Bureau de Change Laboratory

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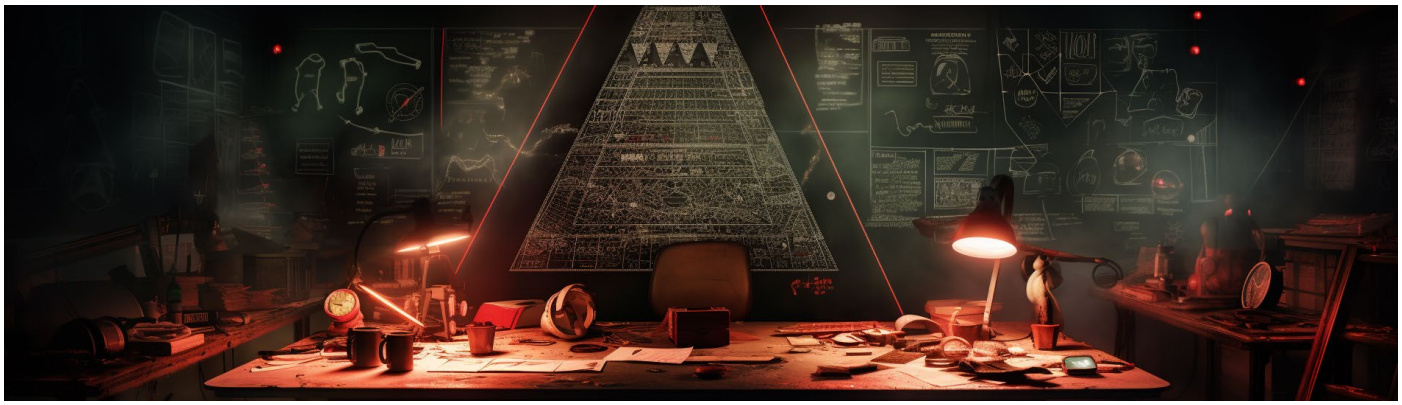

Technical Report

Editable activity system artefacts for use in Change Laboratory workshops

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Abstract: This entry concerns the use of editable activity systems provided as downloadable Powerpoint slides. Examples are given of how the slides might be used in live face-to-face workshops, or in online workshops facilitated through video conferencing platforms. The resource also provides graphical representations that can be used to analyse and describe systemic contradictions.

Keywords: Activity system; Workshop planning; Technological Tools; Online Change Laboratory.

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1. Introduction

In activity theory, the unit of analysis is the activity system, and researchers frequently use graphical representations of activity systems to illustrate findings or describe human activity. In a Change Laboratory, the researcher / interventionist may use activity system diagrams as a second (or first) stimulus to facilitate the process of expansive learning during sessions, and these diagrams are produced with the aim of facilitating actual empirical analysis during face-to-face or online Change Laboratories.

While a researcher may be able to produce diagrams at a leisurely pace from the comfort of their desktop, in my own experience participants working live in a workshop will be moving at a far more dynamic rate. A scribe might be typing 'live' to a document during a face-to-face

workshop. Participants might be coming up to an interactive whiteboard to make contributions using a pen tool, or interacting with a shared file during an online meeting.

The purpose of these PowerPoint slides is to provide a resource to facilitate these types of situations – for the scribe taking notes, the participant at the interactive board, and the online participant.

The slides consist of copiable and editable activity system diagrams, and graphical representations of contradictions, that researchers are free to use as needed in their own work. It should be noted that the diagrams are adapted from Engeström (1987/2015) and have also been used in the author's own work (Miles, 2020; Miles, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Graphical representations of systemic contradictions are based on the work of Bligh and Flood (2015).

2. The scribe taking notes

The first slide is an Editable Activity System with editable text box labels. This might be suitable for a scribe typing live during a workshop (Figure 1). In a Change Laboratory, one of the participants is usually assigned the role of scribe. This person then takes notes in real time during the workshop and this obviously necessitates fairly rapid typing skills as ideas and comments are produced by the participants in real time. Participants might, for example, suggest several ideas for TOOLS, but then jump quickly to RULES. This first slide allows a scribe to focus on note-taking but also provides an organised template that will produce a clear example of the activity system being described during the workshop. Note that the text box labels can be moved and expanded to manage text as required.

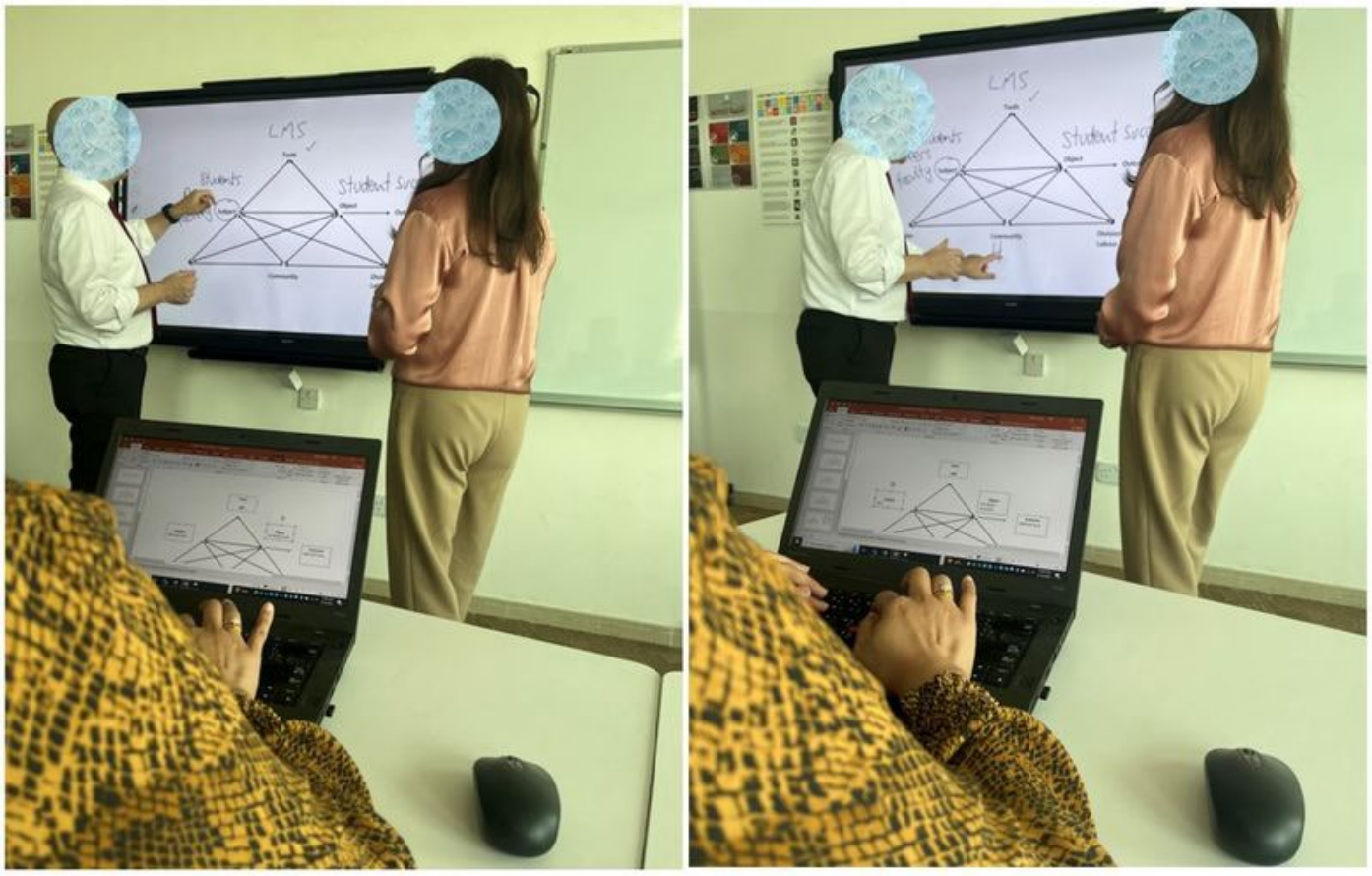

Figure 1. The scribe at work.

3. The participant at the interactive board

The second and third slides are both Editable Activity Systems, one completely blank and one with fixed labels. Researcher/interventionists might use these in live workshops where participants are coming to an interactive whiteboard and making contributions (Figure 2). The slide itself is static, and the whiteboard pen is then used to write freehand over the top of it.

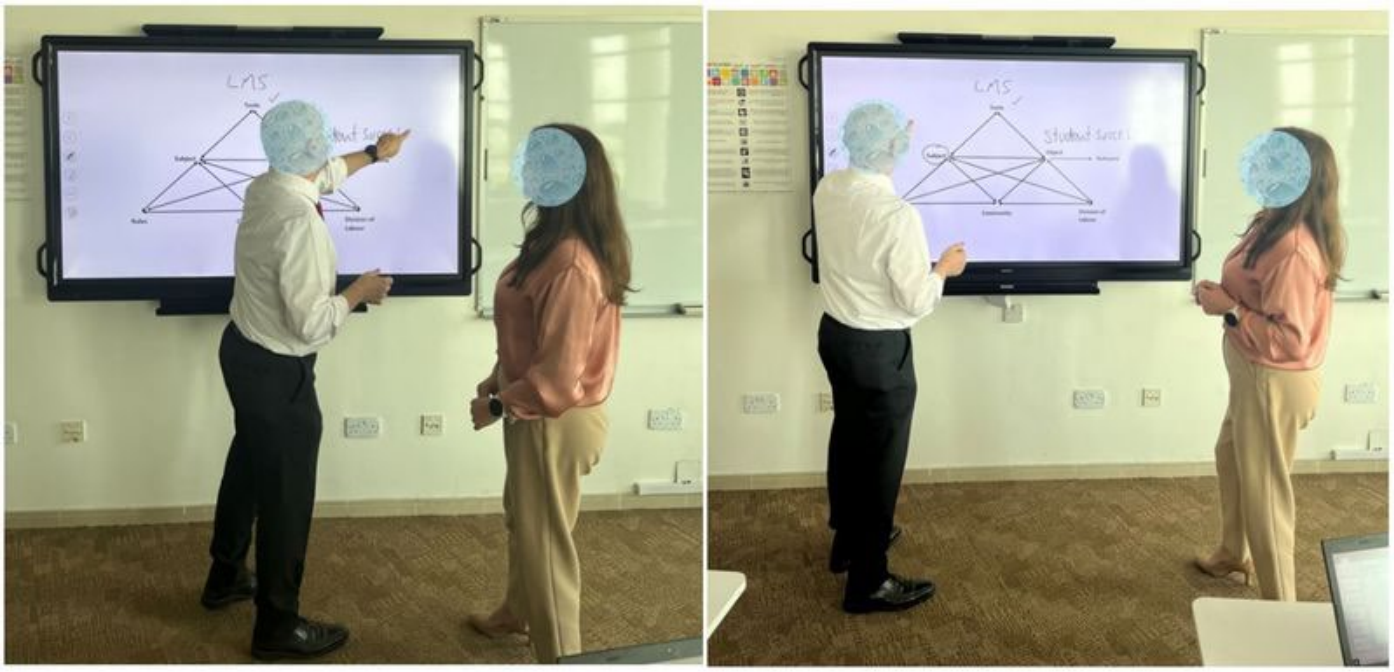

Figure 2. At the board in a live workshop.

4. The online participant

These slides could also be used during an online session as a shared file for participant contributions. For example, the file could be shared in an online meeting platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, and participants would then be able to either edit the file directly or use the meeting platform's annotation tools to take notes during the workshop (Figure 3).

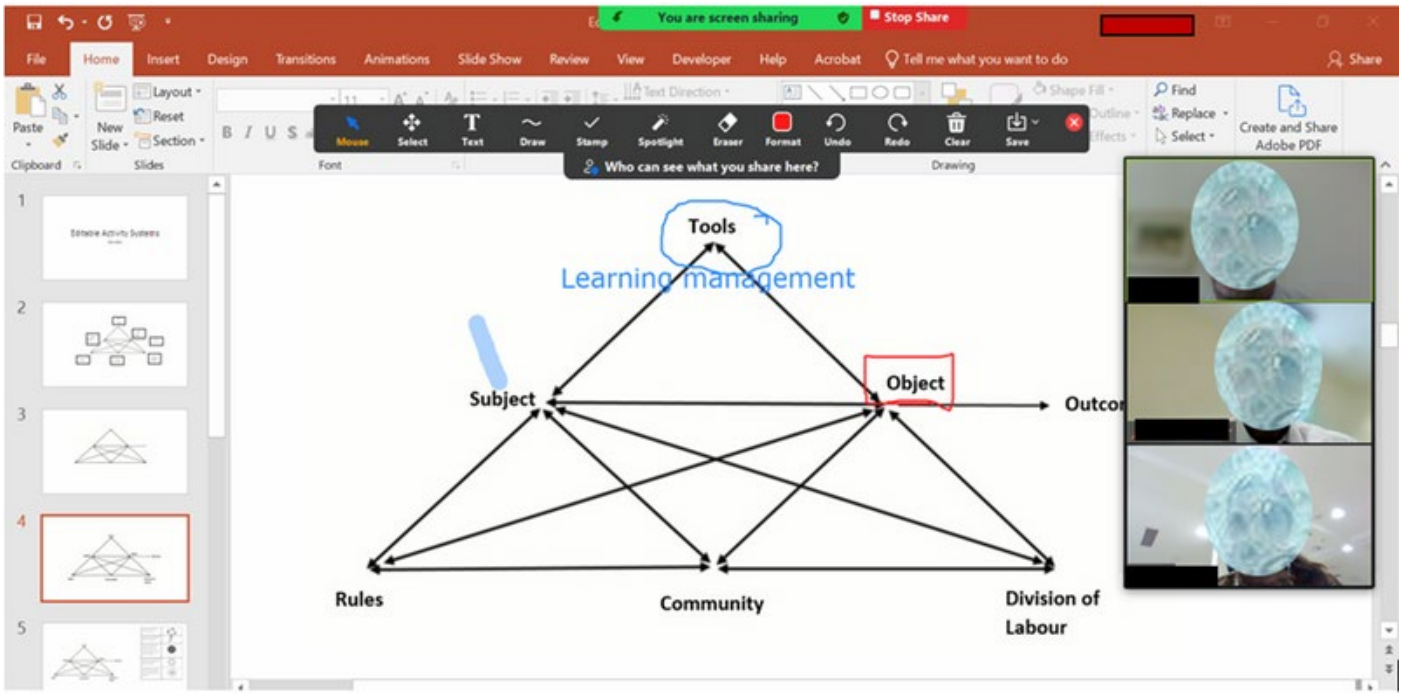

Figure 3. An online workshop.

5. Graphical representations of systemic contradictions

The final two slides are Editable Activity Systems, but include graphical representations of systemic contradiction symbols (Bligh & Flood, 2015) (Figure 4).

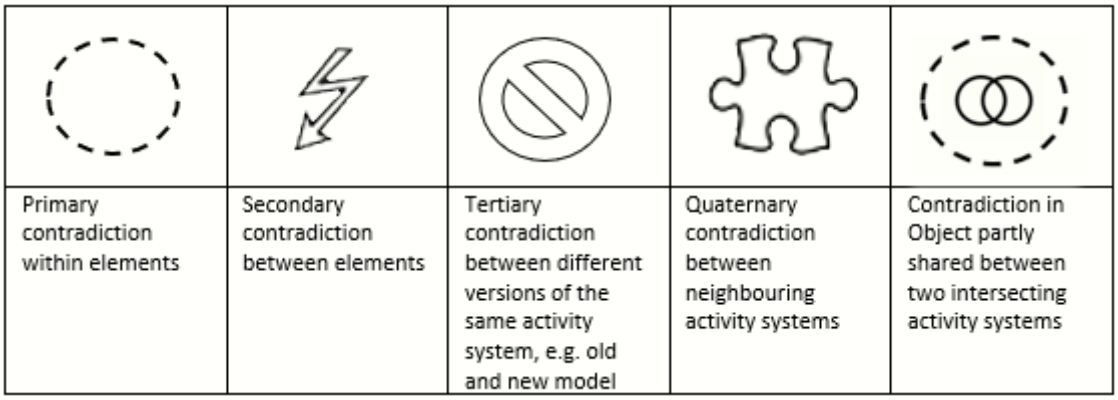

Figure 4. Graphical representations of systemic contradiction symbols.

These slides are designed to be used when analyzing contradictions and as such could provide second stimulus during actual empirical analysis. A second stimulus is a framework to help participants construct their solutions together. I have included an example slide of each type of systemic contradiction for your reference.

I hope that you will find these slides useful. Note that we have also included the diagrams as a jpeg and in editable Word format, so as not to forget the leisurely desktop researcher!

Downloadable resource

Downloadable versions of the resources referred to in the text can be found as Supplements 1, 2 and 3 alongside this report.

About the author

Rob Miles is an English language professional who has worked in the UK, Greece, Spain, Italy, and Brazil. Since 2005 he has been based in the United Arab Emirates. As well as teaching full-time he completed his PhD, 'A Change Laboratory: A collective approach to addressing issues in laptop-mediated English language classrooms' in 2021. Rob's main interests include activity theory, expansive learning, language acquisition, classroom technology, device deployment, professional development, educational leadership and writing assessment. Rob is an Alumni Member of the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning at Lancaster University.

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