for risk-taking implies an ongoing negotiation of the curriculum with students, and a sensitivity to how they are perceiving their own learning. The voices of these teachers represent the complex work of coming to understand second language teaching within this tension.

C. Engagement

> I mean, you know, I've been, I'm surprised, I'd be surprised if people said that you know, after a few years they've got it all mastered.
> Because here we are in the second year of using this program and
> I still feel like it's a bit of a mystery tour. So, you know, and a teacher's career is like that. A teacher's career is not stagnant. It doesn't stay in one place. It has to move and so you have to move along with it.
> (Carolyn, Group Mtg. #4)

Closely related to the theme of risk-taking is the theme of engagement. How do teachers and students view their engagement in teaching and learning French in the context of an experiential-communicative curriculum? By engagement I mean the act of involving oneself, of interacting with the learning experience, of becoming a participant. I said in the first chapter that I found two facets to engagement in this study, engagement in the knowledge construction underway in the classroom and engagement in the cultures and worlds of the speakers of the language. Carolyn's remarks are a suitable introduction to this section because they demonstrate once again the notion that the curriculum is never stagnant and that to be engaged in the curriculum is to be constantly recreating the curriculum.

The teachers in the study thus found themselves struggling within this tension about engagement for teachers and students. Although these tensions may never be entirely resolved, these teachers learn to work within them, as did

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the teachers in Lampert's study (1985) on teacher knowledge. For example, readers learned in the account of Sally's experiences that in her third semester of implementation, Sally saw glimpses of what it could be like when students started to take ownership of the language they are using and learning. Some of her students started to engage in their language learning by bringing their lives into the classroom. This example informs Legutke and Thomas' vision.

> Sally: It's a ground up kind of thing. It's a very, it's a respectful
> way of doing things I think.It draws in a lot of people. And allows them
> to offer what they have. Which I think really goes well if we can
> continue you know, and get that idea. (Int#3:)

As an elementary teacher, Pat believed in the importance of encouragement in helping children learn, and mentioned how self-esteem was bound up with language learning at the beginning stages. Students need encouragement to see themselves as speakers of the language and to become engaged in their learning.

> Pat: I guess it is sort of an encouraging, nurturing attitude that I think
> that I promote. I know in beginning reading, you need an awful lot
> of positive strokes and self-esteem to feel you are able to begin to
> learn to read another language. And I think that some of those
> skills are the same that you find in French as a Second
> Language and with my Primary background, you know, it is all part
> of the same game... You know, teaching the whole child is the word as
> well as promoting French as an admirable thing to try, as well as you can
> (Int.#1).

In the account of June's experience, also, readers have read about the value that June placed on the need for her students to talk about their own worlds and identities through the use of the second language. We have seen examples of this in June's account of her students struggling with their readiness to engage in the activities in the classroom, such as the two boys in the "shoe story" on

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page 85, for example.

According to Marina, her students found the exchange of information about topics that students cared about inherently enjoyable on a social level. This aspect of the activities helped her create a sense of engagement with the curriculum as French became the vehicle through which a classroom community was built.

> Marina: Several students, this is so interesting to me and it, it's the first time this has ever happened. I gave them a comment sheet to fill out about how they enjoyed the program and things they liked, and almost all of them just spontaneously from different classes said they liked speaking in French and I felt yeah, that's just what we want. You know, they really enjoyed asking each other questions and talking and using the language, so I think that's the big plus. (Int.#3).

In the same vein, Elaine placed an emphasis on introducing strategies to incorporate the processes of co-operative learning into her classes. But despite her commitment to these collaborative learning processes, Elaine remained sensitive to the fact that sometimes learners' perceptions of the processes of group work are that they interfere with individual learning. She demonstrated sensitivity to students' individual identities as learners. She knew that one did not have to always be involved in group work to be engaged in learning.

> Elaine: The dynamics of groups, you know, doesn't always work. And they don't always--, the thing that sometimes bothers me, is that we've been doing this with, at Kwantlen [College] with my Spanish, and I get frustrated as a learner. Because I work with somebody who doesn't have a very good Spanish pronunciation and it doesn't help me, or doesn't know as much as me, and it doesn't help me. And I'm sure some of the students must feel that way. Come with a really good background in French and good pronunciation and good vocabulary and then they're working with somebody who's weaker. They get, must get frustrated the same way that we adults must get frustrated if they're keen. (Int.#3)

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Issues around engagement were not easily resolved for these teachers. Carolyn, for example, had an ongoing concern during the study over the lack of potential for the FSL curriculum to place students in truly authentic situations of communication where activities are more than superficial and where there can be authentic engagement on the part of students with the language as a tool for making meaning. Carolyn's comments indicate how raising these questions for oneself is not always a comfortable process for the teacher.

> Carolyn: I don't know. It's interesting. I haven't put my finger on it and I feel constantly like I'm just sort of out of reach a bit, you know. It's this nebulous thing, way out here, and I keep looking at the groups of kids and I keep wondering when they're actually going to talk back to me [in French]. Like really talk back to me. Like want to talk back to me. Not have me say, "You answer me back, I don't understand you." Like really want to use it. ... Because, oh, I can run a good class and I can get them to do this and I can get them to produce but it's missing that desire to say, and this is why it really hard to deal with the grade 10s because they're saying well, can we write it out in English? (Int. #3)

Carolyn too found that to engage students in the authentic learning of French, one needed to be sensitive to how their identities were bound up in their learning, once learning became more than just an intellectual exercise. Artificial classroom contexts are difficult contexts for truly authentic communication. In this following excerpt, Carolyn talks about trying to convince her students that in speaking French in the classroom with one another they won't be giving up their own identities, but then contradicts herself by saying that sometimes she feels like she has given up part of herself when she uses a second language to communicate. This demonstrates how the notion of engagement with another language and culture can be problematic, as the learning experience causes a loss of competence. Carolyn feels this is why the deeply felt need to

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communicate in French is rare for these students.

> Carolyn: They're fighting really hard against this identity thing. I really see these kids more than any group I've ever seen. Really don't make me be a French person. It's like they're saying that. Don't make me be that. I don't want to be that, you can't make me be that. And I'm saying you don't have to be that. You can still maintain who you are. You don't have to lose anything. You can actually gain. They see it as a complete loss of self. That they're, you know, like we cannot cross over that line. And I've tried to talk to them about those things, those feelings of anxiety, those feelings of frustration. The fear that comes along with, with taking on a new identity. Because I really believe you do. I think you do lose something in the process. You lose who you are, and I see it with the teachers we work with, right. I mean, we go to these meetings and we don't speak French, we speak English. Because our identity is really formed in English. And I always thought it was kind of wacky, you know. Here we were, these language teachers, and we're not using language because we're really more at home in our own skin speaking English. To communicate with each other, you and I, say, for example, we're both English speaking. For you and I to communicate it seems like a farce. So, Well, what I find is that it has to touch something. It has to touch something really deep for that kid in order to want it, for them to want to be able to say it. (Int#3)

The challenge is to engage the students' identities with the language, so that they see themselves as users of that language and therefore participants in that culture. This is where the tension sets in.

Another teacher, Linda, spoke of the challenge of motivating her students to take an interest in the language in one school in particular where most of the children were Indo-Canadian, bringing a strong cultural identity with them to school from the home culture. Carole also wondered if her students in the South of the district, being predominantly from unilingual families, readily saw the value of learning a second language or becoming a participant in another culture. In the very multicultural, multilingual North of the district, however, Carole felt that students living in multicultural contexts already were more open to language learning. These comments suggest that language

becomes powerful when it becomes part of one's identity, and that one's identity is influenced by one's culture and its political context. Who the learners are and what identities they bring with them to the classroom makes a difference in their readiness to engage in a communicative-experiential FSL curriculum. The old curriculum was perhaps less problematic because within it French was somehow viewed as an academic school subject divorced from issues around the interaction of the learners' identities and the culture carried by the language.

In summary, then, these teachers' experiences demonstrate that engagement in second language teaching and learning involves cognitive, affective, social and cultural dimensions which renders the curriculum complex and highly contextualized for diverse groups of learners. Negotiating and constructing the curriculum with diverse groups of learners means attending to and examinng the assumptions behind students' relationships to the curriculum in order to foster engagement with the language as a tool for the construction of meaning.

D. Conclusion

None of the tensions around these themes was completely resolved for any of the participants. Nevertheless, as Lampert (1985) documented in her study, teachers must act in the midst of these unresolvable tensions. This is why their work must remain "a little off balance". The teachers in this study believed that they had evidence to defend the notion that the communicative-experiential approach to the curriculum was a richer educational experience for learners because students could become engaged in personalizing the curriculum, interacting with each other in the social context of the classroom, participating in the target language and culture through experiential goals, and negotiating

their learning from the point of view of their needs for communication. Nevertheless, these teachers often found themselves struggling with tensions within this curriculum. They found that certain aspects of their vision for the communicative-experiential curriculum clashed with students' perceptions of what learning French in a school setting should be all about.

The theoretical frameworks of the communicative-experiential curriculum which were summarized in the literature review are incomplete without the contributions of the perspectives of theory and practice constructed from the lived experience of teachers such as those who participated in this study. The challenge for those theoreticians and practitioners interested in second language teaching and learning becomes therefore to make more space for the perspectives of those who live within the ongoing tensions of the curriculum. How does the knowledge represented by these themes disrupt the larger conversation of theory and practice about second language teaching and learning? Let us return to the questions posed by Legutke and Thomas (1991).

> Is it possible to turn L2 (second language) classrooms into whole person events, where body and soul, intellect and feeling, head, hand and heart converge in action?...Can L2 learning be a satisfying activity in itself, in the here and now of the classrooms?... What needs to be done to regain creative potential in the L2 classroom?...What needs to be done to create situations and scenarios where communication in the target language is more meaningful?...What needs to be done to develop in learners a capacity for critique? How can they become co-managers of their own learning and participate in their own teaching?... Can cultural awareness be taught? What forms of teaching and learning would be most suitable for such an endeavour? (1991, pp. 7-10)

The knowledge contributed by these teachers challenges the assumptions in the questions posed by Legutke and Thomas by demonstrating that

implementation of a pre-conceived notion of a curriculum is probably never attainable in that particular contexts created by particular groups of teachers and students who come together in classrooms override this non-problematic ideal view. Should teachers, therefore, stop trying? I think the discourse of the teachers in this study demonstrates that the goals of the communicative-experiential curriculum are indeed worth the struggle, but that their realization is superficial without careful attention to the students themselves engaging in those goals. The knowledge of these teachers also enriches an understanding of the macro-strategies proposed by Kumaravadivelu (1994) by providing first hand examples of the issues with which some second language teachers struggled and the strategies they employed as they constructed their practice. By challenging to a certain extent the theoretical constructs of the communicative curriculum and by providing examples from lived experience of the tensions within which teachers live and work, the knowledge of these teachers makes an important contribution to the theory and practice of second language teaching and learning. In the next and final chapter I discuss the conclusions and implications that maybe drawn from the study as a whole.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A. Introduction

> Teachers must act in an imperfect world. We have no choice but to
> risk ourselves. The choice is to consider the risk private or to build
> a community that accepts vulnerability and shares risks.
> Vulnerability is endurable in a community of care and support- a
> community in which members take time telling and listening to the
> stories of each other's journey... We need people who listen to us
> and to whom we listen, who help in the narration of our story, so
> we can more readily recognize our changing values and our
> meanings... We must begin to scrutinize and become intentional
> about the communities within which we teach. We must seek our
> new coalitions and work intentionally at the social fabric that
> surrounds those of us that are called to be teachers (Huebner,
> 1987, pp. 26-27 in Miller, 1990, p.104)

As a result of attending to the discourse of this group of FSL teachers as

they worked individually and collaboratively to make sense of a new curriculum,

I have been able to identify and interpret two important themes about the

tensions inherent in second language teaching and learning. These two

tensions were related to risk-taking, and engagement. The significance of these

themes for teachers is heard in Huebner's remarks in the quotation above.

In the first chapter I identified two major foci for this study, one on

propositional knowledge, on understanding what these teachers know as a

result of their experiences, and the other on procedural knowledge, on

understanding how the teachers went about constructing knowledge from their

experiences. In this concluding chapter I discuss the implications of the

propositional knowledge represented in these themes for the larger

conversation of theory and practice in second language teaching and learning,

as well as discussing the implications of the procedural knowledge constructed during this study for teacher development. I also suggest directions for further research which follow from the discussion of these implications.

A word of explanation about the nature of these conclusions is necessary at the outset of this chapter. In a qualitative study such as this one conclusions are not intended to lead to prescriptions for practice. They are meant rather as contributions to the larger conversation of theory and practice about the questions at hand. Implications rather than recommendations follow from these conclusions, therefore. Because this study demonstrates the importance of viewing the construction of teacher knowledge as an ongoing process for each individual, it would be inconsistent to prescribe generalized practices to teachers as a result. This thesis has maintained that, as demonstrated by the case study of this group, teacher research has the potential to contribute both to the knowledge of individual teachers and to the conversation of theory and practice that continues between all educators in their sometimes multiple and alternating roles as practitioners, theoreticians and researchers. Therefore the directions for further study which I suggest are intended for teachers and researchers working together in collaborative settings. What makes these directions credible is that they have been arrived at through the process of listening to teachers' voices, through understanding the issues of this curriculum "from the native's point of view" (Geertz, 1974).

In addition, it is appropriate at this point to reexamine the assumptions with which I began the study. I had formulated two questions in my proposal for this study, as stated in Chapter One, "a desire to document and interpret the effect of the curriculum changes in question on the practices of teachers, and a

motivation to understand more about the value and processes of teacher research as a vehicle for teacher development." In this concluding chapter I maintain that my initial assumptions as a researcher were challenged in the course of this study. I have learned that the linear, one way relationship between the theory of the communicative-experiential curriculum and the practice of teachers which I had assumed is challenged by the knowledge constructed in this thesis. I have also learned that rather than being a "strategy" for the development of teachers, the value of teacher inquiry seems to lie in the context it creates for the re-examiniation of assumptions and the construction of understandings through making sense of lived experiences, rather that in the lessons that teachers learn from doing "research". With this change in perspective on my part in mind, I would like to offer some tentative implications and directions for further research which I feel arise from the conclusions of this study.

B. Implications for Second Language Teaching and Learning

Being a "little off balance" means teaching and learning in the midst of certain tensions. In the accounts of the teacher participants' experiences with the new curriculum, I have demonstrated how particular teachers integrated their beliefs about the educational value of the FSL curriculum, their personal life experiences, and their theories and practices about teaching and learning with their current lived experiences in the classroom in an ongoing process of constructing and testing tentative knowledge about their work. I further analyzed the participants' discourse to identify these tensions as themes within this communicative-experiential curriculum in FSL, within which the participants were making sense of their experiences and acting in their practice. These

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tensions revolved around risk-taking and engagement for teachers and students.

The conclusion that for these teachers these tensions were somewhat unresolvable and ongoing in their practice renders problematic the assumptions of neat theoretical constructs such as the multi-dimensional curriculum (Stern, 1983). The themes of this inquiry reinforce the need identified by Kumaravadivelu (1994) for documentation of the implementation of macro-strategies and the development of "principled pragmatism" on the part of second language teachers such as those who participated in this study. At this point I wish to discuss some implications and directions for further research which I see as flowing from an understanding of these themes. The participants in this study found that working within the communicative-experiential curriculum meant much more complex roles for teachers and students, in that many of their assumptions about what learning French in a classroom setting was all about were being challenged. Evidence was documented from many of the participants' experiences which spoke to the notion that questions of risk-taking and engagement made the relationships of teachers and students to the curriculum more complex. The following implications are intended to provide some directions for further research about these more complex roles. At the same time they should not be viewed as prescriptive directions for the theory and practice of others, or a substitute for the necessary sense-making and problematizing with which teachers live and teach.

1. Working within the communicative-experiential curriculum may imply increased attention to the affective dimensions of learning.

In this study there was evidence of an ongoing tension for teachers around taking risks to create more affectively engaging contexts for learning. Teachers such as June, Carolyn, Sally and Carole, for example, described the importance of the affective side of language learning and the struggle to engage students in using language for authentic purposes which involved more than purely cognitive dimensions of learning. At the elementary level these teachers emphasized the importance of activities which responded to the experiential and social needs of the students, and nurtured participation in a supportive learning environment which valued risk-taking on the part of students to use the language. Secondary teachers also mentioned the tenuous and delicate nature of a curriculum which assumes the affective involvement of students on a personal level when the students do not necessarily view the curriculum like this for themselves. They also found that when students became involved in contexts which included emotional, social and affective dimensions, that particularly powerful learning experiences resulted. Such contexts included communicative tasks and projects which facilitated students bringing their life experiences into the language classroom, which valued the students' efforts to construct meaning through using the language for creative ends, and which offered students opportunities to interact with others around themes which were important to them. But in many instances these teachers felt hampered by the market economy of schooling in place in the system in which they worked.

For these teachers, this "whole person" element, to which Legutke and Thomas also referred (1991), was perhaps the most important aspect that made the new curriculum potentially more educationally valid for a more inclusive student population. More emphasis needs to be placed on creating learning

contexts that are not purely cognitive but rather engage students through involving the social, affective, physical and aesthetic dimensions of their beings, as well as strengthening ways of validating this learning through assessment and evaluation processes.

2. The negotiation of meaning is a fundamental concept of the communicative-experiential curriculum which needs more understanding and more attention in FSL classrooms because it is so complex.

In this study there are many examples of instances where teachers and students are involved in the negotiation of meaning and what counts as knowledge. One of the underpinnings of the communicative-experiential curriculum is that meaning is constantly being negotiated by learners (Breen and Candlin, 1980). This negotiation is part of the meaning making process in the language itself, and part of the context for learning constructed within each classroom. In a context where students have become engaged in constructing and using language as a resource for meaning making, for example, issues such as how much grammar to emphasize shift in focus. Understanding the structure of the language in meaning making contexts may empower language learners to become more autonomous in their use of the language. Who holds the power in the classroom is also an issue of negotiation. Many of the teachers in this study cited examples of negotiation with students about evaluation processes and learning activities which demonstrated that constructing understandings with students helps develop ownership of the curriculum. Rather than taking the view of negotiation as subtle persuasion, these teachers learned to recreate the curriculum based on careful attention to the understandings about knowledge held by their students. More examples of

such work by teachers need to be shared in all their complexity.

3. The implications of the notion of the classroom as community need more investigation within the FSL curriculum.

The assumptions and behaviours associated with viewing FSL as an academic school subject seem at odds than the notion of the classroom as a learning community which underlies the the communicative view of language (Candlin and Breen, 1980; Breen, 1985). This is not a new idea, as even before the notion of communicative language teaching took hold in its twentieth century version (Kelly, 1976), the work of Moskowitz (1978) on "caring and sharing in the foreign language classroom" demonstrated an interest in creating communities of participants who cared about one another within second language classrooms. This notion of community is at the heart of the directions that Legutke and Thomas have taken in their work (1991), and it is also being explored in broader contexts of "communities of inquiry" (Wells, 1994). In second language classrooms, the added dimension of the interaction between the diversity of home languages and cultures represented in the classroom, and the worlds represented by the target culture and language presents both exciting and problematic possibilities. Projects building on these possibilities have already been explored. For example, the exchange of ideas and experiences around common themes between students learning French from Ontario and students learning English from Quebec via electronic conferencing has been studied as a use of technology to enhance the communicative curriculum (Sanaoui and Lapkin, 1993). I noticed in the comments of Carole, Elaine and Linda, however, that the notion of the classroom as community may be also problematic. Students in the classrooms of these teachers did not

necessarily see themselves as sharing their personal lives with the other students through the vehicle of the target language. More research in this regard would help to bring more of the assumptions behind this notion to the forefront for discussion.

4. The concept of authenticity within the communicative curriculum needs further investigation and understanding.

As early work on the communicative approach by Breen pointed out, language learning becomes authentic when it is contextualized in social settings (Breen, 1983; 1985). This setting is created by the individual and cultural identities of teachers and learners as well as the target language and cultures. Sometimes program materials claim to be using the communicative approach because they have included authentic texts from the target culture or they have created real life tasks for the students. Breen argued that, as a learner, what is authentic is what is important to individuals for their own purposes (Breen, 1983). Not all communicative tasks are automatically meaningful, and grammar points studied in context for purposes to which learners are committed may be very authentic indeed. Breen (1985) called for a view of second language classrooms as "coral gardens", where understandings of what the curriculum is all about and how learning takes place are mostly "under the surface". Given this analogy of the coral reef, it is a challenge for second language teachers to bring these issues to the surface and to work with them to build and rebuild shared understandings of the curriculum. Teachers in this study, such as Carolyn and Carole, problematized the meaning of authenticity for their students. The perceptions of the teachers in this study only scraped the surface of the complexity of the teacher's role in constructing this

curriculum with her students, and more work needs to be shared. But we have also heard from the teachers in this study that it's hard to work in isolation, especially when one is interested in challenging the system. To promote the risk-taking and engagement necessary for this activity, contexts for the construction and examination of knowledge by teachers need to be created as part of their daily work.

C. Implications for Teacher Development

The understandings constructed within the inquiry group were tentative, and reflected ongoing problematizing of issues by the participants. Similarly to the participants in Colgan-Davis' (1993) and Miller's (1990) research, closure on issues was not necessarily self-imposed. Within the research group these understandings were collaboratively constructed, as in Colgan-Davis' study (1993). Some of the ways in which this group functioned demonstrated a particular process of collaborative meaning making recognized as characteristic of feminine discourse (Minister, 1991).

How does participation in the research group create favourable conditions for the work of these teachers? As in the study of a second language teacher research group by Schecter & Ramirez (1992), the participants found that the group provided support, ideas and intellectual momentum. In our group the predominant comments about the value of the group had to do with support. Several participants mentioned "hearing what other people are doing in their classes" as a source of workable ideas. But I suggest that there are more profound effects of the teacher researcher group upon teachers' views of their practice, which are embedded in the experience and the discourse of the group. First, I noticed an interplay of tensions particular to individual teaching and

learning contexts, and the most wide sweeping of social, political and educational issues, of emic and etic problem-posing. I saw an indication of this process within the group around issues to do with the broad goals of second language education, and of its social and cultural implications. Occasional parts of the discourse broached the topics of the appropriateness of FSL for all learners, involving heritage language and cultural issues. This indicated to me that collaborative construction of meaning provided a vehicle through which these teachers grappled with bigger issues, including social change, by beginning with a reflexive stance towards their own practice.

What does this study of the workings of this teacher inquiry group contribute to knowledge about teacher development? What implications for teacher education inservice practices and further research follow from the knowledge contributed by this study? I am able to identify the following implications of the conclusions of this study which may provide direction.

1. The process of living the curriculum is highly contextualized and intensely personal as well as transformational for teachers. Teacher inquiry groups provide settings for the construction of this knowledge of lived curriculum which is changed by and changes its participants.

Participation in such teacher research may support teachers as they learn to dwell in what Aoki (1994) has called the intertextual spaces of curriculum, a risky but necessary place to be.

> One of the nice things about acknowledging multiple curricula is the opening up of spaces where teachers really dwell, where they are doing their work, where they're struggling. What the teachers constitute in these spaces, as they struggle through simultaneously making sense of the curriculum-as- planned and of the kids' lives in the classroom, is a tough game. Living in the spaces is what teaching is. It's not merely implementing a given curriculum into a situation- although that's part of it... As we come to understand, we

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change ourselves. Coming to an understanding in a deep sense is at the same time to modify ourselves in such a way that we will act differently in the world. Such thinking breaks from the notion that we think first, then do. Thinking and doing are entwined (Aoki, 1994, p.5).

The implication of this study is, therefore, that participation in teacher research and more specifically in collaborative oral inquiry as in this group, has the potential to contribute to the career long ability of teachers to make informed judgements in the light of ever changing contexts of curriculum. These "ever changing contexts of curriculum" use a different language than the more technical term "educational change". Much is heard in educational discourse about teachers' abilities to adapt and be flexible in the face of educational change. What does this really mean? Being flexible and adaptable is a dangerously passive stance without developing the ability to ask critical questions, to seek tentative answers and to be reflexive about one's own practice.

There is ongoing debate in education about whether curriculum change is a process which is best directed and implemented from educational policy debated and mandated at the national, provincial or district levels, or whether the kind of change most significant to learning in classrooms is that which springs from decisions reflected and acted upon by those closest to the contexts of students (Fullan, 1991; Lieberman, 1994). According to Lieberman, the best chance for educational reform is created through top down support for bottom up change. In reality, however, institutionally initiated reform seems to take place in a confused atmosphere of tension as the system attempts to synthesize and mediate input from stakeholder interests at various levels in education. Ways of supporting ongoing sense-making, judgement, and informed risk-

taking on the part of teachers must be embedded within any change initiative, so that there are as many ways recognized for achieving broad curricular goals as there are teachers and learners. This stance helps teachers to go beyond curriculum prescription to think more deeply about knowledge and how it is held in their classrooms.

> Essentially, teachers and students negotiate what counts as
> knowledge in the classroom, who can have knowledge and how
> knowledge can be generated, challenged and evaluated. We are
> arguing that through inquiry, teachers come to understand how
> this happens in their own classrooms and how their interpretations
> of classroom events are shaped. (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993, p. 45)

2. The lived experience of the teachers in this study challenged presently existing paradigms of teacher competence.

Several of the participants in the study mentioned that in the course of the implementation they increasingly learned to give themselves permission to personalize and adapt the curriculum to the needs of their contexts within the broader parameters of the communicative, experiential framework. This research group was important because it made space for and respected the self-evaluative work of teachers.

> June: And when you look at your own learning, when you
> really focus on your own learning, how you went about learning
> something and you study your resistances or your strengths or
> your, you know, the blocks that you have or the questions and how
> you ask questions and how you sort through things, it
> enables you to do a better job. (Int.#3)

This sort of self-knowledge is not highly enough valued as a component of inservice teacher education or ongoing teacher development. Present inservice programs in school districts still operate mostly on the expert model, that is, based on the assumption that master teachers are able to impart

methodology to those less skilled via a series of "practical" workshops. The more elusive side, the inside work, does not receive much attention, although it is clearly a crucial element in understanding the curriculum as lived by teachers and students. Just as teacher development depends upon valuing the constructed knowledge that teachers hold about the curriculum, so does good teaching depend on understanding the ways in students personally construct knowledge of the curriculum.

Teachers in this group found themselves struggling with what it meant to be a competent teacher in the context of the new curriculum. Master narratives about teachers being expected to always be in control of the situation were being challenged. New capacities and new roles for the teacher meant that risk-taking became a focal point of discussion. There were sometimes feelings of guilt shared amongst the group about not being innovative enough, and questions about what it meant for the teachers to be learners as well. The view of teaching as a capacity building lifelong pursuit, on the other hand, acknowledges the importance of the development of a sense of critique, reasoned judgement, and risk-taking on the part of teachers (Lieberman, 1994).

> June: An emerging theory is that teaching is not a safe place to be.
> We can't enter it thinking that we're going to be safe, it
> has to involve risk-taking. (Everyone laughs) (Group Mtg. #3).

This capacity involves coming to value the feeling that curriculum is a moving target, and teaching means living "a little off balance". Just as one begins to feel in control of new technical expertise, new contexts may demand different skills. Marina reinforced the notion that teaching as capacity building requires continuous informed experimentation.

> Marina: It's a learning process I think, and you have to go through

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the motions. And each year does get better than the one before. Just because you've seen what works and you've seen what doesn't work and you can deal with those things better, but it takes experience, you know, and if you try It for yourself; you can hear other peoples' point of view but it's very important to go through it yourself. To experiment, and there's a lot of, a lot of room for that. And I find I can experiment in ways now which I perhaps wouldn't have done then. (Int.#2)

Part of this capacity building, according to Carolyn, involves maintaining a critical edge, being able to assess the value of curriculum changes and to ask oneself difficult questions.

> Carolyn: I have a history of using the approach. But I don't find that, I don't feel a lot of times adequate in dealing, in using, not that I don't feel adequate in using it, but I feel inadequate because I would like to be able to be more effective and I feel that somehow you know, even though I have a history I don't necessarily have it down pat. Not at all. I mean, I'd be surprised if people said that after a few years they've got it all mastered. Because here we are in the second year of using this program and I still feel like it's a bit of a mystery tour. So a teacher's career is like that. A teacher's career is not stagnant. It doesn't stay in one place. It has to move and so you have to move along with it. (Group Mtg. #4)

This stance requires tentative language and attitudes as well as a spirit of risk and of self-critique. In other words, the "messiness" of teachers' meaning making processes need to be much more recognized and valued. This shifts the language of what it means to be competent as a teacher. Participants spoke of being able to maintain "that critical edge" in order to make the most reasoned judgements possible, in a world where curriculum is forever a "moving target", and where teachers struggle to be in control in contexts where they are, in more subtle ways, out of control or controlled by educational and political agendas not their own.

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3. Some of the value of teacher research may lie in the confidence participants collaboratively build to give themselves the power to act, through building a deeper understanding of the ways in which knowledge is held in their classrooms. The importance of teacher inquiry needs to be more highly valued.

Teaching needs to be viewed as a profession that values and engages in collegial reflection, problem-solving and collaborative knowledge construction as a necessary and integral part of its pursuit. Within the group in question I recognized the beginnings of building such a stance among the participants, but as Miller pointed out (1990), this collaborative work takes more time than was allowed for in the life of this group. The essential value of teacher research lies in the promotion of this stance about the knowledge of teachers. Through understanding themselves, their students and the curriculum more critically, teachers will be able to grapple with larger issues of knowledge and will take a career long reflexive stance in their practice. Participation in this teacher researcher group created opportunities to explore teacher-generated issues in an environment where questions and open-ended inquiry became valued more than answers. Because the research group focussed on collective meaning making, it created a sense of community which was rare within the experience of these teachers. For example, Sally viewed this notion of community as having to do with feeling supported as part of a group during periods of individual risk-taking with the new curriculum, and developing an appreciation of the other participants in the community and their teaching contexts.

> Sally: But I do know that I've got more energy for teaching
> than I've had in a good ten years... And part of that comes from,
> and I think this is really crucial for me, a lack of feeling of isolation.
> And I wish it [teacher research groups] were something that were more
> built in to our system in general. I wish that we had more of a professional

development long term, instead of more of a survival mode, which is what it is a lot of the time. (Int.#3)

Encouraging communities of inquiry amongst teachers where the participants have the opportunity to share in the generation of knowledge about teaching and learning is an important vehicle for combatting the forces of isolation which seem to plague the teaching profession. These contexts may be useful as spaces where teachers can figure out who they really are and what they stand for. Bernice Johnson Reagan talks about the value of such spaces, even though one can only stay there from time to time.

> But that space while it lasts should be a nurturing space where you sift out what people are saying about you and decide who you really are. And you take the time to try and construct within yourself and your community who you would be if you were running society. (1983, p.358)

How can educators at all levels support teacher research? Schecter and Ramirez (1992) concluded that the kinds of support that were found effective in facilitating teacher research within their group were time, legitimization, attention to group processes, and the catalytic effect of the requirement of producing a report at the end of the process. I suggest that more systemic forms of support are necessary for teacher research to become an integral part of what teachers do. Teacher research initiatives need to be introduced with sensitivity to teachers' lives and the ways in which they are structured by the school system. First, the concepts of time and timing must be understood from the points of view of the teachers who are potential participants in such groups. Teachers talk a lot about the stress of time; some say there's no time for professional development. In this study participants identified the group as a rare and unusual opportunity to have time just to talk with colleagues. The secondary teachers whose schools followed the semester system and

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particularly Janey, whose school followed the quarter system, found that their perceptions of their practice were even more frequently reframed by the contexts of new students and new beginnings. The dynamics of teachers' and students' contexts seemed to have everything to do with the sorts of issues that were raised and investigated. Time and timing are thus crucial to teachers, and in the daily course of education, no time is dedicated for teacher inquiry.

To help remedy this perception, I feel that the place of teacher inquiry in relation to other forms of professional development must be articulated if teachers and administrators are to understand its value. As Schecter and Ramirez (1992) point out, the jumping off point for the group should be articulated. Groups need a "raison d'être" other than teacher development in general, even though the hope is that what is learned through the group is carried on into other contexts by the participants as an attitude or a stance towards themselves, teaching and education. In order to be powerful, opportunities for teacher research need to occur within a larger community that sees the kind of knowledge that comes out of the group as contributing, with other sources, to an ongoing spirit of inquiry within the profession. The value of this personal research process embedded within a larger context of communities of inquiry has been described by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) Lieberman (1994), and Wells (1994). Teacher inquiry groups should not exist alone and in isolation from larger issues and other contexts, because they are by nature bridging endeavours, lived in the midst of overly polarized notions of theory and practice, the new and the old, the personal and the public, and the particular and the general.

Finally, the space for teacher research must be publicly acknowledged as significant for the wider academic and educational community. To support

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teacher research is to find the spaces where its discourse can be heard as an important part of what teachers do. Four possible ways of making such space are:

• to encourage universities to value teacher inquiry as a legitimate genre of knowledge by offering courses for credit based on the premises of teacher research, such as the SFU Comet model described in Chapter One,

• to work to integrate teacher inquiry as a necessary component of any new curriculum implementation plan supported by Ministries of Education,

• to initiate teacher inquiry models at the school district level as integral models of professional development and educational change and to attach monies to these initiatives, and

• to encourage teachers' associations and unions whose mandate includes the support of the professional development of its members to fund this model and look upon it as a vehicle for reasoned educational change.

Directions for further research clearly point to the need for researchers and teachers to work together to document more comprehensively the processes of constructing understandings at work in teacher inquiry settings and to share this knowledge with those interested in pursuing these endeavours. Rather than limiting the legitimacy of the results of such processes, the understandings forged by teachers in the midst of practice must be included in the larger conversation of theory and practice about teaching and learning. To return to the opening quotation of this chapter:

> We must begin to scrutinize and become intentional about the
> communities within which we teach. We must seek our
> new coalitions and work intentionally at the social fabric that
> surrounds those of us that are called to be teachers (Huebner,
> 1987, pp. 26-27 in Miller, 1990, p.104)

EPILOGUE

The oral examination of this thesis took place on March 6th, 1995. Seven of the nine teachers in the research group were present. The participants had an opportunity to ask questions and to respond to comments and questions after the formal round of questioning from the examiners was completed. As the participant researcher, I found the interaction between the teacher community and the academic community during the discussion interesting and worthy of comment. It was important for the participants to sit side by side with the academic community, and as much as possible within the protocol of the setting of an oral examination, ask questions together about the value of this research. The degree of ownership of the participants about the significance of the research was evident. The questions and comments of the academic community helped me, and the group, I believe, to appreciate the importance of clarity and comprehensiveness in expressing our interpretations, thus making what we learned more accessible to others. During the discussion there were moments of awkwardness in communication between the two discourse communities. This attested to the gap between the theory and practice of teacher inquiry from the point of view of the academic community, and its meaning for the participants, as members of the teaching community. I hope more opportunities such as these, where the academic community and the teaching community participate in and evaluate research from different but equally valued perspectives, will help develop richer, less polarized ways of constructing understanding about educational theory and practice.

APPENDICES

Cynthia Lewis, FSL Helping Teacher
November, 1992

Dear Surrey FSL teacher,

I am writing this letter to inform you about my proposal for research for my Doctoral dissertation and to invite you to participate in a research group in this regard.

My area of interest for my dissertation is the personal theories and practices of French teachers as they put the curriculum into action in their classrooms. I feel this research is important in order to value in a more explicit way the knowledge and experience of teachers in the field. Insights about the understandings that teachers hold about their practice will contribute to knowledge about what current theoretical approaches to FSL look like in action and how they are brought to life in practical terms by teachers.

To this end, I have made the following proposal for the design of the study. I would like to involve **six to eight FSL teachers** in the district in a Research Committee on the Implementation of the new FSL curriculum. Members of the committee would benefit professionally from participation in the study in the following ways:

1. Participants would have opportunities to reflect explicitly on events in their classrooms and share their successes and frustrations with colleagues.
2. Participants would have opportunities to focus on common areas of concern with others on the committee and to give input to the district, the Ministry and the authors of our new programs.
3. Participants would have opportunities to focus of the implementation from the point of view of their students by involving them in evaluation of the program.

Timeline and Commitment Necessary

The project will last from January to May 1993 with the possibility of brief follow-up in the Fall of 1993. The first meeting will be Monday, January 18th at 1:00 PM with substitute provided. Participation in the project will involve:

*   Participation in three extensive interviews about your background, theories and practices, at the beginning, near the middle and towards the end of the project. Transcripts will be made from these interviews and participants will be asked to review what they have said. You will have control over what you have said and where it will appear.
*   Participation at three half-day group meetings for which you will receive a substitute. These meetings will hopefully be funded by an Intermediate Program site development grant.
*   Collection of information about the implementation of the program in your classroom in ways which the participants deem suitable (Journal notes, work samples, interviews, video, audio tape).
*   Sharing of the results of the project in some way with the rest of the teachers in Surrey.
*   Participants will always have the option to opt out of the project at any time.
Fully respecting the time commitment involved my idea is to involve the participants in as many ways as possible without making excessive demands on their time. Please see attached the agenda for the first meeting. If you have any questions or comments about this proposal do not hesitate to call me at 590-2255

FSL Curriculum Implementation Research Group
Initial Meeting
CISC - Room #1 - Monday, January 18th - 1:00 PM-3:00 PM

Agenda:

1. Background and purposes of the research group. (Cynthia) Review of the proposal.

2. More specific goals of the group - timelines and outcomes, application for the grant (see grant application). Possibilities for sharing the project.

3. The purpose of this first meeting is to understand more about your background as a teacher, your beliefs about second language education and your perceptions regarding the implementation of the new FSL curriculum. Your comments during this meeting will be recorded and transcribed so that everyone receives a copy of the transcript of the discussion. From the transcript we will attempt to tease out common questions and concerns that we can focus on as a research group.

   a) Please tell us about your teaching background and experience.

   b) Please tell us about the changes in FSL education that you see being represented in the new FSL curriculum. How is it different from the last curriculum? What do you perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of such changes?

   c) Please tell us about how you have found the implementation process so far? What have you done? How has it worked out? What have you learned from the implementation process so far?

   d) What questions have been emerging as you proceed? What concerns do you have about the implementation?

Appendix Three: Questions for First Interviews

Background and teaching

1. Please tell me about your professional background and what lead you to become a teacher.

2. Please tell me your personal view about the goals of second language education.

3. Please tell me about your personal approach to second language teaching.

4. Do you have any opinions about the new FSL Curriculum and Assessment Framework?

The Change Experience

1. Surrey has recently adopted new approaches and materials for FSL education. We are in the first year of implementation of this new curriculum. What were your anticipations of te change experience, and how are these anticipations matching the actual experience?

2. What differences are there in this new approach to second language learning for your students and yourself?

3. What factors eg events, sources of help, decisions, expectations, people are influencing your experience of change?

4. Have you noticed any changes in your and our students' reactions to change since the beginning of the year?

5. What problems or difficulties are characterizing your experience of change and how aare you dealing with these?

6. Is there anything else you consider important to your experience that you would ike to comment on?

7. What else should I be asking you aout this general topic?

8. What questions are you asking yourself about the implementation of this new approach?

9. How will you collect evidence about this question in your classroom?

Appendix Four:

Second Group Meeting March 4 1993

Agenda

1. Review of the transcript from the first meeting

2. Identification of emerging themes from the transcripts.

3. Updates on individual research foci and classroom issues.

4. Sharing of ways of collecting information about research interests.

5. Organization of visits to one another's classrooms.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO : **FSL Research Group:**
FROM : **Cynthia Lewis**

RE : Nous!!!

DATE : Apr. 20, 1993

1. Please find enclosed the transcript of our second group meeting. Please read this and jot down places that need further discussion in the group and/or more emerging themes. We will talk about these at the third meeting.

2. Speaking of the 3rd meeting, most people have planned their visits for the end of March or April. I am proposing to move the final meeting of this group up, therefore to **THURSDAY, MAY 6th**, 1993, **12:45 - 2:45 PM** at CISC, room #1. This will make less of a gap between meetings and allow more time for the 2nd round of individual interviews. Please RSVP to Lise.

3. Please find enclosed June's summary paper from Comet. If other people have papers they wish to share, please send me a copy and I'll circulate them.

Agenda - May 6th:

- Year-end updates from research focusses
- Feedback from visits
- Review transcript of second meeting
- Timetable for 2nd round of interviews
- Date for September meeting

CYNTHIA

CL/ll

TO   :   Members of the FSL Research Group

FROM: Cynthia

RE   :   Minutes of the third meeting and schedule of interviews

1.   We talked about the research plan from here on in - that I would do a
     second round of interviews now focussing on two large questions.

     • Looking back at the transcript of the first personal interview, what parts
       do you consider important to comment on, to clarify or to revise at this
       point? What things struck you as you reread this transcript?
     • If you needed to summarize for someone outside our group the nature of
       your research focus around curriculum implementation, the process you
       followed to keep track of your focus and your conclusions so far, what
       would you say?
     • Anything else you would like to say, ask, comment on?

     We will meet once more in September - tentatively Sept. 23 from 8:30 AM
     to 11:30 AM at CISC, to talk about your perceptions as we start a second
     year of implementation, and to plan the content of our workshop at the
     BCATML on Oct. 15th. We talked a bit about what our session might look
     like. Several people mentioned the importance of having concrete
     examples and an interactive session. We might try a "Foire" approach! We
     also need to celebrate! Finally, I will arrange interviews with each person
     after Oct. 15 as the last phase of the project.

Thanks again for giving your time for interviews. I'll contact those with whom I
     need to arrange a time.

Merci!

Cynthia

TO   :   <u>FSL Research Group:</u>
FROM   :   **Cynthia Lewis**

Bonne rentrée!!

Please find enclosed the transcript from our meeting in May and your "case study" as I have interpreted it so far. The names have been changed to protect the innocent!

So, what happens now? ...

1. We agreed in May to meet again in September **(Thursday, Sept. 23rd)** in order to formulate our conclusions so far <u>and</u> to prepare for our workshop at the BCATML on Oct. 15th. I am trying to negotiate a group rate for our registration at the Conference. Please apply to your **Pro-D** for about **$75.00**.

   I am proposing that we meet **<u>ALL DAY on Sept. 23rd from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the ANNEX.</u>** See the agenda at the end of these notes.

2. Your "case studies" are my first attemps to do justice to the contexts of change that you explored as part of the research group. These documents are YOUR PROPERTY, NOT MINE. Before using them as part of my study, I would like to hear your feedback. Does what has been said do justice to your experience? What has <u>not</u> been said that should be said? Please let me know your reactions. We will be going over the studies individually during the 3rd round of interviews in November.

3. <u>**Agenda for September 23rd:**</u>

8:30   Coffee, updates
9:00   Review transcript from May meeting, summarizing <u>themes</u>
10:45 Deciding on format for BCATML
13:00 Preparation time for BCATML
14:15 Report back
14:45 Conclusions, next meeting (date??)

TO : Members of the FSL Research Group

FROM: Cynthia

RE : <u>"Shadowing" and the future of the group</u>

I am looking forward to spending time with you in your schools. This will provide background for me and you will know that I have a sense of how things are for you by actually being there. What I will do is keep an "anecdotal record" of what happens during my visit and I will leave a margin on the side for questions I might have or comments we might make together after the visits. I will give you a copy of my notes after the first and second visit so that we can look at them together during the follow-up interview.

After the second visit, we have left time for a follow-up interview after school. We need to discuss:

- your reactions to the "case study" of yourself so far (as was given to each person in September)
- the "shadowing" experience and notes
- your observations on the "implementation" of a new curriculum in FSL for you now that we are part way through the second year. What is the same for you? What is different this year? What issues have moved on? What new issues are there? Where do you hope to be with all of this by the end of this school year?
- your evaluation of this shift in the FSL curriculum so far. How is it good for students? How do you know? What concerns do you still have?
- your evaluation of your experience in the research group itself. How was it the same or different than other curriculum groups that you have experienced? Would you like to keep meeting or is this enough? What is the role of such groups in curriculum change?
- PS. May 26th-28th 1994 the CAAL (Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics) is meeting at UBC. (This group usually meets in Quebec.) I will be submitting a proposal to read a paper on my research in progress and would invite any of the group who is interested to join me.

See you on the dates we've arranged!

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