Language Learning and Activation In and Beyond the Classroom

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Abstract

In contemporary educational contexts, technology, globalization, and mobility have brought about a blurring of the boundary between language learning and activation in and beyond the classroom. (We prefer the term "activation" to "use" as it has a more dynamic connotation.) This contrasts with the pre-globalized, pre-Internet world when, in many EFL (and even ESL) settings, opportunities for language use outside the classroom were either limited or non-existent. These days, regardless of the physical context in which learners are living, there are many opportunities for language activation outside the classroom (see Benson & Reinders, 2011; Nunan & Richards, 2015, for over 40 case studies of such opportunities). Additionally, there is a problematic distinction between classrooms, as places where language is learned, and the world beyond the classroom, as spaces where classroom-acquired language and skills are activated. Inside the classroom, experiences can be created in which learning and activation can co-occur (Swain, 2000). Beyond the classroom, learners are not only activating their language in authentic contexts, they are also developing their communicative repertoires and acquiring language skills that are not readily acquired in the classroom (Choi, 2017). This paper thus rests on the following premises: learning and activation can co-occur inside and outside the classroom; and, language learning/activation outside the classroom offers challenges and opportunities that are not available inside the classroom. In the body of the paper, we will expand on, exemplify, and attempt to justify these premises. We will also argue that a blended, project-based approach, incorporating both in class and out of class learning/activation opportunities provides optimal environments for language development. In the body of the paper, we showcase the rich learning affordances in blended project designs drawing on four case studies from a range of contexts. Finally, we discuss the need to rethink the roles of teachers, learners and pedagogy within the blended model.

Keywords: Language learning, pedagogy, project-based learning, language activation, out of classroom, learning affordances, blended model

From the Traditional to the Contemporary in Language Teaching

In much language pedagogy, a clear distinction is drawn between language learning and language use. Prior to the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s, methodological techniques in the classroom resulted in language that bore little resemblance to the language that was used in authentic interaction outside the classroom (Canale & Swain, 1980; Swain, 1985; Savignon,1987). The audiolingual drill, for example, bore no resemblance whatsoever to the way people spoke to each other outside the classroom, and nor was it intended to. Its purpose was to inculcate the morphosyntactic patterns of the target language through an inductive process of habit formation. The assumption was that once sufficient patterns had been acquired, the learner could deploy these in communicative interactions outside the classroom. However, the transfer from in-class language learning to out-of-class language use did not happen as effortlessly as suggested by the audiolingual method, which was based on behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

In the 1960s, behaviourism and structuralism came under serious challenge, and a much richer conceptualisation of language and learning began to emerge (Chomsky, 1959; Diller, 1978). The view of language as a finite set of phonological and morphosyntactic rules was seen as inadequate, and linguists such as Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980) began developing models to account for language as a tool for communication. Hymes' (1972) model of Communicative Competence for example, incorporated linguistic competence but added other elements such as discourse and pragmatic competence. While Hymes' model is predicated upon a sociolinguistic view of language, linguists working within a psycholinguistic paradigm see language in terms of cognitive mechanisms, and look to neurological models to account for ways in which individuals acquire and use language. (For a comprehensive review of these theoretical perspectives and empirical studies see Ellis, 1994.)

These new views of language had a profound impact on applied linguists such as Breen and Candlin (1980) who were interested in applying them to language pedagogy. Breen and Candlin's paper on the essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching was one of the first, and most influential, publications in this area. While teaching practices prior to the development of CLT focused on the output, or the end product, of instruction, CLT forced syllabus designers and materials developers to give just as much prominence to learning processes. It became increasingly difficult to sustain the traditional distinction between syllabus design (the *what* of instruction) and methodology (the *how*). If language acquisition was a matter of acquiring skills in communicating in addition to learning grammatical rules and lists of vocabulary, these skills should be fundamental to classroom instruction. Experiential learning, or "learning through doing" (Kohonen, 1992) became the watchword of CLT. Breen and Candlin (1980), Kohonen (1992) and others argued that it was an oversimplification to see the classroom as the place where language was learned and the world beyond the classroom as the place where it was subsequently deployed. In fact, learning and activation can both be achieved in the classroom through activities such as collaborative dialogue (see Swain, 2000).

Experiential learning has evolved over many years. It draws inspiration from Dewey's progressive educational model (Dewey, 1933), Lewin's social psychology (Lewin, 1944), and the humanistic psychology of Maslow (1962) and Rodgers (1961). The most comprehensive theoretical model of experiential learning was developed by Kolb (1984). It represented a paradigm shift from the transmission model in which learners were relatively passive recipients of knowledge transmitted by teachers. In Kolb's experiential model, learners were actively involved in learning by doing: engaging in concrete tasks and projects that connect to their personal experiences, reflecting on the learning experience, and transforming learning by deriving abstract principles from their reflections.

Experiential learning required teachers and learners to embrace new roles. The "master – servant" relationship gave way to a negotiated curriculum in which learners were active participants in their own learning rather than passive recipients of instructional tasks determined by the teacher. The new role relationships for teachers and learners entailed in experiential learning is captured by Kohonen as follows:

> The goal is to enable the learner to become increasingly self-directed and responsible for his or her own learning. This process means a gradual shift of the initiative to the learner, encouraging him or her to bring in personal contributions or experiences. Instead of the teacher setting the tasks and standards of acceptable performance, the learner is increasingly in charge of his or her own learning. (Kohonen, 1992, p. 36)

This experiential, negotiated stance is a fundamental dimension to the out-of-class projects which we describe in the case studies that form the rest of this paper. The case studies demonstrate that project-based learning is full of rich learning opportunities. Well-designed projects help learners see language learning and activation as processes, and that it is the learners themselves who need to take responsibility for their own learning (Nunan, 2017).

A Case for Out-of-Class Projects

Our purpose in this section is to argue a case for the incorporation of out-of-class projects into language programs. In the course of doing so, we examine two propositions. The first, and one we largely accept, is that there are some fundamental differences between the contexts of language learning and use inside the classroom and in the wider world, and consequently in the type of language events that typically occur in these two spaces. The second, which we reject, is that there is a strict separation between language learning and language use. The notion that the classroom is where language is learned, and the world beyond the classroom is where it is subsequently activated or deployed, is a naïve one. Of course, it is possible to acquire a chunk of language and subsequently press it into communicative service, but the interplay between acquisition and activation is more complex than this. In the process of activating their linguistic resources in order to communicate, learners can, and do, acquire new linguistic and communicative resources and skills. This can happen inside and outside the classroom. However, given the differences between the two contexts (to be discussed below) it is important to provide learners with opportunities to communicate beyond the classroom. In these spaces, learners are not only activating their language in authentic contexts, they are also developing their communicative repertoires and acquiring new language skills that are not readily acquired in the classroom. As Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) write:

> Part of our responsibility, it seems, is to help learners relate to the language environment outside of the classroom, help them to see how to mold their language resources to a changing environment – adapting language resources to an ever-changing situation. Something we do quite naturally in a language we're fluent in but not in language we're not so fluent in. (p. 36)

Another compelling reason for incorporating an out-of-class dimension into language pedagogy, is the substantial body of evidence showing that an exclusively classroom-only environment is inadequate for the development of high levels of proficiency in another language. Pfenninger and Singleton (2017, p. 180) synthesise numerous studies showing that out-of-class experiences such as study abroad and extracurricular activities are "significantly associated with learners' foreign language (FL) proficiency and oral performance, respectively." Adding to in-class hours with out-of-class input and interaction

is important because of the limitations of the former. Pfenninger and Singleton refer to the classroom as a "minimal-input environment" and contrast it with the amount of exposure an L1 learner receives.

> … the first 5 years that a child spends acquiring his / her native language in a naturalistic setting is equal to studying an FL in a school context for 90 years. Or, to turn the argument around, the amount of input that a child receives in 3 weeks while acquiring his / her native language is equivalent to the sum total of learning an FL in a school environment for 1 year or 200 school hours. (p. 180)

Of course, we are not suggesting that a FL learner needs to match the number of hours of the L1 speaker, nor that the contexts are comparable, but the inequities in terms of input and opportunities for activation are striking.

In the rest of this section, we shall examine both of the propositions introduced in the preceding paragraph in greater detail, looking first at the nature of classroom discourse and some of the differences between in- and out-of-class learning and use, and then at the relationship between acquisition and activation.

Not so many years ago, the classroom was referred to as a "black box" because classroom-based research was in its infancy, and once teachers shut their door we knew comparatively little about what went on there. However, over the last 30 years, with the advent of portable and relatively cheap recording devices, there has been an explosion in classroom research. (For a review of substantive and methodological aspects of classroom research, see Nunan & Bailey, 2009.)

Pioneering research into the nature of classroom language was carried out by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). These researchers were the first to develop a system for the analysis of classroom discourse that revealed some significant differences between the language of the classroom and non-classroom discourse. Among other things, they found that a great deal of classroom discourse consisted of a recurring pattern: the teacher initiates the interaction, usually in the form of a question, there is a response from one or more students, and the teacher then provides evaluative feedback on the student response. This is known as an IRF pattern (teacher initiation, learner response, teacher feedback/follow-up). Two features of this IRF pattern differentiate it from non-classroom discourse. In the first place, the teacher asks questions to which he or she already knows the answer. These are referred to as display questions because their function is not to obtain information, but to get the students to display their knowledge. The second differentiating characteristic is the evaluative feedback, "good," "yes," etcetera. In conversations outside the classroom, if we were to evaluate our interlocutor's responses in this way, it would probably lead to unpleasant consequences.

In their analysis of classroom discourse, McCarthy and Walsh (2003) identify four classroom discourse modes: managerial mode, materials mode, skills and systems mode, and classroom context mode. The first three modes exhibit characteristics that are typical of the classroom such as the IRF patterns we have just discussed. Classroom context mode, described below by McCarthy and Walsh (2003, pp. 181-182), is relatively rare, notwithstanding the fact that it is the only mode that comes close to exhibiting some of the features of non-classroom discourse.

> In classroom context mode, opportunities for genuine, real-world-type discourse are frequent and the teacher plays a less prominent role, taking a back seat and allowing learners all the space they need. The principle role of the teacher is to listen and support the interaction, which often takes on the appearance of casual conversation outside the classroom … the turn-taking is almost entirely managed by the learners, with

competition for the floor and turn gaining, holding and passing, typical features of natural conversation. Topic shifts are also managed by the learners, with the teacher responding more as an equal partner. Teacher feedback shifts from form-focused to content-focused, and error correction is minimal, and there is genuine communication rather than a display or test of knowledge.

While they go on to argue that teachers should strive to create activities that result in more naturalistic discourse, that is, exhibiting some of the features they note above, they remind the reader that the classroom is not the outside world: it has its own discourse. The classroom has its own special functions and rationale. It offers learners a structured, safe environment with, in most instances, predictable language and routines. There are clear roles for teachers and learners, and the interactions are hierarchical, with the teacher getting to decide who says what about what topic and when. Students receive explanations, scaffolded practice, and pedagogical feedback. Outside the classroom, on the other hand, students are functioning in a risky threatening environment where they are required to engage in interaction in which the language is less predictable. They have to function autonomously, without the guidance and support of the teacher or a textbook and have to take part in a broader range of authentic interactions. Feedback, when they fail to communicate their intended meaning, can often be brutally honest.

When learners move from the classroom to the wider world, not only do they have to deal with the linguistic demands summarized above, but they also have to cope with a more extensive range of interactional and communicative variables. In addition to activating their knowledge of linguistic systems, they also need cultural knowledge (which is often based on "rules of the conversational game" about which native-speakers have implicit, rather than explicit, knowledge) as well as a knowledge of the content and context of the conversation (see also Kramsch (2006) on the need for "Symbolic Competence"). Physical factors, such as whether the conversation is face-to-face or conducted on the telephone or through the Internet, will also affect their ability to communicate effectively. They have to work out things such as the power relationships between interlocutors. There are also numerous factors internal to the learner that will come into play outside the classroom. These include, *inter alia.,* threats to identity and "face" posed by the L2, emotional factors such as the anxiety of using the target language in authentic communication as well as the pressure to perform. In the classroom, after posing a question, it is recommended that teachers, provide learners with sufficient time to process the question and formulate a response. However, in the world outside the classroom, when someone asks a question they expect an immediate response. A pause of more than a second or two will result in a repetition of the question, a show of impatience, or the speaker switching into the learner's first language. We are not arguing against providing "wait time" but suggest that students should also have the opportunity to practice responding under time-pressure through role plays, simulations etc. in preparation for real-world encounters in which interactional and communicative variables are constantly in motion. Complexity Theory captures this intricacy and fluidity. In her explication of the theory, Larsen-Freeman (2014) states,

> In the moment, embodied learners soft assemble their language resources co-adapting to the environment. As they do so, their language resources change. Learning is not the taking in of linguistic forms by learners. Instead the language resources of learners are emergent, mutable, and self-organizing. Their development is self-referential, not an act of conformity. Development is spurred by learners' quest for increasing functionality, enabled by the learners' awareness of difference, made perceptible by the affordances in the environment, and by a continuing dynamic adaptation to a specific, but ever-changing, context. (pp. 239-240)

We now turn to the second proposition that underpins this paper: the relationship between acquisition and activation. This notion is not new. It can be traced back to Krashen's (1981, 1982) controversial Comprehensible Input hypothesis in which he argues that Comprehensible Input is the necessary and sufficient condition for language acquisition, in other words, that we acquire language when we understand messages in that language. Swain (1985), an early critic of Krashen, argued that Comprehensible Input was necessary but not sufficient, that Comprehensible Output was also necessary. In order to produce comprehensible utterances, learners have to syntacticise their language. In other words, they have to encode their language grammatically, and in doing so, have to process the language more deeply than is required in understanding utterances.

> Output may stimulate learners to move from semantic open-ended strategic processing prevalent in comprehension, to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production. (Swain, 2000, p. 99)

More recently, Swain (2000) has argued that "collaborative dialogue," which can occur inside and outside of the classroom, is an important mechanism in facilitating acquisition.

> [Collaborative dialogue] is knowledge-building dialogue. In the case of our interests in second language learning, it is dialogue that constructs linguistic knowledge. It is what allows performance to outstrip competence. *It is where language learning and language use can co-occur*. It is language use mediating language learning. It is cognitive activity and it is social activity. (Swain, 2000, p. 97, italics our emphasis)

In the next section, we turn to some of the practicalities of blending out-of-class projects with in-class instruction.

From the Classroom to the Wider World: Four Case Studies

In this section, we present case studies in which learners engage in out-of-class projects as part of a blended in-class/out-of-class program. We address the question of what teachers can do to promote out-of-class learning and support learners in planning, enacting, and reflecting on their experiences. Until comparatively recently there were major challenges in organizing out-of-class learning opportunities. However, globalization and the ubiquity of technology have provided a wealth of virtual and actual resources that learners can, and do, draw on, in their everyday lives (Legutke, 2005). In his visionary "Airport" project carried out in the 1970s, Legutke had his secondary school students in Frankfurt hone their L2 interviewing skills in class, and then activating them by interviewing passengers at the international airport. Speaking metaphorically, Legutke said, "Every city has an international airport." In other words, even back in the 1970s, resourceful teachers and learners were able to find ways of activating the target language outside of the classroom (Legutke & Thomas, 1991; Legutke, 2005; Grau & Legutke, 2015).

Beyond the classroom, learners are not only activating their language in authentic contexts, they are also developing their communicative repertoires and acquiring new language skills that are not readily mastered in the classroom. Not only do they acquire new vocabulary, improve fluency and pronunciation, and refine their grammatical knowledge and skills, they also develop pragmatic, discourse, strategic and sociolinguistic competencies such as negotiating meaning, initiating a conversation, turn taking, lowering their affective filter, developing confidence and so on.

The four projects we have chosen here all share the following characteristics: they involve language teaching and learning contexts in and out of the classroom and incorporate on- and off-line modes of

meaning making and communication; their authors are researchers who are also often the program designers and instructors; and they incorporate students' voices and perceptions of their learning experiences. Below, we provide a summary of each project highlighting aspects of how both in- and out-of-classroom spaces work together to create rich project-based learning experiences (see Beckett & Miller, 2006).

Case Study 1

Miller & Hafner (2015): Taking control: A digital video project for English for Science students

Miller and Hafner's study focuses on university-level Chinese students in Hong Kong who are taking a mandatory credit-bearing course to fulfil the university's language requirement. Over a period of seven weeks, the students worked in small groups to produce a scientific documentary in the form of a digital video. They uploaded their documentary onto YouTube and presented their work in class. (In the more comprehensive version of this study published in 2014 (see Hafner, 2014), there was also a written component as part of the final assessment.) In completing this project, the students moved seamlessly between in- and out-of-classroom spaces. Although the bulk of the activities such as data collection, scripting, filming, editing of the video, and posting comments on the course blog happened out of the classroom, in-class support provided the structure (i.e. explanations about the genre of documentaries and workshops to develop different reading, video editing and writing strategies) needed for students to begin enacting their own ideas. The role of the teacher was to plan, organize, instruct and mentor students. Framed by a "learner-autonomy-based pedagogy," where learners were free to use the tools they needed to collaboratively create the video, students took control of their projects by taking on roles such as researchers, writers, organizers and presenters. Students' interview comments clearly show the development of a strong sense of ownership towards producing high-quality, meaningful work. While the overall benefits exceeded the expectations of the course designers/instructors, the authors also point out a number of ways instructors can further support students' learning. For instance, in relation to the use of learners' first language, which the students often used strategically depending on context and purpose, the authors see a place for explicit discussion in class to help facilitate awareness of how different linguistic resources can facilitate language learning and activation for particular purposes. Hafner (2014) also suggests more guidance in helping students with rhetorical strategies involving linguistic, multimodal semiotic resources, and knowledge of discoursal identity performances in helping students to present their work multimodally.

Case Study 2

Black & Choi (under review): Emerging student voices: How can group dynamic assessments help?

Black and Choi's study is situated in a Masters-level language teacher education program in Australia consisting of a mixture of 53 local and International teachers. The teachers-in-training were enrolled in a course that deals with the cultural politics of teaching English in various contexts over a period of 8 weeks. Each week, teachers were introduced to challenging concepts such as language rights, linguistic imperialism, globalization, translanguaging, and resourcefulness. They were given 20 minutes at the end of each class to sit with their (fixed) group members discussing how the key concepts related to their own lived experiences and to pedagogical issues. Teachers were asked to compile their emerging weekly understandings with examples in the form of a multimodal project to answer the broad question: "How should languages be taught in a new era of migration and mobility?"

For the out-of-class component, teachers were given freedom to choose any mode, that is, PowerPoint, video, play, essay, or a combination of various modes to present their work in the final week in class. The task counted towards 20% of their overall assessment. The design of the project was predicated on three factors: 1. teachers finding it difficult to connect the key concepts meaningfully to their lives

and to pedagogical practices, 2. limited intellectual engagement between local and International teachers and difficulty in activating International students' voices, and 3. the course designer's/lecturer's interest in a "critical" applied linguistics approach specifically focusing on the four elements of "difference, participation, power and change" (see Pennycook, 2001). The twenty-minute allotment in class allowed teachers to immediately articulate their understandings to each other often through personal stories of their own diverse language learning journeys and teaching experiences in different cultural contexts. These stories may never have been heard in whole class discussions, and played a significant role in building rapport, trust and understanding amongst local and International teachers. The limited timeframe prompted students to continue communicating, collaborating, designing and creating their project outside of the classroom through online communication, via text messaging and face-to face meetings.

The lecturer was informed as teachers continued to develop their responses to the task requirement. Group members for instance, would email the lecturer sometimes to ask for advice on new ideas they were developing and access certain spaces/resources to include in their work, as shown in the following example (written by an International, L2 speaker of English teacher – "TEGCOM" and Chinglish are concepts from readings lecturer and students had been discussing in class),

> Our team is doing a video for the hurdle task, and we're considering having a "TEGCOM" class in our video. I'm wondering that can we have a "Chinglish class" in our classroom to reimagine a storyline, I can teach some interesting English phrases that Chinese people created. What do you think? Is there any possibility that you can spare 5-10 minutes for us in Tuesday's class? I think it will be fun and it's awesome if the whole class can show up in our project including you. (LOL)

Emails such as these show student-teachers are thinking with the literature, the literature is igniting new ideas, International L2 teachers are naturally gaining a sense of confidence in engaging with a wider audience including the lecturer in playful and appropriate ways. (The final outcome of this group's work can be accessed at the following site: https://youtu.be/EyxwzMiFsCc.) Their film documents the rich personal transformations the teachers realized in interactions that took place over time, in multiple spaces and through multiple modes that were fundamental to the process of creating a collaborative project both within and beyond the classroom. When classroom instruction empowers learners to use their resources to create their own texts according to their own design, it extends the learning experience far beyond the classroom into the fabric of students' daily lives. The parallel relationship between in- and out-of-class activities can affirm students' resourcefulness and help to create a holistic and empowering learning experience.

Case Study 3

Cadd (2015): Increasing the linguistic and cultural benefits of study abroad

It is not uncommon to hear of the disappointment many language learners experience during their study abroad programs. The source of the disappointment is failure to improve overall fluency due to a range of factors including a lack of self-confidence, few meaningful opportunities to engage with native speakers, and difficulty in moving out of familiar comfort zones with fellow speakers from the same linguistic background. Cadd's study focuses on undergraduate students studying a range of foreign languages enrolled in a study-abroad program through a university in the United States. To address the above issue, his faculty designed 12 mandatories "tasks" or "mini-projects" that required study abroad students to interact with native speakers as a way of assisting students in increasing functional and oral proficiency, and cultural understanding. Before students' departure, a great deal of structured, in-class preparation went into making sure students were comfortable and ready to

realistically activate the tasks once overseas. At the pre-departure stage:

> [S]tudents received explicit instruction and practice in preparing to complete the tasks. Each student turned in weekly the target language necessary to complete one task. By the end of 12 weeks, the students had a single document providing an outline of the language necessary to complete the tasks. The course instructor and professors of each language of study assessed the document turned in by students. (Cadd, 2012, p. 234)

By utilizing blog spaces, students wrote a post about their completed tasks on a program-supported blog site. Seventy-five percent of their course grade was dependent on the posts. The other 25% was based on comments made on other students' blogs. Language instructors based in the United States monitored the blogs and provided direction as necessary. The blogs were then assessed considering the extent to which students wrote reflectively, analysing not only the task in itself but the depth of the interaction associated with the task (see Cadd, 2012 for the full version of this study).

Despite the limitations of the study, Cadd reports that students felt less anxious, more fluent and more willing to interact with native speakers. They felt they understood different cultures better and were more inclined to critically reflect on their own cultural beliefs. One comment made by one of the students in this study seems to capture the importance of this carefully structured, targeted approach in a nuanced way. The student stated "I wouldn't say I'm fluent, but I'm much more fluent than I was before I came. I feel I am more fluent because I can talk about things not in a textbook and with a greater variety of people. I can make myself understood" (Cadd, 2015, p. 260).

Case Study 4

van Oorde-Grainger in collaboration with Aranmore Catholic College Intensive English Centre students (2012): "Leave My Home" music video

This project involved 60 new arrival, teenage migrant students from Dinka, Hazara and Chin cultural backgrounds studying in an Intensive English Centre in Australia. It was organized and produced by the film-maker and artist Poppy van Oorde-Grainger, over a ten-week period, who at the time was running the YMCA Western Australia's Drug Aware Open Arts program. The funded project aimed to create dynamic contemporary art while fostering young people's wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of belonging. Once the students chose the genre of the music video, van Oorde-Grainger found a dancer, musician, two filmmakers, four volunteers, and teachers to collaborate on the productions over six months. To amplify the message of the music video, the producer also contacted buyers, distributors, film festival directors and journalists.

Students were engaged in a series of workshops: a drama workshop where they chose the theme "freedom"; a dance workshop where they were taught breakdancing, freestyle and other performance skills; and hip-hop music workshops where they created a track collectively deciding on the beats, melody and chorus which is sung in Persian, Dinka, and English. Two students wrote the verses in their own languages, Dinka and Farsi and other students helped to translate them so they would have English subtitles. Thinking about what they wanted in the music video, they then chose artefacts such as soccer costumes, and locations where they felt free, that is, home, school, the beach, and the soccer pitch. They screened the final product at a local communal outdoor space where other students watched their videos and saw the members perform live in public. (The full video can be seen at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWFKmvMKVNI, and the behind the scenes video at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Kw5wIPtOCc.)

The encouraging and amazed comments by people passing through this space allow us to see the

importance of making such performances available for public viewing both to educate the general public about the kinds of resources young migrant learners are bringing to their new homes, as well as an opportunity for students themselves to see their resources as being recognized and valued by those outside of school spaces. The video was also shared internationally in countries such as France with Sudanese and Afghani refugees who felt connections with the young people singing in languages they were familiar with and prompted the refugees to ask many questions about these students' lives in Australia. The producer and four collaborating artists also engaged in rich co-learning experiences where they were introduced to different cultures, the mixing of languages, and the capacity to use the body to communicate while creating such complicated projects.

An external evaluation conducted by the Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts, Australia (DADAA, 2012) found the project made a significant impact on the students' sense of wellbeing, enhanced engagement with the Arts, relationship building with their peers and the public, and cultural exchange. In relation to cultural exchange, the evaluators also highlight the fact that being involved in such a structured but dynamic project helped students to feel they could "be understood" (p. 13) in the community. As some of these case studies show, getting to a place where learners feel they can make themselves understood can take a village to produce.

Discussion

The learning affordances in blended project designs

As the above case studies show, the integration of in- and out-of-classroom spaces can provide rich possibilities for all students regardless of linguistic background and learning contexts. Physical or virtual classroom spaces can be used for more structured interactions, particularly when students need to focus on learning about new strategies to plan, present and critically reflect on their work. Out-of-classroom spaces provide opportunities for data collection and filming in authentic contexts. The absence of teachers in out-of-classroom environments and online modes allows for more natural discourse, activation of students' own methods of exploration, and engagement in more genuine meaning making processes as they script and edit their work at their own pace.

Within such planning processes, students activate all of their language learning resources, in particular their bi-/multi-lingual resources. They do so to engage, collaborate, problem solve, create their own meaning and produce meaningful work. This can be seen in case studies 1 and 4 in particular. The latter case, in particular, demonstrates that where students' multilingual "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) are woven into the final production, these resources become visible locally through live performances, and internationally through the Internet. Such opportunities validate students' existing linguistic and cultural resources and interests, a fundamentally important ingredient in bringing about young people's sense of wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of belonging. For new arrival students who often need to quickly transition into mainstream schools in their newfound countries with only a limited set of emerging language practices, such experiences are crucial. In case study 2, student-teachers also exercise their multilingual practices in the process of completing the task but here, they also reflect critically on what multilingualism means for them through pedagogically guided discussions using a range of contemporary literature, teacher-led lectures and reasons to collaborate outside of the university. The in- and out-of-classroom experiences in this study will hopefully provide models of what language teachers will do with their colleagues for their continuing professional development when they complete their studies. Critical reflection on learners' own cultural beliefs was also fostered in case study 3 through opportunities to interact with native speakers in everyday spaces while also maintaining regular engagement with scholars in reflective blogs.

Shuttling between pedagogical and non-pedagogical spaces enable learners to engage in their own complex ways of making meaning, discovering for themselves how they can and need to "make themselves understood" to others using their full linguistic repertoires as shown particularly in case studies 3 and 4. Opportunities for such awareness to develop should be at the heart of teachers' designs for language learning.

Rethinking the roles of teachers, learners and pedagogical designs

One of the most significant outcomes of this paper is the importance of the teacher to the blended learning context. However, the teacher needs to develop skills and embrace roles that go beyond traditional instructional roles. Although it is learners who need to activate their knowledge, skills, interests, and creative energies to complete the projects, they are not necessarily left to their own devices. Depending on the level and dimensions of complexity of the tasks at the different stages of the project, students need teachers' support and guidance as they move from one stage of their project to the next, a central practice for teachers who subscribe to Sociocultural approaches (see Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2015). Teachers do not hand over the blueprints and disappear but remain available to support students throughout the completion of the project. In case study 2, the lecturer was kept informed as student-teachers continued to develop their responses to the task requirement. This close and regular contact enabled students to develop a relationship with the lecturer (in this case, a playful one as shown in the student's use of "(LOL)" in the email exchange). The lecturer was also invited and eventually appeared in the students' final project. In case study 4, students needed a range of teachers with various areas of expertise to access new skills. Providing structure and support in preparing for, during, and after in- and out-of-class projects, emerges as a critical task for teachers in all of these studies. As students moved between in-class, out-of-class, and virtual spaces and modes, a crucial role for teachers was to scaffold students' linguistic and experiential knowledge development as the project developed (a particularly crucial role in case study 1). (For a detailed discussion of the nature and functioning of pedagogical scaffolding, see van Lier, 2007).

Following Canagarajah (2011), far from there being nothing further for schools to add in teaching multilingual students about the use of multiple linguistic resources, teachers can play a pivotal role in facilitating awareness in students of the value of using their other languages resourcefully for learning. This was particularly crucial in case studies 1 and 2. For this to happen effectively, teachers also need to be educated about multilingual approaches (see García & Kleyn, 2016). These studies show, while there are many more resources and places for learning available in our contemporary world, they do not make the work of teachers redundant. As many scholars have shown, "teachers are the most influential factor in student learning and how learning gets organized on the ground" (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010, p. 100).

By the same token, the blended model being argued for here also entails particular roles for learners. Clearly, a view of learners as passive recipients of knowledge determined and delivered by the teacher is untenable. When designs for learning are based around empowering learners to freely use their resources to create their own texts according to their own design, it extends the learning experience far beyond the classroom into the fabric of students' daily lives as shown in all of the case studies. Whether using learner-autonomy pedagogy, critical, or interventionist approaches, learner-centeredness sits firmly at the heart of many designs for project-based learning. In learner-centred pedagogy, learners are involved in decision-making processes about what is to be learned, how it is to be learned, and how it is to be evaluated (Nunan, 1988, 2013). The four case studies presented in the preceding section, all exemplify learner-centeredness in action, i.e. students take control of their projects and, in the course of doing so, extend their role beyond that of student to a range of other roles

such as researchers/interviewers, writers, organizers and presenters. All four case studies promote learner autonomy and student responsibility for their in- and out-of-class interactions. In short, teachers should take responsibility for showing learners how they also need to take on new roles, becoming active participants in their own language learning and activation, and that this requires negotiation and compromise as well as collaboration with the teacher and their fellow students (see Cummins & Early, 2011).

Thinking about the learning affordances of different spaces/practices and leaving enough flexibility for structures to change are key considerations in blended project designs. Performance-based and outcomes-driven curricula have been constant themes in educational theorizing and practice. In the 1970s, the performance objectives movement was prominent. In the 1980s and 1990s competencies replaced objectives in light of the criticism that behavioural objectives were too narrowly conceived. In the 2000s, in North America, competencies were refashioned as standards. The current drive to articulate what students should know and be able to do to equip them to contribute to 21st century society are also strongly outcomes-based. While we do not dismiss the value of outcomes-driven curricula for certain learning groups, we are also aware of an inherent contradiction. Central to 21st century curricula are attitudes, dispositions and skills such as communication, collaboration, autonomy and creativity. An educated individual with these attributes will behave in ways that cannot be specified in advance. Stenhouse (1975, p. 82) framed this dilemma over 40 years ago when he stated that:

> Education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes of the students unpredictable. (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 82)

The four case studies illustrate the fact that in- and out-of-class projects provide fertile grounds for learners to behave in resourceful and creative ways and would appear to reflect Stenhouse's dictum. Although we are not arguing against the use of competency statements to provide general guidelines for the design and development of learning experiences, we would urge teachers to be alive to the potential for and, indeed, the likelihood, that students will generate outcomes that could not have been predicted in advance.

It is in the totality of these intersecting dynamics that creative thinking skills, the creation of a sense of community and team spirit, ownership and understanding of what collaborative, group learning can offer, that meaningful learning can begin to emerge. As our analysis shows, language learning and activation happen simultaneously in all communication-oriented spaces. It is no longer useful to think about structure and agency/autonomy, in and out of classrooms in dichotomized ways but to think more ecologically about their relationship for learning (see Larsen-Freeman, 2003, on the need to move away from dichotomized ways of thinking in language teaching and learning—a point we have made in the body of the chapter).

Conclusion

The case studies show there is no "one size fits all" when it comes to finding solutions to implementing blended in- and out-of-class project designs. Ultimately, teachers need to find solutions that fit their own context. This requires developing a degree of professional autonomy which is precisely what the blended design is intended to do for the learners. However, teachers do not have to function alone. They too, have resources, most importantly their students, who have no trouble picking up multimodal ways of meaning making because they are already using such modes in their daily communicative practices. While not new, multimodality is still not taken seriously (Kress, 2000) in many high stakes assessments in formal institutions, so teachers need to develop skills in negotiating, not only with their

learners, but also negotiating "upwards" with program administrates, course directors and others in control of the curriculum (see also Poehner, 2009; Lantolf & Poehner, 2011, on the value of developing dynamic approaches to assessments). The blended project design described in this paper requires teachers to engage in multimodal studies themselves and build partnerships with experts to help develop skills for the particular activities they have in mind.

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