

Modelling conceptual thinking in interactions with novice teachers

Jane Harvey, University of South Florida

Ninth International Conference on Language Teacher Education
May 14–16, 2015
The Commons Hotel
Minneapolis, MN

Learning to Teach and Conceptual Thinking

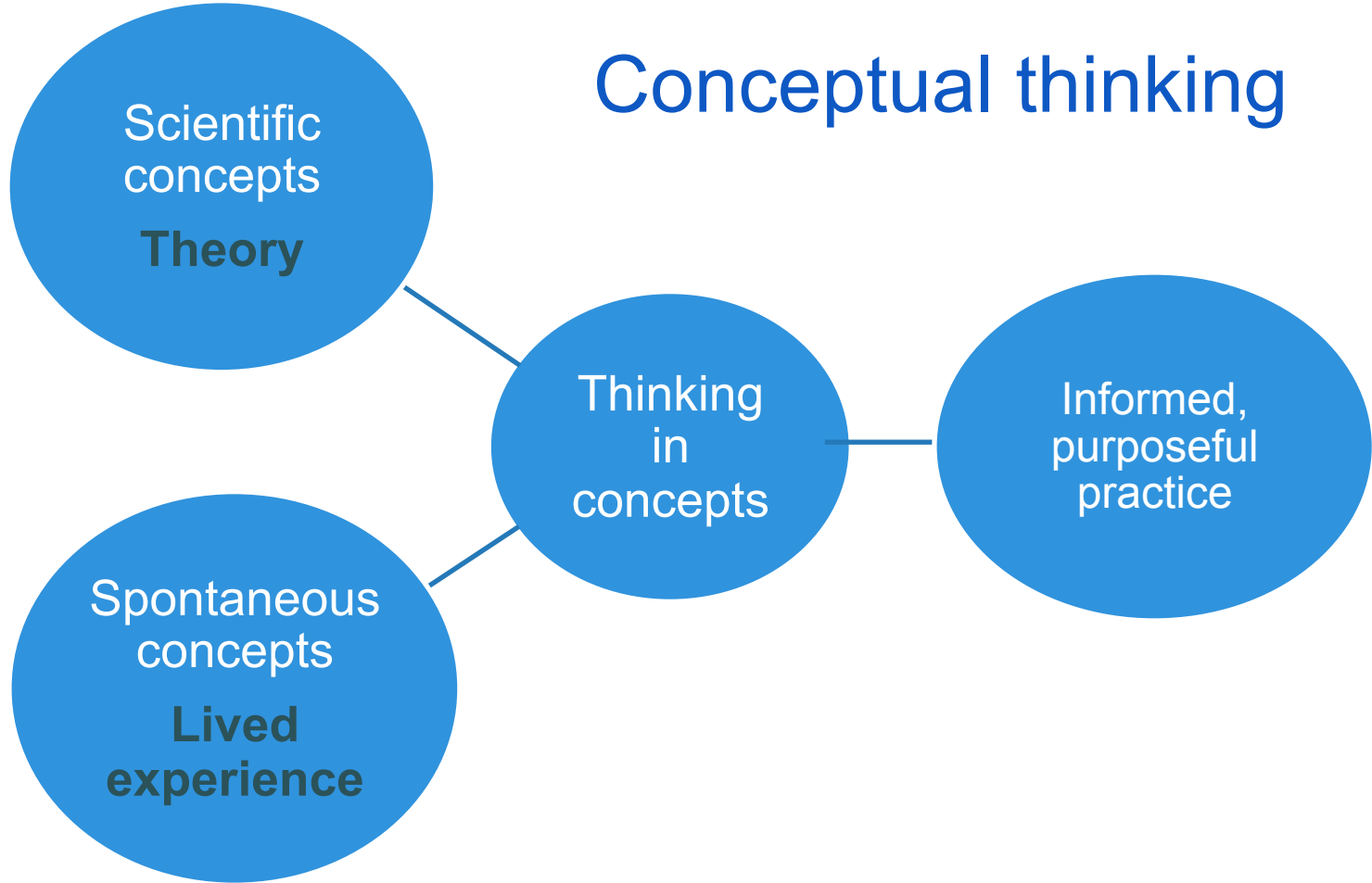
“a complicated, prolonged, highly situated, and deeply personal process that has no start or end point” (Johnson & Golombek, 2011, p.xi)

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory – a lens

Spontaneous concepts and scientific concepts

Spontaneous concepts	Scientific concepts
originate in lived experience	originate in formal instruction
immediate	mediated
unsystematic, not tied to other concepts	part of a systematic, logical hierarchy of concepts
highly contextual	abstractions, decontextualized
not open to inspection	open to inspection

Conceptual thinking





Conceptual thinking and teacher education

“conceptual thinking serves as the basis for expertise in any professional domain. Teachers demonstrate their expertise by thinking in scientific concepts, not just holding them” (Johnson, 2009, p. 64).

“the activities of L2 teacher education must assist teachers in this process of making their everyday concepts explicit, of reflecting on and critiquing them, and of beginning to think in concepts about aspects of their teaching which are relevant to their daily professional lives” (Johnson, 2009, pp. 64-65)

The post-observation conference and teacher learning

the perfect site to investigate how language reflects and informs conceptual thinking about teaching

- focus of the interaction is the retrospective analysis of a lesson and thus highly conducive to the conceptual and verbal linking of lived experience (everyday concepts) with formal knowledge (scientific concepts).
- also a prospective, future-orientated focus of helping the teacher be more purposeful in planning future classroom activities
- approached by both teacher and mentor as a teaching/learning opportunity so the roles of expert and novice are salient.

The study

How conceptual thinking is modelled by a mentor in interaction with novice teachers in post-observation conferences

- a large university intensive English program
- a mentor and two novice ESL teachers
- Rick (pseudonym), first language English speaker, in his second semester of ESL teaching, recently completed his MA in Applied Linguistics - intermediate level grammar class
- Pepa (pseudonym) first language Spanish speaker, had taught EFL in Spain, in her first semester of teaching after MA in Applied Linguistics - advanced level business topics class.
- five observations with each teacher over the period of one semester.
- POCs held after each observation.
- recorded and later transcribed.



Modelling conceptual thinking

Ideation

Analytic ideation

Terminizing

Generalizations

Principles



Ideation

the encapsulation into verbal form of the concept or idea behind a single and context-bound lived experience

J: no I don't think in any way that you spent too long on that. I think that was a great decision. I think you know it's so worthy of you that you didn't think "oh my god" you know "I need to get through my materials". You were focused- **you were student orientated** - you knew what was right for them ...

Analytic Ideation

Ideation of aspects of the teachers' lived experience of the classroom through conceptualizations of their types or parts

J: yeah and you put that on the board she said “shoes is” and everybody went “shoes are”. Yeah and so there are two very different things. One was that very **implicit**, you know you did the recast correction and the other one was the very **explicit** you know. Nothing wrong with doing them but just thinking about “why am I doing this now which is the- how can I - yeah which is the most appropriate”.

Terminizing

an articulation of an accepted term for the phenomenon, part of what Freeman (1991) called the discourse of language teaching.

R: we'll probably talk about that in class and then I have some um a bunch of sentences and stuff and choosing and removing

J: so really **form focused controlled practice** - which they need

Generalizing

abstracting out from the event or feature of the lived experience under focus to make a generalization.

R: some of them kind of whipped got though it really quickly and then they went back and they were thinking and asking questions about it and I could see that they were all working on it and talking about it so

J: mhm yeah ... they find this kind of thing very satisfying I think. **They like the intellectual challenge of that they- and when they have to think about something they feel they're learning**

This type of conceptual thinking reflects how through abstracting out from one specific context and generalizing to others, the teacher can understand and anticipate more accurately during lessons.

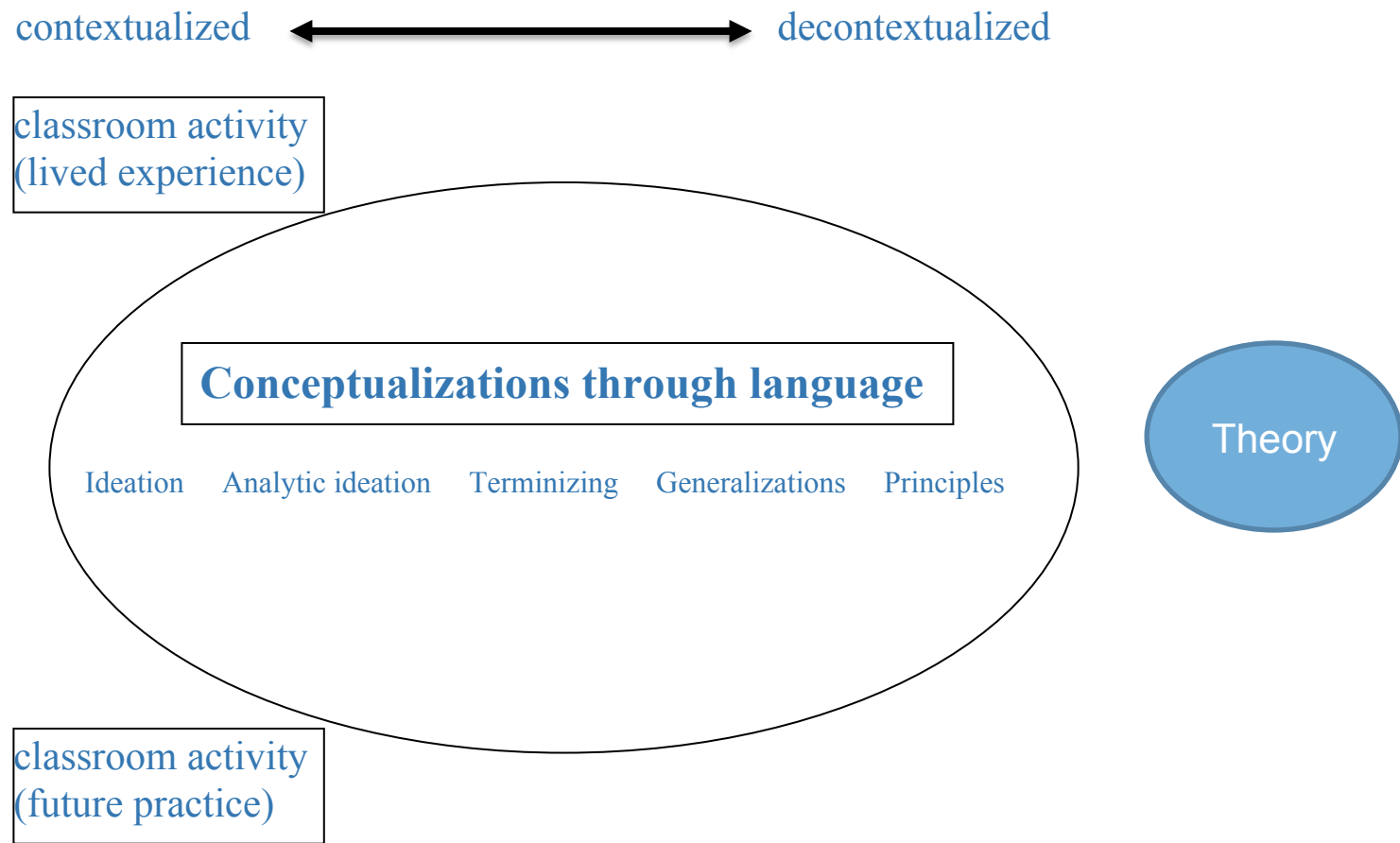


Principles

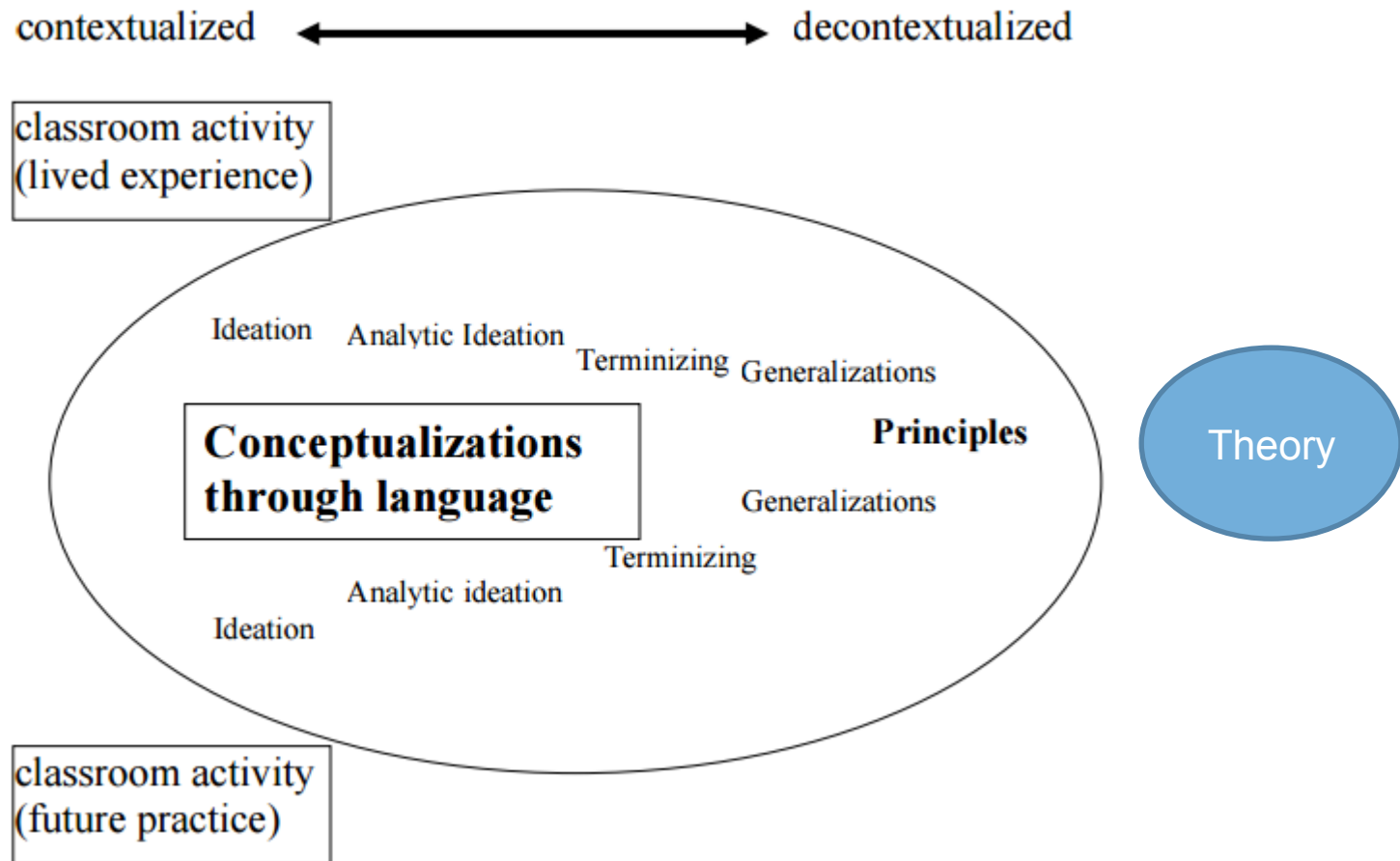
constitute a pivotal point between retrospective reflection on and reconceptualization of lived experience and more prospective planning for and regulating future behavior.

J: and maybe that's something that you could do you could **take a more maybe purposeful approach to monitoring them** when they're doing a discussion like this

Conceptual thinking in mentor discourse



Conceptual thinking in teacher education



Implications for Teacher Education

help teacher educators to be more aware of their own language and to be more purposeful in their attempts to promote conceptual thinking in the teachers with whom they work.

- Prompt a teacher to a more abstract decontextualized conceptualization of an element of classroom lived experience during observation feedback
- Identify or offer language that represents a level of decontextualization beyond that of simple narrative when assessing and giving feedback on student teachers' written assignments,
- seek out language-based teacher education activities that promote the use of the language of conceptual thinking,.



References

Freeman, D. (1991). "To make the tacit explicit": Teacher education, emerging discourse, and the conceptions of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 7(5/6), 439-454.

Johnson, K.E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. New York: Routledge.

Johnson, K.E., & Golombek, P.R. (2011). *Research on second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective on professional development*. New York: Routledge.

Modelling conceptual thinking in interactions with novice teachers

Jane Harvey, University of South Florida
jkharvey@usf.edu

Ninth International Conference on Language Teacher Education
May 14–16, 2015
The Commons Hotel, Minneapolis, MN