While changes related to cultural diversity are visible and at work in social, cultural and political contexts, cultural diversity as such is being ignored or rejected across many countries. It is the denial or hidden nature of diversity in educational settings and learning processes, reflected in the marginalisation of this topic, that this book wants to address.

The book chapters are blind peer reviewed and draw from a variety of learning settings across the world. They are intended to open up spaces to talk, promote and struggle for the relevance of addressing learning diversities. This includes current and new directions for theoretical and methodological discussions.

They concern spaces of interaction and diversity research across single and multiple moments, different contexts and various time scales. They also explore the diversity of theories used to address these issues and how we theorize the relationship between centres and margins in understanding the idea of opening spaces for dialogue.
Open Spaces for Interactions and Learning Diversities
Open Spaces for Interactions and Learning Diversities

Edited by
Alessio Surian
University of Padova, Italy
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PART 1
THE SPACE AND TIME OF LEARNING INTERACTIONS
1. LEARNING WITH PASSION AND COMPASSION

INTRODUCTION

As the conference that brought together the authors of the following chapters was approaching, one spring morning poet Maya Angelou passed away. One of the conference and of this book key word is “open”. What is an open attitude? Suddenly I went back to one of her facebook posts dated July 5th 2011. She wrote:

*My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.*

Likewise, as scholars focusing from a sociocultural perspective on learning and educational relations in order to take into account passions and compassions in what we experience and reflect upon we are adopting an emerging orientation towards multidisciplinary research work in the field of learning interactions (Grossen, 2009).

In this spirit, such affective dimension was enhanced in our conference by opening each day by listening to live music performed by some of the best travelled musicians that Padova would offer: Wilson Colombus, Luca Manneschi, Alberto Vedovato, Andrea Ferlini, and Luca Xodo who also contributed this book’s cover photo. In a similar way songs were helping Mediterranean people to act to support and to welcome refugees crossing the Mare Nostrum, and to mourn those who lost their lives while moving across borders. As Gang sing “*Mare ti prego stanotte, falli passare, mare nostro mare – Tonight I am praying you sea, let them cross, be our sea*”. In this spirit the first key-note speech was delivered by Gianfranco Bonesso (Venice Municipality) who skilfully placed participants’ studies on learning, interactions and multicultural contexts in relation to the actual challenges of public policies promoting diversity as a social advantage.

Unlikely previous SIGs publications in this field, this book presents a broader spectrum of contents to offer glimpses into some of the variety of current research fields. To provide a common thread the authors were invited to respond to the following question:

What are the challenges that global movements and cross-cultural communication continue to pose to many areas of teaching, learning and education?

The conference organisers assumption was that with increasing dynamics and diversity in most societies (i.e., offline and online mobility, inter-institutional
collaborations, migrations and intercultural encounters as well as individual transitions) this area of research becomes even more important in learning research. While changes related to cultural diversity are visible and at work in social, cultural and political contexts, cultural diversity as such is being ignored or rejected across many countries in Europe. It is the denial or hidden nature of diversity in educational settings and learning processes, reflected in the marginalisation of this topic that the conference wanted to address.

Therefore, the following chapters are intended to open up spaces to talk, promote and struggle for the relevance of addressing learning diversities. This includes current and new directions for theoretical and methodological discussions. They concern spaces of interaction and diversity research across single and multiple moments, different contexts and various time scales. They also explore the diversity of theories used to address these issues and how we theorize the relationship between centres and margins in understanding the idea of opening spaces for dialogue.

A MEETING OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS IN 2014

The following chapters offer diverse approaches to studying learning interactions and discourses. They follow up previous research exploring the potential and challenges that each strand of research can bring to understanding the psychological, social and cultural life of educational relations and how they mediate the situated practice of learning in today’s contexts (Kumpulainen, Hmelo-Silver, & César, 2009).

The book is one of the results of a conference with the same title held at the University of Padova, 27–30 August 2014. It was organised by a scientific committee including Sanne Akkerman, Aleksandar Baucal, Gert Biesta, Sarah Crafter, Giuseppe Ritella, Alessio Surian, Rupert Wegerif. The members of the committee were participating in and representing three Special Interest Groups (SIG) of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI). The three SIGs addressed Social Interaction in Learning and Instruction (SIG 10), Learning and Teaching in Culturally Diverse Settings (SIG 21), and Educational Theories (SIG 25). Therefore this book continues a series of publications that came out after SIGs meetings in these fields of research, beginning with ‘Social Interaction in Learning and Instruction. The Meaning of Discourse for the Construction of Knowledge’ edited in 2000 by Helen Cowie and Geerdina van der Aalsvoort which was based on papers that had been presented at the meeting in Leiden 1998 of SIG Social Interaction in Learning and Instruction. Two publications followed up in 2009 as the result of meetings of SIG members, mainly the Lisbon conference that in 2004 joined forces of members of SIG Social Interaction in Learning and Instruction, and SIG Special Educational needs. Kristiina Kumpulainen, Cindy Hmelo-Silver, and Margarida Cesar edited ‘Investigating classroom interaction. Methodologies
in action’ which reviews diverse approaches to investigate classroom practice. Margarida Cesar and Kristiina Kumpulainen also edited ‘Social Interactions in Multicultural Settings’ which offers the results of studies focusing on the multilingual and multicultural dimension of formal education. In 2012, Eva Hjörne, Geerdina van der Aalsvoort, and Guida De Abreu edited ‘Learning, Social Interaction and Diversity – Exploring Identities’ which is based on studies presented during the Gothenburg, May 2008 conference organised by three SIGs: Social Interaction in Learning and Instruction, Learning and Teaching in Culturally Diverse Settings, and Special Educational Needs.


THE SPACE AND TIME OF LEARNING INTERACTIONS

The focus of the next chapters is to examine the role of interactions and diversity within practices of learning and the way such interactions and ideas of diversity co-evolve. Following the “open” spirit of the conference, authors were free to choose the format and length of their chapters. As a result the various contributions offer a variety of choices to text length and to writing approaches depending on the available data and core research methods and content focus. The inter-textual fabric is visible in the socio-cultural framework adopted by the authors, exploring learning as occurring through participation and collaboration within and across social groups. In an implicit or explicit way most chapters discuss issues of intersubjectivity, the ability to expand one’s own perception in order to include other perceptions and ways of thinking (Moro, Müller Mirza, & Roman, 2014). Special attention is being paid to the role of conversation and dialogues in social interaction across different contexts (Baucal, Arcidiacono, & Budjevac, 2011). Spaces and places are a key focus and they are the specific subject of the second and the third chapter.

In the second chapter Peter Renshaw and Ron Tooth take the reader to Queensland Australia in order to go back to Vygotsky’s notion of perezhivanie. They present Storythread a narrative-based and place-responsive pedagogy that enables them to explore deep learning and significant changes to self as reported by students that experienced such learning activity. In turn, this enables them to explore Lev Vygotsky’s notion of perezhivanie, an understanding of learning as a transformative process based on dialogue involving intellectual and deep emotional insights that leads to reflection on oneself and one’s future. To facilitate such process they avoid enhancing precision in the pedagogical design in order to favour richness and openness of the learning environment, as a way to offer deep learning opportunities to
as many students as possible. This implies visiting natural places through excursion that are “inherently unpredictable”.

Along with Vygotsky’s, Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas offer a remarkable canvas for exploring learning interactions from a dialogical perspective. In the third chapter, Giuseppe Ritella and Beatrice Ligorio focus on the ways space and time are negotiated in dialogical interactions and on the social process that embeds such interactions. A technology rich environment hosting a media design project course offers them the opportunity to use Bakhtin’s concept of chronotope to investigate how a group of students constructs space and time while designing their project. They identify three aspects of space-time negotiation, and they conduct three studies to explore them.

Stefano Oliverio contributes a fourth chapter that builds bridges across educational theories and diversity issues by exploring the hyphenation practices from a philosophical perspective, beginning with the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. In investigating our contemporary existential condition, Vattimo saw one of its chief features as the liberation of differences and of what could be generally called “dialect.” Vattimo explicitly opposes this trait to the project of the humanistic Bildung as it was articulated in German tradition and found its culmination in Hegel’s idea of the self-transparency of consciousness. To this idea of an “educated society” understood as an “enlightened” and therefore “transparent” society, Vattimo counters the project of a valorisation of the pluralisation of history and culture as it is/may be promoted thanks to the proliferation of communication. Vattimo seems to champion the passage from a dialectic to a dialectal Bildung. On the one hand, Oliverio’s chapter intends to emphasize the educational significance of this project; on the other, though, it raises the question whether a ‘dialectal Bildung’ is sufficient to cope with contemporary scenarios. If the role that the liberation of ‘dialects’ has in breaking the grip of monological and ultimately diversity-erasing approaches in education is not objectionable, what can be discussed is whether it can represent a final option. In particular, the contribution engages with this question by drawing upon some ingenious ideas of Horace Kallen on hyphenation. In the heat of the polemics on the hyphenated America (the derogatory phrase used to attack the immigrants who were not considered true Americans, but only Italian-American, Irish-American etc. because they did not belong to the English stock of the first settlers) Kallen countered that ‘culture is spiritual hyphenation.’ Oliverio’s chapter suggests that the educational engagement aimed at valorising plurality should consist not so much in a ‘dialectal Bildung’ as in the cultivation of the awareness of our constitutive ‘hyphenated condition.’ To achieve this end, a reinterpretation of the Matthew Lipman community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) is appealed to in the light of Hansen’s idea of educational cosmopolitanism and Delanty’s critical cosmopolitanism. The CPI will be presented as a ‘space of borders’ and re-interpreted against the backdrop of a reading of the Bakhtin’s notions of getting into shape and borders.
The role of narrative in relation to social inclusion in educational and research practice is addressed in the fifth chapter by Colette Daiute and Philip Kreniske who address two relevant questions:

How might narrating be useful for participants’ evaluation of higher education institutions claiming to be inclusive?

How might those complex uses of narrating serve meaning making by diverse groups, in this case immigrant and native-born students in higher education?

Daiute and Kreniske’s study of narrating in the rapidly changing institution of the community college in the United States illustrates a dynamic theory of narrative, that narrating is an activity and means of making sense of experience, how one fits, and what might be important to change. They argue that research focused on social inclusion in education must design for complexity of meaning, as individuals’ participation in institutions is likely to involve critique, as well as connection, and dilemmas that can usefully be raised toward improved social integration. After briefly discussing the foundational theory of narrating, their chapter presents the design and results of a study asking community college students to narrate their best and worst experiences in college. Analyses of the 546 narratives revealed 4 major and 20 supporting categories of values students emphasized with their narratives. Results show that participants used the different narrative genres to express different meanings of the college and that U.S.-born and immigrant students oriented in some different ways to their colleges. Their findings illustrate why researchers must approach narrating as a social process for interacting in the relevant world.

The sixth chapter on dialogic interactions and collective writing in primary years involves the collaboration among seven colleagues:

Sylvia Rojas-Drummond, Ana María Márquez, Riikka Hofmann, Fiona Maine, Ana Luisa Rubio, José Hernández, Kissy Guzmán.

They extensively report an investigation into the development of children’s literacy as a result of their involvement in a Learning Together programme focused on dialogic and text production strategies. The year-long study included 120 grade-six (11–12 year olds) children from two (experimental and control) Mexican elementary schools. Both groups engaged in individual and group pre- and post- intervention Tests of Textual Production in which they were required to produce a written text as a result of collaboratively synthesising and transforming information about a topic from different written sources. In addition to the gathering of quantitative data, the dialogic interactions of two ‘focal triads’ of children engaging in the pre- and post- Tests of Textual Production were analysed using the Ethnography of Communication in combination with a socio-cultural Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis which is provided at the end of the chapter. Findings show that children who participated in the Learning Together programme, employed
styles of communication that were more dialogic when collaborating in triads during the post-test than in the pre-test. They also produced higher quality written texts. The statistically significant results suggest that Learning Together participants appropriated and transferred the dialogic and text production strategies promoted, so that they could apply these effectively not only in collaborative contexts but also independently, in a self-regulated and autonomous fashion.

The analysis of the communication process in peer learning and knowledge co-construction is also at the core of the study by Susanne Jurkowski and Martin Hänze. Their seventh chapter analyses students’ discourse within the framework of transactive communication, i.e. communication that refers to and builds on a learning partner’s idea such as critique, extension, and integration. Their results are based on an experiment involving eighty university students. According to their results trained students outperform control students in extending their partner’s ideas. Training also has a positive effect on students’ knowledge acquisition which was partially mediated by students’ improved transactive communication.

The eighth chapter is devoted by Anikó Zsolnai, László Kasik to the social and personal features that play a key role in the development of social problem solving and coping strategies in adolescence. Their focus is on Hungarian students. Their study suggests four main conclusions, namely that (a) negative problem orientation, rational problem solving and avoidance show increasing tendency with age; (b) overt aggression, impulsivity and avoidance as coping strategies were used by older children in a significantly higher proportion than by younger children; (c) family characteristics (family type, mothers’ educational level) play a major role in the development of social problem solving and coping strategies; (d) school success shows positive correlation with social problem solving and coping strategies, and these values increase with age.

ADDRESSING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The next four chapters deal with linguistic and cultural diversity in formal education. In the ninth chapter Ksenija Krstić, Ljiljana B. Lazarević, Ivana Stepanovic Ilić address the following question: Why some children dropout from schools in Serbia before they earned a secondary education diploma? It must be noted that Serbia has a major problem with high school dropout rate. In 2013, in Serbia 25.3% of young people between 18 and 24 years were not in education, employment or training system. Dropout rates are even higher for children from marginalised groups. According to 2014 data dropout rate is over 78% for children from Roma community. This work is a part of the larger study aiming at studying the factors causing dropout from Serbian educational system. The study focuses on the analysis of educational system and school context from the perspective of students who left school. The main aim is to analyse case studies of early school leavers in order to get better understanding of factors influencing dropout, to describe the risks and
barriers in educational system which increase a chances for dropout, and to indicate
the causes and dynamics that cause dropping-out.

Teuta Mehmeti and Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont devote the tenth chapter to
inquire further in three directions: (a) to better understand what are the pedagogical
designs that favour success of pupils from migrant (Albanian) families within the
Swiss school system; (b) to reconsider more attentively the cognitive processes that
are afforded or required by these pedagogical designs; and (c) to better understand
the communication dynamics between students and teachers. Albanian-speaking
children in Switzerland are often subject to failure in school within a context where
negative social representations are conveyed by the media and through political
discourse about Albanian migrants. Nonetheless, recent studies suggest that it is the
very structure and functioning of the Swiss school system that might be a relevant
obstacle for these children’s school success. Mehmeti’s and Perret-Clermont’s study
shows that in conditions where children are explicitly invited to be active and to
develop their own thinking and confront their peers with it, they show significant
involvement, are active, and they present remarkable argumentations. They defend
their standpoints and provide arguments. The chapter also discusses teachers’
negative representations due to a supposedly sociocultural distance between them
and the children.

An introductory Finnish L2 programme for seven-year-old Swedish-speaking
children is the subject of the study that Fredrik Rusk, Michaela Pörn, and Fritjof
Sahlström present in the eleventh chapter. Using conversation analysis, they
analyse participants’ management of L2 knowledge in interaction when solving the
problems of understanding the L2, and how children negotiate rights and primacy
to own and others L2 knowledge. In their study learning is understood as a social
action: as something participants demonstrably and explicitly do in the contingency
of social interaction. They analyse “Doing learning” from a participant’s perspective
and by considering the learning object as something that participants actively orient
to and co-construct in social interaction. The study suggests that the management
of L2 knowledge is facilitated by a choice of task and/or content that is partially
familiar to the children.

Classroom practices in relation to teachers beliefs and practices, and to inclusive
education are also at the core of the twelfth chapter. In the final chapter in this section
Jelena Rudić and Aleksander Bauca practice their “critical eye” on the teaching of
language and math in Serbia. Inclusive practices in the Serbian education system have
been recognised as one of the major pillars in changing the country’s teaching system.
In that sense inclusiveness is not only discussed from the perspective of special needs
education, but provides a perspective on different socio-economic backgrounds,
differences between local communities, etc. However despite the efforts over the
past decade or so, very little seems to have been achieved in changing teachers’
practices inclining them towards a more inclusive approach. In this chapter we
focus on practices of teaching and learning in language and mathematics classrooms
taking into account how teachers cater for the diverse needs of the students with whom they work. Data are drawn from a mixed method study exploring teacher beliefs on teaching and learning and their associated classroom practices. A sample of 96 upper secondary teachers teaching Serbian language and literature (L1) and mathematics participated in the study. For the purpose of this chapter exemplary episodes were chosen in order to examine the topic in focus. After identifying four groups of teachers: ‘traditional’, ‘traditional stressing atmosphere’, ‘laissez faire’ and ‘modern’ types, the practices of each type were examined from the perspective of their catering for different students’ needs. All teacher types except the “modern” one provide little space for students’ voices and personal understandings regardless of the subject they teach. While the “traditional” type teachers maintain a distance between themselves and the students, this is not the case for other teacher types. Only in case of the “modern” type teacher there is a clear focus on catering for different students’ ideas and solutions thus providing equal amounts of space and time for everyone in the classroom. Taking into account the country’s current practices in teachers’ initial education and professional development, the preconditions that facilitate teachers embracing more inclusive approach are discussed.

FROM RESEARCH TO TEACHING

The thirteenth chapter by Jane Hughes still focuses on diversity and takes a sociocultural perspective in exploring a teaching curriculum in a business school. It explores how students come to ‘figure’ out who they are as they participate in an educational world constructed by a teacher. Accounting education research, taking a social constructivist perspective, has highlighted the difficulties in teaching accounting, a discipline derived from a professional business practice, in a university setting. The dominance of procedural knowledge (problem-solving that focuses on an algorithmic aspect), rather than conceptual knowledge, in accounting education has been noted. The tendency of university students to rely on a procedural knowledge of accounting, such as memorisation and rote learning, is unsatisfactory for entry to a professional world of accounting or business, due to the complex accounting issues arising for professionals in the twenty-first century. The chapter explores the figured worlds of academic accounting, in a university business school, to assess how students participated in and made sense of their accounting studies.

The learning trajectories and identity development of three students, selected due to the diversity of their backgrounds, prior study and work experiences, are explored. Students’ figured worlds are dominated by the “pedagogical authority” of the examination, as communicated in the lectures and seminars (in the teaching and tasks). Students positioned themselves as examination strategists, seen in their classroom behaviour (tasks and relationships). All three students’ learning trajectories showed how they used examination strategies, developed using accounting processes, to bridge the gap between actual and designate identity and achieve their career investment aim. One student was able to find a conceptual
understanding of accounting, as he was able to position himself in a figured world of professional business management (evidenced in his narrative), as well as a figured world of examination strategies. Other students remained in a figured world of examination strategies and their understanding was limited to examination techniques and associated study skills. The three student trajectories showed how different worlds and identities might develop from participation in the same educational setting. The sociocultural perspective of figured worlds and identity development suggests a further way to make sense of student success and failure in accounting. In particular, the sociocultural perspective in this chapter considers how to explore the heterogeneity in student study behaviours, noted by both higher education and accounting education researchers.

Values education is addressed by Alfred Weinberger, Jean-Luc Patry in the fourteenth chapter devoted to VaKE (Values and Knowledge Education). Empirical evidence suggests that teachers neglect values education due to the high amount of subject matter they have to teach and the lack of knowledge and methods to get involved with values education. To overcome these problems the authors developed a teaching method that allows integrating values education with curricular subject matter goals: the constructivist teaching method VaKE. The approach emphasizes solving moral dilemmas as a source to trigger moral questions as well as questions related to content. The chapter describes the theoretical and practical framework of VaKE as well as main results of empirical studies that test the validity of the theory, and problems and difficulties that can arise during the implementation process.

In the last and fifteenth chapter Christian Tarchi and Alessio Surian describe ways to use critical incidents and the use of higher education students’ video-logs as ways to both research and promote learning about intercultural abilities. They note how the increase of internationalization initiatives promoted by higher education institutions from all over the world, does not necessarily lead to greater intercultural sensitivity and how students with different acculturation strategies, might have different needs, and different sources of cultural stress. The chapter focuses on ways to provide teachers and practitioners working in cross-cultural educational settings with tools to reflect on students’ development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness. To this aim, and to foster theoretical advances about the nature of diversity understandings and strategies, the chapter proposes the combined use of video-logs to foster reflection on intercultural sensitivity, and acculturation scales to foster reflection on intercultural awareness.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to EARLI for supporting the SIGs meeting activities and to the reviewers and the colleagues that made the conference and this publication possible. Heartfelt thanks to the scholars who opened the Padova conference with dialogues across the various research fields that inspired further discussions during the conference sessions that contributed to the above mentioned chapters: Gert Biesta, David Clarke, Michèle Grossen, Rupert Wegerif, Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta.
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Alessio Surian

University of Padova
2. PEREZHIVANIE MEDIATED THROUGH NARRATIVE PLACE-RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

INTRODUCTION

We explore in this chapter episodes of deep learning and significant changes to self that students report after experiencing a narrative-based and place-responsive pedagogy called Storythread. To theorise this kind of learning we deploy Vygotsky’s notion of perezhivanie because it treats learning as an amalgam of intellectual and emotional insights that leads to reflection on oneself and one’s future. Vygotsky wrote only sparingly about perezhivanie towards the end of his life (Vygotsky, 1934/1994). He sketched a view of development that situated emotional experiences as central to the trajectory and direction of a person’s life. Given the fragmentary and unfinished nature of Vygotsky’s exploration, the interpretation of perezhivanie is contested, but most scholars accept the phrase “emotional experience in a social situation” as a starting definition (Blunden, 2014; Gonzales Rey, 2011; Smagorinsky, 2011; Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013). Perezhivanie provides a unit of analysis where there is re-organisation of aspects of the self and one’s plans for the future. It is not the external situation or environment per se that is crucial but the subjective and emotional sense that individuals make of their experiences and this will vary across individuals depending on their interests and personal histories.

Storythread is a pedagogy that seems to engage students intellectually and emotionally. It connects students’ first-hand and emotional experiences in a natural place (in this case, in Karawatha forest), with learning about the ecology of the place, and the story of a local environmental advocate (in this case, Bernice Volz) who worked hard to preserve the forest for future generations. The current design of Storythread evolved across three decades. In the 1980s Ron Tooth, an environmental educator, began adapting drama and arts-based methods for engaging children in first-hand learning experiences beyond the classroom. Over time these methods were extended to foreground the competing motives of characters and protagonists in the narrative (real and imaginary) who faced dilemmas about how to achieve a personal goal while relating in an ethical and caring way to a natural environment. Students were invited to enter imaginatively into these narratives about place and conflicting motivations in order to dialogue with the protagonists (actual or role-played) and amongst themselves about how to resolve the dilemmas. In this process they needed to articulate reasoned arguments, express their values and be critically reflective in the light of their knowledge of the environment and the perspectives of others.
others. In the late 1990s as educational research focussed more on the importance of children’s domain-specific knowledge, Storythread gave more explicit attention to scaffolding children’s scientific concepts and methods of inquiry. Finally in the past 5 years, Storythread has been conceived as a place-responsive pedagogy that weaves together the unique learning affordances of specific places, with opportunities to develop new identities for oneself and connect to other people as environmental advocates. The current approach to Storythread is an amalgam of these diverse influences. It offers students different “hooks” to engage them in learning, whether the hook is attentiveness and quiet contemplation; or interest in science per se; or the beauty of the place; or the inspiration of the characters such as Bernice Votz, or the physicality of engaging first-hand in the natural environment.

Feedback on the effectiveness of Storythread has been collected over many years from the staff at the environmental education centre, from visiting teachers, parents and from students. Methods of collecting feedback have included professional diaries kept by the centre staff and teachers, surveys collected from students, and more recently interviews with students, written reflections from students on their experiences, and measures of students’ conceptual learning and values. This feedback was used to inform the on-going iterative design and modification of the pedagogy and in addition it provided vivid instances of how the programme had changed particular children or led to a broader change in students’ behaviour at school such as avoiding littering, or showing interest in and respect for animals around the school such as birds, lizards and ants in the playground. The emotional responsiveness of students to the Storythread excursions was mentioned quite often by teachers and parents who accompanied the students. Many students expressed a new understanding of themselves, a new sense of their possible futures and new resolutions about advocating for the environment. To explore this type of emotional and subjective learning, we deploy below the Vygotskian concept of perezhivanie (Vygotsky, 1934/1994) in analysing students’ interviews, written responses and drawings after their excursion.

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PEDAGOGY

Design-Based Approach

The present chapter draws upon data from a project that investigated place-responsive pedagogies in seven environmental and outdoor education centres across different regions of Queensland Australia. The project was guided by a design-based approach that Wang and Hannafin (2005) define as a “systematic but flexible methodology aimed to improve educational practices through iterative analysis, design, development, and implementation, based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real-world settings, and leading to contextually-sensitive design principles and theories” (p. 6). The data and analyses presented below were collected from one of the seven environmental education centres, namely, Pullenvale
Environmental Education Centre, and arose from an excursion to Karawatha forest. To provide the setting and context for the research we describe below key features of the excursion. We turn first to the actual forest and its unique affordances for influencing students’ learning.

*Karawatha*

Karawatha is a preserved forest remnant of 1000 hectares located in the southern suburbs of Brisbane. It includes wetlands, a diversity of forest types and micro-climate zones, as well as multiple threatened frog species and birds. It was preserved in the 1990s through the advocacy of a local community action group led by a resident and self-taught naturalist, Bernice Volz. Students prepare prior to the excursion for about 6 weeks by thinking about how they might become environmental advocates, reading about Bernice, practicing how to listen and observe in natural settings (see *dadarri* below), and learning about the ecology and micro-climates of Karawatha. After the excursion they continue to work on the records of their visit to Karawatha, write personal responses and reflect on their experiences and learning as environmental advocates guided by their classroom teachers.

*Local/Global Environmental Advocacy*

Part of the place-responsive pedagogy employed at Karawatha foregrounds the life and values of Bernice as an environmental advocate. Prior to the excursion they are given background information about her life and her connection to Karawatha. During the excursion they have the opportunity to talk to Bernice via mobile phone, and to imaginatively enter into the role of ‘environmental advocates.’ They learn that Bernice had documented Karawatha’s flora and fauna via an international data network called *PPBIO*, which is coordinated in Manaus, Brazil by Dr William Magnusson (http://ppbio.inpa.gov.br/en/home) and in Brisbane, Australia by Dr Mark Hero (http://ppbio.inpa.gov.br/ppbionter). Multiple *PPBIO* sites are monitored in Brazil, Nepal as well as Australia to record the local fauna and flora in specific habitats, and to provide longitudinal data to determine the effects of human activities as well climate change. Students learn, through their excursion to Karawatha, about the connection between this global knowledge network and their local environment. In this way the place-responsive pedagogy enacted at Karawatha links environmental advocacy to personal commitments and civic action, as well as to the development of scientific understandings and inquiry regarding diverse eco-systems.

*Blanket Role*

In preparation at school for their excursion to Karawatha students are invited to take on the *blanket role* of ‘environmental advocates.’ A *blanket role* is a convention
in drama where all the participants take the same role within a whole-group role-play or process drama. It is often used with younger students because it is a highly engaging way for them to connect imaginatively and actively with others and with place. At Karawatha students move beyond the traditional fictional roles of drama practice into a new space where they are invited to see themselves as a new kind of person who is growing and developing the values and skills of the environmental advocate and discovering their own voice and sense of agency in their daily life. Through the blanket role of environmental advocate students focus on Bernice’s local knowledge, values, and community actions and consider why she so willingly committed herself to preserve Karawatha from development. During the excursion, students develop their knowledge and skills as environmental advocates by exploring the wetlands area for themselves, attentively and mindfully observing and recording the life of the forest, and visiting significant places that were important to Bernice. Together with the teachers they traverse Karawatha from one side to the other, passing through diverse ecological zones, noting the sudden changes in the forest zones, and imagining themselves walking in Bernice’s shoes as well as walking in the presence of the Indigenous custodians of the land who have lived and walked in Karawatha for thousands of years. In summary, students are scaffolded at their schools and then at Karawatha to experience and explore the multiple aspects of the blanket role of environmental advocacy, that includes scientific understanding and knowledge, aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment, and the capacity to communicate to others what they have learned so that they can become agents of change in their school and community.

Dadirri

A key learning activity that is designed to connect the students to place is called dadirri. It means inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. It is a ‘tuning in’ experience with the specific aim to come to a deeper understanding of nature. Dadirri is an Australian Indigenous practice shared by the Indigenous elder, Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann of the Ngangikurungkurr people from Daly River in the Northern Territory, Australia. Students are introduced to the concept and then asked to practice dadirri by sitting quietly alone in the forest for approximately fifteen minutes, trying to relax as they observe, listen to, and feel the natural place around them.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The extracts from students discussed below were collected either from in-depth interviews conducted in 2013 with a group of grade six students after their Karawatha excursion, or were collected in 2014 from the letters written by grade seven students to Bernice Votz about their Karawatha excursion. One hundred letters were sampled from students who attended three different schools, each on separate
excursions to Karawatha. Extracts from these letters are explored below for evidence of deep emotional learning and changes to self.

Our initial examination of the students’ interviews and letters revealed deep and eloquent responses from many students. For example, one student reported:

Before I did this program I just saw myself as someone who is passionate about nature and, yeah, someone who cares about wildlife but after I’d done this program I see myself as a wildlife warrior and I feel more confident in myself and I’ve become more alert and observant with my surroundings and it has given me a new confidence to go out and see the environment, instead of – just sitting and think oh I like the environment, I like nature, but not actually doing anything about what’s happening. (Year 6 Student)

The extract highlights the student’s heightened sense of herself across time. In the past she had been passionate and caring about wildlife, but now in the present she has become a wildlife warrior who is more alert and observant. In the future she imagines herself as more confident to engage and do something about what’s happening. This reflection on herself across time and the emotional tone of her response suggests that the Karawatha experience could be a defining moment in her developmental trajectory.

Another student realised she had begun to relate to Karawatha through an entirely new mode, that is, through “feelings” rather than through “seeing”. She reported that the dadirri activity of quiet contemplation alone in the forest had moved her into a different kind of learning that allowed her to view herself in a completely new way.

Before I saw the environment through visuals and now I see it through feelings. (Year 7 Student)

It was accounts such as this that led us to consider the relevance of perezhivanie for analysing the changes reported by students following the Karawatha excursion.

Our deployment of perezhivanie in this chapter is exploratory and illustrative. The analytical use of perezhivanie in empirical research is quite limited at this stage. It has been used recently to investigate early childhood play (Fleer & Hammer, 2013) and storyworlds (Ferholt, 2015) created by young children with assistance from adults as they step into and out of various roles during episodes of imaginative play. In these studies, perezhivanie draws attention to episodes of heightened emotional engagement within a role. These episodes become topics of conversation and reflection between children and adults as they revisit the stories they have created and enacted. It’s as if they are floating above the experience and learning from the episode as they recall and evaluate the emotional experiences within and beyond the stories. The child is both acting imaginatively (as if somebody else) but also able to shift to consider the “as-if self” from the perspective of their past and present self. In these moments they are learning about emotions and themselves simultaneously.

Ferholt (2015) has defined certain features of perezhivanie that emerged from her research on playworlds. She summarises the features as involving the following:
the relationship between the individual and the environment is the event; cognition and emotion are dynamically related; another person is needed for this experience; time flows in more than one direction; experiencing the self, not directly but through the medium of experiencing the others; a form of intersubjectivity in which we insert ourselves into the stories of others in order to gain the foresight that allows us to proceed (in the face of despair); an internal and subjective labour of ‘entering into’, which is not done by the mind alone, but rather involves the whole of life or a state of consciousness; twice-behaved behaviour. (Ferholt, 2015, p. 71)

While not adopting all these elements relevant to *perezhivanie* as expressed in playworlds, we will consider the following as indicative of *perezhivanie* in relation to the Karawatha excursion: first, description of change that seems important to the student; second expression of emotion related to an insight or new understanding; third a reference to the temporal dimension of the self in the past, present and/or the future; fourth, some sense of a changing relationship between oneself and others; and finally a reflective stance on the experience.

**Explorations of Perezhivanie**

Students indicated that they had changed their views of themselves at school and in the world generally. Sometimes, these were described in terms of change in relation to *personal qualities* or specific personal characteristics such as openness, confidence, alertness, attentiveness, and passion. One boy could see that because of the entire Karawatha experience his openness to others had increased:

“I’ve noticed – I’m more open to new ideas from people because it used to be just like me, me, me but now I’m listening to others because what they say also matters and doing this program, yeah, has let me, like, open up my brain and allow other people’s thoughts. (Year 7 Student)

In this extract we can identify features of *perezhivanie*. There is a report of significant change (*this program yeah has let me, like, open up my brain*), a new understanding of oneself (*it used to be just like me me me*) and a new relationship with others (*allow other people’s thoughts*).

Other students summarized their new sense of self as an identity shift – as in the eloquent quotation above where the student says, ‘after I’d done this program I see myself as a wildlife warrior’. These self-identifying labels provide students with a strong well-formed schema for deciding how to act in spontaneous and proactive ways. For example, in the poetic comments following, a year seven student imagines green leaves growing inside her – representing a new more passionate and exciting self.

“Well, this is a bit weird but I think that these, my inside of my body used to be dark and focused on one thing at a time. When I used to write, like, for
English and stuff it would just be so boring and I wouldn’t use the same sort of expression and passion that I do now because – but now inside where it used to be all dark and nothing special about it, it’s sort of got these green leaves and it’s just twirling around and I think that if people keep on doing this that’s what will happen to them. And so I think that I’ve grown more exciting and passionate and not so dull and blank that I was before and so I think that this has improved everything about me not just my nature smartness, so I think it’s been really great. (Year 7 Student)

Just as in the studies of children’s play by Fleer and Hammer (2013) and Fernholt (2015), the Karawatha experience has provided this student with an imaginative template to reconsider her past self and project a new more exciting and passionate self into the future. The metaphor of the growing green shoots provides the means for elaborating and communicating this new sense of self. She sees advantages for everyone in engaging in this kind of experience. (I think that if people keep on doing this that’s what will happen to them.) So in this extract we can see the key elements of perezhivanie – significant change from an old self to a new self (this has improved everything about me), heightened emotional engagement (it’s been really great), and the implication that her relationships with others have changed (improved everything about me not just my nature smartness).

The way that direct experiences of nature and place can generate a diversity of nuanced personal responses and new understandings about the self is captured in the following two quite typical responses that were sent to Bernice Volz. They were written at the time in the excursion when the whole group had spoken to Bernice on the phone. Students always want to share how much they appreciated what she had done and what they had learned. These letters to Bernice were constructed when emotion was at its highest and the motivation to speak from the heart was most intense. The authentic voice of both students is evident. Daniel has realized that his knowledge and understanding have been slowly growing over time through deep listening, and this has now allowed him to describe himself to Bernice as the kind of person who is growing closer to “the bush” and wants to spend more time in nature.

Dear Bernice. When I first started walking in Karawatha I did not know much about my surroundings. Then I noticed that being attentive and looking and listening to the environment really grew my knowledge and understanding. After a while I felt like I knew more about the bush and I grew closer to the bush and the environment and came to peace with my surroundings. Today I’ve learnt lots more about Karawatha and the environment. Also I learned lots about Dadirri (deep listening). As an Environmental Advocate I will now help protect the bush and care for it. Spend more time in the bush. Best wishes Bernice. Daniel. (Year 7 Student)

For Daniel there is growth in knowledge, as well as peacefulness and attentiveness in his relationship to the forest. In the future he proposes to spend more time there
and become an advocate. This combination of emotional responsiveness, intellectual engagement and a sense of changing identity suggests that the excursion has been a moment of *perezhivanie* for Daniel.

For Cathy, being immersed in the beauty of Karawatha, as well as being inspired by what Bernice had achieved, affected her in a very personal and profound way. She reveals herself as a deep thinker who has used this experience to reflect on her own life and values. What is particularly moving about her response is the open willingness to share her empathy for Karawatha with Bernice and her ability to use her experience to reflect deeply on herself and what she wants to achieve. The experience has allowed her to mediate a process of self-reflection that seems new for her and is typical of what happens for many students.

Dear Bernice. When I first started walking in Karawatha I was unsure of what I was going to discover, but I was very interested in the forest and its unique beginning. Then I noticed the biodiversity was so untouched and beautiful in its own incredible way. After a while I felt confused as to why people could ever doubt the fact that this beautiful, unique place could ever be denied to the future generations. Today I’ve learnt the true importance of the incredible forest in an urbanising world. Some places MUST be preserved for those in the future so they can appreciate Karawatha and other forests. As an Environmental Advocate I will now try to become dedicated to preserving that which is of the most vital importance to the Earth. I want to do what you have given us for generations to come and preserve that which is precious. You have inspired me. Best wishes Bernice. (Year 7 Student)

Cathy expresses a range of emotions including uncertainty (I was unsure…), confusion (I felt confused…) determination (some places MUST be preserved…) and inspiration (You have inspired me). These emotions are closely connected to her emerging knowledge of Karawatha as a unique place with biodiversity that is threatened in an urbanising world. In addition to these emotional and intellectual responses, Cathy sees her future *self* as dedicated to preserving the forest for future generations. Cathy locates herself in a temporal zone that stretches back to the beginning of the forest and projects forward to generations to come. These four aspects of her account of the excursion, namely, emotional responsiveness, intellectual engagement, changing self and temporality are indicative of *perezhivanie* – a significant emotional charged experience that will likely have far-reaching consequences for her developing personality.

Another student in expressing what had changed for him during the Karawatha excursion wrote the words below and drew the image (Figure 1) to express how he had connected emotionally to the natural world while using one of the key pedagogical tools, *dadirri*.

*Dadirri* is very important and that we are all connected in a way. The forest is a place of imagination and discovery and that everything is linked just like vines coming from you and link with the vines of trees. (Year 7 Student)
The representation of emotion in the drawing is somewhat conventional in deploying a heart for love, but in combination with the text we sense here an imaginative engagement and insight with regard to the forest – a realisation that “we are all connected in a way”. Again this combination of emotion and insight suggests that the visit to Karawatha and the practice of dadirri created a perezhivanie for this student.

This account resonates with what Abram (1997, p. 69) called a “renewed attentiveness … through a rejuvenation of sensorial empathy with the living systems that sustain us.” Abram (1997) suggests that this is what leads to a new environmental ethic that will transform how we see ourselves in the world. We have seen this ethical response in Karawatha many times, especially when students engage in dadirri in a deep way, and allow themselves to become connected to the many changing and interacting details of nature around them – the movement of the wind in the trees, the unexpected surprise of sudden rain, the myriad of subtle colours and textures, the different ecological zones and the calls of animals. Within dadirri students move through a slow and emergent process that transforms their understanding of themselves and of their relationship to the place, but often in quite different ways. The nature of the perezhivanie varies greatly across depending on what creates the emotional responsiveness for particular students.

CONCLUSION

In the Russian language perezhivanie carries a sense of suffering (Vygotsky, 1934/1994) and Russian scholars exemplify perezhivanie mainly with regard to insights arising from overcoming personal trauma and dealing with crises rather than in the context of more positive emotional experiences and associated learning (Blunden, 2014). However, contemporary scholars (Ferholt, 2015; Fleer & Hammer, 2013) are deploying perezhivanie more broadly to describe positive and expanding learning arising from episodes of deep emotional engagement. It is this positive sense that we have deployed perezhivanie to describe the complex learning arising from Storythread pedagogy.
Perezhivanie has been explored here as a unit of analysis to describe students’ learning as simultaneously emotional, intellectual, and ontological. As our extracts and examples have illustrated, students report changes in their knowledge, their sense of self and their plans for the future using emotive and reflective language and drawings. They link these changes directly to aspects of the Storythread pedagogy such as the practice of dadirri, or the awareness of Karawatha’s ecosystems, or the aesthetic beauty of the forest, or the character of Bernice Votz. We suggest that the multifaceted activities and experiences included in Storythread offer a variety of ‘hooks’ that capture the interest of different students. Rather than attempting to design a highly technical differentiated pedagogy targeted to specific individual differences, the design of Storythread was open to diverse pedagogical approaches, including narrative strategies, inquiry science methods, drama through the blanket role, and authentic models of advocacy, such as Bernice Votz. We reported on how these diverse features of Storythread captured the interest of different students so that multiple entry points and pathways were provided for students to learn from their experiences. This is consistent with the notion of perezhivanie that foregrounds the subjective dimension of learning and the personal sense that each student makes of their experiences. Rather than seeking precision of pedagogical design we seek richness and openness so that deep learning opportunities are offered to as many students as possible.

Natural places are inherently unpredictable, so during the Karawatha excursion students can be exposed to sudden changes in the weather, the appearance and disappearance of birds, insects and amphibians, and moments of heightened sensory awareness. These experiences contrast with the predictability of habitual classroom practices where students rarely have to take risks or work outside their comfort zones. It is not surprising, therefore, that many parents (who accompany groups of students on the excursion) report that they still vividly remember their childhood excursions to nature reserves and forests. It is also commonly reported by teachers that normally distracted and disengaged students in classroom learning, are sometimes transformed into leaders and enthusiastic participants at Karawatha. This highlights the affordance of learning through first-hand experiences, and the opportunity it provides some students to move beyond their established identity as resistant learners. Perezhivanie cannot be engineered or predicted in particular cases, but the combination of a multifaceted narrative based pedagogy such as Storythread linked to sensorial and unpredictable experiences in a natural environment seem to provide the conditions for memorable and transformative learning for many students.

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