

Teacher learning comes in addressing tensions between differing forms of explanation in order to participate in the activity in ways that make sense to that community.

donaldfr@umich.edu

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Forums

Teacher creativity

Daniel Xerri argues for its inclusion in training programmes.

Creativity is one of the most exciting concepts that currently inform the field of ELT. The attainment of creativity in the classroom is most probably dependent on the teacher's own creative practices. This could seem daunting to some teachers, however, these practices need not always be thought of as generating novelty out of nothing. Teachers' creativity can also consist of the synthesis of disparate elements or the formation of connections between things that were previously seen as incapable of connection.

Definition

In *The Act of Creation*, Arthur Koestler maintains that, rather than seeing creativity as the creation of something out of nothing, it is more appropriate to conceive of it as the act of rearranging or regrouping already existing elements. He claims that creativity 'uncovers, selects, re-shuffles, combines, synthesises already existing facts, ideas, faculties, skills. The more familiar the parts, the more striking the new whole' (Koestler 1964: 120). Hence, creative people are capable of 'combining previously unrelated domains of knowledge in such a way that you get more out of the emergent whole than you put in' (Koestler 1980: 344).

When Koestler's notions of creativity are applied to teachers, one could argue that teacher training programmes at both pre-service and in-service levels can play a pivotal role in promoting this form of creativity (Xerri *in press*). Such programmes have the potential to cultivate teachers' ability to engage in what Koestler (1964) calls 'bisociative' thinking, a creative leap of the mind which results in the formation of a new matrix of meaning through the act of combining elements from previously unconnected matrices of thought.

Multimodality

The pedagogical understanding and subject knowledge that teachers receive on training programmes could easily be complemented by the cultivation of the belief in the potential of creative teaching to engage language learners. One form of such creative teaching (and of bisociative thinking)

is multimodality, which is defined as 'the crafted integration of two or more ways, or modes, of communication, so that their combined meaning as a whole is greater than either mode separately or their simple combination' (Dressman 2010: 71). An example of this is when a teacher's ability to bring a text to life by the careful combination of print, audio, video and hyperlinks makes it highly engaging for language learners (Xerri 2016).

In order, therefore, for teachers to foster creativity in the learning environment they need to be equipped with the capacity to think creatively and generate innovation. Developing the knowledge, skills and beliefs needed to employ a multimodal approach is just one means by which teacher education and development can help teachers to achieve this form of creativity.

daniel.xerri@um.edu.mt

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Daniel Xerri is a lecturer in TESOL at the Centre for English Language Proficiency, University of Malta. He

holds a PhD in Education from the University of York. More information about his talks and publications can be found at: www.danielxerri.com.

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