

EDITORIALS

Expanding Experience, Expanding Meaning

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Exploring teacher development often seems to entail taking seriously hard-won insights from our own and others' experiences, even and perhaps especially, when these still-radical insights have nearly become unreflective truisms. *People learn in and with their worlds. Language is a shared communicative act. Positionality matters to different ways of knowing. Action without thought, like thought without action, risks becoming meaningless, irrelevant if not harmful.* Indeed, if these insights themselves remain only at the level of thought, as bits of knowledge deposited without the mediation of communication and personal experience, they lose their power.

As I see it, one of the great values of the articles published in this journal is the (re)connection of insights to experiences. These articles are often less concerned about guaranteed replicability or direct transfer, and more concerned with a broadening of the range of experiences available for the learning and development of both writers and readers. As hooks (1994) observed, direct experience is qualitatively different from vicarious experience for knowing in different ways, but this does not mean experience provides exclusionary authority. The whole point of listening to others' experiences is to know differently along with them—not to reproduce their knowledge, but to let it change our thought and action. Others' experiences give us new possibilities for making meaning and acting meaningfully with our worlds.

As language teachers and researchers, we are often in the business of precisely this expansion of semiosis. Pennycook (2019) reminded us that language teaching should

be fundamentally about facilitating the addition of meaning-making resources and enabling the traffic of meaning to flow in all directions. Again, this suggests a blended listening-reading-speaking-writing with both language and experience made common.

This autumn, among other texts on reading, education, and intellectual work, some students and I read Elbow's (2009) classic proposal that we play the believing game just as much as the doubting game in our academic lives and beyond. In short, Elbow argued that looking primarily for the weaknesses in others' ideas tends to rob us of opportunities to be moved by them and to let them transform our unquestioned assumptions. Playing the believing game means suspending our certainty in our own premises enough to play with the possibility that new conceptualizations also make sense on their own terms.

This text resonated with many students in unexpectedly paradoxical ways: students inducted into criticality-as-doubt found themselves playing the believing game with Elbow's argument, while students trained to trust scholarly authority found themselves playing the doubting game. That is, some students reflected that they realized that Elbow was right about their own reading and discussion habits, as they were closing themselves off from really engaging with ideas that challenged their current thinking. Other students, meanwhile, reflected that they critically questioned Elbow's argument that the doubting game had become too dominant, realizing instead—and against the grain of the text—that their own imbalance was that they often uncritically assumed that they were reading to accept the purportedly

more intelligent thinking of the expert texts. From these divergent responses to Elbow's text, a shared provisional idea about balance emerged among the classroom community, but it was clear that the precise actual and ideal balance between believing and doubting would remain under constant negotiation.

This reminded me that there is much to be gained by actively reading and really listening, challenging ourselves to briefly inhabit others' worlds (see Lugones, 1987), while also respectfully questioning from other standpoints. *Explorations in Teacher Development* invites readers to keep both their minds and the texts open to other potentials, with and against the grain. Each of the four articles in this issue provides an intelligent dialogue partner and extends an offer for transportation to their world.

In this issue

First, James Porcaro shares his valuable perspective on teaching when retirement is looming. His diverse experiences have led him to vital realizations, but they also raise concerns about further potential going unrealized. As some doors have closed and new opportunities have opened, new teaching contexts have kept his teaching practice fresh and exciting, though even in the same context, each year and each group is interestingly different. However, when teaching opportunities are finally closed to a teacher, questions of freshness and purpose arise.

Second, Denver Beirne offers his exploration into making reflection a communal practice, an act of commoning

and communication. We know that teacher reflection is valuable for us, but it is less clear how to foster reflection among our students. Beirne narrates his exploration with the scholarly literature and with the students in his university speaking and listening classes.

Third, Takaaki Hiratsuka and Atsushi Mizumoto report their research into facilitating exploratory talk among Japanese university EFL students, making reflection common in another way. Distinguished from disputational talk and cumulative talk, exploratory talk also balances the doubting and believing games for deeper collaboration and co-construction of knowledge. Their findings suggest that even a brief intervention before discussions can significantly increase exploratory talk.

Finally, Nate Olson shares his research into team teaching with soft CLIL, showing how teacher collaboration is often agonistic and is all the more transformative because of this dissensus. Even in the same context and within the same discipline, English language teachers can challenge their own and others' sedimented thoughts and practices, with benefits for both teachers and students. Thinking with the other articles in this issue, we might say that team teaching can become a practice of exploratory talk or shared reflection in action, a praxis that invites students into this and similar dialogue.

Call for Papers

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