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Creative in finding creativity in the curriculum: the CLIL second language classroom

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Abstract

Modern education is often characterized by a tension between learning and creativity (Connery et al., 2010). "The Arts"—if attended to at all—is often positioned as a distinct element of the broader curriculum, and separate from teaching and learning within other curricular domains. Yet, despite being largely neglected within contemporary social constructivist literature, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1987) has as its core a fundamental concern for creativity, affect, and emotion as the basis for human development. This paper argues that Vygotsky's understanding of catharsis—in particular, the transformative potential of emotion— gives cause to rethink the qualitative nature of pedagogy, and especially the importance of "mundane creativity" (Holzman, 2010, p. 27) at the core of teaching and learning. This, in turn, opens up new possibilities for conceiving of how creativity might be understood and realized within and across different dimensions of the curriculum more broadly. For an empirical example to explore these constructs, the paper considers data from a "content and language integrated learning" (CLIL) context. Emerging in the mid-1990s as a European response to the success of the Canadian French immersion method for teaching languages (Johnson and Swain, 1997), CLIL sets out several guiding principles for integrating second language (L2) with content to develop both simultaneously. With a focus on how Japanese mediates a unit of work on Geography, the study highlights how the integrated language/content focus affords a space for creative pedagogical engagement in terms of learners making their own creative choices on what language to use, and how it could be used, to facilitate the learning of both language and content (Bachman and Palmer, 2010; Mahn and John-Steiner, 2002).

Keywords: Sociocultural theory; Creativity; Language; Pedagogy; CLIL

Creativity within education: still the icing on the cake?

As Guilford (1950) argued in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association well over 50 years ago, "a creative act *is* an instance of learning" (p. 446, emphasis added). Yet, dominant theories we continue to rely on to understand teaching and learning have failed to foreground the role of creativity to any notable extent. Despite a sizable body of educational research into how emotion relates to creativity (e.g., Bower 1992; Christianson 1992; Vail 1994)—and a further body of research recognizing the overlap between these constructs and learning more generally (e.g., Cropley 2001; Egan 1992; Dirkx 2001; Sefton-Green and Bresler 2011; Tan 2007)—creativity remains largely niche within broader discourses on teaching and learning, or as an "add-on" to the core activity of pedagogy (e.g., De Bono's CoRT Thinking strategies). Indeed, the current place of both emotion and creativity within pedagogy seems reminiscent of where the "social" once stood in relation to "cognitive" in mainstream paradigms on learning: as little more than "icing" on the cake (Sharwood Smith 1991 cited in Churchill et al. 2010).

This pervasive segregation of "learning" and "creativity" is readily apparent within contemporary approaches to educational practice. The new Australian Curriculum, for example, confines the Arts to a specific area of the curriculum, and then not as a focus until

the second phase of development (ACARA 2010). Such curriculum decisions imply that creative learning processes are somehow distinct from other areas of learning (e.g., those comprising Phase I domains, such as English, Mathematics, and History), while also underscoring the notion of creativity as something to "*be* taught"—creativity as the *object* of pedagogy—rather than as an inherent dimension of learning in its own right, that drives, shapes, and influences the fundamental nature of pedagogy itself.

Notably, the Curriculum also identifies "Creative [and Critical] Thinking" as a *General Capability* for the framework as a whole, but the current lack of clarity on how creativity "fits" within prevailing models of pedagogy renders its inclusion vague and problematic. It is telling, for example, that the Curriculum suggests these general capabilities will find "natural homes" within other learning areas—such as "*Literacy* in English, *Numeracy* in Mathematics, *ICT* capability in Technologies, *Personal and social capability* Health and Physical Education and English, and *Intercultural understanding* in Languages" (ACARA 2012a, italics added)—thus referring to all capabilities *bar* "Creative and Critical Thinking" (and "Ethical Behaviour", another area recognized as challenging to teach (Halverson 2004; Schuitema, Dam and Veugelers 2008)). Elsewhere, some general capabilities are elaborated further in relation to specific learning areas, but again any reference to creativity remains absent: "*Literacy*, *Numeracy* and *ICT capability* is based in English, Mathematics and Technologies respectively.... *Personal and social capability, Ethical behaviour and Intercultural understanding* focus on ways of being, behaving and learning to live with others" (ACARA 2012a, italics added).

Creativity is thus rendered nebulous, with no clear understanding of its deeper role within pedagogy. When creativity *does* appear in the detail of the curriculum, it regresses to isolated "add-ons" to core teaching and learning. In History, for example, icons signifying *Critical and Creative Thinking* appear against some knowledge and skills, but not others. "Develop[ing] texts, particularly narratives and descriptions" apparently requires no creativity, nor does understanding "the role of a significant individual in ancient Rome's history". Yet, to understand "the role of a significant individual in ancient Greek history", the icon suggests that creativity apparently becomes a must (ACARA 2012b, emphasis added)!

This lack of theorization between teaching, learning, and creativity within the curriculum—and how they relate to and better inform the other—is endemic within the education research literature. Echoing Sternberg's (2006, p. 2) introduction to *The International Handbook of Creativity* that "what is perhaps most notable about creativity research around the world is how little of it there is", Tan (2007a, xlvii) concedes: "in psychology and education, creativity is still at the margin". The challenge, according to Sefton-Green and Bresler (2011), is to transcend the legacy of past curriculum configurations where creativity has been primarily understood within the confines of specific discipline domains (e.g., the Arts), to instead ask the broader question:

> What does creativity add to our understanding of learning, its organization and its processes; and how does our understanding of learning determine our understanding of creativity? (p. 13)

The argument central to this paper is to recognize the inherently creative dimension of what it means to teach and learn at the most fundamental level from a social constructivist perspective. It draws deeply on Vygotskian literature, which is perhaps ironic given that much of the mainstream pedagogy criticized thus far has been inspired by a Vygotskian understanding of human development (Vygotsky 1978, 1987). Yet creativity, emotion, and

affect have been dimensions of Vygotsky's work that have remained largely underdeveloped until recently (Connery et al. 2010). As highlighted elsewhere (e.g., Stepanossova and Grigorenko 2006), Soviet psychology has had a long-held interest on creativity, differing fundamentally its perspective from the West's focus on the "solitary genius" (Glăveanu 2010, p. 149).

Beginning with a discussion of emotion, meaning, and sense within Vygotskian sociocultural theory, I then consider their implications for appreciating the place of "mundane creativity" (Holzman 2010, p. 27) within classroom practice, and the tensions this raises for established understandings of creativity within curriculum theory. The second half of the paper turns to an empirical discussion on the significance of such creativity within a setting that has no overt focus on "teaching creativity" as such. Yet, by reflecting on examples of pedagogy within the context of a content and integrated learning (CLIL) program to teach Geography through Japanese, the paper reveals the critical place of creativity in promoting higher levels of student engagement as the foundation for developing new skills and knowledge.

Perezhivanie: the affective core of the creative human animal

Luria (1934/1987 cited in Mahn and John-Steiner 2002, p. 9) contends that "without the exploration of the relationship of the word to motive, emotion, and personality, the analysis of the [Vygotskian] problem of 'thinking and speech' remains incomplete". In Vygotsky's early work, the focus was mediation, and the role of sociocultural tools and artefacts in human development. Later, with his shift in interest to the properties of the tool itself, and on "word-meaning" more specifically, emerged a corresponding interest in the relationship between intellect and affect. This was best encapsulated in his notion of *perezhivanie*, or the influence of one's "lived emotional experience" (John-Steiner et al. 2010, p. 8).

Perezhivanie offers a foundation for considering how "the human experience" —what it means to have a full and rich affective history at the core of our consciousness—is carried through to our appropriation of tools within social interaction (Mahn and John-Steiner 2002, p. 11). If we recognise the human as a "creative" animal (Lobman 2010, p. 200), and define humanity by its ability to create and transform the world within which we exist, then perezhivanie highlights the need to extend our focus beyond conventional rationality and reason to also consider the role of emotion "at the heart of the creative process (Vygotsky 1925/1971, 1930/2004, 1933/1976)" (Marjanovic-Shane et al. 2010, p. 224).

Vygotsky's interest in emotion emerged as no coincidence with his corresponding shift to focus on words and word-meaning in the latter years of his life; particularly the distinction he came to extend between word "sense" and "meaning". While the latter is a "comparatively fixed and stable point ... that remains constant" (Vygotsky 1978, p. 276), sense is "dynamic, fluid and complex": "the aggregate of all the psychological facts that arise in our consciousness as a result of the word" (p. 276). Meaning can therefore be understood as an agreed-upon, codified definition that denotes what the word signifies, whereas sense carries with it the "feeling" of a word based on past experiences. Thus although the search for creative solutions lie, in part, upon "conscious, deliberate" reasoning, it is made complete by the influence of "indirect products, emotions, and emotional solutions" (Stepanossova and Grigorenko 2006, p. 248).

Through sense, then, Vygotsky's understanding of development is inextricably tied up with perezhivanie, and the emotional, lived history of what it means to be a language learner and

user.[1] Citing Walsh's (1991) ethnographic study of language use among young Porte Ricans, for example, Mahn and John-Steiner (2002) (p. 21) contend that "words exude much more than a dictionary definition; they become socially inscribed entities imbricated with context and intentionality (p. 66)". Holzman (2010) similarly posits that we do not "learn" our native language through a systematic focus on "meaning", but rather, as children, we are expected that we can *do* (i.e., experience and feel) more than what we already *know*. This seems counterintuitive to the basic pedagogical premise of having to learn before one can be expected to do. Yet, despite young children being "*not-knowers"* of language, we nonetheless relate to them as if still capable "language *users*":

> Before a child has acquired grammatical and written language, he [sic] knows how to do things but does not know that he knows ... a child spontaneously makes use of his ability to separate meaning from object without knowing that he is doing it, just as he does not know he is speaking in prose but talks without paying attention to the words. (Vygotsky 1978, p. 99)

In other words, the ultimate goal of language learning—communicative competence (Hymes 1972; Bachman and Palmer 2010)—develops not from being "taught" a knowledge of language (i.e., meaning), but from being engaged in *creating* understanding from the word and its "sense". Within such a framework, guesswork and insight become central (Leontiev 1978a, 1978b in Stepanossova and Grigorenko 2006). As Holzman (2010) elaborates, "[adults] relate to infants and babies as capable of doing things that are beyond them. They relate to them as fellow speakers, feelers, thinkers, and makers of meaning. In other words, as fellow creators" (p. 34).

While the teaching and learning literature often puts the emphasis on "meaning making" within social constructivist pedagogies, *sense* making is therefore at least as important for conceptual development; especially as it relates to the formation new words and syntax in a second (or any additional) language. While made more complex by the presence of additional metacognitive and metalingusitic psychological tools that mediate the development of the second language in contrast to the first (Lantolf and Johnson 2007), at the heart of all language learning, and using, is the deep-seated need "to be understood". The act of communicating between ourself and others—the need to make meaning on the basis of our "self", rather than simply assemble words from a dictionary—requires a *sense* of the words we use to convey that self to others (Swain et al. 2010). As Mahn and John-Steiner (2002) further elaborate with respect to (English) second language learners,

> The challenge [is] reconciling their developing word sense and word meaning in English with the word sense of the equivalent word in their native language—what that word evokes for them personally. Word meaning in English will predominate over word sense until they develop fluency, until words sound right, until they get a feeling for the language, and until they develop the systematicity and automaticity required to convey profound ideas in English. (p. 21)

Emotion and its relationship with creativity and learning

This understanding of language learning transcends the idea of language as a mere "tool kit" for the learner to acquire. Rather, the focus shifts to a developmental process of continually *becoming* (Holzman 2000, p. 8): one does not simply "take on" language, but comes to a

[1] Or learner and user of any new tool or sociocultural artefact, including new concepts and knowledge.

realisation of how words come to shape our expression of self, as well as their influence on relationships we have with others and the world around us. Language learning is therefore inextricably tied up with an appreciation of not only what words "mean", but the feelings they also evoke through "sense". It is, then, a necessarily creative process, and one inseparable from emotion and affect.

This creativity is not that which we are accustomed to recognising within schools, where "creative" is often equated with well defined, and refined, sets of "artistic" skills: those that enable *an* individual to "produce special things, original, novel, unique, and perhaps extraordinary or extraordinarily significant items, relative to others who are not creative" (Holzman 2010, p. 30). By way of contrast, a Vygotskian notion of creativity is necessarily collaborative and social. It exists within the sense-making and meaning-making that emerges through the social mediation (and appropriation) of tools within the zone of proximal development (ZPD): the internalisation and (crucially) *transformative externalisation* of tools, signs, and other sociocultural artifacts (Moran and John-Steiner 2003). Importantly, then, the ZPD—the point at which the learner moves from a reliance on others (other-regulation) to the independent capacity to perform or know for themselves (self-regulation) (Vygotsky 1978)—is not a zone in the sense of "place", but a "creative, improvisational activity" (Newman and Holzman 1993, 1997 cited in Lobman 2010, p. 202). Such "creativity" can thus be understood as "the human ability to make things, to build, to develop—especially in its most mundane forms— to create a conversation, a picnic, or a lesson about angles" (p. 200). Yet, as Holzman (2010) observes, "while mundane, it is also magical!" (p. 30).

Vygotsky explores this nexus between emotion and development through the notion of catharsis; an idea that first appeared in his doctoral thesis, *Psychology of Art* (1925/1971). With reference to animal psychology in *The Problem of Age* (1934/1998), Vygotsky argues that purely mechanical imitation "says nothing about the *mind* of the imitator" (p. 201, emphasis added), and continues: "The animal's imitation is strictly limited by the narrow boundaries of its capabilities. The animal can imitate only what it is capable of doing" (p. 201). As Brophy (2009) similarly observes in his writings on patterns of creativity with respect to the significance of the connections between imitation, our past, and learning,

> Imitation is fundamental to learning and in itself its exercise is a pleasure [... it] connects us to the past and to each other in the present. Our daily social interaction is based on a willingness to adopt conventions from the past and imitate each other in behaviour, speech, clothing, in routines and other ways. (p. 61)

Human imitation, the basis for learning and development, is thus marked by an inherently (albeit everyday and ordinary) creative process of externalisation: the internalisation of what already "is", to be refashioned into something new— bestowing the old with what it *can* be (Connery 2010). It is this cathartic process, and the nexus between what is internalised, perezhivanie, and the release which creates something new, that we see emotion, affect, and creativity working together within development. As Marjanovic-Shane et al. (2010, p. 228) put it,

> Catharsis occurs when the creative juxtaposition of conflicting emotions implodes to produce something novel that has not existed before. In the cathartic moment, individuals and groups overcome the past, transforming perceptions of themselves, others, and the world. In this manner, the creative process touches the future.

> A cultural-historical approach to creative education provides ample opportunities for cathartic moments including the sudden "a-ha" one feels when grasping a new concept, the breakthrough insight a team experiences working on a science project, a brilliant solution crafted by novice and mentor to a complex social–historical puzzle.

Most significantly, if we rethink pedagogy as necessarily having to appeal to affect, in order to *effect*, "creative" engagement, then it has the capacity to shift our understanding of teaching and learning. In particular, it necessitates a shift in "focus... from the products of those environments to the dialectical relationship between what is to be learned and the creating of the environment for learning and development" (Lobman 2010, p. 204).

The remainder of this paper turns to an empirical analysis of "mundane creativity" promoted through a pedagogical focus on developing new conceptual knowledge and skills through a language other than the students' mother tongue. "Content and language integrated learning" (CLIL) emerged in Europe in the mid-1990s in response to the success of the Canadian immersion model (Coyle et al. 2010; Johnson and Swain 1997), in which regular curriculum content is taught through the medium of a second language (e.g., English speaking students learning mathematics through French). However, in contrast to Canadian immersion which has evolved into a clearly defined approach with distinct core and variable features (Baker 2006), CLIL offers a flexible framework for how language and content can be integrated across a greater range of contexts and settings (Coyle 2008). The excerpt analysed here is from a larger study on the role of Japanese as a sociocultural tool to mediate dual language/ content outcomes (Cross and Lo Bianco 2009).

In response to Lobman's (2010) point on the need to focus less on the product of instruction than on the environment that allows for creative engagement from which new products can be made, CLIL provides a rich context for appreciating the role of creativity within settings for teaching and learning. Rather than presuming the existence of already "finished" tools (language) by which to simply "transfer" finished cultural artefacts or products (content), both are constantly under construction and reconstruction by teachers and learners in their attempts to produce something new; namely, an understanding of the new knowledge (in this case, about Geography), together with a competence to communicate in the language being used (Japanese).

Instances of the creative within "mundane" teaching and learning

The CLIL program of interest was a 5 week unit of work integrating Year 10 Japanese and Geography. The classes involved two groups of *16 students at an independent boys' school in Melbourne, Australia. Jason,[2] their teacher, was an English native speaker with qualifications and experience in teaching both Japanese and Geography. Naomi, the language teacher assistant, is a Japanese native speaker and recent teacher graduate specialising in language education, but with no background in Geography. Neither teacher had specifically taught a CLIL program before, although Jason had taught curriculum content through Japanese at another high school with an immersion style program in the middle years (i.e., grades 7–10).

With a focus on Asian Studies in the domain of Geography, the unit of work examined cultural, economic, and adventure tourism in Japan, with an emphasis on developing content,

[2] Pseudonyms have been used throughout this paper to preserve participants' anonymity.

knowledge, and skills from the Humanities domain of the mainstream curriculum (the Victorian Essential Learning Standards [VCAA 2006]). Jason undertook primary responsibility for planning the unit in consultation with the school's Humanities and Geography coordinators to ensure content was relevant while also avoiding overlap. Naomi assisted with developing materials and language support, and the university research team met monthly with Jason to provide guidance on CLIL pedagogy while drafting the program over an *6 month period.

The program was taught over 5 weeks, with three 55 min lessons per week. One lesson per week was recorded to video as stimulus for post-observation interviews (Gass and Mackey 2000). Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded using conventional qualitative techniques (Cohen et al. 2008), and then analysed using cultural-historic activity theory (Engeström1987) to generate accounts of classroom activity from the perspective of the "teacher subject" (Cross 2010). The section that follows explores how the integrated language/content focus provides a context to understand the role of otherwise "mundane" creativity in learning and development. The intent is not to provide a detailed cultural-historical analysis of CLIL pedagogy itself, but to highlight the significance of creativity within the ongoing process of learning.

"Although they don't 'understand', they can still 'think'": the magical within the mundane

In contrast to a traditional language lesson where students might always be expected to "use" the target language for any language being produced, the content-oriented focus within CLIL engaged students in a much broader, more indirect platform for language usage. The dynamic between "using language/doing content" was complex, and there was no compulsion for students to use Japanese except for the "products" of specific content-based tasks (e.g., a completed worksheet about drivers in tourism, or a presentation outlining an itinerary for a target tourist group). Interestingly, despite this indirect focus on having to use Japanese, this integrated content and language space was one that teachers described as much richer for engaging students in language use compared to their typical "language" lessons:

> It seems like a bit of a childish thing to be putting magnets on a map, but that's actually one of the most interesting ones for the groups I sense, because every time that you put the magnetic map there, all four of them usually would gather around and be sticking magnets on, and they're really interested in that. So it's just a different way of looking at the vocabulary, because all of the names are in *katakana* [Japanese block script]. And then they've gone through and attempted to identify all of the countries in their booklets. (Jason 237–244)

> I think they've touched on superlatives before, but [this integrated] activity really brings it home... It was probably the one that took the longest out of all of the workstations, but I think it's one that they actually enjoyed in the end. (Jason 264–269)

In CLIL we do some drills at the beginning of the class ... but it's not the main part of the lesson. The CLIL part is more active, so they actually use their knowledge and try to apply the knowledge for what they're actually doing for the new goal. (Naomi 160–164)

Most crucially, this dynamic focus on "using language/doing content" led to a context within which students seemed to have greater ownership and creativity over the language when it

was used. Language became a tool for which students appeared genuinely focused on attempting to understand what was being said to them, as well as also on how they were being understood in their own attempts to use language:

> [With regular Languages classes], it's just doing exercises and drill, drill, drill... it can be a little bit more passive... [With CLIL] it's more fun and they try to use Japanese as much as possible. And although they don't "understand", they can still "think". (Naomi 166–177)

> I think in CLIL if students are so enthusiastic and if they want to, maybe they can go even further—that's why maybe some students used those vocab and grammar that they haven't learnt in the lesson. (Naomi 576–578)

In contrast to a regular language lesson where the use of English is often seen as a negative (Cummins 2007), in a CLIL context, despite students having considerable freedom on whether to use Japanese or not for the most part, they did not appear to deliberately avoid Japanese. That is, the content seemed to provide a fertile "sandpit" where Japanese was not positioned as "language as object" for students to accept (or reject), but as a tool that was subtly worked in through the content-based tasks that engaged students at another, more indirect level. Students seemed to set their own rules on when and how they would use Japanese, with the gain appearing to be higher, more genuine levels of student engagement because language was then used in the ways "they wanted to":

> Some breakthroughs were in terms of when we came to a discussion question, there were students volunteering... some of them were using the structures which we've been working on so it just came out. (Jason 15–18)

Similarly, teachers noted that, during the program, it was the students who often took ownership for the type of language being used and produced:

> Because the context of the unit is that you're looking at why people go where they do, because the geography is in terms of the location of things, and that language of why, and explaining why, is really important, and so we've emphasised that probably right from the start—talking about why do people go to France, for a start. Today the students just started to volunteer why they were interested in going to particular places in Japan... I think that was a breakthrough. (Jason 130–136)

> When I say something in Japanese, actually they understand, and they try to confirm in English... they start talking in English, but still they get input. Maybe the output part still takes more time, but I think their listening ability and listening skills are getting a lot, a lot better—and, yeah, students actually enjoy it. (Naomi 274–279)

> There was one boy who was using the computer. He is a little bit weaker compared to other students, but I was pretty surprised that he was looking at the Japanese website. He said like, "Oh, it's all in Japanese, so I don't know," but he was still trying to find some information! (Naomi 281–284)

In sum, rather than direct attention to learning and using the language, the integrated focus on content therefore seemed to provide a platform for students to be creative with the language they were encountering through teacher input and the classroom materials on their own terms.

The object became one of transforming their understanding of the content into language that they could use, rather than as language being something "performed on cue". This same idea—about "living through the content", and the authenticity that content affords to own, feel, and experience language—came through strongly in a comment by Jason while reflecting on his own history as a (now successful) language learner:

> The reason why I love Japanese and the language and have an interest in it is because of my experience: experiences with Japan and with the people of Japan and a project like this gives you a chance to engage more with those things. So, to actually, that richness of material that you're engaging with in terms of just getting some Japanese maps, some realia from Japan and looking, you know, real things like Google Earth. (Jason 521–526)

It was not "getting it right"—with the "it" being "meaning", in the Vygotskian sense—that mattered in this context, but the creative use of language and owning the potential of what words *could* mean that mattered most. Naomi noted, for example, that although one approach to resolving problems might be to "translate every single sentence", she observed one group in this integrated setting who, focused on a content-based problem, "just went through and looked at the internet, and they get some idea and they try to create their own Japanese sentence—and I think it's wonderful" (182–183). It was this unscripted quality of student language and their capacity to take risks with making sense from language that most impressed the teachers. Naomi commented that although students used language incorrectly at times, "still, I'm glad that they tried to use it" (525–526). The focus was thus less on linguistic accuracy, than what students were actually trying to say through Japanese:

> Maybe with Year 9, I know all the answers and I know everything, you know what I mean? [... but with the] CLIL task, there are suitable answers, but not definite, "This is the right answer," or "This is wrong." Or maybe students can create the things, especially what we did in today's class, those leaving a message, and they need to sort of give more information about the one area. But they don't, there is some direction what they need to say, but it's not definite, like "Oh, you should say this word." They can be more creative. (Naomi 136–152)

This sense-making that emerged through students' use of Japanese as they grappled with constructing and reconstructing their understanding of Geography resulted in students being positioned with a sense of genuine creative ownership over both. The unit of work concluded with group presentations of itineraries for various tourism sectors (e.g., ecotourism, economic tourism, etc.). As intermittent weekly observers, the researchers were struck by the length and variety across presentations, and raised this point during the final post-observation interview:

> *Researcher*: Was what they presented today entirely independent? Had they come up with their own plans, their own language on the PowerPoints? That was all from themselves?
> *J*: Mmm mmm. That was independent.
> *R*: That's pretty impressive, because they were quite long ...
> *J*: Mmm, they were actually—that's what I was thinking. Lucky we got them started when we did because it took the rest of the time!

Conclusion

What is most notable about this integration of content and language in this curriculum context is that it produced a space for students to learn about language in a way that was contextualised and purposeful. Rather than a situation where students "had" to use language in "a" particular way, as might typically be the case in a language-as-object oriented classroom (Richards and Rodgers 2001; Larsen-Freeman 2000), the space created by the dual curriculum focus with content in this environment was one where students could move in and out of Japanese. This allowed students to think about both the ideas being discussed and the language being used, from which they then made their own, creative choices about what and how to use language for themselves.

In terms of illustrating mundane creativity within pedagogy, this was a curriculum context where not even the tools we would typically take for granted within teaching and learning (i.e., language) were readily available to simply "transmit" the finished "product" (i.e., content). Rather, both teachers and students were constantly involved in a process of creating and transforming all available resources to move from "not knowing" to "knowing". For Lobman (2010), "when learning and teaching are viewed as forms of joint meaning making, curricular standards are enhanced" (p. 223). This is precisely what we see happening in this context, where both teachers and learners engage in the creation of something new: both new conceptual understandings about content in geography, and the language through which those ideas are being made and expressed.

Recurring themes within the teachers' perceptions of the learning observed in this setting were marked by keywords such as "try", "active", "new", "enjoy", and "volunteer". Significantly, despite students being "not knowers", they were simultaneously positioned as still being expected to transform what was made available to them in the L2 into something new. Like the student at the computer who exclaimed, "It's all in Japanese ... I don't know!", he nonetheless remained working with those tools until he *did* understand.

There are, of course, limits on what is possible, as Vygotsky (1978) recognised in his notion of the zone of *proximal* development, and the limitations on development according to the conditions under which such activity takes place. Yet the critical point here is that learning, when it does occur, is the result of transforming something new from the curriculum to create something that did not exist before, meaning that the learner must always be positioned one step ahead or, as Holzman (2010, p. 34) describes it, "a head taller": "they bring with them some expectation they *will* learn" (p. 37, emphasis in original).

The pedagogical imperative is to therefore appreciate learning as not the act of "being taught", but of creating and refashioning tools based on one's own foundation for sense-making, or perezhivanie. Like all genuinely creative acts, it requires a "willingness to explore uncertainty" (Stepanossova and Grigorenko 2006, p. 254), and thus becomes crucially dependent upon "environments where children (and adults) can take risks, make mistakes, and support each other to do what they do not yet know how to do" (Lobman 2007, p. 605). The "safe" classroom is oft cited within the literature, but safety must go beyond a notion of general well-being. Jason was almost apologetic with his reference to his students' high levels of engagement when it seemed "childish". Yet this ability to feel comfortable to take such risks, the freedom to "learn playfully" (Holzman 2010), is not a luxury, but crucial for genuine development:

> Though the play-development relationship can be compared to the instruction-development relationship, play provides a much wider background for changes in needs and consciousness. Action in the imaginative sphere, in an imaginary situation, the creation of voluntary intentions, and the formation of real-life plans and volitional motives. (Vygotsky 1978, p. 102)

In attempts to understand best contemporary practice within teaching and learning, much has been made of what it means to "work" within the ZPD to achieve higher student outcomes. The result has been a focus caught up with attempting to identify models, techniques, and strategies for what teachers and learners should "think" and "do". While clearly important, what cannot remain ignored is the need to also engage with the curriculum in ways that appeal to how learners "feel": the recognition of the deeply emotive and affective dimension of what it means to "make sense", "create understanding", and view learning as the ultimately creative act of the learners' self being in a state of constant "becoming".

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