Cross-Departmental Materials Development through Lesson Study

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Lesson study is a process that has been undertaken as a part of the Japanese school system for many years. It typically involves teachers getting together to work on a new lesson to deal with an identified problem or shortcoming in the existing national curriculum. A set of teachers and school board members will typically get together to collaborate on a new lesson, then observe as one of the members trials the lesson in class. This observed trial is then followed by reflection and discussion by the group members, who then return to the drawing board to make further enhancements before the next trial. In the Japanese school system, the process can take a great length of time, for the opportunity to teach the lesson in development will typically only come up once in a year, since all teachers follow the same curriculum at the same time (Fernandez, 2002; Lewis, 2002; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999).

This paper will share how native English-speaking teachers from the US, Canada, and Australia came together to experience the process for themselves, partly out of an interest in developing a new lesson that would be of great value to the learners, and partly out of a desire to gain new teaching experiences that would allow for professional development. Because these teachers were working in an English

Language Institute (ELI) as part of a Japanese university (Kanda University of International Studies), they had a relatively large amount of flexibility in terms of their choice of lesson focus, timing of trials, and meeting times for feedback. In contrast to the typical Japanese public school process, the five participating teachers were able to fit four trials of the lesson into a single academic year.

The teacher-participants began by identifying a very general area of interest for the lesson in question that would accommodate courses in three different departments within the ELI. This is the first time such an endeavor has been tried in recent years. So, the teacher-participants looked at developing a lesson that could be used to improve the learners' skills in reading. While the first couple of trials of the lesson were to get a sense of what needs should be met through this lesson, eventually a narrower objective came into focus.

The sections that follow will describe the various incarnations of the lesson as each teacher-participant faced competing demands as they underwent the process. Each teacher-participant tried to meet the agreed-upon criteria of the group while tailoring the lesson to meet the particular needs of their learners and the goals and objectives of the course the lesson was being trialed in. The following descriptions of each of the four trials will make these competing demands clear, and the closing reflections of each of the teacher-participants will add further insight into the individual victories and setbacks faced by all.

THE LESSON STUDY

Round 1

The first version of the lesson was conducted with a first-year class in the English Department. The Lesson Study members came from three different departments, so the initial goal for the lesson plan was merely to create a cross-curricular lesson.

Beyond that, the aim was yet to be determined. Thus, the initial version of the lesson plan (see Appendix 1) was a simple four skills lesson—learners listening to each other (in warmers and group work), speaking to each other (in warmers and group work), reading (the text), and writing (their recreated versions of the story). This was the first trialed lesson; therefore, several elements presented in this lesson were eliminated during the further teachings of the lesson. This initial lesson consisted of a warmer activity in the form of Telephone, followed by an explanation of paraphrasing, as opposed to exact duplication, group paraphrasing of the story using visual aids, and all class sharing.

The class of learners were streamed as advanced-intermediate. The picture book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak was chosen, as it presented a memorable, engaging authentic text, unfamiliar to the Japanese learners. As a children's story, the vivid pictures and repeating language were thought to be useful cues to help the learners as they worked to paraphrase the text.

The teacher read the story out loud while the learners listened and looked at the pictures. Following the reading, learners formed groups and were asked to reconstruct the text based on defined roles (grammarian, super speller, etc.). They were given the illustrations from the story as a memory aid. This task focused on co-construction, as each group was only given one copy to fill out. The teacher focused on accuracy in grammar and spelling for the reconstruction of the story, which differed from later versions of the lesson. After completion, groups shared their re-creation of the story with the whole class.

Round 2

The second administration of the lesson was also carried out within the English Department, but as part of a second-year Extensive Reading course. All classes

within the English Department are streamed, and this particular group of learners was a selection of the top 25% of the learners in their year. Significantly, though all the other classes involved in the lesson administrations were unfamiliar with the lesson format, this group of learners had also experienced a similar lesson format earlier in the year, so in terms of organisation, this facilitated a smooth running of what is quite an unusual and challenging lesson.

There were some significant changes from the first administration of the lesson, in terms of text selection, class structure and timing. “The Three Brothers”, a rather obscure fairy tale by The Brothers Grimm was chosen as the text. To cater for a more proficient group of learners, lexically this was more difficult than what was used previously. However, due to time constraints and the desire to finish the lesson within the 90-minute class period, at approximately 600 words, it was also noticeably a shorter text. The choice of a fairy tale was intentional, as it provided a clear and more easily recognisable genre. The choice of a less well-known example of the genre was also deliberate, making the learners completely reliant on the text itself. The use of illustrations and visual cues was discussed in the feedback session following the first administration of the lesson and agreed to be removed due to various reasons, not least because of the difficulty involved in finding them.

The method of textual input was also changed. Initially, learners were split into four equal groups and rather than having the text read to them, were handed a section of the story to read individually. They were told that the story had been broken up into four different parts and their first task was to decide which part of the story their group had been given. After 3 – 4 minutes groups were asked to respond. Learners were then asked to continue reading and become familiar with the text. For unknown vocabulary, they were asked to refer to each other, the teacher, or dictionaries. There was no pre-teaching of vocabulary as in the first administration. After 7– 8 minutes

learners were then told that in two minutes their section of the text would be handed back to the teacher. Learners were then split into new groups, consisting of at least one person who had read each part of the story. They were then asked to verbally retell the story. Following this, they were asked to write, as a group, a paraphrased version of the story. No roles were assigned. One group broke into two smaller sub-groups, the rest continued to work as a whole. After 25 minutes, each group was asked to read aloud their story. They were neither collected, nor corrected, for grammatical or textual errors. Finally, the original version of the story was read out loud by the teacher. There was a final restating that the original aim had been paraphrasing, not replication. The whole process took approximately 90 minutes.

Round 3

The third administration of the lesson with a more focused aim on helping learners to recreate a cohesive text by paraphrasing was conducted in a first-year English course within the International Languages and Cultures (ILC) Department during the second semester of the academic year. The lesson was applied as part of the reading curriculum for the first-year learners since the lesson had been adjusted to center on reading a text. Since learners are not streamed in the ILC Department English courses, it was necessary to choose a slightly easier text than was previously used during the second administration of the lesson. Therefore, a short story by Langston Hughes titled “Thank You Ma’am” was used for the lesson.

The structure of the lesson generally followed the same pattern as the previous version, with only a slight variation at the beginning to introduce some background schema for comprehending the text due to the use of an unaltered version of the story for this class. Some discussion had been had regarding the use of authentic or adapted text during our follow-up meeting from Round 2, as is discussed in more

detail below (see Round 4), but we continued to go for the "authentic" text for this administration and leave it to be discussed further for the next round. A final point regarding the text for this administration of the lesson is that the learners were not given the full story for the tasks as in the previous administration. The homework for the lesson was to write an appropriate ending for the story based on what they understood so far.

Also, a difference in the grouping methods was seen in this administration by asking learners to return to their original groups to collectively re-paraphrase what they had heard before writing it up, rather than asking the learners to rewrite the story in the second grouping. The idea was to give them another opportunity to collectively solidify what they had heard and confirm understanding of the overall text content. Finally, learners were asked to rewrite individually rather than as a group, though the versions should have been the same per group. In previous versions of the lesson plan it seemed that when learners wrote as a group the work was not evenly distributed and those learners who were not as active seemed to have gotten less from the paraphrasing activity than those who were involved in the writing process.

Basically, the third administration of the lesson followed the same structure as the second administration. Only a change in text and grouping patterns were made for this version of our lesson development.

Round 4

For reasons that will be explained below, the lesson was taught twice in Round 4 of the Lesson Study process – once in a first-year writing class and once in a first-year English course for the International Communications (IC) Department.

It was decided that a story with a different theme, written in a more standard

variety of English, would be more suitable for first-year IC learners. “The Emperor’s New Clothes” was proposed as a replacement for “Thank You Ma’am”. The choice of text sparked a debate amongst group members regarding the value of using authentic texts and what exactly constituted an “authentic” text. When the aims of the lesson were first decided, it was specified that learners were to paraphrase an authentic text; however, the team did not discuss at the time why using an authentic text was so important. Many, many different versions and adaptations of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” have been published, written in a variety of styles and for different audiences, but with time being of the essence it was easiest for the teacher to use a version found on the Internet. The teacher adapted the story slightly by replacing a few of the more difficult or old-fashioned words and phrases; this teacher felt that the suitability of the text depended on other considerations and not only on whether it was, in the strictest sense of the word, authentic (see Taylor, 1994 and Adams, 1995 for critical viewpoints on using “authentic” texts). However, some other team members felt that the benefits of using an authentic text would be lost if the story were altered in any way, especially if the richness of the language and the challenge for learners of having to figure things out were diminished to some degree. Eventually, the team decided against using “The Emperor’s New Clothes” due to the fact that most of our learners already knew it in Japanese (although this could arguably be a good thing, especially for lower-level learners). With the group still unable to come to a consensus regarding authenticity, another story not known to learners – “Inspiration Can Be Anywhere” (Couture, 1999) – was chosen. It was decided that the lesson would be taught twice – once with the “authentic”, unaltered text and once using the same story but with a few slight, judiciously-made adaptations. The written, reconstructed stories from groups in both classes were collected by the teacher in order to assess how well learners had been able to

summarize and paraphrase and to see if there were any parts of the story that had been misunderstood.

When, as in Round 2, a fairy tale is used, the story has a familiar structure, making it easier for learners to understand how their section fits in relation to the rest of the story. With the story used in Round 3 ("Thank You Ma'am"), learners did not have that advantage as there was little description of the characters or setting at the beginning. When a story is divided into sections, individual sections may not contain enough information for learners to be able to figure out who the characters are, or even what the story is generally about. The story used in the fourth round of the lesson study process, "Inspiration Can Be Anywhere", was – like "Thank You Ma'am" – not a fairy tale. With these considerations in mind, it was decided that learners would benefit from a bit of background information before being given the story sections to read. The characters' names were put on the board and the teacher explained how they were related to each other in the story, and a very general overview of what the story was about was given: a young girl had a dream; someone encouraged her to pursue her goal, and this encouragement, or inspiration, helped her to achieve it. The idea was to help learners by giving some context for the different sections while being careful not to give away too much information.

In the Round 3 feedback session, it was suggested that instructions could be written on the board in order to facilitate the forming and re-forming of groups and to ensure that learners clearly knew what they were to do at each stage of the lesson. Because there would have been quite a lot of information to write on the board, learners were instead given a handout with instructions for the various phases of the lesson.

According to the lesson plan (see Appendix 2), individual learners were to be called on at the end of class to summarize each section orally, as happened in Round

3, but on both occasions time ran out. This lack of time at the end was largely due to the fact that the first ten or fifteen minutes of the Round 4 lessons were devoted to a warm-up activity which was designed to help learners understand the aims of the lesson as well as the procedure.

The terms 'paraphrasing' and 'summarizing' were explained to learners, with a definition for each written on the board. Summarizing was made part of the lesson's focus, in addition to paraphrasing, since learners were really being asked to identify the most important parts of the story – they couldn't remember and retell every detail contained in the original – and then retell this shorter version in their own words. Paraphrasing and summarizing are also two skills that IC learners practice as they learn to write research essays, so this double aim fit nicely with the learners' program of study.

Learners had not been permitted to use dictionaries in the previous trial of the lesson; as a result, learners had to rely on guessing from context and were perhaps more likely to negotiate the meaning of unknown words and phrases within their groups. However, there were instances in which some learners misunderstood parts of the text, which led to some groups being confused about the story as a whole. Negotiation of meaning and contextual guessing are certainly important for learners; however, it was felt that learners would be better able to focus on the aims of paraphrasing and summarizing if they were not distracted by too many unknown words which could lead to spending an inordinate amount of time trying to figure out details of the story that really weren't that important to the action. One example of this occurred when a group of learners, using the "authentic" text, got stuck on the word *trapeze;* in this case, the teacher explained the word to the group, but added that it wasn't really important in relation to the rest of the story, and the learners moved on in their discussion. It was anticipated that this word would likely cause

confusion and so it had been replaced in the adapted version.

Considering the fact that IC learners are not streamed, dictionaries were allowed during the reading phase of the lesson. However, learners were encouraged to first try to guess the meanings and to help each other with any unknown words. Learners were told that they could use their dictionaries later, but only if they felt it absolutely necessary and that they should look up no more than three or four words. It might be a good idea to prohibit the use of dictionaries for most of the time allotted for reading in order to encourage guessing and negotiation; dictionaries could then be permitted for just three or four minutes at the end of the reading phase so that learners can check their guesses. It was also suggested in one of the meetings that a glossary or pictures could be included with each section to help scaffold the text.

Each section of the story was numbered, so that it was clear who had the first part of the story, who had the second part, and so on; thus determining the chronological order of each section was not part of the task as it had been in earlier versions of the lesson.

REFLECTIONS

Mercy

I was fairly happy with the execution of my lesson. My learners seemed to respond well to the various activities, and to truly enjoy them. However, several elements trialed in my lesson were eliminated or substantially changed in future permutations of the lesson plan. While an engaging activator, in retrospect Telephone was not the right note on which to begin, as I believe that it established a precedent which rewarded exact duplication, rather than correct paraphrasing. I neglected to see this side of the game during my planning. As such, this element was removed from future lesson plans, even though the game was quite a success with

my learners. As noted before the lesson plan that I taught included visual cues, an element which was removed from subsequent lesson plans. While I believe that the cues engaged visual learners, our group decided to eliminate them for two reasons: first, not all stories have accompanying pictures and we wanted our lesson plan to be as easily adaptable as possible, and secondly, the visual element—especially when reprinted on the student handouts—took the emphasis off recollection and recreation of the story as a whole. With a picture summary of the story, the learners did not have to reconstruct the plot, merely the dialogue. Because of these two reasons, we eliminated visual elements from all other lesson plans.

Finally, group work during the reconstruction of the text was a vital element in all other lesson plans, though the size of the groups, and the rules for group interaction changed with each of the teachings.

The teaching experience was quite interesting; having your peers watch your teaching with a critical eye was a new and different experience for me. Another strange element was the feedback, which was often only about things to change, and not what was successful, as those were the element that would be preserved. However, overall, I found it to be a rewarding experience to share my planning and teaching with a group of peers.

Dave

On reflection I feel that the lesson succeeded in meeting its stated aim, and in developing and clarifying certain aspects of the Lesson Study process.

The initial "jigsaw" phase of the lesson, while a worthwhile skill of itself, was perhaps an unnecessary complication and was removed from subsequent administrations. Perhaps this was an example of trying to fit too much into the one lesson. Interestingly, in recent reflections written by learners of this class, seven

months after the fact, many have referred to the enjoyable and challenging nature of this particular lesson. Some also referred to the number of different skills it required of learners – in many ways a positive response, but in terms of the somewhat narrower focus of this study, cause for some concern.

However, the clear structure of this story, and indeed most fairy tales, provided a firm basis for overall comprehension. I also believe it was vital that learners were unfamiliar with the text. Not only did they then have to rely on their own reading comprehension, and that of their original group members, but more importantly, on other group members for the rest of the story. Without the need for this information, there would have been no "gap" to fill.

The length of the text was also very suitable for a class of this level. While a few of the very capable learners were able to memorise chunks of the text, generally learners paraphrased rather than reproduced or summarised. With some of the longer texts used throughout the Lesson Study process, particularly when the writing task had to be finished in class, I feel that learners were forced to summarise. Obviously, while a shorter text increases the possibility of learners memorizing large chunks, compromising in favour of a shorter text precludes the necessity to merely write a précis (under time pressure), and therefore defeat the original purpose of the lesson. Throughout the four administrations, this very important issue of text length was never resolved satisfactorily. Accordingly, the focus of the lessons seemed to vary from replication, to summary, to textual comprehension. Perhaps the confusion within the Lesson Study team as to the definition of paraphrasing, or indeed the lesson objective itself, caused this. I believe it should have been one of the foremost considerations. Nevertheless, overall I was very happy with the way this text helped facilitate the skill of paraphrasing

Some important changes that needed to be introduced in the third administration

were apparent. It became obvious that having learners return to their original groups would be effective in solving several problems. It would facilitate paraphrasing. It would reduce the chance of discussion being monopolised by a stronger student, as was evident during this class. It would also promote negotiation of meaning. There was very little of this negotiation evident within this lesson, primarily because each student had to rely completely on the version of the story provided by one other student. It was also decided that asking learners to, once again, write the story individually would be of benefit.

Unfortunately, much of the discussion subsequent to this lesson, particularly in relation to text choice, became bogged down in what I considered matters of peripheral importance: genre, and textual authenticity. Neither of these factors is significantly connected to the skill of paraphrasing and yet they took up far more time than the more important concerns of text length and structural complexity. The inability of the group to reach any real agreement on how to deal with these concerns remained a significant stumbling block.

Ultimately the failure of the group to complete the originally agreed upon five administrations, particularly taking into account the experimentation evident within the first two, pointed to underlying issues. On occasion, lessons were not fully discussed and perhaps for personal reasons opinions remained unvoiced. This was detrimental to the Lesson Study process. Whilst many improvements were made throughout the four administrations, personally, it remains disappointing not to have resolved some of these issues. However, the challenging task of reconciling the often conflicting requirements of departments, classes, personalities and teaching styles was a very worthwhile experience. Furthermore, it's gratifying to see that the final product of this rigorous process is a cohesive and viable lesson.

Tara

Upon reflection, my administration of the lesson seemed fairly successful in achieving the aim of the lesson and following the developed lesson plan. However, there were a number of confusions with: overall comprehension of the text content; grouping learners; the order in which to paraphrase the story; and the concept of paraphrasing itself. The most significant difficulty I had in teaching the lesson was how to introduce the concept of paraphrasing and then apply it to a written form, which then seems like it becomes summarizing. I also considered if it was possible that we were asking learners to do too much in this one lesson? Some of these lesson-administrating concerns were ironed out in the following administration, but others may be considered for future renditions of the lesson.

In terms of the Lesson Study process, this was my second year participating at KUIS. It has been interesting to note the differences between the two years' group interactions and the lessons of focus. We had three repeating teacher-participants from the previous year and two new members. Perhaps the three of us repeating took for granted that we would share the same dynamics as we had the previous year in the Lesson Study process. However, dealing with differing personalities, varied levels of experience with Lesson Study and teaching, diverse teaching philosophies, and multi-faceted curriculum goals and objectives made this year much more challenging for everyone in the Lesson Study group.

Also, while our lesson in the first year had a clear aim that was both broad and specific at the same time, our lesson this year still seems to be swimming around a number of different skills. Since our group decided to do a lesson that was more reading and writing-centered that could be applied across curriculas, we found there were a lot more issues to contend with than initially expected.

Two particular issues are still of concern: 1) What exactly is paraphrasing and

how does it differ from summarizing? 2) Are we causing a cognitive overload by asking learners to apply all four language skills at the same time when the strategy being taught is completely new to them? Further study regarding the first question is currently being conducted based on this lesson development as it still remains clear there is confusion based on the lesson descriptions above. In regards to my second question, we are asking learners to read a text, explain it orally, paraphrase orally (introducing new strategy), listen and remember, then paraphrase orally again using memory, and finally write the memorized paraphrased text in their second language. It seems like quite a bit to ask of learners as an initial lesson for a particular language strategy. So, perhaps it is safe to say there is a cognitive overload and this may be one reason as to why it seems that we were having difficulty achieving our overall lesson aim. This is still to be considered.

Therefore, though we have created a nicely structured lesson in the 2007-2008 Lesson Study group that can be pretty easily followed and taught; I feel as if it is not yet complete since there still seem to be some pedagogical holes that need to be addressed. I hope that this lesson can be made available to the three departments in the ELI and that others can make contributions to what we started. The lesson has great potential to be a very effective way to develop learners' paraphrasing skills in an academically challenging manner while also maintaining student participation and interest.

Through this Lesson Study process I came to realize via the feedback sessions that the grouping method I chose to use for this lesson and often for other activities may have caused more confusion when it should have just been a quick transition to the main activity. Through observing other lessons, I could see when it is beneficial to offer more explanation, provide different forms of instruction (ie written vs verbal) and to consider the use of altered text depending on the group of learners. Also, I

became more aware of my personal strengths and weaknesses in leading discussions and working through conflicts. Ultimately, the Lesson Study process was very beneficial to my teaching and professional development.

Brian

While our Lesson Study (LS) group didn't always function as efficiently as it might have, I believe that we were able to collaboratively create an engaging and effective lesson which can help our learners to understand the concepts of paraphrasing and summarizing and practice these skills. Based on the experience of the 2006 – 2007 LS group and that of the 2007 – 2008 LS team, creating a lesson plan that all group members, let alone all ELI teachers, will consider to be "perfect" may be wishful thinking. To be sure, in both the first and second years, the lessons were developed with all team members contributing valuable ideas; the final lesson was a product of the collaborative LS process. At the same time, the teacher-participants also put their own spin on things, to varying degrees, when it came time for them to teach the lesson: teachers chose a text that they felt was more interesting or that was somehow better suited to their curriculum or to the needs of their learners; different teachers had different ground rules for different parts of the task (e.g., dictionary use), different ways of presenting information, and so on.

In addition, it is often the case that things do not go exactly according to plan, with teachers often needing to think-in-action and improvise in order to keep the lesson on track. I believe that teachers who participate in Lesson Study should be permitted a certain measure of flexibility when trialing the lesson in their classes, as should other teachers who may eventually decide to teach the lesson in their courses. While we had hoped to identify stories that would work well with most ELI classes, our goal was also to design a lesson that could be used with any number of stories.

Teachers, in the future, may want to try using one or more of the stories we chose, or they may want to choose their own. Likewise, they may want to use an "authentic text", or one that they can adapt to suit their learners.

In one of my classes, one group finished the writing phase early because they had condensed the story down to just a few sentences; in this case, learners were asked to try to add more details. The teacher may decide to give learners a specific length to aim for, for example, between ten and fifteen sentences, or they could be given a ten or fifteen minute time limit, so that they know roughly how much time to spend on rewriting each section of the story.

Given that it was, for me and my learners, our first experience with this lesson, I found it difficult to fit everything into 90 minutes. Time could have been saved by shortening or even eliminating the warm-up. In addition, the final oral summary of each section could be saved for a review activity in the following lesson. As this lesson is fairly complex in terms of student groupings and the demands of the task, learners would no doubt benefit from being given the chance to repeat the activity with another story; the learners would already be familiar with the procedure of the lesson and might be able to focus more on the actual task of paraphrasing and reconstructing the story. Practicing paraphrasing and summarizing on a number of occasions would allow learners to truly develop these highly useful skills.

Sometimes teaching behaviors or beliefs that are not discussed in team meetings beforehand are observed by the other team members during the lesson, and may become a topic of debate in subsequent feedback meetings. These unexpected "hotspots" can be just as important for professional development as what is consciously thought out, discussed, and decided upon in the team planning sessions. However, this can lead into more personal territory, going beyond the lesson plan on paper. Discussion of personality-based teaching behaviors during feedback sessions

requires both a certain amount of courage and sensitivity on the part of the observers, while the teacher receiving the feedback needs to be thick-skinned to some degree and also keep an open mind. In the end, group members may come to realize that they all prefer to teach certain aspects of the lesson according to their own styles and beliefs.

In the feedback session following the third teaching of the lesson, the team suggested several ideas for improving the lesson plan, which I tried to implement with my classes. However, at one point during this feedback session, the meeting became rather tense and the group experienced a communication breakdown of sorts. As a result, some feedback and ideas for improvement were not aired during the meeting, and thus I felt to some degree that I was teaching the lesson without having the full benefit of the team's insight and ideas. A certain amount of conflict is probably inevitable when a number of teachers meet on numerous occasions to try to create a lesson plan that everyone agrees to as an example of best practice. Where disagreements occur, the trick is to find a way to turn conflict into a positive opportunity for team-building and professional growth.

Chris

The preceding descriptions of the various incarnations of the lesson, as well as the reflections that follow, all go to show that the creation of a lesson to suit the needs of a variety of teaching styles and contexts is not a task to be undertaken lightly. Even though a relatively large amount of time was invested in the process, the teachers involved generally agree that work remains to be done. A variety of issues may have played a part in this lack of closure. Because this was the second Lesson Study experience for me, I too can make a comparison between the two years and suggest a few reasons why this second experience did not go quite as well as the first year.

One source of difficulty was that the group never seemed to reach a satisfyingly clear goal. While we initially agreed that we were interested in working together on a reading/speaking-related lesson that would suit all departments, a particular problem to address was never settled on with any conviction. The absence of a clear shortcoming in existing material, or of a student need to be fulfilled, deprived the group of an issue to rally around. Indeed, it seemed that every time the group got together, we would return to the question of exactly what lesson objective we were seeking to accomplish. This was in marked contrast to my Lesson Study in the previous year, where the group identified a specific need: to help learners discover how to use movies to teach themselves English.

I also think our Lesson Study could have benefited from a bit more structure to the proceedings. Teachers are notoriously busy people, so care must be taken to make sure that extra work taken on, even for professional development, is conducted in the most efficient manner possible. In our case, some routines may have helped the process go more smoothly. For instance, an understanding that all members would review and reflect on notes from previous meetings prior to each time we came together again would help make better use of the very limited times when we were all able to meet. In addition, each time the group came together after observing a lesson trial, it would be useful for the member who had taught the lesson to take the floor with a thorough examination of what had happened from his/her unique perspective. The more this teacher shows investment through deep reflection, as well as comfort with looking at his/her own lesson with a critical eye, the more the other members will feel comfortable offering frank comments, and the more the quality of the lesson can be improved as a result.

Simply getting together with colleagues to talk shop can be of great value in terms of professional development, and the Lesson Study process focused our attention

on a number of issues that might not otherwise get attention. For instance, lengthy discussions took place over the relative purpose and importance of using warmers, of the meaning and usefulness of paraphrasing, and, yes, over the value of using authentic texts vs. graded material to match the learners' levels. The back and forth that took place over these and other topics provided opportunities for us to challenge our own beliefs and come to new understandings of teaching possibilities that we might not have otherwise considered. Beliefs about teaching that I held to be self-evident proved not to be immune to challenge, and the ensuing debates were of great personal value as my colleagues helped me see things from a new perspective.

Although a perfect final product may not have been developed in the end, I was happy to become aware of some techniques for effectively teaching a paraphrasing lesson. Specific insights that I take away from the process are that having individual groups of learners assigned different parts of a story to learn before having them mix in a jigsaw fashion to share the various parts is an effective way of maximizing student interaction and negotiation of meaning. These processes could then be carried further by having the learners return to their original groups to share what they learned about the other parts of the story. The lesson can come to a close with the groups writing summaries of the complete story, or learners can paraphrase their story as a part of an assessment phase.

Conclusion

As the above lesson descriptions and individual teacher-participant reflections show, the Lesson Study process was ultimately a rewarding experience despite a number of challenges. Working with varied personalities, teaching styles and experiences served as professional development for all the members involved. Trying to create a lesson that will work within the curricula across the three departments

in the ELI was a larger task than expected. There is still room for improvement regarding the lesson. Future teachers may find this report useful in understanding the basis for the lesson creation and it is hoped that the lesson will be further developed to fully meet the lesson aim. Ultimately the Lesson Study process for the 2007 – 2008 academic year proved to be worthwhile in creating an adaptable lesson for the entire ELI, but more importantly provided an opportunity for all the teacher-participants to grow as professionals.

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APPENDIX 1

Lesson Study Lesson Plan v. 1

Activity	Time	Materials
Warm up: Telephone	5 minutes	____
Preteach vocabulary: • mischief • ceiling • gnash • tame • rumpus • wolf • claws • supper	10 minutes	Assorted pictures
Vocab comprehension: Draw a brief sketch using as many of the words as possible	5 minutes	handout
Read story: *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak	20 minutes	PowerPoint show, handout for note taking
Story recreation: Assign roles, Clarify directions, hand out slides	30 minutes	Slides, Role description sheet
Collect		

APPENDIX 2

Lesson Study Lesson Plan v. 4

Aim: *To be able to paraphrase an authentic text in the collective construction of a cohesive text.*

Main Task – (75 minutes)

Explain the title and give a very brief introduction of the characters in order to help students understand how their part of the story fits into the rest of the text. For Inspiration Can Be Anywhere, the teacher might introduce the story as follows (character's names can be written on the board):

This is a story about a young person who had a dream and how they were inspired and encouraged to work to accomplish that dream.
Characters: Hannah Moore; Mr. & Mrs. Moore; Mrs. Haverill; Shirley (Mrs. Haverill's cousin)

Step One (20 minutes)

- In groups of four or five, Ss read one section of "Inspiration Can Be Anywhere" [each section is between 200-250 words].
- Ss discuss in groups what they understand of the group's portion of the story, helping each other as necessary.
- Ss can discuss and decide what the main points are. T may want to tell Ss: "Remember, but don't memorize!" Story sections are taken away.

Step Two (25 minutes)

- Ss assign themselves a letter (A, B, C, D, and E) within their group and make new groups (A group, B group, etc – the new group should have at least one member from each part of the story).
- In turns, students paraphrase what they understood and remember from their part of the story in order to reconstruct the entire story. T may want to remind Ss: “Be sure to ask questions if you don't understand something!”

Step Three (20 min)

- Ss return to their original groups (as in Step One) and again retell the entire story together (paraphrasing and negotiating meaning). As
- Ss discuss and retell the story, they rewrite the story together on one sheet of paper with each student, in turn, writing for 4–5 minutes.

Step Four (10 minutes)

- Collectively paraphrase the story as a class. T randomly calls on students to retell different parts of the story.