



Dilemmas of design and predicaments of practice: adapting the 'Fostering a Community of Learners' model in secondary school English language arts classrooms

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This study examines three middle school and secondary school English teachers' attempts to adapt and enact the principles and practices of the 'Fostering a Community of Learners' (FCL) model. As a systemic pedagogical model designed to foster authentic dialogue and inquiry, FCL challenges deeply held traditions of English as both a school subject and academic discipline. Three critical incidents, selected from separate extended case studies, reveal the conceptual challenges teachers face when bringing to life practices consistent with constructivist learning principles. The study shows that through simplification of the model and gradual experimentation, the teachers began to approximate the systemic integrity of FCL. The study identifies key curriculum-planning strategies employed by the teachers that led to pedagogical innovation (e.g. double-planning, renaming, isolation, retrenchment, and fusion).

This fourth paper in this issue of *JCS* examines ways in which Brown and Campione's (1996) comprehensive pedagogical model, 'Fostering a Community of Learners' (FCL), dares English teachers to rethink the conventional approach to studying literature in middle school and secondary school classrooms. I provide here illustrative comparisons to design and implementation efforts in social studies (Mintrop 2004), science (Rico and Shulman 2004), and mathematics (Sherin *et al.* 2004). Consistent with the experiences of the social studies and science teachers described in other papers in this issue of *JCS*, the English teachers presented here struggled to break free from the entrenched curricular habits of English as a school subject. I extend the analyses offered by Mintrop and Rico and Shulman by showing that through simplification of the model and gradual experimentation, the teachers began to approximate the systemic integrity of FCL. The study identifies the key curriculum-planning strategies employed by the teachers that led to pedagogical innovation.

Current US reforms in English language arts are rooted in constructivist theories of learning. This is clear in approaches to writing instruction that emphasize writing processes (Hillocks 1995, Sperling and Freedman 2001), in literature teaching that encourages open and authentic dialogue (Probst

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1988, Langer 1992, 1995, Nystrand *et al.* 1997, Beach and Myers 2001), and in specific curriculum proposals such as the 'Pacesetter' English programme (Wolf 1995), which is organized around critical questions in language use while at the same time infusing traditional and contemporary world literatures. Although teachers appear willing to embrace these visions of student learning, many find pedagogical enactments difficult to achieve, particularly in literature study (Marshall *et al.* 1995). The well-rooted tradition of teacher-directed discussion and interpretation of conventional literary texts has proven resistant to change.

The learning principles that undergird FCL are consistent with constructivist reform goals in English education in the USA; in addition, the particular participant structures provide a vehicle to reshape the substance and syntax of classroom literature discussions. Designing and implementing this model challenges teachers to rethink their traditional understandings of the nature of literary text, the nature of literary understanding, and the purposes of discourse within the English classroom.

In this paper, I explore the challenges associated with abandoning traditional approaches to the study of literature by describing my work with three middle school and secondary school English teachers. For two years, we worked to understand FCL principles and practices and to adapt them to the teachers' classrooms. I examine three critical incidents that occurred in either the design or implementation process; the incidents connect with deeper conceptual challenges teachers face in bringing to life teaching practices consistent with constructivist learning principles. This paper has three parts: a review of traditions of teaching English language arts in the USA that introduces a conceptual language for analysis, accounts of the three critical incidents, and a thematic analysis of the critical incidents.

'What is English?': traditions of teaching English language arts

Elbow's (1990) question, '*What is English?*', implies that English as a school subject may be approached in different ways. Among English educators and middle school and secondary school English teachers in the USA, the substance of the curriculum has been the subject of intense deliberation. In recent years, debates within the academy have swirled over which texts to include in the canon (Graff 1992), and these arguments have reached down to middle schools and secondary schools. For example, although the list of common core texts has changed surprisingly little over the last 25 years, anthology selections have tended to reflect contributions of women and minority writers (Applebee 1993). Furthermore, the notion of 'text' has been expanded to include a wide range of expository material, films, and even icons and images from popular culture. Literary theories, ranging from reader-response to feminist to critical, now challenge the dominant theory of New Criticism (Grossman 2001). New Criticism, as a literary theory, emphasizes a close reading of *the text itself*: by means of careful examination of the formal elements of the text, a 'best' and 'timeless' reading may be achieved (Tyson 1999). Although US literary critics no longer use this

approach, its vestiges endure in middle school and secondary school English classrooms, particularly in the sense that students often perceive that the purpose of class discussion is to uncover the teacher's 'superior' reading of a literary text. To combat this tendency, English-education reformers have encouraged alternatives to the typical pattern of initiation-response-evaluation (Cazden 1988) that has prevailed in classroom literature discussions. Reformers promote formats in which students have greater opportunities to construct original and personally relevant interpretations of texts (e.g. Eeds and Wells 1989, Marshall *et al.* 1995, Nystrand *et al.* 1997). These reform efforts reflect the core ideas of reader-response theory, a literary theory that asserts that the meaning of a text lies in the active 'transaction' between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt 1938, Tyson 1999).¹

Language as artefact and other approaches

Teasing out some of the differences mentioned above, Gere and her colleagues (1992) characterize four distinct answers to the question 'What is English?' They describe four approaches to language in teaching English, each varying in terms of its view of text(s), its method of literary interpretation, and classroom practices and processes. Of the four, one approach, *language as artefact*, dominates the landscape of middle school and secondary school English in the USA; it views literary texts as privileged artefacts to be examined closely. Within this approach, the study of text focuses upon analysis of its formal properties, with the teacher as the expert reader who guides students' interpretations of the text. This approach reflects a somewhat sterile version of the literary theory of New Criticism which dominated US university English departments in the middle of the 20th century. Applebee (1996) has referred to this approach as the *deadly tradition*, because learners strive to memorize and produce *knowledge-out-of-context* rather than engage in active meaning-making. As Applebee puts it, '[students] are forced to memorize the rules but are never allowed to ride the bicycle . . . [M]ost students quickly understand the game of school is to figure out what the teacher wants; and it is a game many students simply do not want to play' (p. 33).

In contrast to the *language-as-artefact* approach, Gere *et al.* (1992) describe three other approaches, *language as development*, *as expression*, and *as social construct*. Across these three approaches, the concept of text is construed more broadly; for example, recognized works of literary merit are not necessarily privileged over students' writing, and the notion of genre may be extended to include multi-media or informational expository text. Interpretation of texts is consistent with reader-response and critical literary theories. Most importantly, the teacher's role is redefined as a facilitator or coach who scaffolds and guides students' growth in both understanding and generating language and text. In classrooms consistent with these three approaches, student talk is more likely to occur, for each approach offers teachers a way of engaging students in meaningful dialogue with one another.

Curriculum as conversation

Applebee's (1996) metaphor of *curriculum as a conversation* synthesizes the latter three approaches and offers a conceptual rationale for understanding what the study of English might entail. The metaphor operates on at least two levels. First, it suggests that the content of school curriculum needs to engage students in 'culturally significant domains of conversation' that connect with the various academic disciplines' traditions of knowing and doing. Second, it suggests that students need to engage in genuine dialogue in order to participate in those larger traditions. Applebee (1996) contends that a critical role of schooling is to help children employ the 'culturally constituted tools' human beings have created to make sense of their world and experience. In school settings, these 'tools' are the traditions of the academic disciplines. 'These traditions', he explains, 'include not just concepts and associated vocabulary, but also the rhetorical structures, the patterns of action, that are part of any tradition of meaning-making' (p. 9). Thus, schooling helps students become conversant in both the substance and syntax of various disciplines (Schwab 1964).

For Applebee (1996), these traditions capture ongoing conversational domains about how people understand their world; rather than being fixed, those traditions are dynamically unfolding as new ideas enter the domain. Alchemy, for example, has been supplanted by modern chemistry to explain certain phenomena of the physical world. Thus, 'what the academic disciplines do represent at any given moment in time is the current state of an ongoing dialogue about significant aspects of human knowledge and experience' (p. 10). In the study of literature, recent debates over 'the canon' and the widespread acceptance of feminist and critical approaches to literary analysis are two indications of the ongoing dialogue in this discipline. Applebee concludes that the kind of education students need is one grounded in the dynamic *knowledge-in-action* that these traditions embody and that involves students in these larger conversations. In this respect, Applebee's work parallels Gardner's (2000) view of the 'disciplined mind'.

The FCL model

FCL was developed by Ann Brown, Joseph Campione, and their colleagues in a series of design experiments (Brown 1992, Brown *et al.* 1993, Brown and Campione 1996). As a pedagogical model, FCL is well suited to foster the development of *knowledge-in-action*. FCL's overarching goal is to engage students in genuine and generative inquiry into the 'big ideas' of a discipline. A guiding image is the transformation of the classroom into a research community. This transformation is accomplished by implementing several distinct participant structures, including benchmark lessons, reciprocal teaching, and cycles in which students research–share–perform to develop understandings of big ideas. *Benchmark lessons* are commonly shared experiences designed to activate prior knowledge and introduce core concepts. Often benchmarks are achieved through whole-class lectures, discussions, or demonstrations; however, they differ from traditional

teacher-led discussions in that they are designed to be touchstone experiences that the community refers to throughout an investigation.

Another participant structure is *reciprocal teaching* (RT) (Palinscar and Brown 1984), a small-group pedagogy designed to foster reading comprehension. Within the small group, the teacher models and scaffolds comprehension strategies involving predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing; the teacher gradually diminishes his or her facilitation role as the students internalize these strategies and use them to comprehend expository text (Pressley 2002). Using RT, teachers structure discussions of anchor texts or research materials.

Through cycles of researching, sharing, and performing, students use the participant structure of *jigsaw groups* (Aronson *et al.* 1978). In jigsaw, a large conceptual topic is parsed into smaller pieces. Within small groups, students develop expertise on one piece; then group members are reconfigured to share information. At the conclusion of an investigation, students engage in a performance that involves their demonstration of *knowledge-in-action*. This might require the production of a research report, the completion of an experiment, or a dramatic presentation. Thus, FCL is designed to foster dialogic classrooms in which students are invited to act as researchers constructing understanding of essential ideas. The FCL model is consistent with the kind of *adventurous* teaching for understanding called for by many reformers (Cohen 1989, Cohen *et al.* 1993).

This gloss of different approaches to the teaching of English and to the FCL model provides background for my analysis of three teachers' attempts to adapt FCL in middle school and secondary school English classrooms. Although FCL was designed in elementary classrooms in the context of science instruction, its constructivist principles of learning are consistent with reform efforts in English. I thought the specific participant structures would easily transfer into English classrooms. As it turns out, adapting FCL was more easily planned than completed. Each of the teachers I worked with struggled to situate FCL within the context of the dominant *language-as-artefact* approach to teaching English. In this next section I detail three critical incidents that occurred either designing or implementing FCL in middle school and secondary school English classrooms.

Three critical incidents

Context and methods for study

The larger context for this work was a professional development project, 'Fostering a Community of Teachers and Learners' (FCTL), whose purpose was to design teacher-learning experiences that supported novice and veteran secondary school teachers' understanding and implementation of FCL. FCTL, as a research project, encompassed several different 'design experiments' (Brown 1992). That is, collectively, the principal investigators, project directors, and research assistants organized and studied several different teacher-learning communities (e.g. Louis and Kruse 1995), each involving some aspect of designing and implementing FCL. I served as a

project director; in that capacity during 1995–1997 I designed and conducted professional development experiences at one middle school (Lincoln Middle School [LMS]),² and I simultaneously researched the impact of these experiences upon the teachers' understanding of FCL and their classroom practice. Over the two years I worked with a total of 12 members of the LMS faculty, who taught English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

In my role as staff developer, I worked with project assistants to develop a collaborative model of professional development. From the project's start, I explained to the participating LMS teachers that I would introduce the general model of FCL, as described by Brown and Campione (1996), and together we would adapt and re-invent the model to work in their classrooms. This approach was consistent with recent reforms aimed at designing constructivist professional development (Little 1993, McDiarmid 1994, Richardson 1994, Darling-Hammond 1995, Fullan 1995, Lieberman 1995, Hawley and Valli 1999). I organized two summer institutes, each lasting one week, where FCL principles and practices were introduced and where teachers began to design FCL curricula. During each academic year, I held monthly meetings for all participating teachers. These meetings focused on sharing experiences and solving problems of implementation. In addition, I provided intensive support for the English language arts teachers in their design and implementation of FCL units. This support took the form of curriculum-planning sessions, usually after school, as well as classroom observations during FCL instruction. Similar support for teachers of other subject matters was provided (Mintrop 2004, Rico and Shulman 2004, Sherin *et al.* 2004).

As a research project, all activities were documented. For example, participating teachers were formally interviewed twice (background and exit); participating teachers were observed regularly and field notes were written for each classroom visit (for most teachers 15–20 visits took place); transcripts of teacher-meeting conversations or field notes were generated for all professional development activities; teacher-developed curriculum materials and reflections were collected. The central method of data distillation and analysis was the case study (Merriam 1998). Case studies were developed for individual teachers and for the teacher-learning communities. Each teacher case study details the teacher's background, experimentation with FCL, and involvement in teacher-learning communities. Multiple sources of data—including transcripts from background and exit interviews, field notes from curriculum-planning sessions, classroom observations, and transcripts of teacher community meetings— informed each case study.

Each of the three critical incidents presented herein is drawn from separate case studies of the three English teachers with whom I worked. The incidents I selected illustrate different dilemmas of design and predicaments of practice that occurred when these three teachers attempted to apply the principles and practices of the FCL model to teaching English. In the following section, I reconstruct and reflect upon the incidents. The first recounts Debbie's crisis point in the first year of the programme; had we not resolved Debbie's crisis, she would have abandoned the project. The second

incident examines how Allie engaged in a double-planning process to develop an FCL unit for a text she had never taught. I include a third contrasting incident, in which Patrick re-invents RT by fusing it with another participant structure. Reconstructing these incidents from the data gave me opportunities to respond to the following research questions:

- In what ways did each teacher's view of English, as a school subject-matter, shape his or her design and implementation of FCL?
- In what ways did the teachers apply the FCL model in an English classroom?

Before I recount three critical incidents, I provide a brief overview to the school contexts in which the teachers worked. Debbie and Allie both worked at LMS in California, an urban school struggling to meet the needs of a diverse and rapidly changing student body. At the time of my involvement, approximately 950 students were enrolled in LMS. Among those students, 32 different ethnic groups were represented, and 24% of the students were born outside the USA. In organization, LMS divided students and teachers into grade-level teams. Debbie and Allie were the two English teachers working on a Grade 8 team; Tanya, who is described in Mintrop (2004), was also on this team. In addition, LMS organized teachers into departments, although they did not often meet. Patrick completed his student teaching experience in Allie's classroom; subsequently, he was hired to teach English in a diverse, urban secondary school whose students were similar in profile to LMS graduates. Patrick identified members of the English department as his most important colleagues. As a new teacher, he worked closely with a senior member of the department, who served as his mentor. The high school was organized along a block schedule format; thus, Patrick taught semester-long courses that met daily for 90 minutes, which afforded him the opportunity to teach the same course twice in one academic year.

Debbie: teaching literature or history?

Debbie, a middle school teacher with seven years' experience at LMS, came reluctantly to this project. In interviews, Debbie explained that she agreed to participate because her colleagues on the Grade 8 team were excited about the project. Given her colleagues' explanations of FCL, Debbie perceived the project at first as primarily about groupwork, and she had serious reservations about using this approach in her classroom.

In my observations of Debbie's classroom prior to implementing an FCL unit, her practice fitted closely with the *language-as-artefact* approach. Debbie commanded attention from her position at the podium in the front of the class. Student tables were arranged in rows. An agenda, which was almost always completed, was posted on the board each day. Several lessons I observed when the class was reading Wilder's play *Our Town* (1956) illustrate typical classroom practices. Debbie assigned parts to students, scenes were read aloud, and Debbie stopped the reading to pose questions,

mostly about vocabulary or plot, with some thematic points developed. After reading an act in the play, students responded to textbook-generated questions in their journals. When asked about her larger purposes for the *Our Town* unit, Debbie explained that she wanted students to understand some of the conventions of drama and to see the universality of the play's themes. Thus, the domains of conversation Debbie made available promoted the *knowledge-out-of-context* that Applebee (1996) finds prevalent in middle school and secondary school English classrooms. Nevertheless, the students seemed to enjoy class; they liked Debbie and respected her for running an efficient, purposeful classroom.

Initial plans. Debbie frequently planned lessons and units with Allie, the other English teacher on the Grade 8 team. I worked with Debbie and Allie to develop FCL curricula for their classes. During the summer institute, Debbie and Allie decided to adapt their existing unit on Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1995) into an 'FCL unit'. They chose this book because they typically taught it in the second semester, thus giving them time to prepare students for the unit and to gather new materials. The teachers used different texts; Debbie's students read a play based on the diary that was in the textbook's drama unit, whereas Allie's students read excerpts from the actual diary. In previous academic years, the teachers had taught the text with several goals in mind; to teach students about the Holocaust and about the dangers of prejudice. Their unit had involved lectures and videos on World War II and the Holocaust, reading the play or diary selections aloud, and answering textbook- or teacher-generated study questions. Thus their conception and enactment of the *Anne Frank* unit was grounded in the tradition of *language as artefact*.

For Debbie and Allie, their proposed FCL unit for *Anne Frank* represented a significant departure from previous years' instruction. We began the process of adapting or redesigning their existing unit to fit the FCL model by identifying a big idea. In several intense discussions, Allie and Debbie chose to focus the reading of the text on common adolescent experiences, e.g. emerging sexuality, developing intellect, and separating from parents. However, because they had in previous years emphasized historical details of the Holocaust ('These kids don't know who Hitler was'), they decided to embed this new thematic approach within a historical approach to texts. Allie and Debbie wanted students to connect with Anne Frank's adolescence and to recognize that her experiences unfolded in the historical context of World War II and the Holocaust. In adapting their previous unit to the FCL model, they renamed lectures and films given to provide background information into *benchmark lessons*. Research cycles are a focal participant structure in the FCL model. Debbie and Allie planned an extensive cycle to follow their students' reading of the text. They planned to organize students into research groups that would conduct inquiries into adolescent experiences within other time periods, notably the 1960s and 1990s in the USA. They expected students to consider some important adolescent experiences already studied while reading *Anne Frank*, and also to examine how larger social and political events influenced adolescence during these different time periods. Although they did not have specific

reading materials in mind, they imagined students would read expository texts to conduct their research.

This new conceptualization of the unit had the potential to foster deep understanding of a significant literary theme. Grade 8 students are ripe to discuss their experiences as adolescents; thus, the unit's focus was likely to foster genuine dialogue and provoke authentic inquiry. Because many significant works of literature, in various cultures, have explored the contours of adolescence, the unit provided an opportunity to connect students with this larger textual conversation. Furthermore, the research group process had the potential to promote meaningful, open-ended explorations that yielded *knowledge-in-action*. The FCL version of the unit did indeed represent a departure from the *language-as-artefact* approach.

The crisis. Over the summer, Allie and Debbie developed the outline of the FCL unit but not the finely etched details. During the school year, as it came time to begin the unit, they declared a 'state of emergency'. They announced that they needed to radically change the FCL unit because they were unprepared to teach it as it was originally conceived. Debbie, in particular, felt overwhelmed by its scope. In explaining her desire to redesign the unit, she said on several occasions: 'I don't have time to get the resource materials. I have to prepare the students for high school. I'm not a history teacher.'

In a 'do-or-die' two-hour planning session, Debbie scrapped the original FCL version of the unit, and together we devised an abbreviated 'unit' that entailed a structured research/jigsaw groupwork task. Debbie's revised unit was a five-day groupwork activity, which she called the 'FCL component' and thought of as the unit's culminating activity. Debbie designed an attenuated research/jigsaw activity. She provided the newly framed focus for the research groups' discussions: 'Characterization'. Debbie then taught the text of the play in the same manner as in previous years; however, after reading the text, students were organized into research groups, each focusing on a single act in the play. Students 'researched' the plot, major themes, symbolism, and characterization in each act; in practice, this took the form of note-taking and cluster diagrams. Students were then reconfigured so that each research group had an expert on each act. In these new groups, students created a diagram in which they developed a metaphor for an assigned character and selected quotations from the text that illustrated the metaphor. Thus, the conversational domain shifted from the actual human experience depicted in the literature to terms scholars have used to analyse texts. In many ways, the abbreviated unit reinforced the *language-as-artefact* approach that had characterized Debbie's prior instruction of this play.

Debbie was pleased with the 'FCL component'. In a reflective case that she wrote about this unit, she described this activity as a 'golden moment':

Students were engaged, motivated, competitive (checking out other groups became an art form), and went further in depth than I had envisioned, and they had FUN! . . . I was surprised at the quality of the presentations and the thoughtfulness of the questions raised by the audience.

Ironically, Debbie mused over the fact that many students did not appear to grasp significant historical details of the play.

Reflections on Debbie's crisis and its resolution. On reflection, I puzzle over the sources of Debbie's crisis and what her solution reveals about her understanding of the traditions of knowing and doing English, especially in a middle school classroom. Why did Debbie abandon her proposed focus on themes of adolescence and replace it with a study of literary terms? Why did Debbie truncate the research process and structure it so that discourse in the research groups was limited to her topics rather than the students' questions? In what ways did Debbie's decision to retrench from her original unit plan make sense to her?

To answer these questions, I return to the reasons Debbie cited for rejecting the initial plan and examine them in light of the traditional mode of literature instruction. Certainly, Debbie's pragmatic concern that she did not have resource materials for the students to use during the proposed research phase of the unit was legitimate. Indeed, one of the recurrent 'technical' challenges of FCL curriculum design is finding appropriate materials to launch and sustain the research process. Debbie's solution to a lack of readily available materials was to reduce the focus of the research from a historically grounded inquiry into adolescent experiences to characterization, a narrowing that required no outside textual resources. Debbie's solution reveals a conception of resources as text-based, a conception that probably came both from my presentation of FCL as well as traditional notions of research. In retrospect, I wish I had persuaded Debbie to stay with themes of adolescence but to rethink her notion of a resource; for example, a vibrant research process could have been designed around both interviews with parents or other adults about their adolescence and a more refined self-exploration of themes of adolescence. Such research would have been more personal and less historically based, but it would have allowed for connections between the students' and parents' lived worlds and the text-world. Such research would have been consistent with the *knowledge-in-action* that Applebee (1996) promotes.

Debbie's shift to literary terms as the focus for group conversation may be grounded in the pressure she felt to prepare students for high school. Debbie's selection of literary terms reflects a common view of the high school curriculum in the US, one rooted in New Criticism's approach to reading and experiencing literature. But her decision to prepare students for high school also reflects a school-wide pressure to see all students succeed on traditional academic measures. Throughout the time that I worked with Debbie and her colleagues, the teachers regularly remarked on the school principal's demands to teach reading comprehension and to prepare students for standardized tests. Debbie and her colleagues perceived that the school board and the general public were highly critical of their school district and that they were accountable for students' success both in tests and at the next level of schooling. This pressure maps onto larger debates in the USA regarding coverage or depth. Debbie believed that she needed to 'cover' literary terms so that her students would not appear unprepared or incompetent in high school.

Another reason for Debbie's reshaping of the unit may be located in her sense of appropriate activity structures in an English classroom. FCL, as an instructional model, has specific participant structures designed to scaffold authentic dialogue, e.g. benchmark lessons, RT, and jigsaw. In this first attempt at FCL, Debbie did not fully implement any of these practices, mainly, I think, because the introduction of more student-centred dialogue in the context of small groups was a significant departure from her previous practice. Debbie was accustomed to orchestrating class discussions. In designing curriculum, Debbie attempted to implement FCL structures by superimposing them on procedures more familiar to her. Often this involved renaming, rather than recasting, prior practice. For instance, 'pre-reading' background lectures and videos were renamed as benchmarks. The full purposes of benchmarks as 'touchstones' were not necessarily realized. Debbie viewed the research cycle as an addendum, rather than as a core practice; consequently, she found it easy to reduce the scope of the cycle and to rename small-group discussions of her questions as research.

Debbie's sense that she was not 'a history teacher' probably contributed the most to her decision to attenuate and refocus the research process. In the US middle school English classroom, historical context is typically the ground, not the figure. In hindsight, I see that the original unit design embedded the research process in expository texts because such texts were emphasized in the FCL model (Brown and Campione 1996). Debbie, who did not have deep background knowledge in history, felt at a loss to orchestrate research about different historical periods; thus, it makes sense that for Debbie the historical approach seemed inappropriate in an English classroom. Debbie was in fact expressing fidelity to her sense of what is an appropriate text in an English classroom. In retrospect, perhaps I could have suggested that we anchor the research process in literary texts.

Another possible explanation for Debbie's abandoning the original historical approach in favour of literary terms is related to the Holocaust as a domain of conversation. As Mansilla and Gardner (1997) point out, the Holocaust is understood differently when viewed through historical and literary lenses. The FCL unit, as designed, pressed the teachers to consider the Holocaust in deeply personal ways, through the particular voice of Anne Frank. The implemented unit's emphasis on generic literary terms supplemented with background material on the Holocaust could safely convey the facts of this period and details of the text, but not necessarily the experience of the Holocaust. For Debbie, the FCL unit was perhaps a more intimate and challenging way to teach the text and, more importantly, the Holocaust. I suggest that not only did the unit overwhelm her in terms of resources, but also teaching the text's content in *this* way scared her. When she said 'I'm not a history teacher' she was doing more than retreating to her perceived disciplinary camp. The subtext of her remark implies that for her to teach such a provocative domain in a more daring, less controlled way was unnerving. It redefined what might happen in classroom conversations and what literary experiences might occur.

Nevertheless, that her initial attempt was relatively short (five days) and perhaps too teacher-centred is understandable, given her prior practice. Indeed, it represents a rational first step on her part. As a result of this unit,

Debbie gained confidence and went on in her second year to design and implement a more complex unit that fostered more genuine classroom discourse.

Allie: a tale of two units

Allie, who was on the same team as Debbie at LMS, also taught Grade 8 language arts. In addition to her teaching responsibilities she served as Language Arts department chair. Allie was receptive to new ideas and actively sought professional development opportunities; indeed, at the time that she joined the project, she had amassed an impressive professional development résumé.

At the beginning of the project, I observed that in whole-class settings, Allie's practice, like Debbie's, was closely tied to the traditional teacher-led discussions of literature. For instance, during class discussion Allie tended to ask comprehension questions for which she had a particular answer in mind, much like 'the game' Applebee (1996) described. However, Allie also organized students into groups, and conversations flowed relatively unchecked during those activities. In our curriculum design process, Allie often mentioned using an 'into-through-beyond' approach to organize a unit. This scaffolding structure, which derives from an earlier version of California's English language arts curriculum framework (California Department of Education 1991), emphasizes activating students' prior knowledge and providing sufficient context before reading a literary work ('into'), guiding or scaffolding students' comprehension ('through'), and offering activities that allowed students to apply a work to their own lives or connect that work with what others read ('beyond'). It is also consistent with Langer's (1995) theory of 'envisionment', which Allie read about while involved in this project. Thus, although Allie's practice was tied to the *language-as-artefact* tradition, she had also engaged in practices consistent with reform-minded traditions.

In her first year of FCL experimentation, Allie implemented several participant structures. First, she used RT, both in whole-class and in small reading groups. She treated RT as a stand-alone participant structure, and her introduction never strayed far from the scripted version she found in support materials for teachers. Second, like Debbie, she abandoned the *Anne Frank* research cycle; however, she replaced it with a different small-group process. Rather than study literary terms, students transformed different diary entries into dramatic scripts, which they later performed. Allie's third round of FCL experimentation involved a research cycle that led to newscasts written and produced by students to accompany another unit. Although Allie's experimentation was more extensive than Debbie's, she also tended to treat the participant structures as activities, rather than as a systemic model designed to foster dialogue and inquiry. The following critical incident occurred as Allie prepared for her second year of FCL experimentation and implementation.

After her first year in the FCL project, Allie spent the summer developing an FCL unit for a book she had not yet taught, *Lupita MaZana*,

by Patricia Beatty (1981). The novel chronicles in harrowing terms the protagonist Lupita's migration from Mexico to the Los Angeles area. Because many of Allie's students were Latino, she felt that the protagonist's experiences would engage her students. Having experienced some modest successes with her FCL experiments during the school year, Allie decided that *Lupita* would be her most complete FCL unit. Over the summer, I met with Allie periodically to discuss her plans and progress. At this point, Allie desired my commentary, but she was clearly in control of the design process. When I came to her house for the first meeting, she showed me the two units she had developed for the novel. The first unit she called the 'traditional-style' unit, the second her 'FCL-style' unit.

The traditional-style unit, which Allie subtitled 'teacher-directed', listed major themes and conflicts; included chapter summaries, vocabulary lists, and study guide; presented an independent writing assignment based on the writing genre 'problem/solution essay'; and outlined the contents of an individual 'portfolio assessment' to include an attractive cover, a letter of introduction, a timeline of the novel's plot, a character analysis, and an essay on a major theme. Allie identified as the major theme 'survival in a hostile environment'. The chapter summaries retold major points of the plot. Vocabulary exercises focused on defining Spanish words that were not translated in the text. Allie's study-guide questions focused on plot and character's intentions, and they tended to direct students toward Allie's reading of the novel, e.g.:

*How does Lupita get her name?
 What tragedy happens to the Torres family?
 Salvador shows himself to be very argumentative. Describe two
 situations in this chapter that show this trait.
 In your opinion, how will this affect Salvador's future?*

The written essay and portfolio assessment were individual tasks with a teacher-generated topic and genre structure. In sum, her unit's structure reflected a common teacher-centred format for units and a compartmentalized view of language (i.e. vocabulary, comprehension, and writing were barely integrated). The parsing of activities in this unit was consistent with a *language-as-artefact* approach. Allie explained that she planned to use the traditional unit with her sheltered-English class.³

At first, Allie's FCL-style unit was almost identical to her traditional unit. She merely replaced the individual 'portfolio assessment' project with a group research project. However, as Allie revised the unit, she gradually incorporated and adapted FCL's various participant structures. The final version of her 'FCL-style' unit was substantially different from the 'traditional-style' unit. Allie planned to use this unit with her regular English classes.

Allie focused the FCL-style unit around the central question, 'Is survival based on luck?' Although her written question was narrowly put, her activities were more broadly construed around the question 'How do individuals survive and overcome difficult circumstances?' Allie wanted students to examine with compassion Lupita's circumstances as an

immigrant and to make connections between Lupita's experiences and their own, both in terms of immigration and more broadly in terms of overcoming difficulties. Thus, this unit was organized around a generative domain of conversation, with potential to help students develop *knowledge-in-action*.

For her FCL unit, Allie rewrote the traditional unit's study guide. Because her purpose was to 'scaffold deeper content learning', she posed more open-ended questions that focused on conflict and characterization. For instance, note how the following questions invite personal opinion and inference: 'On page 15 Lupita asks herself a question. What do you think her interior monologue would sound like?' Also, Allie used RT to structure students' discussions of the text.

In addition to the study guide, Allie developed a series of benchmark lessons that she called 'guided writing, reading, and viewing activities'. For example, as a guided writing activity, Allie asked students to recall personal experiences in response to the following journal prompts: 'Have you ever made a decision or had a decision made for you that you regret? What was it? What were its effects?' The inclusion of personal experience as the starting point for examining a character's decision was a pedagogical move I had not yet seen in Allie's teaching. In her guided reading activity, Allie brought in essays from students in the newcomers' class (a class for students who had recently arrived from another country) that described their experiences 'Coming to America'. Thus, Allie connected her students with their peers' lives and with the characters' lives.

Finally, Allie replaced the 'portfolio assessment' in the traditional unit with an innovative, community-based group research project. Students generated a list of 'problems' the protagonist Lupita encountered in her transition from Mexico to the USA (e.g. finding housing, getting work, learning English, naturalization and amnesty, loneliness, and racism). Students then formed research groups to find out how immigrants in their community 'solved' these problems. Instead of a traditional report, students used the Internet and called local agencies to develop pamphlets that presented resources for immigrants. Using the school's new technology laboratory, they produced glossy pamphlets in English and Spanish and planned to distribute them at local libraries and community centres. This was a more authentic version of the 'problem-solution' essay Allie had included in her traditional unit.

After completing the unit, Allie wrote up a summary and her reflections upon the FCL unit. She remarked that 'the discussions were rich with students' questioning actions of both the character and the reality of the situations'. Allie realized that the domains of conversation for this unit were generative and meaningful to her students. In her critique of the unit, Allie focused on some technical problems she encountered in implementing the unit, e.g. difficulties with the computers and time allocation. In the year following this research project, Allie presented and revised her FCL-style unit at a conference for teachers on the topic of service learning, and the unit was eventually published in a service-learning curriculum manual.

Reflections on Allie's two units. From its 'traditional' start, Allie's FCL unit evolved into a more student-centred unit that encouraged original

interpretation, fostered personal connections, and engaged students in an authentic research project. By broadening the 'texts' and by promoting new domains of conversation and discourse practices, Allie helped students develop *knowledge-in-action*. This unit was Allie's most sophisticated FCL unit and also her most innovative, because she put her own stamp on benchmarks and jigsaw. Nevertheless, Allie's curriculum design process puzzled me. Why did she design a 'traditional-style' unit first and use that as the template for her FCL unit; that is, why did she, in effect, double-plan? Why did Allie only implement the FCL version with regular English classes?

In interviews and informal conversations, I asked Allie to recount her design process. Allie explained that she designed the 'traditional-style' unit first because that process helped her to become familiar with the book. In light of this response, I reread the study-guide questions and vocabulary lists in the traditional unit. Her questions indeed trace Allie's particular reading experience, e.g. her predictions, inferences, connections, and interpretations of characters' motivations and growth. Her vocabulary words are exclusively those Spanish words she did not know. While recognizing the need many English teachers have to clarify and develop their reading of a work by taking notes and posing questions, I wondered about the implications for Allie's sheltered-English students who experienced this version of the unit. Because the study-guide questions were a focal assignment, students were asked to recreate Allie's interpretation and literary experience rather than create their own.

I suspect that Allie used the teacher-centred traditional unit with her sheltered-English students because she believed that FCL was less appropriate for students who 'need basic skills'. Allie believed that students with weak comprehension and writing skills needed 'teacher-directed' guidance. For Allie, FCL was, in certain regards, a reward. The irony, as I see it, is that Allie gave those students whom she perceived as 'motivated' and academically talented a more robust form of teacher-direction through the FCL participant structures. By contrast, the sheltered-English students, whose lived experiences reflected this novel, were initiated into the game of 'figure out what the teacher wants'. Although I do not think Allie was aware of this unintended consequence, I suspect that Allie's unfamiliarity with the novel motivated her retreat to safer 'teacher-directed' ground with her sheltered-English students. Lacking deep pedagogical content knowledge of this text, Allie was perhaps only willing to risk the FCL unit with more proven students. I can only speculate after the success of the FCL unit that in future years Allie will teach the novel to all classes, using the FCL version of the unit.

Patrick: finding my feet

I worked less intensively with Patrick than I did with either Allie or Debbie. Patrick had taught for three years before returning to graduate school to earn a master's degree and teaching licence. Patrick's initial approach to teaching literature was more consistent with reform ideas, which is perhaps attributable to his teacher-preparation programme. For example, in his English methods course he read seminal texts on reader-response theory

(e.g. Rosenblatt 1938, Probst 1988) and was introduced to a socio-cognitive view of writing instruction (Sperling 1996). He completed his student teaching in Allie's classroom; thus, he observed Allie's first attempts at both the FCL participant structures, which preceded her design and implementation of the FCL unit on *Lupita* described in the previous section. Following his student teaching, Patrick attended an FCTL summer institute; while there, he consulted with me as he designed an FCL unit on Toni Morrison's *Beloved: A Novel* (1987), which he planned to teach in the upcoming school year to Grade 11 students in an urban high school.

During the institute we discussed different resources Patrick wanted to use to supplement the novel and to provide context (e.g. readings about slavery and interviews with Morrison). Patrick did not refine plans for the unit because he planned to collaborate with an experienced colleague in the English department to develop curriculum for *Beloved*. Throughout the year, Patrick participated in a teacher-learning community consisting of recent alumni from a master's level teacher-education programme, and at the close of his first year I interviewed him about his experiences. Although I reviewed some videotapes of Patrick's classes, I did not directly observe Patrick's teaching; thus I rely more heavily on interview data to reconstruct the following critical incident.

'Not as much as I had hoped'. At the end of the year, Patrick admitted that he had not done as much FCL as he had hoped. He explained that he had worked closely with his colleague to understand both the novel and what passages and aspects of the text posed significant challenges to the students. As they taught the book for the first time in the first semester class, their goals were to:

make *Beloved* readable at the 11th grade and not be such an overwhelming text. . . . [I focused on] getting the kids through basic difficult passages. I had some fairly grandiose ideas about some activities that I wanted to pull out of the text that, logistically, without us really understanding the text, would have been really hard to do, and so the first time through, we did a lot less of the FCL-type stuff than I had originally hoped for. And part of that was because I was as much on unsure-footing as the kids were with this book. . . . We, I think, successfully put together a couple of activities that allowed the kids to feel more ownership over the text and allowed kids to depend on each other for information that pertains mostly just to interpretation of the text.

Although Patrick did less than he had hoped, his goals were consistent with FCL principles. For instance, he wanted students to 'feel more ownership' and 'to depend on each other', and he expected to learn with students as they mutually experienced 'unsure footing'.

Patrick went on to critique his initial teaching of *Beloved*, characterizing it as too 'teacher-centred'. He described his plans for a more 'student-centred' FCL unit:

Well, what I'm trying to craft in my mind right now is I'm trying to go through the book and pick out some of the more difficult but crucial passages, where I would like the students to look at what they studied about literary devices, about literary elements, about history, about some primary research that they

will be in charge of, in groups, teaching the rest of the class on specific things that they have brought from outside the text into their understanding and interpretation. . . . There's a lot of information that the kids just miss there. [He refers to a specific passage in the novel.] Morrison lets you know what she thinks about the interconnectedness of the histories of the people that she's talking about. . . . There are a lot of passages in there that are overwhelming unless you understand the context from which they come, and I need to pull out those things that overwhelm me and then give the students the materials to understand them rather than just explain in class. And the past two times I've taught it, I pulled them out and explained them in class, for want of saving time [*sic*], and want of anything better to do.

Patrick chastises himself because he slipped too easily into 'explaining' literature to students 'for want of time, and want of anything better to do'. Yet, his self-criticism reflects his inclination to break out of the *language-as-artefact* approach to teaching literature.

Fusing RT with seminar. In Patrick's second semester, he began to experiment with one participant structure, RT: he saw RT as a way to generate student discourse about the novel and as a gradual step toward a fully realized FCL unit. In Patrick's English department, several veteran teachers had developed an approach to whole-group discussion called 'seminar'. In 'seminar', students learned to pose three different kinds of questions when reading literature: *literal*, *interpretive*, and *applied*. Patrick describes the appeal of seminar:

I have trouble staying out of discussions when it comes to *Beloved*, because there's so much I want them to see, and I have a hard time zipping it. So seminar is a tool that I've used to help me do that. . . . I use it to create more of a situation where the students are depending on each other for information and generating the questions themselves.

Drawing on this already established English department practice, Patrick fused RT with seminar to forge a new participant structure that guided students' inquiry into literary texts in a secondary school classroom. Patrick introduced students to the three types of questions and modelled developing these questions while reading literary texts. For homework, students were expected to complete a reading assignment and to generate questions at each level. During class, Patrick used their questions to guide small-group and whole-class discussion.

Patrick's fusion of seminar with RT solved a problem he had observed with RT when he student-taught in Allie's classroom. During the summer institute, Patrick had shared his concerns regarding Allie's initial implementation of RT. He had found her approach overly teacher-directed and too 'formulaic'. He also found that the strategies of RT—questioning, summarizing, clarifying, and predicting—did not necessarily foster trenchant literary analysis. For Patrick, the types of questions used in seminar replaced the comprehension strategies of RT. Patrick described seminar:

It's sort of a process, and they sit in groups of eight, and they work through these questions for an hour and half in class, and they do very well with it. It's astonishing how well they do. And I don't say a word. I don't peep.

Thus, Patrick began his implementation of FCL by focusing on robust classroom discourse. Combining a practice that had been introduced to students in previous years at the school with his prior knowledge of RT, Patrick forged a discourse-practice that led to sustained, dynamic discussion in which students depended on each other for information and for generating the questions. A possible critique of Patrick's fusion is that he was too removed from the students' discussions. To continue one-and-a-half hours without a 'peep' may represent an abdication rather than delegation of authority. It also reminds researchers of the difficult balance required as teachers move from a teacher-directed to student-centred study of literature.

However, Patrick's pattern of experimentation also suggests a staged pathway of FCL curriculum design. First, Patrick observed another teacher, Allie, attempt RT. Then, Patrick and his experienced colleague sought to develop pedagogical content knowledge around the novel *Beloved*. In the first semester course, Patrick tried to anticipate where students would connect and struggle with the text. He found himself assuming the conversational floor more often than he wanted. In the second semester, during his second iteration of teaching the novel, Patrick focused on fostering student-driven classroom discussion by fusing his department's seminar with RT. Once he had a sense of where students were likely to feel overwhelmed as readers, then he felt ready to develop a more full-fledged FCL unit.

Reflections on Patrick's finding a sure footing. In listening to Patrick's reconstruction of his efforts to design and implement FCL, several comparisons with Debbie's and Allie's experiences emerged. For instance, Patrick, like Debbie, felt overwhelmed by a full FCL unit. He also simplified FCL to make implementation manageable. However, Patrick's strategy of simplification focused on working with one participant structure until he was able to foster authentic dialogue. Listening to his students' conversations helped him understand how the students read a challenging text. His goal was fostering discourse, not implementing a participant structure.

Patrick's experience in Allie's class provided him with images of practice that he sought not to emulate. Through this counter-example, he refined his beliefs about what he wanted to accomplish using FCL practices, and about how RT needed to be altered to structure discussions of literary texts. Patrick also had the opportunity to observe the difficulties one can encounter when trying to shift the norms of classroom discourse. Often the literature on teacher change and professional development promotes the use of expert modelling to help teachers see a new practice in action. Although Allie was not an expert in RT, her modelling was still useful for Patrick.

The context of Patrick's English department influenced his implementation of FCL in at least two ways. First, his veteran colleague played an important role in his initial teaching of *Beloved*. A priority for Patrick was developing a working relationship with his colleague; thus, he downplayed his original FCL plans in order to design curriculum with her. Her 'reading' of the students at the school and her pacing of the text helped Patrick learn where his students were, a necessary step to implementing FCL with

success. Second, this department aligned itself with a reader-response approach to literary analysis. The department had developed a common approach to literature discussion, which they called 'seminar'. This practice of 'seminar' set the stage for his reinvention of RT.

Patrick and Allie's experiences designing FCL for a newly taught text and Debbie's experience adapting curriculum from a previously taught work suggest that there are benefits and costs associated with both approaches to designing FCL curriculum. The advantage of adapting a previously taught unit is that the teacher has familiarity with how students respond to the work, where the sticking points are, and what groundwork needs to be laid. The disadvantage is that when implementation of FCL proves challenging, the teacher has a ready, often proven, fallback plan. Prior experiences teaching the unit, particularly if they reflect traditional approaches, can make it more difficult to envision a constructivist approach and easier to slip into a teacher-led explanation. The advantage of designing FCL curriculum for an 'untaught' book is that the teacher is less likely to have a well-formed 'reading' of the book, and therefore may be more open to constructing meaning jointly with his or her students; thus, classroom discourse may be less teacher-centred. The disadvantage is that it may be harder for the teacher to identify significant domains of conversation that also appeal to students and thus promote *knowledge-in-action*.

In sum, Patrick's metaphor of finding sure footing in many ways applies to all three incidents. To design and implement FCL approaches to teaching literature requires a journey with many unsure steps.

Dilemmas of design and predicaments of practice

In reflecting upon these three incidents, several themes emerge that reveal deeper conceptual challenges teachers face in bringing to life teaching practices consistent with constructivist learning principles. Tyack and Cuban (1995) contend that an innovative pedagogical model, such as FCL, rarely changes the teacher; rather, the teacher changes the model to fit within his or her prior patterns of instruction. That is, teachers situate new practices in the context of existing practice. With this argument in mind, I return now to the two research questions that guided this study and offer some conclusions about the dilemmas of design and predicaments of practice associated with adapting FCL in the middle school and secondary school English classroom.

Influence of traditional view of literature instruction

The first research question considers how each teacher's view of English as a school subject-matter shapes the design and implementation of FCL. FCL pushes against the traditional view of literature instruction in two important ways: first, it expands the notion of what counts as an appropriate text and, by extension, the purposes for language instruction; second, it challenges the expectation that the teacher is the primary interpreter of texts. Debbie

and Allie serve as a contrast to Patrick, for both Debbie and Allie start from the traditional *language-as-artefact* approach to teaching literature, whereas Peter aligns himself more closely with other reform-oriented approaches. For all three, their beliefs about English instruction and their pedagogical content knowledge (Grossman *et al.* 1989, Grossman 1990) shape the experimentation paths they take.⁴ Debbie, for example, whose practice most closely reflects the *language-as-artefact* approach, retrenches from her initial FCL plan because she seeks to maintain fidelity to her discipline. For Debbie, the big idea of literature instruction is the concept of genre. Although she can envision a more thematic approach to studying *Anne Frank*, as evidenced by her elaborate planning of a unit considering issues of adolescence, in the end she abandons this approach and retreats to her traditional role of teaching *Anne Frank* as an exemplar of drama and as an opportunity to reinforce students' understanding of basic elements of literary texts. Part of Debbie's decision to retrench comes from her inability to identify or to locate appropriate curriculum materials for the research cycle on themes of adolescence. Debbie also struggles to let go of her role as the focal interpreter of texts; hence, she treats FCL as a 'component' or supplemental addition to her traditional teaching of *Anne Frank*.

The critical incident involving Debbie is taken from her first attempt at FCL. By comparison, Allie's *Lupita* units are a more mature iteration of attempts at FCL design and implementation. Yet Allie's decision to *double-plan* the unit (to plan a teacher-directed unit before an FCL unit) suggests that Allie was unable to envision a student-centred unit until she had solidified her interpretation of the text. Her decision to have her sheltered-English students follow the traditional unit also suggests that for Allie a student-centred unit is a reward, or at least can only be experienced after one knows the basic grammar of schooling. Her beliefs about the conception of the subject matter and appropriate instructional strategies appear to vary by student population. That is, Allie double-plans because she holds two different views or conceptions of what it means to teach English.

Patrick offers a contrast; through his process of fusing RT with seminar, he uncovers a way to hear the students' reading of the text. He, unlike Debbie and Allie, appears to realize that an FCL unit best begins with the students' rather than the teacher's reading of the text. This is a significant departure from traditional instruction in literature. Patrick's overarching conception of what it means to teach English most closely reflected the reform vision; hence, he understood that he had to find a way to make the students' reading of the text public. He focused his energies on finding an instructional strategy that would realize this goal and that would help him develop necessary pedagogical content knowledge—in particular, insights into students' common readings and misconceptions of the text.

Simplification strategies: tinkering with participant structures

The second research question focuses on the ways that the teachers applied the FCL model in their classrooms. Like many of the reforms advocating teaching for understanding, FCL calls for *adventurous* teaching (Cohen 1989,

Cohen *et al.* 1993). Many models that fall within the reform framework require systemic classroom change. Yet fostering this kind of learning often overwhelms novice and veterans alike. The three teachers described herein offer some important insights into how teachers simplify a complex pedagogical model. All three teachers approached their simplification through gradual experimentation with each of the participant structures. Each, in effect, tinkered with the structures, and only after several iterations did each teacher begin to approximate the systemic integrity of FCL.

One simplification strategy is *renaming*. Debbie renames background lectures and videos as *benchmarks*; as a result, she under-uses this particular participant structure. Benchmarks, on the surface, appear to be similar to lectures, but because Debbie does not grasp the systemic purpose of benchmarks, she does not press students to revisit systematically the content of the benchmarks. A second strategy is to *isolate* one aspect of the system. Allie's introduction of RT is an example of this strategy. Initially, for Allie, RT was a stand-alone participant structure. Its purpose was to structure reading comprehension of texts that had no bearing on a larger FCL unit. The discourse that unfolded in RT was not replicated in other classroom activities. A third strategy is to *plan and retrench*. For example, Debbie and Allie initially planned a fairly elaborate research cycle, but as the time for implementation approached, each retrenched. Because they treated the research cycle as an amendment, it was easier to truncate. Debbie's and Allie's simplification move raises questions about how to appropriate the research cycle in the English classroom. It appears that it was harder for the teachers to envision the research cycle during the reading of the text. In her 'into-through-beyond' metaphor, Allie saw benchmarks as a way into the text, RT as a way through the text, and research as way beyond the text. A fourth strategy is *fusion*. Patrick's fusion of his department's seminar with RT allowed him to establish the kind of discourse he wanted to permeate all classroom conversations. I offer one final observation about these different simplification strategies: the teachers appeared to learn from one another's experiments. For example, Patrick learned from Allie's initial implementation with RT; as a result, he was primed to fuse seminar with RT.

In conclusion, the critical incidents that arose from Debbie's, Allie's, and Patrick's design and implementation experiments with FCL in middle school and secondary school English classrooms remind researchers that the traditional model of literature instruction casts a long shadow over what kinds of conversations teachers establish in their classrooms. These incidents remind researchers that overcoming the *language-as-artefact* approach comes through taking small steps, that it requires the development of new pedagogical content knowledge, and that experimentation within a community of teachers does indeed foster teachers' learning and gradual implementation of a complex model.

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Notes

1. For brevity's sake, I have oversimplified both New Criticism and reader-response criticism. Tyson (1999) provides a general introduction to a range of literary theories, and Grossman (2001) examines how those literary theories have shaped the curriculum and pedagogy in secondary school English.
2. Names of schools and individuals are pseudonyms.
3. 'Sheltered English' is a model of instruction designed to support second-language learners' gradual acquisition of English.
4. Borko and Putnam (1996: 690) synthesize the four components of pedagogical content knowledge that Grossman (1990) outlined. They are '(a) an overarching conception of what it means to teach a particular subject, (b) knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics, (c) knowledge of students' understanding and potential misunderstandings of a subject area, and (d) knowledge of curriculum and curricular materials'.

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