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Intercultural Learning and Hybridity in the Culture Laboratory

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Intercultural Learning and Hybridity in the Culture Laboratory

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Abstract

The number of immigrant students in vocational education and training is steadily increasing in Finland. This poses challenges for teachers and schools. This research focuses on emerging questions of intercultural learning in the context of immigrant training, and on a method – the Culture Laboratory – that was developed in an attempt to respond to the challenges. The main methodological and theoretical framework lies in cultural-historical activity theory, developmental work research, and in the concepts of the intercultural and hybridity. The empirical material consists of videotaped recordings of discussions in the Culture Laboratory.

The five main research questions focused on the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning, the significance of disturbances in it, the potential of suggestions for intercultural learning, ‘paper’ as a mediating artifact, and the concept of intercultural space.

The findings showed that the Culture Laboratory offered a solid background for developing intercultural learning. The disturbances manifested revealed a multitude of scripts and activities. It was also suggested that the structure of expansive learning could start from externalization instead of internalization. The suggestions the participants made opened up a hybrid learning space for intercultural development, and offered a good springboard for new ideas. Learning in ‘Paperland’ posed both challenges and opportunities for immigrant students, and different paper trails emerged. Intercultural space in the Culture Laboratory was a developmental zone in which a hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating took place.

Key words: intercultural learning, immigrant training, cultural-historical activity theory, developmental work research

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Toiminnan teorian ja kehittävän työntutkimuksen yksikkö
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Tiivistelmä

Maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden määrä kasvaa ammatillisessa koulutuksessa tasaisesti. Tämä asettaa haasteita ja mahdollisuuksia opettajille ja kouluille. Tutkimus tarkastelee kulttuurienvälisen oppimisen kysymyksiä maahanmuuttajakoulutuksessa sekä menetelmää – kulttuurilaboratoriota – jonka avulla haasteisiin pyrittiin vastaamaan. Tutkimuksen pääasiallisen teoreettisen ja metodologisen viitekehyksen muodostaa kulttuurihistoriallinen toiminnan teoria ja kehittävä työntutkimus sekä kulttuurienvälisyys ja hybridisyys käsitteet. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu kulttuurilaboratoriossa käydyistä keskusteluista.

Viisi päätutkimuskysymystä keskittyvät seuraaviin asioihin: kulttuurilaboratorimenetelmän heikkoudet ja vahvuudet, kulttuurilaboratoriossa esiintyvien häiriöiden merkitykset, osallistujien tekemät ehdotukset, 'paperin' käyttö artefaktina ja kulttuurienvälisen tilan käsite kulttuurilaboratoriossa.

Tulokset osoittavat, että kulttuurilaboratorio toimi vahvana työvälineenä kulttuurienväliselle oppimiselle ja kehittämiselle. Muutoslaboratorio-menetelmän välineet vaativat kuitenkin muokkausta. Häiriöt, joita kulttuurilaboratoriossa tunnistettiin, paljastivat kulttuurienvälisen oppimisen monikäsitteisyyden sekä monitoimintaisuuden. Tulokset myös esittivät, että ekspansiivisen oppimisen rakenne kulttuurilaboratorion kaltaisessa tilanteessa voi alkaa ulkoistamisesta sisäistämisen sijaan. Kulttuurilaboratoriossa tehdyt monet ehdotukset koulutuksen kehittämiseksi avasivat hybridin tilan, joka tarjosi ponnahduslaudan uusille ideoille. Oppiminen ”paperimaassa” asetti haasteita mutta avasi myös mahdollisuuksia maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoille. Kulttuurienvälinen tila muodostui kehittäväksi areenaksi, jossa tapahtui hybridi tunnistamisen, vertaamisen ja luomisen prosessi.

Avainsanat: kulttuurienvälinen oppiminen, maahanmuuttajakoulutus, kulttuurihistoriallinen toiminnan teoria ja kehittävä työntutkimus

Preface and acknowledgements

My interest in immigration and intercultural issues goes far beyond this dissertation, which I started over seven years ago. My personal experiences played a special role – working, studying and living in another culture has had an impact on my thinking and has guided me in exploring the issues more thoroughly. My interest in immigrant education was aroused at the beginning of my teaching work. There was an immigrant student, a brilliant lady from Iran, who was studying with two thick dictionaries at her side, an English – Persian and an English – Finnish dictionary. Her persistent working and attitude gave me the impetus to study and develop the fascinating, yet difficult work that the process of learning, studying and instruction in a new country involves.

First I owe warm thanks to the entire research site, Helsinki City College of Social and Health Care, the immigrant students and the staff, who participated in the Culture Laboratory and the Culture Laboratory Project with open minds.

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Last but not least, I owe thanks to my family. My parents Aino and Olavi Heppola have given their encouragement and support throughout the different phases of my life, including the dissertation process. My spouse Jukka and our daughters Elisa and Julia have shared everyday life with me, and have reminded me that there is life outside and after the dissertation: they have been my inspiration and my strength. My love and thanks to them. I dedicate my work to Elisa and Julia.

Esipuhe ja kiitokset

Oma kiinnostukseni maahanmuuttokysymyksiin juontaa juurensa pidemmälle kuin noin seitsemän vuoden taakse, jolloin esitin ensimmäisen tutkimussuunnitelman käsillä olevasta tutkimuksesta. Kokemukseni opiskelijana toisessa maassa, myöhemmin työntekijänä kolmannessa maassa ja kotiäitinä neljännessä maassa ovat kaikki antaneet henkilökohtaisen kimmokkeen asioiden tutkimiseen ja jäsentämiseen. Aloitettuani yli kymmenen vuotta sitten terveydenhuollon opettajan työn silloisessa Helsingin kaupungin terveydenhuolto-oppilaitoksessa nämä kysymykset seurasivat minua myös työhön. Erityisen hyvin minut pysäytti eräs iranilaissyntyinen opiskelija, joka käytti opettamieni asioiden opiskeluun sekä persialais-englantilaista että englantilais-suomalaista sanakirjaa. Hänen perään-antamattomuutensa ja valmistumisensa uudessa kulttuuriympäristössä uuteen ammattiin innostivat minua tutkimaan ja kehittämään koko sitä kiehtovaa ja raskasta prosessia mitä oppiminen, opiskelu ja opetus uudessa maassa tarkoittavat.

Aluksi haluan lämpimästi kiittää koko tutkimuskohteeni Helsingin sosiaali- ja terveysalan oppilaitoksen maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoita ja henkilökuntaa, jotka ennakkoluulottomasti osallistuivat sekä kulttuurilaboratorioon että kulttuurilaboratoriahankkeeseen.

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Marianne Teräs

1 Introduction

“When I came to school on my first day, everything was quite different than in our school”

”Ensimmäisellä päivällä kun minä tulin kouluun oli kaikki ihan erilaista kuin meillä.”

I started my dissertation with a short quotation from one immigrant student’s diary, in which she describes her experiences and feelings about her first day and week at Helsinki City College of Social and Health Care¹. I think that it illuminates and grasps well the process of researching and developing: what was different, why it was different, how it was different, and what is a difference in any case? These were some of the questions that directed the research and development work reported here. Thus, my research focuses on the challenges teachers and students faced when students with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds entered the College and on how the teachers and students used the opportunity to work together with the researchers. It was a fascinating process and a journey that took over three years.

Finland won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006. This was a surprise to many, because the band and the song were not at all ‘typical’ of the ‘normal’ winning entries, not in the Finnish sense not the Eurovision sense. The band was called “Lordi” and the song “Hard Rock Hallelujah”. The band performed in monster masks and costumes, and played hard-rock type of music. There were protests against the band in Finland after they had won the national competition, as well as in Athens, Greece, where the Eurovision contest was held.

After the contest I saw a television talk show in Finland in which people were discussing the country’s ‘national’ image and how the Lordi band affected this image. The mood of the discussion was interesting because the participants felt and

¹ Henceforth the College

said that the Lordi band did not convey a good image of Finland: both the band and the image were too marginal and too different. In fact, they were embarrassed that this song and this band in particular had won the contest. Yet, it was the people, first in Finland and then in Europe, who had voted for the band and had chosen this particular song. How, then, does this relate to this research?

First, I think it reflects the phenomenon I am studying here – intercultural learning. In everyday life people meet and encounter others from a rich variety of backgrounds. These encounterings can be a source of learning and a springboard for novel ideas and practices. Secondly, it is indicative of the changes and variations within cultures, which may be surprising for people who are living through this change. Thirdly, it celebrates difference and marginality: something on the fringes of music ended up center-stage. Finally, it shows how the meaning of ‘national’ has changed in our contemporary world: a ‘Finnish’ monster band plays heavy-metal rock in English, and is chosen as a representative of Finland.

This research focuses on emerging questions of intercultural education and learning in a Finnish vocational school in the context of immigrant training, and on a method – the Culture Laboratory – that was developed in an attempt to respond to the challenges of this intriguing area. The group of 17 immigrant students from eight different countries of origin, their teachers, other staff of the College, and researchers came together and started to discuss and develop the training. The purpose of this study is to enhance understanding of the situation and of the developmental process, and to elaborate the concept and the phenomenon of intercultural learning.

Many Finnish schools nowadays face this same situation because the number of immigrants living in Finland has increased. Even though the growth has been fast, the numbers are still very low compared to other European countries. The largest groups come from Russia, Estonia, and Somalia; about 3% of the population are native speakers of a language other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sami (Statistics Finland, 2007). Other Western European countries are struggling with questions of ‘second’ or ‘third’ generations of immigrants, but Finland is facing its ‘first’ generation. The diversity of cultural backgrounds and native languages in the Helsinki region has expanded: almost 10% of students studying in secondary vocational schools are native speakers of a language other than Finnish or Swedish (Opetusvirasto, 2006).

Talib (1999), who studied otherness in Finnish schools, describes it as a culture shock for teachers when they realize that there is a diversity of cultures in the classroom. The situation and the role of immigrant students in Finnish schools are still very indistinct, and in the process of formation. We do not have strong multicultural traditions, expectations regarding mastery of the Finnish language are high, and the teacher has the central role in the learning process. This also implies

that the teaching of immigrant students could be primarily a top-down process that is directed from teacher to student. It is a new and challenging situation in vocational education because there are fewer immigrant students in vocational institutions than in comprehensive schools. Furthermore, adult immigrants often prefer finding work to going to studying. Thus, teachers are facing challenges such as social problems and cultural tensions between students and teachers (Kuisma, 2001). Moreover, teachers in vocational schools feel that adjusting to the norms of the school is often difficult for students (Romakkaniemi, 1999).

Entry into a new society, especially for adult immigrants, is often through participation in working life (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Vesala, 2002; Virtanen, 2002). It may nonetheless be very hard to find a job for those who do not know the language and culture of the new country. It may well be different for children: they attend school and learn the new language more quickly. Adults have to struggle not only with everyday problems, but also with language problems and cultural diversity (Aunola, 2002). What seemed to be so easy and smooth in one's own country can become a nightmare in the new country. In any new situation we face novel challenges and demands. Nevertheless, there are also opportunities. Novel situations can open up a fresh 'landscape for learning' – a hybrid learning space. Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda (1999) describe this hybrid in-between space as a Third Space.

A new training program for immigrants was started in Finland in 1999, a Preparatory Training Course for Immigrants Orienting towards Vocational Education (henceforth Preparatory Immigrant Training). The course takes a year and consists of five modules. The main aim of the training is for the students to learn the Finnish language and culture to such an extent that after they have completed it they are able to embark upon regular vocational training, which is conducted mainly in Finnish. The training may include a work-placement period, which takes place in Finnish workplaces. (Opetushallitus, 1999.)

The College started the new training program. Over eight percent of the school's students are immigrants (Opetusvirasto, 2006). Before starting the new training some of the teachers attended an in-service course on intercultural issues, while others did not. Yet, even the teachers who had experience of living, working, or studying in different cultures were confused by the questions related to social, economic, cultural, and health issues the students had. The problems that arose included absenteeism and dropping out, cultural tensions between teachers and students, and in particular difficulties concerning the instruction methods and learning materials. The need to look upon their own mother tongue as a second language was a constant challenge for the teachers. The situation required fresh solutions. Thus, a research and development project funded by the European Social Fund/EQUAL initiative was started, the aim of which was to promote good

ethnic relations and to increase vocational teachers' multicultural competence. The University of Helsinki and the City of Helsinki formed a partnership. (Teräs, 2004.) My study is based on this research and development project, which employed methodological and conceptual solutions from cultural-historical activity theory (henceforth activity theory) (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont'ev, 1978; Engeström, 1987). Thus, my research stems from practical questions and challenges, as well as from a need to understand phenomena faced by students and staff at the College by means of theoretical concepts.

The intercultural is not a new concept: it describes something between two or more cultures, and the dynamics between different cultures. Intercultural education puts emphasis on learning from the dynamics between various cultures (Cushner, 1998). It incorporates political and ideological approaches, as well as practical approaches in terms of learning from a rich variety of practices in different cultural circumstances (cf. Fennes & Hapgood, 1997; Gundara, 2000). In some contexts it is perceived as a transformative learning process (cf. Räsänen & San, 2005).

Managing this situation calls for new competences among teachers, as well as among other authorities and workers, and the need to develop intercultural competence in Finland has been mentioned (Pitkänen, 2006; Pitkänen & Kouki, 1999; Räsänen & San, 2005). Intercultural competence is described as a combination of necessary skills, attitudes, knowledge, ethics, and actions (cf. Jokikokko, 2005; Lasonen, 2005; Pelkonen, 2005).

This study is divided into three parts. First part comprises the chapters that form the societal and conceptual basis for my research. In the second chapter I outline the immigration situation in Finland and explain how my research will provoke and contribute to the societal discussion. The third chapter presents the theoretical foundations of the research, and the fourth introduces the research site and the participants. The fifth chapter sets out the research questions and the sixth chapter focuses on methodological questions and choices.

The second part presents the findings of the empirical analyses. Each chapter focuses on one of the general research questions, and presents the related analyses and findings. In the seventh chapter I first describe the Culture Laboratory method and its implementation, and then analyze the disturbances identified in it. The eighth chapter examines the suggestions made by the participants concerning the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The ninth chapter focuses on paper as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory and the last of the empirical chapters, the tenth one, centres on intercultural space as manifested there.

The third part comprises two chapters. The eleventh chapter presents the conclusions and the contributions of this research from the theoretical, methodological, and practical points of view. In the twelfth and final chapter I assess my role in this study, as well the research and the research process.

2 Immigration, society and schooling

In this chapter I will briefly explore changes in global migration, and then consider the changes in Finnish society and schooling due to the increased ethnic and cultural variety and diversity. Immigration-related changes in Finland have affected procedures and raised challenges on the societal, the institutional and the individual level. On the societal level the impact has extended to institutions such as schools because they are intertwined and related.

Furthermore, vocational education and training follows changes in working life because the aim is to educate and train the future labor force for the labor market. Changes in working life also have an impact on vocational education and training in terms of the kind of education and training and the number of student places offered on the general level and in labor-market training in particular. Lastly, I will show how this research relates to these changes, and how it could contribute in meeting these challenges.

However, I would like to point out that challenges and changes are basic elements in societies and schools, and it would be misleading to claim that it is only now, due to the increased number of immigrants they have arisen. For example, the increased use of technology, along with the coming of the information society, the ageing of the population, and demands for economic efficiency, have been in focus in descriptions of the challenges facing the Finnish welfare state and working life (cf. Himanen, 2004; Työministeriö, 2006). On the other hand, unless cultural variation and diversity are specifically considered, it easily happens that the cultural majority is taken for granted and as a norm, as Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003) have argued.

2.1 Changes in international migration

Immigration and migration are as old as the world itself, and as Mukherjee (2002, p. 9) puts it, the world is a human mosaic. Even though the reasons for moving from one country to another might have changed in both individual and struc-

tural terms, people have been moving from where they were born and have lived to new areas and spaces throughout history (Mukherjee, 2002). According to statistics supplied by the International Organization for Migration (= IOM), there were 175 million international migrants in 2000: one out of every 35 persons was an international migrant (IOM, 2005).

While many typical reasons for migration remain such as widening disparities in income and employment, armed conflicts and poverty, new trends also emerge such as temporality², and feminization. Moreover, some migrants are highly skilled, and there are large emigration flows to 'old' immigration countries such as Ireland and Italy. A shift in migration from developing to developed countries has also occurred: almost 60% of all international migrants remained in the developed world in 2000. On the regional level migration within North America and the former Soviet Union has increased whereas in other regions it has decreased. In 2000 about 10% of all international migrants were refugees. (IOM, 2005, pp. 380–381.) Table 2.1 gives a general overview of migration in the world from the 1970s to 2000.

² Temporality of migration means that people are migrating and emigrating for shorter periods of times: for example, work permits are given only for a fixed period.

Table 2.1 Trends in international migration in the world and in certain major areas, 1970–2000 (adapted from IOM, 2005, p.369)

Major area	Number of international migrants (millions)				Percentage distribution of international migrants by region	
	1970	1980	1990	2000	1970	2000
World	81.5	99.8	154.0	174.9	100.0	100.0
Developed countries	38.3	47.7	89.7	110.3	47.0	63.1
Developed countries excluding USSR	35.2	44.5	59.3	80.8	43.2	46.2
Developing countries	43.2	52.1	64.3	64.6	53.0	36.9
Africa	9.9	14.1	16.2	16.3	12.1	9.3
Asia*	28.1	32.3	41.8	43.8	34.5	25.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	5.8	6.1	7.0	5.9	7.1	3.4
Northern America	13.0	18.1	27.6	40.8	15.9	23.3
Oceania	3.0	3.8	4.8	5.8	3.7	3.3
Europe**	18.7	22.2	26.3	32.8	22.9	18.7
USSR (former)	3.1	3.3	30.3	29.5	3.8	16.8

* Excluding Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

** Excluding Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

As Table 2.1 shows, there was a major increase in migration between the 1970s and 2000. International migration has always been a global process, as King (1995, p. 31) states, and it is both a product and an agent of uneven development. Furthermore, although economic factors typically drive it, it is often perpetuated by social factors. Despite globalization many barriers remain: capital and commodities are more free to move than people.

Historically, migration has shaped the human world by contributing to cultural hybridity in many places (King, 1995, p. 18). Furthermore, as Stalker points out, globalization is a historical phenomenon connected to trade and movements of people, yet nowadays it is seen in terms of global consciousness. It is a complex question, both in the lighter sense of events taking place in many countries at the same time, and with the more serious implications that events are connected and there is a steady multiplication and intensification of links and flows between discrete national entities (Stalker, 2000, p. 2). The negative aspects of migration include undocumented immigration and the smuggling of people.

Stalker (*ibid.*, pp. 7, 33) also points out that the character of international migration has changed: the flow of people has become more complex and diverse. People move from one place to another more rapidly than before, and some traditional migration channels have dried up (e.g., in Europe due to strong political and social pressures) while new ones have opened (e.g., in South-East Asia).

King (1995, pp. 22–23) describes the changing pattern of migration, quite apart from its link to globalization: it has become more differentiated, meaning that countries take in highly skilled and unskilled migrants, for example. It has also intensified around the world, and while historically there have been more male than female migrants, this is not necessarily the case nowadays. In addition, both the pull and push factors have changed.

From the European perspective (Parry, 2002, p. 22), the numbers of immigrants are larger and the geographical spread is wider. For example, Indian specialists in information technology are moving to Europe, and multinational companies are closing their factories in Europe and starting up in South America or China. Geddes (2003) distinguishes three waves of immigration to Western Europe after the Second World War: the first one mainly involved male labor migration, and second mainly family immigration, and the third includes asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented immigrants.

Current opinions about the economic benefits and costs of migration seem to be contradictory, diffuse, and confusing. There are those who claim that it benefits all: the receiving country gets the labor force, the sending country gains in terms of reduced unemployment, and immigrants can achieve a better standard of living – the wave of immigration to North America during the 1900s is cited as an example. However, these approaches seem to emphasize the positive sides and to give a limited account of questions, and would seem to be inadequate. There is therefore a need for a broader analytical framework. For example, do migrants compete with or complement the local labor force in traditional areas of immigrant employment such as farming and construction on the one hand, and in taking highly skilled jobs in information technology on the other. As far as the sending countries are concerned, one might ask if migration hinders or helps development; it seems to be a two-way road. (IOM, 2005, pp. 63–170.)

The Migration Policy Institute, an international think tank on migration and immigration based in Washington, compiled the following as some of the important aspects of global migration in 2006: saying good bye to multiculturalism and welcoming assimilation, the United Nations has engaged in high-level dialogue on international migration and development, the migration question is all about the border (meaning the border between the US and Mexico as well as between Europe and North Africa), and growing competition for the ‘right’ skilled workers, meaning how developed countries want to attract highly skilled workers. (Migration Policy Institute, 2007.)

2.2 A country between the East and the West

Historically and culturally Finland has been, and still is, a land between the East and the West, and eastern and western cultural heritages are evident in the practices and artifacts in different parts of the country. Furthermore, it has maintained its position as a cultural intersection its position at the crossroads being beneficial to Finnish artists, for example. As Pentikäinen (1997, p. 17) writes, during the pre-industrial period Finland's cultural life emphasized its position as a mediator between East and West, and this rich interaction has provided a dynamic foundation for music, visual arts, architecture and design over centuries, and has influenced artistic achievements.

From time to time 'Finnish culture' is presented as homogenous and coherent. However, there are nine distinctively different cultural areas and provinces in the country: Varsinais-Suomi, Uusimaa, Satakunta, Häme, Savo, Karjala, Pohjanmaa, Lappi, and Ahvenanmaa in which the dominant language is Swedish. The material, mental, and social cultures of these areas differ, and the cultural identities of the people living in them have been identified as 'hämäläinen', 'savolainen' or 'karjalainen': only people living in Varsinais-Suomi area were called Finns. (Pentikäinen, 1997, p. 17.)

These kinds of variations are often forgotten in public debates in which Finnish culture is presented as a single entity, almost a package immigrants need to learn about in order for them to be able to live, study and work in Finland. Aside from these provincial variations, Finland has its 'old' cultural and ethnic minorities, which could be described as 'immigration-based': the Swedish-Finns, the Jews, the Tatars, the Romanys and the Russians. The largest group is the Finland-Swedish, who comprise six percent of the population and are usually regarded as a language minority, although their position as a minority is a matter of debate given their dominant position in Finland throughout history (Lepola, 2000). The Sami people, who live mostly in the northern part of the country, are Finland's only indigenous people (Pentikäinen, 1997). Thus, the conception of a homogenous 'Finnish' culture can be questioned on the basis of these historical movements.

2.3 From emigration to immigration

Historically, Finns have emigrated to other countries. Before the Second World War almost 500,000 had moved to North America, and since then about 730,000 have left the country. Approximately 75% of them moved to Sweden, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. The estimate is that about 1.2 million Finns or people with Finnish ancestors are living outside Finland. The turning point from emigration to immigration was in the 1980s, when emigration was at its lowest level and

immigration was on the increase. However, most of the immigrants at this time were Finnish returnees (Korkiasaari & Söderling, 2004). According to the official statistics, about 10,500 people moved to Finland and about 7,700 left Finland in 1985, in 1990 about 13,500 moved in and about 6,500 moved out, and in 2003 about 17,800 moved in and about 12,000 moved out (Statistics Finland, 2007).

Emigration to Sweden, and before that to North America, was mostly 'labor migration' due to unemployment in Finland and higher salaries in Sweden. The economic situation changed during the 1980s, however, and the differences between the two countries leveled out. Thus, the emigration concept has changed: the emigrants of today are mostly well-educated, and often plan to stay abroad only temporarily, to improve their language abilities or career opportunities, for example. Current estimates indicate that mass emigration from Finland is unlikely. Thus, Finland has changed from a leaving country to a receiving country. (Korkiasaari & Söderling, 2004.)

The first refugees taken in by Finland after the Second World War came from Chile in 1973, and in 1979 there were some 'boat people' from Vietnam. Since then most of them have been 'quota' refugees, or people Finland has agreed to take in from refugee areas around the world under international agreements. The annual number of quota refugees varied from 100 at first to 750 in 2004. A rapid increase in immigration began in 1990, as the following statistics show. First, the number of foreign citizens living in Finland increased four-fold between 1990 and 2003; secondly, the number of foreign-born Finnish citizens and residents doubled between 1991 and 2003; and thirdly, the number of residents whose first language was not Finnish tripled between 1992 and 2004 (Statistics Finland, 2002; Tanner, 2004). There were several reasons for these changes. For example, the then president Mauno Koivisto declared that all Finns or people who had Finnish lineage living in the former Soviet Union could be considered 'return migrants' and they were entitled to move with a special status. Secondly, war broke out in Somalia and former Yugoslavia, and some of these refugees came to Finland. Furthermore, Finland joined the European Union in 1995, and this has had an effect on international migration.

Even though the statistics focus on numerical changes in the number of immigrants, they also indicate a qualitative change in Finnish society. For example, the need for state employees such as teachers, social workers and police officers to deal with people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in their work, has drawn attention to multicultural and intercultural competencies and capabilities on the individual, the community, and the societal level. According to Pitkänen and Kouki's extensive study (1999; see also Pitkänen, 2006) on conceptions of immigration, the representatives of the authorities saw it both as enrichment and as a threat to Finnish culture, and they felt the need for further education to improve

their language abilities, for example. Furthermore, the cultural differences and the special needs of immigrants were considered problematic, although attitudes towards them varied greatly. The amount of research on ethnic and cultural issues in a variety of disciplines has also increased (see Työministeriö, 2004).

Yet, the number of foreign citizens³ living in Finland is still very low compared to other European countries, and is proportionally the lowest among the EU countries (Statistics Finland, 2002)⁴. There are about 121,379 foreign citizens living in Finland, only approximately two percent of the total population of 5,200,000. Foreign-born citizens comprise about three percent of the population, the biggest groups being from Russia, Estonia, Sweden, and Somalia. Almost half of the immigrant population lives in the capital region. The immigrant population living in Finland falls into four main groups, which partly overlap: people with Finnish roots, spouses of Finnish citizens, refugees, and labor migrants (Statistics Finland, 2007; Korkiasaari & Söderling, 2004). Furthermore, the situation in Finland is unlike in the other Nordic countries, in which immigration started earlier and the numbers are higher. For example, immigrants comprise approximately 12% of the population of Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2003) and approximately 8% in Denmark (Danmarks Statistik, 2003).

Yet, the process of immigration is not just a question of belonging to a certain group (cf. Berry, 2004). There has not been a thorough discussion in Finland about immigrant issues, or about the various needs different 'groups' have. For example, the term 'immigrant' is widely used to cover refugees, spouses, and children who were born in Finland to immigrant parents or moved here as a child. The practical question we face is that people who have come to Finland for different reasons have different needs and challenges. I was involved in a project concerning how teachers at a college of further education identified the needs of adult immigrants, and the results showed that they were very aware of the language problems; however, the language problems seemed to dominate, and other issues of concern to the immigrant students such as knowledge of the cultural tools used in teaching and studying and discrimination during work placements, were neglected (Teräs & Saarelainen-Haila, 2006).

³ The official statistics incorporate citizenship, land of birth, and mother tongue, for example (Pohjanpää, Seppo, & Mauri, 2003).

⁴ This was before 10 new countries joined the EU in 2004, and two more in 2007.

2.4 Immigration policies

As a member of the international community and of the European Union Finland has agreed to follow international agreements such as human-rights conventions, which together with EU law create a framework for the national legislation (Valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös, 1997).

The administration of immigration policies and questions in Finland is distributed among many ministries (e.g., the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Education), the main ones being the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour (Työministeriö, 2006). This distribution causes its own problems and questions, and has been criticized in the media because it creates information gaps and hampers decision-making (cf. Savolainen, 2006).

In the spring of 2007 a new government was formed following the election. Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second Government program introduced changes to the organization of immigration issues, and a new Minister of Migration and European Affairs, Ms. Astrid Thors, was appointed. She calls for a new type of active migration policy, meaning that the structural barriers against working in Finland should be reconstructed. (Tuomarla, 2007; Ministry of the Interior, 2007.)

Lepola (2000) carried out an extensive study on the political debate on immigration in Finland during the 1990s. She analyzed the political discourse and reflected on it from the perspectives of multiculturalism, nationality, and the Finnish identity. She suggests that there might be a need for a new term she calls "Finlander" to delineate people who live in Finland and have various ethnic and cultural origins. On the other hand, if the concept of a Finn were extended to mean all people living in Finland on a permanent basis, which seems unlikely because immigrants are not considered part of the Finnish identity, the concept of the Finlander would not be needed. (Lepola, 2000.)

The first immigration and refugee-policy program was implemented in 1997, before which time 'foreign questions' were associated with Finland's foreign policy, and it focused on refugee and asylum-seeking issues as well as on immigration. The emphasis was on the integration of immigrants into Finnish society and working life. Integration was depicted as a dual process: on the one hand it was seen in terms of a quick mastery of the Finnish language and societal rules, and on the other hand, immigrants were simultaneously expected to maintain their mother tongue and original culture. Another aspect of the duality is reflected in the principals of immigration: immigrants are treated as equal members of Finnish society, and at the same time they are expected to take responsibility for their

own lives. Thus, the program highlights the fact that immigrants have both rights and obligations. (Valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös, 1997.)

Furthermore, this emphasis on immigrants' own activity opened up the possibility for them and their organizations to participate in political decision-making. Three levels of policy were also introduced: the national integration policy, municipal integration programs and plans, and individual and family integration. Furthermore, active steps were taken to promote integration: for example, in adult education the aim was that all adult immigrants should have the opportunity to take courses in which they would learn about Finnish culture and receive the training and education to enable them to find a job in Finland. This immigration and refugee policy was the basis of 'The Integration Act', which was passed two years later in May 1999, and slightly amended in 2002 and 2006.

The aim of the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers Act was to promote integration, equality, and freedom of choice. It also emphasized actions to enable immigrants and asylum seekers to acquire the skills and knowledge they need in order to live in Finnish society, and contained provisions concerning their everyday living. Again the dual and this time more reciprocal nature of integration was evident: on the one hand requirements placed on the immigrant herself or himself, and on the other hand actions were taken by the authorities and society. Integration was defined as an immigrant's individual development toward coping with working life in Finland and maintaining her or his own language and culture. Again the three levels of action were evident: national integration policies, municipal responsibility for interaction programs, and individual responsibility. (Integration Act, 1999.)

The Integration Act provided for immigrants with permanent residence in Finland to draw up an integration plan, and to receive subsistence and other support during their first three years. The plan usually includes training and other measures to help the new residents to join Finnish society. The training may involve specific 'integration training' with a focus on the Finnish language, culture, and society, and include practical training in Finnish workplaces and preparatory vocational or other education that is equivalent to the labor-market training accepted by the employment office. The Integration Act was relevant with respect to this research as well, because under it the Preparatory Immigrant Training entitles participants to financial support. It is this new training course and its challenges that are the focus of this study.

A thorough evaluation and monitoring exercise was conducted in 2002 covering all levels and provisions of the Act. This produced numerous suggestions for development on the legal, national and municipal levels. As far as education and training were concerned, these included allocating more resources to integration training and to specific actions for illiterate immigrants. There was also an em-

phasis on the need to coordinate information about immigrant education and training, and to develop the content and quality. The result of the exercise was a report entitled “Conducting integration training in co-operation”, published in 2005 in collaboration between the authorities in the labor and educational fields, and an evaluation study giving recommendations for the further development of integration training. Both the report and the study emphasized the importance immigrant training and education in opening the door to Finnish society and working life. Special attention was given to making the training more working-life based, and to taking account of immigrants’ previous educational and other qualifications. Moreover, measures were introduced to clarify the training system in order to alleviate the confusion it produced among organizations and participants. (Työministeriö, 2002; 2005; Uusikylä, Tuominen, Mäkinen, & Reuter, 2005.)

The government adopted an action program against ethnic discrimination and racism in 2001, entitled “Towards ethnic equality and diversity”, in which it acknowledges the work against discrimination and racism and demands both monitoring and practical actions promoting good ethnic relationships. It suggests measures on the national, regional, and local level for combating discrimination and racism (Työministeriö, 2001). The program included a provision to establish an office and the post for ‘ombudsman for minorities’, which was later implemented. In 2004, another act entitled “The Non-discrimination Act” – it is also called The Equality Act – was passed, the purpose of which was to foster and safeguard equality and enhance the protection of those who have been discriminated against. It also obliges local authorities to draw up an equality plan. (Equality Act, 2004.)

The latest changes in immigration policy in Finland occurred in October 2006 when the Government Migration Policy Programme was accepted. There is a shift from refugee and sporadic immigration toward more focused and, especially, work-related immigration: Finland like other European countries is facing the challenges of an aging population and a shortage of young people. The main points of the program include developing work-related immigration, making the steering system for integration more effective, and improving ethnic relations. (Työministeriö, 2006.)

As depicted above, the legislation related to cultural and ethnic diversity in Finland has been revised and actions have been taken during the last ten years. From the immigrant perspective all these legal-policy reforms are significant. Those entering Finland are entitled to take various Finnish-language courses, and to receive financial support. If an immigrant is faced with discrimination or racism in schools or other institutions, under the Equality Act she or he may take the case to the ombudsman. In terms of policy we have the tools to meet the op-

portunities and challenges, but it is not that simple. The aims are well-intentioned and the legislation provides a solid basis, but there is still a need to turn policy into practices in the everyday life of people living in Finland.

2.5 Working life

Getting a job has traditionally been an immigrant's path to her or his new society, but finding a job in Finland is difficult. The unemployment rate of immigrants is much higher than that of Finns: in the early 2000s it varied from nine percent of US citizens to 75 percent of Iraqi citizens and was 30 percent on average, whereas among Finns it was about nine percent (Pohjanpää et al., 2003, pp. 19–20).

However, an ageing population and a shortage of labor are future challenges facing Europe, and this will affect also Finland (cf. Työministeriö, 2003). Entrepreneurship offers one alternative to immigrants who cannot get a job, and this is supported in the Government's Migration Policy (Työministeriö, 2006).

According to a study conducted by Forsander and Alitolppa-Niitamo (2000) on working life in connection with immigration, the branches most commonly employing immigrants were industry, catering, cleaning and caring. Catering and cleaning in particular were so-called 'entry jobs'. These first jobs were crucial, because immigrants without professional knowledge and skills or experience in Finland found it hard to get a job: what they had achieved outside Finland was not highly valued. According to immigrants themselves, as well as employers, the prerequisites included a good command of Finnish (or Swedish) language and up-to-date professional competence, along with so-called informal eligibility, in other words a positive attitude and cultural and social readiness. Immigrants had obtained jobs through their personal efforts and contact networks, but official measures were also required, such as further training and the opportunity to update professional skills and knowledge. (Forsander & Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2000.)

Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000, p. 80) divided the problems immigrants confront during their acculturation process in Finland into two main groups: a lack of various human and material resources and various forms of intended or unintended discrimination. They studied immigrants' discrimination experiences in Finland, and found wide variation among different minority groups in everyday life, working life, and services. For example, Arabs, Turks and Somalis had experienced more discrimination than other minority groups. According to the Immigrants' Living Conditions Survey, approximately every third respondent had experienced violence, half of them because of their foreign background, and 25% had failed to get a job because they were not Finns. However, again the differences between the groups were large: Somalis and Russians had experienced more discrimination than Estonians and Vietnamese. (Pohjanpää et al., 2003, pp. 76–77.)

Jaakkola (2005) surveyed the attitudes of Finns toward immigrants in 1987–2003, which was a period in which Finnish society changed, and not only in terms of the number of immigrants, but also in economic cycles. These cycles had an impact on Finnish attitudes toward immigrants. For example, Finland plunged into recession and massive unemployment in the early 1990s, and in 1993 the unemployment rate had increased from five percent in 1987 to 19%. The most recent survey from 2003 showed a drop to nine percent. After the recession Finnish attitudes had become more favorable toward immigration and immigrants, depending to some extent on their occupation: in 2003 half of the respondents thought that Finland should accept more ‘skilled’ foreigners than it did. The results showed that favorable attitudes were associated with higher levels of education, domicile (the Helsinki Metropolitan Area), political ideology (e.g., the Greens) and gender (women), among other things. (Jaakkola, 2005.)

There have been many projects and recent studies on working life in Finland, a country facing the challenges associated with diversity. For example, Pitkänen (2005) studied intercultural work and the questions stemming from it in companies located in Eastern Finland. She found that the companies identified the benefits of having people with diverse backgrounds working together, because it brought innovations and new perspectives. On the other hand, there were challenges connected to language and communication difficulties, and to the fact that the Finnish worker was used as an example, ‘a standard’. Furthermore, immigrants were expected to bring surplus value to the company, and recognizing diversity in work places was also considered challenging. This affected the management level too, and how they perceived and identified diversity, and was the focus of Sippola’s (2005) study: she suggests that organizations should treat diversity as a comprehensive strategic approach and not as a separate procedure, such as training. Practices that respect equality should be developed in cooperation with the entire personnel.

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, changes in society and in working life have an impact on education and training as well: as in society, so in working life and schools there are more and more colleagues and students with various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Thus, teachers need a broader understanding, as well as theoretical and practical tools and practices.

2.6 Education and training policies concerning immigration

Matinheikko-Kokko (1999) has conducted a comprehensive analysis of immigrant education and training in Finland. She describes the process from refugee training to immigrant training in the light of educational policy. In the 1980s the emphasis was on individually selected training or work placement for refugees, but shifted

between 1989 and 1993 to the ‘normalization’ of immigrant children: a refugee child had the same rights and enjoyed the same services as all children in Finland. Enrichment ideology started to emerge during 1994–96, and immigrant children were considered a welcome addition in schools. Educational policy moved in 1997 towards self-directed learning for immigrants, the role of the teacher changing to that of supporter, assimilator, short-term employee, and counselor. (Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999.)

In 2002, Matinheikki-Kokko and Pitkänen (2002) conducted an analysis of immigrant policies and the education of immigrants in Finland. This was part of a large comparative study of immigrant education in six countries at various stages and with a variety of policies: Britain, Finland, France, Germany, Greece and Israel. They describe the Finnish policies as a process from refugee care, normalization and mainstreaming to cultural enrichment, and path-based integration. Accordingly, they portray the educational policies as refugee education, cross-cultural awakening, prerequisites for multicultural education, and inclusive schooling. They drew up a table tracing the development of Finnish immigrant settlement and education policy in the 1980s and 1990s. This table is reproduced below (Table 2.2), and the following Table 2.3 is my updated version.

Table 2.2 The development of Finnish immigrant settlement and education policy in the 1980s and 1990s (Matinheikki-Kokko & Pitkänen, 2002, pp. 58–59)

Integration setting	1. 1980–1988	2. 1989–1993	3. 1994–1996	4. 1997–
A The immi- grant policy programmes and their main ideology	<i>Report of the Refugee Com- mittee (1980)</i> Individualistic care of refugees in terms of their individual needs	<i>Finnish Refugee Policy (1989)</i> Normalisation through localized, collective refugee reception actions	<i>Principles of Finnish Refugee and Migration Policy (1994)</i> Cultural Enrichment through challenging the ‘normal’ set of service systems to change	<i>Government Programme on Immigration and Refugee Policy (1997)</i> Path-based Integration policy strengthened by specific legislation
B Perceptions of equality	Formal equality through improving refugees’ legal rights to services within a uniform system	Equal opportunities through establishing links between refugee reception actions and a mainstream welfare system	Cultural diversity and equal opportu- nities for all groups of immigrants, including refugees as a priority group	Equal membership through having a balance of rights and duties
C Orientation to culture	Individually oriented refugee education	Cross-cultural awakening by seeing refugees’ language and culture as a resource in the Finnish education system	Cultural enrichment introduced through principles of: equal- ity, bilingualism, multiculturalism.	Towards inclusive multicultural schooling
D Language Policy: Finnish as a Sec- ond Language (FSL)	Identification of the areas and actions for developing Finnish as a foreign language	A high priority for courses of Finnish as a Second language for adults	Instructional recom- mendations for FSL teaching and testing	
Teaching of the native language	Introduction of native-language teaching		Instructional recommendations for native-language testing	An option for an increase in native language teaching from two to four hours
E Educational programmes Comprehensive school	Need-based preparatory schooling	Time-based preparatory schooling	Preparatory schooling as a cultural bridge to the mainstream	Strengthening of the status of immigrants within regular schooling through new school legislation
Vocational edu- cation		National recommendations on curricula for migrant training courses for migrant youth and adults	Short employment courses without educational status	Preparatory courses (20–40 cr.) within vocational education
Adult education	Pre-vocational training programmes			Flexible choices rather than flexible curricular arrangements

Table 2.3 The development of Finnish immigrant settlement and education policy between 1999 and 2006

Integration setting	1999	2001	1) 2004 2) 2006
A The immigrant policy programmes and their main ideology	<i>Integration Act</i> To promote integration and support the day-to-day living of immigrants, integration plan	<i>Towards ethnic equality and diversity</i> Monitoring and taking measures against discrimination and racism, actions to promote good ethnic relations	1) <i>Equality Act and</i> 2) <i>Government Migration Policy Programme</i> 1) Fostering and safeguarding equality, equality plan, positive actions 2) Promoting work-related immigration and clarifying guidance systems, improving ethnic relations
B Perceptions of equality	Equal membership, rights and obligations	Ethnic equality, special needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities	1) Equality for all people (age, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, opinions, health, disability, sexual orientation, other personal characteristics) 2) Human rights and equality for all
C Orientation to culture	Dual culture: learning about Finnish culture and maintaining the native culture	Multiculturalism Multiethnicity	1) Multiculturalism, pluralism, non-discriminatory practices 2) Multiculturalism, pluralism, non-discriminatory practices
D Language Policy: Finnish as a Second Language (FSL) Teaching of the native language	Bilingualism: acquiring a command of Finnish (Swedish), maintaining the native language		1) – 2) Learning Finnish (Swedish) and supporting the native language and culture
E Educational programmes Comprehensive school Vocational education Adult education	 Preparatory vocational training Integration Training Language and integration training	Training at all levels about discrimination and racism	1) Training at all levels about equality 2) Information and training for all immigrants including family members, Improving opportunities for immigrant students to study on all levels and all forms of education

These two tables reflect the changes in Finnish society with regard to immigration and educational policies. Over 25 years there has been transformation from individual refugee policies and practices to multicultural, pluralistic, and non-discriminatory policies on three different levels: the national, the regional and the individual. It is clear that Finland is committed to integration policies, as are many other European countries. However, what is meant by integration, who integrates, and into what, is still unclear. Furthermore, the integration of immigrants follows many paths in different European countries because of their different historical, political and social developments (Geddes, 2003). However, I argue that in Finland all these policies are still being used in the day-to-day practices because municipalities, schools, and work places are in different phases in terms of encountering people from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

I also believe that the major future challenges are in identifying variations in day-to-day implementation and realization of these policies. For example, the bi-directional and reciprocal process of integration introduced in the Immigration and Refugee Policy of 1997, and which still applies in the Government's Immigration Policy of 2006, is a complicated and multifaceted process. How can you integrate and 'separate' at the same time – the former by learning Finnish practices and the latter by maintaining your own cultural heritage?

This research is one example of how one school, the College, has approached the question of diversity in classrooms, and has given time and space to discussing and developing its practices. Thus, the College will rise to the challenges teachers and students are facing daily in schools and classrooms. From the societal perspective, my research facilitates the process of institutional change in the College as cultural and ethnic diversity continues to expand. It offers both a method for coping with and an understanding of this highly interesting and mesmerizing phenomenon, which is encountered in the work of all authorities. Its contribution is in creating a new understanding, tracing the phenomenon of intercultural learning, and offering an example of the construction of local practices in the new situation.

In order to understand the situation and to develop the practices I needed to take another perspective, and not merely to describe the change and challenges that took place in society and in national policies. Thus, I sought theoretical tools for addressing questions such as what culture or learning is, and what I, and others, mean by them. This is the focus of the next chapter.

3 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will elaborate the key concepts, theories, and studies that have been meaningful for my research. I will also examine some concepts from the area of international migration and immigration research, as well as from activity theory. Furthermore, I will introduce my conceptualization of the dynamics of intercultural encountering in classrooms with a variety of students and practices, which is embedded in local and historical circumstances. I would also like to point out that concepts and theories are reflections of their history, practice, and context, and that concepts such as culture, learning, and activity serve to facilitate the grasping of complex phenomena.

I have taken ideas from various disciplines, such as anthropology, and education, and have considered studies conducted in different countries and region. One might call these eclectic choices, but in my view they approach the same kinds of phenomena from different perspectives, and thus enhance our understanding. It also strengthens the intercultural and multidisciplinary aspects of my research. Moreover, as Silverman (2005, p. 99) writes, different approaches, theories, models, and concepts help the researcher to look at phenomena in various ways. Furthermore, some theoretical tools are more useful than others. I see the phenomenon I am studying here as intercultural learning, and how this affects the development processes in the Culture Laboratory.

3.1 Culture and its neighboring concepts

Culture and neighboring concepts such as ethnicity are fascinating phenomena and research objects because they are multilayered and complex issues. It is hard to define one in isolation from the other, and in any case there is no single, comprehensive definition. Furthermore, there has been a change in how such concepts are dealt with the literates, from fixed categories or reductionistic entities to the dynamic social constructs with fluid boundaries and the hybrid, complex mul-

multiple meanings in contemporary writings in various fields (cf. Hall, 1995; Mac an Ghaill, 1999; Sullivan, 2005).

Culture

In everyday language culture usually refers to the arts. There are “Culture Sections” in newspapers and “Culture News” on television, covering issues such as literature, music, and painting. On the other hand, culture has been associated with many disciplines over the centuries – anthropology and archaeology being the most common, but also including sociology and education. Thus, it is a broad concept on which experts and scholars have different views. It is defined according to the context and tradition on which it is used.

There are focused aspects of culture, such as the culture of a particular street or a small group, which could be called ‘subcultures’ of a larger culture. Fine referred to those local, small-group cultures as “idiocultures”, which he defines as “a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and that serve as the basis of further interactions” (Fine, 1987, p. 125). On the other hand, there is the broad approach: “Everything in education relates to culture – in its acquisition, its transmission, and its invention”, as Erickson wrote (2001, p. 31).

Some approaches emphasize the ‘internal’ sides of culture, such as cultural schemas or scripts, while others emphasize the ‘external’ sides, such as material objects. Furthermore, activity theory, for example, interlocks these two sides taking into account the dual nature of artifacts (Cole, 1996, p. 124). The time dimension is broad too, from the 17th century and the work of Tylor, who was the founder of modern anthropology and at the end of 1800s referred to culture as a way of life (Kupiainen & Sevänen, 1996), stretching to post-modern references to culture as symbols or “networks”, as suggested by Forsnäs in the late 1990s (Forsnäs, 1998). Hall (1995, pp. 178–179) sees cultures as systems of meaning. However, one thing that is common to most approaches is that culture involves the social dimension: no one can create, maintain, or mediate culture alone. For example, an artist who creates his or her art seemingly alone needs an audience. There is also an implicit distinction between the cultural and the natural.

Erickson (2001) distinguishes culture as cultivation, as tradition, and as information bits. He also refers to it as a symbol system, as social processes, and as motive and emotion, stating that it could be seen as a primary human toolkit, just like other tools such as the hammer, and the language we use. Emphasis on language, or communication as culture, was advocated by E.T. Hall (1959/1981) in his statement that culture is communication.

Moreover, culture could be described as a product and a process: “Culture is a product of human creativity in action; once we have it, culture enables us to extend our activity still further” thus, “culture is entirely the product of human activity, an artifact” (Erickson, 2001, p. 31). Yet, on the other hand, the invention and production of culture happen through various processes in which people take part. Erickson (2001, p. 33) claims that these processes are profoundly political in nature, having to do with access to and the distribution of social power.

Cole (1996) pointed out that artifacts or systems of artifacts are the fundamental constituents of culture. Artifacts are ideal and material at the same time. They exist not in isolation, but on various levels. Culture, which is more or less visible and invisible to its users, is involved in the processes and contents of education. On the one hand, it could be referred to as the context, as something that rounds us, on the other hand it is something that weaves everything together. (Cole, 1996, pp. 132–137, 144.)

There have calls for a more comprehensive notion of culture. Ratner, for example, argues that cultural phenomena are socially constructed, and fall into the following five main interdependent and interlocked yet distinctive types:

- cultural activities such as producing goods and educating children
- cultural values, schemas, meanings and concepts such as wealth and youth
- physical artifacts such as tools and books
- psychological phenomena such as emotions or perception, and
- agency, which means that humans actively construct and reconstruct cultural phenomena (Ratner, 2000).

Hall (1995) also has proposed a re-conceptualization of culture: it is not settled, enclosed, or internally coherent. It is formed through the juxtaposition and co-presence of different cultural forces and discourses, and their effects. Yet, people tend to think that cultures are homogenous and unified. Hall responds to this by focusing on the functional and the purposeful: closed conceptions of culture help to unite nations and to produce a national identity (Hall, 1995, pp. 187–188). However, a shift has occurred from culturalism, which puts culture in the centre, to cultural differentialism, which emphasizes the notion of difference in relation to the social, cultural and psychic dimensions of contemporary life (Mac an Ghaill, 1999).

Long (2001) also argues against a homogenous or unitary concept of culture, and suggests that we should “embrace theoretically the central issues of cultural repertoires, heterogeneity and hybridity.” Cultural repertoires are the ways in which different cultural elements (e.g., value notions, discourses, and ritualized

procedures) are used and recombined in social practices. Heterogeneity, for one, refers to multiple social forms within the same context. Hybridity involves mixed end products that are results of combinations of different cultural ingredients and repertoires. He advocates discourse analysis as a tool with which to study cultural repertoires, defining discourse as a set of meanings embodied in metaphors, representations, images and narrative statements. (Long, 2001, pp. 51–52.)

Hall (1995) refers to hybridity as a process of transculturation. Transculturation “describes one of the key cultural processes which operate between hitherto sharply differentiated cultures and peoples who are forced to interact”. Therefore, the culture that evolves in transculturation processes or in “diasporas⁵” is “the result of some never-completed, complex process of combining elements from different cultural repertoires to form ‘new’ cultures which are related to but which are not exactly like any of the originals” (Hall, 1995, p. 193).

Gutiérrez et al. (1999) also elaborated on the notion of hybridity and employed the concept of the Third Space. According to them, hybridity is ubiquitous and exists on multiple levels of learning environments, although teachers do not necessarily see diversity and difference as resources for creating new learning – even though, linguistic, ethnic and racial diversity offer rich and productive potential for any learning community. Instead of trying to get rid of these even possibly conflicting situations in the classroom, teachers should take advantage of the opportunity to open up new horizons and thus to expand learning. Hybridity and diversity should not be considered problematic, but rather seen as important cultural resources for learning. These hybrid spaces are encapsulated in the notion of the Third Space, and these learning zones are promoted and sustained by hybrid language and schooling practices that bridge home and school. The Third Space is described as a developmental zone between official (e.g., the school curriculum) and unofficial (e.g., the home culture) spaces in a classroom. (Gutiérrez et al., 1999.)

Cultural stereotypes are simplistic descriptions of cultural traits in other groups, although stereotypes do not exist unless people believe in them (Eriksen, 1995, p. 252). They are alive and well in everyday discourse because they may have a practical and functional role in everyday life. As Eriksen points out, stereotypes are related to ‘facts’: practices or information about different ethnic groups may be exaggerated or over-generalized. They may also be self-fulfilling prophecies, which is important to realize especially in education. Furthermore, they provide ideological legitimation for ethnic boundaries, and strengthen group cohesion. (Eriksen, 1995, pp. 252–253.)

⁵ Hall frequently employs the concept of diaspora, meaning “the long-term settlement of peoples in ‘foreign’ places which follows their scattering or dispersal from their ‘original’ homeland.” (Hall, 1995, p. 193).

Bennett and Bennett (2004) argue that in order to avoid cultural stereotyping people often use statements such as, "Treat every person as an individual" instead of accurate cultural generalizations. This kind of individualistic approach could be considered one form of cultural chauvinism imposing a Western-type of individualism on every situation. They call for useful cultural generalizations based on systematic cross-cultural research. (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 151.)

The concept of culture in this research

Even this short presentation on various perceptions of culture and cultural phenomena reflects the complexity and the multi-layered nature of the concept: multifaceted phenomena hardly ever carry simple definitions or descriptions. For the purposes of this research I understand culture as a dynamic and hybrid as well as a socially and historically constructed phenomenon. It involves the intermingling of cultural practices, discourses, values, conceptions, and artifacts. Thus I perceive hybridity as a constituent part or even the core of a culture, which may be in conflict with views advocating that there are some essential elements within cultures. Hybridity refers to the past, the present and the future, because cultures are in constant movement: the transformation may be slow or quick, or even both at the same time. Furthermore, cultural agency reflects the active role of people who produce, create, and transmit culture. The concept of culture I adopt here relates to learning and education, both in a focused sense as a learning culture and in a broad sense as a way of life. As mentioned before, however, there is a need to discuss some neighboring concepts as well, which is what I do in the following sections.

Culture and place

Massey (1995) and also Hall (1995) state that the concept of culture is usually intertwined with the notion of place. We commonly think of different places or nations when we speak about different cultures, and thus the notion of culture is 'placed'. Hall also writes that we tend to present cultures as homogeneous and unified, tied to places, traditions, and a 'homeland'. However; the endeavour to make cultures and places to correspond with one another has been a hopeless, expensive, and sometimes violent and dangerous enterprise. (Hall, 1995, p. 186.)

Culture and ethnicity

The concepts of culture and ethnicity are highly interlocked and are sometimes used interchangeably. I will draw a distinction between them, however, because I understand that they also have discrete features. In anthropology, as well as in

other social sciences, ethnicity is regarded as a social construction. Eriksen (1995) states that ethnic groups are used to describe both minority and majority groups, and at the same time, ethnicity deals with the relationship between groups that are considered culturally distinctive. He argues against the common belief that ethnicity has something to do with objective cultural differences, and that it assumes importance when groups live in isolation from one another. Studies in anthropology have proven quite the opposite: ethnicity matters in contexts in which groups are culturally close and have contacts with each other. In other words, “Ethnicity occurs when cultural differences are made relevant through interaction.” Ethnic groups exist through the general recognition of cultural distinctiveness, which is mostly present in social practices such as marriage, language, and work. Thus, an ethnic identity needs to be embedded in at least some of these social practices in order to survive. (Eriksen, 1995, pp. 250–251.)

Ethnicity is described as relational, processual and situational. An important element in ethnic ideology is historical continuity in groups with a shared history and traditions. Furthermore, ethnicity could also be perceived as a combination of different dimensions – symbolic, social, economic and political. For example, resource allocation emphasizes the economic and the political dimensions, and thus benefits ethnic groups. Ethnic identity may vary in situational and in absolute terms. One’s ethnic membership may be socially relevant, but one’s self-perception is made up of many other elements, too. For example, descendants of different Scandinavian migrant groups in the USA may gather together and celebrate traditional feast days a few times a year, when they perceive themselves as Finnish Americans or Swedish Americans, but for the rest of the year they consider themselves Americans. (Eriksen, 1995, pp. 254–256.)

Race, ethnicity, and nation

According to Fenton (2003, p. 13), there is a common core uniting the concepts of ethnic group, race, and nation, the differences being on the periphery. They all incorporate the idea of descent or ancestry, and ideas about culture. Furthermore, Fenton defines race, nation, and ethnic group as follows:

- Race* refers to descent and culture communities with two specific additions:
- 1 the idea that ‘local’ groups are instances of abstractly conceived divisions of humankind, and
 - 2 the idea that race makes explicit reference to physical or ‘visible’ difference as the primary marker of difference and inequality.

Nation refers to descent and culture communities with one specific addition: The assumption that nations are or should be associated with a state or state-like political form.

Ethnic group refers to descent and culture communities with three specific additions:

- 1 that the group is a kind of sub-set within a nation-state,
- 2 that the point of reference of difference is typically culture rather than physical appearance, and
- 3 often that the group referred to is 'other' (foreign, exotic, minority) to some majority who are presumed not to be 'ethnic'. (Fenton, 2003, p. 23.)

He also points out the differences in the discourse on ethnicity between the USA and the UK. The concept of race is still frequently used in everyday, political, administrative, and academic discussions in the USA, whereas in the UK, as in other European countries, the concept of ethnicity has largely replaced it. The demise of race in public discourse has happened in Finland, too, probably because it is now perceived as politically incorrect (cf. Forsander et al., 2001). Race is usually only briefly referred to in connection with ethnicity. Paradoxically, at the same time the discourse of racism has expanded to cover all sorts and modes of discrimination, such as age, gender, and religion.

Nationalism as an ideology and a cultural phenomenon exists almost everywhere in various forms. Furthermore, nation-building is regarded as part of the globalization process, and as connected with colonialism, decolonialization, and modernity. It is typically defined in anthropological circles as an ideology that parallels cultural boundaries with political boundaries within a nation: only people who are alike should live within a nation's boundaries. (Eriksen, 1995, p. 261.)

The difference between ethnicity and nationalism is more complex on practical level than on the level of definition because someone could inhabit grey zone between nationhood and ethnic identity, or be part of an ethnic group that is divided (Eriksen, 1995, p. 266). For example, the Sámi people, the only indigenous people of Finland, live in the North Calotte region that lies in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia. Billig (1995) argues that nationalism is usually regarded as a marginal phenomenon (e.g., the hard right), but it assumes center-stage within nations. He refers to this everyday 'flag-waving' type of nationalism as "banal nationalism".

My research was conducted in an educational setting. The focus was not on building or showing ethnicity or nationality, but on the variation and diversity within and between cultures as a driving force for development. However, as the above discussion shows, the conceptualization of ethnicity, race and nationhood, and of their relationships, is far more complex and multilayered than is typically

portrayed in educational research, and as Lee, Beale Spencer and Harpalani (2003) have argued, we, too, need to re-think the whole phenomenon.

3.2 The intercultural and intercultural space

‘Inter’ is a prefix that originates from Latin and denotes spatial, social, and time dimensions such as located or existing “between”, “among”, “in the midst of”, and “mutually”, “reciprocally”, “together”, and “during” (Random House Dictionary, 1996, pp. 991–992; Webster’s Dictionary, 1986). Thus, the intercultural means between or among two or more cultures. Furthermore, it involves interactions, mutuality or reciprocity between cultures, or during cultural processes, for example. Many disciplines and practices stem from the idea of the intercultural, including intercultural communication (cf. Gudykunst & Mody, 2002), intercultural training (cf. Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004), and intercultural education (cf. Cushner, 1998; Räsänen & San, 2005).

Cross-cultural, transcultural, and multicultural

Similarly, the prefixes ‘cross’, ‘trans’ and ‘multi’ give further dimensions to the adjective ‘cultural’. ‘Cross-cultural’ emphasizes differences and similarities: cross-cultural communication involves comparisons across cultures, whereas intercultural communication involves communication between people from different cultures (Gudykunst, 2002, p. 19). In the area of cultural studies, the hybridization of different cultures is also depicted as a process of transculturation, which involves forced interaction between people of sharply differentiated cultures. A related term is the concept of diaspora, which refers to the long-term settlement of people in foreign places (Hall, 1995, p. 193).

The concept of the multicultural also carries many meanings. On the one hand it reflects the existence of many cultures, and on the other it implies better opportunities for all people. As Kivisto (2002, p. 36) put it, “Multiculturalism frequently involves an unspoken mixing of what is and what ought to be.” He points out the distinction between the terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘multiculturalism’, the former implying an analytic concept and the latter a normative precept. Moreover, there has been a huge increase in the use of multicultural discourse in recent decades. For example, Hannerz (2003) analyzed ‘fundamental’ and ‘multicultural’ speech, and suggested that, paradoxically, multicultural speech sometimes incorporated the narrowmindedness of cultural fundamentalism. Multicultural discourse has also found its way to Finland, although the concept of the multicultural is not yet stabilized: it has been used to refer to demographic aspects of the existence of many cultures, as well as to political agendas and equal opportunities for all (cf. Huttunen, Löytty, & Rastas, 2005).

Multicultural education

In the educational context, Banks (2001, p. 3) claims that multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational-reform movement, and a process. “Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students – regardless of their gender and social class and their ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics – should have an equal opportunity to learn in school”.

Thus, the goals of multicultural education are to help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures, and to provide students with cultural and ethnic alternatives. A further aim is to provide all students with the skills, attitudes and knowledge they need in order to function within their ethnic culture, within the mainstream culture, and within and across other cultures. The idea is to reduce the pain and discrimination that members of some ethnic and racial groups experience, and to help students to master essential reading, writing, and math skills. (Banks, 2002, pp. 1–4.)

In Finland, Talib has carried out research and has written on multicultural schools (1999; 2002; 2005). She has called for multicultural competence, which she understands as different levels of awareness from self-awareness to a global sense of responsibility, to be included in the professional competence of teachers. Teachers could develop such competence by reflecting their everyday practices when they encounter students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, for example. (Talib, 2005, pp. 43–46.)

Lasonen (2005) describes the distinction between multicultural and intercultural education in the context of learning and working as follows: “*Multicultural education* prepares the learners to adjust themselves to live and work on a daily basis in multicultural communities and working contexts (...) [whereas] *intercultural education* prepares the learners to act as interpreters and mediators between different cultures.”

Intercultural education

Multicultural education is criticized for focusing on specific problems such as differences in learning style and in language development within ethnic or cultural groups. Cushner, for example, argues that intercultural education is more proactive and action-oriented than multicultural education, the emphasis being on developing a genuine understanding of cultural differences and similarities in order to build a foundation for working collaboratively (Cushner, 1998, p. 4). Interestingly, McGee Banks (2005) showed in her historical review how “intergroup education” and “intercultural education” were precursors of multicultural education in the early 1900s, when many immigrants settled to America. She describes how

teachers and other authorities tried to help them to settle in their new country and to feel good about themselves. There were also different efforts and programs aimed at increasing students' understanding and appreciation of ethnic and racial diversity.

In the context of intercultural education, 'intercultural' refers to implications, comparisons, exchanges, cooperation, and confrontations between groups. As Cushner writes, "Problems and situations are seen as so complex that they can be dealt only through the convergence and combination of different viewpoints." (Cushner, 1998, p. 4). Thomas (2000, p. 31) refers to the 'intercultural' in education, a scenario which "involves an analysis of the relationships between two or more different cultures that result from long-term contact." The goal in this scenario, apart from examining differences and similarities, is to detect new cultural patterns of behaviour, which could lead to better levels of schooling and social interaction. Intercultural analysis could also lead to the development of more culture-sensitive pedagogies. (Thomas, 2000.)

Gundara (2000, see also Gundara & Jacobs, 2000) sees intercultural education as part and parcel of all educational processes, and not a separate area (Gundara, 2000, p. viii). He refers to the long and complex legacy of Europe's multicultural past, suggesting that intercultural education needs to take into account the complexities of the past and present situation together with aspects of social diversity. He also criticizes the new racism in Europe and Eurocentric thinking.

In Finland, Räsänen, with others (cf. Räsänen, Jokikokko, Järvelä, & Lamminmäki-Kärkkäinen, 2002; Räsänen & San, 2005), has conducted research on intercultural learning and teaching in the context of teachers' education from the early 1990s. Pelkonen (2005) criticizes the superficial level of intercultural education in which only limited aspects of different cultures are introduced to students, such as food, clothing and customs. She argues that intercultural learning can be seen as a transformative process in which the learner acquires competences and sensitivity that support understanding, dialogue, and the adaptation from one cultural context to another (Pelkonen, 2005, p. 71).

Pelkonen also presents different intercultural learning models and theories, which she divides into two main categories: those that emphasize developmental processes and those that emphasize radical perspective transformation through experience. She gives as examples Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett & Bennett, 2004) and Mezirow's transformative learning (Mezirow, 1995). She also supports the idea of including intercultural competence as an element of teaching competence. (Pelkonen, 2005.)

In the same book, Jokikokko (2005) advocates intercultural competence, which she defines on four dimensions: attitudes, skills, action, and knowledge and awareness. In her view, it is based on ethics (see also Räsänen & San, 2005). Pitkänen

(2006) and Hammar-Suutari (2005) acknowledge the need for intercultural competence in the context of the work of the authorities and as part of contemporary working life.

The intercultural, the boundary zone, the Third Space, and transcultural space

However, there are other concepts referring to zones, areas or places in between something, including boundaries, boundary-crossers or brokers, and hybridities or third spaces (cf. Bhabha, 1998; Wenger, 1998).

Boundaries usually distinguish one thing from another. They may be physical, such as between places, countries and departments, on the one hand, or social and ideological, such as between groups, identities and cultures. Thus, as Massey (1995) pointed out, boundaries matter: they define who you are, where you live, where your tax money goes, and which nationality you possess. All this also highlights the power issue in that where boundaries are drawn and by whom is an embodiment of power relations (Massey, 1995, pp. 67–69).

Moreover, as Kerosuo (2006) argues, boundaries may be important locations of change, development and learning within organizations in that they may trigger learning and development. She studied multichronic patients who constantly needed to cross the boundaries of different health-care organizations, and how this boundary-crossing promoted such change.

Konkola (2001) focused on student occupational therapists' work placement in polytechnics, and conceptualized a hybrid space between school and work she calls the boundary zone⁶. When a teacher goes to the workplaces and meets students and workers it is also a meeting of different activity systems⁷. She describes boundary zones as a kind of "no man's land" in which there are elements of three different activity systems – teaching, studying and working. When the three share a mutual object an activity, which she calls a boundary zone activity, may emerge (Konkola, 2001; see also Kerosuo, 2006).

Gutiérrez et al. (1999) used the notion of the Third Space to conceptualize betweenness in an educational setting. They argue that Third Spaces as learning zones are promoted and sustained by hybrid language and schooling practices that bridge home and school. They could be thus described as a developmental zone between official (e.g., the school curriculum) and unofficial (e.g., the home culture) spaces in a classroom. (Gutiérrez et al., 1999.)

⁶ On the boundary zones see also (Kerosuo, 2006).

⁷ The activity system is considered further in section 3.4.

Gutiérrez, Rymes and Larson (1995) introduced the notion of a script and a counter-script: teachers follow their traditional lesson scripts and students form their own counter-script, an “unofficial” script as opposed to the teacher’s “official” script. However, in some cases teachers and students enter into the Third Space, such as when a student poses a question and thereby crosses the boundary of the previous script. Stepping into the Third Space opens up a new horizon for learning and thus expands the learning.

Tomas (1996) called this space between cultures transcultural space in his investigation of the history of Andaman anthropology⁸. This form of intercultural space could be perceived as “transient, sometimes humorous, often dangerous, and periodically cruel”, generated in situations governed by misinterpretation or representational excess. This transcultural space, which is transient and ephemeral, is fluid and haphazard in essence and may open up before one suddenly and close up behind one smoothly or cruelly. These spaces are products of fleeting intercultural relations. He goes on to argue that “transcultural spaces can sometimes be produced by representational dislocations or incomplete transformations on *systematically* based circuits of representation that have been deployed or that operate interculturally.” (Tomas, 1996, pp.1–3 emphasis in the original.)

Critics of the notion of the intercultural include Sullivan (2005), who wrote in the context of anthropology that the conceptualization of betweenness as intercultural space is not adequate to describe the fluid social field that emerges in interactions. He also criticizes the structuralistic perspective according to which cultures are hermetic entities, and intercultural spaces are consequently rigid blocks between these cultural entities. I see his point and agree to some extent, but my approach to intercultural space is from a different perspective.

The intercultural and intercultural space in this study

As mentioned earlier, the ‘intercultural’ means between or among two or more cultures. In this study, however, I would also like to emphasize the dynamics, hybridity, and interactive, reciprocal nature of ‘inter’, not only its location or existence somewhere between. Thus, intercultural refers to the interactive, hybrid, and dynamic processes at work between cultures and people. These processes are

⁸ Tomas (1996) examined the encounters between representatives of the British East India Company and the Andamanese between the late-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries based on travel literature, ships’ logs, journals of surveying expeditions, and administrative reports. The Andaman Islands are located in the Bay of Bengal.

manifested in cultural clashes, co-operations, and new innovations, for example, and take place in an area that could be conceptualized as a third space (e.g., Bhabha, 1998; Gutiérrez et al., 1999) or a boundary zone (e.g., Kerosuo, 2006; Konkola, 2001), but which I call intercultural space because the driving forces are the dynamics and variations between cultures and people. As I see it, too, the boundaries between different cultures are moving and dynamic, locally constructed and permeable rather than fixed, static and rigid.

This conceptualization of the betweenness of cultures is interesting here because it catches well the momentary, yet significant nature, of a space between cultures and people. This 'interspace' could also be referred to in terms of dislocation and misinterpretation, as well as being potentially dangerous as Tomas (1996) described transcultural spaces. However, I would also emphasize the potential and the opportunities.

I would consider my research 'intercultural' rather than 'multicultural' or 'transcultural' for three reasons. First, the practical aim of the project⁹ was to develop Preparatory Immigrant Training and to explore the ways in which cultural variation and diversity affect development work. Secondly, I have focused on dynamics and hybridity between cultures and people. Thirdly, my interest was in the area between 'us' and 'others' rather than on 'us' and 'others', or on processes of exclusion and inclusion. However, I would like to point out that my decision to apply the concept of the intercultural does not imply that I favor one concept over others, it rather means that it fits well with the phenomenon I wish to study, and thus to understand and develop further in theoretical as well as in practical terms.

3.3 Learning and intercultural learning

My approach to learning is based on perceptions of it as a cultural process, and on cultural-historical and sociocultural theories of learning (cf. Säljö, 2001; Wells & Claxton, 2002). This does not mean that I do not consider theoretical threads in learning that are connected to behaviorism and cognitivism cultural phenomena: it rather means that for my research site and object I needed an approach that provided me with the analytical and theoretical tools that would allow me to look at learning as a cultural phenomenon more broadly and thoroughly.

There is a constant dynamic between culture and learning, as Säljö (2001) points out. Learning is not a homogeneous or one-dimensional process. Furthermore, it happens on both individual and collective levels – in organizations,

⁹ The practical framework of this research, 'The Culture Laboratory Project', is described in Chapter 4.2.

communities, schools and workplaces, for example. It is also a historical process, which means that what people learn and need to learn vary in time: for example, computing skills are considered necessary skills nowadays.

Learning is an aspect of all human activity and occurs in all activities and practices. It is a historical image, which school has created, that learning comes after teaching and only – or at least mainly – occurs in these institutional settings. Tough teaching and instruction are important, people also learn outside school. Furthermore, it is not only what and how much people need to learn that changes, but also the way in which they learn, which depends on the cultural circumstances in which we live. Thus, understanding something requires knowledge of the cultural phenomena and communicational models in which these issues or conceptions are embedded. (*ibid.*, pp. 11–14.)

The focus in socio-cultural and activity theoretical research is on how people appropriate different cultural activities and how they make use of the cultural devices at their disposal. The socio-cultural approach is based on the fact that human beings are biological creatures, a combination of physical and mental resources. They develop in a biological sense, but the change is so slow that it is hard to see. Moreover, change is also evident in our cultural instruments and tools when we use them to monitor and change our environment and create collective knowledge, and thus create culture. (*ibid.*, pp. 27–28.)

Cultural instruments and tools

Socio-cultural and activity theoretical thinking places special emphasis on cultural instruments and tools, and on how people learn to use, create and change them. According to Säljö, culture is a combination of ideas, valuations, knowledge and other resources, which we acquire in interaction with our environment: it also comprises all physical devices – artifacts – that belong to our everyday life. It is thus a mixture of the material and the immaterial, which are in close interaction with each other. Furthermore, it is something – intellectual or material – that human beings have created between people and their environments. The way in which people behave, think, communicate, and perceive reality is shaped by their social and cultural experiences. (*ibid.*, pp. 27–28, 33.)

Cultural mediation

Another significant aspect is cultural mediation, which is based on the work and ideas of Vygotsky. He devised the term mediated action for when tools and signs are used as auxiliary means, yet are mutually linked in action. Tools represent concrete working implements such as a hammer or a pencil, and signs refer to psycho-

logical implements such as symbols and signs, or remembering and comparing something. The concept of the zone of proximal development also stems from Vygotsky's work, and it links the notion of potentials with the social dimensions of learning, transformation and development. (Säljö, pp. 73–74, 123.) In Vygotsky's words, "It is a distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Intercultural learning in this study

Learning involves development, transformation, and changes in tools, minds, practices or activities. It is also locally and historically formed, so that it takes different forms and modes in various schools, places, and countries. It produces diverse methods and conceptions about how people learn, what they learn, and why. I wrote earlier that the intercultural in this study means interactive, hybrid, and dynamic processes between cultures and people. Thus, intercultural learning means the interactive and hybrid process of change, transformation, and development between cultures and people. It means that all parties involved can learn, and thus it is a two-dimensional or multi-dimensional process. I will now introduce some approaches to and studies about learning and teaching in the context of diversity.

Radical-local teaching and learning

Hedegaard and Chaiklin (2005) have developed a theoretical and practical approach to teaching and learning that they call "radical-local teaching and learning". As a concept it combines dialectically institutional and societal aspects with local, specific aspects of teaching and learning. As a practice it helps children to learn the basic concepts of the different subjects taught in schools, and at the same time to analyze their life situations; the main concern is how to relate educational practices to children's specific historical and cultural conditions. It focuses on the dynamic relations between the subject matter, and the life situations and personal development of children. The work in question is based on an experimental after-school teaching program for families and children with a Puerto Rican background living East Harlem, New York.

The radical-local approach offers an interesting critique of and an alternative to culturally sensitive or responsive pedagogies (cf. Gay, 1998 on culture-sensitive teaching). There is a common emphasis on understanding children's and families' cultural backgrounds in relation to educational practices and schooling, but it

does not treat cultural issues as the only influencing factors in terms of children's success at school. As Hedegaard and Chaiklin write, it is important to know one's history, but to be bound by it is another matter. Furthermore, culture is something to be lived, not something to be used as a means of categorizing children in schools. (Hedegaard & Chaiklin, 2005, p. 197.)

Cultural modeling

Lee and her colleagues (Lee, 2001; Lee et al., 2003) studied how cultural contexts affect learning, especially with African American students. She has created a framework, which she calls "cultural modeling", for designing instruction and organizing classroom practices that makes explicit connections between students' everyday knowledge and the demands of subject-matter learning, and thereby bridges the cultural world of students and the cultural practices of the subject matter. Socialization is viewed along three dimensions: family and community practices, academic disciplines, and classroom practices (Lee et al., 2003). The framework has been especially useful in studying the rhetorical and literacy practices of African American students by making visible the discourse of the African American Vernacular English spoken in these communities. The traditional talk or speech genre of this community is called signifying. (Lee, 2000.)

The intercultural framework

Weber (2003; 2005) developed an heuristic model she calls the intercultural framework in the context of intercultural education and development for students of economics. She elaborates on intercultural-encounter situations and uses two theoretical threads: "mindful identity negotiation" as put forward by Ting-Toomey in the area of intercultural training and communication, and the theory of "expansive learning" developed by Engeström in the context of activity theory. Weber claims that a fruitful combination of the two offers a good basis for people who wish to become competent boundary-crossers in intercultural situations. Moreover, one could go beyond the story telling, cross-cultural descriptions, and simple adaptation measures that are the usual tools used in intercultural training. She proposes that the new approach could pave the way for development and innovations in intercultural-encounter situations: when people from culture A and from culture B meet, a new activity system or inter-culture may emerge. For her, intercultural learning and development is a collective activity: "mindful identity negotiation" on an "individual as well on the collective" level." Thus, she perceives intercultural learning as identity negotiation (Weber, 2005, p. 117).

3.4 Cultural-historical activity theory

Activity theory is based on the ideas developed and the research conducted by Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria in Russia (Cole & Engeström, 1993). These ideas have since been further developed by researchers in both East and West. Engeström (1996) briefly describes the three theoretical generations of activity theory. The first generation centred on Vygotsky and his work, and especially on idea of mediation and mediated action. The need to search for and elaborate mediation on a more collective level gave the impetus for the further evolvement of Vygotsky's ideas. The work and research of Leont'ev emerged as the second generation of activity theory. He claimed that collective activity was essential to human functioning, and distinguished three levels of actions – activity, actions, and operations (Leont'ev, 1978). The third generation of activity theory is facing the challenges that accompany multiple voices and perspectives, as well as networks of different activities. (Engeström, 1996.)

Human activity

There are certain premises that direct the research conducted under the umbrella of activity theory. The theoretical premises cover many countries around the globe, and there are varieties of disciplines employing the conceptual and practical tools. Human activity is the main research focus in studies on human development, learning, and working. Activity is regarded as collective, object-related and motive-driven, whereas actions are individual and goal-oriented. Furthermore, operations secure the conditions of actions (Leont'ev, 1978, p. 52). Mediating cultural tools, instruments, and artifacts are important elements of activity, which is perceived as historically shaped. Activity-system modeling is widely used in research on activity: development and change occur as tensions or contradictions between or within activities. (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 2005.)

Activities use, produce, maintain, and create new cultures both in a focused and in a broad sense. Cultural variations, differences or similarities are typical elements of human activity shaped by its object. The starting point is to identify who is acting, how, with what, and why. This view – that cultural differences are typical of human – is shared by intercultural trainers, for example, although they tend to emphasize cultural differences between different nationalities or countries in order to promote understanding of these differences and to help people to adapt to various cultural environments. One example concerns how to deal with business associates in different regions or in multinational companies. A further challenge is that we might forget that cultural differences and variations exist within *intra*-cultural settings, too.

Intercultural activity

Earlier I defined the intercultural as interactive, hybrid, and dynamic processes between cultures and people. Thus, intercultural activity could refer to reciprocal dynamic hybrid processes, which are collective, object-related and motive-driven in local historical contexts and operate between cultures and people. The relationship between cultures and activities is interactive and intertwined. New activities may emerge when new needs arise or old needs change: the need to understand cultural artifacts or cultural phenomena in a specific local, historical context, as in the case of immigrant students, is one example. When a group of people share an object in order to fulfill this need, the motive might be to make 'invisible' cultural phenomena 'visible', because often people take their 'own' cultural phenomena and artifacts for granted. Intercultural activity may create new activities, although this is not necessarily the case. Therefore, we need to allow the time and space so that we will become aware of our cultural practices and thus able to introduce new meaningful practices in education, in management, and in health care with people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

As Säljö (2001) stated there is a constant dynamic between learning and culture, and the relationship between learning and activity is interlocked and interactive. In other words, activities may involve learning and learning may involve activities, but this is not necessarily the case. For example, a student may have his or her individual goals to learn something, which are not shared by the class community. On the other hand, there are class assignments in which all participants share a mutual object, such as in small-group work. As I wrote earlier, intercultural learning is an interactive and hybrid process of change, transformation, and development between cultures and people. Intercultural learning as intercultural activity is thus perceived in this study as an interactive, hybrid process in which cultural variations, differences and similarities are identified and compared, and new tools and solutions promoting development and change are created.

The object, mediation, the activity system, and contradictions

The premises of activity theory also emphasize the main concepts studied in the community, such as the object of the activity, mediation and mediating tools, and contradictions. In the following I will examine the key concepts used in this research more thoroughly: the objects, tools, and artifacts, the activity system, and contradictions.

According to Leont'ev (1978), there is no human activity that does not have an object. The object is described as the focused aim of the activity. It gives it a determined direction, and is its true motive. Motives are fired by the needs of hu-

man communities and societies (Leont'ev, 1978). Thus, the concept of the object is already inherently present in the concept of activity, as Engeström, Puonti, and Seppänen (2003) write: "An object is both something given and something projected, anticipated and constructed. An entity of the outside world becomes an object of activity as it meets a human need."

Furthermore, they argue that transformation in the object of work in contemporary working life could be conceptualized as an expansion of the object in spatial and temporal terms. Temporal expansion includes both long-term and instantaneous types of work, while spatial expansion involves collaboration between different places and spaces forming concrete trails between local agencies. They also make a distinction between "a generalized object of a historically evolving activity system and the specific object as it appears to a particular subject, at a given moment, in a given action." (Engeström et al., 2003.)

Miettinen (2005) considers the nature of an object to be complex and contradictory rather than unitary and separated. He examines the object of activity in three ways in the work of researchers in a biotechnical laboratory: as simultaneously epistemic and practical, as a commodity with contradictions between use value and exchange value, and as a heterogeneous or functionally complex system consisting of different material and social entities.

Human activity is perceived as historically developed and culturally mediated (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). This applies to Vygotsky's research (1978, p. 52–54), and refers to his work and ideas of mediated action. Tools and signs are forms of artifacts that human beings use, create, and produce.¹⁰ People transmit the use and skills pertaining to artifacts from one generation to another, as Wartofsky writes (1979, p. 201). He also distinguishes between three modes of representations: primary artifacts (e.g., tools and the skills), which are used in production; secondary artifacts, which are used in the preservation and transmission of the acquired skills or modes of action; and tertiary artifacts, which are representations of possible or imaginary worlds, such as the world of art (Wartofsky, 1979, pp. 202–209).

An activity system could be perceived as a model for human activity of a relatively stable kind, as well as an analytical tool for studying it. Furthermore, activities emerge when new collective motives are identified or old ones are transformed. Human activity is manifested in individual actions. An activity system comprises different elements that are in interaction with each other: the subject, the object, the outcome, instruments, rules, the community, and the division of labor – and typically portrayed in the shape of a triangle (Figure 3.1). For example, teaching in

¹⁰ There is more about mediation in Chapter 3.3.

a school could be described as a teaching activity the subject of which is a teacher or a group of teachers. The object is students' learning, and the outcome a learning task. Furthermore, instruments of teaching include teaching methods as well as textbooks. The rules are based on a curriculum, and a community is a class sharing the same object. The division of labor between participants in an activity defines the tasks and the power relations. The activity of studying could be depicted in a similar vein, and activities are often analyzed with two adjacent pairs of activity systems. Human activity is seen as interplay between automatic operations as conditions of actions, individual actions focusing on individual goals, and collective activity focusing on the mutual object. (Leont'ev, 1978; Engeström, 1987.)

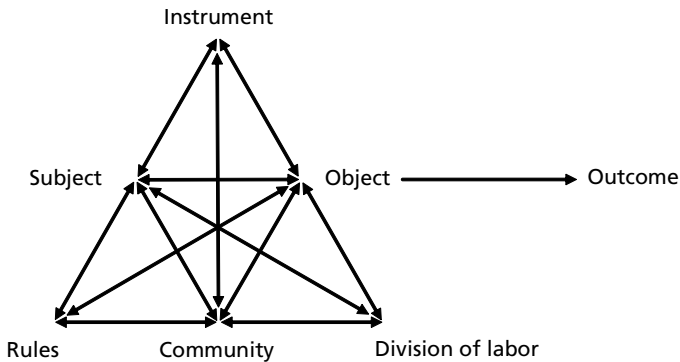


Figure 3.1 The structure of human activity (Engeström, 1987, p. 78; Engeström, 1998, p. 47)

The picture is even more complicated in intercultural settings such as immigrant training, when portrayed in an activity-system model, because there are simultaneously many activity systems that are adjacent or overlapping and on a collision course: for example, immigrant students have socialized and have learned about different work instruments, rules, and divisions of labor between students and teachers during their previous studies.

Contradictions are seen as forces driving development, learning and change. Innovations and dilemmas, like ruptures and disturbances, are considered manifestations of inner or outer tensions and contradictions of human activity (Engeström, 1998, pp. 62–65). According to Engeström (1987, 87–89), there are four levels or layers of contradictions within the human-activity system: primary inner contradictions exist within each element of a central activity; secondary contradictions occur between the elements; tertiary contradictions emerge between the dominant form and a culturally more advanced form of the central activity,

and quaternary contradictions exist between the central activity and neighboring activities. The intercultural setting could be portrayed as the contradictions within one activity system, such as that of studying, or between diverse systems.

The theory of expansive learning

The theory of expansive learning was introduced in 1987 by Engeström. He argued that most theories of learning concentrated on knowledge and skills that already existed, while he proposed a theory focused on searching for something that did not exist at the beginning of the learning process. This means that learning is created as the process is going on. Thus, the object of expansive learning is typically the whole activity system. For example, in the activity of learning the unit of analysis for the whole system is an activity-system model. Expansive learning may produce culturally new forms of activity. As Engeström states, people at work in contemporary workplaces are in constant need to learn something that is not stable, not even defined or understood (cf. Engeström, Lompscher, & Rückriem, 2005). However, activities do not necessarily evoke expansion or, consequently, expansive learning.

Expansive learning is often depicted as a cycle (Figure 3.2), which is manifested through specific epistemic or learning actions that illustrate a process known as “ascending from the abstract to the concrete”. These actions form an expansive cycle or spiral. Typical actions are described as a seven-step process: questioning, analyzing, modeling, examining the model, implementing the model, reflecting on the process, and consolidating the new practice. The development of working practices requires many kinds of innovations, some of which may be single working instruments or practices, and others working processes comprising many phases. Expansive learning requires demanding and purposeful working from all participants. (Engeström, 1999.) I have not included learning actions as such in my empirical material in this study, but have rather used an expansive methodological cycle based on the theory of expansive learning in order to analyze the different phases in the Culture Laboratory Project (see Chapter 6 for more details).

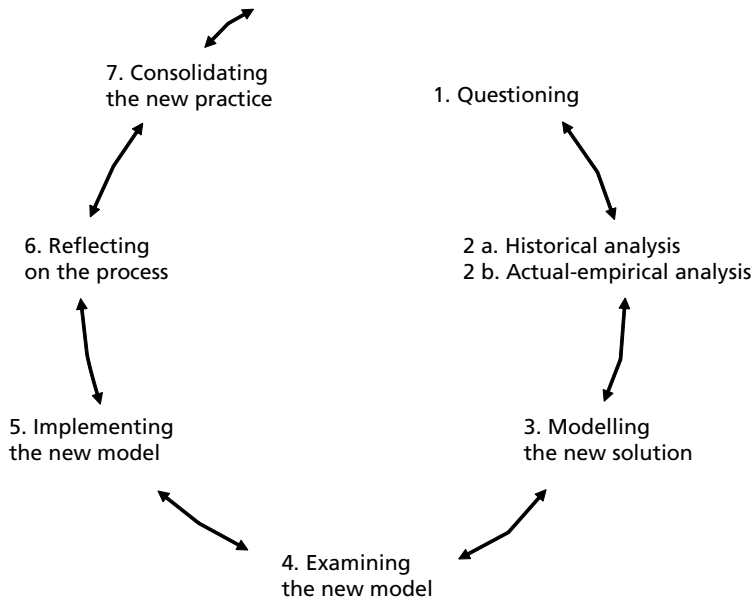


Figure 3.2 Sequence of epistemic actions in an expansive learning cycle (Engeström, 1999, p. 384)

The expansive cycle has been used in many empirical studies in different circumstances and at various sites, such as in health-care settings (Engeström, 2005) networks (Foot, 2001), agriculture (Seppänen, 2004), and network collaboration (Toiviainen, 2004).

Foot (2001) analyzed the development of expansive cycles that took several years in a conflict-monitoring network in the territory of the former Soviet Union. She traced the development of the network through the activity-system model, and especially through the construction of its object, the analysis of the contradictions and the development of its tools. Her analysis of developmental cycles identified one full expansive cycle (as shown in Figure 3.2) and part of a second one. The cycles partly overlapped so that the introduction of the indicator model (a new model of conflict indicators giving an early warning of ethnic conflicts) was part of the evaluation phase of the first cycle, and at the same time it was part of the analysis phase of the second one. Thus, the introduction of the new model both catalyzed and consolidated the existing activity and marked the emergence of the second cycle of expansive development of the network.

Toiviainen (2004) examined learning and the challenges of collaboration in a small-firm network. She analyzed who the learners in the networks were, why, what and how they learned. She applied the expansive-cycle model, among other

conceptual and methodological tools, to a dialectical analysis of developmental contradictions embedded in the cycle of expansive learning, also, over a time period of several years. She found out that the challenge of learning in networks was to perceive and reconcile the different “levels” – the ideological level, the project level, the production level, and the worker level. She created a concept and called this learning across levels, which could also be described as levels of network activity. She pointed out that different levels of activity are embedded in the expansive cycle.

The theory of expansive learning was relevant to this study because teachers in vocational schools faced new questions. Preparatory Immigrant Training was new to them. The outcome was also new: those who completed it did not enter working life, as is normal after vocational training, but went to another vocational school. The main focus of the training was on the Finnish language and learning culture, so that the students could start their vocational studies afterwards: it was not regular vocational training, the main aim of which is to acquire the competence needed for a particular occupation. In activity-theoretical terms, the object and the outcome of the learning activity had changed. Accordingly, a change in one of the elements of the activity system caused disturbances in other elements. For example, the instruments (e.g., professional books) used in the learning activity were far too difficult for the students. Furthermore, many questions arose because of their different cultural backgrounds: they had socialized in different learning cultures in their previous studies, mostly elementary schools in their native countries. Moreover, the teachers were mainly experienced in teaching majority students. Thus, there were no ready-made solutions to apply to the Preparatory Immigrant Training: they had to be created and applied during the process.

The activity of teachers and students in immigrant training could be described as a relation between two activity systems, or a pair of adjacent activity systems – the activity of teaching and the activity of studying. Moreover, teaching and learning activity in this context could be described as a historical construction of local teaching and learning practices in each of the students’ native countries, which made this training a complex and multifaceted practice. These students came from eight different native countries: Estonia, Russia, Somalia, Iraq, Chile, Italy, Afghanistan and Japan. This kind of intermingling of students from various parts of the world was, and still is, typical of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. Thus, the division of labor between students and teachers varied a lot in the students’ previous schools, and the instruments of teaching and learning also differed: for example, the use of so much paper in the Finnish school system made them wonder how they should study and what they should do with all the paper in this “Paperland”.

In this chapter I have depicted and elaborated the concepts, models, theories and studies that I perceive as important for my research. The theoretical background is rich because the practices and phenomena are complex and multilayered. The following chapter describes the research site and the participants of the study.

4 The research site and the participants

This chapter explains the practical framework of my research and gives the background information. It begins with a short introduction of the research site: the College. I will then describe the Preparatory Immigrant Training with a brief look at the historical background, and the Culture Laboratory Project, and, finally, I will introduce the participants of this research.

Vocational education and training in Finland has long traditions. However, there have been many changes in recent years, and reforms on the level of the national education system (Lasonen & Stenström, 1995). In the area of health care, for example, education and training for nurses and midwives started in the late 1800s. Under the latest reform of vocational education and training in 1999 the polytechnic and secondary levels were separated: previously, registered nurses and practical nurses were trained in the same schools of nursing and health care. This was a change that was implemented throughout the education system, not only in health care. (CEDEFOP, 1997.)

School-based learning on the vocational level is a Nordic tradition, whereas some other countries take a more work-based approach (Lasonen, 1996; Lindberg, 2003). However, it would be misleading to state that vocational education and training is confined to school-based practices in Finland, or in the other Nordic countries. Work-based learning, involving regular work placement, is an important part of the system.

The challenges facing educators on the vocational level include the need for flexibility, transferability, and mobility within the whole system as well as on institutional and individual level. Education and training need to adjust to the changes that occur in societies. Furthermore, educational systems need to find a new balance between different aspects such as initial training and lifelong learning; it seems that people have many occupations during their lives and they need to 'update' their knowledge regularly. There is also the question of the traditional occupations and the need to be more flexible in terms of qualifications: for example, there are times when both school-based learning and qualification through

work experience are required. The education system also faces social demands and financial constraints. (cf. Stenström & Lasonen, 2000; Nijhof, Heikkinen, & Nieuwenhuis, 2002.) Furthermore, there is increasing diversity in the student body.

4.1 Preparatory Immigrant Training in the College

The College is a secondary-level vocational school, and between 1,500 and 1,800 students are enrolled in vocational programs each year. In 2006, approximately eight percent of the students had an immigrant background (Opetusvirasto, 2006). The Practical Nursing diploma is the most popular choice, and other options include courses of study qualifying graduates to work as pharmaceutical assistants, special needs assistants in educational institutions, masseurs/masseuses and in equipment maintenance. Immigrant students are offered either vocational education or Preparatory Immigrant Training.

The College has two locations one in the Malmi area, where the Preparatory Immigrant Training takes place, and one in the Laakso area, where the adult education takes place. The staff comprises around 170 teachers and around 40 other personnel.

In 1999, the Preparatory Immigrant Training was started in different sectors of the secondary-level vocational institutions of the City of Helsinki (Teräs, 2002). The program was specifically developed for immigrant students who wanted to continue their education on the vocational level, but whose language skills and knowledge of the Finnish study culture were not yet sufficient to enable them to cope with mainstream studies. The length of the training varies from six months to one year, and the aim is to improve language and other necessary skills before the students embark on vocational education and training, which is mainly conducted in Finnish or Swedish. It is aimed at those who already have a basic knowledge of Finnish or Swedish. There are five modules: languages, mathematics and natural sciences, civic studies, life management, and vocational and study guidance, which may include on-the-job-training. (Opetushallitus, 1999.)

The College Preparatory Immigrant Training program takes one year of full-time study and includes four to six weeks of on-the-job training. It attracts about 40–60 students annually from different countries, but predominantly from Russia, Estonia and Somalia.

Two groups, with a total of 30 students from ten different countries enrolled in the program in 1999. It was not only the program that was new to the teachers: they also awoke to face new challenges and questions. The study materials were far too difficult for the students, and many teaching and learning methods were only effective with those who had grown up in the Finnish educational system. The

drop-out rate and an alarming number of absences gave them real cause for concern. This multicultural education seemed to be a chaotic series of short everyday encounters in which students and teachers struggled to cope as best as they could on their own. (Teräs, 2002; 2004.)

The idea of starting a project to develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training emerged when the teachers voiced their concern about the challenges involved and about the students. They were concerned about the practical consequences for those who did not pass the course, and on the theoretical level they wondered how to conceptualize the new situation and the challenges in the classroom. (Teräs, 2004.)

4.2 The Culture Laboratory Project

The Culture Laboratory Project (henceforth the project) ran over two-and-a-half years from November 2001 until June 2004. It was funded by the European Social Fund/the EQUAL initiative. The EQUAL Community Initiative seeks new ways to combat exclusion as well as all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labor market by means of transnational cooperation. The particular aim is to support those who are in the most vulnerable position and to further the job-retention rate of those threatened with exclusion from the labor market. The University of Helsinki and the City of Helsinki formed a developmental partnership in the project, which was a collaborative effort involving the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research of the University of Helsinki, and the College: it was implemented in the College. (Teräs & Lampinen, 2004)

The objective of the project was to develop Preparatory Immigrant Training in collaboration between students, teachers, and researchers. The aim was to increase teachers' multicultural competence as well as to promote good ethnic relations. The primary target group comprised students with an immigrant background and their teachers. Over 100 students have participated in it, together with 15 teachers, the project coordinator, a project researcher (this researcher), administrative staff, and a researcher and academic supervisor from the partner organization. (Teräs & Lampinen, 2004.)

There were five central measures¹¹ within the project. The first was the implementation of two Culture Laboratories, and the second was the organization of development days, because the teachers' joint work was conducted around these gatherings. Thirdly, a study was conducted in the context of this research.

¹¹ I use the term 'measures' here to indicate various actions in the project: it is part of the 'project language' and does not involve any measurements as such.

Fourthly, after the first Culture Laboratory seven different experiments were carried out during the 2002–2003 academic year, the aim being to develop prevailing practices. The teachers planned, realized and evaluated the experiments together with multi-professional teams. The fifth measure was a renewed curriculum. (Teräs & Lampinen, 2004; Teräs, 2004.)

New tools for coping with intercultural work at school were also developed. A guidebook for immigrant students “A Pocketbook for the Prep. Student” was produced, meant for those who had started their studies at the College and had thus become part of a new learning culture. Moreover, “A Pocketbook of Intercultural Teaching” was compiled for teachers whose students included those with an immigrant background. The aim was to familiarize new teachers with intercultural education and, at the same time, to collect the experiences and knowledge obtained during the project to be disseminated to other teachers as well. There was an external evaluation covering the results and effectiveness of the project at the final stage. (Haataja, 2004; Haataja & Salonen, 2004; Partanen, 2004; Teräs & Lampinen, 2004.)

Transnational co-operation was an element of the EQUAL projects, and the Culture Laboratory project had a partner in Copenhagen, Denmark – an adult learning centre called ‘GefionCenter’. Information was gathered, experiences shared, and measures planned and implemented jointly: for example, seminars on questions to do with immigration were organized in both Denmark and Finland. (Haataja et al., 2004.)

The Culture Laboratory Project was actively involved in the national theme work undertaken by the EQUAL Projects. The Common Voice Theme Project comprised seven EQUAL Projects and one Leonardo Project, the aim being to promote tolerance and ethnic equality as well as multiculturalism and plurality in both society at large and working life. Behind the project was the desire to improve the life situation and employment opportunities of immigrants, as well as to prevent discrimination. The core measures included various seminars, excursions and marketing trips, becoming acquainted with the other projects within the theme project, and the joint reporting and dissemination of information in order to spread the good practises. (Teräs & Lampinen, 2004.)

4.3 The participants of this research

The participants of this research consisted of one group of 17 students, who were enrolled in the Preparatory Immigrant Training during the academic year 2001–2002 and were natives of eight different countries (Estonia, Russia, Somalia, Iraq, Chile, Italy, Afghanistan, and Japan), and four teachers, a school assistant, a counselor, the chief interventionist, the project coordinator, and this researcher (the

staff ¹² were Finns, one Hungarian, and one Russian: I will explain in more detail my role in Chapter 12) – 26 people altogether. Three students quit the training, and thus participated in the study only at the beginning. One teacher left, too, and another started within the Culture Laboratory.

The immigrant students who took part in this research were from diverse backgrounds, not only in terms of their native countries but also in age and education. Gender was the only variable that was almost constant: only one male student, all the others were female. Some had moved to Finland as children, some had moved only a year previously. Their previous learning practices varied, too. On the one hand, they were very accustomed to literacy practices, which included reading and writing tasks, but there was a huge variety of schooling systems between and in different native countries. However, they all had a long history of schooling. There was wide variation in terms of how long the students had lived in Finland: some had been in Finnish comprehensive education for many years, while others had only been in the country for some months before they started the Preparatory Immigrant Training. This variety created a dynamic atmosphere in the classroom. The common concern among the students was the new language, Finnish, which they were studying.

I will not go into detail about the students' personal, social and cultural backgrounds, for two reasons. First, I want to avoid stereotyping: in some cases there was only one student from a certain cultural background, so claiming that she or he was representing that culture would have been misleading. Secondly, it was a methodological choice. In the area of intercultural training, challenges faced by students and teachers are often 'explained' in terms of cultural differences or personal traits. I believe that knowing about people and their cultural backgrounds is interesting and enhances understanding, which has happened in the Culture Laboratory, but it does not 'explain' why something happens or why someone behaves in a certain way. The issue is much more multifaceted and complex. The participants bring their cultural experiences into the present, and I will examine the dynamics and interaction of this intercultural encountering, and the solutions reached together in those situations.

The teachers who participated in the Culture Laboratory represented three different subject fields: the Finnish language, social sciences, and health care. One of them also acted as a 'tutor' teacher, which meant that she took care of practical, social, and cultural matters. The Finnish-language teacher changed during the project: the first three sessions were run by one person and then another took over.

¹² I use the term 'staff' to highlight the fact that other professionals besides teachers were also involved in the Culture Laboratory.

The social worker and the school assistant were regular staff at the College. The project co-ordinator was also a professional Finnish-language teacher. She and the school assistant were immigrants themselves. All members of the staff were female.

5 Research questions

This research focuses on questions of learning and development and the challenges faced by Finnish vocational schools in catering for the needs of students with increasingly diversified ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These challenges are described in the preceding chapters. More and more students have moved to Finland from different countries and regions and choose to study in vocational schools. There they face not only a new language environment but also a new social and cultural environment. They have usually gone to schools in their native lands and have thus followed their historical and local learning practices and ways. I am interested in the preparedness of schools for the variety and diversity of students, and in the kinds of theoretical and practical tools teachers, schools, and immigrant students have at their disposal in this situation.

The research explores the phenomenon of intercultural learning in general, and how this is understood and seen at the College and in the Culture Laboratory in particular. Furthermore, the study focuses on how student variety and diversity affect the development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training: from the methodological perspective I am investigating the Culture Laboratory method in intercultural learning and development. I perceive that each question, some of which stem from practice and some from theory, opens up a window on this intriguing phenomenon. There are five main research questions, each of which incorporates more specific sub-questions.

- 1) What are the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning?

The Culture Laboratory is described and assessed as a method for promoting intercultural learning. It was created and implemented for the first time as an application of the generic Change Laboratory method. There are various methods used in intercultural training to extend understanding of cultures, including cultural enrichment, cultural modeling, and the intercultural framework (cf. Landis et al.,

2004; Weber, 2005). Thus, this research question explores the potential of the Culture Laboratory as based on the Change Laboratory. The findings of the analysis are given in Chapter seven.

- 2) What is the significance of disturbances in the Culture Laboratory when used as a tool for intercultural learning?

The focus here is on the disturbances that have been recognized in the Culture Laboratory: disturbances could be seen as manifestations of inner or outer contradictions of any activity. In addressing this and the research question I explore the potential of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning, and aim to develop the method further. In particular, I consider the following four sub-questions. What kinds of disturbances occurred in the Culture Laboratory? What kinds of scripts and activities were manifested? What kinds of activity systems were present? What do the disturbances tell us about the cycle of expansive learning? The findings of the analysis are also reported in Chapter seven.

- 3) What is the potential of participants' suggestions for developing intercultural learning?

The third research question explores concrete ideas for developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training: from the very first session of the Culture Laboratory the participants offered many suggestions for its development work, the hidden potential of which is worth studying. There are three blocks of specific research questions. What is a suggestion, what kinds of suggestions were made, and who made them? How do suggestions reflect the history of the way learning is talked about, and how could their hidden potential be brought to light? What kind of process is suggestion-making? The findings are discussed in Chapter eight.

- 4) How does 'paper' function as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory?

The focus here shifts from the Culture Laboratory method and the suggestions for improving the Preparatory Immigrant Training into mediating artifacts and tools used in the Culture Laboratory. This research question explores and reflects a specific type of working culture, the 'paper culture' immigrant students faced when they started to study at the College. How was paper used in the College and in the practices of the Culture Laboratory? What kind of paper trails emerged? How was power manifested in the use of paper? The findings of this analysis are reported in Chapter nine.

- 5) How could the concept of intercultural space be enriched in the light of experiences gained in the Culture Laboratory?

The fifth research question concerns the dynamics of intercultural encountering in the Culture Laboratory. My conceptualization of this encountering leans on the notion of intercultural space, and thus I explore more thoroughly how intercultural space was manifested and employed for intercultural learning. Specifically, how did the participants use the notion of culture in their talk, and what types of cultural talk were identified? The findings are given in Chapter ten.

6 Research methodology

When considering research methodology one needs to decide how to gather the data or empirical materials and how to analyze them. Developmental work research, the theoretical and methodological framework used in this study, also requires considerations of how to do the intervention. This chapter concerns the methodological choices and their background. It begins with an introduction to developmental work research as an approach to studying working practices, and continues with a description of intervention approaches and the Change Laboratory method. I will then discuss the reception of empirical material as a process, and explain how the empirical material¹³ was organized in this case. The chapter ends with a summary of the units of analysis employed in each empirical chapter.

In general, research methodology refers to choices the researchers make in their studies. Decisions about methodology are also theoretically loaded, as Silverman has pointed out (2005, pp. 99, 109). As a methodological choice I favored developmental work research because it offered useful practical and theoretical tools in the new situation immigrant students and the teachers at the College were facing. Chapters two and four focus more on the changes that took place in Finland in general, and in the College in particular. However, cultural and ethnic diversity in the different contexts of education – from kindergartens to universities – has increased.

6.1 Developmental work research

Engeström (1998; 2005, p. 11) describes developmental research work (DWR) as an interventionist approach, the aim of which is to study transformations and learning in work technology and organizations. Under the interventionist

¹³ I chose to employ the term ‘empirical material’ instead of ‘data’. It is indicative of two things: I use it first when referring to the discussions in the Culture Laboratory, and secondly, it refers to the qualitative nature of this research (cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

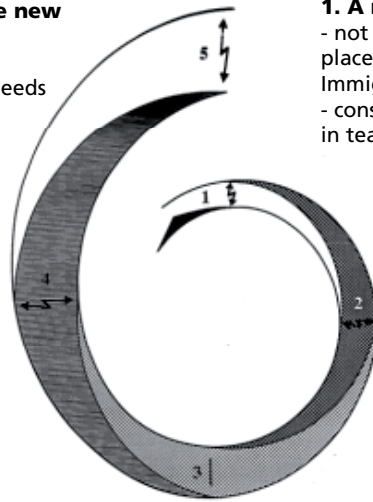
approach practices are intentionally explored and changed in order to facilitate understanding and the transformation of those specific practices and social realities. The origins of DWR lie in the work and research carried out in Finland since the early 1980s, and the cycle of expansive learning (see Chapter 3.4 Figure 3.2) is often used as its theoretical and methodological framework (Engeström, 1987; Virkkunen, Engeström, Helle, Pihlaja, & Poikela, 1997). Figure 6.1 shows the steps of the expansive methodological cycle of the Preparatory Immigrant Training.

5. Consolidating the new practice

- evaluation and new developmental needs

4. Changing the practice

- a new curriculum in autumn 2002
- experiments and changes to existing teaching practices in spring 2002



1. A need for development:

- not everyone gets a study place after the Preparatory Immigrant Training
- constant confusing situations in teaching

- difficulties in Finnish-language learning and the dominance of the Finnish language in teaching and learning

2. The old working practices are not enough

- the curriculum and the teaching methods need improving, but how?
- what are the elements of successful immigrant teaching and learning?

3. Looking for a new solution

- in the Culture Laboratory teachers, students, and researchers together pondered the situation and looked for solutions to improve the teaching
- a working group for the new curriculum was set up

Figure 6.1 The expansive methodological cycle of the Preparatory Immigrant Training during the Culture Laboratory

This cycle was outlined as an overall methodological framework of developmental work for the Preparatory Immigrant Training during the Culture Laboratory by the chief interventionist and me. It was presented during the fifth session. The figure illustrates the five steps adapted to the local situation. Figure 6.2 below illustrates the expansive methodological cycle of the project.

5. Establishing new working methods

Follow-up meetings:
Follow-up and assessment
of the new curriculum
Identifying new needs for development

Teacher:
How do we transmit
all of this to
vocational education?

4. Changing prevailing practices and introducing new tools

Introduction of the
Experimental Curriculum
New Teaching and Learning
Methods for Multicultural
Education and Studies
Guidebooks for Students and
Teachers for Immigrant
Training

Teacher:
All of this stuff can
also be used in other
things, like other
classes.

3. In search of new solutions

Experiments:
Based on the suggestions made by
the participants, we launched seven
experiments in which we sought new
working methods for multicultural
teaching: The Work Shop of Life
Management, Expanding Vocabulary,
Integrated Teaching, Educational
Institution Field Period, Portfolio of
Growth, Combining Work Place
Learning with Finnish Language
Learning, and Student Tutor
Activities.

Teacher:
Pedagogical discussion
keeps things moving and
that is, of course,
the best advantage.

1. Need for development

Immigrant Training was a new concept and
brought a new multicultural group of
students together to be educated. Conflict in
the target group of the education: the aim of
the new program was that the student
would continue his/her education in
vocational training, and would not yet enter
working life.

Conflict in tools: the students had
difficulties learning the Finnish
language and adapting to the
Finnish learning culture. Teachers
had difficulties with the study
materials and methods.

Student:
When I came to school
on my first day,
everything was quite
different than in our
school.

2. Old working methods are not enough

The Culture Laboratory:
We met together with the
teachers and students to discuss
issues concerning learning and
studying in different cultures and
made suggestions to improve the
education. The Culture Laboratory
is based on the method of the
Change Laboratory, which was
developed in the field of cultural-
historical activity theory.

Student:
We must have more
classes in the Finnish
language.

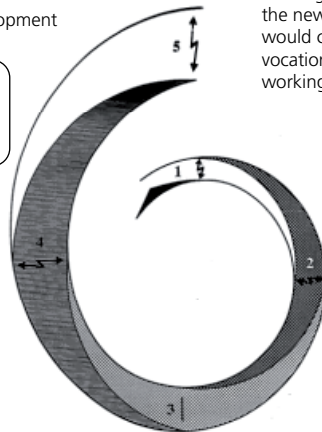


Figure 6.2 The expansive methodological cycle of the project

This cycle was produced after the project in autumn 2003 as an overview of the development work done during it. It demonstrates its phases, the Culture Laboratory forming the second phase. Thus, it created a practical framework for my research, which is limited to the beginning phase. The excerpts, presented in the form of speaking turns, are from the project materials, and not only from the discussions in the Culture Laboratory. I have chosen those that demonstrate the

different phases rather than any systematic studying. The project coordinator and I compiled this cycle.

The difference between the two cycles is the situation they outline: the cycle in Figure 6.1 was used as part of the planning – how things could proceed during the project – whereas Figure 6.2 shows its overall implementation. Thus, the first figure looks ahead and the second looks back. In both cases, the cycle was a good analytical tool.

Studying actual practices in order to develop a specific type of work is one of the constituent premises of developmental work research. In this case, I have done this in the context of intercultural learning and immigrant training. This required conceptual tools, which in developmental work research are called ‘intermediate’ analytical tools, and may be categories, classifications, dimensions, or models from the empirical material (Engeström, 1998). I have used concepts such as suggestions and the intercultural as intermediate analytical tools. Figure 6.3 gives a general picture of developmental work research.

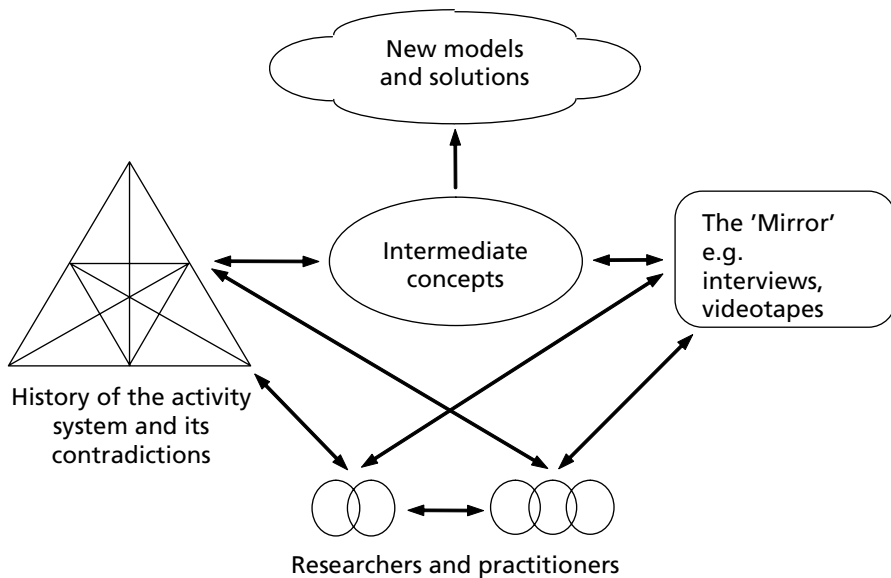


Figure 6.3 A general design of developmental work research (Engeström, 1998, p. 125)

Thus, the intermediate concepts mediate abstract models into specific research objects, such as the kinds of historical contradictions that are manifested in this specific work activity (Engeström, 1998, p. 125).

The DWR approach has been implemented in many research sites and disciplines including school settings, court work, health care, economic crimes and agriculture, and in the processes of new technological innovations and scientific research (Engeström et al., 2005). I will now describe two studies based on DWR that were carried out in educational settings, which are relevant because my research site was a vocational school. The first of these was conducted in a junior high school in the Helsinki region, and also used the Change Laboratory method (Suntio, 2001; Engeström, Engeström, & Suntio, 2002; Rainio, 2003), and the second one, also in a vocational setting, promoted collaboration between vocational teacher education, training institutes, and working life (Lambert, 1999; 2003).

The Jakomäki project was carried out in one of the junior high schools in Helsinki. The aim was to develop new practices within the school. Different aspects were brought together and discussed in the Change Laboratory. For example, the students felt that the teaching at the school was boring and the parents thought that the school did not pay enough attention to the students. The teachers, for one thing, wanted to declare 'war on student apathy', and the researchers found that there were barriers at the school that prevented to full advantage being taken of existing resources. As a result of the new visions that emerged, six developer teams were formed and new experimental practices were introduced. For example, one team focused on supporting students' self esteem and another on redecorating the school facilities. (Engeström et al., 2002.)

Within the Jakomäki project Suntio (2001; see also Engeström et al., 2002) studied how the teachers planned and implemented one of the experiments: a 'final project' for ninth-grade students about to finish their middle school. The empirical materials consisted of discussions in the Change Laboratory, interviews, and other ethnographic materials such as documents and field reports from the visits to the school. The central concepts used in the study were activity system, contradiction, object, and expansive learning. The analytical methods were chosen in accordance with the research questions, and included quantification, argumentation, categorization, and the phasing of the final project. (Suntio, 2001; Engeström et al., 2002.)

One interesting result of the Jakomäki project as far as my research is concerned was that teachers of immigrant students in particular added new aspects: their discourse was different from the traditional professional teacher discourse, and thus increased the multi-voicedness in the school. Furthermore, they also needed to break up the boundaries between school subjects in order to create meaningful instructional units, and the boundaries between school and home (Engeström et al., 2002).

Later the initial Jakomäki project became a springboard for a new project that focused on developing information-technology-tied practices. A variant of

the Change Laboratory, called the Knowledge Work Laboratory, was organized (Rainio, 2003).

Lambert developed a new instrument called “a learning studio” for promoting “developmental transfer”. Transfer is considered an important aspect of learning because schools are not able to teach students everything they will need in the future, and thus schools need to “equip students with the ability to transfer – to use what they have learned to solve new problems successfully or to learn quickly in new situations.” (Tuomi-Gröhn, Engeström, & Young, 2003, p. 1). There are different approaches to transfer, such as the cognitive or constructivist, the situated or sociocultural, and the activity theoretical (2003, pp.11–12; Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003). Developmental transfer, based on activity theory, expands the basis of the transfer from the actions of individuals to those of the collective organizations.

It is not a matter of individual moves between school and workplace but of the efforts school and workplace to create new practices. Novel is also that new knowledge and practices are consciously created, instead of focusing on the transition of knowledge from one organization or community of practice to another. In developmental transfer, new practices expand also to other collaborating activity systems, not only the original ones. (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003, pp. 34–35.)

Developmental transfer was the dominant intermediate concept in Lambert’s research. The implication is that all parties can learn new knowledge and new practices.

Traditionally in teacher training the various systems – the training itself, the institutions and working life – are somewhat separate. The learning studio was set up to facilitate boundary-crossing between them. “The aim of the studios was to promote innovative learning in vocational institutions as an interaction process that crossed boundaries over the three activity systems”, the teacher education and the health-care and social-welfare training institutions and service-delivery organizations. (Lambert, 2003, pp. 236–237.)

The learning studios were implemented in the schools in which the student teachers were working. The participants were teachers, students, the headmaster, the student teacher, workplace supervisors (e.g., nurses and social workers), and the teacher educator. A shared object, a boundary object, emerged as a promising tool to facilitate boundary crossing. In one of the studios one such boundary object was a form proposed by a student teacher. It combined the abstractness of a curriculum and the concreteness of the students’ practical opinions. (Lambert, 2003.)

However, the learning studios were not only places in which different parties came together and collaborated, they were also places in which a new kind of knowledge production took place. The research material consisted of 11 video-taped learning studios and subsequent interviews. Voice analysis was used in order to focus on the interaction in the learning studios, and on how the participants constructed a shared object, a boundary object, and created knowledge collectively and dialogically. (Lambert, 1999; 2003.)

What was common to these two development and research projects, which were based on activity theory, was that they brought together the different parties involved in social practices and crossed boundaries between and within organizations. Practitioners and researchers together evolved new practices and new knowledge. Intervention was employed as a tool in the process in the form of the learning studio, the change laboratory, and the knowledge-work laboratory.

6.2 The Change Laboratory as an intervention method

Interventions are widely used in development and research work across various practices and disciplines. For example, they are used in health care to study the effects of treatments, procedures, and drugs. According to Long (2001), they have traditionally been seen as the linear execution of a plan of action with expected outcomes. However, an intervention is a much more complex and multifaceted process. It is not a separate, discrete project in time and space, but is a complex set of evolving social practices and struggles, and an intermingling of differing flows of events and interests. It is “an ongoing, socially constructed, negotiated, experiential and meaning-creating process”. (Long, 2001, pp. 25–34.)

In the social sciences, new forms of working practices can be evaluated following mini-interventions. Virkkunen (2004) writes that business management has a long history of interventions as a special form of professional and business mode. Moreover, there is special emphasis in action research and developmental work research, for example. Some studies follow the process from the interventionist’s or the community’s point of view and thus give an insiders’ or an outsiders’ perspective, but most studies share an interest in the process of intervention and the relation between the subject and the object. It is seldom that an intervention alone produces change and development in a system, however: it rather supports and amplifies the forces of development that are inherent in it. (Virkkunen, 2004, p. 38.)

However, an intervention based on Vygotsky’s method of double simulation, such as the Change Laboratory, differs from approaches such as ‘design experiments’ (Engeström, 2007). I will now introduce the Change Laboratory method, which was used as a model for the Culture Laboratory.

In response to the various needs of modern workplaces facing the challenge of constant change, the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research has developed a new method and approach, the Change Laboratory. The theoretical and methodological basis is activity theory and developmental work research. The Change Laboratory is set in workplaces, and practitioners and researchers collect empirical material that they then bring to it. The empirical material is discussed and new tools and solutions to existing problems and challenges are sought and created in collaboration with researchers and practitioners. These new means are tested and used in actual working practices and then brought back to the laboratory for monitoring. (Engeström, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja, & Poikela, 1996; Virkkunen et al., 1997; Virkkunen, Engeström, Pihlaja, & Helle, 1999.)

The method is based on Vygotsky's method of dual stimulation, and the concepts of re-mediation and the zone of proximal development. Dual stimulation occurs when participants are facing challenging new situations with new tasks. The tasks or problematic situations faced at work comprise the first type of stimulation, and the auxiliary means or conceptual models representing the work constitute the second type. (Engeström et al., 1996; Engeström, 2007.)

The zone of proximal development, in Vygotsky's thinking, is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Engeström reformulated this idea as follows.

It is the distance between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in the everyday actions (Engeström, 1987, p. 174).

The zone of proximal development refers to a learning space in which participants discuss existing problems and generate novel solutions with the assistance of an interventionist.

The Change Laboratory method has been developed as a tool for working-life situations in which the old is no longer good enough, but the new has not yet been discovered. Combining practice and theory in such a way that conceptual and practical development work walk hand-in-hand is the cornerstone of this approach. Together, researchers and workers analyze work and come up with new solutions, working methods and tools. The multi-vocality of laboratory work means that the different ideas and perspectives of the participants are brought forward, listened to and interpreted together; the views of old authorities or superiors are not respected as self-evident. (Virkkunen et al., 1997.)

Mediating working tools are used to help participants in reflecting on the past, present and future working practices in question. The sessions are lead by a chief interventionist. So-called ‘mirror data’ is collected prior to the Change Laboratory sessions. This describes a current work situation, possibly a problematic situation or work disturbances. The mirror data is then used in the sessions to facilitate reflection or to show a particular aspect of the work. The theoretical tools used include modeling, and in particular the activity system model and expansive cycle. The main practical working tool is a ‘board’, with three tables: the mirror, ideas/ tools, and models. The tables may also incorporate the time dimensions of the work: past, present, and future. A participant acts as a ‘scribe’, and makes notes on the board of on-going discussions. A ‘memo’ serves as a reminder for the participants, and memos of the sessions are written after each one. The participants carry out ‘tasks’ related to development work between the sessions. (Virkkunen et al., 1997.)

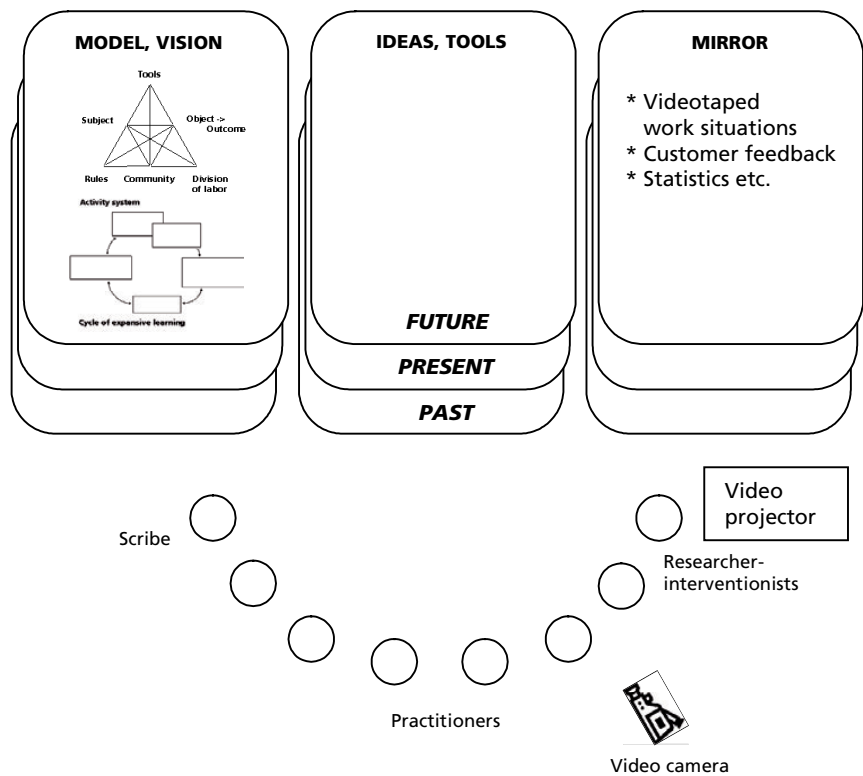


Figure 6.4 A prototypical layout of the Change Laboratory (Virkkunen et al., 1997; Engeström, 2007)

Figure 6.4 shows a prototypical layout of the Change Laboratory. Typically there are weekly sessions of two hours over a ten-week period, thus the nature of working is compressed.

Practitioners are encouraged to conduct experiments in their working practices, and they monitor them and the results in the Change Laboratory sessions. The working principles include participatory engagement, multivoicedness, and an experimental and developmental approach. (Virkkunen et al., 1997.) Change Laboratories have been implemented in many kinds of work places, such as industrial facilities, hospitals, news rooms, and schools (see Engeström et al., 2005).

The Culture Laboratory developed and used in this study is an application of the generic Change Laboratory method for situations in which the emphasis is on cultural or ethnic variety and diversity among participants, instruments, and circumstances. Thus a Culture Laboratory is an application of the Change Laboratory in 'multilingual and multicultural' settings. It shows and explores the dynamic movements of intercultural encountering, and how this situation can enrich learning and development. The implementation of the Culture Laboratory is described in Chapter seven.

6.3 The creation and organization of the empirical material

Agozino (2000), among others, has argued that the notion of data collection should be replaced by the notion of data reception, especially in migration research. He points out that a researcher doing social research is receiving information from a willing subject rather than going into the field and collecting data, such as butterflies. The notion of reception emphasizes the nature of research practice, in which people are considered autonomous subjects, rather than the hierarchical nature of data collection. He also points out from a practical point of view that data reception is more feasible, and that most researchers operate in fields even though they mis-identify it as data collection. (Agozino, 2000, pp. 15–17.) Agozino's argument holds on the context of this research in that the participants were autonomous subjects in the discussions in the Culture Laboratory, and I as a researcher was receiving rather than collecting data. However, the reception idea implies that the researcher is a passive receiver of data. I would therefore describe it more as a process of mutual creation in the intervention setting. The discussions in the Culture Laboratory could be seen as a data creation process because it emphasized its participatory and interactive nature. Furthermore, neither participants nor researchers were in passive roles.

The empirical material of this study comprises the nine sessions of the Culture Laboratory, 20 hours altogether, which were both audio- and videotaped. The

project coordinator, who attended each session, videotaped them and I took care of the audio-taping. There were three reasons for the double taping. First, it was a back-up system: if the video failed then the audio tapes could be used, and vice versa. This turned out to be a successful procedure: on only one occasion was the whole utterance of a speaker not taped because of a change of the video and audio-tapes at the same time. Secondly, I wanted to include both actions and speech in the analysis, and the video material was suitable in that respect. Thirdly, it was easier to transcribe from the audio-tapes than from the videotapes. However, I should point out that we had only one video camera at our disposal, and it was usually directed toward the speaker of the moment. This limited the use of the video material to some extent.

The speakers were identified and their utterances transcribed into text after the Culture Laboratory. I transcribed four of the sessions myself, and five were transcribed by someone else – although I identified the speakers. Thus, the nature of the empirical material used in the analysis was mostly discursive. The process of analyzing question by question required multiple readings of the transcriptions and viewing of the videos. Two of the analyses relied on the videotapes, too.

Chapter seven, in which the disturbances are identified, reports what I called ‘behavioral disturbances’, which mean physical movements and restlessness among the participants of the Culture Laboratory, for example. This was seen on the videos. Another type of analysis reported in Chapter nine included material artifacts. I was focusing on what the participants were saying about the paper used in the College and in the Culture Laboratory, and on how they interacted with its different forms in the Culture Laboratory. The latter was seen on the videos.

The main language used in the sessions was Finnish, although other languages were spoken, including Russian, Estonian, Arabic and Somali. I have only transcribed what was said in Finnish, because typically the other languages were whispered and there were no clear utterances audible on the tapes. The concentration on the Finnish language may limit the use of the empirical material, but the inclusion of more languages would have required more microphones and naturally translators, which was beyond the resources of this study.

When I analyzed the empirical material I used Finnish, and even when I started to write this report in English the excerpts were all in Finnish. Thus, it was after I had chosen which excerpts to use that a colleague and I translated them into English. Furthermore, I decided to cite them in both languages in this report so that readers who can understand Finnish may read them in the original language. Both languages are used in the excerpts cited in all the empirical chapters except Chapter nine, which only includes the English versions and photographs from the videos. Using both English and Finnish was a methodological choice as well as a statement against ‘one language only’ type policies.

However, it should be borne in mind that for the students Finnish language was their second or third language. When I was translating the Finnish excerpts I had to find a balance between fluency and correctness: the excerpts were not in 'correct' Finnish and they are not 'correct' English either. The main issue for me was that the speaker's voice was heard and understandable. A further complication is that English is my second language: we could thus say that it was the same situation when the immigrant students were speaking Finnish and I was writing in English. As Robinson-Pant (2005) has stated, the investigation and elaboration of cross-cultural perspectives in educational research involve more than language: it is a matter of navigating 'between the worlds' and between the languages. However, my approach to this was also practical: the students were doing their everyday training in Finnish, our staff comprised both native and non-native speakers of Finnish, and we managed. It follows that doing research and writing the report 'between the worlds and languages' is also manageable.

Studying discourses, broadly speaking, implies an interest in language in use and meaning-making processes in different social situations and encounters. There is not one type of discourse analysis, but rather different forms of discourse traditions, including, conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, interactional sociolinguistics, discursive psychology, Bakhtinian research, and critical discourse analysis, for example (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yater, 2001). Furthermore, anyone studying discourses within inter-ethnic communication should remember, as van Dijk, Ting-Toomey, Smitherman and Troutman (1997, p. 144) write, that "the ethnic and cultural diversity of human societies is reflected in language, discourse and communication." People from different societies and cultural backgrounds use language in different ways.

I perceive my study as a discursive one, but not only discursive because I also include actions and material artifacts in the analysis: in Chapter nine I analyze what people said about paper and how they interacted with it in the Culture Laboratory. Including actions, tools and material artifacts in analyses is typical in socio-cultural and activity-theoretical research. For example, Goodwin and Harness Goodwin (1996) used talk, various tools, documents, and actions such as seeing in their investigation of how airport personnel interacted and shaped their working practices.

There were nine two-to-three-hour sessions in the Culture Laboratory, and, 5812 speaking turns among the participants. First, I organized each session into thematic sequences on the basis of the main topics it covered, and gathered the content logs (this is presented in Chapter 7, Table 7.2).

Secondly, I identified the different topics covered in each session. These were either given by the chief interventionist and the researcher, or were brought up by other participants who felt they were of current significance. Some of the topics discussed in the previous session were continued in the next one. However, nam-

ing a new topic was not an easy task. The very notion is vague (see, for example, Brown & Yule, 1983; Linell, 1998). Brown and Yule wrote that even though a topic is usually something ‘that is talked about’, a text or discourse may contain many topics covering different points. A topic comprises a set of sentences or utterances that could be considered to belong together (*ibid.*, p. 74). According to Linell, new topics emerge in a “dynamic process of topic progression” (*ibid.*, p. 181). This kind of dynamic process was also identified in the Culture Laboratory.

The main topics of the sessions included the following: why we are in the Culture Laboratory, what are the basic working methods of the Culture Laboratory, everyday life in Finland, instruction in the school, tensions between language and content instruction, cultural and language qualifications for further education, the cycle of the development work, the activity system in the development work, the roles and tasks of students and teachers in different cultures, learning and teaching in different cultures, instruments of learning in different cultures, practical training, the integration of learning in school and learning in practice, and the evaluation of the Culture Laboratory.

Thirdly, I organized each session as I was analyzing them into “topically related sets”. Mehan (1979) introduced this concept in the context of classroom interaction, and specifically the structure of classroom lessons. He identified sequential and hierarchical organization in classroom interaction. A lesson could be divided into phases, instructional sequences, and interactional sequences. Topically related sets are typically larger units organized around topics in teacher-student interaction, what Mehan calls elicitation sequences. (*ibid.*, p. 65.)

I chose the topically related set as my basic tool for organizing my empirical material for two reasons. First, the Culture Laboratory was conducted in a classroom environment, and I recognized the lecture-type patterns in the question-answer-feedback structure. However, there were also other types of interaction, such as group working. Secondly, the topically related set was at an appropriate level: it was broad enough and yet narrow enough to enable me to organize the empirical material.

There was a total of 211 topically related sets in the Culture Laboratory the borders typically being established when someone asked a new question or initiated a new statement. There were also various transitions from one topically related set to another. The chief interventionist typically said in such as case, “Let’s proceed”.

This basic organization of the empirical material helped me to look at more closely the sessions and to examine each one in the light of the research questions, and it allowed me to form the units of analysis needed to study the sessions more closely. Next, I will summarize how the units of analysis were used in each empirical chapter.

6.4 The analyses

The empirical chapters covered the main and specific research questions introduced in Chapter five, and these directed the analyses. The empirical material was organized on the basis of topically related sets, and then broken down into the units of analysis.

The first and second main research questions were the following. What are the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning? What is the significance of disturbances in the Culture Laboratory when used as a tool for intercultural learning? The analysis, a more detailed description of how I formed the unit of analysis, and the findings are given in Chapter seven. The theoretical concepts employed included a disturbance, a script, and an activity, and the unit of analysis was a disturbance sequence. The empirical material consists of all nine sessions.

The next main research question was: What is the potential of participants' suggestions for developing intercultural learning? The theoretical framework constituted the following concepts: suggestions, social languages, perspectives, objects, trajectories, and hybridity. The units of analysis were: a suggestion utterance, an episode, and a discussion. The empirical material consists of all nine sessions. In their suggestion utterances the participants presented a fresh idea or a viewpoint on the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The suggestions, episodes and discussions then formed a special kind of communication sphere. Chapter eight gives a more detailed description of the concepts and the process of forming the units of analysis.

The fourth research question was: How does 'paper' function as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory? The analysis and the findings are given in Chapter nine. The empirical material initially comprised all of the nine sessions, and then the analysis focused on the three sessions of the Culture Laboratory (the first, the sixth, and the ninth). The theoretical concepts employed were: artifact, paper trail, action, object, script, and power, and the units of analysis were topically related sets, paper-related actions, and sequences. The analysis utilizes both transcribed discussions and videos, and follows talk about and interaction with paper. It was conducted on three dimensions – talk, paper-related actions, and combination of both.

The final research question was: How could the concept of intercultural space be enriched in the light of experiences gained in the Culture Laboratory? The analysis and the findings are given in Chapter ten. The concepts used included culture, nation, hybridity, and the intercultural. The unit of analysis was cultural talk, which illustrates how people speak cultural issues. The empirical material again comprises all nine sessions of the Culture Laboratory. Table 6.1 lists the main re-

search questions, the theoretical concepts and the units of analysis, and shows which Culture Laboratory sessions were used.

Table 6.1 The main research questions, the theoretical concepts, the empirical material used in each chapter, and the units of analysis

Ch.	Main research question	Theoretical concepts	Sessions used for analysis	Units of analysis
7	What are the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning?	Disturbance Script Activity	All nine	Disturbance sequence
7	What is the significance of disturbances in the Culture Laboratory when used as a tool for intercultural learning?	Disturbance Script Activity	All nine	Disturbance sequence
8	What is the potential of participants' suggestions for developing intercultural learning?	Suggestion Social languages Perspectives Object Trajectories Hybridity	All nine	Suggestion utterance Episode Discussion
9	How does 'paper' function as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory?	Artifact Paper trail Action Object Script Power	All nine, and then the first, sixth, and ninth sessions were focused on	Topically related sets Paper-related actions Sequences
10	How could the concept of inter-cultural space be enriched in the light of experiences gained in the Culture Laboratory?	Culture Nation Hybridity The intercultural	All nine	Cultural talk

Table 6.1 shows, the empirical chapters incorporated multiple theoretical concepts and units of analysis. For each research question I needed to form and construct a suitable unit of analysis. From the methodological perspective, forming these units was a process in which different perspectives– the research questions, the phenomena under examination, and the systematic organization and analysis of the empirical material – were intertwined and in constant dialogue.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, pp. 4–6) describe this type of qualitative research process involving the application of different perspectives and paradigms, all of which are respected in their own right as ‘a bricolage or a quilt making’, and the researcher as ‘a bricoleur’. “The methodological *bricoleur* is adept at performing a large number of different tasks, ranging from interviewing to intensive self-re-

flection and introspection”, whereas “the theoretical *bricoleur* works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms”.

Doing this research was like making a quilt at times. However, an interesting pattern seemed to emerge, as well as new perspectives and ideas related to existing practices. I will now move on to the findings and the empirical chapters.

7 The Culture Laboratory and its disturbances

The following excerpt is from the first session in which the participants talked about the Culture Laboratory, what it was and why they were there. It reflects many elements of the working and talking that took place.

Excerpt 7.1

290 Student 3: The Culture Laboratory, what does it mean? And I said that because we all come from different cultures and there are also new cultures here and a totally new way of studying, and here we're looking into how to make better these different cultures.¹⁴

291 ##Student 8: Another country's culture.

292 Student 3: How to make it better?

293 Teacher 2: The social intercourse between different cultures or how should it be expressed, because I don't want to put words into your mouth?

294 ##Researcher: Make it better.

295 Teacher 2: We come from different cultural backgrounds.

296 Chief interventionist: Should we jot things down on the mirror table so that we can later agree on the terms we're using, maybe different cultural manners or practices or what did you really mean, could you say it briefly again?

297 Student 3: It means that if I study in my own country my manners and ways of studying are completely different systems from those in Russia, and now that we've come to Finland and the systems are totally different, and now the Finns think that this laboratory is a system that suits us all and will help us to study better, I don't know how to put it briefly.

298 ##Chief interventionist: Yes.

299 Teacher 1: Making studying better.

300 Student 3: Making it better is the goal.

¹⁴ See Appendix 5 for the symbols used in the excerpts.

301 Student 5: Or learning about different cultures.

302 Chief interventionist: Yes.

303 Student 9: So that we can all learn better here, all together.

290 Opiskelija 3: Että kulttuurilaboratorio, mitä se tarkoittaa, ja mä sanoin se koska me tulemme erilaisista kulttuureista ja täällä se täällä on myös ihan uusia kulttuureja ja ihan uusi opiskelutapa, ja täällä katsotaan miten vois parantaa tämä erilaiset kulttuurit.

291 ##Opiskelija 8: Toisen maan kulttuurin.

292 Opiskelija 3: Miten vois parantaa tämä?

293 Opettaja 2: Eri kulttuurien kanssakäymistä vai miten sen ilmaisisi, etten mä laita sanoja sun suuhun?

294 ##Tutkija: Parantaa.

295 Opettaja 2: Tulemme erilaisista kulttuureista.

296 Vetäjä: Ehkä kuitenkin siihen peilitaululle vielä ett sovitaan sit mitä otetaan jatkoon että onko se oliko se erilaisia kulttuurisia tapoja vai mitä, käytäntöjä vai mitä tarkoittit sillä, voiko sen sanoa jotenki lyhyesti?

297 Opiskelija 3: Se on sellainen, jos mä opiskelen oma kotimaassa minun tapoja on ihan erilaisia kun Venäjällä he opiskeli ja nyt kun me tulemme Suomeen ja täällä on ihan erilaisia systeemi ja nyt suomalaisten mielestä tämä laboratorio haluaa tällanen systeemi laittaa meille kun voisimmekin opiskella hyvin ja hekin vois opiskella hyvin sellaisia, en mä tiedä miten vois lyhyesti sanoo.

298 ##Vetäjä: Niin.

299 Opettaja 1: Opiskelun parantaminen.

300 Opiskelija 3: Parantaminen on tavoite.

301 Opiskelija 5: Tai eri kulttuurien oppiminen.

302 Vetäjä: Niin.

303 Opiskelija 9: Ei että voivat oppia täällä helpompi kaikki yhdessä.

This chapter focuses on the implementation of the Culture Laboratory and on the application of the practical and conceptual tools of the Change Laboratory in a ‘multicultural and multilingual’ setting in the development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training.

The chapter is divided into three sections. It begins with a description of the implementation of the Culture Laboratory: how it was planned, carried out, and monitored. This is followed by an analysis of how the theoretical tools – disturbances and scripts – were identified and manifested, and the chapter ends with a discussion about its strengths and limitations in terms of intercultural learning.

The Culture Laboratory was not the straightforward execution of a planned intervention. It was rather a fragmented and powerful field with multiple tensions

and interests that were manifested in disturbances. This made me think about what constituted differing interests and forces, and about their emergence. It could not be described as a monolithic kind of activity either, but was more of an intersection of multiple activities. Furthermore, as Gay (1998, p. 9) writes: “Teaching and learning are always cultural processes”. The Culture Laboratory was part of the students’ learning process as well as part of their acculturation process (cf. Berry, 2001).

This chapter addresses the first two general research questions:

- 1) What are the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning?
- 2) What is the significance of disturbances in the Culture Laboratory when used as a tool for intercultural learning?

The four more specific questions directed the analysis.

- What kinds of disturbances occurred in the Culture Laboratory?
- What kinds of scripts and activities were manifested?
- What kinds of activity systems were present?
- What do the disturbances tell us about the cycle of expansive learning?

The empirical material analyzed in this chapter comprises of all nine sessions of the Culture Laboratory. I have mainly used the transcriptions of each session, and also consulted the video recordings.

7.1 A description of the Culture Laboratory

7.1.1 *Before the sessions started*

I have outlined the idea of the Culture Laboratory from two perspectives, first as an intercultural encountering and a forum in which students and teachers could discuss and develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training, and secondly, as an application of the generic Change Laboratory – an innovative and promising method for exploring the rich and complex issues involved in intercultural learning. The framework of activity theory also gave a solid basis for the development work at the College. It took approximately half a year from the idea generation to the implementation. The Culture Laboratory Project is described in more detail in Chapter 4.2. (Teräs, 2004.)

Before starting the sessions, I gathered material that could also have been used as ‘mirror data’ in the Culture Laboratory reflecting the current situation of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. This included interviews with teachers and students and videotapes of the instruction (Table 7.1). This material was then used

in the planning of the Culture Laboratory, as a guide in focusing on the emerging questions, and as mini-interventions to reflect the tensions in the Preparatory Immigrant Training. Interviews were conducted with 13 students in two groups and with two teachers, each lasting from 43 minutes to 55 minutes (appendix 1). The participants wrote diaries starting from the first week of the Preparatory Immigrant Training in August until the start of the videotaping, which took place over two weeks in October. I also met the students for the first time in August and gave them information about the project (appendix 2).

Table 7.1 The material gathered for ‘mirror data’ for the Culture Laboratory

Interviews	Diaries	Video
13 students in two separate groups, two teachers (audio-taped)	13 students, three teachers, one school assistant	About 20 hours of taped lessons (Finnish language, physics and chemistry, health care and social sciences)

The next excerpt is from a teacher’s dairy and is about the videotaping. It was clearly not an easy task for the teacher to ‘expose’ her own teaching and interaction with students to a third person. However, the process of collective development started to emerge when she wrote, “I am no longer alone, I receive support “. None of the other participants commented on the videotaping in their diaries.

Excerpt 7.2

111001

A really interesting week behind me. The filming has almost finished. At first it caused a lot of anxiety, but then it was really strange to experience all of this. Before the filming I was thinking, “Get out Marianne [the researcher], get out with your cameras!” I guess that’s what being afraid means (....) Suddenly after the videotaping had started I started feeling really good, that there was another teacher in the class, maybe just sitting quietly in the corner and making her notes. The video camera was very well placed, it didn’t disturb me at all. The question of being videotaped wasn’t an issue at all, the issue was that my work autonomy was affected. (...) I don’t remember having been put into such a hard spot before.

WELL (...) I STARTED FEELING THAT, OH MY GOODNESS, THE TWO OF US HERE ARE NOW WITNESSING WHAT IS HAPPENING AND I ‘M ONLY ONE PERSON HERE IN THE CLASS, AND I CAN’T CONTROL EVERYTHING. And what’s more, now we can start doing something about these things, now they’ve been exposed. I’m no longer alone, I get support. The teaching situation is created by all of us together and so we can all also develop it together.Period. [in the original]

111001

Todella mielenkiintoinen viikko takanapäin. Filmaukset on sitten filmattu melkein. Kyllä se jännitti, mutta oli todella merkillistä kokea tämä kaikki. Ennen filmauksia oli tunne, että “juokse suolle Marianne [projektitutkija] kameroinesi”. Kai se on sitä pelkoa (...). Yhtäkkiä videoinnin alettua alkoi tuntua tosi hyvälle, että luokassa on joku muu opettaja, vaikkapa vain hiljaa nurkassa istuen ja muistiinpanoja tehden. Videon paikka oli loistava, se ei häirinnyt minua ollenkaan. Ylipäätään videoitiinko vai ei ei ollut oleellista, vaan oleellista oli se, että työntekoni integriteettiin ylipäätään kajottiin. (...) näin kovan paikan eteen en muista joutuneeni.

NO, (...) ALKOI TUNTUA, ETTÄ HYVÄNEN AIKA, ME KAKSI NYT TODISTETAAN TAPAHTUMIEN KULKU JA ETTÄ MINÄ OLEN VAIN YKSI IHMINEN TÄÄLLÄ LUOKASSA, ENKÄ VOI KAIKKEA HALLITA. Ja mikä tärkeintä, nyt näille asioille voidaan alkaa tehdä jotain, kun ne paljastuvat. En olekaan yksin, vaan saan tukea. Opetustilanne on kaikkien yhdessä aikaan saama ja silloin me kaikki voimme myös yhdessä sitä kehittää. Piste. [muoto originaalissa]

This diary excerpt shows that the videotaping was a source of anxiety for the teacher, which may reflect the fact that the tools of the research were new to her. However, the process of mutual development work started to emerge.

The planning of the Culture Laboratory sessions was mostly carried out by the chief interventionist and myself. In addition, during the first two sessions the participants suggested topics they wanted to deal with on the basis of the interviews. The project co-ordinator also sometimes took part in the planning process. This practice was criticized by the teachers, however, and one of them commented on it in her evaluation form. She also suggested a “teachers’ Culture Laboratory”: “Joint preparation by teachers in advance would have benefited the Culture Laboratory, and it would have been good to have a specific teachers’ Culture Laboratory now and then.” On the other hand, everyone had the opportunity to give feedback through the monitoring process after each session.

7.1.2 The Culture Laboratory sessions

The nine sessions took place from November 2001 to April 2002. They were held in a classroom during an ordinary school day. The normal school day lasted from 8.30 until 3.30, and the sessions were held on Tuesday afternoons. The students and teachers sat in a semi-circle in random order and changed places in every session (see Figure 7.1). Each of the sessions lasted for two to three hours at intervals of one to six weeks.



Figure 7.1 The Culture Laboratory setting

The sessions began with music from the students' native countries. While they were listening to the music the participants had a cup of coffee or tea and conversed informally. The proper session started with the reading of a memo, a summary of the previous session written by one or two students. If no memo was available, the group reviewed the previous session together, and on two occasions I had made a 'video memo' by editing a video clip covering the main themes of the discussion. Group work was often carried out in small groups consisting of one member of staff and two to three students. The suggestion for this type of working practice came from one of the students. It was difficult to keep to the timetable, and sessions often started and finished late. Absence, leaving before the session was over, and leaving and coming back were commonplace. There were regularly one or two breaks during the session.

For the students, the sessions were part of their regular training program: in the Culture Laboratory they had the opportunity to learn Finnish and to "learn how to learn" – the focus in the latter being on learning and studying methods. The sessions were not only 'multicultural', but also 'multilingual'. Finnish was the main language used, but Russian, Estonian, Somali, and Arabic were also spoken. Language difficulties were characteristic of the discussions, particularly with regard to the understanding of words and meanings. Each session had a specific topic (Table 7.2.).

Table 7.2 An overview of the sessions in the Culture Laboratory (=CL)

CL session date	Time /h	No. of students	No. of staff	Mode of working	Main discussion themes
1 20.11.2001	2	12	7	Instructional	Working practices of the CL, what is the CL and why are we in it, suggestions for developing the training
2 4.12.2001	2	13	8	Instructional and group work	Developmental work, working together, expectations of the CL and the tools used, suggestions from the previous session
3 11.12.2001	2	11	7	Instructional and group work	What is immigrant training, everyday life in Finland and at the College, teaching in this school, the language level of the students, mistakes in speech, heterogeneity of the groups, learning and fears
4 14.1.2002	3	13	8	Instructional and group work	Finnish-language teaching, reform of teaching, Finnish everyday life
5 22.1.2002	2	14	8	Instructional and group work	Activity-system and developmental-cycle models, suggestions for a meeting on rewriting the curriculum
6 12.2.2002	2	13	7	Instructional and group work	Feedback from the meeting, teachers' and students' tasks in different cultures, latecomers
7 26.2.2002	2	10	7	Instructional and drama	Learning and tools of learning in different cultures
8 9.4.2002	2	10	7	Instructional	Experiences from work placements with Finnish employers
9 16.4.2002	2,5	13	8	Instructional and group work	Learning at work and at school, evaluation of the CL

Between the sessions the participants carried out specific tasks depending on the topic (e.g., they wrote about their cultures), and the tasks were discussed in the Culture Laboratory. The participants monitored the sessions either in group discussions immediately afterwards or by filling in a form (appendix 3).

The number of participants in the sessions varied from 17 to 22. Thus in most of them someone was absent, usually, one or more of the students, and three students quit the course after the third session. When I analyzed the absences I noticed no regular pattern – nobody missed all the sessions, for example, and all the students joined them at some point.

7.1.3 Monitoring and evaluating the Culture Laboratory

The Culture Laboratory was monitored after each session, and evaluated during the final session and also later on in May. The purpose of the monitoring was to give the chief interventionist and the researcher feedback on what the participants thought about the session and what changes they thought should be made.

After the first three sessions I conducted a brief discussion in two separate groups (the students and then the staff). The students had said after the second session that they found it hard to understand why they were involved in the Culture Laboratory: they did not know what was expected of them, or why they were involved in developing teachers' work. One of them suggested that I should interview teachers of the same nationality as they were and ask them what approach Finnish teachers should take¹⁵. Another said that they could give me their opinions and insights about the College, and then I could pass their ideas on to the teachers. The staff members were also unsure about what was happening in the Culture Laboratory and about their role. Thus, I cannot claim that the implementation was smooth or easy: on the contrary, there were constant physical and verbal disturbances and persistent restlessness. This gave me good reason to look more closely into the disturbances.

The participants were asked to fill in a monitoring form after sessions four to eight (appendix 3). They usually commented if they had not fully understood something that had been done or discussed in the session, or indicated that they did not want any changes next time. However, only some of them returned the forms, the numbers varying from six to 15.

The evaluation of the Culture Laboratory was incorporated into the last session. The participants discussed it on the basis of the pre-session task they had been asked to do (appendix 4). They said, for example, that they had had a chance to get to know different cultures and that they had learned to discuss in Finnish, as the next example shows:

Excerpt 7.3

Student: We have learned to talk and discuss in Finnish.

Opiskelija: Keskustelemaan, pohtimaan suomeksi.

On the other hand, one student said that she had not fully understood what was going on:

¹⁵ How the participants talked about different cultures or nationalities is discussed further in Chapter 10.

Excerpt 7.4

Student: Unfortunately I didn't always understand, what we were doing during this class.

Opiskelija: Valitettavasti minä en ole oikein ymmärtänyt joskus, mitä me teemme, me teimme tässä tunnilla.

Another student felt that the board was too time-consuming.

Excerpt 7.5

Student: Well, I would have left out these 'fiu-fiu' [points on the board] because that took so much time.

Opiskelija: Niin ja minä olisin jättänyt nämä pois nämä 'fiu-fiu' [viittaa kädellä seinätauluihin], siellä tä otta aika.

The staff thought, for example, that the discussion had opened up new perspectives and given them suggestions for developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training.

Excerpt 7.6

Teacher: The discussion has brought new points of view to practically each theme and also concrete examples and suggestions about developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training: it has been activating in several ways.

Opettaja: Keskustelu on tuonut uusia näkökulmia vähän joka teemaan sekä myös konkreettisia esimerkkejä ja ehdotuksia mm-koulutuksen kehittämiseksi; aktivoinut monin tavoin.

The participants thought the Culture Laboratory should be used for other immigrant groups, but after some changes. One teacher wanted to narrow down the themes and to focus more on the problems. It was also considered too broad in scope, and one teacher suggested that it could be conducted on a smaller scale. Not all the tools were found satisfactory, as one of the students also remarked (excerpt 7.4). An overall wish was for more decisiveness in the implementation.

Excerpt 7.7

Teacher 3: And then I think that it would be great, because the groups differ so much, it would be good to go on with these Culture Laboratories. They could be a bit smaller, like four to five meetings with a group so that all the teachers

teaching a group and the students would be there. So we could always see and think about what we could improve, and that kind of discussion would promote that. (...)

Teacher 1: And then we should somehow define the question.

Teacher 2: Always have a theme.

Teacher 1: So that the discussion wouldn't break down, and that there'd be some clear problem to discuss.

Opettaja 3: Ja sitte tota ja sitten tän niinku mä aattelen, et tää ois hirveen hyvä, koska ryhmät on niin erilaisia, ni jatkaa tämmöstä kulttuurilaboratorioo. Mut tätkin sillai vähän pienimuotoisempaa, että neljä viis tapaamista ryhmän kanssa niin, että on kaikki opettajat, jotka ryhmää opettaa ja oppilaat. Ja sitten näit, et mitä voitais parantaa ja ottaa huomioon, ni aina ois tällasii keskusteluja. (...)

Opettaja 1: Ja sitte pitäis jotenkin rajata sitä, mitä käsitellään.

Opettaja 2: Aina teema.

Opettaja 1: Ettei ole diffuusua, siis sillai, että hajoaa se keskustelu, vaan joku semmoinen selkeä probleemi, mistä puhutaan.

On the other hand, one teacher was of the opinion that if everything was set in advance, there would be no room for new ideas.

Excerpt 7.8

Teacher 2: If we want some new questions, then we can't set the themes down beforehand (...) I'd also like to say that not everything can be planned ahead of time, because in that case we couldn't take up these new questions that come up (....)

Opettaja 2: Jos me halutaan jotain uusia asioita, niin silloinhan me ei voida niitä etukäteen kirjata niitä teemoja (...) mut mä halusin myös sen sanoa, että kaikkea ei voida etukäteen suunnitella, koska muutenhan me ei pystytäkään olemaan avoimia niille uusille asioille, jotka siit nousee (....)

Thus, in sum, the participants wanted the Culture Laboratory to continue, but thought it should be developed further, such as by focusing on specific themes and organizing it on a smaller scale.

Some of the difficulties faced in the implementation phase were to be expected. First, this was the first experience of the Culture Laboratory and there was no previous practice to build on. This might have caused confusion and insecurity among the participants about their role in it. Furthermore, these kinds of reflective working practices take their time and energy to evolve. Secondly, working

with native and non-native speakers of a language is time-consuming, and there were language problems, particularly related to understanding. However, the Culture Laboratory was considered an interesting forum and form of intervention because it offered new perspectives on the diverse cultures involved and the everyday practices of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. In addition, the students had knowledge and experience that most of the staff did not have: learning in different countries and cultures and being part of a new learning culture at the College.

Furthermore, it questioned traditional teacher-student interaction in the classroom, and teachers experienced something new, such as sitting between two students. As one of them said: "(...) and now I'm sitting between N and N, where I've never sat before". Being familiar with the lesson practice at the College, I would claim that in the Culture Laboratory teachers had to explore their role and their relationships with others from a different perspective. On the one hand, they had to consider the relationships between various members of staff: it was not typical for school assistants and social workers to be involved in the development of training. On the other hand, they had to think about their relationships with the students and the chief interventionist, and with me as a researcher. Furthermore, tensions between the chief interventionist and the teachers could have reflected some kind of power struggle between them.

When I analyzed the Culture Laboratory according to the activity-system model, introduced in Chapter 3.4, I defined the central activities of the College as teaching and studying. There were also other activity systems, such as the administration, which produced the rules and the 'student services'¹⁶, for example. All these activities were potentially present in the Culture Laboratory, and in addition there was the activity of developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training. Development activity was not new; there had been numerous development projects at the College before this one, and there will be projects in the future. However, combining development and research was a new departure, and thus my role as a researcher and the tools of my research, for example, were not familiar to the participants. I will discuss my role as a researcher in more depth in Chapter 12.

The objects of teaching and studying activities include the learning of specific subject matter, while the object of administrative activity might be ensuring a good working community for teachers and students, and that of student services could be the wellbeing of students. As far as the Culture Laboratory is concerned, the object could be described as developing the Preparatory Immigrant Train-

¹⁶ I use the term 'student services' to describe social, health and counseling services for the students at the College.

ing. Furthermore, the students and teachers, as well as, other staff were engaged in many activity systems at the College, and the participants were part of other activity systems in their daily lives outside. These multiple networks could have been a significant source of disturbances in the Culture Laboratory. I will further analyze the multiplicity of activities in the Culture Laboratory in Chapter 7.3.

7.1.4 The Culture Laboratory – an application of the Change Laboratory

The Change Laboratory as an intervention method was introduced in Chapter 6.2. In my analysis of the Culture Laboratory as an application of the Change Laboratory I perceived certain differences. In the Change Laboratory, the ‘object’ of the work – patients in health care or students in schools – could be involved as themselves or via mirror data. In the Culture Laboratory, however, the students were actively participating in all of the sessions and this may be one of the reasons why the two objects emerged (that of developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training and that of learning the Finnish language). The two objects were manifested in the students’ questions concerning what was being taught in the Culture Laboratory, for example, and in the teachers’ remarks regarding Finnish spelling.

There were problems with the Change Laboratory tools on both the theoretical and the practical level. The students did not write their memos regularly, working with the board was time consuming, and the assignments given by the chief interventionist were considered extra work and not part of the course. Moreover, we did not apply theoretical tools or concepts related to intercultural learning, so the discussion was mainly about the current state of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. Furthermore, the historical and future-oriented perspectives were lacking. In the next example, the chief interventionist suggests that the tools need to be considered more carefully when used in immigrant training. This is from the last session.

Excerpt 7.9

Chief interventionist: And then one point, as we all have such different points of departure, and the language skills are so diverse, I’ve noticed that we need lots of time for the work, I mean that we really need to take our time and give ourselves space and the chance to talk and go into the details. (...) And then I’ve also given some thought to these tools or instruments, which I’m familiar with from Change Laboratories, like the boards and the memos and different kinds of assignments. I’ve reached the conclusion that they could function well in this kind of immigrant teaching and training, but they should be thought about more (...) how they could be better fitted in.

Vetäjä: Ja sitte sellanen, et ku meil on hirveen erilainen lähtökohta kaikilla ja osittain kielikään ei ole kaikilla yhtä hyvin käytössä, niin sen huomannu, että tarvitaan paljon työskentelyyn aikaa siis siihen, että on aikaa ja tilaa ja mahdollisuutta rauhassa niinku keskustella ja paneutua. (...) Sit on näitä välineitäkin vähän ajatellu, kun mulla on ollu näitä muutoslaboratorion välineitä täs yrittäny käyttää ni näitä seinätauluja, kun tätä muistiota ja erilaisia tehtäviä niin semmonen tuntu on ollu, että kyllä nää vois toimia tämmösessä maahanmuuttajien niinku opetuksessa ja koulutuksessa, mut se että niitä täytyy viel miettiä, (...) et miten ne vois paremmin sopii tähän.

However, some of the difficulties that emerged were expected and understandable, such as language questions. Intercultural encountering is a complex and tension-rich area because the participants have different pasts and interests that intermingle. The working method of the Change Laboratory is interventive, which means questioning existing practices. This type of working is emotionally and practically demanding in that some aspects of the work that are hard to face may come out into the open. It also muddled up the routines and everyday practices at the College. Furthermore, the conceptual nature of the working method was new to the participants. I thus needed to explore the Culture Laboratory beyond its practical implementation, and the disturbances occurred provided a good starting point.

7.2 Analytical tools

7.2.1 *“No, no, that doesn’t suit the purpose”*

This quotation comes from the first session and it shows the basic idea of ‘a disturbance’ identified in the Culture Laboratory. First, the word ‘no’ is actually multiple ‘no’s’, to show how the speaker objected to something that had been said before. Secondly, it revealed that there was a “different purpose” as well, whether it concerned the working practices of the Culture Laboratory, the role of a scribe, or learning practice at the College. In this case the chief interventionist said this when the participants suggested that she could also act as a scribe. She rejected this suggestion by pointing out that there were different roles with different actors in the Culture Laboratory. I will first introduce the theoretical concepts – a disturbance and a script – which I will use in my analysis of the empirical material: I introduced the activity concept in Chapter 3.4. I will then discuss the unit of analysis – a disturbance sequence.

7.2.2 *The conceptual framework: disturbance and script*

Disturbances are visible discoordinations in work and in social interaction connected to work, as Engeström (1998, p. 65) writes. He also refers to them as unintended deviations from the script. They occur between people and the material world as well as in social interaction between people. Disturbances between people are typically manifested as difficulties in understanding, disagreements, rejections, and objections. One rhetorical marker is the word ‘no’. Furthermore, disturbances can manifest themselves in physical restlessness in the form of movements and gestures, or leaving the room. (Engeström, 1998, pp. 65–66.)

In activity theory, innovations, dilemmas and disturbances are considered manifestations of inner or outer tensions and contradictions in human activity (Engeström, 1998, pp. 62–65). They are not looked on as ‘problems’, but are rather perceived as important sources of development and evolvement. Thus, naming or conceptualizing something such as a question or an objection as a disturbance does not mean, as in everyday thinking, that it is somehow problematic and should be eliminated. On the contrary, disturbances may reflect a pivotal element of the activity and thus could enrich its evolvement. Disturbances were examined in this analysis closely because rejection, disagreement and physical restlessness were observed throughout the Culture Laboratory sessions. Moreover, as the monitoring and evaluation showed, the participants wished for some changes.

Disturbances are unintended deviations from the script. A script could be described as a historically evolved artifact that has a rule-like character: scripts “codify and regulate standard procedures in repeatedly occurring cultural situations”, and even though they may be explicit, participants often do not recognize the one they are following (Engeström, 1992, p. 79). A script could be a phased description or an instruction of how things are going to happen from beginning to end, including the division of roles and the expectations of the participants. In cognitive psychology a script is a kind of schema in a person’s mind of how things proceed. However, in the context of collective work processes this is not enough: a script emerges and exists in interaction with the working community rather than in one person’s mind. Interactions in workplaces reflect the structure of activity systems and contradictions. For example, an agenda, normal practice in meetings at work places, and the chairperson’s ideas may form the script of a meeting. However, in a new or unclear situation it may be vague and open to disturbances. (Engeström, 1998, pp. 64–65.)

On the other hand, studies (cf. Helle, 2000; Koli, 2005) on disturbances in working processes based on networks of multiple activities suggest that the concept of script does not adequately illustrate the normal, fluent progression of work. Thus, the script for the fluent progression of work or an ideal concept about work is

more suited to analysis of work in standard mass production than in postmodern types of networking. Schools as institutions are traditional places, and changes are usually slow (cf. Lortie, 1975; Miettinen, 1990). Thus, scripts about teaching and studying tend to be rigid and traditional. Yet, as Koli's (2005) study on the work of vocational teachers shows, the script of teachers' work has changed from 'only' teaching to include developing, fostering, and negotiating in networks, for example. The 'teacher teaches' script in itself has become outdated. Besides, the changes tend to reflect changes outside classrooms more than inside, even though they affect the work going on inside, as with the use of computers.

The chief interventionist made explicit the script of the Culture Laboratory in the first session. She talked about the rules and gave three: 1) ask if you do not understand, 2) everyone is encouraged to participate, to discuss, and to listen to each other, and 3) the chief interventionist does not give ready answers. In brief, the script was 'ask, participate, and create'. Other principles (related to the working practices, for example) were also put forward, concerning the division of labor between the participants, working together, and reserving time for the Culture Laboratory. The script of the Culture Laboratory was moulded from that of the Change Laboratory.

A lesson script is based on learning objectives and the curriculum. Lessons are traditionally planned and led by a teacher, who is also responsible for keeping to the timetable. Mehan (1979) identified a typical lesson structure, which he described as an I-R-F structure: initiation, response, and feedback. Usually the teacher initiates a question, a student responds to it and the teacher gives feedback. There is also a 'repetition' type of script, when teachers present talk or texts and the students repeat them.

Gutiérrez et al. (1995) considered the Third Space¹⁷ in terms of a script and a counter-script. An example of this is when the teacher follows his or her traditional lesson script but students form their own counter-script, an "unofficial" script in contrast to the teacher's "official" script. In some cases, teachers and students enter into the Third Space, such as when a student asks a question and crosses the border of the previous script. Stepping into the Third Space opens up a new horizon for learning.

¹⁷ See Chapter 3.2 for more on the concept of the Third Space.

7.2.3 *The unit of analysis: disturbance sequence*

A disturbance is used here in two senses: as a theoretical phenomenon revealing tensions and contradictions, and as a unit of analysis for identifying disturbances in the empirical material. In order to distinguish these two aspects I named the unit of analysis a disturbance sequence, because it mostly consisted of participants' multiple utterances. Furthermore, identifying disturbances, and especially the different types, was not an easy task because they were often intertwined. However, it was done for analytical reasons.

A disturbance sequence started in the Culture Laboratory when one speaker asked a question or made a statement and ended when another speaker either came back to the topic or introduced a new one or a new perspective on the discussion. Thus, the speaker, with such a comment, interrupted the script of the Culture Laboratory, and then someone restored it. The result of the disturbance sequence was either a new topic or the continuation of the same one.

The next example (Table 7.3) shows one disturbance sequence in order to demonstrate the analysis: I used tables as an analytical device. The sequence started with the chief interventionist's turn¹⁸ (22) telling the participants that they could now start reporting the results of the group work to everyone. The teacher then remarked (turn 23) that "everybody should use only a certain amount of time" when reporting to the whole group. This indicated the existence of a timetable and a plan that had to be followed and controlled. The disturbance sequence ended when the chief interventionist (turn 26) restored the script of the Culture Laboratory and said that the reporting could start. In the example, the script of the Culture Laboratory, the reporting, was interrupted by the script of the lesson, the controlling. However, I cannot claim that following the timetable was not part of the role of the chief interventionist: it was her job to do that, too, as she (turn 24) agreed. In the Culture Laboratory, however, if important issues emerged she changed her script and did not merely execute the plan she had in mind.

¹⁸ Henceforth I use the term 'turn' to indicate a speaking turn

Table 7.3 An example of a disturbance sequence

CL session	A disturbance sequence	Type of disturbance
9	22 Chief interventionist: Do you now have the energy to go through the results of the group work together? Then we could have a break. But that means we'd have about half an hour for the reporting and the break, could we manage that? Then we could continue at about half past and start the last assignment. 23 Teacher: Yeah, and we'll have to make sure that everyone uses only the time allowed for the reporting, so that we don't run over time like half an hour for the reports and another half an hour for the break. 24 Chief interventionist: Well, yes. 25 Teacher: Or we'd have to be here late into the evening. 26 Chief interventionist: Yeah. I think that we could go through the reports by having the teachers say what questions were taken up in the groups, and we could take one topic at a time, would that be OK? (....) 22 Vetäjä: Tuota jaksasitteko niin, että purettais nyt yhdessä? Ja pidettäis sen jälkeen tauko ja selvittäiskö me niin, et me oltas, meil ois nyt niinku vähän reilu puol tuntia aikaa purkaa ja pitää tauko ja oltas puolelta suurin piirtein takasin ja alottaa sit sitä viimistä tehtävää. 23 Opettaja: Joo jos pidetään vaan huolta siitä, että jokainen käyttää vaan sen oman aikansa, ettei veny et puolt tuntii ja puol tuntii. 24 Vetäjä: Niin, joo. 25 Opettaja: Ja me ollaan vielä iltapäivällä täällä. 26 Vetäjä: Joo. Mull on semmonen ajatus, että se purkamisen vois tehdä niin, että jos vaikka opettajat kertois, että mitä asioita ryhmäs tuli esille ja me voitais mennä, mentäskö me kysymys kerrallaan, oisko se hyvä? (....)	Admonition

This disturbance sequence was identified as an admonition type of disturbance. Questions, answers, and statements are usual types of talk in classrooms (cf. Mehan, 1979). Asking questions was included in the script of the Culture Laboratory, too, and I needed to ask why I perceived a question or a statement as a disturbance. One reason was that it was an unintended deviation from the script: it stopped the discussion and revealed another script. Furthermore, a disturbance revealed that there were multiple activities present in the Culture Laboratory, and that the participants were engaged in multiple activities. Thus, it was not an individual's resistance to something new, which might be the usual interpretation of problems faced in development work (cf. Virkkunen et al., 1997). The admonition example given in Table 7.3, when examined superficially, could be interpreted as the teacher complaining about the organization of the Culture Laboratory to the chief interventionist. However, a closer look at the disturbance sequence reveals two different scripts: that of the Culture Laboratory and that of the lesson. The former is an element of the development work; group work was used in compliance with the multivocality and participatory practice of the Culture Laboratory, and the chief interventionist followed this script by allocating time and space for discussion about the results of the group work. The teacher's remark about the timetable could be seen as a script of a lesson, and thus as an element of a learning activity.

I recognized two categories of disturbances: behavioral and verbal. Behavioral disturbances included the bodily movements of the participants, the comings and goings, mobile phones ringing, and a general restlessness in the Culture Laboratory. Verbal disturbances involved talk. Both categories sometimes also involved material artifacts. There was also some overlap, such as when the participants talked about turning off mobile phones when someone's phone started to ring. There were five types of verbal disturbance: 1) understanding, 2) guiding the scribe, 3) objections or rejections, 4) disagreements, and 5) admonitions.

An 'understanding' type of disturbance involved asking the meaning of a Finnish word, for example. Students frequently asked what a specific word meant, or indicted somehow that they had not followed the discussion. This type of disturbance directed the attention to Finnish language learning rather than to development work.

The 'guiding the scribe' type of disturbance also directed attention to Finnish language learning. It involved guiding a student scribe in spelling, for example: it was a typical pattern for one of the students and one member of staff to act as scribes, and usually the student noted issues that arose in the on-going discussion on the board. If the student asked, "How do you spell this word?" then the staff member or some other participant gave the spelling.

If a speaker made a counter-statement or rejected something someone had said earlier, it was identified as an 'objection or rejection' type of disturbance. I have not separated these two types because they were so intertwined in the discussion. Another marker in this type was the word 'no'.

Furthermore, if speakers gave different opinions this was identified as a 'disagreement' type of disturbance. Sometimes the speaker also used an expression such as "in my opinion" when she or he responded to another speaker's opinion. The basic idea was thus that there were at least two differing opinions involved in this type of disturbance.

An 'admonition' type of disturbance drew attention to working practices, but there were no clear disagreements or objections within it. In my preliminary analysis this was a kind of 'remnant category' into which I put disturbances that did not fall into any of the others but interrupted the discussion in the Culture Laboratory and revealed another script. This type of disturbance was then called an admonition, and stemmed from one speaker's turn when she said, "I would like to remark...".

Analyzing disturbances has long been part of development work, especially in industrial work processes. Furthermore, as Norros (1996) states, disturbances have a dual nature involving threats to the functioning of a system as well as development potentials. Researchers within developmental work research have also employed different kinds of disturbance analyses when examining interaction between people or between people and cultural artifacts.

Koistinen (2007) analyzed disturbances as part of the production of CD-roms in a new media company. She developed what she called “a disturbance analysis method”. She employed multiple techniques and sources (e.g., field notes, observations, interviews, memos) in her empirical material collection over a nine-month period. As a unit of observation she used a “disturbance mention” in her empirical material, and her unit of analysis was “a disturbance mention category”. She found over three hundred disturbance mentions and five types of categories: a technical problem in a product, a lack of materials or photographs, problems with the script process, delay and time pressure in a project, and a lack of comment from the customer. Then she further explored how disturbances reflected the contradictions in the activity.

Koli (2005; see also Launis & Koli, 2005) analyzed disturbances in the context of the work well-being of vocational teachers on the secondary level. She examined “disturbance situations” in their work and found out that recent changes had caused many. In fact, there were so many that they considered them ‘normal’ and did not regard them as deviations. Thus, the question arises of what is ‘normal’ in a ‘normal school day’. She suggested that the ‘teacher teaches’ script has expanded, and that teachers are involved in multiple activities in schools nowadays, such as in different networks.

Mäkitalo (2005) studied work-related wellbeing in the context of nursing-home work. Part of his study involved an analysis of disturbances and contradictions. He analyzed 15 morning-routine episodes over seven mornings, which he audio- and videotaped, and used clients’ initiatives that resisted or opposed what was going on as possible indicators of disturbances. His initiative analysis revealed the institution’s script and the resident’s script, and how they clashed during the morning episodes.

Engeström and Mazzocco (1995) analyzed disturbances in the work of a television production team. They write “Producing a TV program is an on-going process of crisis negotiation, resolution, and avoidance by the crew”. They identified 330 disturbances in the work interactions of the crew and divided them into three types: local, intermediate, and global. Local disturbances involved problems or the anticipation of a potential problem by the crew in the production-control room, intermediate disturbances involved crew and one or two other activity systems such as announcers, and global disturbances incorporated all seven identified activity systems.

These other classifications and analyses of disturbances are similar in some respects and different in others compared to my analysis. First, these researchers collected their empirical material in real work situations, such as nursing, teaching, or producing something, whereas my setting was an intervention and an experiment itself, and it was also a mix of teaching and developing.

Secondly, the other researchers included different types of materials in their analyses, whereas I have concentrated mainly on discursive empirical material. Thirdly, many used the concepts of an activity and a script to elaborate disturbances and to explain their occurrence. Finally, they all used the concept of a disturbance in a similar vein: it was regarded as deviation from a normal scripted course of events at work. However, Koli (2005) suggested a more expanded notion than ‘a normal scripted course of events’.

I excluded from my analysis one disturbance type called a ‘switching of language’, which occurred when a participant was talking to someone in a language other than Finnish. In such cases the participants were usually whispering to each other and no clear words or talk were audible on tape. I realize that this exclusion limits the study, but there were lots of ‘audible’ disturbances to be analyzed.

The analysis was conducted in three steps. First, I organized each session according to topically related sets¹⁹. I then identified the disturbance sequences (Table 7.3) and sorted them into different types. Finally, I examined the sequences more closely in order to find out what kinds of activities and scripts they might reveal. The questions that arose concerned the kind of script, whose script it was, and the outcome of the disturbance sequence. I will now turn to the findings and give examples of disturbances from the empirical material.

7.3 Findings: many disturbances, multiple scripts and activities

7.3.1 *Behavioral disturbances*

Behavioral kinds of disturbance sequences occurred, for example, when the participants moved from one place to another searching for texts and papers (see Figure 7.2), came late or left before the session was over. Absences were common, but nobody was missing from every session. The ringing of mobile phones during the sessions was also observed.

¹⁹ I have explained the organization of the empirical material into topically related sets in Chapter 6.3.



Figure 7.2 The participants are focusing on 'paper work'

“Well, we have to be somewhere, don’t we?”

The next example is from the fourth session. The topic of the set was that someone was missing. A frequent pattern was that someone would come late, or leave during the break or before the session was over. In this example, the chief interventionist (turn 24) called attention to late comings and goings and wondered if it was normal practice at the College. The teacher responded to her (turn 25), “Well, we have to be somewhere, don’t we?”

Excerpt 7.10

24 Chief interventionist: This is kind of interesting this working with you in the Culture Laboratory, I don’t know if you do this all the time, but it seems to me that there’s a constant need to arbitrate, all the time, someone’s somewhere and comes from somewhere, so that this seems to be your everyday habit.

25 Teacher 1: Well we have to be somewhere, don’t we?

26 Chief interventionist: Well, maybe we should all be in the same place.

27 #Teacher 2: Well, it’s a fact that we work in several locations, this college is such that some teachers have to run from one place to another.

28 #Chief interventionist: Yes, teachers and.

29 Teacher 2: Between different buildings and then the students have a lot of stuff.

30 Chief interventionist: Yeah.

31 Teacher 2: These sessions about work placement and with counselors, so sometimes we just muddle through.

24 Vetäjä: Tää on semmonen aika jännä nyt ku mä oon ollu täällä täs kulttuurilaboratoriossa, mä en tiedä, ett onks tää teillä aina muutenkin mut tuntuu, ett koko ajan niinkun aina tää sovitteleminen, että aina jotku on jossain ja tulee, ett se on niinku semmonen ilmeisesti ihan teidän arkipäivää, että joo.

25 Opettaja 1: Pitäähän sitä jossakin olla.

26 Vetäjä: Mut ett niinku kaikki ois siinä samassa paikassa.

27 #Opettaja 2: Se on ihan yks, ihan ihan tosiasia, että tota ku meillä on useammassa toimipisteess, tää oppilaitos niin jotkut opettajat joutuu juokseen siinä.

28 #Vetäjä: Niin opettajat ja.

29 Opettaja 2: Eri oppilaitosten väliä ja sit opiskelijoilla on aika paljon kaikkea.

30 Vetäjä: Joo.

31 Opettaja 2: Näitä neuvotteluita työharjoittelusta ja opojen kanssa, ett se nyt niinku sähliällään.

This excerpt shows that the teachers at the College worked in different locations, and moving from one unit to another caused the late arrival. Furthermore, the students had “a lot of stuff” (turn 29). The teacher gave examples such as negotiations between the College and employers about the four-week work-placement periods that were included in the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The counseling represented another activity system – student services – inside the College. Having been a teacher at the College I know that many mundane questions draw students’ attention, such as accommodation, health, and social security. Questions pertaining to everyday life were real for many of them. This was one of the reasons why the school’s social worker was a participant in the Culture Laboratory: we wanted to develop new practices between learning and counseling at the College. This kind of engagement in various activities to do with solving problems of everyday living resulted in the absence of students and teachers from lessons as well as from the Culture Laboratory.

This disturbance sequence described a behavioral disturbance. First, it revealed the script of the College lessons: it was an everyday occurrence that people came and went during them. Secondly, this excerpt exposed the multiple activities of the participants, in which they were engaged both inside and outside the College. This is illustrated in Figure 7.2: there is group work taking place and one student (on the left) is filling in papers and is not taking part. She came in late and I asked her what she was doing. She explained that she had met the College counselor who had given her an application form for another school, so she was filling it in in the Culture Laboratory.

This kind of multiplicity of activities is common in organizations, as Engeström (1998) observed, and Gutiérrez et al. (1999) have also found it common in classrooms.

7.3.2 Verbal disturbances

The verbal type of disturbances identified in the Culture Laboratory were classified 1) understanding, 2) guiding the scribe, 3) objections or rejections, 4) disagreements, and 5) admonitions. Table 7.4 shows how they were distributed in the different sessions. In total there were 132 verbal-disturbance sequences, the number varying from three (in the eighth session) to 29 (in the first session). The most frequent type of disturbance was guiding the scribe (52), followed by 36 of the understanding type, 18 admonitions and 15 objections and rejections. There were 11 disagreement types of disturbances. Thus, almost 67% of the disturbances were connected to understanding or guiding the scribe.

Table 7.4 The distribution of the verbal-disturbance types in the Culture Laboratory

CL session	Under-standing	Guiding the scribe	Objection/rejection	Dis-agreement	Admonition	Total
1	9	10	3	2	5	29
2	2	6	1	1	1	11
3	4		2		3	9
4	4	1	1	1	1	8
5	3	9	1	1	1	15
6	6	13	2	2	3	26
7	3	10	2	1	1	17
8	2			1		3
9	3	3	3	2	3	14
Total	36	52	15	11	18	132

The table 7.4 shows, there were no systematic increases or decreases in the number of disturbances in any particular phase or session of the Culture Laboratory: there was rather a series of waves.

“I did not understand”

The next excerpt is from the first session, in which the chief interventionist introduced the tools of the Culture Laboratory. The participants were talking about the names of the board, and more specifically about a ‘mirror’²⁰. So, the discussion concerned the meaning of a ‘mirror’ and how it was used in the Culture Laboratory. One of the students asked what would happen if the mirror was broken, and

²⁰ The board is the tool of the Change Laboratory that I have explained more in Chapter 6.2.

the discussion fluctuated around this. In the middle of it one student asked what the word “paljastava” (revealing) meant (turn 102). The other participants had used this word earlier. The student went on and said that she had left her dictionary in another classroom.

Excerpt 7.11

102 Student: I did not understand what it means, the word ‘paljastava’. I’m sorry, I left my dictionary in our classroom.

103 Chief interventionist: Yeah, the word ‘paljastava’ derives from the word ‘paljastua’ to reveal, meaning it is not hidden anywhere.

104 #Student: Yes, oh yes.

105 Chief interventionist: It is revealed, you see it, you cannot hide it.

106 Student: And everyone can look at it.

107 Teacher: Yes.

108 Chief interventionist: For example, a videotape of some lesson can be revealing, you can see what is happening, can’t you. Well, what other thoughts do you have?

102 Opiskelija: Minä en ole ymmärtänyt, mikä se tarkoittaa paljastava, valitettavasti olen unohtanut minun sanakirja luokassa.

103 Vetäjä: Joo, jos on paljastava se tulee sanasta paljastua, ei ole piilossa.

104 #Opiskelija: Aha, niin, niin.

105 Vetäjä: Se on paljas, näet ei voi peittää.

106 Opiskelija: Ja kaikki voivat kaikki voivat katsoa.

107 Opettaja: Niin.

108 Vetäjä: Esimerkiksi videonauha jostain tunnilta se on paljastava, siinä näkyy se mitä tapahtuu, eikö niin. No, mitäs muita ajatuksia?

I interpreted this disturbance sequence as an understanding-type of disturbance. Furthermore, here the script of a language lesson interrupted the script of the Culture Laboratory. It was started by a student, and both teachers and the chief interventionist agreed with it. Thus, they accepted the script the student had suggested and explained the meaning of the word “paljastava”. The student was given an answer to her question, then the chief interventionist (turn 108) returned to the script of the Culture Laboratory by saying, “Well, what other thoughts do you have?”, and the discussion went back to the topic of a ‘mirror’ and its use in the Culture Laboratory.

In activity-theoretical terms, the object of a language lesson is to learn the new language, whereas the object of the Culture Laboratory was to develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training. These two objects were present in the Culture

Laboratory and caused disturbances. The object of the language lesson was in evidence when the student asked the question about the meaning of the word “paljastava”, and that of the Culture Laboratory when the chief interventionist introduced its working tools and the participants talked about them. I am not saying that these two objects could not coincide, but in the Culture Laboratory they were still distinct, which made its operation fragmentary. However, the parallel or simultaneous existence of two objects was also evident during the lessons. This came out when the participants were talking about learning the Finnish language and studying different subjects. In fact, one of the crucial questions in the project (more on the project in Chapter 4.2) after the Culture Laboratory concerned how to combine the learning of Finnish and of subject matter, such as social sciences.

“It is in your country but not in ours”

The next excerpt is from the first session. Its topic was whether students and teachers could eat together at the College. One student made a suggestion that immigrant students, Finnish students and the teachers could sometimes eat together so that they could get to know the Finnish culture and each other (turn 606). However, the other students in the group disagreed and gave reasons for their opinions: in particular, they were against the idea of students and teachers eating together (e.g., turns 607, 608, 617).

Excerpt 7.12

606 Student 1: (...) why don't we all go to eat together, in country X at school we all go together to eat. This may be really different, but this could help in getting to know a new culture, we all go together and we're all foreigners, and this school is a Finnish school. Then we can all eat and drink together and get friendly with the teachers and students. If I go and talk to or ask a teacher something she says go and ask a student, I go from the student I ask the teacher, and we all can discuss it together, it's an idea. (...)

607 Student 12: N why N sometimes a teacher also needs her privacy.

608 #Student 9: The teachers also need their own space, I don't think there's enough space here for all the teachers and the students.

609 Student 1: But it might be nice to eat together with the teachers, why not?

610 Student 9: I don't think so, the teachers are in a higher position.

611 #Student 8: I think.

612 ##Student 1: Why, why should she be higher, we're all equal.

613 ##Student 9: In our school they were in different positions.

614 ##Student 9: No, no it's not like that.

615 Student 1: Why not, what is this?

616 #Student 9: It is in your country but not in ours.

617 Student 8: I think that you'd be the only one who would be there.

606 Opiskelija 1: (...) miksi ei kaikki menemme syömään kaikki yhdessä, esimerkiksi maan X koulussa me menemme kaikki yhdessä syömään, tämä on ehkä on tässä asiassa on todella erilainen asia, mutta tämä voi auttaa tutustua uuteen kulttuuriin kaikki menimme ja sitten me olemme ulkomaalaisia, mutta tämä koulu on suomalainen koulu ja sitten me voimme jäädä kaikki yhdessä syödä ja juoda ja sitten me voimme tulla ystvälliseksi opettajoiden kanssa, opiskelijoiden kanssa sitten, jos minä menen keskustelen tai kysyä joltakin opettajalta hän sanoo, kysy opiskelijoilta menen opiskelijoilta, kysyn opettajalta, koska me menemme kaikki yhdessä me voimme keskustella kaikki yhdessä asiasta, se on idea.

607 Opiskelija 12: N miksi N, joskus opettajalle myöskin tarvitsee rauhaa.

608 #Opiskelija 9: Me myös opettaja täytyy oma hyvä paikka, tässä ei mahdu kaikki opettajat ja opiskelijat mun mielestä.

609 Opiskelija 1: Mutta se voi olla kiva, että me voimme syödä yhdessä opettajan kanssa miksi ei.

610 Opiskelija 9: Minä ei luule, että se on hyvä opettaja on kuitenkin korkeampi kuin meidän.

611 #Opiskelija 8: Mä luulen.

612 ##Opiskelija 1: Miksi, miksi se on korkea meidän me olemme kaikki sama samat ihmiset?

613 ##Opiskelija 9: Meidän koulussa oli niin.

614 ##Opiskelija 9: Ei, ei ole.

615 Opiskelija 1: Miksi ei, mikä se on tämä?

616 #Opiskelija 9: Se on sinun maassa meidän maassa ei.

617 Opiskelija 8: Mä luulen, että te olisitte ainoo ihminen kuka siellä olis.

This disturbance sequence covers the whole topically related set, but I have shortened it because this short excerpt brings out students' different opinions. I have interpreted the sequence as a disagreement-type of disturbance. When the student suggested eating together she indicated that in her native country students and teachers ate together. She said later that this was a Finnish school, and that she had asked the teachers (indicating the current practice at the College) if they could eat together, but the teachers had told her she should rather ask Finnish students to join her (turn 606). Another student (turn 607) responded to this and said that perhaps teachers needed their peace and quiet. Then, yet another student (608) suggested that teachers needed their own space, and that there

was not room for everyone. However, the student who had made the suggestion defended her idea (turn 609). Then the other student explained the relationship between a teacher and a student in her native country and said (turn 616): “It is in your country but not in ours”, indicating that different countries had different practices.

I think that this disturbance sequence shows the intermingling of different scripts in time as well as in enculturation. On the one hand, it reveals different scripts in the students’ past – what kind of enculturation process they had gone through in their previous schools, how the teachers and students had interacted with each other, and what the power distance between them was. The normal practice of the student who suggested eating together was different from that of the other students. On the other hand, it shows the current script of the College: students and teachers did not eat together. The student who made the suggestion wanted to change that practice.

In this situation the ‘old’ script of the students’ previous schools was a kind of shadow script, which followed them, like a shadow, to their current situation. In this case it concerned how students and teachers interact outside classrooms, whether they eat together or not. This kind of situation, in which previous scripts shadow current practice, is an element of intercultural encountering in immigrant training. Thus, a shadow script is a script that people learn through their enculturation process and which becomes part of their intercultural encountering. On the other hand, all the scripts we learn through experience and participation in different cultural practices are potential shadow scripts. However in intracultural situations we usually know the unspoken scripts, take them for granted, and follow them, and the shadow script does not cause disturbances. In all situations there are potential shadows, but they only become visible in certain circumstances – when the sun is shining. Thus, a shadow requires the existence of light for it to become visible. In a similar vein, ‘one culture’ is not enough to make a shadow script visible – it requires ‘the other culture’. However, I am not claiming that ‘cultures’ are homogeneous entities that do not change. On the contrary, scripts are locally and historically constructed artifacts that vary and change in different situations. Furthermore, it would be too simplistic to claim that a script does not vary or change in intracultural settings, but the disturbances identified in such settings may well be different from those in intercultural settings.

As a result of this disagreement, the participants had a fruitful discussion on the many different ways of learning a new language. They also decided to have integrated lessons with Finnish students and to buy a coffee machine for their group. However, they did not agree to eat with the teachers.

“I think this is all in vain”

This next excerpt is from the fifth session. The topic concerned the theoretical tools used in the Culture Laboratory. The chief interventionist and I had outlined the Preparatory Immigrant Training with the help of the expansive methodological cycle (see Fig. 6.1 in Chapter 6) and an activity-system model. She then asked (turn 231) if the participants had followed her introduction. Two teachers responded (turn 232, 233) that explaining and using a model was in vain. One of them went on to ask why things could not stay on the concrete level, indicating that this kind of working with models was too abstract (turn 234), and that she did not understand it (turn 236). The discussion went on, and another teacher said that she did not understand what was going on either. The chief interventionist asked (turn 361) how the participants would like to proceed if not with the models. Thereafter, the teacher who made the complaint (turn 363) protested that the chief interventionist was not listening to them, and wanted to use the time in the Culture Laboratory to prepare for a ‘curriculum meeting’, which was scheduled for the following week for rewriting the curriculum of the Preparatory Immigrant Training.

Excerpt 7.13

231 Chief interventionist: How do you feel, do you have the energy to follow it?

232 Teacher 1: I think this is all in vain.

233 #Teacher 3: Yeah, I guess it is.

234 #Teacher 1: Why can’t we stay on a concrete level?

235 #Chief interventionist: Well, we try to be concrete, the excursions and.

236 ##Teacher 1: Well, then I don’t get it.

(...)

360 Teacher 3: Well, I still didn’t understand, excuse me.

361 Chief interventionist: I did try to ask you what you wanted, what you think will take us forward, if the discussion about the model doesn’t interest you.

362 #Teacher 2: There are many ways of looking at it.

363 #Teacher 1: You’re not listening, I’ve said that I want us to make concrete preparations for the meeting on Thursday about the rewriting of the Curriculum, we should discuss it in small groups, and then we can continue the work on Thursday.

364 #Chief interventionist: Well then, shall we continue?

365 #Teacher 1: This is my suggestion, it’s work that we understand and that we’re capable of doing, well of course we can discuss this for two hours.

- 231 Vetäjä: Tuntuuko ihan, jaksatteks te seurata?
 232 Opettaja 1: Musta tää on hirveän turhaa.
 233 #Opettaja 3: Tiiätsä tää on kyll joo.
 234 #Opettaja 1: Miks me ei voia olla sillä tasolla, sillä konkreettisella tasolla?
 235 #Vetäjä: No me yritetään olla konkreettisia retket ja.
 236 ##Opettaja 1: No sit mie en ymmärrä.
 (...)
 360 Opettaja 3: En mä vieläkään oikein ymmärtäny, anteeks vaan.
 361 Vetäjä: Mä yritin kysyä teiltä, että mitä te haluaisitte, ett mikä teistä nyt veis eteenpäin, jos tuo mallin käsittely ei vie.
 362 #Opettaja 2: Siinä on monta eri näkökulmaa.
 363 #Opettaja 1: Ku et sie kuuntele mitään muuta, mä oon sanonu, että minä haluan, että me valmistaudutaan torstain opetussuunnitelman kehittämiseen konkreettisesti, miettien pienryhmissä, että me voidaan siellä sitt jatkaa sitä.
 364 #Vetäjä: No sitten, onko se sitä, vielä jatketaan?
 365 #Opettaja 1: Se olis mun ehdotus, joka me ymmärretään ja joka me pystytään tekemään, voiaanhan me miettiä tätä kaks tuntia.

I interpreted this sequence as an objection/rejection type of disturbance. It exposed a competing script with that of the Culture Laboratory. As Engeström (1998, p. 64) stated, the participants of an activity may present competing scripts. The script of the Culture Laboratory involved analyzing the current practices of the Preparatory Immigrant Training with the help of theoretical tools. However, using the tools was not easy and the participants felt that there was no point. Furthermore, one teacher wanted to use the time in the Culture Laboratory to prepare for another meeting: thus a competing script emerged. The script of the Culture Laboratory was directed by the chief interventionist and me, whereas the competing script was initiated by the teacher. The result of this disturbance sequence was that the participants started to prepare for the curriculum meeting in small groups.

”What is the plan?”

This topically related set is from the sixth session and dealt with the comings and goings. After this short disturbance sequence the participants started to watch a video clip, ‘the mirror data’, taped during the lessons. The teacher asked the chief interventionist about the plan for the session (turn 713). She (turn 714) responded that she had had another plan, but it had changed because there should be time for discussing certain issues.

Excerpt 7.14

713 Teacher: Well, N, I'd like to point out that it's a quarter to three, and we've got 45 minutes, what's the plan? We've now discussed the first topic, so is it the plan to discuss two, three and four or to continue this discussion?

714 Chief interventionist: Well yeah, I had thought of discussing a lot more, but well, somehow I think we should give ourselves time to discuss so that we could begin to. But well, maybe it's better to watch the video in between, it would be a change and then we can continue reporting, and the video brings up some topics.

713 Opettaja: No hei, N, pyydän huomauttaa, että kello on varttia vaille kolme meillä on 45 minuuttia aikaa, ja mikä on suunnitelma? Me olemme nyt tän yksökohdan käyneet, että onko tarkoitus käydä kakkonen, kolmonen ja nelonen, vai pysyä tässä?

714 Vetäjä: Joo, oli tarkoitus käydä paljon enemmänkin, mutta tuota jotenkin se että must pitäs saaha puhua niistä, ett se alkaa, mutt tuota se vois olla, jos me katotaan välillä se, se video niin se vois olla vaihtelua ja me jatketaan sitte sen purkamista, mutt siit videosta tulee joitakin asioita.

I interpreted this as an admonition-type of disturbance. It was a short revelation of the script of a lesson and the script of the Culture Laboratory. The script of a lesson is that the teacher has a plan that she or he follows. However, the script of the Culture Laboratory was more flexible, and sometimes unexpected issues emerged that needed time and space for discussion. The chief interventionist indicated this kind of script in her turn. After this short disturbance sequence the participants started to watch the video clip, 'mirror data' which had been taped earlier during one of the lessons.

"Should we write it down?"

The next example comes from the seventh session. The participants had been engaged in group work and were talking about learning – what was understood by it – and sharing their insights. Then it was time to report the results of the group work. The chief interventionist asked which group would like to start the reporting (turn 113). One student started by saying that learning was hard work (turn 114). Then I interrupted and asked: "Should we write it down on the board?" (turn 116). The school assistant agreed (turn 117). The chief interventionist confirmed that all ideas and conceptions were supposed to be written down (turn 118). The student scribe asked if the color of the pen was acceptable (turn 119) and I re-

sponded, “Blue is fine” (turn 121). The discussion went on to grammatical fluctuations in the Finnish language (turns 123, 124, 127).

Excerpt 7.15

113 Chief interventionist: Well, which group should we start with?

114 Student 14: Well, it was hard work for us, we talked about learning being hard work.

115 ##Student 9: We all said that.

116 Researcher: Should we write down what learning is, learning is hard work?

117 School assistant: Yeah, let's write it down.

118 Chief interventionist: Let's write down all these conceptions and thoughts about learning that came up in the groups.

119 Student 1: Here, is this OK?

120 #Teacher 1: Yes.

121 #Researcher: Blue is a good color, very good.

122 Student 1: Learning is hard work.

123 Researcher: Hard work.

124 Teacher 1: Hard work – partitive case.

125 Student 1: Yes.

126 Chief-interventonist: It's probably enough to write it like this, you see, yes there's a question here.

127 Teacher 1: But if we're studying Finnish at the same time.

128 Chief interventionist: OK, then.

113 Vetäjä: No minkäs ryhmän tuotoksista me alotetais?

114 Opiskelija 14: No meillä oli se kovaa työtä, tästä me puhuimme et oppiminen on kovaa työtä.

115 ##Opiskelija 9: Me kaikki läpi kävi.

116 Tutkija: Pitäskö se kirjata mitä oppiminen on, oppiminen on kovaa työtä?

117 Koulunkäyntiavustaja: Kirjotetaan vaan.

118 #Vetäjä: Kirjotetaan kaikkia niitä käsityksiä ajatuksia mitä ryhmissä on noussu esille oppimisesta.

119 Opiskelija 1: Tässä, onko sopiva?

120 #Opettaja 1: On.

121 #Tutkija: Sininen on hyvä väri, oikein hyvä.

122 Opiskelija 1: Oppiminen on kova työ.

123 Tutkija: Kovaa työtä.

124 Opettaja: Kovaa työtä, partitiivi.

125 Opiskelija 1: Kyllä.

126 Vetäjä: Riittää varmaan ihan vaan se kovaa työtä, kato ku tääl on tää kysymys.

127 #Opettaja 1: Mut jos samala opiskellaan suomea.

128 Vetäjä: No sitte.

I interpreted this sequence as a guiding-the-scribe type of disturbance. There was not much negotiation here because everyone agreed that the sentence “learning is hard work” had to be written down on the board. Furthermore, two scripts were exposed: the script of the language lesson and the script of the Culture Laboratory. According to the latter important issues from the discussion were supposed to be written down, while the script of the language lesson was that the students should learn the grammatical rules of Finnish. The result was that spelling instruction took its time. On the other hand, this disturbance sequence also revealed a concurrence of activities. The scribe wrote on the board (the script of the Culture Laboratory) and learned some Finnish (the script of the language lesson) at the same time.

7.3.3 Contradictions and the structure of the expansive cycle in the Culture Laboratory

My theoretical findings fall into two categories: 1) what multiple, intertwined scripts and activities tell us about contradictions in the Culture Laboratory, and 2) what the structure of an expansive learning cycle in a ‘multicultural and multilingual’ setting like the Culture Laboratory is. The expansive cycle of learning offers methodological elaboration and reveals the qualitative changes observed in the teachers’ work at the College.

As I was analyzing the disturbances I noted that some of them were to be expected from the start, such as the language difficulties, and other were understandable in hindsight. However, some of them became visible only after the analysis. The power and the consistency of the different activities and scripts were surprising.

The consistent nature of the activities may reflect the nature of schools as institutions. The participants had been to different kinds of schools over the years and thus the scripts of teaching and learning were stable, even though changes in vocational teachers’ work have been considerable (cf. Koli, 2005). On the other hand, the diversity may have been due to the newness of the situation to the participants – combining intervention, research, and development in conjunction with the staff and the students. Thus, the participants searched for stability and safety in the script they knew well. Cazden (2001, p. 31) calls this kind of situation

in a classroom a “default option”, employing computer terminology and indicating something “what the system is set to do “naturally” unless someone makes a deliberate change.”

The findings of the analysis suggest that there were multiple activities and scripts, which manifested themselves as disturbances in the Culture Laboratory. Thus, the nature of the Culture Laboratory was that the participants were engaged in many overlapping activities, which not only concerned learning and developing – its main activities, but also activities inside and outside the College. This network of activities is presented in Figure 7.3.

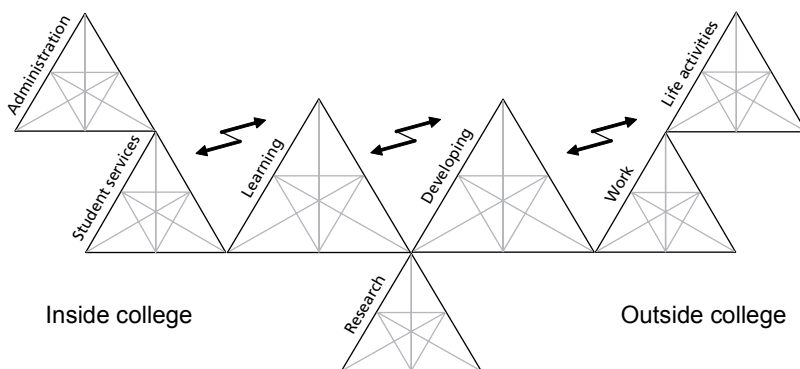


Figure 7.3 The network of multiple activities ‘disassembled’

Figure 7.3 depicts a typical outlining of a network of activities as perceived at the College. However, the Culture Laboratory network suggests that the activities were close to each other: they are compressed, and the different activities are intermingled in time and space. Thus, activities within borderlines seemed to take an important role in the development work, as shown in Chapter ten. The compression of different activities also seems to reveal their diversity (cf. Engeström et al., 1996).

This multiplicity could also be depicted as a network of adjacent activity systems (see Figure 7.2). The student is filling in an application form for another school. She had received the form from the College counselor, and thus was part of the counseling activity inside the College. On the other hand, she was part of the other school’s activity outside the College when she was filling in their application form. The others in the picture were involved in a group discussion and were thus engaged in the activity of developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training. Furthermore, the multiplicity of activities in the Culture Laboratory could be depicted as coexistent activity systems. Another example of this coexistence of

activities was when the scribe was writing on the board what was being said, and thus the participants were involved in a developmental activity: they were learning Finnish at the same time and thus participating in a learning activity. Even though this finding reflects something inside one school, and a specific practice, it brings to mind what Engeström (1999, p. 36) wrote “It might be useful to try to look at the society more as a multi-layered network of interconnected activity systems, and less as a pyramid of rigid structures dependent on a single center of power”. The multiplicity of activities could also be described as the hybridity that was recognized in the Culture Laboratory.

This hybridity emerges from the two objects of the Culture Laboratory. On the one hand, there was the object of learning as the students wanted to learn (and the teachers wanted to teach) Finnish, and on the other there was the object of developing as the participants discussed how to improve the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The participants may also have had individual goals: one of my goals, for example, was to develop the Culture Laboratory method. This inherent structure of two objects is reflected in the next example, which is taken from the first session. The chief interventionist was introducing the Culture Laboratory to the participants:

Excerpt 7.16

Chief interventionist: (...) And this Culture Laboratory is part of your training and at the same time it's part of the development project, where the aim is to improve immigrant teaching and training (....)

Vetäjä: (...) Ja tää kulttuurilaboratorio, niin tää on osa teidän koulutusta ja samalla tää on osa tätä kehittämisprojektia, jossa pyritään parantamaan opetusta ja maahanmuuttajien koulutusta (....)

However, I am not claiming that the two objects emerged because the chief interventionist or the teachers said so. It was manifested in the practices of the project and of the Culture Laboratory. In activity-theoretical terms, we could say that there was a system-level, or fourth-level contradiction²¹ between two activities, that of learning the Finnish language and that of developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The working hypothesis of the Culture Laboratory involved only first- and second-level contradictions. In other words, within the elements of the activity of teaching some of the tools lost their use value because the language in the textbooks was far too difficult for immigrant students, for example. There

²¹ See Chapter 3.4 for more on levels of contradiction.

was also a contradiction between two elements of the teaching activity: the object had changed but the teaching tools and methods had not.

Usually in developmental work research third-level contradictions emerge as tensions between an old practice and a planned new practice in the later phase of an expansive learning cycle, and the fourth-level contradictions between the central activity and its neighboring activities (Engeström, 1998, pp. 63, 91, 92). This may be the case in situations in which the central activity is the focus of development. However, my empirical material suggests that in this kind of heterogeneous, hybrid setting, when the participants come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to develop something new together, fourth-level contradictions are elements of the process from the early stages. The fourth, systemic-level contradictions were between current intertwined and overlapping different practices, in other words between the activities of developing and learning and their neighboring activities inside and outside the College.

Furthermore, the activities and the scripts were intertwined and linked to each other in the Culture Laboratory. I identified two types of central activities (see Figure 7.3), learning and developing. There were also activities inside and outside the College, which reflected and affected practices of the Culture Laboratory in terms of administration, counseling, researching, working and life activities.

If scripts are conceived of as tools or rules of activity, then they are also elements of it. I identified a script of a language lesson, which was the element of the learning activity, and that of the Culture Laboratory, which was the element of the developmental activity. Furthermore, a script competing with that of the chief interventionist emerged when the teachers wanted to prepare for the curriculum meeting instead of discussing the activity-system model in the fifth session. Then a shadow script emerged from previous learning experiences during the enculturation process of the students. This multiplicity of scripts could have increased the hybridity in the Culture Laboratory.

Hybridity could indicate at least three things. First, it could indicate heterogeneity in a group comprising participants with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as in a 'multiagency' setting: the participants had in this case not only had different experiences, they had also had different experiences in different regions, countries, and continents, all of which had their historical and local forms of activity. Secondly, it could indicate development work as the participants were in a new situation and needed to learn new tools, methods and conceptions. Looking at teaching and studying in terms of developing was a new perspective, at least for some of them. This could be depicted as a 'multiactivity' and 'multiscript' setting. Finally, it could indicate the interventionist method itself: there is a phase in development work in which hybridity seems to be a pattern, not a deviation. This kind of questioning approach is emotionally, mentally,

and practically demanding because it tends to disrupt the everyday routines at work.

If we consider hybridity from the perspective of expansive learning²², and especially the structure of the expansive learning cycle, we can see that in the first phase there is typically one stable activity system, such as teaching or cleaning. The development work focuses on this activity, its object, its history, and its changes. A dominant feature of this phase is said to be the internalization of the predominant form of the activity. Then, little by little criticism of this predominant practice takes hold and the phase of externalization begins to dominate the process (Engeström, 1998). Thus, internalization involves learning the established activity, and externalization, involves creating new ideas or instruments (Engeström, 1999). This could be the structure of an expansive learning cycle in a monocultural setting.

However, things may be somewhat different in a ‘multicultural’ or ‘intercultural’ setting. This does not mean that development work does not take into account the multivoicedness of the single activity – it does – but in a ‘multilingual and multicultural’ setting the process of expansive learning seems to look different.

I have outlined the development work of the overall project with the help of the cycle in Figure 6.2 in Chapter six. The Culture Laboratory is placed in an early phase (the second phase) of the development cycle. Thus, internalization should be a dominant feature of the process. However, the existence of multiple scripts, and especially the shadow script, suggests that the students already had a clear conception of the dominant activity of learning based on their previous practice, and thus did not “internalize the predominant, established activity”. On the contrary, my empirical material suggests that a dominant feature might have been externalization rather than internalization. This finding indicates that the students had become familiar with an established activity of learning during their enculturation process, and before learning current practice of the College they needed to externalize their previous practice.

Thus, my empirical material suggests that in a setting like the Culture Laboratory in which the participants have diverse cultural backgrounds the expansive learning cycle starts from externalization instead of internalization. However, I am not claiming that internalization is not part of the cycle in a ‘multicultural’ setting as well: it is rather a qualitatively different type of expansive learning process. It is helpful to start with the process of externalization in a setting such as the Culture Laboratory.

We never quite reached the “phase of externalization” in the Culture Laboratory, or in the project – in other words the modeling of the new practice. We did

²² I have explained in more depth the expansive learning and the cycle of it in Chapter 3.4.

create new working practices and tools, but no new models (cf. Teräs, 2004). At the College we might have produced a model of intercultural learning in that we started the development work from a monocultural and monoactivity perspective, and from the internalization phase as we had been used to doing. However, we could have started the project from a 'multicultural' and multi-activity perspective, and we could have externalized previous practices first.

Even though my research was carried out in a school context in a specific setting, these theoretical findings, may contribute in other contexts. Many organizations are involved in developmental work and face a continuous flow of projects in their daily lives. More and more of these are 'international' and people from diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds are therefore acting together. People are apparently brought together by a common object such as developing, teaching, or managing. The tricky thing is that it all sounds similar – in the different cultures people teach, develop, or manage – which is why I use the word apparently. In practice, however, people are encultured to use different tools, symbols, signs and rules in teaching, developing and managing – not only between cultures but also within them. Thus, recognizing multiplicity and system-level contradictions in the early phases of development helps in managing complex, international projects. Furthermore, externalizing (in the sense of making cultural practices visible) cultural practices could benefit projects. I will continue on this subject in the tenth chapter in which the focus is on the intercultural.

7.4 Conclusions concerning the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory

I have described the Culture Laboratory in this chapter because it formed the practical framework of my research and because I wanted to examine the method more thoroughly. The result is a description of how it was implemented, and of the number of disturbances that occurred, and of the multiple scripts and activities that were revealed. The research questions concerned the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning, and the significance of the disturbances identified. In addition, certain specific research questions directed the analysis: what kinds of disturbances occurred in the Culture Laboratory, what kinds of scripts and activities were manifested, what kinds of activity systems were present, and what do the disturbances tell us about the cycle of expansive learning.

The intervention, the Culture Laboratory, was not the streamlined execution of an intended intervention plan made by the chief interventionist and myself: on the contrary, many kinds of disturbances were observed of both a behavioral and discursive nature (e.g., movement or absence among the participants, 'guiding the

scribe', and difficulties in 'understanding' the language). Furthermore, the many disturbances recorded confirms Long's (2001) criticism of the plan-execution-outcome type of intervention. He describes intervention as a complex and multi-faceted process, a complex set of evolving social practices and struggles. Moreover, it is an intermingling of differing flows of events and interests, and an on-going, negotiated and socially constructed process. These differing flows were identified in the implementation of the Culture Laboratory, which indeed was an on-going, negotiated process.

One thing that made the Culture Laboratory a complex process was that there were two parallel activities going on at the same time. In activity-theory terms, there were two adjacent activity systems: the activity of learning and the activity of developing. Furthermore, there were tensions between the activities that were manifested as disturbances. For example, the object of the language lesson was to learn the new language, which took time and effort on the part of the participants, as the examples show. Moreover, the participants were engaged in many activities besides learning and developing, both inside and outside the College – which was manifested in the comings and goings, and their absence from the Culture Laboratory.

Another reason why the Culture Laboratory turned out to be “an intermingling of differing flows of events and interests” could have been that not only were there multiple activities, there were also multiple scripts. The script of the lesson and the script of the Culture Laboratory clashed from time to time, as did the scripts of the past and the present – in other words the scripts of the students' past and present schools experience. I called this kind of script a shadow script: it was conceived during the enculturation process and emerged within the intercultural encountering. In this case it involved teaching and learning processes. The students had learned different kinds of scripts in their countries concerning interaction during or outside lessons, for example, and this followed them to their new situation like a shadow. According to Engeström (1998, p. 64), we are not always aware of the scripts we follow. I would like to add that we are not always aware of the scripts that follow us – especially if there is no time or space for reflection.

Lessons scripts are based on learning objectives and a curriculum, and the lessons are traditionally planned and led by a teacher. The teacher's responsibility includes keeping to the timetable because a schedule is an important artifact in a school: it directs what students are supposed to learn, where, with whom, and for how long. Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000) demonstrated this in their ethnographic research on school practice. The timetable was regularly referred to in the Culture Laboratory, the script of which was based on the generic method of the Change Laboratory.

Upon reflection, certain factors related to the space and time used in the Culture Laboratory might have strengthened various activities and scripts. For example, the fact that the physical venue was a classroom might have supported the activity and the script of a lesson. If the Culture Laboratory had taken place in the restaurant or library area of the College, for example, it might have strengthened its script.

In terms of strengths, I think that bringing the different parties together in this multifaceted process of development was one of the important outcomes of the Culture Laboratory – the immigrant students and their teachers on the one hand and the other members of staff, the project staff and the researchers on the other. The project enabled the participants to work on their mutual development, and it created a new kind of space in which teachers and students could explore questions of intercultural learning and development within the Preparatory Immigrant Training.

The mundane practice of teaching is often very hectic and fragmentary, especially in vocational education and training as the abundance of subject matter tends to take the attention of both students and teachers. There is thus no time or space for reflection, and no tools to help either. The Culture Laboratory provided a structure and a framework, as well as the tools, for the mutual development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training, and it provoked and facilitated the development work. Furthermore, it directed attention to intercultural encountering and issues that stem from it. The disturbances identified opened up new perspectives, but also created barriers as far as this development work was concerned.

In terms of limitations, the participants faced difficulties, too. For example, the questioning and conceptual kind of working practice was new to them, and was practically and emotionally demanding. It took time and energy to make sure that everyone was following and understanding what was happening, which could apply to any multilingual working group, of course. The process also took time and space away from everyday practices the result being confusion in routines and practices. The roles of the participants differed, too, in terms of the division of labor between students and teachers, and between the chief interventionist and the teachers. According to activity theory, the division of labor means the division of work, tasks, and power in human activity (Engeström, 1987): the tension between the chief interventionist and the teachers might thus have been an indicative of a power struggle between them, which was manifested as disturbances.

For the future, I suggest that, in the school context, the working practices of the Culture Laboratory should be exposed in a more visible manner than we did, emphasizing the questioning and the negotiating, and the differences in working practices between the classroom and the Culture Laboratory. This would ensure that the participants would become more familiar with how it operates.

Moreover, the working tools could be adopted to suit the needs of immigrant students, and could include more multilingual material, for example. Certain theoretical tools of intercultural learning could also be incorporated into the working practices. Focusing on specific topics might also help the development work.

I perceive intercultural learning as a process of reciprocal change, transformation, and development between cultures and people (more on this in Chapter 3.3). Despite the difficulties encountered, the Culture Laboratory provided a solid structure and a framework for intercultural learning and development. Furthermore, it had the potential to break down the traditional type of interaction between students and teachers. I consider it a potential and useful tool for intercultural learning.

The Culture Laboratory resulted in some changes in the everyday practices of the College. However, there is a need for further exploration in terms of the methods used and the results achieved. This is my next task. The numerous suggestions the participants made for developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training.

8 Suggestions as a hybrid learning space

8.1 “Then we have this kind of a suggestion”

Can a simple suggestion initiate an innovative process at school when students and their teachers gather together to discuss and develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training? The section heading is a quotation from a report given by a Culture Laboratory participant on the results of their group work. The focus of this chapter is on the suggestions the participants made and on the suggestion-making process in the Culture Laboratory. This is an interesting avenue of exploration given the many disturbances identified and analyzed in the previous chapter.

I will first present the research questions and the empirical material used for the analysis. I will then introduce the conceptual framework of the analysis, incorporating suggestions, social language, and perspectives. Thirdly, I will describe the four steps of the analysis and the units I used – such as an utterance and an episode. I will then present the findings, and finally give my conclusions in relation to the research questions.

I will also reflect on whether suggestions could open up a hybrid space for intercultural learning and development when people with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds encounter, discuss, and offer them. Furthermore, can a hybrid space be a springboard for new ideas? As Gutiérrez et al. (1999) have found out, when the students’ and the teacher’s script meet, a hybrid space, which they called the Third Space, emerge. This could enrich learning in the classroom. Lee and Roth (2003) used the notion of hybrid space to conceptualize a space between scientific practices, and language and local knowledge to create something new.

My general research question for this chapter is this. What is the potential of participants’ suggestions for developing intercultural learning? Furthermore, three blocks of specific research questions directed the analysis.

- 1) What is a suggestion, what kinds of suggestions were made, and who made them?

- 2) How do suggestions reflect the history of the way learning is talked about, and how could their hidden potential be brought to light?
- 3) What kind of a process is suggestion-making?

The empirical material used in the analysis consisted of talk in all of the nine sessions of the Culture Laboratory. I used all of the sessions because the participants made suggestions from the start to the finish.

8.2 The conceptual framework: suggestions, social language, objects, perspectives, trajectories and hybridity

I will now introduce the main concepts used in the analysis, as well as the studies in which they were applied. In this study, a suggestion means an idea or a viewpoint concerning the Preparatory Immigrant Training offered for consideration by someone. It indicates or influences something within the training. Webster's Dictionary (1986) defines a suggestion as follows: a means or process of influencing attitudes and behavior, a slight indication or touch, or the process by which one thought leads to another especially through an association of ideas. Here the notion is used to separate suggestions from other kinds of remarks the participants made during the Culture Laboratory.

Suggestions as such have rarely been the object of research, whereas there are some studies on initiatives. Kontinen (2000) analyzed the discussion process in a meeting of foreign-aid-department employees, focusing on the participants' suggestions as a potential for innovation, and Haavisto (2002) studied client initiatives during the court process.

In this study, suggestions were made and usually discussed further during the Culture Laboratory, and some of them were implemented. The following extract from the seventh session is a good example: one student suggested that those who studied well should get some reward from the College, which had been the practice in her native country.

Excerpt 8.1

Student: Well yes, well, we would like to say that if a student is good at studies, well, she or he could get a reward, a little reward for example, in country X it was like that.

Opiskelija: No joo, no me haluaisimme sanoa, että jos opiskelija hyvä opiskelee, hän voi saada palkinto pieni palkinto, esimerkiksi maassa X oli sama asia.

The participants themselves also frequently used the term suggestion: “we can suggest it”, or “a good suggestion”. Thus, a suggestion was an everyday concept in their talk. However, I have used it as an intermediate scientific concept in order to follow the innovative process that emerged in the Culture Laboratory.

The concept of social languages was developed by Bakhtin (1981). He emphasized the fact that languages were divided not only into linguistic dialects, but also into socio-ideological groups. By this he meant that people use different historically evolved social languages in different situations: when speakers use their voices to act, they blend in with previous voices that used those particular words. Social languages emerge within a social group. (Bakhtin, 1981.) One might assume that in the context of education teachers have their own social languages, and students have theirs. Furthermore, between and within countries students and teachers have different historically and locally constructed social languages, which they used in talking about instruction and learning.

The concept of social languages was utilized by R. Engeström (1995, 1999), for example, who studied doctor-patient interaction in a Finnish primary-health-care clinic, and Kärkkäinen (1999) who studied the discourse of teacher teams in teachers’ meetings. I used it in order to analyze suggestions as a reflection of the participants’ historically and culturally grounded ways of speaking about learning.

According to Leont’ev, there is no activity without an object, which gives it a determined direction and which is its true motive (Leont’ev, 1978)²³. Analyzing the object of the activity is a major component in many studies (e.g., Lambert, 1999; 2003; Foot, 2002). In searching for such an object, activity theory utilizes an activity-system model introduced in Chapter 3.4 (Engeström, 1987). I used the concept of the object in categorizing the focal content areas of the suggestions on the one hand, and in determining in which direction they were pointing on the other: practices inside or outside school.

A perspective can be understood as a point of view about something. Holland and Reeves (1996) examined how software-engineering students’ programming teams developed their perspectives within their contexts of action. They found out that team perspectives were contingent, historical and collective, and developed over the course of the project (Holland & Reeves, 1996).

Boland and Tenkasi explored and presented a process of perspective making and perspective taking in organizations, which they called communities of knowing. They argued that producing new knowledge in order to make innovations in modern firms required not only a strong perspective within a community but also the ability to take the perspective of another into account. The former they called

²³ See Chapter 3.4 for more on the concept of an object.

perspective making and the latter perspective taking (Boland & Tenkasi, 1995). I utilized the perspective concept in order to analyze what kinds of viewpoints the participants expressed in suggestions concerning the Finnish language.

A trajectory indicates the process of how a phenomenon evolves over time. Strauss used the concept in two senses: first as the course of any experienced phenomenon as it evolves over time, and secondly as the actions and interactions contributing to its evolution (Strauss, 1993). Kärkkäinen (1999) analyzed the planning process of teachers in collaborative curriculum-making and compared the processes of Finnish and American teacher teams in terms of a trajectory. I utilized the notion in following the evolving process of suggestion-making – the way in which a suggestion lived and was transformed by new perspectives through the discussions in the Culture Laboratory.

Hybridity, according to Long, refers to mixed end-products that are results of combinations of different cultural ingredients and repertoires (Long, 2001, pp. 51–52), while Gutiérrez et al. (1999) describe it as ubiquitous and existing on multiple levels of learning environments. Lee and Roth (2003) used the notion of a hybrid space to describe a space between scientific practices and language and local knowledge: it is an area in which new practices, things, and discourses emerge and are created.

Virkkunen (2006) suggested the notion of hybrid agency in his research on complex inter-firm collaboration in the context of software creation for pulp production involving the transition from production carried out by single organizations to a process based on long-term collaboration between specialized companies. This collaboration is rarely the linear execution of a plan, but is rather a long, complicated and contradictory process. Furthermore, traditional boundaries between producers and providers become blurred. A hybrid or double agency seemed to emerge in this new type of co-operation.

Tuunainen (2005) uses the notion of hybridity in the context of blending the academic and the entrepreneurial world. He describes it as a mixture of different actors, materials, and activities between universities and companies, and claims that practices in hybrid firms in which researchers act as company employers in spin-off firms are not as smooth and easy as may have been portrayed in the discussion on ‘entrepreneurial universities’. Interestingly, “boundary work”²⁴ becomes an important tool for research-entrepreneurs.

²⁴ He takes the concept of boundary work from Thomas Gieryn. Boundary work refers to rhetorics how scientists draw boundaries between science and non-science. Moreover, Tuunainen enriches the concept of boundary work by including locally constructed rules, regulations, and material and organizational arrangements in time and space.

I employ the notion of hybridity to conceptualize how suggestions can open up a learning space. Thus, hybridity is a mixture of different ideas and perspectives that could be used as a springboard for development work. Evolvment needs hybridity rather than fixed boundaries and ready-made solutions. It also reflects the blended and unaccomplished nature of suggestions and suggestion-making.

8.3 Units of analysis: suggestion utterance, episodes, and discussion

An utterance as the basic unit of speech was introduced by Bakhtin (1987). He conceptualized the realization of language in terms of individual concrete utterances, claiming that an utterance has a special marker: its addressivity – it is always addressed to someone. The boundaries of each concrete utterance are determined by the change of speaker (Bakhtin, 1987, pp. 60–102).

R. Engeström (1999) used an utterance as a unit of analysis and proposed that it served as an expanded unit of interaction. I exploited the notion of suggestion utterances in order to separate suggestions from other kinds of remarks the participants made during the Culture Laboratory. Suggestions are realized in the form of concrete individual suggestion utterances, which for practical reasons are simply called suggestions.

An episode is used as a concept in interaction analysis. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrision (2000), the general idea of a social episode refers to any coherent fragment of social life, which often has a recognizable beginning and ending. It consists of a sequence of actions that have some meaning for the participants. R. Engeström (1999) used an episode as the basic unit in her analysis of meaning in doctor-patient interaction.

J. Engeström (2002) also utilized the concept in his study on the development of an original new product and service concept in a Finnish Internet consulting and design company. He developed a three-level schema as his unit of analysis: a single discursive action, an episode, and what he called a discussion.

I employed ‘episode’ and ‘discussion’ as units of analysis to describe the process of suggestion-making. An episode was formed by a sequence of suggestions that were interlinked by explicit or implicit cross-references, and were focused on the same topic. Episodes then formed a discussion when concentrated on the same topic. Obviously suggestions, episodes and discussions were overlapping and intertwined due to the nature of the talk in the Culture Laboratory, but I have separated them for analytical purposes.

I began the analysis by gathering a content log of talk in the Culture Laboratory. I then focused on suggestions because it was striking how eagerly the students offered their suggestions in order to contribute to the development work. Furthermore, they caught the attention because the participants made numerous

suggestions throughout the Culture Laboratory, starting with the first and ending with the last session.

Secondly, I separated suggestions from other kinds of speaking turns among the participants at the same time as I defined the concept of a suggestion. Suggestions were linked to each other and formed a special kind of communication sphere. The boundaries between them were twofold. The main criterion was a change of speaker, but in a few cases another participant interrupted the speaker before she or he had finished. In this case the two utterances were fused into one suggestion utterance because the speaker had clearly put the suggestion forward. On the other hand, in some cases, the speaker was reporting on group work and included more than one suggestion in his or her turn, thus each suggestion was separated.

The third step focused on suggestions about the training – teaching, studying, instruments of learning, and organization – because I wanted to examine more closely the suggestions that had a direct impact on the training course. Thus, suggestions concerning the working practices in the Culture Laboratory were left out, as were those that did not openly affect the training course but tended to focus on subsequent vocational education, for example.

In the fourth step I identified the first suggestion made in the Culture Laboratory concerning the Finnish language. Then I classified all further suggestions concerning Finnish according to the concept of a perspective. This analysis formed the trajectory of these suggestions. This also enabled me to look more closely into the process of suggestion-making – how one suggestion lived and was transformed during the Culture Laboratory. Moreover, the process revealed which suggestions were supported and which ones were rejected.

As a result, there were 81 suggestions concerning the training in general, and 212 specifically concerning the Finnish language. I explored the former through the concepts of social language and object, and the latter through perspectives. This two-dimensional examination revealed diverse viewpoints and helped to bring out the potential hidden in the suggestions. I will first discuss the 81 general suggestions and then consider the process of the Finnish-language-focused ones.

8.4 Findings: the many suggestions and the suggestion-making process

8.4.1 Overview

A total of 81 suggestions about the training course were made during the eight Culture Laboratory sessions. The numbers varied from zero to 19, none being made during the second session. The content covered teaching and studying practices. Some of the suggestions concerned how teachers should teach: they should speak at a normal pace – not too slowly or too quickly – and should organize instructional games for the students. Others referred to the organization of the training, such as the length of the school days, and to the inclusion of students in the planning of the course. The students were active in making suggestions: they came up with 31 suggestions against the four put forward by the teachers.

Most of the suggestions (44) were made during the group work, and most of these were initiated by students – which is obvious from the content. Participants other than students and teachers made two suggestions. Some students were more active than others, even though the group work tended to facilitate the participation of all. Most of the suggestions (76) were addressed to the teachers, and five to the students. Many of them were explicitly formulated, including words such as ‘teachers’ and ‘teaching’ if addressed to teachers, and ‘students’ and ‘studying’ if addressed to students.

8.4.2 Suggestions and history

When a participant made a suggestion it could be assumed that it was a historically and culturally grounded way of speaking about learning and training – a historically evolved social language. Table 8.1 shows the emergence of four social languages. The 81 suggestions concerning the training were divided into eight categories on the basis of two factors: who was the active subject (either a teacher or a student in the group, or both), and what the suggestion referred to (practices inside or outside the school). Here I should point out that the suggestor was not necessarily the active subject of the suggestion: students made suggestions in which teachers were the active subjects and vice versa. For example, students pointed out that it was bad practice for the teachers to give homework on an irregular basis – many assignments on one day and none on another. On the other hand, the teachers expressed the opinion that the students could also learn from each other and not only from the teachers.

Table 8.1 The emergence of social languages

WHO WHERE	Teacher	Together	Student	Outsider: other students, other people	Total
Inside school	39 48.1% Traditional teaching	11 13.6% Teaching and studying together	13 16.0% Traditional studying	2 2.5%	65 80.2%
Outside school	–	1 1.2%	3 3.7% Learning	12 14.8% outside school	16 19.8%
Total	39 48.1%	12 14.8%	16 19.8%	14 17.3%	81 100%

As shown in Table 8.1, 80% of the suggestions referred to practices inside the school. Teachers were active subjects in almost 50% of them, and students in a little less than 20%. In almost 15% of them the subject was a joint activity involving both teachers and students, and in 17% the active subject was an ‘outsider’, such as the Finnish students in the school, other immigrants, or practitioners in the work-placement locations.

Four types of social language emerged in the analysis of the suggestions and their history: traditional teaching, traditional studying, teaching and studying together, and learning outside school. ‘Traditional teaching’ refers to classroom practices in which the teacher explains, speaks, teaches, and demonstrates in the classroom. Most of the suggestions (48%) employed this social language. Both teachers and students made suggestions reflecting ‘traditional teaching’. The following example 8.2 is characteristic of the ‘traditional teaching’ type of social language. It is from the sixth session, and the student expresses the wish that the teachers would explain more when the students did not understand. There were many suggestions indicating that the primary task of teachers was to explain unclear or new things to students.

Excerpt 8.2

Student: Yeah, the student didn’t understand what it was and what the teacher was saying, and it could be that the student didn’t understand this thing at all, and also the teacher should always explain important things, it means the main issues, and write them on the board.

Opiskelija: Joo, opiskelija ei ymmärtänyt, mitä se on siellä tullut ja mitä se opettaja sanoo, ja vois olla tämä asia kokonaan hän ei ymmärtänyt ja myös opettajan pitäis selittää aina tärkeä asiakin se tarkoittaa pääasiat ja kirjoittaa taululla.

I interpreted this example as ‘traditional teaching’ type of social language, because explaining new things reflects the traditional teaching task in classrooms. It was not surprising to me that the immigrant students wanted this type of teaching because teacher-centered teaching was more familiar to them than the student-centered practices employed at the College.

While ‘traditional teaching’ points toward teachers’ behavior, ‘traditional studying’ reflects the behavior of students. It depicts students sitting in a classroom and listening to teachers, writing notes, or asking questions, which the teacher answers. Furthermore, students do their homework. In this empirical material there were 13 ‘traditional studying’ type of suggestions (16%). The following example, from the seventh session, demonstrates this traditional student role and task: when the teacher explains, the student makes notes.

Excerpt 8.3

Student: Because if you already have an assignment paper, and the teacher explains, so I can always write it down, you should always write it down (....)

Opiskelija: Koska jos sinulla on moniste jo, ja opettaja selittää, niin aina voin kirjoittaa sinne muistiinpano, kun pitää aina kirjottaa (....)

I interpreted this example as a ‘traditional studying’ type of social language, because here the student indicated that when teachers teach students need to listen to the explanations and to make notes. Again, this type of student action was not surprising given the previous example and the number of suggestions in the ‘traditional teaching’ type of social language. In a way they go hand in hand: when teachers explain students need to listen and to make notes. However, I think that the student’s active subjectness is more emphasized than the teacher’s in this suggestion, and therefore it represents the more ‘traditional studying’ type of social language than the ‘traditional teaching’ type.

The third type of social language that emerged was ‘teaching and studying together’, which refers to classroom practices in which teachers and students act together. There were 12 (15%) suggestions in this category. Furthermore, only one suggestion reflected outside classroom activities (specifically, excursions). In example 8.4 below, which is from the fourth session, the student is referring to practices involving collaboration, which she liked because everybody had a chance to speak.

Excerpt 8.4

Student: We'd put an emphasis on group work, too, we like it because everybody has a chance to speak (....)

Opiskelija: Mekin korostimme tätä ryhmätyötä, tykkäämme tästä, koska kaikilla on mahdollisuus puhua (....)

I interpreted this example as 'teaching and studying together' type of social language because the student emphasized group work. This was a minor surprise to me because at the beginning of the Preparatory Immigrant Training the students usually shunned group work and wondered why such practices were employed at the College. On the other hand, those in the Culture Laboratory were now accustomed to more interactive study practices in their studies at the College: it was not the first phase of the training for them.

The fourth type of social language that emerged was 'learning outside school', representing suggestions in which students learn in their daily lives from the people around them or in the workplace during their practical training, for example. There were 15 suggestions in this category, which represents almost 20% of the total. The following example, from the fourth session, reflects this type of social language: the student emphasized learning during the work-placement periods.

Excerpt 8.5

Student: Then we think that learning in workplaces is important because workplace learning, because there we can improve our Finnish language skills, and then we get to know about professions and then we can talk to Finnish people.

Opiskelija: Sitten me luulemme, että työssäoppiminen on tärkeää, koska työssäoppiminen, koska sen takia me voimme parantaa meidän suomen kieli ja sitten tutustua ammattiin kanssa ja sitten voimme puhua suomalaisten kanssa.

I think this example reflects the 'learning outside school' category because the student supported learning in work places. This is a traditional type of learning practice in vocational education and training. However, it extended the boundaries of the Finnish-language classroom. The students thought that was a good way to get to know about different professions and to learn Finnish at work.

Next, I will present the two suggestions that fell outside this categorization of social language, both of which were made by students. In the first one, from the first session, the student said that she wanted to have more instruction together with Finnish students, and in the second, from the seventh session, the student suggested that teachers could invite other immigrants into the classroom to tell

‘their story’. I perceive both to open up a perspective that points away from the classroom on the one hand, and invites ‘outsiders’ in on the other. Furthermore, this could create hybridity in terms of instruction by transcending the boundaries of classrooms and the College.

Excerpt 8.6

Student: Why don’t we have working groups together with Finnish groups? (...)

Opiskelija: Miksi ei meillä on suomalaisten ryhmä työryhmän kanssa, miksi, minä en ymmärrä tällä hetkellä? (...)

Student: May I make a suggestion (...) there are lots of immigrants in Finland (...) is it possible to sometimes invite an immigrant here?

Opiskelija: Saanko mä sanoa yhden ehdotus (...) Suomessa on paljon maahanmuuttaja (...) onko mahdollista joskus on kutsuu tänne?

In my view, even though there were only two such suggestions, they both pointed in an important direction. Interaction between all students at the College is essential for all: it can strengthen good ethnic relations and support immigrant students’ learning. Inviting immigrants in would set a good example and therefore help students to cope with Finnish society.

Table (8.2) and Figure (8.1) below both demonstrate the categorization of the four types of social language in the different sessions of the Culture Laboratory.

Table 8.2 The types of social language in the different sessions

Social language	CL1	CL3	CL4	CL5	CL6	CL7	CL8	CL9	Total
Traditional teaching	3	3	8	4	3	4	1	13	39
Teaching and studying together	3	1	5	0	0	3	0	0	12
Traditional studying	2	1	2	0	0	7	0	1	13
Outside school	0	1	4	1	0	4	1	4	15
Total	8	6	19	5	3	18	2	18	79

All of the social-language types except ‘outside school learning’ were established in the first session and they were all used in the third and fourth as well as in the seventh sessions. Both ‘traditional teaching’ and ‘outside school learning’ were used in the fifth and eighth sessions, and only ‘traditional teaching’ in the sixth. All except ‘teaching and studying together’ featured in the ninth and final session.

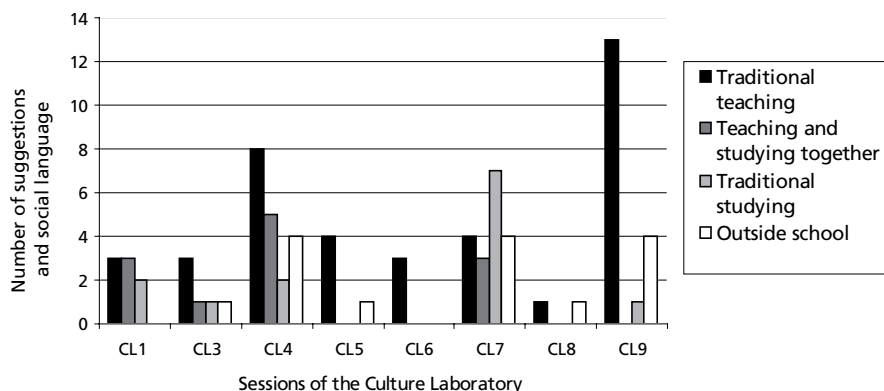


Figure 8.1 The types of social language in the different sessions

There was only one session, the sixth, in which only the social language of ‘traditional teaching’ was used, and at least two emerged in the other sessions. However, it is worth noting that ‘outside school learning’ suggestions did not increase after the students had completed their work-placement period: on the contrary, ‘traditional teaching’ suggestions were at the very top of the list. In their feedback the students said that they had learned many things during the work-placement period, especially about the Finnish language, but that they still wanted the teachers to teach them beforehand as it was not possible for them to learn about various matters during the course of the work placement. This reflects a traditional approach to learning and teaching.

8.4.3 *Suggestions and the future*

The general object of the Culture Laboratory was to develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training. However, another object emerged, as I have shown in Chapter seven: learning the Finnish language. There was a multitude of parallel, overlapping, and simulations activities in the Culture Laboratory. The students said that they were participating in the developmental work and the Culture Laboratory for the benefit of future students. Thus, each suggestion could be seen as a potential vehicle for refining the training, and could carry the potential for future progress.

The focal contents of the suggestions were classified into two groups: discussion about the practices inside school – such as teaching and studying – and discussion about life outside school – such as living in Finnish society. Modes of teaching and studying, which included instruments of learning and the organization of the training, accounted for 65 suggestions, which was 80% of the entire number (see Table 8.1). However, the objects of these suggestions also extended

beyond the school: through learning the Finnish language at the College, the students were better able to understand Finnish society and thus to manage better in their daily lives. The objects of 16 suggestions were directed towards Finnish society and working life.

What do these objects convey to us about the future orientation of the training? On the one hand, they were aimed at changing and improving it, and at helping students to cope with their everyday lives. Both teachers and students acknowledged this. On the other hand, a tension between these two objects was perceptible. Thus, the division into two objects opened up a hybrid learning space, which created an opportunity to integrate learning inside and outside of the school. This is reflected in example 8.7 (from the ninth session): a teacher was reporting on some group work and a student had suggested that teachers could sometimes teach at school as if it was at work.

Excerpt 8.7

Teacher: Well, in number seven [number of the task] just that sometimes you could teach at school just as if it was at work, for example, some drama plus a visit, that's all we have.

Opettaja: No kun meil on siin seiskas vaan, että joskus koulussa voisi opettaa niin kuin oltaisiin töissä esim. draama plus opintokäynti, siin ei oo muuta.

In example 8.8, which is also from the ninth session, one student says that you cannot learn everything in the classroom and that people outside can also teach students valuable things. This suggestion was connected to the topic of everyday habits in Finland.

Excerpt 8.8

Student: Well, sometimes we could learn from ordinary people, not everything can be learned in lessons, I think so.

Opiskelija: No se vois oppia ihan tavallinen ihmisten kanssa, kaikkee ei vois oppia oppitunnill, minun mielest.

The tension between the objects created a learning space, which offered possibilities and opportunities for students and teachers to learn. This was important for the immigrant students who said that it was difficult to establish relations with Finnish people.

What happened to all these suggestions is also interesting point. Were there any changes in classroom practices? This was a subject the chief interventionist

brought up in the sixth session: did the suggestions matter? Indeed, the teachers had taken into account some of the ones that students had made: one of them referred to her own subject matter and the suggestions she had tried to take into account: “(...) that what suggestions the students have made, then we have tried to follow them and implement them.” Another teacher pointed out how one student’s suggestion about experimental training for immigrants aiming at a certain profession was positively taken up by the management of the school. Students also commented on how the teachers had changed their lessons. For instance, one student said “(...) when we talked about how there should be more IT [computer lessons], now our teachers do it (...)” Furthermore, the same student recalled how the teachers had now organized more trips, as was suggested in the Culture Laboratory. Suggestions therefore did matter.

8.4.4 *Suggestions as a process*

I will now return here to the suggestions concerning the Finnish language because they seemed to form an interesting chain. The analysis of these suggestions and the perspectives linked to the topic in the Culture Laboratory shows another kind of approach, and a suggestion is seen in a slightly different light in that it is complemented by a perspective. The initial suggestion remains, but it is supplemented by another point of view, and this reveals the process. I focused on the process of one particularly important suggestion in order to better understand the trajectory. Figure 8.2 shows the model for this analysis. The first step was to recognize the new suggestion, and the next to establish whether the next one also concerned the Finnish language. If it did, was there a fresh perspective, or was it the same?

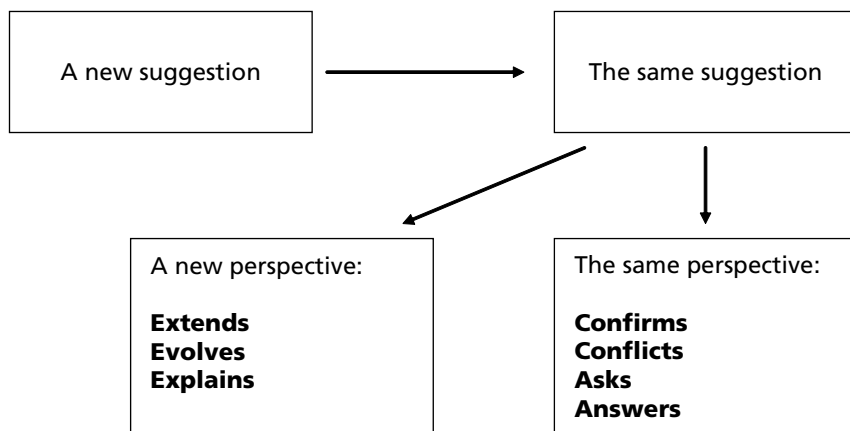


Figure 8.2 Suggestions concerning the Finnish language: the process

Seven perspectives on the Finnish language emerged, three of which were the expanding type, and four the maintaining type. Perspective-expanding suggestions – extending, elaborating, and explaining – throw new light on previous suggestions, whereas perspective-maintaining suggestions – confirming, conflicting, asking, and answering – do not.

Categorization of the different perspectives follows, and Figure 8.3 below shows the extent of their occurrence. Examples from the empirical material are given later in conjunction with the analysis of the trajectory of these suggestions.

Perspective-expanding suggestions:

- **A new suggestion** is a suggestion made for the first time. It has not been discussed before, nor does it have direct reference to any other suggestions.
- **An extending suggestion** extends or enlarges the suggestion that preceded it. It offers a new perspective on a previous suggestion.
- **An elaborating suggestion** challenges a previous suggestion through problematic expressions and opens up a new perspective.
- **An explaining suggestion** gives reasons for a previous suggestion and initiates another perspective.

Perspective maintaining suggestions:

- **A confirming suggestion** supports or repeats a previous suggestion. It does not include minimum feedback markers such as “yeah”, which could indicate that the person is listening to the suggestions but does not necessarily support it.
- **A conflicting suggestion** is a rejection of a previous suggestion.
- **An asking suggestion** requests more information or assurance about a previous suggestion. The difference between an elaborating and an asking suggestion is that the latter does not open up a new perspective whereas the former does.
- **An answering suggestion** gives a response or more information concerning the previous suggestion, or revises previous suggestion.

The division of the seven perspectives is shown in Figure 8.3. There were 212 suggestions concerning the Finnish language. The most common perspectives were confirming (over 33%), while conflicting perspectives were the most rare. There were 90 instances of perspective-expanding suggestions (43%), and thus 121 perspective-maintaining suggestions, or 57% of total.

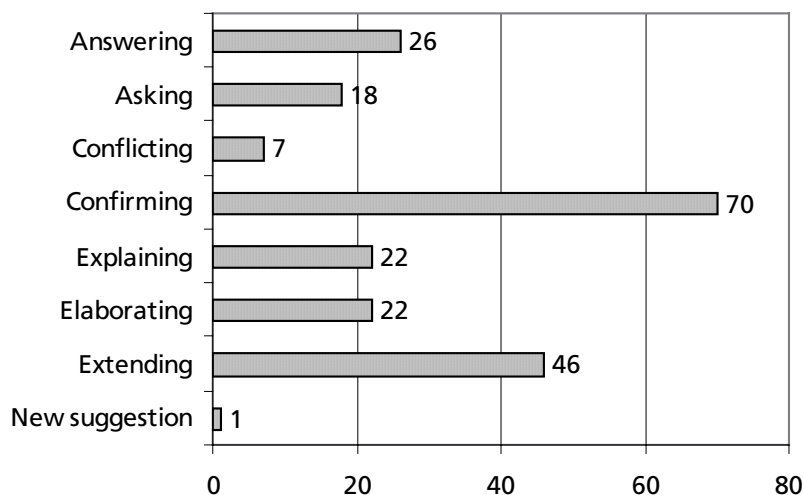


Figure 8.3 The types of suggestion perspective

On the one hand, perspective-expanding suggestions are potentially helpful in development work, and at the same time they feed the process and even escalate it. On the other hand, perspective-maintaining suggestions, especially confirming suggestions, created an atmosphere in the Culture Laboratory in which new ideas flourished. Even though the confirming suggestions did not open up new perspectives, they seemed to be strategically important to the process. I therefore examined them more closely.

The students articulated 26 confirming suggestions, the teachers 27, the chief interventionist 12, and others five. Thus, both students and teachers were active in this respect. This broke up the traditional interaction and power relations between students and teachers, according to which teachers mostly ‘approve’ and support what students propose. Figure 8.4 is an illustration of a hybrid power relation in the Culture Laboratory.

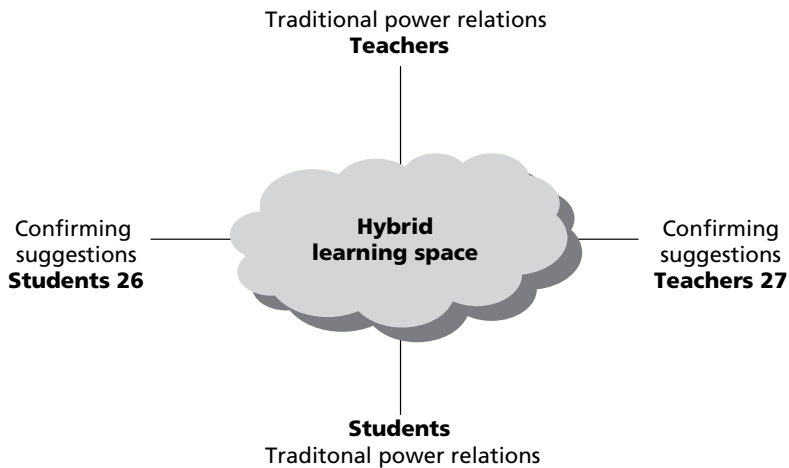


Figure 8.4 Confirming suggestions creating a hybrid learning space

Figure 8.4 illustrates how confirming perspectives create a hybrid learning space because the rich number of confirming suggestions seemed to result in the breaking up of traditional power relations between teachers and students. The students took the teacher’s traditional role of a supporter and acceptor of students’ ideas. They made almost as many confirming suggestions as the teachers, thereby blending students’ and teachers’ tasks in the classroom.

Figure 8.5 below shows the distribution of confirming suggestions in the different sessions of the Culture Laboratory. No confirming suggestions concerning the Finnish language arose in the sixth, seventh or eighth session.

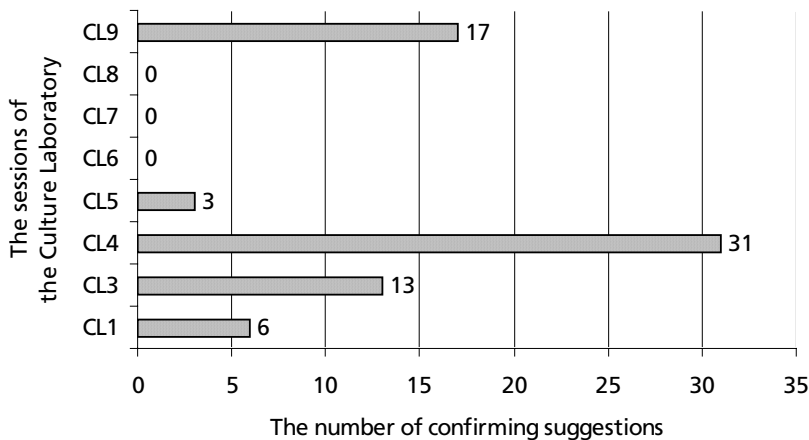


Figure 8.5 The distribution of confirming suggestions in the Culture Laboratory

Thus confirming suggestions were made at both the beginning and the end of the Culture Laboratory. Furthermore, when there were lots of suggestions concerning the Finnish language there were also more confirming types of suggestion, as was the case in the fourth session.

The following Table 8.3 shows the overall trajectory of the suggestions concerning the Finnish language. The trajectory illustrates the process: how the suggestion arose, was responded to, transformed, and concluded. It also outlines the evolving and dialogic nature of the conversations in the Culture Laboratory.

Table 8.3 The trajectory of suggestions concerning the Finnish language

No. of suggestions	Episodes (No. of suggestions in an episode)	Discussion	Contents and topics	CL
1–9	1 (9)	A1	More Finnish lessons	1
10–15	2 (6)		Change of Finnish-language teacher	1
16–18	3 (3)		Finnish is important for further training	3
19–23	4 (5)	B1	Condition of admission: better Finnish language level	3
24–34	5 (11)	C1	Correcting student's language	3
35–38	6 (4)	D1	Condition of admission: language test. It is difficult that the group is so heterogeneous	3
39–47	7 (9)	D2	Placement test at the beginning , heterogeneous group	3
48–52	8 (5)	D3	Heterogeneous group, students also learn from one another	3
53–57	9 (5)	C2	Correcting student's language	3
58	10 (1)	E1	Content and language integrated instruction	3
59–65	11 (7)	C3	Correcting student's language	3
66–71	12 (6)	A2	More Finnish language, inflections	4
72–73	13 (2)	E2	Content and language integrated lessons	4
74–81	14 (8)	A3	More Finnish language, inflections	4
82–87	15 (6)		Written language and spoken language	4
88–91	16 (4)	A4/ E3	More Finnish language, integrated lessons or inflections	4
92–95	17 (4)	F1	What is Finnish language teaching?	4
96–103	18 (8)	E4	Content and language integrated teaching	4
104–117	19 (14)		How many credits are there for Finnish in the curriculum?	4
118–123	20 (6)	A5	More Finnish: expanding vocabulary and preparedness from comprehensive school	4
124–129	21 (6)	F2	What is Finnish language teaching?	4
130–139	22 (10)		Whole year of Finnish, then? What should the student be able to do?	4
140–146	23 (7)	G1	How to learn more Finnish: one has to study hard	4
147–154	24 (8)	E5	Why are other lessons not good for Finnish learning, integrated learning, teachers' ideas	4
155–158	25 (4)	G2	How to learn more Finnish?	4
159	26 (1)	B2	Condition of admission: a better Finnish language level	4
160–163	27 (4)	G3	How to learn more Finnish?	4
164	28 (1)	B3	Condition of admission: a better Finnish language level	4
165–168	29 (4)	G4	How to learn more Finnish?	4
169–170	30 (2)	A6	More Finnish, it is involved all the time	5
171–177	31 (7)	G5	How to learn more Finnish? Integration	5
178–179	32 (2)	H1	Did you learn Finnish during the practical training?	8
180–186	33 (7)		Speaking one's own mother tongue and Finnish	8
187–189	34 (3)	H2	Did you learn Finnish during the practical training?	9
190–194	35 (5)		Learning language in school or outside school?	9
195–205	36 (11)		What helped you the during practical training?	9
206–208	37 (3)		Evaluating the CL sessions	9
209–212	38 (4)		Finnish grammar	9

The teachers made 80 suggestions (38%), while the students made almost as many, 77 (36%). The chief interventionist made 28 (13%), and 15 were the result of group work. Other staff made three suggestions and the researcher made nine. The whole process started when one student made a new suggestion (in excerpt 8.9) that there was too little Finnish-language instruction at the College.

There were 38 episodes in six sessions, the length varying from one to 14 suggestions. Episodes turned into discussions when the same topic was further talked about in the same or the subsequent Culture Laboratory sessions. The total number of discussions was eight, varying in length between two and six episodes. However, not all episodes turned into a discussion: some topics that were only discussed on one occasion. I labeled the discussions from A to H according to the content and topic, and separated the episodes by numbers. For example, A1 was the first episode in discussion A, A2 was the second episode in discussion A, and so forth.

Excerpt 8.9 below is from discussion A, which I called “More Finnish language”. It consisted of six episodes (A1–A6) and 35 suggestions. I will not give all 35 here, but will focus on different perspectives that illustrate the process and flow.

The new suggestion is extended and then confirmed by other students, as shown in example (1–3, see the example for the numbers in parenthesis). The discussion continued in the fourth session. Again, the students placed heavy emphasis on the importance of learning Finnish in the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The teacher reacted to this by making an evolving suggestion (4). This was supported and explained by another student (5). Then the teacher extended the suggestion (6): foreigners have to learn the different inflections by heart. The topic continued: the students wanted more Finnish lessons. The teacher repeated her suggestion (7) that classroom practice could be changed so that professional teachers would cover the inflections, or that the lessons could be better integrated. By integration she meant that a vocational teacher and a Finnish-language teacher would plan, implement, and evaluate the lessons together. This suggestion had been brought up earlier. Discussion E focuses on this particular topic. A student again brought up the same point: we need more Finnish lessons. The teachers offered other perspectives. One of them further suggested (8) that students could learn ten new words a day, and another extended this suggestion (9), which concentrated on vocabulary, to cover conceptions and the all-around education provided for children in Finnish comprehensive schools. The topic was brought up for the last time by students in the fifth session: we need more Finnish. The teacher confirmed her previous response that all the training was in Finnish (10).

Excerpt 8.9

A new suggestion (1)

Student 2: And in this school here there's only a little Finnish language (...) but learning Finnish first is important (....)

An extending suggestion (2)

Student 1: We can, we need to have more lessons to learn the Finnish language.

A confirming suggestion (3)

Student 9: More Finnish.

An evolving suggestion (4)

Teacher 3: Should the vocational teachers always give examples then. Of course they could give the basic form of the words, genitive in the singular (....)

An explaining suggestion (5)

Student 14: At the same time then we'd study Finnish language.

An extending suggestion (6)

Teacher 3: And the foreigner has to remember what the ending is and what kind of ending is affixed to what kind of stem.

A confirming suggestion (7)

Teacher 3: Then it must be integrated instruction or then instruction that you [vocational teachers] also learn the inflections of words and tenses and types of verbs.

An extending suggestion (8)

Teacher 3: I've always said that the vocabulary, it's what it is, it tends to be rather limited and narrow, so if you could increase it by ten words a day.

An extending suggestion (9)

Teacher 2: Vocabulary is more than just words, if we think that Finnish vocational instruction is based on the Finnish comprehensive school (...) and then the same kinds of modes and other things like that (...) when you learn the words and other things at the same time you kind of learn how these things are understood in Finland.

A confirming suggestion (10)

Teacher 2: I still say that, well, the Finnish language is involved in the instruction all the time. And I think this is also something that is worth discussing and thinking about, that we don't study these subjects in other languages, that you learn in every subject how to utilize the Finnish language.

Uusi (1)

Opiskelija 2: Ja tässä koulussa on nyky on Suomen kieltä on vähän (...) mutta ensin on tärkeä suomen kieltä (....)

Laajeneva (2)

Opiskelija 1: Me voimme, me tarvitsemme saada enemmän tunteja suomen kielessä oppiminen.

Vahvistava (3)

Opiskelija 9: Lisää suomen kieltä.

Kehittelevä (4)

Opettaja 3: Pitäskö sitte ammattiaineiden opettajien niinku ottaa aina esimerkiksi, kyllähän varmaan ammattiaineiden opettajat vois aina antaa ne sanojen perusmuodot, yksikön genetiivin (....)

Selittävä (5)

Opiskelija 14: Samassa opiskelemme suomen kieltä.

Laajeneva (6)

Opettaja 3: Ja ulkomaalaisen pitää muistaa, mikä pääte, millanen, millaseen vartaloon liitetään millanenkin pääte.

Vahvistava (7)

Opettaja 3: Sit sen pitää olla integroitu opetus tai sitte se opetus, että te opettlette [tarkoittaa ammattiaineiden opettajia] myös sanojen taivutusmuodot ja aikamuodot ja verbityypit.

Laajeneva (8)

Opettaja 3: Mä aina sitä kans sanonu että sanasto, että se on niinku se mikä on, tuppaa olemaan aika pieni ja suppea, että jos te sitä saatte sen 10 sanaa päivässä lisätty.

Laajeneva (9)

Opettaja 2: Sanastoki on muutakin kun ihan sanoja, jos me aatellaan, että suomalainen ammatillinen opetus lepää suomalaisen peruskoulun pohjalla (...) jonkin näköset tavat ja muut tämmöset näin (...) ett sillon niinku opettelet niitä sanoja ja muuta niin sä samalla opettelet niinku sitä, sitä käsitystä mitä näistä asioista on Suomessa.

Vahvistava (10)

Opettaja 2: Mä vielä toistan, että kyllä se suomen kieli on koko ajan kaikessa opetuksessa läsnä ja se ois mun mielestä semmonen joka kannattais nyt kans ehkä keskustella ja pohtii, eihän me opiskella muilla kielillä näitä aineita, että suomen kielen käyttämään oppimistahan on kaikilla oppiaineilla.

This showed how one discussion (A) progressed, and how suggestions changed in different sessions. It started with a student's suggestion that there was too little Finnish-language teaching, and ended up with the teacher's suggestion that the Finnish language was involved in all of the training. The suggestions made in between illuminated the various perspectives on this important topic, and expanded the idea of Finnish-language learning. For example, the participants considered where language learning could take place, who would teach it, and how it could be studied.

As table 8.3 shows, all the other discussions (B-H) were intertwined with this central theme. Furthermore, the students offered other solutions to language problems, for example that one condition of admission should be a good command of Finnish (discussion B), and another should be a language test (discussion D). Teachers should correct mistakes in students' language (discussion C). For their part, the teachers suggested the integrated teaching of both content and language (discussion E). They also asked the students what Finnish-language teaching actually consisted of in the light of the fact that all of the training was conducted in Finnish, and what made Finnish-language lessons so desirable (discussion F). The participants also talked about how to learn Finnish (discussion G). The episodes that were individual and thus did not constitute a discussion also concerned the topic of learning the Finnish language.

8.5 Conclusions concerning suggestions

My first specific research questions concerned what a suggestion was, what kinds of suggestions were made and who made them. I found that the suggestions covered the training, such as learning and studying in school, and that the students were active: they made most of the suggestions either individually or during the

group work. This implies that the Culture Laboratory offered them both the opportunity and the space to participate in the development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training, and through this these immigrant students experienced that their view – their voice – was appreciated and listened to. Thus, the Culture Laboratory increased multivocality.

Furthermore, this kind of participatory method supported students who were threatened by marginalization. It is often said that immigrant students need to adapt to Finnish society, and the official immigrant policy emphasizes an integration approach (for more on the Finnish immigration policy see Chapter 2). It was found in the Culture Laboratory that immigrant students contributed well to the development process when they were given the opportunity to participate, even though there were many disturbances (see Chapter 7).

The second specific research question focused on suggestions as a reflection of historically grounded ways of speaking about learning, and on their hidden potential. Both teachers and students primarily used the ‘traditional teaching’ type of social language (see Bakhtin, 1981) when they made suggestions (concerning how to explain new issues to students, for example). Thus, both teachers’ and students’ suggestions predominantly reflected traditional ways of speaking about teaching and studying. In the light of previous research (e.g., Jackson, 1990; Lortie, 1975), this finding is by no means new: a school appears to be a place with strong traditions and high resistance to change.

However, the way of learning that is characteristic of vocational institutions – ‘learning outside school’ – also emerged in the suggestions, as did ‘teaching and studying together’ (cf. Resnick, 1987; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). This emphasizes the importance of transcending the classroom and school boundaries, especially in immigrant training because immigrant students are not familiar with Finnish everyday and working life – as they pointed out during the discussion.

Furthermore, daily life offers a meaningful and fruitful source of learning in opening up a new horizon and a hybrid space.

The aim of the Culture Laboratory was to develop the training, and most of the suggestions were directed towards this (Leont’ev, 1978). The reason why these suggestions came up might have been the students’ wish to make their previous and current leaning experiences noticeable and visible. This could provide them with a more solid basis on which to progress with their studies. The teachers’ suggestions, in turn, might also have been aimed at helping the students to succeed at the school. However, a tension between the suggestions directed at life in school and those directed at life outside was observed, and both teachers and students shared and acknowledged this. This tension opened up a hybrid space and offered a learning opportunity to both teachers and students.

Hybridity is not a commonly used concept in educational studies even though, as Gutiérrez et al. (1999) have pointed out, it is ubiquitous and it can enrich and expand learning. This finding is confirmed in the analysis of the Culture Laboratory.

The third specific research question concerned the process of suggestion-making. In the analysis, one dominant topic – suggestions concerning the Finnish language – was followed throughout the Culture Laboratory. It was found that a simple suggestion started an innovative, complex process. It was not necessarily just an individual, separate idea produced by someone who wanted to improve the training, but triggered a fruitful discussion process. Furthermore, suggestions served as vehicles for students and teachers aiming to improve their daily practices. This expands the traditional concept of a suggestion as an individual contribution to an expansive cycle, and reflects the collective nature of the suggestion-making process. Elaborating, exploring, and extending suggestions offered the potential for expansive learning (Engeström, 1987).

Furthermore, a single suggestion sometimes triggered an escalating and cumulative process or chain. On the one hand, there was a need for students to learn, and they had fresh perspectives and ideas related to the training, and on the other hand, the teachers had the power to implement the suggestions, and the project staff contributed to the development work. All three parties were required and they all had complementary needs and competences. This broke up the traditional power relations between students and teachers.

The general research question concerned the potential of suggestions for intercultural learning and for the development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. I believe that teachers should pay more attention to students' suggestions about their training. Suggestions open up new perspectives on everyday work, and a new hybrid space for learning. They are a sounding board for future improvements. They reveal something about a person's history and way of talking about learning. Their contents shed light on the current state of the training, and participation in the developmental process could empower immigrant students. In any case, as was demonstrated here, suggestions matter.

What, then, opened up the hybrid learning space in the Culture Laboratory, and on what preconditions did this happen? The analysis showed that a single suggestion started an innovative process of suggestion-making. Thus, initial suggestions should be heard and listened to. Furthermore, it seemed that the large number of confirming suggestions (one third of all suggestion types) was one precondition. They helped to create a fruitful and trustful atmosphere, and they broke down traditional power relations between students and teachers. Another precondition was that students' suggestions mattered: the teachers started to take them into account and changed their practices. The students therefore noticed that their contribution was important to the development work. Thirdly, the Culture

Laboratory method seemed to be a precondition: it encouraged the participation of all and it combined and complemented the practical knowledge of students and teachers with the theoretical knowledge of the researchers.

The students not only made numerous suggestions concerning the Preparatory Immigrant Training, they also reflected on the learning practices of the College. This type of reflective feedback and talk produced delightful insights into these learning practices. Most students in Finnish comprehensive schools probably take these practices for granted, but it is interesting to know what typical Finnish cultural artifacts these students pointed out. This is what I will consider next – namely the frequency and ubiquitous state of ‘paper’ in the practices of learning and in the practices of the Culture Laboratory.

9 Learning in “Paperland” – ‘paper’ as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory

9.1 “Learning in Finland means many papers”

The immigrant students pointed out that learning in Finland was all about paper as the quotation in the title shows²⁵:

Student: Learning in Finland means many papers, Paperland in Finland there is a lot, a land that uses lots of paper.

Chief interventionist: I see, lots of paper.

Student: Yeah, in school there is a lot of paper, many assignments, many similar, for example, in our home country it's not like that (....)

Opiskelija: Oppiminen Suomessa on paljon paperimaa, Suomessa on paljon paperimaa.

Vetäjä: Ahaa, paljon paperia.

Opiskelija: Joo, koulussa on paljon paperia, paljon tehtäviä paljon samanlaisia, esimerkiksi meidän kotimaassa ei ole samanlaisia (....)

The focus in this chapter is on learning tools, and especially on the use of paper as a mediating artifact in the Finnish learning culture as reflected in the practices of the Culture Laboratory. I will first introduce my research questions and the empirical material I employed then I will consider ‘paper’ as a mediating artifact. Section three describes the conceptual framework of the analysis and section four the analytical tools. The findings are presented in section five, and the conclusions in the final section.

²⁵ I use the phrase “Paperland” as an expression, which one immigrant student used, referring to the country where studying and teaching practices involve many papers.

The general research question addressed in this chapter concerns how ‘paper’ functions as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory. The specific research questions are as follows:

- How was paper used in the College, and in the practices of the Culture Laboratory?
- What kind of paper trails emerged?
- How was power manifested in the use of paper?

The empirical material consists of all nine sessions of the Culture Laboratory. The initial analysis covered all the sessions, but three (the first, sixth and ninth) were selected for more specific analysis.

9.2 Paper as a mediating artifact

I maintain that paper is an essential and ubiquitous artifact in Finnish vocational learning practices. Children in Finnish schools are socialized in practices that are paper-dependent and paper-dominated. This involves producing and using paper in various forms such as textbooks and study materials. Thus, adolescents and adults who enter vocational institutions after comprehensive school are already very accustomed to the ubiquity of paper, and take the ‘paper culture’ for granted. This is equally true of teachers, who have mainly taught majority students in Finland. However, immigrant students have to cope with a new language and physical environment, and in particular with new learning practices mediated through talk and text. This means that papers are read and written, shared and delivered, copied and carried, talked about and referred to – as well as lost and looked for – almost constantly. What if your previous learning practices have not included paper at all, or if the use of paper has varied? This encountering situation could become a source of confrontation as well as of empowerment for immigrant students, as this study shows. Furthermore, their experiences could offer a good springboard for renewing educational practices because they bring fresh and different insights, and question the dominant modes.

The ubiquity and dominance of paper in schools is not a new phenomenon in Finland, or in other countries. The evolution of writing systems, the expansion of literacy and, later, the development of printing technologies has enhanced humans’ capacities in a fundamental way. However, teaching and studying practices that were dependent on texts and books were already criticized by Dewey (1898/1975) when he wrote about the paradox of higher education: on the one hand “slavish dependence on books” and on the other hand “real inability to use them effectively.” When students are told to find something about a new object,

their first demand is for a book to read about it, Dewey continues, and they exhibit a sense of helplessness when they are told that they must go to the object itself and let it tell its own story (Dewey, 1898/1975, p. 265).

Engeström (1987) distinguishes between the "activity of learning" and the "activity of school-going." On the latter he writes:

[T]ext takes the role of the object. This object is molded by pupils in a curious manner: the outcome of their activity is above all the same text reproduced and modified orally or in written form (summarized, classified, organized, recombined, and applied in a strictly predetermined manner to solve well-structured, 'closed' problems). (Engeström, 1987, p. 101.)

He (1987, p. 103) continues, "The object of learning activity cannot be reduced to text." Fichtner (1984) and Olson (1994) also point out the strong, historical connection between text and schooling; for centuries schools have tended to be places in which students learn by receiving or reproducing relevant texts. Miettinen (1990) gives a historical analysis of teaching and learning in American and European classroom traditions. He points out that many analysts have, from different theoretical approaches, criticized school learning based on memorizing and reproducing school texts. Thus, the criticism is that in school it has traditionally been more important to learn a particular text than to see and to learn from 'the real world' about complex questions and phenomena students see and confront in their daily lives in society.

In their study on artifacts, tools, and classrooms McDonald, Le, Higgins and Podmore (2005) analyzed three different classroom events in which material artifacts were employed, in two of which paper was used. One of these involved a reading task with five-year-old children and the use of a flip chart, and the other concerned a textbook being used with Vietnamese university students studying the English language. The third event included primary-school children working together with a jigsaw puzzle. According to the researchers, "The three artifacts had a common effect on human functioning. They acted as controllers of behavior, demanding attention and channeling action. The artifacts carried a meaning, including messages about their use."

From the perspective of my study, this is an interesting finding because immigrant students have probably been socialized into using different kinds of artifacts in their learning, or even similar kinds of artifacts such as textbooks, but the meaning, messages, and practices those artifacts carry compared to the ones used in Finland remains a mystery. Even though I am not focusing on the messages written on the papers used in the Culture Laboratory, I think that it is important to take into account cultural artifacts or tools in the area of in-

tercultural learning and competence: when people move from one country to another they immediately collide with the material artifacts and tools in the new environment. As Miller (1998) stated, material things matter. Thus, it is essential that people learn to use, manage, and produce the material world around them as well as the language and practices. However, I am not claiming that the material and ideal worlds are separated. As Cole wrote, based on Ilyenkov's work, cultural artifacts have a dual nature, including the material and the ideal (Cole, 1996, pp. 117, 124). For example, I have sometimes received creased and folded papers from students applying to study positions at the College, and have found out that these messy papers were their final school reports from Finnish comprehensive school. In the cultural environment in which they are living the meaning and the message of this final report is a crucial material artifact that students need to take good care of because it matters when they are applying to study elsewhere.

The relationship between talking and writing is an intriguing one. As Säljö (1988, p. 181) writes, understanding the learning processes in modern societies is intimately related to understanding the cognitive consequences of the domination of the written word as a means of instruction and knowledge production. Furthermore, this raises a complex question about the relationship between talk and text, and between oral and written cultures. Ong (1982, pp. 7, 8) states that orality is a native form of language, and that talk is primary in relation to the written language. People who have learned to live in a robust written cultural environment such as Finland may easily forget this perspective. On the other hand, Olson (1994) writes that the relationship between orality and literacy is reciprocal: what we say has an effect on what we write just as what we write has an effect on what we say and think. Oral- and text-based cultures affect not only the mind and thinking of the people who have lived or constantly live in them, but also their remembering and learning practices (Olson, 1994; Ong, 1982).

School-based learning is a Nordic tradition in vocational education and training, which is more work-based in some other countries (Lasonen, 1996). However, it would be misleading to suggest that it is restricted to school-based practices in Finland, or in other Nordic countries. Work-based learning, which involves regular work placement is an important part of the process, although assignments such as writing a reflective diary about workplace learning experiences are usually included in the practical periods.

It is paradoxical that in this age of computers and the Internet the consumption of paper has increased: the quest for paperless offices and hospitals, not to mention classrooms, has not succeeded very well. Why do people tend to keep their papers and even to produce more? In addressing this question Sellen and Harper (2002) claim that it is because paper and computers have different "af-

fordances"²⁶, and that people are reluctant to give up paper because it works well in some situations: many would rather read long documents on paper than on screen. The workers in the knowledge industry Sellen and Harper studied used paper when they were merging, reviewing, reading and comparing documents, and in social processes surrounding collaborative authoring. For example, when the reviewers sat around a table everybody could see the papers (e.g., a report) that were under discussion, while documents on a lap-top are only visible to the person sitting in front of the screen. Henderson (1999) studied industrial designers and found that they used both computers and papers in their work: mixed-use practices involving mixed and differential use of paper and electronic options were quite frequent, and offered useful solutions.

Paper tends to be a special cultural artifact in Finland. The forest industry and the production of paper have been and still are crucial factors in Finnish economic life (Metsäteollisuus, 2004). Moreover, the literacy of Finnish young adults is top-class according to the Programme for International Student Assessment of the OECD (PISA, 2003): most of Finns – 85% of adults – read one or more newspapers daily, according to the National Media Study (Kansallinen mediatutkimus, 2004). Furthermore, a national report on the book trade in Finland (Stockmann, Bengtsson, & Repo, 2002) reveals that the publication and sale of books, as well as the numbers of books borrowed from public libraries per inhabitant, are among the highest in international terms. Thus, is it not surprising that paper and books are interdependent and frequent means of instruction in schools in Finland, or that immigrant students are confronted by this robust 'paper culture' when they enter educational institutions. Moreover, the evolvement of the written language has been part of the nation-building process. Paper seems to have a symbolic meaning in Finnish society: transparency and openness could be considered part of the democratic process. However, the use of paper also feeds bureaucratic practices, and the need to write and fill out papers causes stress to anyone not familiar with them. The stability, durability and legal force of the written word engenders trust in it: "What is written is true" is a conception that is strongly rooted in the collective mind of the Finnish people. For example, Finnish court practices were extremely tied to textual practices before the procedural reform of the early 1990s (Haavisto, 2002, p. 11).

²⁶ Affordance is the concept introduced by the ecological psychologist Gibson in his theory of affordances. He states, "The affordances of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill." Affordance "implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment." (Gibson 1986, p. 127, italics in the original.)

The ubiquity of paper as a frequent learning medium, however, causes concern among immigrant students from countries where it is a scarce resource and thus uncommon in schools, or where learning practices involve textbooks and notebooks, not papers as such. Thereby, questions arise concerning how to read papers, how to write them, how to take care of them, and how to organize them.

9.3 The conceptual framework: artifacts, the paper trail, actions, objects, scripts, and power

According to activity theory, human activity is historically developed and culturally mediated (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). The elements of an activity system include the object, the outcome and the subject, instruments, rules, community, and the division of labor (Engeström, 1987). I am using the notion of paper here as a historically and culturally developed artifact in Finnish vocational learning practices. It takes different forms, including photocopies, texts, books, notebooks, assignments, reports, and articles.

A paper trail could be perceived as a chain-like process of paper-related actions. Activity and actions are connected yet distinct in activity theory. An action could be perceived of as a basic element of the human activity in which it is realized. As Leontev (1978, p. 64) writes, “Human activity does not exist except in the form of action or a chain of actions.” Activity is regarded as collective, object-related and motive driven, unlike actions, which are individual and goal-oriented. Actions can be part of different activities separated by their objects. Activity is regarded as a system, not merely a reaction, with its own internal transitions, transformations, and development. (Lenot’ev 1978, pp. 52, 62–64.)

Paper-related actions can be explained in advance and they can be traced afterwards. This means, for example, that we know who has handled papers, where they have been, what has been done to them, where they are stored, and so on. I use the notion of a paper trail here to track the paper-related actions of students and teachers. Figure 9.1 depicts a typical paper trail for a learning task on the general level. This example illustrates what is probably the most common way in which teachers in vocational schools use paper as a learning tool.

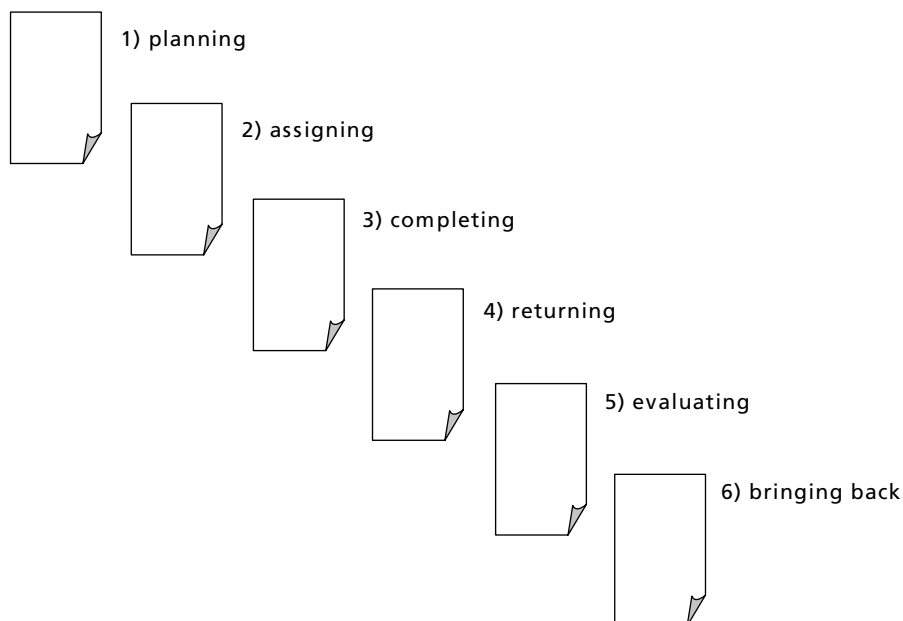


Figure 9.1 A typical paper trail of a learning task

When teachers plan and prepare a learning task they carry out a 'planning' action, and then deliver the task to the students in an 'assigning' action. The students complete the task – a 'completing' action – and give their work back to the teacher – a 'returning' action. When the teacher evaluates the work she or he completes an 'evaluating' action, and finally gives it back to the students in a 'bringing back' action. Each paper-related action in this paper trail could be considered part of the learning activity. Paper trails may also involve other cultural artifacts such as reading a book, seeing a movie or listening to some music and writing about it.

This type of analysis of interaction with material artifacts in classrooms is not very common: as McDonald and others (2005) state, previous classroom studies have mostly concentrated on discursive interaction between teachers and students. This investigation into a paper trail and paper-related actions thus contributes to the study of human-artifact interaction in classrooms and in working life because it expands the analysis. As Miller (1998, p. 6) put it, studying and analyzing material culture offers great potentials given the diversity of material forms. Teaching at the College was mostly mediated through talk and text.

According to Leont'ev, the object of an activity gives it a determined direction and is its true motive (Leont'ev, 1978). The activity-system model mentioned above could be applied in searching for such an object. I have used this notion to illustrate the fact that paper, a tool of learning, is sometimes transformed into an

object of learning thereby revealing the multiple activities inherent in the Culture Laboratory²⁷.

A script could be described as a historically evolved artifact that has a rule-like character: scripts “codify and regulate standard procedures in repeatedly occurring cultural situations” (Engeström, 1992, p. 79). I use the notion of a script here to illustrate the script-like character of paper: in some situations paper tended to be transformed from a tool of learning into a script for learning. Scripts and paper trails have some common characteristics, and yet are distinctive. For example, they are both linear descriptions and they can both take the form of paper. However, a paper trail is a bigger process than a script, which is more like an element of a procedure.

Power in connection with schooling has been in focus in the critical-pedagogy approach. The effects of power relationships, class, gender, and ethnicity have been addressed, and issues such as domination, oppression, and emancipation have been discussed (cf. Giroux, 1983; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). The relationship between power and paper could be perceived as one dimension and objectification of the relationship between a student and a teacher. As Long (2001, pp. 19, 71) suggested, power emerges from social processes of interaction: it is not something that can be simply possessed or measured, but it is a flux and the dynamic construction of negotiation about interests and meanings in encounters at interfaces. Here the paper trail could be examined in terms of the power invested in it, as a crystallization and reification of power. As far as learning tasks are concerned, this includes the evaluation of learning and the grade attached to it.

9.4 Units of analysis: topically related sets, paper-related actions, and sequences

The following analysis is based on transcribed discussions and videos. It is twofold: on the one hand it follows the talk in the Culture Laboratory, in other words what the participants said about paper, and on the other hand it follows the interaction with paper – in other words what they did with it. Jordan and Henderson (1994) refer to this method of using videos and focusing on talk and interaction with artifacts at the same time as Interaction Analysis, the background of which lies in ethnography, sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis. They used a type of transcription they call “parallel columnar transcripts”, which means

²⁷ See Chapter 7 for more on the multitude of activities in the Culture Laboratory.

parallel columns that include reporting both verbal and nonverbal activities (Jordan & Henderson, 1994, pp.1, 45). I have adopted this kind of parallel columnar transcript (see Table 9.1) in order to facilitate the organization and analysis of my empirical material.

The analysis is three-dimensional. First, I organized the talk into topically related sets (see Mehan, 1979 in Chapter 6.3). I then analyzed the interaction with paper in terms of paper-related actions, which meant going through the video recordings to see what the participants did with their papers. These paper-related actions were individual and goal-oriented, and included writing personal notes and organizing papers. They were not necessarily part of any collective activity. Paper-related actions can be categorized in terms of mode and function: they may be messages to somebody, or personal notes, for example.

Thirdly, I applied the notion of sequences, a concept used earlier by Mehan (1979), when talk and paper-related actions fused. For example, a student may have had a paper in his and her hand, have been talking about the group work, and looking at his or her own papers at the same time (e.g., notes from a group-work session). Table 9.1 gives an example of this analysis. The participants were talking about the previous session, and they were trying to remember collectively what they had talked about. They were going through their papers to remind themselves of the themes.

Table 9.1 An example of analysing talk and interaction in the Culture Laboratory

Topically related set 3: Re-remembering previous session Turns 53–71, CL6	Interaction with paper	Sequences (talk and interaction with paper fused)
61 Chief interventionist: Here you can see that the memo is quite good, because it helps us a little to remember what happened last time; there's always so much happening in between the sessions. 62 Student 14: Did we talk about the final exams? That we don't want to have a final exam, rather that the diploma for this preparatory immigrant training would be like a final exam. And the diploma would help us to get to the next level, or, I can't remember did we talk about it? 63 Chief interventionist: Yeah, well. 64 Student 14: Yes, we did. 65 Xx: Yeah, we did. 66 Chief interventionist: At the end, I think we talked a lot about it. At the beginning, I gave you a kind of model, and we could have tried to analyze things, that we'd talked about with the help of the model. But you didn't feel that was helpful and then we pondered, or you pondered about developing the curriculum of the training, what kind of things were important and what would help students to go to the next level after this preparatory immigrant training.	Teacher 1 browses through her papers at the table Student 14 browses and looks at her papers  Student 14 looks at her papers Student 3 looks at and organizes her papers Teacher 1 browses through her papers Researcher shows student 1 a paper, student 2 searches for papers	Talk and action fused by student 14

The analysis was conducted in phases. First, the main themes covered in each session were identified. The speech turns that focused on tools of learning in different cultures were examined in the second phase, and it seemed that the students had been used to different kinds of tools in their previous schools. This also highlighted the role of paper as a typical artifact in this Finnish vocational collage. Thirdly, I made a rough analysis of paper use in all nine sessions: paper was intertwined into the practices in them all. I then chose three sessions (the first, sixth, and ninth) for closer study. I chose these because they represented different phases of the Culture Laboratory structure – the beginning, the middle, and the end – and because the theme of the sixth session was "culturally developed tools of learning". Finally, I examined the discussions in the three sessions with the help of topically related sets, paper-related actions and sequences. Next, I will discuss the findings of this analysis.

9.5 Findings: ubiquitous paper

9.5.1 The three Culture Laboratory sessions and the use of paper

The Culture Laboratory was organized in an ordinary classroom and was led by the chief interventionist. The mode of interaction could be described as instructional, along with group work, mutual reflection, and negotiation. Furthermore, it was not only the chief interventionist who initiated interaction and brought new topics and ideas into the discussion, the participants were also active in doing so: as the findings reported in Chapter eight show, there were lots of suggestions for developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training.

During the first session the chief interventionist introduced the new tools, procedures, and practices of the Culture Laboratory, and the participants asked questions about the working practices. The sixth session was organized on the basis of group work, as was the ninth.

Table 9.2 Learning in Finland is learning with many papers

Topically Related Set 21: Finland is Paperland Turns 388–413, CL1	Interaction with paper	Sequences
388 Chief interventionist: What else do you have in mind? 389 Student 2: Learning in Finland means many papers, Paperland, in Finland there's a lot, a land that uses lots of paper. 390 Chief interventionist: I see, lots of paper. 391 Student 2: Yeah, in school there's a lot of paper, many assignments, many similar, for example in our home country it's not the same (...) 392 ##Chief interventionist: Yes. 393 Student 2: Here, everybody is, everybody is presenting a paper, one or two papers. 394 #Chief interventionist: Yes. 395 Student 2: Then there is much paper always, we don't learn, for example, I didn't know this when I came to Finland that there are always, at my home, there's much paper now at this moment, too. 396 Chief interventionist: Well, this is now one kind of cultural difference in practices. 397 ##Teacher 2: Good, N. should I write this down on the board? 398 Chief interventionist: And we'll no doubt come back to this issue again. 399 Student 2: Okay, okay. 400 Chief interventionist: If it's maybe one of those. 401 ##Student 2: Yhym 402 Chief interventionist: It belongs maybe at the moment to those different cultural habits and practices. [Guiding the scribe] 403 ##Teacher 2: Yeah, here we go. <i>Continues ></i>	Teacher 2 is writing on the board Student 5 is writing on her paper	Talk and interaction fused by teacher 2

Topically Related Set 21: Finland is Paperland Turns 388–413, CL1 (continues)	Interaction with paper	Sequences
404 Chief interventionist: We'll no doubt come back to these, to your feedback and it involves this issue, too, just after the break, but if we now think on a more general level. 405 Other 1: [talking in Russian] 406 #Teacher 1: What did you write? [a question to the scribe] 407 Chief interventionist: For example, many papers. 408 #Teacher 1: Many? 409 #Researcher: Many papers. 410 Teacher 1: Yes, so there are. 411 Chief interventionist: Yes. 412 Student 1: Because Finland, Finland is Paperland. 413 Chief interventionist: Yeah, it could be one reason. But now, I wrote that on a general level that we're looking at here [in the Culture Laboratory], what could it mean? It could be that we're looking at culture here, cultural phenomena, which deal with school, teaching, society and everyday life, many things. These things are connected to studying very much, aren't they? What you now said, but then it could mean that people with different cultural backgrounds also look at these things, so in many ways people from different cultural backgrounds can analyze them. [culture and cultural phenomena]	Chief interventionist: points with her hand to the papers and looks at them Teacher 2: picks up a notebook and moves from the board back to the table 	Talk and interaction fused by chief interventionist

Even in the first session students pointed out that there was a lot of paper involved in learning in Finland, and that Finland was a land that used a lot of paper (Table 9.2, turn 395). Subsequently, the teachers confirmed this. In the ninth session one of them said: “But it’s normal that there are many papers.” This indicated that learning practices often involved paper and that its use was normal procedure in the College. Paper was intertwined with the practices of the Culture Laboratory in terms of both talking and doing, and it took different forms: photocopies, textbooks, notebooks, tasks, memos and so on. Papers were both referred to and talked about in the discussions. When paper was referred to, it was usually mentioned as an artifact – for example, “Do you have the assignment with you?” – but when it was talked about it became the topic of discussion, as Table 9.2 shows. Paper was also implicitly present in the talking and in the doing in that everybody brought the ‘right’ papers to each session. This usually meant what they had been given earlier.

There was a rich variety of interaction with paper in the Culture Laboratory. Participants read, wrote, drafted, and looked at papers, picked them up and filed them or gave them to each other. Figure 9.2 is from the sixth session, in which the teachers and students were involved in group work: the participants are discussing an assignment, which is on the table.



Figure 9.2 The participants talking about an assignment during the group work

The physical, textual, and collaborational aspects of paper were also in evidence. The first tangible and visible sign was when the participants took papers in their hands, touched them, turned them or look at them. The second sign was connected to the literacy aspect involving writing and reading; the participants wrote down their tasks and wrote memos, and also read various texts. Thirdly, there was the co-operation between participants such as in the group work. These aspects reflect the use of paper in different ways – private use, mutual use, and use between certain participants. For example, the participants made personal notes about the discussions in the Culture Laboratory, and also wrote memos and comments on the board for common consumption. Furthermore, some participants wrote messages to each other during the discussions.

In general, talking and paper-related acting were not fused in that most of the time only one person was talking, while others were writing their personal notes or going through their papers, for example. In some cases too, a written assignment guided the discussion and the learning process (see Figure 9.2): this is how a tool was transformed into a script. The assignment guided the topic and the order of the discussion in small groups, and the time used for discussion. This occurred especially in the group sessions. Even though it was typically a developmental tool, the board occasionally turned out to be an object of learning as well, especially in situations in which someone was guiding the scribe: at the same time the scribe was learning some Finnish. These transitions were momentary, but they usually stopped the discussion and directed attention to the learning of the new language, Finnish, from the mere taking of notes of the discussion.

In sum, the analysis showed that paper was intertwined into the everyday practices of the Culture Laboratory in many different ways. The students were producers as well as consumers, even though language difficulties were perceived. Paper is clearly an important cultural artifact in Finnish vocational education and training, and it is a major mediator of learning and teaching. This offers a significant challenge to teachers in terms of dissecting their teaching practices and not taking the 'paper culture' for granted. Immigrant students need guidance in learning about the cultural meaning of paper and how to deal with the amount generated. On the other hand, teachers should critically consider whether they need so much, and how they could use the students' previous experiences as a springboard for promoting less paper-dependent learning.

9.5.2 Paper trails

In the College the students wrote assignments, took written tests, and read texts and books. The paper flow was usually unidirectional from teachers to students. The teachers gave various worksheets and indicated a book to read, but in some cases students also brought newspaper articles they were interested in, for example. Paper trails can be traced back to paper-related actions, as shown in Figure 9.1.

The following paper trail (Figure 9.3) is more specific and emerged in the practices of the Culture Laboratory. I have marked both paper-related actions and the places at which paper was transformed from a developmental tool into an object or a script, and back again to a tool; thus, the activities of developing and learning were partly overlapping.

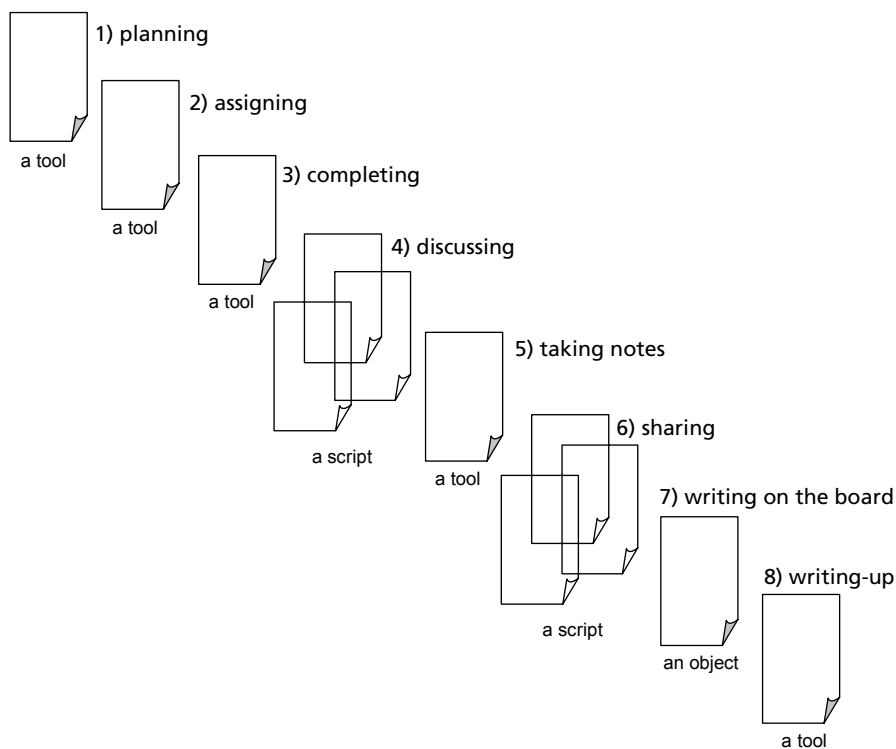


Figure 9.3 A typical paper trail in the Culture Laboratory

The paper trail depicted in the figure started when the chief interventionist and the researcher carried out a ‘planning’ action. The participants had been given an assignment in advance (an ‘assigning’ action). They worked on it individually outside the Culture Laboratory (a ‘completing’ action). It was then discussed in small groups in the Culture Laboratory (a ‘discussing’ action) and someone took notes (a

'taking the notes' action). The results of these discussions were then shared with the whole group (a 'sharing' action): everyone joined in the discussion and thus gave their voice to the issue in question. Next, the participants talked over the issues and negotiated what to write on the board. A scribe wrote it down (a 'writing on the board' action). Finally, the participants received the written reports (a 'writing-up' action). The steps of this paper trail comprised eight paper-related actions.

Writing a memo could be also analyzed in terms of a paper trail. For example, the first paper-related action is when someone writes the memo, and the participants negotiate about what it should contain. In the next session the memo is read aloud to all participants. If it needs rewriting or finishing then that is done. The memo is then filed so that all who wish to can read it. This paper trail crosses the boundaries of the Culture Laboratory sessions.

No other kinds of paper trail were observed in the core sessions of the Culture Laboratory, although there were traces of others in the discussion – usually related to the Preparatory Immigrant Training – such as language assignments. When the participants discussed their experiences in the Culture Laboratory in the ninth session they also revealed that they had written a diary during their work-placement period. Thus, the paper trail of a dairy crossed the boundaries of the College into working life.

Paper-related actions also served a certain function, such as a controlling (has everybody done the task), participating (general discussions), reminding (memos), representing (the developmental process), and negotiating (what to write on the board). If a participant does not complete a 'replying' action, for example, this may affect his or her participation in the general discussion. In the above example (figure 9.3), these functions could be described as follows: a 'participating function' – meaning that everyone could be part of the developmental process, and a 'sharing function' when they talked about various topics and expressed their opinions. Furthermore, each function might also confront and empower students depending on how paper was used in practice, who used and produced it, and how aware both students and teachers were of this kind of paper trail.

I have indicated in Figure 9.3 how a developmental tool transformed itself into an object and a script. These transitions were momentary, flexible, and dynamic. Thus, the object that emerged was also momentary and flexible. This may have been due to the multiple functions of the Culture Laboratory, as discussed in Chapter seven: there were multiple, overlapping activities and scripts present. When the scribe wrote on the board, everyone turned to look and concentrated on it, even correcting spelling mistakes, for example. During the group work the participants followed the assignment as a discussion script: this shows in Figure 9.2 in which everyone is looking intensively at the assignment, and someone was reading it aloud.

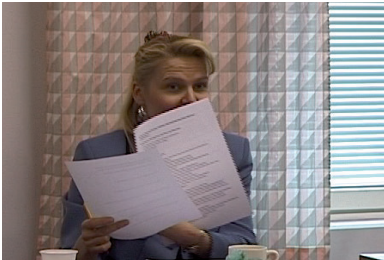
9.5.3 *The power of paper*

Paper trails evoke questions of power because they are mostly stable, long-lasting and visible, and they cross boundaries. In this case they facilitated the tracking of who had access to the papers, what kinds of papers were produced, who was authorized to write them, how tasks were evaluated, and so on. They could be seen in terms of the crystallization of power, and if teachers are not aware of this they might use paper to dominate and control students. This is particularly relevant in the case of immigrant students who typically feel that they are not competent speakers or writers of their new language if linguistic mistakes are emphasized and looked for. This is a paradox, because one aspect of learning a new language is to pay attention to mistakes and to correct them.

In the school context the teacher usually has the power to guide and evaluate the learning processes, but on the other hand, paper is a potentially powerful artifact for students, too. For example, they could make suggestions about how to develop their training and produce written documents for teachers or administrators who need to respond to them. Thus paper can facilitate student empowerment and students can contribute to their training. This kind of empowering practice was also to be seen in the Culture Laboratory.

The next example (Table 9.3) from the ninth session emphasizes how paper can be a powerful tool for students because of its permanence. This topically related set was connected to the evaluation of the Culture Laboratory and the participants gave their opinions about what they had learned. A teacher holds the paper (a list of suggestions made in the Culture Laboratory) in her hand and says that even though many of the suggestions on it made her feel distressed, it was a kind of guiding light for her to follow. It would help her to remember all the ideas and suggestions the participants had made during the Culture Laboratory (the suggestions were analyzed more closely in Chapter 8).

Table 9.3 The list of suggestions is preserved on paper

Topically related set 20: What did the staff learn in the CL? Turns 348–363, CL9	Interaction with paper	Sequences
Teacher: Yeah, I remember now what I wanted to say. I think I have learned a lot, for example, how I need to take students into consideration, or your wishes concerning the teaching. Some wishes I’ve already tried to take into account, but now I’ve got this list, and I looked at it this morning and yeah this is massive, and I felt a bit distressed. How can I implement all this, but teachers can’t comply with all wishes, but naturally some of them, and it’s nice anyway that there is this paper to know what I should do and try to do it. So, this paper is a kind of a guiding light for me to follow (....)	Looks at the paper, picks it up and shows it to everyone 	Talk and interaction fused

This is a good example of the kind of power paper has. A list of suggestions written on paper is not something that can easily be forgotten. The paper is preserved and so are the suggestions, and although it is easy to ‘file’ papers away, they are still there. Another aspect of the power of paper is connected to the status of the organization, or to someone’s personal status within it, as reflected in the paper quality, the logo, the text type and the color: the message conveyed is influenced by the physical nature of the paper used (Pellegram, 1998).

In a country like Finland, it sometimes seems that paper is more important than people: you need to have the right kind of paper as a means of identification or certification in order to exist. This verification and certification aspect is interesting, and is connected to the legal aspect and the nature of evidence. Chapter two referred to some aspects of the new trends in global migration, one being ‘undocumented’ migrants, which is also called ‘illegal’ migration. This question is therefore also being debated on the global level. It emerged in the Culture Laboratory when the participants were talking about certificates and awards. One student brought the issue up, and suggested the College could give awards and certificates as was the practice in her native country. This illustrates the role of paper in confirming one’s status, educational level and position in society, for example. Immigrant students run into trouble when their existing certificates are not valid in their new country.

I observed two types of confronting situations faced by the immigrant students in the Culture Laboratory. First, there was just too much paper and they had difficulties in organizing and finding it all. This may have happened because they did not know how all the papers were related to the practices of the Culture Laboratory. On a more general level, they did not know which piece of paper was related to which learning subject and how.

The next example (Table 9.4) is of a confronting situation in which the participants did not know what piece of paper was being talked about, and some of them had left it at home. The search for the 'right' paper causes confusion in the session. This topically related set ends when someone leaves the classroom to take more copies of the assignment. It is from the sixth session.

Table 9.4 Searching for the ‘right’ piece of paper in the session

Topically related set 22: Do you have the assignment with you? Turns 280–304, CL6	Interaction with paper	Sequences
283 ## Chief interventionist: Last time you got this assignment, back in December. You needed to answer the following questions (....) 284 Teacher 3: I don't have it because I wasn't here in December. 285 Student 5: I don't have it either. 286 # Chief interventionist: Yes, I suppose you don't have it. 287 Student 8: We gave them to you, didn't we? 288 # Chief interventionist: No. 289 # Teacher 1: It's this. 290 Chief interventionist: Someone offered it to me, but when I said take it with you now, because we'll go through it together, it was for you in advance. Last time we agreed that now today we'll deal with it, because we haven't yet talked about this (....) 291 # Researcher: OK, how many of you have the assignment paper with you, or, or, what you should have written, only N? 292 Teacher 1: Haven't you got it there, ah, not this [asks the student]? 293 Student 8: It's the same, yours is just bigger. 294 Teacher 3: You've got the wrong paper. 295 Student 8: It's the same. 296 Teacher 3: Aha. 297 Researcher: It looks like this or then a bit. 298 Teacher 2: I've got this. 299 Research: They'll both do. 300 Teacher 2: Is this? 301 Researcher: Both are fine, it's, the same as N's. 302 Teacher 1: The font is just different. 303 Chief interventionist: Should we take more copies of it? (....)	Teacher 1 touches the papers on her desk and picks them up. Student 2 searches for papers. Student 16 browses through her papers. Students 7 and 14 browse through their papers. Student 3 looks at her papers on the desk.  Teacher 1 shows a piece of paper to a student. Student 8 puts her papers into a file. Student 16 takes papers out of a file. Student 7 browsers through her papers. Student 5 reads her papers.	Talk and action fused by teacher 1.

The students did not know how to organize their papers, or they were confused because there were too many. They forgot to bring them to the Culture Laboratory, which caused the second type of confrontation, namely the absence of the ‘right’ paper. This was the one someone was referring to or talking about, but others did not have it with them, or they could not find it. The absence of and the search for the right paper repeatedly caused confusion in the sessions as everybody was looking for it. In the above example the teacher said (turn 294): “You’ve got the wrong paper” indicating that there were ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ papers. There was confusion between the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ paper because there were two papers containing the same information. In terms of power, this also touches on the question of authorization: which was the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ paper. In this case, the teacher exerted her authority and told the student that she had the ‘wrong’ paper. However, the student had the ‘right’ paper after all, which the researcher confirmed in her turn 301 when she said that both copies were fine.

It is clear that paper is a prominent artifact in Finnish vocational-education practices. In this case, the teachers may have been so accustomed to using it that they did not realize the novelty of it for the students. Differences in cultural values could have contributed to the confrontation: the students may have felt that human being was more important than a piece of paper, so they came to the classroom, but forgot to bring their papers. On the other hand, the teachers knew from before that the ‘old tools’ of vocational education and training, such as textbooks, were far too difficult for immigrant students so they produced more study materials themselves, which increased the amount of paper.

What was learned from the intervention? I would say that the immigrant students pointed out an ubiquitous and ‘unseen’ element of the training practices that most Finns take for granted. Even though the consumption of paper did not decrease during the Culture Laboratory, I have seen that this issue has been taken up in the College. For example, teachers and students have discussed questions such as why we use so much paper, what we can do to reduce its consumption, and how we can develop our practices and break away from our old paper-oriented habits. Teachers have also given serious thought to how they could encourage immigrant students to learn new practices and to benefit from the paper culture. They have introduced practices in which students are producers of paper – they write news leaflets and produce “portfolio” assessments, for example. One student put it this way: “I have learned that when you study in Finland you need to have a little office with you.”

9.6 Conclusions concerning 'paper' as a mediating artifact

The general research question addressed in this chapter concerned how 'paper' functions as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory. Three specific issues were examined: how paper was used in the College and in the practices of the Culture Laboratory, what kind of paper trails emerged, and how power was manifested in the use of paper.

The analysis showed that paper is an ubiquitous artifact in Finnish vocational training and education. The immigrant students were confronted with a robust literary environment and developmental and learning practices in the College: papers were read and written, shared and delivered, copied and carried, talked about and referred to – as well as lost and looked for – almost constantly. Paper took different forms – photocopies, textbooks, notebooks, assignments, and memos. There was a rich variety of interaction with it: the participants read, wrote, drafted, took hold of, filed and exchanged their papers, which were at the same time physical, textual, and collaborative. Thus, paper was a prominent mediator of developing and learning in the Culture Laboratory as well as in the College. Reading texts, memorizing and repeating them in schools is a phenomenon Dewey (1898/1975) criticized over a century ago. This still seems to be the reality in Finnish vocational education today, despite the influence of the computer and the Internet.

Different paper trails emerged and revealed the power of paper. A paper trail could be regarded as the crystallization or condensation of power: they are mostly stable, long-lasting, and visible, and they cross boundaries such as in the writing of a learning diary during a work-placement period. The trails were formed in processes of paper-related actions such as planning, assigning, completing, returning, and evaluating assignments. The most typical form of paper trail in schools is that connected to literary learning tasks. The one that emerged in the Culture Laboratory was also a part of collective working involving the actions of discussing and sharing.

Paper-related actions also served certain functions to do with control and participation. McDonald et al. (2005) found out when they examined material artifacts employed in different classrooms that these artifacts mediated a certain function: a textbook could mediate the topic of discussion, for example. In this study, this kind of functioning mediation was seen, for example, when during the group work an assignment directed the topic of discussion: this was how a tool turned into a script. A developmental tool could also turn into an object of learning. For example, when the participants were writing on the board and the scribe asked for advice on how to spell a specific Finnish word, there was an overlapping

with another activity – activity of learning the Finnish language²⁸. These transitions from tool to script or object were momentary, flexible, and dynamic.

Different kinds of paper trails exist in workplaces, too. For example, students remarked that in Finnish workplaces “everything is written down: who came to work, who was absent and so on”. This could be perceived as a controlling or managing function. In the area of health care, the patient history and care plan have a significant role in the caring and nursing, and similar kinds of paper-related actions are to found there, too (Engeström, 1992).

As McDonald et al. (2005) state, previous classroom studies have mostly concentrated on discursive interaction between teachers and students. Thus, the paper trail and paper-related actions analyzed in this study could increase our understanding of human-artifact interaction both in classrooms and in working life. As Miller (1998, p. 6) put it, studying and analyzing material culture offers great potential.

The new challenges for students were twofold: how to control the flow of paper from teachers and other staff, and how to change paper consumption into production. This put heavy emphasis on using the written language, because Finnish was new to the students. Also, the multiple use of paper was a further challenge. The teachers, in turn, found it challenging to consider their daily practices, into which they were socialized from new perspectives. They needed to make their working practices visible to the students, and also to mediate the wider cultural meanings. As McDonand et al. (2005) state, cultural artifacts carry meanings and messages. It is not only the immediate question of managing the situation, it’s also a question of mediating the meaning – the use of paper for example – in this cultural environment. During the project the teachers critically reflected on their practices and the social reality they shared with the students. Critical consideration of mundane practices helps in making ‘invisible’ cultural patterns and practices ‘visible’. How did the participants use the Culture Laboratory to reflect on the everyday practices of the College and beyond? This is the question I will explore in the next chapter.

28 See Chapter 7 for more on the multitude of activities in the Culture Laboratory.

10 Intercultural space manifested in the Culture Laboratory

10.1 "I'm from Russia, I've lived in Finland for a year already"

The student said this in the first session of the Culture Laboratory, in which the participants introduced themselves. It captures some aspects of the process of immigration and acculturation (cf. Berry, 2001; 2004). On the one hand, it reflects the cultural or, as in this case national, background indicating who I am and where I come from. It also merges culture and place (cf. Massey, 1995; Hall, 1995). On the other hand, it refers to the person's relationship with the new country, a nation, Finland: where she currently lives. Furthermore, it involves complex and multilayered situations immigrants often find themselves in, and questions they ponder concerning their relationship with their cultural background and with the new country. The quotation also incorporates dimensions of movement and time. (cf. Chryssochoou, 2004.)

The focus of this tenth chapter is on the participants' talk about cultures and their cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the Culture Laboratory. My aim is to explore the dynamics, the potentials, and the flow of ideas inherent in encounters between people with diverse backgrounds. Thus, the analysis follows the participants' use of opportunity and space. The general research question concerns how the experiences gained in the Culture Laboratory could enrich the concept of intercultural space. The specific questions addressed concern how the participants employed the notion of culture in their talk, and what types of cultural talk were identified.

The empirical material comprises the transcriptions of all nine sessions in the Culture Laboratory.

10.2 The conceptual framework: culture, nation, hybridity, and the intercultural

The concept of culture is disputed and has many meanings and definitions. Furthermore, it is multilayered and complex and people use it in multiple ways in different contexts. I have written about culture and its neighboring concepts, and about the intercultural and hybridity, in more detail in Chapter three, and will just briefly recap some of the aspects of these concepts here.

For example, Ratner (2000) considers culture in terms of five main phenomena: cultural activities; cultural values, schemas, meanings and concepts; physical artifacts; psychological phenomena; and agency. According to Hall (1995; also Massey, 1995), the concept of culture is usually intertwined with the notion of place. For example, the participants in the Culture Laboratory mostly referred to it as a nationality or a place such as “a Russian” or “in Japan”. Hall goes on to suggest that this ‘placed’ culture mostly exists in the realm of fantasy only. The purpose of ‘nationspeak’ is to produce a common ground or the idea of a unified culture. This is contradictory to the fact that both Western and Eastern European nations are cultural and ethnic mixtures, or “hybridities” (Hall, 1995, p. 185).

Hall goes on to state that cultures are ‘placed’, and that we tend to present them as homogeneous and unified, tied to places, traditions, and a ‘homeland’. However, the endeavor to make a culture and a place correspond with one another has been a hopeless, expensive, and sometimes violent and dangerous illusion (*ibid.*, p.186). I perceive cultures as open, changing, and dynamic with variations and diversities, and not as hermetic entities. Similarly, I perceive the boundaries of different cultures as blurred and permeable.

Studying nations or nationalism is a major field in sociology. According to Fenton (2003), nation refers to descent and culture to communities with a state or state-like political form. Greenfeld (1992) studied the history of nations and nationalism, and shows how the concept of nation has changed. He considers ‘nationalism’ an umbrella term for the related phenomena of national identity (nationality), consciousness, and collectives based on nations. He also shows how the concept of nation has changed from its meaning in medieval times as ‘a group of foreign people’ to modern conceptions of a nation as ‘a unique, sovereign people’ (Greenfeld, 1992, pp. 3, 9). I use the concept of nation and nationality to illuminate the way the participants spoke about nations, national consciousness, nationality, and the country they had moved from.

Both Long (2001) and Hall (1995) argue against a homogenous or unitary concept of culture. Long suggests that we should “embrace theoretically the central issues of cultural repertoires, heterogeneity and hybridity.” Gutiérrez et al. (1999) see the notion of hybridity as ubiquitous and existing on multiple levels of learning environments.

Intercultural space could be seen as a fluid, hazardous, ephemeral, and dangerous space between cultures on the one hand (cf. Tomas, 1996) or, on the other, as a rigid block between cultural entities (see Sullivan, 2005). For me it is a dynamic area between cultures and people. Intercultural spaces are fluid and flexible with the potential to be a springboard for new ideas and practices. They may nevertheless be potentially dangerous. They thus have a dual nature: potential and possibility as well as precariousness and even perilousness.

In this study I see intercultural space as a tension-rich energy field in which the driving forces are the dynamics and variations between cultures and people, and which can erupt in different directions depending on how it is used and for what purposes, the kinds of artifacts that are used, and the division of power within it. Hybridity, in turn, refers to the mixture of cultures and the dynamic cultural processes present in intercultural spaces.

10.3 The unit of analysis: cultural talk

People from different societies and cultural backgrounds use language in different ways. Forming the unit of analysis was a complicated process, probably because the concept of culture itself is a vague and multifaceted notion (see, for example, Erickson, 2001), and people use it in multiple ways. However, I wanted to examine more carefully what and how the participants explicitly talked about cultures, in other words how they spoke about their diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, their native countries, their cultural learning practices, and immigration, for example. On the other hand, this does not mean that I equate the concepts of nation and nationality, or ethnicity and culture; I am rather suggesting that these concepts are intermingled in the participants' talk. As Fenton (2003) put it, concepts such as ethnicity and race have a common core with differing edges.

Consequently, I traced words indicating that a speaker was somehow referring to culture, and when I recognized turns involving such words I called them 'cultural talk'. It started when a speaker referred to culture in his or her turn, and ended in one of two ways: it was either a single turn or a series of turns. If it was a single turn it started and ended within the same turn, while if it was a series it ended at the borders of topically related sets. Its borders were, in a similar vein, either a change of speaker or a change of topically related set.

Cultural talk was developed as a unit of analysis in three steps. First, I identified all topically related sets that included it, giving attention to whether the speaker was indicating a nation or nationality, ethnicity, or cultural behaviour, for example. Secondly, I identified whether cultural talk was a single turn or a series of turns within a topically related set. A single turn occurred when the speaker included cultural talk in his or her turn, but the following speakers did not continue with

it (see Table 10.1). A series of turns occurred when one speaker started it and the next ones continued with it in their turns.

Thirdly, I observed types of cultural talk, in other words what kind of process was identified in the talk when the participants were discussing issues. If the speaker was observing or identifying something such as “the Finnish way of life” or “a Somalian teacher”, I called it an observation type of cultural talk. This was my starting point in a way: the participants had identified and explicated something referring to cultural issues and wanted to share their thoughts with the others.

Table 10.1 gives an example of cultural talk as a unit of analysis. The participants were talking about excursions and visits to different places. One student said that she would like to visit “another famous Finnish person”. It was a frequent occurrence in the Preparatory Immigrant Training to visit museums, for example. In this case, the group had been to the home-museum of a Finnish author. The student confirmed that the existing practice was a good one.

Table 10.1 An example of a type of cultural talk as a unit of analysis

CL session/ No. of cultural talk	Cultural talk	Type of cultural talk	Single/series
CL1/8	Student: And then I think it would be good to go another time to visit some famous Finnish person, for example. Opiskelija: Ja sitten minun mielestäni, voi tarvi saada toinen kerta mennä esimerkiksi käymään joku Suomen kuuluisa ihminen	Observation	Single

The comparison type of cultural talk involved comparison between cultures, such as “in Finland and in Somalia”, or “Italian teachers and Japanese teachers”. The participants also referred to “my/our” culture or to “your/their” culture. This was part of the process of making different cultural practices familiar and ‘visible’ to all participants.

The creation type of cultural talk involved sowing new seeds: the participants put forward fresh ideas on how to develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training. Most of the suggestions analyzed in Chapter eight, were identified as new seeds if they involved cultural talk. New seeds were also sown in turns in which the object of the Culture Laboratory was also manifested: the purpose was to develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training (see Chapter 7).

These three types of cultural talk were related. For example, new seeds included both observations and comparisons, and comparison included observation. The process started with the observation-type of talk as the participants became aware of the cultural dimension and ‘stepped’ into intercultural space. This hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating sometimes led to new ideas, as was the case with the creation type of talk, but not always, as in the case of the observation and comparison types.

During the analysis I tried to bear in mind the fact that one could say that all talk in the Culture Laboratory was ‘cultural talk’ because human activity is culturally mediated and one powerful ‘mediator’ and ‘a tool of tools’ is language (Vygotsky, 1978). Hall puts it as follows: cultures are systems of meanings, and through language we give meaning to the world (1995, p. 178). On the other hand, I do not intend to focus on cultural discourse in terms of analyzing the way in which various people used language (cf. Wetherell et al., 2001), because the group came from ten (the students from eight different countries and the staff from two) different cultural backgrounds. In any case, the participants were talking in Finnish, a new language for most of them, yet it was the only common language.

10.4 Findings: diverse cultures and the hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating in intercultural space

There were a total of 211 topically related sets in the Culture Laboratory, of which 139 included cultural talk. This comprised 66% of the total of topically related sets (see Table 10. 2 in Chapter 10.4.4). Thus, the analysis showed that cultural talk was present in many ways in the discussions. This, naturally, was not a surprise. The point of the Culture Laboratory was to give time and space for cultural reflections.

On the one hand, it was not evident from the beginning that the participants would employ the space for cultural elaboration because, as shown in the Chapter seven, the Culture Laboratory had two objects: learning Finnish and developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training. On the other hand, the participants clearly wanted to discuss cultural questions. This could indicate that during the very hectic rhythm of everyday life in the schools there was not much time to stop and contemplate cultural issues. In any case, it was a new type of training and situation for most teachers and students, and the lack of competence in the realm of intercultural elaboration was apparent.

In the following I will first make some general observations about the use of the notion of culture within the cultural talk of the participants, and then I will give a detailed analysis of the types of cultural talk that emerged in the Culture Laboratory.

10.4.1 *The multiple use of the notion of culture*

The content of the cultural talk reflected the notion of culture as multifaceted as it is (see Chapter 3). The participants used many expressions, such as “culture, nation and nationality, cultural background, home country, and cultural practices”, and combinations such as “Somalian culture, Finnish learning practices”. Many of the excerpts discussed in the previous chapters are also examples of cultural talk. Interestingly enough, we did not address the concept of culture directly, and it was not as such a theme or a topic of discussion in the Culture Laboratory.

The first part of excerpt 10.1 reflects one student’s use of the concept of culture as a country, as a language, and as practices. It is from the eighth session, and the student was talking about her experiences from her work-placement period: she had been working with immigrant students in another school.

The second part of the excerpt, which is from the fourth session, involves a teacher’s use of ‘culture’. The participants were talking about learning the Finnish language. The teacher referred to culture as “Finnish society, language, different phenomena, everyday life, common rules and a shared understanding, concepts, a new country, and a new culture”. The turn also reflects the historicity and change in culture. Furthermore, no one asked what the speakers meant by the concept of culture or asked for any clarification, or, for that matter, paid any attention to this kind of usage.

Excerpt 10.1

Student: (...) When I came to Finland, we, I found it difficult, too, all immigrants face such problems in the beginning, it’s a new country, a new language and new practices and such, it comes a shock.

Opiskelija (...) Kun mä tulen Suomeen, meillä, minullakin on ollut vaikea, se semmosia tule kaikki maahanmuuttajille semmosia ongelma aluksi tulee, kun tulee uusi maa ja uus kieltä ja uusi tavat semmosia tulee sokki.

Teacher: And the Finnish society is a very complex society. It has become extremely complicated in the last few decades. You not only have to understand the words but also how they’re perceived and how words and phenomena, sort of how they come up in everyday Finnish life. That’s what studying is all about, for example when you’re studying to be a practical nurse or for some other vocation, it’s very much about finding out about common concepts and shared rules, so that we can understand things in approximately the same way. It’s not enough to just learn words and grammar, you also need to find your way into the new country and the new culture.

Opettaja: Ja se että suomalainen yhteiskunta on hyvin monimutkainen yhteiskunta. Se on monimutkaistunut tavattomasti viime vuosikymmeninä. Se että ymmärtää niinku ei pelkästään sanaa vaan se että millä lailla se käsitetään ja ne sanat ja ne ilmiöt niinkun, miten on suomalaisessa arjessa ja elämässä. Sitähän koko opiskelukin on sitten kun opiskelee vaikka lähihoitajaksi tai jos-sain muussa, että opiskellaan hyvin paljon niitä yhteisiä pelisääntöjä, niitä yhteisiä käsitteitä, että me ymmärretään asioita suurin piirtein samalla tavalla. Ne on kanssa se, se vaan on muutakin kuin sanojen tai kieliopin opiskelua uuteen maahan ja uuteen kulttuuriin niinkun sisäänpääseminen.

The multiple use of the notion of culture could indicate at least three things. First, the participants were using it as an ‘everyday concept’, and were very familiar its multiple implications. Secondly, it captured a mundane phenomenon the participants were trying to understand, and thirdly, the concept itself is multilayered and complex (cf. Erickson, 2001).

10.4.2 *The nation and nationality*

The participants were mostly referring to culture as a country of origin, a nation, or a national culture when they were talking about cultural issues. They used the words, “in Finland, Russia, or Somalia” and “Italian, Finnish, or Japanese”, for example. Thus, they were reflecting their national identity (nationality), their consciousness of it, and collective notions based on nations, as Greenfeld (1992, p. 3) describe it. Furthermore, the connection with a place and a culture was apparent (cf. Massey, 1995; Hall, 1995). Again many of the excerpts already cited could be considered from this perspective, too. It must nevertheless be borne in mind that this type of analysis tends to emphasize this perspective because nation, nationality and country comprised one of the markers of cultural talk in the empirical material.

This next example (excerpt 10.2) comes from the sixth session. The participants had been doing group work and were reporting their discussion to everyone. The topic was teachers’ tasks in different cultures. The speaker started her turn and reported that in country X the teacher’s task was to explain and to write on the board, and furthermore that the teacher had more authority. She was asked what she meant by that.

Excerpt 10.2

374 Teacher: If I look at what was put down [looks at the papers on her desk], I’ll talk about the tasks of a teacher separately. Well, in country X a teacher writes on the board and explains at the same time.

375 Chief interventionist: Well, I guess it has already been written on the board.

376 Teacher: Yeah, and the level of teachers, in country X the level of teachers is higher, but this means that the teacher has authority, isn't that what you said [asking the student who had said it], and.

377 #Chief interventionist: What do you mean by teachers being on a higher level?

378 #Teacher: Well, in the sense that she or he has authority, that's how I understood it, but as you pointed out, that the level is higher.

379 Chief interventionist: Higher in status and authority?

380 Teacher: Yes, and.

(...)

374 Opettaja: Jos mie täältä [katsoo paperiin] otan erikseen ne opettajan tehtävät. No niin maassa X opettaja kirjoittaa taululle ja selittää samalla.

375 Vetäjä: No niin se on siellä ehkä jo on.

376 Opettaja: Joo ja opettajan taso on maassa X opettajan taso on korkeampi, mutta se tarkoittaa, että opettajalla on auktoriteettia, niinhän sinä sanoit [viittaa opiskelijaan, joka tämän sanoit] ja.

377 #Vetäjä: Missä mielessä opettajalla on korkeampi taso?

378 #Opettaja: Siis siinä mielessä, että hänellä on auktoriteettia, näin mie ymmärsin, mutt sie sanoit sen, ett on taso korkeampi.

379 Vetäjä: Korkeampi niinku asema ja auktoriteetti.

380 Opettaja: Niin, ja.

(...)

This finding suggests that one dominant feature in immigrant training and intercultural encountering is the nation and how people perceive themselves and others. As Hall (1995) and Massey (1995) stated, culture is "placed". However, talk about cultures did not focus on cultural difference in terms of the 'exotic other', neither was there any kind of 'mystification of difference', which is sometimes found in "culturespeak" (Hannerz, 2003).

What emerged was rather a stream of interesting thoughts in which different viewpoints flowed and gave an impetus for new ideas. However, this does not mean that encountering cultures was seen only in terms of enrichment, which is so often the case in the canon of multiculturalism, and which Hannerz (2003) calls "praising speak". On the contrary, there were also critical comments about the College practices from both students and teachers, although they tended to develop into discussion and suggestions. The next excerpt (10.3) comes from the first session. The student had criticized the frequent changing of Finnish-language

teachers. She wanted to keep the one who was teaching them at that time. The discussion about the effect of a change of teacher went on.

The second part of the excerpt is from the third session. One of the staff had said that immigrants should be content with what they saw and came up against in Finland, and should not grumble. However, a teacher contradicted this comment and said that, on the contrary, immigrants could grumble, and that was one of the reasons for having the Culture Laboratory.

Excerpt 10.3

Student: It's an important issue, we've been here at the College almost three months. We had a Finnish teacher because the Finnish language is important for us here in the Preparatory Training. Our first teacher is now ill and now we have a new one called N, and we want to continue with her because we like the system she uses, how she is with us and how we study with her. But now again the teacher will change and a new one is coming. I don't know how we can adapt so quickly, quickly to the new teacher again, because every teacher has her own system, own method and procedures. And the teacher was also, for example, now when N knows already what we can do, and what we should still learn and I think it's important.

Opiskelija: Tärkeä asia se, kun meillä on melkein kolme kuukautta, kun me olemme täällä koulussa. Meillä oli suomen kielen opettaja, kun meille on tärkeä suomen kieli täällä valmistava kurssilla. Meidän ensimmäinen opettaja on nyt on sairaana ja nyt meillä on uusi opettaja N ja me haluamme hänen kanssa jatkaa, kun hänen systeemi me pidämme hänen systeemistä, millä tavalla hän menee meidän kanssa ja miten hän me opiskelemme. Mutta nyt taas opettaja pitäsi vaihtaa ja uusi opettaja tulee. Mä en tiedä, miten vois sopeutua niin nopeesti, nopeesti uuden opettajan kanssa ja koska hän, joka opettajalla on oma systeemi, oma metodi ja sen kanssa menee. Ja myös opettaja oli, esimerkiksi nyt kun N on hän tietää, minkä me osaamme ja minkä pitäis vielä oppia ja se on tärkeä asia minun mielestä.

Member of staff: And I don't think an immigrant should grumble. Everything you're given, you should be grateful for everything you get. Then, with people there's always something, always something there, I don't think anything is pointless. Of course it's difficult for you; you need to learn more Finnish, to manage better, to study more, but this is an issue to talk about in the Culture Laboratory.

Chief interventionist: Yeah.

#Teacher: May I comment briefly, two words? Both of these turns [referring to something said in previous turns] were absolutely good, but I think that immigrants can grumble, that's why we are here, one reason anyway, nothing else.

Henkilökunnan jäsen: Ja minun mielestäni maahanmuuttaja ei saa purnata kaikki niinku kaikki mitä annetaan teille, kaikki pitää ottaa vastaan ja kiitolisuudella. Sitten kun ihminen aina jotain jää, aina jotain jää, että täällä ei ole minun mielestäni mitään turhaa. Totta kai teidän on vaikea teidän pitää enemmän saada suomen kieltä niinku paremmin hallita opiskella enemmän mutta tästä voikin puhua kulttuurilaboratorio.

Vetäjä: Joo.

#Opettaja: Saanks mä lyhyen kommentin, kaks sanaa, nää oli hirveän hyviä molemmat puheenvuorot [viittaa aikaisemmin sanottuun], mutta ett mun mielestä maahanmuuttajat saa purnata, siks me ollaan täällä, myös yks syy, ei muuta.

The excerpts show that critical comments and “grumbling” were part of the talk in the Culture Laboratory, and that this kind of talk was accepted. Worries, problems, or difficulties in cultural situations were not silenced, but were rather discussed. Suggestions for future actions emerged: in flow and process of suggestion-making (see Chapter 8). The atmosphere in the Culture Laboratory was open to critical comments, which tended to turn into suggestions.

10.4.3 *We and they, an immigrant*

The participants frequently employed expressions such as “us” and “our”, and “they” and “theirs” in their cultural talk. “Our culture” referred to the speaker’s idea of his or her culture, and “the other” to the cultures of other participants. However, no polarization between two cultures, such as Finnish and Russian, emerged, probably because the participants were from many cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, they did refer to the immigrant’s position in a way that could be described as “Being, Coming from, and Living”. This could reflect the process of immigration and acculturation. When the students introduced themselves they added, “I am a Russian”, or “I come from Somalia”, or “I have lived in Finland for two years now”, for example: “living in Finland” suggests that they identified themselves as residents of Finland. Expressions such as “immigrant” and “foreigner” were also used frequently.

The next example (excerpt10.4) comes from the fourth session. The participants were talking about the importance of learning Finnish and one student strongly felt that there should be more computer lessons and more Finnish lessons in the Preparatory Immigrant Training because “we” (immigrants) need Finnish

language so much for study purposes. Another student confirmed this and emphasized the importance of Finnish lessons even more by saying, “I think that only Finnish is important”.

Excerpt 10.4

230 Student 3: And I think that this preparatory course should really prepare immigrants for vocational training, it means things like there should be a lot of lessons that benefit the student, like computer lessons and Finnish lessons, we need a lot, and other topics, for example, I could mention other topics, which we’re doing in our vocational training as well, but there’s nobody to tell us if we don’t understand, when there’s just one immigrant student in the group – come here teacher and teach me the Finnish language, and she or he won’t come, I don’t know what.

231 Student 2: Language is always important, if you’re hungry you don’t start with dessert, you start with the main course and eat your dessert after that. Finnish lessons are the main course, also computer lessons and then comes the dessert, do you understand, and I think only Finnish is important.

230 Opiskelija 3: Ja minun mielestä tämä valmistava kurssi pitäis olla oikeasti valmistaa maahanmuuttaja se ammattikoulutukseen varten se tarkoittaa sellaisia asioita, pitäis ottaa kiinni ja sellaiset oppitunti pitäis olla paljon kun opiskelijalla vois olla hyötyä se ATK ja suomen kieli me tarvitsemme paljon ja muut asiat esimerkiksi mä muut asiat voi sano kun me vois opiskella ammattikoulussa myös, mutta siellä ei ketään sitten sano, kun luokassa yks opiskelija on maahanmuuttaja, tulkaa nyt opettaja nyt tulee sinulle ja opettaa suomen kieltä, hän ei tule se, en tiedä mikä.

231 Opiskelija 2: Kieli aina on tärkeä, koska jos sinulla on nälkä, et halua jälkiruokaa haluaa esiruoka sitte jälkiruoka, mutta suomen kieli esi se on ruokaa myös tietokone myös on tämä on tulee jälkiruoka sama, ymmärrätkö ja minusta on tärkeää suomen kieli vain.

This example shows that the students identified themselves as immigrants. The question of cultural identity is an important and complex one (cf. Hall, 1999). I will not go into detail here because I think that in order to do that I would need other empirical material besides the talk in the Culture Laboratory. I would raise only one issue: was an “immigrant identity” something that the Finns had ‘forced’ the students to adopt because it was difficult to cope with other kinds of identities: ‘once an immigrant always an immigrant’.

This could reflect the immigrant situation in Finland (see Chapter 2) and the newness of it. The country is dealing with ‘first-generation’ immigrants, and only

recently has the question arisen about who is an immigrant. For example, is a child who was born in Finland to immigrant parents also an immigrant? Moreover, the term “immigrant background” is frequently used. In practice, immigrants have different kinds of needs than people with various ethnic or cultural backgrounds who have been living in the country for years, but the ‘label’ could effectively conceal other issues such as discrimination. Furthermore, when does an immigrant become a Finn? This is a question Lepola (2000) addressed in her dissertation, for example. On the other hand, it could reflect the fact that teachers and schools as institutions lack competence in intercultural issues.

The following excerpt 10.5, reveals an interesting phenomenon: a kind of ‘dynamic we’, meaning that the participants formed different kinds of ‘we groups’. The excerpt is from the second session and the participants had been engaged in group work deciding what topics they wanted to discuss in the Culture Laboratory. The student suggested that too much time had been invested in talking about the working practices of the Culture Laboratory.

Excerpt 10.5

Student: Yeah, so you [the chief interventionist] asked about this and other ideas. Well, this is another idea and our opinion [1] is that much time has been invested in this, so it’s better to go directly to our point [2], that is to discuss about our culture, Finnish culture [3] and then try to improve this preparatory training course, and we [4] don’t need to talk for an hour or so about working practices such as being a scribe.

Opiskelija: Joo siis te kysyitte tästä asiasta ja sun muut muita ideat. No ihan on muita idea ja meidän mielipide [1] on se, että on menny niin paljon aika tähän asiaan että on parempi mennä ihan suoran meidän pointtiin [2] eli keskustella meidän kultturista [3] suomalaisten kultturista ja sitten yrittää parantaa tää valmistava kurssi me emme [4] tarvi keskustella tuntia tässä muista tekeminen taikka taulukirjuri.

In this turn the student used “we” or “our” four times. First she mentioned “our opinion”, meaning those who were involved in the group work: it was a frequent practice in the Culture Laboratory. Secondly she said “our point”, the “our” referring either to the members of the small group or to all the Culture Laboratory participants. The third reference was to “our culture and Finnish culture”, which again could mean the student’s culture or the cultures of the other non-Finns in the Culture Laboratory. Finally, when the student said “we don’t....” she was including all participants. The use of this kind of ‘dynamic we’ could have the effect of increasing hybridity in the Culture Laboratory and thus reducing the polarization.

10.4.4 A hybrid process of observation, comparison, and creation in intercultural space

In my analysis of hybridity in cultural talk I found that there it was 61 observation (44%), 51 new seeds (37%), and 27 comparison (19%) see Table 10. 2.

Table 10.2 Types of cultural talk in the Culture Laboratory

CL session	Total of Topically Related Sets (TRS)	No. of TRS including cultural talk	Type of talk: - observation (P) - comparison (C) - creation/new seeds (NS)	Single turn (SI) Series of turns (SE)
1	32	19	P: 8 C: 6 NS: 5	SI: 8 SE: 11
2	17	8	P: 6 C: 2 NS: 0	SI: 4 SE: 4
3	31	23	P: 10 C: 2 NS:11	SI: 6 SE: 17
4	24	17	P: 3 C: 2 NS: 12	SI: 2 SE: 15
5	16	13	P: 5 C: 1 NS: 7	SI: 3 SE: 10
6	29	16	P: 6 C: 7 NS: 3	SI: 6 SE: 10
7	16	13	P: 6 C: 2 NS: 5	SI: 4 SE: 9
8	21	16	P: 8 C: 5 NS: 3	SI: 3 SE: 13
9	25	14	P: 9 C: 0 NS: 5	SI: 2 SE: 12
Total	211	139	P: 61 C: 27 NS: 51	SI: 38 SE: 101

The number of topically related sets that included cultural talk was 139 (66% of the total), of which 38 (27%) were single turns and 101 (73%) were series of turns. Thus, the series of turns were far more frequent than the single turns. This could reflect the lively exchange of views and the dialogic nature of the discussion in the Culture Laboratory.

Observation was the most frequent type of cultural talk: 61 (44%) of all topically related sets. This could reflect two things. On the one hand, there was a 'cultural dimension' in the discussion in that the participants became aware of cultural issues, which is an important element of intercultural encountering (cf. Landis et al., 2004). On the other hand, it could reflect a process in which the participants become aware that they could no longer take dominant practices for granted: if there is no cultural awareness it can easily happen that dominant practices are regarded as 'universal'. It is difficult for members of dominant groups in particular to realize that their cultural practice is one among many.

However, the sowing of new seeds, or the creative type of cultural talk, was also common: it occurred in 51 of the (36.6%) topically related sets. Thus, the participants produced new ideas for developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training. This confirms the findings reported in Chapter eight: the participants made many suggestions. The nature of the Culture Laboratory was developmental as one of its objects was to evolve the Preparatory Immigrant Training (see Chapter 7).

The comparison type of cultural talk was identified in only 27 instances (19.4%). This could indicate that the participants wanted to move beyond comparison to creation. However, it could also reflect the fact that the participants were discreet, and comparison could have been perceived as evaluation, which they did not wish to do.

The following figure (10.1) is based on Table 10.2. It shows the number of topically related sets included in the cultural talk and the types of talk in the different sessions of the Culture Laboratory.

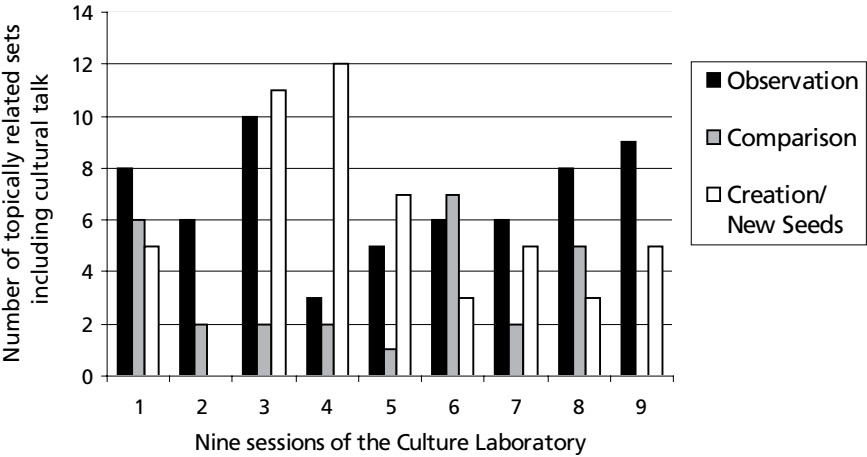


Figure 10.1 Types of cultural talk in the Culture Laboratory sessions

As shows, the observation type of cultural talk occurred in every session, the number of those topically related sets varying from three (fourth session) to ten (third session). The comparison type featured in every session except the last one, and the number of topically related sets varied from one to seven. As for the creation type, it was present in all of the sessions except the second one, and the number of sets varied from three to 12. There was no a particular pattern in the existence, temper, or progression of these different types of cultural talk.

The next table (10.3) shows the relationship between the types of cultural talk and single or series turns: single turns comprised 44% and series of turns 56% of all observation-type of cultural talk, thus the relationship seemed to be balanced in that there were only seven more series of turns than single turns. There was a clear emphasis on series of turns in the other two types: 85% and 86% for the comparison and creation types, respectively.

Table 10.3 The relationship between single and series turns and types of cultural talk in the Culture Laboratory

CL session	Observation single	Observation series	Comparison single	Comparison series	New seeds/ single	New seeds/ series	Total
1	6	2	1	5	1	4	19
2	4	2		2			8
3	4	6		2	1	10	23
4	1	2		2	1	11	17
5	1	4	1		1	6	13
6	4	2	1	6	1	2	16
7	3	3		2	1	4	13
8	3	5	1	4		3	16
9	1	8	0	0	1	4	14
Total	27 44%	34 56%	4 15%	23 85%	7 14%	44 86%	139

This finding suggests two things. First, it shows the participatory and dialogic nature of the Culture Laboratory: people listened to each other and discussed. This was reported earlier, in the analysis of suggestion-making discussed in Chapter eight. It also suggested that new seeds were embedded in different viewpoints in the developmental process: new ideas needed to be discussed and elaborated on. Thus the development work was enriched with multivoiced discussion among people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. I will now give some examples of each type of cultural talk.

Observation

The next example (excerpt 10.6) is from the third session. The participants were talking about development work and the practices of the Culture Laboratory, then one student asked if the Culture Laboratory was something that could help immigrants to cope with life in Finland.

Excerpt 10.6

Student: But I want to know, if this Culture Laboratory can help immigrants to manage and get on well in Finland and in life, this was what I wanted to say.

Opiskelija: Mutta mä haluan tiedä, onks tää kulttuurilaboratori voi auttaa maahanmuuttajalle voi että maahanmuuttajat voi päästä hyvin Suomessa ja elä-

mässä, tää se on mun asia.

There the student mentions “immigrants” and “Finland”, but there is no comparison between cultures or new seeds or ideas for the future development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. I thus interpreted it as an observation-type of cultural talk and as a single turn.

Comparison

The next example (excerpt 10.7) comes from the eighth session, and the participants were talking about the work-placement period. The students were recalling their experiences in Finnish workplaces. One teacher asked how the Finnish and another country’s kindergartens differed and the student replied that in Finland there were more kindergarten teachers, more group working, and more individualistic working practices.

Excerpt 10.7

Teacher: How do Finnish and Country X kindergartens differ from one another?

Student: Well, they are quite, in Country X there’s only one kindergarten teacher, not two or three. And there’s much more group work here, and for example it’s impossible to do individual work, and there’s very much individual work here, in a small group the teacher has only one or two children, it’s very good. And she or he can divide the group and one does this thing and the others other things, and one can listen to fairytales and others can play, it’s good, that for example, when one teacher reads to Finnish and foreign children, someone who understands fairytales, another can teach new words, and they can give the right names, it’s good.

Opettaja: Miten suomalainen ja maan X päiväkotit eroaa toisistaan?

Opiskelija: No, ne on ihan , että maassa X on vaan yksi lapsentarhaopettaja, ei oo kaksi, ei oo kolme. Ja täällä on hyvin enemmän ryhmätyö täällä, ja esimerkiksi mahdotonta teke individuaalityötä, että täällä on hyvin paljon individuaalityötä, pienessä ryhmässä opettaja oppi kaksi vai lapsia vai yksin, se on hyvin hyvä. Ja hän voi jakaa ryhmä ja yksi tekevät yksi asiat, toiset toinen ja toinen voi kuulla satuja ja toinen leikkivät, se on hyvä, että esimerkiksi, kun yksi opettaja lukea suomalaisille lapsille vai ulkomaalaisille, kuka on hyvä ymmärtää satuja, toinen opettaja oppia uusia sanoja ja he kertovat väärä ja nimeä, se on hyvin hyvä.

I interpreted this example as a comparison-type of cultural talk and as a series of turns. The student highlighted some differences between the two cultures. However, she did not give any new ideas; she only said what the differences were and that she liked some practices adopted in Finland.

Creation

The next example (excerpt 10.8) is from the seventh session. One student suggested that it would be good to visit workplaces as they had done before, because then they could observe young people's activities, hospitals, and kindergartens: what "Finnish life" is about.

Excerpt 10.8

Student: I think that it's good to visit workplaces like with N and N, we visited a lot, a youth centre, a kindergarten, and a hospital. It is good that we can see Finnish life, what's a patient, what's a doctor, what is caring and nursing, it's very interesting.

Opiskelija: Minä luulen että hyvä olla tutustua työpaikalle N:n kanssa ja N:n kanssa me menemme paljon nuorisotalo ja lasten päiväkoti ja sairaalaan. Se on hyvä, että me voimme nähdä suomalaista elämää, mitä on potilas ja mitä on lääkäri, mitä on hoito, et se on hyvin kiinnostava.

I interpreted this excerpt as a new-seed-type of cultural talk and as a single turn. The question is what is 'new' in this turn. The 'old' information is that students typically visit workplaces as part of their vocational education and training in order to get to know about working practices, but for both students and teachers the newness was the reference to "Finnish life": it opened up a new perspective on an 'old' practice. What does it mean to be a patient, a doctor or a nurse in Finland? It also expanded the horizon from the teaching perspective in giving a cultural dimension to learning: it is not only the professional qualifications that are important, but also the everyday life of Finns. Furthermore, the student implied that it was a significant learning challenge for students to understand and see "Finnish life", thereby expanding the borders of classroom life and suggesting that 'real life' could also be a source of learning at school.

The next example (excerpt 10.9) is from the first session. The participants were talking about the curriculum of the Preparatory Immigrant Training, and then one student suggested that immigrant students or "foreigners" should be included in the curriculum working committee.

Excerpt 10.9

511 Student: And another thing, if I think about this school plan, has it been written by the principle or the social worker or teachers, I don't know, they're all Finns. Would it be possible, if we as foreigners, if this plan was made, or this we do or the committee does, doesn't it, would it be possible, could we have

one or two foreigners in a committee making these plans, and also a teacher of Finnish and a school assistant, is it possible?

512 Teacher: For the writing of the curriculum?

513 Student: No.

514 #xx: Yeah.

515 Student: The school plan, what the school organizes for immigrants.

516 Teacher: Schedule?

517 Student: Yeah.

511 Opiskelija: Vielä toinen asia, jos on mä, ajattelen tämä koulu suunnitelma se on tehny tämä on en tiedä rehtori tai kuraattori tai opettajat en tiedä, kaikki he ovat suomalaisia. Onko mahdollista, jos olemme ulkomaalaisia, jos tämä suunnitelma on tehty tämä teemme tai komitea eikö niin, onko mahdollista jos on lisätä yksi tai kaksi henkilö ulkomaalaisia, sama on suomen opettaja ja koulunkäyntiavustaja onko mahdollista sama eikä suunnitelma?

512 Opettaja: Opetussuunnitelman tekoonko?

513 Opiskelija: Ei.

514 #xx: Joo.

515 Opiskelija: Koulusuunnitelma, koulu järjestää maahanmuuttajille.

516 Opettaja: Lukujärjestys?

517 Opiskelija: Joo.

I identified this as a creation-type of cultural talk and as a series of turns. Here the student was making a clear proposal to change the College practice: to include immigrant students in the planning of the training. It also reflected the self-identity of the student: “we as foreigners”, others as “Finns”. However, it does not suggest the passive role of the students, but rather emphasizes their participatory nature and subjectivity. This proposal was accepted and was also implemented later in the project.

10.4.5 *Intercultural activity*

I have shown in previous chapters how the participants employed intercultural space to set in motion a hybrid process by observing, comparing, and creating in the Culture Laboratory. One angle on this process is to explore it through the concept of activity²⁹ and the kind of activity it reflects.

²⁹ See Chapter 3.4 for more on the concept of activity.

Part of the next excerpt (10.10) was used at the beginning of Chapter seven as an example of discussion in the Culture Laboratory. It also brings out one of the objects: developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The participants were talking about what the Culture Laboratory was and also introduced the idea of “making cultural differences visible”, which was then at least partly accepted.

Excerpt 10.10

297 Student 3: It means that if I study in my own country my manners and ways of studying are completely different systems from those in Russia, and now that we've come to Finland and the systems are totally different, and now the Finns think that this laboratory is a system that suits us all and will help us to study better, I don't know how to put it briefly.

298 ##Chief interventionist: Yes.

299 Teacher 1: Making studying better.

300 Student 3: Making it better is the goal.

301 Student 5: Or learning about different cultures.

302 Chief interventionist: Yes.

303 Student 9: So that we can all learn better here, all together.

303 Student 9: No, that is easier for all of us to learn here together.

304 Teacher 2: To make visible the learning habits in different cultures, here are some different possibilities, which one do we choose here?

305 Chief interventionist: Does it describe it that we make visible different cultures and different cultural habits?

306 Teacher 2: To make visible just like this Russian, and Finnish and Afghan.

297 Opiskelija 3: Se on sellainen, jos mä opiskelen oma kotimaassa minun tapoja on ihan erilaisia kun Venäjällä he opiskeli ja nyt kun me tulemme Suomeen ja täällä on ihan erilaisia systeemi ja nyt suomalaisten mielestä tämä laboratorio haluaa tällanen systeemi laittaa meille kun voisimmekin opiskella hyvin ja hekin vois opiskella hyvin sellaisia, en mä tiedä miten vois lyhyesti sanoo.

298 ##Vetäjä: Niin

299 Opettaja 1: Opiskelun parantaminen.

300 Opiskelija 3: Parantaminen on tavoite.

301 Opiskelija 5: Tai eri kulttuurien oppiminen.

302 Vetäjä: Niin.

303 Opiskelija 9: Ei, että voivat oppia täällä helpompi kaikki yhdessä.

304 Opettaja 2: Tehdä näkyväksi erilaisten kulttuurien tapaa oppia, tässä nyt pannaan tiskille erilaisia, minkä me valitsemme tähän, mitä mä kirjaan tähän?

305 Vetäjä: Kuvaisko se, että tehdään näkyväksi erilaisia kulttuureja erilaisia kulttuurisia tapoja?

306 Opettaja 2: Tehdä näkyväksi just tällä lailla venäläinen ja suomalainen ja afganistanilainen.

I am suggesting that the hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating could be described as the emergence of a new type of activity: making invisible cultural practices more visible to all participants. This emergence could be called ‘intercultural activity’ – which in itself seems to call for a new type of shared object: in a heterogeneous situation making diverse cultural practices visible and familiar to all subjects. It also involves creating shared meaning and understanding.

Intercultural activity seems to take place on the borderline between different cultures, or at activity interfaces. In the Culture Laboratory it was on the borderline between different learning cultures, as the student said in the excerpt (10.10 turn 297) “my manners and ways of studying are completely different systems from those in Russia, and now that we’ve come to Finland and the systems are totally different”. It was also on the borderline between activities of learning and activities of developing. From the ‘central to marginal’ perspective, intercultural activity seems to be on the edges of established activities.

This type of activity may differ from the conventional notion of activity as “an established, stable type of activity” (cf. Engeström, 1998). This ‘inter-activity’ in an ‘inter-space’ seems to have two dimensions. On the one hand, it is momentary and fluid, emerging suddenly and surprising you. The next excerpt is from the first session. The participants were talking about the Culture Laboratory and the idea behind it. Then one student asked if they were allowed to discuss the teacher’s work related research despite the fact that the student group had been involved in the project for several months. The issue was discussed further and it was agreed that this was co-operation between the participants.

Excerpt 10.11

Student: Can I, can we discuss, for example, studying and the teacher’s work related research together?

Opiskelija: Saanko, saammeko me keskustella esimerkiksi opiskelu ja opettajan työtutkimus yhdessä?

This excerpt shows that the student was unaware of the boundaries of the discussion. Were students allowed to comment on and discuss teachers’ work, or work related research at schools in general? This was probably a new experience for the student and thus entailed boundary-crossing.

On the other hand, intercultural activity may well be stable, its object being to make cultural practices, models and instruments familiar and visible to all subjects. This could be achieved through the use of established instruments, rules and the division of labor, as is done within intercultural training.

Inter-space has two dimensions. On the one hand, it opens up new horizons as a developmental, innovative space. This has been the case in this study: the empirical material shows how the participants contributed to the development work of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. On the other hand, inter-space could be a dangerous, potentially frightening space to enter, although there is little evidence of that in this study. There are light traces of it in some turns. For example, in excerpt 10.1 the student said, "When I came to Finland, we, I found it difficult, too, all immigrants face such problems in the beginning". In excerpt 10.3 one member of staff was talking about "grumbling". In the middle of her sentence she said, "Of course it's difficult for you", indicating that it was natural for immigrant students to have a difficult time.

However, the issue here is that inter-activity is meaningful in hybrid processes, and thus in development and learning. It may be an inter-phase for new emerging activities, or a long-standing established activity in itself: it could become an instrument for intercultural learning.

For example, in a classroom in which there are people from diverse cultures, teachers and students can create a new type of learning culture, which differs from that of the majority students, nor is it the same as the immigrant students' previous learning culture: it is something new. As mentioned in Chapter three, I see intercultural activity as reciprocal dynamic hybrid processes, which are collective, object-related and motive driven in local historical contexts between cultures and people. It is not a question of adaptation to something that already exists, but rather shows how cultural diversity could be seen as a resource and richness for developing new practices. However, there may also be potholes and pitfalls, even though there was no clear evidence of this in my empirical material. If you are on the borderline, you may "end up in no-man's land", as Konkola (2001) stated, or you can stay in-between spaces, as Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) put it with reference to the generation of young adolescents who entered Finland as children and were growing up and living in the country.

10.5 Conclusions concerning the intercultural in the Culture Laboratory

The general research question addressed in this chapter concerned how the concept of intercultural space could be enriched in the light of the experiences in the Culture Laboratory. The specific questions included how the participants employed the notion of culture in their talk, and what types of cultural talk were identified.

Intercultural space is not just a fluid, hazardous, ephemeral, and dangerous space between cultures (see Tomas, 1996), and neither is it a rigid block between entities (Sullivan, 2005). In this study it turned out to be a fluid and flexible space between cultures, a potential springboard for new ideas and practices. Thus, it is seen as a dynamic and developmental space. It seems to me that it carries both aspects: potential and opportunity as well as precariousness and even perilousness. It is also a tension-rich energy field, ready to erupt in different directions depending on how it is used, for what purposes, with what kinds of artifacts, and according to what division of power.

The participants used the concept of culture in many expressions, such as “culture, nation, and nationality, cultural background, home country, and cultural practices”. This multiple use could indicate at least three things. First, they were using the notion of culture as an ‘everyday concept’, and they were very familiar with its multiple use. Secondly, it grasps well a mundane phenomenon the participants were trying to understand, and thirdly, the concept itself is multilayered and complex and its multiple use reflects its many sides (cf. Erickson, 2001).

Hannerz (2003, pp. 213–214) has written about the rise and the spreading of “culturespeak”, indicating that the use of “culture” has expanded enormously in recent decades. This “culturespeak” pervades public discourse, from the political to the educational and from the commercial to the advertising spheres. Thus, one might wonder whether it is too loose a concept for scientific use. According to Hannerz, some anthropologists have suggested that we could well do without the whole concept of culture, but as he points out, the concept does not die out because some researchers decide not to use it. The focus should rather be on the forms and modes of “culturespeak”. (Hannerz, 2003, pp. 216–217.)

Another question was whether the Culture Laboratory was a place in which the participants just talked on a superficial level about cultures in general: the empirical material shows that this was not the case. One can hear the canon of ‘multicultural’ speech in Finland, too, such as in the political arena. One dominant theme in immigrant training, or intercultural encountering, is the nation and how people perceive themselves or others: this was evident in this empirical material, too. As Hall (1995) and Massey (1995) stated, culture was “placed”. However, the talk about cultures did not bring out the cultural difference of the ‘exotic other’, neither there was any kind of ‘mystification of difference’.

Different viewpoints were expressed and gave rise to new ideas. However, this does not mean that the encountering was only seen as enrichment, which is often the case in the canon of multiculturalism: Hannerz (2003) calls this “praising speak”. On the contrary, there were also critical comments about College practices in the students’ and the teachers’ turns. Nevertheless, the critical comments and grumbling tended to dissolve into discussion and suggestion.

The cultural talk was 44% observation, 37% creation, and 19% comparison. The total number of topically related sets that included it amounted to 66% of all topically related sets, of which 27 % were single turns and 73 % were series of turns. This predominance of series of turns could reflect the dynamic exchange of views and the dialogic nature of discussion in the Culture Laboratory: this was seen in the analysis of suggestion-making in Chapter eight, for example. The analysis also shows that new seeds are embedded in different viewpoints in the process of development: new ideas need to be discussed and elaborated on. Thus, development work is enriched with multivoiced discussion among people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

I am suggesting that the hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating is the emergence of a new type of activity: making invisible cultural practices more visible to all participants. Furthermore, this emergence could be called 'intercultural activity', which in turn seems to call for a new type of shared object: in heterogeneous situations making diverse cultural practices visible and familiar to all subjects. It also involves shared meaning-making and understanding, and seems to take place on the borderline of different cultures, or at interfaces between activities. It is on the borderline between activities of learning and activities of developing.

11 Conclusions and contributions

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, the purpose of my research was to further understanding about the developmental process, and to strengthen our conceptual grasp of the phenomenon of intercultural learning.

This research stemmed from both the practical situation at the College³⁰ and the theoretical elaboration of this situation: immigrant students and their teachers were facing questions and challenges to do with diversity and variation in their everyday practices. The participants of this study³¹ came together to face, ponder upon, and create solutions to the questions and challenges in a setting called the Culture Laboratory.

There are usually three types of results in developmental work research. The first type includes the concrete changes in work, such as the implementation of new methods or tools, and of new kinds of thinking models for workers. Secondly, there are the qualitative and quantitative findings, such as the typical features of the work and their relationships. Finally, intermediate conceptual tools such as concepts and models emerge when data and general historical hypotheses are combined. (Engeström, 1998, p. 155.)

The first type of results are primarily those from the development and research project: the Culture Laboratory Project. The participants came up with their 'pocket books' and a new curriculum for the Preparatory Immigrant Training, for example. They also experimented with new teaching methods, some of which are still in use at the College. A further significant finding was the transition from the

³⁰ College = Helsinki City College of Social and Health Care

³¹ A group of 17 immigrant students from eight different countries originally, their teachers, the counselor, the school assistant, and the project co-ordinator, the chief interventionist and this researcher.

outcomes of the project to the process of mutual development: teachers, students, other staff and researchers collaborated for almost three years in order to improve the training (Teräs, 2004)³².

The second and third types of results are presented in the empirical chapters of this research. Through the theoretical concepts I have attempted to grasp and understand the phenomenon of intercultural learning and hybridity in general, and at the College in particular. However, the second and third types of findings are intertwined, and this may have caused repetition. I will first summarize the main findings reported in each empirical chapter according to the main research questions, then I will give my conclusions and contributions from theoretical, methodological and practical perspectives. Finally I will make some suggestions for the future.

11.1 A summary of the empirical findings

What are the strengths and limitations of the Culture Laboratory as a tool for intercultural learning and what is the significance of disturbances in the Culture Laboratory when thus used?

The findings of the analyses suggested that in the Culture Laboratory setting, where people with diverse backgrounds met, histories, current situations and practices intermingled and intertwined, and multiple scripts and activities were present. This multiplicity of elements and their hybridity seemed to be an inherent aspect of intercultural encountering.

The participants were involved in multiple activities both inside and outside the College, such as learning and teaching or developing and counseling, which was manifested in numerous disturbances identified in the Culture Laboratory. The significance and the potential effect of these disturbances lay in the revelation of this multiplicity: the historical and actual contradictions inherent in intercultural learning in this kind of setting and the further development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. The disturbances identified were both behavioral and discursive. The former included the comings and goings, and the absences of the participants, while five types of discursive disturbance were also identified: 1) understanding, 2) guiding the scribe, 3) objections or rejections, 4) disagreements, and 5) admonitions.

³² For more on the practical framework of this research see Chapter 4.2, 'The Culture Laboratory Project'.

Furthermore, the multiplicity of scripts identified in the Culture Laboratory was one reason for disturbances. The scripts of the lesson and of the Culture Laboratory clashed from time to time, as did the script of the past and the present, in other words of the students' past and present in education. I called this kind of script a shadow script: it was formed during the enculturation process and emerged within intercultural encountering. In this case it involved teaching and learning processes. The students had learned different kinds of scripts in their previous countries, concerning interaction during or outside lessons, for example, and these followed them to the new situation like a shadow.

The mundane practice of teaching is often very hectic and fragmentary, especially in vocational education and training. Different subject matters tend to take all the attention of students and teachers, and there is no time or space for reflection, and no tools for practicing it either. The strength of the Culture Laboratory was in bringing the different parties together and providing a structure and a framework, as well as the practical and conceptual tools, to facilitate the mutual development of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. Furthermore, it created a new kind of space in which teachers and students could explore questions concerning intercultural learning and development.

However, the participants also faced difficulties. For example, the questioning and conceptual kind of working practice was new to them, and practically and emotionally demanding. It took time and energy to make sure that everyone was following and understanding what was happening. The process of development took time and space from everyday activities, which confused and mixed up practices. The roles of the participants also differed in terms of the usual practices at the College.

I perceive intercultural learning as a process of reciprocal change, transformation, and development between cultures and people. Despite the difficulties encountered, the Culture Laboratory provided a solid structure and framework. Furthermore, it made it possible to break down the traditional type of interaction between students and teachers. I consider it a potential tool for intercultural learning and development.

What is the potential of participants' suggestions for developing intercultural learning?

The findings of the analyses reported in the Chapter eight showed that the participants made many suggestions concerning the Preparatory Immigrant Training. This implies that the Culture Laboratory offered immigrant students both the opportunity and the space to participate in the development work, and through this they experienced that their view – their voice – was appreciated and listened to.

Thus, it increased multivocality in the College. Furthermore, this kind of participatory method provided one opportunity to support students who are threatened by marginalization

Four types of social language emerged in the suggestions referring to historically grounded ways of speaking about learning. Both teachers and students primarily used the ‘traditional teaching’ type in the context of exploring how to explain new issues to students, for example. The ‘traditional studying’ type depicted students sitting and listening to the teachers. However, the language that is characteristic of vocational institutions – ‘learning outside school’ – also emerged in the suggestions, as did ‘teaching and studying together’. This emphasizes the importance of transcending classroom and school boundaries, especially in immigrant training because immigrant students are not familiar with Finnish everyday and working life – as they pointed out during the discussion. However, a tension between suggestions directed toward life at school and those directed toward life outside school was observed. This tension opened up a hybrid space and offered a learning opportunity to teachers and students: daily life is a meaningful and fruitful source of learning for immigrant students.

One important theme in the suggestions – concerning the Finnish language – was followed throughout the Culture Laboratory. The analysis showed that a simple suggestion started an innovative, complex process. A suggestion is not just an individual, separate idea produced by someone who wants to improve the training, but sets off a fruitful discussion process revealing various views about the training. Furthermore, it serves as a vehicle for students and teachers aiming to improve their daily practices. This expands the traditional concept of a suggestion as an individual contribution to one in which the focus is on the collective process of suggestion-making.

Furthermore, a single suggestion sometimes set off an escalative and cumulative process or chain. On the one hand, there was a need for students to learn, and they had fresh perspectives and ideas concerning the training, which escalated the process. On the other hand, the teachers had the power to implement the suggestions and the project staff added their competence in the development work. All three parties were needed, and they all had complementary needs and competences. This helped to break up the traditional power relations between students and teachers.

Teachers need to pay more attention to students’ suggestions about their training because suggestions open new horizons in everyday work as well as a new hybrid space for learning. Suggestions are potentially useful in terms of future improvements. They give information about the person’s history and her or his cultural way of talking about learning. Moreover, their contents throw light on the current situation of the training, and participation in a developmental process

empowers immigrant students. Above all, as was demonstrated in this research, suggestions matter.

How does ‘paper’ function as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory?

The analysis in the ninth chapter showed that paper was an ubiquitous artifact in Finnish vocational training and education practices. Immigrant students confronted a robust literary environment and practices of developing and learning at the College: papers were read and written, shared and delivered, copied and carried, talked about and referred to – as well as lost and looked for – almost constantly. Paper took different forms, such as photocopies, textbooks, notebooks, assignments, and memos. It also triggered a rich variety of interaction: the participants read, wrote, drafted, and took hold of papers, filed them, and gave them to each other. It was at the same time physical, textual, and collaborative. Paper was thus a prominent mediator of developing and learning in the Culture Laboratory as well as at the College.

Different paper trails emerged and revealed the power of paper. A paper trail could be regarded as a crystallization or condensation of power in that it is usually stable, long-lasting, and visible, and crosses boundaries – the writing of a learning diary during a work-placement period is one example. Paper trails were formed in a process of paper-related actions such as planning, assigning, completing, returning, and evaluating literary learning tasks. The one that emerged in the Culture Laboratory also involved elements of collective working such as the actions of discussing and sharing.

Paper-related actions also served certain functions such as controlling and participating. For example, when a group-work assignment directed the topic of the discussion the tool turned out to be the script. Developmental tools also transformed into objects of learning. For example, when the participants were writing on the board and the scribe asked for advice on how to spell a specific Finnish word, it revealed an overlapping with another activity – that of learning the Finnish language. These transitions from tool to script or object were momentary, flexible, and dynamic. There are different kinds of paper trails in workplaces, too. The paper trail and paper-related actions analyzed in this study extend the analysis of human-artifact interaction in classrooms and in working life.

The new challenges for immigrant students were twofold: controlling the flow of papers from the teachers and other staff, and changing consumption into production. There was a heavy emphasis on using the written language. The students also found the multiple use of paper a challenge. For teachers it is challenging to consider their everyday practices, into which they are socialized and which they were used to, from new perspectives. They need to make their working practices

visible to students, and to mediate the wider cultural meaning in the use of specific artifacts, such as the use of paper in Finland.

How could the concept of intercultural space be enriched in the light of experiences gained in the Culture Laboratory?

The findings showed that intercultural space is a fluid and flexible space between cultures. It is a potential springboard for new ideas and practices, and as such is a dynamic and developmental space. However, it may also be a precarious and even perilous space. It is a tension-rich energy field, which can erupt in different directions depending on how it is used, who employs it and for what purposes, what kinds of artifacts are used, and what the division of power is.

The participants used the concept of culture in many expressions, including “culture, nation, and nationality, cultural background, home country, and cultural practices”. This multiple use indicates at least three things. First, the participants were using the notion as an ‘everyday concept’ and were very familiar with its multiple use. Secondly, it captures a mundane phenomenon the participants were trying to understand, and thirdly, the concept itself is multilayered and complex, which is reflected in its multiple use.

There were three types of cultural talk observed in the Culture Laboratory: observing, comparing, and creating. This suggests that new seeds for developing the Preparatory Immigrant Training were embedded in different viewpoints. New ideas needed to be discussed and elaborated in order to refine them. The development work was thus enriched by the multivoiced discussion among people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, the hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating was described as the emergence of a new type of activity – making invisible cultural practices more visible to all participants. I called this emergence ‘intercultural activity’, which seems to call for a new type of shared object: making diverse cultural practices visible and familiar to all subjects in a heterogeneous situation. It also involves shared meaning-making and understanding, and seems to take place on the borderline between different cultures, or at activity interfaces.

Table 11.1 A summary of the main findings and the main conclusion of each empirical chapter

Chapter	Main findings	Main conclusions
7. Focuses on the Culture Laboratory method and the disturbances identified in the Culture Laboratory.	Many behavioral (e.g., comings and goings) and five types of discursive disturbances (understanding, guiding the scribe, objections or rejections, disagreements, and admonitions) identified in the Culture Laboratory, revealing the presence of multiple scripts and activities.	In intercultural encountering there are different pasts and presents, thus, it is multilayered, complex, and hybrid.
8. Examines the suggestions made in the Culture Laboratory and their hidden potential.	Four types of social language emerged: traditional teaching, traditional studying, teaching and studying together, and learning outside school. Seven perspectives emerged in the trajectory of suggestions concerning the Finnish language.	Teachers should pay more attention to students' suggestions about the training, because they may open up a new learning space for all. A suggestion is not only a person's individual input, but could start a collective discussion process and thus expand the development process.
9. Focuses on 'paper' as a mediating artifact in the Culture Laboratory.	Paper is an ubiquitous artifact that mediated learning and development in the Culture Laboratory. There was rich interaction with paper and paper-related actions. Paper was a powerful confrontational tool and also served to emancipate the participants. Special types of paper trails emerged. Paper trails are seen as the crystallization of power in the relations between students and teachers.	The new learning culture requires immigrant students to develop new learning practices and strategies. Paper is a powerful artifact in learning, and emerging paper trails may be a source of confrontation or empowerment, and therefore learning about the use of paper and its cultural meaning in Finland is important for immigrant students. On the other hand, less paper-tied practices could be developed and introduced.
10. Scrutinized the intercultural space manifested in the Culture Laboratory.	The participants talked about culture in many ways – in terms of a nation, nationality, society, and learning practices. A hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating emerged. An activity called intercultural activity emerged.	A new type of inter-activity could emerge in the boarderland between different cultures and activities. In educational settings, more attention should be given to space and time, so that people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds can come together, meet and discuss cultural issues.

11.2 Conclusions and contributions from theoretical perspective

My theoretical findings fall into two categories: some of them may enrich the concepts already in use in the field, and some of them emerged as a result of this research. I will first present the findings related more to expansive learning and activity theory, such as those concerning the structure of expansive learning and the concept of inter-activity, and then move on to those concerning concepts such as intercultural space and hybridity, which stem from intercultural and cultural research. However, these concepts are intermingled. I will first give the major theoretical findings, and then describe those that could be considered intermediate concepts.

Contradictions in the Culture Laboratory

According to my findings, the multiple activities and scripts manifested themselves as disturbances in the Culture Laboratory: the participants were engaged in many activities inside and outside the College. Contradictions are seen as driving forces of development, learning, and change. Innovations and dilemmas, as well as ruptures and disturbances, are considered manifestations of inner or outer tensions and contradictions in human activity (Engeström, 1998, pp. 62–65).

According to Engeström (1987, pp. 87–89), there are four levels or layers of contradictions. Primary inner contradictions exist within each element of a central activity. Secondary contradictions occur between its various elements, and tertiary contradictions emerge between its dominant form and a culturally more advanced form. Finally, quaternary contradictions exist between this central activity and its neighboring activities. In developmental work research third-level contradictions emerge as tensions between an old practice and a planned new practice in the later phase of the expansive learning cycle (Engeström, 1998, pp. 63, 91, 92). This may be in a monoactivity situation in which the central activity is the focus of the development. However, my empirical material suggests that in this kind of heterogeneous, hybrid setting in which the participants come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, fourth-level contradictions were also elements of the process from the early phase. These systemic-level contradictions were identified between past and current, intertwined and overlapping learning practices.

The structure of an expansive learning cycle

There is typically one stable activity system, such as teaching or cleaning, in the early phase of development. The development work focuses on this activity, its object, its history, and its changes. A dominant feature of the initial phase of an

expansive learning cycle is the internalization of the predominant form of activity. Then, little by little, critical comments against the predominant practice strengthen and the externalization phase begins to dominate the process. Thus, internalization involves the learning of an established activity, and externalization involves, among other things, creating new ideas or instruments. (Engeström, 1998.) This could describe the structure of an expansive learning cycle in a monocultural setting.

The findings of the analyses suggest that in a setting such as the Culture Laboratory, in which different pasts and presents intermingle, the dominant feature of the expansive cycle is externalization rather than internalization at the start. Thus the cycle starts from the externalization and not only from the internalization of activities. This suggests that the immigrant students had established their way of learning during their enculturation process, and they needed to externalize their previous practice before learning the current practice at the College.

Inter-activity

According to activity theory, human activity is object-oriented and motive-driven, as well as culturally mediated and collective, historically developing, and multi-voiced (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). The findings of this research suggest that the hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating is what I describe as an emerging of new type of activity: making invisible cultural practices more visible to all participants. Furthermore, I call the emergence 'intercultural activity'. This, again, seems to call for a new type of shared object: in a heterogeneous situation making diverse cultural practices visible and familiar to all subjects. It also involves shared meaning-making and understanding.

Intercultural activity seems to take place along the borderlines of different cultures, or at interfaces between activities. From the 'central to marginal' perspective it seems to be on the fringes of established activities, and to differ from the conventional definition of "an established, stable type of activity" (Engeström, 1998). This 'inter-activity' in an 'inter-space' appears to have two dimensions: on the one hand it is momentary and fluid, emerging suddenly and surprising you, and on the other it is stable.

Inter-space also has two dimensions. On the one hand, it opens up new horizons as a developmental, innovative space, which was the case in this study: the empirical material shows how the participants contributed to the development work of the Preparatory Immigrant Training. On the other hand, it is a dangerous, potentially frightening space to enter, even though there was not much evidence of that in this study.

However, the issue here is that inter-activity is meaningful for hybrid processes, hence for development and learning. It could be an inter-phase in the emergence of new activities, and it shapes those activities. On the other hand, it could be a long-standing established activity in itself, thus becoming an instrument for intercultural learning.

A shadow script

Disturbances are regarded as unintended deviations from the script. A script is a historically evolved artifact that has a rule-like character: scripts “codify and regulate standard procedures in repeatedly occurring cultural situations” (Engeström, 1992, p 79). It takes the form of a phased description or set of instructions concerning how things will happen from beginning to end, including the division of roles and definitions of what is expected from the participants. A special, new kind of script – a shadow script – was identified in the Culture Laboratory. It is learned during the enculturation process, and it emerges during intercultural encounterings.

Paper trails

A new type of concept, ‘a paper trail’ attached to the multiple use of paper as a mediating artifact of learning and developing in the Culture Laboratory, emerged. A paper trail in this context is a chain-like process of paper-related actions. It also represents the crystallization or condensation of power, in that it is mostly stable, long-lasting, and visible, and crosses boundaries – as in the writing of a learning diary during a work-placement period. Paper trails were formed in a process of paper-related actions such as planning, assigning, completing, returning, and evaluating literary tasks, and emerged in the Culture Laboratory as a part of collective working, such as in the actions of discussing and sharing.

Expansive suggestions

Suggestions are traditionally regarded as individual contributions to development work. The suggestion-making process in this context of Finnish language learning produced seven perspectives, of which elaborating, exploring, and extending offered fresh viewpoints. These perspectives thus change the notion of a suggestion from an individual contribution to a collective process of contributing.

Culture

I perceive the concept of culture as a dynamic and hybrid as well as a socially and historically constructed phenomenon (cf. Hall, 1995; Erickson, 2001; Long, 2001; Gutiérrez & Correa-Chávez, 2006). It involves and intermingling of cultural practices, discourses, values, conceptions, and artifacts. Thus, I perceive hybridity as a constituent, or a core of a culture, which contrasts with views advocating unified and homogeneous notion of it. Hybridity refers to the past, present, and the future, because cultures are in constant movement. However, the transformation may be slow or quick, or both at the same time. Furthermore, the notion of cultural agency stresses people's active involvement in producing, creating and transmitting culture (Ratner, 2000).

The intercultural and intercultural space

In this study the intercultural means interactive, hybrid, and dynamic processes between cultures and people (cf. Hall, 1995; Erickson, 2001). These processes are manifest in cultural clashes, co-operation, or new innovations, for example. Furthermore, they take place in an area that is conceptualized as a Third Space (e.g., Bhabha, 1998; Gutiérrez et al., 1999) or a boundary zone (e.g., Kerosuo, 2006; Konkola, 2001), but which I conceptualize as intercultural space because the driving forces are the dynamics and variations between cultures and people. I also see the boundaries between different cultures as moving and dynamic, locally constructed, and permeable rather than fixed, static, and rigid (cf. Hall, 1995; Huttunen et al., 2005, p. 34–35).

Tomas (1996) used the notion of a transcultural space in his study of the history of Andaman anthropology. This intercultural space can be perceived as “transient, sometimes humorous, often dangerous, and periodically cruel”. Transcultural spaces are products of fleeting intercultural relations (Tomas, 1996, pp. 1–3). Sullivan (2005) criticizes the notion of intercultural space in the context of anthropology. He writes that such a conceptualization of betweenness is not adequate to grasp the fluid social field that emerges in interactions.

As far as this study is concerned, this conceptualization of the betweenness of cultures is interesting because it catches well the momentary, yet significant in its own right, nature of a space between cultures and people. As I see it, this ‘inter-space’ harbors dislocation and misinterpretation, and as such is potentially dangerous – as Tomas (1996) described transcultural spaces. However, I would emphasize the potential and the possibilities this kind of betweenness offers. Furthermore, the findings of this study showed intercultural space to be a fluid and flexible space between cultures. It was a springboard for new ideas and practices,

and thus was potentially dynamic and developmental. It is seen as a tension-rich energy field, which could erupt in different directions.

Intercultural learning and activity

Learning involves development, transformation, and changes in tools, practices, and activities (cf. Säljö, 2001). It is also locally and historically formed, so that it takes different forms in various schools, places, and countries. Moreover, it produces diverse methods and conceptions about how people learn, what they learn, and why. Thus, in this study, intercultural learning means interactive and hybrid processes of change, transformation, and development between cultures and people. The implication is that all parties involved can learn, and thus it is a two-dimensional or multi-dimensional process. Thus perceived as an intercultural activity, in the context of my study it is considered an interactive, hybrid process in which cultural variations, differences, and similarities are identified and compared, and new tools and solutions for development and change are created.

Hybridity

Hybridity has been described as mixed end products that are results of combinations of different cultural ingredients and repertoires (Long, 2001), as a process of transculturation (Hall, 1995), and as one aspect of diversity and differences (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). I have used the concept of hybridity in different yet overlapping ways. First, the multiplicity of activities and scripts in the Culture Laboratory are described as hybridity. Secondly, I used it in conceptualizing how suggestions opened up a learning space – thus hybridity in the Culture Laboratory was a mixture of different ideas and power relations between teachers and students, and reflected the overlapping and unfinished nature of the suggestion-making process. It seems that evolvment requires hybridity rather than fixed boundaries and ready-made solutions, and an intervention method provokes it. Thirdly, I used the concept to describe the process of observing, comparing, and creating in intercultural space. Finally, hybridity can indicate the heterogeneity of a group comprising of participants with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

11.3 Conclusions and contributions from the methodological perspective

From the methodological perspective this research supports and challenges developmental work research. There have been many studies for which empirical material has been collected in different countries by means of ethnographic observation, interviewing, or videotaping, for example (cf. Kärkkäinen, 1999; Kon-

тинен, 2007). Comparisons between countries or within one cultural context have also been made. However, there have been only few studies like this one in which participants with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds have come together to develop something new. I would like to point out three things concerning the methods employed in a multicultural and multilingual setting like the Culture Laboratory: multiplicity, creation of empirical material, and quilt making.

Multiplicity

Perviously I described the structure of the expansive cycle and demonstrated that in a case like the Culture Laboratory externalization before internalization is fruitful. This finding also has methodological implications because phases of externalization and internalization may intermingle. This should be considered when the empirical material is gathered or the process of development is outlined: what is the structure, in which phase, and what are the transitions between externalization and internalization.

The multiplicity of activities was mentioned earlier. However, there is a need for a tool that would recognize it as distinct from the network of activities, which I see as a 'flat' tool, during the research and development process. For example, we should be able to identify not only the central activity and its neighboring activities, but also the other activities in which the participants are simultaneously engaged and the historical changes within them because they affect the development work. It is also necessary to take into account how different activities are intertwined in organizations.

A multilingual setting requires more time, and also multilingual materials, for the development work than a monocultural setting. It also suggests that one cannot take anything for granted in a heterogeneous setting, and that emphasis should be placed on making diverse issues and variations visible during the mutual process of development.

Creating empirical materials

Agozino (2000) has argued that the notion of data collection should be replaced by that of data reception, especially in migration research. He points out that a researcher doing social research is receiving information from a willing subject rather than going into the field to collect data, such as butterflies. The notion of reception emphasizes the nature of research practice in which people are considered autonomous subjects rather than part of a hierarchical process of data collection (Agozino, 2000, p. 15). In Agozino's terms the discussants in the Culture Laboratory were autonomous subjects. However, I put forward the idea of 'data'

creation because it emphasizes the participatory and interactive nature of the Culture Laboratory, and the active role of all concerned.

Making a quilt

From the methodological perspective, forming the units of analysis was a complicated process in which the different views and paradigms – the research questions, the phenomena under examination, and the systematic organization and analysis of the empirical material – were intertwined and in constant dialogue. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, pp. 4–6) describe this type of process, in which different perspectives and paradigms are employed and yet are respected in their own right, in qualitative research as ‘a bricolage or a quilt making’, and a researcher as ‘a bricoleur’. Doing this research was like making a quilt at times.

The Culture Laboratory as an intervention method

Long refers to an intervention as “an ongoing, socially constructed, negotiated, experiential and meaning-creating process” (Long, 2001, pp. 25–34), while according to Virkkunen, seldom does an intervention alone produce change and development in a system: it rather supports and amplifies the forces of development that are already inherent in the system (Virkkunen, 2004, p. 38). In Engeström’s (2007) view, an intervention based on Vygotsky’s method of double simulation, such as the Change Laboratory, differs from approaches described as ‘design experiments’.

The Culture Laboratory was not the streamlined execution of an intended intervention plan.

There were problems with the tools – in both theoretical and practical terms. However, some of the difficulties that emerged were expected and understandable – such as the language questions. Intercultural encountering is a complex and tension-rich area because the participants have different pasts and interests, which intermingle. The Change Laboratory working method is interventive and questioning. This type of working is emotionally and practically demanding because some aspects of work that are hard to face may become visible. This type of working also confused the routines and everyday practices of the College. Therefore, the script and the working tools of the Change Laboratory should be made visible.

Thus, from an interventionist perspective, the Culture Laboratory seemed to work well, and some of the aspects of work that are swallowed up during ‘normal’ school-going became visible. The students and teachers confronted many issues during the discussions, and many suggestions and actions stem from the Culture Laboratory.

11.4 Conclusions and contributions from the practical perspective

I will now briefly discuss the practical conclusions and contributions of this research on the individual, organizational, and societal levels. The phenomenon of intercultural learning and development is multifaceted and tension-rich. Classroom teaching may be fragmented, and there may be lots of intervening elements. There is a need to give time and space to cultural issues within the sometimes hectic everyday life at school.

Immigrant students come up against locally, culturally, and historically shaped teaching and study tools and methods when they come to a new country, and these may conflict with the ones they grew up with. This could result in cultural clashes in the classroom. Adult students in particular need to deal with their day-to-day responsibilities in a new cultural environment, and this may have an effect on their learning.

Most teachers in Finnish vocational schools have mainly taught students from majority groups, and they, too, need to learn not to take existing practices for granted. For example, the interaction between teachers and students and among students can differ, and teachers need to focus on working tools and methods as well on the subject matter. The need for ethic-based intercultural competence, which includes acquiring knowledge and skills, and understanding values, actions and cultural artifacts (see Räsänen & Jon, 2005; Teräs, 2007), is obvious. In my view, intercultural competence should be seen as a collective competence within organizations, and not only as the individual competence of teachers and students: the identification of structural barriers is important.

From the societal perspective, Finland has changed from a land of emigration to one of immigration. It is committed to integration and there has been a transformation from individual refugee policies and practices to multicultural, pluralistic, and non-discriminatory policies in recent decades (cf. Matinheikki-Kokko & Pitkänen, 2002). Currently the emphasis is on work-related immigration as more and more people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds are meeting to study and work together (Työministeriö, 2006). The practices need to be developed in collective processes as this study has shown.

I will not go into the details of the practical contributions in this report because my colleagues and I have written about the project and presented the new tools (e.g., 'the pocket books' and the new curriculum of the Preparatory Immigrant Training) in other reports (cf. Teräs, 2004; Teräs & Lampinen, 2004; Haataja, 2004; Haataja & Salonen, 2004).

Summary

In sum, the five main conclusions and contributions of this research are as follows.

1. The Culture Laboratory offers a solid basis and a method for intercultural learning and development.
2. Intercultural space is a tension-rich area in which different interests, pasts, and presents intermingle. It is a potential developmental space in which seeds for new ideas and practices are sown.
3. The hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating is one of inter-activity on the borderline between various cultures and activities.
4. A multiplicity of activities and scripts is an inherent feature of intercultural encountering.
5. The process of creating empirical material emphasizes the active role of all research participants.

11.5 Future implications

I will now highlight some questions and challenges for future researchers and developers. For example, in the implementation of the Culture Laboratory in an educational setting care should be taken to make the working practices more visible than we did, and to emphasize the questioning and negotiating practices. The differences between the working practices in a classroom and in the laboratory should also be pointed out. Focusing on specific topics, holding more sessions, and providing a special “teachers’ laboratory” in-between the sessions might also help the development work. Moreover, working in a multilingual setting requires the working tools of the Culture Laboratory to be tailored to international students through the inclusion of more multilingual material, for example, and the theoretical tools of intercultural learning could be included in its working practices.

Research conducted within an intercultural setting opens up a new perspective on intracultural variation, too. It is not only the differences and similarities between cultures but also the differences and similarities inside them that could be a focus of research. Multi-vocality and participatory practices should also be given more attention than I gave them in this research, and the effects of the intervention need to be considered more in terms of intervention methodology. Furthermore, there is a need for studies that combine practical and theoretical development work within the area of intercultural research.

12 The research and the research process

Doing this research has been a great learning opportunity for me. Being a member of the College and a member of a research community could also be seen as ‘intercultural’ learning: the tools, discourses, and practices employed in one community were historically and culturally constructed and I needed to cross the boundaries. Assessing the research and the research process requires another perspective, which could be seen in terms of critical inspection or ‘reflexivity’. Lynch (2000) argues against reflexivity as “a methodological virtue and source of superior insight”, and points out the diversity of meanings and many uses of it in various contexts.

Qualitative research crosses disciplines, fields, and subject matter, and the many different areas and arenas all have their own traditions, as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note. Furthermore, as Seale pointed out, quality in qualitative research is a somewhat elusive phenomenon that cannot be pre-specified by methodological rules, and that it is enhanced if the research engages in philosophical and methodological debate (Seale, 1999, pp, 7–8).

For me, assessing this research means three things. First, I need to be aware of my bias, influences, and interpretations. Secondly, I have to adopt rigorous, critical analytical practices with open mind, and thirdly to link existing and previous literature and research. According to Silverman (2005, pp. 229–232), there are four aspects involved in assessing qualitative research: building useful theories, using a self-critical approach, thinking about appropriate research methods, and making a practical contribution.

I will first focus on my role as a researcher, how it intermingled with my role as a teacher and a colleague at the College during the project. I will then consider the research and the research process more thoroughly

12.1 My role at the College: from teacher to researcher

The process of “going into the field” or research site is the hallmark of ethnographic studies, and includes issues such as obtaining the permission to do so and gaining the trust of informants. Studies also refer to the process of “going native”, which means becoming deeply involved with one’s informants as “one of them”. In my case, the situation was the opposite. I was a ‘native’: I was a teacher at the College, and had been for five years when the project started, I was involved in development work at the College, and sought funding for the project. I was thus deeply involved in everyday life at the site, yet I could not have done the development work or this research alone without the students and my colleagues.

I see my situation at the College in terms of different phases: teaching, development, and research. I was a colleague of the teachers and other staff at the College, and at the same time to the students I was a teacher³³. During the first phase I was teaching in the area of health care and nursing, then I and my colleagues started to act more as developers. We obtained funding from the City of Helsinki Department of Education to develop the Preparatory Immigrant Training. For example, we organized a support group for Somali-speaking students. The group was led by a Somali person who had been living in Finland for years, and the aim was to discuss the challenges of studying and how to support the students at the College. We collaborated with other schools and found that we had similar questions concerning immigrant education (Teräs, 2004). When the project started I was formally appointed ‘project researcher’, and in 2003 I started my studies as a doctoral student at the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research. The transition from teacher to researcher took years, and each phase raised different questions and issues on which to ponder. My path can be followed through the discussions that took place in different meetings, my personal emails to my colleagues, their emails to me, and my research diary.

It was not a smooth transition for me, nor for my colleagues, and the students were also sometimes uncertain about my role. As an ‘insider’ I knew things of which an ‘outsider’ would hardly be aware and would probably never know, but on the other hand I was blind to how some obvious features of our work might appear to an ‘outsider’. I think that my choice to focus on the first Culture Laboratory discussions as my empirical material stemmed from the transition situation. The discussions in the Culture Laboratory formed the basis of the overall development work in the project, and the Culture Laboratory offered an interesting method and setting, yet was compact enough.

³³ However, I did not teach this group, which participated in this research.

Conducting research on vocational secondary education is unusual because studies carried out in Finland on vocational education and training have mostly focused on polytechnics (cf. Kotila & Mutanen, 2004). Thus, the status and position of research on the secondary level was vague – developmental work being more familiar. Questions therefore arose concerning the need for this development and research project, and the benefit it would bring to the College. The tools of research work in particular were considered a mystery, even a threat from time to time, as with the documentation and taping. Even though participating in development work was a collaborative decision, I was the key person promoting.

Under the ethical guidelines I applied to the College principal for permission to do this research based on my research plan, and this was granted. My supervisors at the College were also very supportive. Participation in the research and development work was voluntary, and the participants received both written and oral information about the project and the research. I informed them about the various stages and aspects, but as the following email to the chief interventionist shows, it was not a simple process. Getting the trust of the participants took more time than I had anticipated. I wrote this email after the fifth session of the Culture Laboratory.

(...)

I [indicating this researcher] talked about half an hour to N and she said that I'd brought in some sort of mysterious theory from outside and was walking with my head in the clouds, and that I'd forgotten all the grass- root-level concerns (in December I was teaching, but now I was full of theory). (...). I was still a member of the work community, but now I'd got a new role as a miracle worker. As a researcher I'd acquired an x-ray vision and eagle eyes, which I then zoomed in on my colleagues and evaluated them. At the same time, I was on the computer and carrying a video camera or a tape recorder, so that even in the night I could evaluate them. Besides, along with the new role I'd acquired a secret knowledge of (activity) theory, which I flashed at them from time to time, and which they didn't understand (want to understand?) and so I was just devising alone new ways of working on my own and was not sharing my ideas with them. When in reality, I'm just rambling and fumbling, and I don't understand it, and nobody does, because the there was no CL [Culture Laboratory] before this. (...) [Marianne Teräs's email to the chief interventionist, February 7, 2002, at 5.32 in the afternoon]

(...)

juttelin n. ½ tuntia N:N kanssa ja hän toi esille juuri sitä, että olen tuonut ulkopuolelta jonkin mystisen teorian ja leijun pää pilvissä, enkä muista ollenkaan näitä ruohonjuuritason murheita (joulukuussa siis vielä opetin, mutta nyt leijun teoriassa). (...) Olen edelleen työyhteisön jäsen, mutta nyt minulla on myös uusi, ihmeellinen rooli. Olen tutkijan roolin myötä saanut myös tarkan röntgenkatseen ja haukansilmät, joita zoomailen sitten työtovereihini ja arvioin heitä. Samalla naputtelen tietokonettani tai kannan videokameraa tai nauhuria, jotta voisin vielä illallakin arvioida heitä. Lisäksi olen tässä uudessa roolissani saanut haltuuni salamyhkäistä salatietoa: (toiminnan) teoriaa, jota aina silloin tällöin väläyttelen heille, jota he eivät yhtään ymmärrä (haluakaan ymmärtää?) ja kehittelem itsenäisesti uusia tapoja toimia, ja ihan piruuttani en sitten jaa tuota uutta tietoa heidän kanssaan. Kun todellisuus on se, että haahuilen ja hapuilen enkä itsekään ymmärrä, eikä kukaan toinenkaan, koska KI [kulttuurilaboratorio] ei ole ollut olemassakaan ennen tätä. (...)

[Marianne Teräksen sähköposti vetäjälle 7.2.2002 klo 17.32]

This email shows that the transition from a teacher-colleague to a researcher-colleague was not easy for me or for my colleagues either. It also reflects the sensitive nature of the relationship between colleagues when roles change: first I was a participant at the College, then my role changed to that of participant-observer, and finally I become a co-creator of empirical material. Furthermore, there were times of turmoil and times of tranquility during the project. On the positive side, some colleagues were thrilled to be part of creating something new.

I shared my work room with my colleagues, as I had been doing for three years, which meant that all the teachers who came to the Culture Laboratory were also my 'roommates'. When the project ended I took study leave for two years in order to analyze the empirical material and to write this report. This gave me time and space to take a 'distance' from the daily life of the College and to concentrate on my research work at the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research. I think this was a necessary and helpful procedure.

12.2 Assessment

The research process lasted many years and included different overlapping phases. It began with the project phase, during which I read the relevant literature and studies, besides gathering empirical materials and participating in the intervention, and made some preliminary analyses. Then there was the process of deeper analysis, building up the units of analysis and getting the findings. Thirdly, I started

to write the report. These processes were not linear, but took place simultaneously at differing levels of intensity.

For example, following the preliminary analysis, which revealed the nature of suggestions (in Chapter 8) and paper as a mediating tool (in Chapter 9), I shared the findings with my colleagues and the research community. Kvale referred to this type of communicating about the research, in my case with the participants and the research community, as 'communicative' validity (Kvale, 1989). However, the questions of validity and reliability in qualitative research have been debated (cf. Silverman, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and it seems to me that these concepts are problematic and are in the process of redefinition.

According to Silverman, building useful theories means showing how far the research demonstrates the use of previous concepts and theories, and establishing the theoretical contribution of one's efforts (2005, p. 229). In my case, I chose activity theory and developmental work research as my main theoretical and methodological standpoints. However, as I was reading the literature, attending research seminars, and talking about my research I found out that immigration had become a very popular topic in Finland within a variety of disciplines: in 2004 there were almost 300 different levels and types of studies focusing on immigration or ethnicity in progress (Työministeriö, 2004). This made me wonder why I had chosen activity theory, and how I could limit my research and yet capture the concepts and theories that were important.

I have explained why I decided to employ activity theory, but in sum it offered an interesting approach as well as the theoretical and methodological tools for carrying out this type of research and development work in the College. On the other hand, I needed to remember that same concepts are used from different theoretical perspectives. The Change Laboratory method in particular seemed to be a potential tool for developing work in a 'multicultural' and 'multilingual' setting. For example, multi-vocality and participation were emphasized: I thought that it was important to listen to the immigrant students' experiences and voices. Development work done in schools is usually teacher-centered.

Employing appropriate research methods covers questions such as how the empirical materials were gathered – or 'created' as I called it given the nature of the discussions in the Culture Laboratory – how they were analyzed and whether the methods were suitable given the research questions and empirical materials (Silverman, 2005, p. 229). I used video and audiotaped empirical material, which could be called 'low-inference descriptors' (cf. Seale, 1999, p. 148), in order to enhance reliability. My own interpretations follow the excerpts from the empirical material, and can thus be distinguished from what the participants said or did. I have also described step by step how the units of analysis were constructed and how the analyses proceeded to demonstrate the research process.

Employing different concepts and units of analysis to the same empirical material could also be regarded as comprehensive data treatment (Silverman, 2005, p. 214). On the other hand, it could reflect eclectic choices or anecdotalism. However, I perceive it as compatible and comprehensive rather than the motivated extraction of empirical material.

Making a practical contribution involves showing how the research results will help practitioners, clients, and policy makers (Silverman, 2005, p. 229). For example, in the context of intercultural learning and development I have developed a new application of the Change Laboratory method, the Culture Laboratory. It is an interesting tool by means of which schools and work establishments could develop multivocality and participation among people with differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Using tabulations and calculation could also be seen as part of the analysis and validation procedure of research (Silverman, 2005, p. 219). I have given lots of tables and figures, partly because of the large number of suggestions that arose: they seemed useful as preliminary analytical indicators. One interesting angle is how the rigor and categorization were used in the tabulation procedures, and how talk was used as fluctuating and flexible type of empirical material. This was a challenge, yet I see that they were not mutually exclusive. For example, I used tables and then a four-dimensional analysis, both of which shed light on the empirical material. I also considered the findings in terms of 'product' and 'process' when analysing the suggestions, for example.

The whole concept of generalization has been questioned and new conceptualizations have been put forward (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, it is still relevant to ask if the findings are credible or have wider significance beyond the study context. First, all the findings I have reported represent what the participants of this research have created and my own interpretations. The question remains whether a setting such as the Culture Laboratory could have similar effects in other contexts. I claim that the suggestions made by the participants are the products of this study, and that different kinds of suggestions would be produced in a different setting. Furthermore, immigrant students or co-workers would identify significant cultural artifacts, as they pointed out 'paper' in this study. The hybrid process of observing, comparing, and creating is evident in other circumstances, too.

The Culture Laboratory as a development method was assessed by the chief interventionist as part of her teacher-education studies (Poikela, 2005). She found that the methods and tools used in the Change Laboratory needed adjustment because the Culture Laboratory meant working with tension-rich multiple activities and scripts. Thus, she made the methodological choice to focus on participatory practices, multi-voicedness, and the cultivation of an inquiry-type of working orientation. Participatory practice was encouraged through the investment of more

time in group work (Poikela, 2005). In my view, these methodological priorities were important drivers of the development process in terms of suggestion-making, for example.

As I pointed out in the chapter on methodology (Chapter 6), doing this research was, in many ways, like being a ‘bricoleur’ or a ‘quilt maker’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 4–6). One of the reasons for that was that the phenomena – interculturality and learning – are complex and multifaceted. It was therefore necessary to develop different concepts and methods of analysis in order to promote understanding and to develop the practices the novel situation demanded from the students, teachers and other staff at the College.

“Kuinkas sitten kävikään?”

“What happened then?”

At the end of my dissertation I suggest a little ‘time jump’ to the present because the project was carried out in 2001–2004. What kind of influence has it had on the current practices of the College? The question “Kuinkas sitten kävikään?” is the title of a famous children’s book (and good children’s books also tend to interest and fascinate adults, in this case the life of the Moomin family and community) written by the Finland-Swedish Tove Jansson in 1952. This is the story of three brave characters of the community: young Moomin troll, little My and Mymble. They faced many adventures and challenges during their journey. At the very end of this book little My says:

Vaan viimeinenkin aukko on nyt liian ahdas asunnon ... Me jäätiin kirjaan, virkkoi Myy niin käy, kun liiaks kehittyi.³⁴ (Jansson, 1952)

I returned to my teaching post at the College in the autumn of 2006, and talked to my colleagues. I thought it was relevant to ask, “What happened then?” Was the Culture Laboratory only the ‘adventure of development’ captured and kept in this dissertation book, or was there something that lived on at the College? I found that the answer was ‘yes and no’. Some of the teachers who had participated in the development work during the project said that they still used some of the ideas and practices. However, the turnover of teachers in immigrant training had been big, and the new ones asked, “What Culture Laboratory?”, indicating that they had no idea of what I was talking about.

³⁴ I have translated this freely from the Finnish version of the book, little My’s idea goes something like this: This hole, the very last you see – They can’t get through – it’s much too little. We’ll stay, here, in this book and why? Because it happens if you develop too much.

I think this could also be the case in other research and development projects. Projects become very 'personalized' and 'projectized': those who are involved benefit in terms of their personal development during the time they are running, and then they start another one. Thus, a future goal in development and research projects would be to break up this personalization and project-by-project development. This is the next challenge I need to face at the College.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Themes of the interviews with the students

1. How did you come to this College? Where did you get the information? Do you think that you are in the right/wrong College?
2. How are things going in your everyday life? (place of residence, money etc.) Does your everyday life disturb /affect your studying life? How much? What could be done to resolve the situation?
3. Have you faced difficulties or had surprises in the College? How have you tried to resolve them?
4. What do you think about your way of learning? Is the way of learning here different?
5. Does your own culture affect the way you study and learn here? How?
6. Do you think that teachers take into consideration the fact that there are students from different cultures? How?
7. Do you think that studying in Finland and studying in your own culture are different? How?

Opiskelijoiden haastatteluteemat:

1. Miten tulit oppilaitokseen? Mistä sait tiedon? Oletko väärässä/oikeassa paikassa omasta mielestäsi?
2. Miten arkielämäsi on järjestynyt? (asunto, raha-asiat jne) Häiritseekö/estääkö arkielämäsi sinua opiskeluissasi? Kuinka paljon? Mitä voisi tehdä asioiden ratkaisemiseksi?
3. Onko HESOTEssa ilmennyt vaikeuksia tai yllätyksiä? Miten niitä on yritetty ratkaista?

4. Mitä ajattelet omasta tavastasi oppia? Onko tapasi oppia täällä erilainen?
5. Vaikuttaako mielestäsi sinun oma kulttuurisi opiskeluun ja oppimiseen täällä? Miten?
6. Ottavatko opettajat huomioon mielestäsi sen, että opiskelijoita on eri kulttuureista? Miten?
7. Eroavatko opiskelu Suomessa ja omassa kulttuurissa mielestäsi? Miten?

Teachers' themes

1. Which groups of immigrants have you taught and which subjects?
2. Have you faced difficulties or had surprises with students? Did you try to resolve them? What happened? What do you think caused them?
3. Do you think that the everyday life of the students affects their studying life? How?
4. Do you think that the culture of the students affects their studying or learning? How?
5. Have you done anything differently with the immigrant groups than with your Finnish-speaking groups? How?
6. What have you learned from teaching immigrants, either formally or informally?

Opettajien teemoja:

1. Mitä maahanmuuttajaryhmiä olet opettanut ja mitä ainetta?
2. Onko opiskelijoiden kanssa ilmennyt vaikeuksia tai yllätyksiä? Yrititkö ratkaista niitä? Mitä tapahtui? Mistä ne mielestäsi johtuivat?
3. Vaikuttaako opiskelijoiden arkielämä mielestäsi heidän opintoihinsa? Miten?
4. Vaikuttaako kulttuuri mielestäsi opiskelijan opiskeluun tai oppimiseen? Miten?
5. Oletko toiminut eri tavalla maahanmuuttajien kuin suomenkielisten ryhmien kanssa? Miten?
6. Mitä olet itse oppinut maahanmuuttajia opettaessasi tarkoituksellisesti tai tahattomasti?

Appendix 2

HCCSHC

17.8.2001

Marianne Teräs

Teacher, room 201

Tel. 310 81831, Mobile: 040-527 6066

DEAR STUDENT!

The Helsinki City College of Social and Health Care (=HCCSHC) is conducting research into the teaching and learning of immigrants during the academic year 2001–2002. The project will involve the teachers and the students of the MMMS01V.

We plan to interview teachers and students, and to video and audiotape lessons and activities in the HCCSHC. The participants will also be asked to write diaries about their ideas and experiences. Participation in this research and development work is voluntary.

The teaching of immigrants is new focus and we hope everyone will participate. Our aim is to improve the teaching and learning so that all students will find it worthwhile studying here with us.

There are four different phases in the project. In August and September we will write diaries about the issues and situations that cause concern. We will also write about the problems. Thus we hope that everyone will learn to write better Finnish: there is a lot of writing in Finnish schools.

We will then interview students in small groups in order to find out how studying at the HCCSHC differs from studying in your own cultural context. In October we will videotape lessons, and then between November and April teachers and students will gather together to discuss.

What do we ask you to do?

We ask you to participate in the teaching and practicing of speaking and writing in Finnish.

If you have any questions about the Project I will be happy to answer them!

With best wishes,
Marianne Teräs.

HESOTE

17.8.2001

Marianne Teräs

Opettaja, huone 201

Puh. 310 81831, GSM: 040-527 6066

HYVÄ MMMS01V-RYHMÄN OPISKELIJA!

Helsingin sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden oppilaitos (=HESOTE) kehittää ja tutkii maahanmuuttajien opetusta ja oppimista lukuvuoden 2001–2002 aikana. Projektiin osallistuu sekä opettajia että ryhmän MMMS01V opiskelijoita.

Haastattelemme opettajia ja opiskelijoita, videoimme sekä äänitämme opetusta ja toimintaa HESOTE:ssa. Opettajat ja opiskelijat myös kirjoittavat vihkoon ajatuksiaan ja kokemuksiaan. Osallistuminen kehittämisen- ja tutkimustyöhön on vapaaehtoista.

Maahanmuuttajien opetus on uutta ja sen vuoksi kaikkien osallistuminen on tärkeää. Haluamme parantaa opetusta ja opiskelua niin, että opiskelijat ovat tyytyväisiä opiskeluunsa täällä meillä HESOTE:ssa.

Projektissa on eri vaiheita. Elokuussa ja syyskuussa kirjoitamme vihkoon asioita ja tapahtumia, jotka ihmetyttävät. Kirjoitamme myös ongelmista. Näin kaikki oppivat kirjoittamaan suomen kieltä paremmin. Suomalaisessa koulussa kirjoitetaan paljon.

Haastattelemme opiskelijoita pienissä ryhmissä siitä, miten HESOTE:ssa opiskelu eroaa oman kulttuurin koulun opiskelusta. Lokakuussa videoimme opetusta. Marraskuusta huhtikuuhun kokoontuvat opettajat ja opiskelijat oppimaan oppimisen ja suomen kielen tunneilla keskustelemaan opetuksesta ja opiskelusta eri kulttuureissa.

Mitä Sinun pitää tehdä?

Sinun tulee osallistua aktiivisesti opetukseen ja harjoitella suomen kielen puhumista ja kirjoittamista.

Jos Sinulla on kysyttävää projektista, vastaan mielelläni kysymyksiisi!

Yhteistyöterveisin

Marianne Teräs

Appendix 3

Monitoring after the Culture Laboratory

1. What did you think about this session?
2. Did you say the things you wanted to say?
3. Did you understand what the others said?
4. Did anything remain unclear to you (what?)?
5. Did the others understand you?
6. Is there anything you would like to do differently in the next session?

THANK YOU!

Arviointi kulttuurilaboratorion jälkeen

1. Kirjoita, mitä ajattelet tästä kerrasta?
2. Sanoitko asiat, jotka halusit sanoa?
3. Ymmärsitkö, mitä muut sanoivat?
4. Jäikö jokin asia epäselväksi (mikä?)?
5. Ymmärsivätkö muut sinua?
6. Haluatko muuttaa jotain ensi kertaa varten?

KIITOS!

Appendix 4

A task to be dealt with in the Culture Laboratory on the 16th of April.

Consider your responses to the following questions:

1. What kinds of things have you learned in the Culture Laboratory?
2. What have you learned about the Finnish language?
3. What have you learned about 'learning to learn'?
4. Should we continue to organize the Culture Laboratory for new groups?
Why/Why not?
5. Were there issues that we did not deal with even though we should have done, or should we have done more, or did we over-emphasize some issues?
6. Did you cover the issues that were brought up in the Culture Laboratory during other lessons too? Which ones?
7. Would you like to continue with the Culture Laboratory? Why/why not?

Välitehtävä. Käsitellään kulttuurilaboratoriossa 16.4.

Mieti valmiiksi vastuksia seuraaviin kysymyksiin:

1. Mitä asioita olet oppinut kulttuurilaboratoriossa?
2. Mitä olet oppinut suomen kielen kannalta?
3. Mitä olet oppinut oppimaan oppimisen kannalta?
4. Pitäisikö uusille ryhmille jatkaa kulttuurilaboratorioita? Miksi ei pitäisi/
miksi pitäisi?
5. Jäikö jokin asia käsittelemättä tai liian vähälle käsittelylle tai käsiteltiin
jotakin asiaa liian paljon?
6. Käsiteltikö kulttuurilaboratorioissa esiin tulleita asioita myös muilla tun-
neilla? Mitä?
7. Haluaisitko jatkaa kulttuurilaboratorioita? Miksi haluat/et halua?

Appendix 5

Symbols used in the research: in the excerpts from the empirical material and in the tables

The excerpts are numbered in each chapter in the order of appearance.

Number in front of the individual turn: number of the speaking turn in the session, if there is more than just one speaker.

CL1-CL9: the number of the Culture Laboratory session

Student 1–17: individual students, if there is involved more than one student

Teacher 1– 3: individual teachers, if there is involved more than one teacher

Other 1–3: other staff members, if there is more than one member of other staff

N: a person's name

Country X: the name of a student's native country

#: interrupting the previous speaking turn

##: overlapping talk

(...): I have edited words out of the speaking turn

[word]: I have included a remark

Xx: unidentified speaker

