

**“That’s how people learn. It’s through the connection”**

**Collaborative learning in an Aboriginal Adult Literacy Centre**

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## Introduction

Adult literacy programs aim to improve skills to help adults participate fully at home, work and in the community.

Many Aboriginal people enter the labour force without the literacy skills for employment.



## Research Question

How does collaborative learning occur in an Aboriginal Adult Learning Centre?

What are the factors that encourage collaboration in an Aboriginal learning environment?



# Literature Review

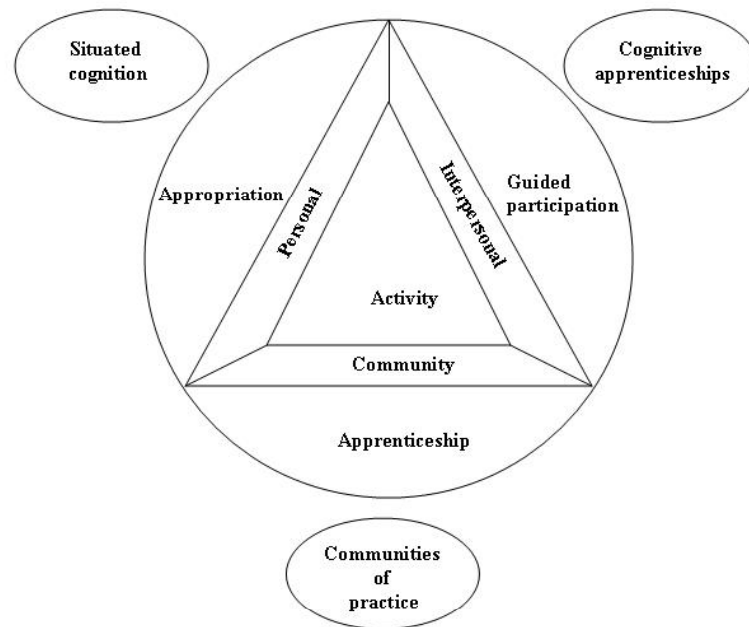
Adult literacy learning (Barton & Hamilton, 2000)

Collaborative literacy learning  
in adults (Taylor, King, Pinsent-  
Johnson & Lothian, 2003; Taylor, Evans &  
Abasi, 2006)

Literacy learning in  
Aboriginal settings (Antone &  
Cordoba, 2005, George, 2003)



Figure 1. Learning through Activity. Adapted from Rogoff (1995).



# Methodology

An Aboriginal Adult Literacy Centre, offering adult literacy programs in Northern Ontario, was investigated as the unit of analysis in a qualitative case study design.



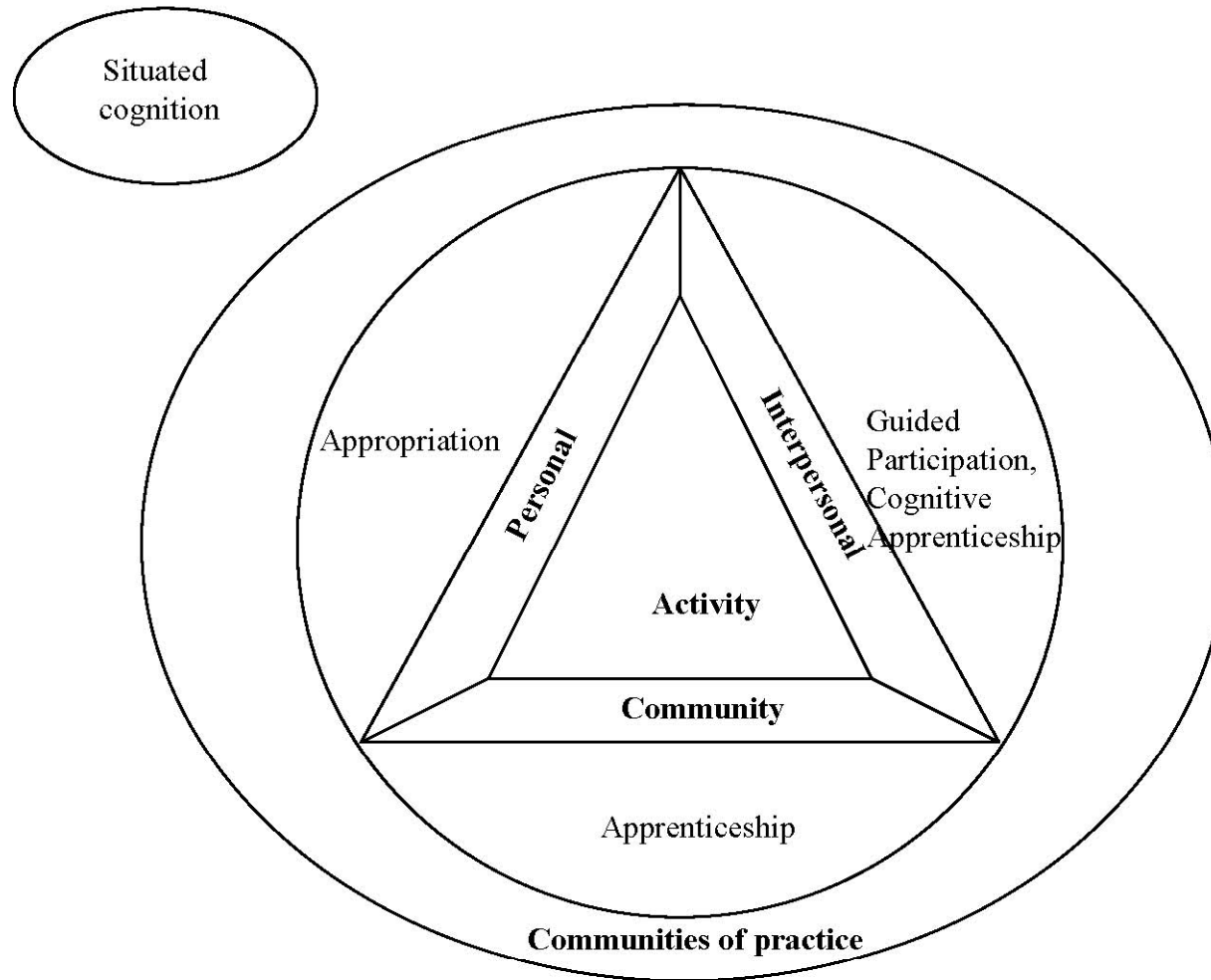
## How collaborative learning occurs:

Can be compared to the process of entering a "house" of literacy learning:

- o standing at the threshold;
- o walking into the house;
- o sitting around the table with others; and
- o being supported in their efforts.



**Figure 2. Learning through Activity in an adult Aboriginal Literacy Centre**



## Factors encouraging collaborative learning:

The instructor as a 'guide on the side',

The use of humour to engage learners,

A culturally appropriate atmosphere.



# Contributions

## To Research

Using Rogoff's perspective adds to our understanding of collaborative learning

Adding to a social perspective of literacy.

Expanding our understanding of cognitive apprenticeships.



# Contributions

## To Practice

Adding to knowledge of increasing participation in Aboriginal adult learners

Adding to understanding of the use of computers to aid learning.

Increasing understanding of a positive learning environment in an Aboriginal setting.



# Contributions

## To Policy

Contributes to knowledge of learning in an urban Aboriginal setting.

