Creativity in Language Teaching
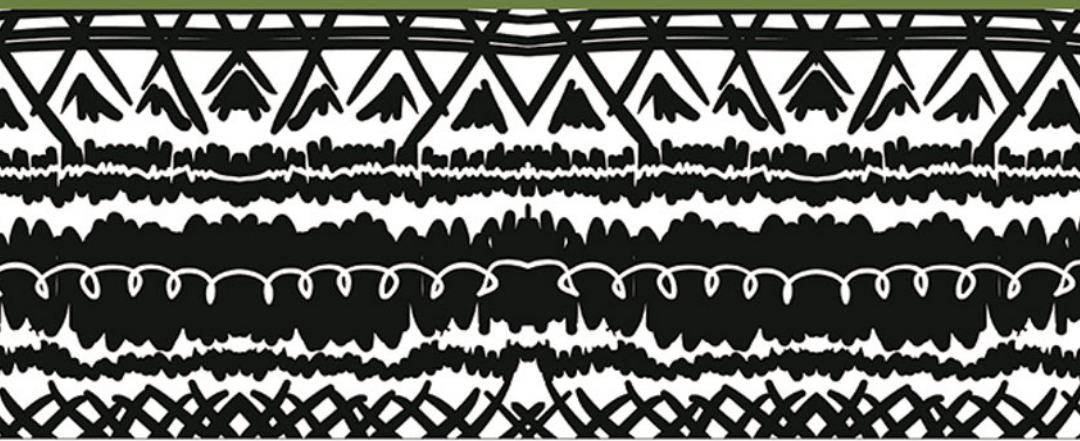
Perspectives from Research and Practice

Edited by Rodney H. Jones
and Jack C. Richards

CREATIVITY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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CREATIVITY THROUGH INQUIRY DIALOGUE

Philip Chappell

Introduction

The concept of creativity carries with it the idea that something new and useful has emerged from some form of human endeavor (Lubart & Sternberg, 1999). Yet what constitutes "new" and "useful" and for whom, in what contexts, and how does it "emerge"? Similarly, dialogue, as opposed to merely any interaction, occurs when two or more people bring their unique perspectives together into a dialogic space, with new meanings emerging from those voices (Wegerif, 2013). Does it follow, then, that if we can say that those new, emerging meanings are useful in some way for the speakers, we have an example of creativity in that particular context? If so, then a remarkable opportunity presents itself to include a dialogic approach in educational contexts such as second-language classrooms. This is my intent in this chapter—first, to tease out what creativity can mean for second-language learning in the classroom, and second, to suggest how particular forms of classroom talk, especially those that are dialogic in nature, can be part of this process of emerging new meanings (creativity), and thus the learning of a second language.

A Sociocultural View of Creativity in Human Development

Imitation, Semiotic Mediation, and the Zone of Proximal Development

Creativity is often viewed at the level of the individual creator. However, given that second-language classrooms are places where a significant amount of social interaction occurs, the view in this chapter is of creativity as a social rather than

an individual activity. The theoretical platform for this is Vygotsky's social interactionist view of learning and development, in which individual cognitive development is considered an outcome of interaction with others. This will be referred to as sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

An essential thread that weaves together the extensive ideas within sociocultural theory is imitation. To imitate is to base one's own actions on models or examples of others. Cultural and social practices endure to a large extent through people, mainly during childhood, imitating the actions of others in their social surroundings. People keep store of these models and reproduce the actions in their own individual ways in order to adapt to current situations. We have all developed routine activities based on what we have seen from others that allow us to act in and on our world. Yet important as these habitual forms of behavior are, the human mind is capable of far more than merely reproducing past experience for the present. It is capable of cognitive acts that combine and creatively rework parts of the past in order to give rise to new ideas and behaviors for the future (Vygotsky, 2004). It is this second form of imitation, cognitive activity that generates creativity, that is of current interest for the second-language classroom.

A sociocultural perspective contends that cognitive acts have their roots in interactions between people. In accordance with this line of reasoning, any discussion of creativity requires it to be situated as social cognitive activity (see Jones, this volume). This is not difficult for classroom language learning, since the social aspect is a given: There are students and teachers interacting together in the classroom for the purposes of teaching and learning new knowledge, skills, and understandings. The cognitive aspect can be explored through reimagining the well-known concept of the zone of proximal development (see what follows).

Human learning is a profoundly social activity, mediated largely through language. This does not detract from an interest in studying how individuals learn and develop; rather, the focus is broadened to individuals systematically learning knowledge and skills through specific forms of interaction with others. Particularly in the classroom, this view steers clear of the notion of the learner as an individual organism acquiring knowledge in stages directly from the outside world. Rather, it foregrounds the belief that an essential part of learning is the intervention or mediation of an expert other (whether a teacher or fellow student) between the learner and the knowledge and skills to be learned. These socially mediated learning and teaching occasions are where language creativity occurs: the creation of new and personally relevant and meaningful forms of thinking and speaking for the future.

Envisioning creativity in this way calls for an awareness of the dynamics of the interactions involving learners and the mediators of learning. This is made possible through a central concept of sociocultural theory—semiotic mediation. Semiotic, an adjective for semiosis, refers to learners interpreting the meaningful signs of others, which for our purposes here are mostly language-based signs.

Mediation refers to interventions by one person in another's learning activity. Semiotic mediation, then, is the process whereby people meaningfully interact with others with the educational intent of intervening in each other's learning activity. Language is the primary tool (sign system) to enable the intervention to be successful. The learner actively interprets the intervening act—the mediation—in order to make sense of the support that the other is offering. When this occurs in a second language, the sense that the learner makes of the interventions is often the result of dialogic negotiation of meaning with the mediator.

Semiotic mediation promotes learning in zones of proximal development (ZPD), where there is a relationship of learning leading development. Learning activity involving semiotic mediation is a precursor for individual development. This idea is apparent in the definition of the ZPD:

> What we call the Zone of Proximal Development ... is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving [i.e., learning activity] under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

This collective view of the creation of new second-language knowledge and understandings has been showcased empirically in classroom-based research (for example, Chappell, 2014b; Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2000), and it is now accepted that the guidance can be semiotic mediation in the hands of a teacher and her/his student(s), or in the hands of fellow students during small-group learning activity (see Extracts 1 and 2 for examples). The creation of a ZPD is a social activity, which stimulates internal developmental processes that operate exclusively during meaningful interactions with others. Indeed, Vygotsky (2004, cited in Holzman, 2010, p. 30) used the phrase "a collective form of working together" to refer to the semiotic mediation that guides these processes. A ZPD opens up when an aspect of language emerges that is not fully developed and activity is directed at supporting the learner in developing greater linguistic control. These episodic learning moments constitute the engine room of the development of greater second-language proficiency.

Sociocultural accounts of language learning include internalization, a process whereby the socially mediated activity is transformed into a learner's own particular way of thinking and doing. It is a transformation of activity-with-others into activity-for-self. For classroom second-language learning, this can be thought of as jointly constructed language that has emerged in classroom interaction transforming into new language for individual learners. This is new, personally meaningful language created as a result of learners saying or doing what may look like the same thing for everyone yet is unique to each individual (Newman & Holzman, 1993). Internalization thus extends the communicative potential of the

learner. The important point to note is that this is goal-directed activity resulting in novelty and is qualitatively different from copying. It involves acts of imitation of the second kind (discussed earlier), which are fundamental for creative cognitive activity. Indeed, more than a century ago, Baldwin (1906), with striking sociocultural overtones, dubbed this persistent imitation, claiming,

> Imitation to the intelligent and earnest imitator is never slavish, never mere repetition; it is, on the contrary, a means for further ends, a method of absorbing what is present in others and of making it over in forms peculiar to one's own temper and valuable to one's own genius. (p. 22)

Imitation plays a major role in instructional settings such as the language classroom. How a learner carries out a given task while interacting with peers and/ or the teacher in the present has the potential to be transformed into what s/he can do alone in a future time, unassisted. Imitation makes internalization possible. Internalization completes the creative process through "a transformation or reorganization of incoming information and mental structures based on the individual's characteristics and existing knowledge" (Moran & John-Steiner, 2003, p. 63).

Thinking and Speaking

In the second-language classroom, language is the goal of both learning and teaching activity, as well as the primary means for carrying it out. Semiotic mediation in ZPDs is aimed at building the communicative potential of the learners by encouraging them to creatively internalize new language forms and uses. The unique feature of second-language classrooms is this dual role for language; it simultaneously provokes thinking and speaking about language. Speaking and thinking can be thought of as a unitary process rather than simply viewing speech as a conduit for thought—"thought is not expressed but completed in the word" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 250). When we are talking about developing a learner's second-language ability, we are at the same time talking about developing her or his ability to think in the second language. Language supports thinking and thinking supports language. During semiotic mediation in the classroom, when learning and teaching activity is working well to support language learning, the result is the creation of new ways of thinking and acting in that language. It stands to reason that if we can identify qualitatively superior forms of classroom talk, we should be in a position to claim that second-language creativity can be enhanced by this talk.

Creativity is a function of learners' life experiences. The richer the classroom is in developing and supporting these experiences for the learners, the greater potential there is for creativity to occur. The more a learner experiences and is stimulated through the senses, the more s/he can draw upon to ignite her or his creative imagination (Vygotsky, 2004). The language classroom is therefore a

site with great potential to draw out all learners' experiences, which align with opportunities to use language to create new language. The type of talk that can support this is discussed in a later section; first, the conditions that can enhance the creative potential of the second-language classroom are introduced in what follows.

Conditions for Creativity in the Second-Language Classroom

Flow

Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997b) is a peak state in which people are free to concentrate on a goal-oriented task, and become fully absorbed in it, letting go of their immediate environment. Flow is crucial for creativity. It is intimately related to joy, happiness, and personal satisfaction, and the most common times when people experience flow are when they are engaged in dialogue with others (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997a). Sawyer (2007, p. 43) extends this to group flow, indicating that for groups, "conversation leads to flow, and flow leads to creativity." For the second-language classroom, then, it is useful to consider the conditions that can promote the type of talk that will enhance creative flow. I have drawn on and adapted the ideas of Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyer to create a list of 10 conditions for creativity in the second-language classroom. These can be considered ideals to aim for and will be present to varying degrees in particular group classroom activities.

1. The learners have clear goals for the group learning task or activity.
2. Each learner's utterances are genuine responses to others' utterances.
3. Each learner's attention is centered on the task, and there is a suspension of awareness of time as learners are absorbed in the here and now.
4. All learners are equally free to participate and contribute.
5. Each learner is invested with some shared control over the task.
6. There are episodes of "collective thinking" (Chappell, 2014b), when the group is co-constructing ideas and knowledge.
7. All learners and the teacher have shared responsibility to support each other's language use.
8. Group cohesion is achieved through shared, tacit knowledge and ongoing feedback to each other.
9. Conversation during the task keeps moving forward.
10. There is a collaborative focus on transforming present understandings into new possibilities. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997b; Sawyer, 2007)

Classroom talk that creates conditions for group flow is clearly much more than the transactional talk of information exchanges common in second-language classrooms. It has a creative thrust, venturing into the unknown, into the world

of possibilities and new understandings. The meaning of each conversational turn may not be complete until the next response. It involves collective speaking completing collective thinking, welcoming acts of semiotic mediation. This creates opportunities for students to experiment with their own and others' thoughts and language, to think and act in new ways using the collective language of the classroom activity. What are the features of classroom talk that allow for creative flow and semiotic mediation to occur?

Types of Talk

In Chappell (2014a), I introduce a variety of types of talk, summarized in Table 9.1, taken from a large corpus of second-language classroom data. The first four are well documented in the literature on classroom discourse. Their default rhetorical structure is the IRF sequence: initiation–response–feedback, often referred to as the recitation script (Lemke, 1990). They are identifiable through teacher-led sets of questions that are often unrelated and require students to respond with factual answers and known information, for which they receive teacher feedback.

TABLE 9.1 Types of Second-Language Classroom Talk (adapted from Alexander, 2001, 2008; Cazden, 2001; Chappell, 2014b; Lindfors, 1999; Mehan, 1979; Mercer, 2000)

Type of Talk	Description
Rote	The drilling of language items through sustained repetition
Recitation and Product Elicitation	The accumulation of knowledge and understanding through questions designed to test or stimulate recall of what has been previously encountered or to cue students to work out the answer from clues in the question
Process Elicitation	Seeking an opinion or interpretation or a reflection by the student on her or his thinking
Instruction/Exposition	Telling the students what to do and/or imparting information, often about target-language items, and/or explaining facts or principles about language and/or explaining the procedure of an activity and/or modeling the talk and behaviors of an activity
Discussion	The exchange of ideas with a view to sharing information and/or solving problems
Inquiry Dialogue	Achieving common understanding through structured inquiry, wondering (playing with possibilities, reflecting, considering, exploring), and discussion that guide and prompt, build on each other's contributions (cumulative talk), reduce choices, and expedite the handover of concepts and principles

Discussion

Discussion, involving exchanging ideas in order to share information or solve problems, is a hallmark of communicative language teaching which, in its stronger or weaker forms, makes extensive use of discussion activities. They are often conducted as small-group activities in which the teacher takes a less direct and more facilitative role, leaving the groups to share information and solve problems without direct intervention. It is a useful stage in a lesson that allows students to share their experiences and build field knowledge for later parts of the lesson. At the same time, it can provide opportunities for semiotic mediation through collective scaffolding and negotiation when breakdowns in meaning occur.

An example of collective scaffolding is presented as Extract 1, where a group of three students is discussing popular tourist attractions. G indicates that he requires support in choosing the generalized noun (*entertainment place*). N's response indicates his incomplete knowledge of this term (*This is most general*), and R provides the support by way of offering a noun with prepositional phrase (*place for entertainment*). G takes up this support and reformulates it as a more elaborate noun group (*fantastic entertainment place*). Collectively, no one student demonstrated complete knowledge of the noun phrase, yet with the mediation of R by way of her supplying the generalized noun *entertainment* and G's creative reformulation of it to *a fantastic entertainment place*, a process of collective scaffolding results in more sophisticated language emerging in the group discussion.

G: Phuket Fantasea the Phuket Fantasea what is called Phuket Fantasea in general?
N: This is most general.
G: Phuket Fantasea general in in like I don't know what you call it for Phuket Fantasea
R: place for entertainment hmm entertainment [nods]
N: [nodding] Hmm Hm. Hmm Hm. Hmm Hm.
G: Fanta no is a fantastic entertainment place. You have to visit it too right?

Extract 1: Collective Scaffolding in Discussion Activity

An example of negotiation of meaning in Discussion is presented in Extract 2. Here, T and L are discussing a scenario reported on in an audio recording where a mountain-climbing accident had occurred. They negotiate the suitability of two lexical items—*experience* and *ability*. L insists on *ability* being the appropriate lexical item, and T concurs twice; once when L explains the difference and again when the teacher (Tchr) confirms in the next stage of the lesson.

T: They took an unnex . . . an inexperienced climber
L: an ability
T: Er (shaking head) they didn't have er

L: experience

T: (shaking head) er abil er all of them took an inexperienced climber but
       Gary doesn't have ability

L: Yes ability inexperience in climb mountain we not do not know he have
       ability or not ability but

T: er no

L: he not have experience he's inexperience

T: er OK (making a note on paper)
       . . .

Tchr: Gary had climbed mountains before but nothing as big as this so he
       didn't have experience climbing really high mountains

T: Yes. No experience

L: Gary has no experience

Extract 2: Negotiation of Meaning in Discussion Activity

Both of the examples provide some positive evidence for semiotic mediation in collective forms of working together resulting in creative appropriation of language at the microgenetic level, or the unfolding of a single conceptual act (Wertsch, 1985). However, not all discussion activities unfold in such a positive manner; there can often be a failure to meet the criteria for creative flow. At times, there is far less engagement in the activity, with few signs of shared tacit knowledge. Genuine responses and feedback to each other are uncommon, and while the learners are involved in the same activity, they may well have quite different goals for their own participation. Or, in fact, expectations of patterns and rituals that develop among particular groups of students with their teacher may place pressure on the students in group activities to focus on being prepared to report their findings in the next phase of the lesson, thus constraining the activity and dampening opportunities for quality discussion.

Typical turns at talk in discussion activities involve stating facts or opinions, explaining or justifying an opinion, and clarifying a statement. These turns can have a lot in common with the student responses to teachers' initiations in recitation and product and process elicitation. They can appear more like an extract from a presentation of findings and less like free-flowing, creative talk. Barnes (2008) recognizes this in mainstream classrooms, describing it as more final than first draft. Often, the next anticipated phase of the lesson involves the teacher nominating each student to present his or her information or a spokesperson to do so on behalf of the group. The rhetorical staging of the talk has a dampening effect. The feedback move constrains opportunities for future-oriented discussion. There is very little evidence of thinking and speaking developing dialectically to create individually significant new forms of language. Discussion activities can run the risk of being preparation for recitation activity; although students are seated in groups, they may well be working as individuals.

Consider the following extract from a discussion between two students after listening to an audio recording from a radio play based on the famous H.G. Wells science fiction novel *The War of the Worlds*. L and R exchange their opinions. Each student has a quite different interpretation than the other, yet there is no recognition or elaboration of this. In the first stage, R and L use a typical IRF pattern, with R intervening to correct word form in between, in an evanescent episode of semiotic mediation. In the second stage, the IRF pattern is repeated. Notice that the Feed-back phase of each stage is a simple minor clause *uhu*, with no follow-up discussion about the ideas of earth being invaded by aliens, the authenticity of the "hoax," and its historical significance. While this fulfills the criteria for discussion, it fails against criteria for creative flow and displays striking similarities to recitation. The responses seem to close off opportunities for further talk rather than opening up possibilities for more inquiry. Both L and R have produced responses that are final draft and ready to be presented to the class; further discussion is therefore unnecessary. And indeed, the next stage of the lesson had selected students to do just that and report to the class, with the teacher writing the responses on the whiteboard. It is notable that the conditions for creative flow are not met, especially the lack of collective thinking, the stalling rather than driving forward of the conversation, and absence of genuine, constructive responses to each other's contributions.

R: And what was the topic about?
L: I think I think it sounds like it make a lot of people er people thought
        that the earth was being invade
R: invaded
L: invaded by aliens
R: Uhu
L: What do you think?
R: I think it's two reasons one because of the broadcast because of the
        sound of the broadcast it seemed real
L: (nodding head) hm hm
R: the story the drama that was played was very short
L: Uhu
R: and the second, at the time world politic the Europeans was starting to
        join World War 2 . . . so the people seems insecurity
L: (nodding head) Hm. Hmm.
Tchr: OK. Let's have some answers. Uuh. D. What . . . ?

Extract 3: Constrained Discussion Activity

Inquiry Dialogue

Inquiry dialogue is characterized by the development of common understandings through talk in structured inquiry, acts of wondering (playing with possibilities,

reflecting, considering, exploring) and discussion. In these interaction episodes, there is mutual guiding and prompting, where each builds on the others' contributions (cumulative talk), reducing choices, and ultimately expediting the handover of concepts and principles. While discussion activities are primarily transacting information and opinions, inquiry dialogue moves beyond this and has greater potential to enhance creativity through talk in the second-language classroom. It does this by opening up possibilities to explore, share, and enquire about things that matter to students in their lifeworlds. It draws out learners' life experiences, thus creating more fertile contexts for creativity. New meanings and new language emerge from the talk in which speaking and thinking coexist as collective thinking/speaking, with waves of episodes when one student's words complete another student's thoughts. Semiotic mediation occurs when ZPDs spontaneously open up as the spoken text unfolds.

In the analysis of Extract 4, I have focused on the rhetorical staging of the inquiry dialogue—how the acts of inquiry function differently to create an unfolding inquiry dialogue. These stages include initiating, proposing, accepting, extending, and narrowing topics for inquiry. This highlights the ways the participants' talk moves the conversation forward and opens up possibilities for inquiry. Conversely, analysis of Extract 5 highlights how the use of closed (limited-response) questions using the IRF speech genre closes down any possibilities for genuine inquiry. I have dealt with the qualitative linguistic differences in detail elsewhere (Chappell 2014a, 2014b). Briefly, first, there is a preponderance of inquiry acts, which function to engage fellow learners in one's efforts to more fully understand something; second, the use of incongruent grammatical forms to realize these inquiry acts, which is not the usual turn sequence of interrogatives followed by declaratives as in Extract 2, and Extract 5. Rather, there are more sequences of declaratives functioning to *wonder*—to keep the topic open, to ponder and play with possibilities, and to keep the conversation moving forward.

A further difference that I want to explore here is the shift in speech genre and rhetorical structure together with a change in register of the classroom talk. If the conventional pattern of talk in the language classroom is realized in IRF sequences, then inquiry dialogue has a subverting function. The goal of the talk and the stages through which the classroom text moves are focused on opening up the field to the unexpected, rather than IRF, which often closes off possibilities for genuine inquiry. When inquiry dialogue starts, it privileges the unknown future and the new. It initiates acts of creativity by altering the field (the topic of the talk) and the tenor of the discourse (the roles and relations of the speakers). The topic becomes more free flowing, opening up to wondering and pondering over ideas. The students become co-explorers of new ideas, respectfully supporting each other's contributions by building upon them. They work constructively with the teacher to keep the conversation moving forward. They do this by constructing meaning out of each other's contributions, building upon those meanings with their own contributions. This is far from the exchange of linguistic

tokens or superficial facts or opinions of discussion and other forms of talk. It is making others' ideas over for oneself—a profound form of creativity.

Extracts 4 and 5 provide a contrast of the genre of dialogic inquiry with that of the recitation script involving product elicitation. First, the rhetorical stages are presented of a short inquiry dialogue episode for a seemingly mundane activity whose aim is to create life histories for people based on their portraits. The episode is in two parts—first, the teacher works together with the whole class on one portrait, modeling the activity. Especially notable is the way that he models inquiry acts. The second part is the talk of one small group of three students. Note in both parts the main stage where most of the talk occurs is the *extend topic of inquiry* stage.

TABLE 9.2 Inquiry Dialogue

Inquiry Dialogue	Rhetorical Structure
T: What do you think about these people and their life?	*Initiate inquiry*
S1: I think they falling in love	*Propose topic for inquiry*
Ss: (Group laughter)	
T: Falling in love. OK. So maybe what, not married yet?	*Accept and extend topic of inquiry*
Ss: No. Not yet (in unison)	*Extend topic of inquiry*
T: So I wonder. They still love each other. They're not fighting yet.	
Ss: (Group laughter)	
S6: Maybe fighting already	
S5: And the guy that man asks for maybe asks for one more chance.	
S4: Forgive me. (Group laughter)	
T: I'm sorry. I won't do it again. (Group laughs loudly)	
S1: Maybe they are not a couple	
S2: Det det	
T: Det	
S3: signals circles with hand	
S2: Deting	
T: Dating. They're dating. OK. Do you think they're working or students?	*Narrow focus of inquiry*
S2: University.	
T: University.	
S5: How about lady is a student and man is a teacher? (Group laughs loudly)	*Extend topic of inquiry*
T: I don't I don't think so because usually the	
S5: Yeah she looks young (group laughter)	
T: yeah but the problem is that usually the teachers are more handsome than this (Group laughter and groans)	

Inquiry Dialogue	Rhetorical Structure
T: OK. Take a minute. Look at the next three pictures. What can you tell about picture B, C and D. Anything you can guess.	Initiate new Inquiry activity (in small groups)
Group of three students	
A: I think it could be about some wine	Initiate topic for inquiry
S: uhu uhu wine	Accept and extend topic of inquiry
B: Yes and maybe he's the owner wine shop	Extend topic of inquiry
S: No I think not the owner because he look he looks too young	
B: Er Ok employee employee	
A: Yes he looks about 30 years old so maybe he's full time working	
S: I think number A and number B is like teenager lifestyle and when they grow up they like maybe housewife and	Initiate topic for inquiry
B: Housewife? (all three laugh)	Extend topic of inquiry
A: Yes housewife	
B: Yes	
S: And C is like professor in university	
A: Yes and I wonder if he enjoy life more now	
S: Yes I think so because look at him smile right now	
B: Hm. I want to know why smile smiling	

Now compare the stages of the inquiry dialogue with the recitation script using product elicitation, which is ostensibly an activity with similar aims to Extract 4. The teacher with the whole class is discussing a football match they had watched the day before. This is but a short episode of a much longer transcript of classroom talk in which IRF dominates throughout. Of the 11 questions asked, 8 are closed, requiring a limited response (usually yes or no). Of the three open questions, in which a wide range of answers is possible, all are quickly shut down by the teacher, closing off any possibilities for expanding topics. Given this is an episode exploring word meaning in the context of students' real-world experiences, one might expect some more opening up of the topics.

The intention is not to place value judgments on the pedagogical usefulness of using the IRF sequence but to show through contrast how a teacher's strategic use of instructional talk can create classroom contexts in which students are exploring ideas together and creating possibilities for the future, even in a seemingly unremarkable language-learning activity such as Extract 4. Through their talk, teachers can engender the conditions for creative flow, thus establishing conditions conducive to second-language classroom creativity. Inquiry dialogue is a natural partner for creative flow. In creative group flow, collective insights emerge through the dialectic of thinking and speaking, creating multiple opportunities for ZPDs to open up when the need for semiotic mediation arises.

TABLE 9.3 IRF Sequences in Whole-Class Discussion

	IRF Turns	Open (O) or closed (C) question
T: Now, was it a close match last night?	I	C
Ss: No. No. No.	R	
T: It wasn't a close match?	F	C
S1: What you mean by close? What do you mean?	R	O
T: Right.	F	O
What do I mean by close match?	I	
S2: One good team ah and the other team ah is very bad	R	
T: No	F	
S3: No it's not	F	
T: Ah. We're going to the Old Town railway station soon. Is it close?	I	C
S3: Yes. Yes it's close. It's near the school.	R	
T: Yeah. It's near the school.	F	
Ss: Yes	F(s)	
T: It's close, yeah?	F	C
Now last night, was it a close match?	I	
S4: But, er, I think that the meaning will change.	R	
S2: Yeah	R	
T: Was it a close match?	I	
S3: What do you mean by close?	R	O
T: What do I mean by close?	F	C
I'm trying to find out if you know the meaning of a close match, yeah?	I	
S1: The teams are both good.	R	
T: Ah! Very good. Very good. Yeah. The teams are both good.	F	C
	I	
What was the score?		
S5: 1–1.	R	
S4: 2–1	R	
T: What was the score last night?	F/I	C
Ss: 2–1	R	
T: 2–1 yeah? Er, if the score had been 6–1, it wouldn't have been a close match. But if it's 1–1 or 2–1, then that's a close match.	F	
S4: The teams are the same.	I	
T: OK.	R	
Very good.	F	
S4: We talk about the score.	R	
T: Right!	F	C
So was it a close match?	I	
Ss: Yes. Yeah. Yes.	R	
T: It was a close match. Alright. Now let's go on . . .	F	

Implications for Classroom Teaching

Classroom talk can be taken for granted by language teachers despite its unquestionable importance for learning and teaching. Indeed, a sociocultural account of second-language learning assigns a profound status to language as the primary source of cognition (see Jones, this volume). It deserves not to be taken for granted but to be strategically managed by the classroom teacher. This is no mean feat, but I hope readers have seen how rich the rewards can be. As a first step, teachers would be wise to reflect on the types of talk that occur in the classrooms in which they work with language students. Table 9.1 provides a summary of these types and can be the source of a variety of informal or formal classroom research activities in which teachers can analyze their classroom talk. There are endless opportunities to align discussion and inquiry dialogue with tasks and activities in which the conditions for creative group flow are present. Extract 4 provides an example of how teachers can model the inquiry dialogue for students. Indeed, I observed each day of this teacher and his class over a 6-week period and can say that by building inquiry dialogue into each lesson, both in the teacher talk with the whole class and student talk in small groups, the opportunities for spontaneous inquiry dialogue grow. Yet it does need to be strategically managed, for as mentioned earlier, inquiry dialogue has a subverting role and can interfere with classroom routines and rituals as much as it can enhance the opportunities for genuine language learning to take place.

Questions for Discussion

1. Generally, creativity is often viewed on the individual level, when such people as artists, songwriters, and storytellers come to mind. Do you tend to view creativity as an individual process or more of a social one? Have the ideas in this chapter changed how you might think about creativity in the second-language classroom? In what way?
2. For many language teachers, there is a role for copying, another for repetition, and another for imitation. How do you view these three terms in light of how imitation has been presented in this chapter?
3. How does semiotic mediation as a theory for classroom teaching and learning compare to other constructs, such as negotiation of meaning or scaffolding?
4. A Piagetian view of development is that an individual will only learn when s/he is at the appropriate stage of development. Conversely, the view proposed in this chapter is that learning leads development. The Piagetian view is attractive in language programs that are streamed by proficiency level. How might the position of learning leading development be applied in structured programs such as these?
5. Is it possible for a classroom activity to meet all 10 conditions for creative flow? Use this list to analyze a recent classroom activity that you have set up and reflect on the usefulness of the list for classroom planning.

6. How useful for classroom teachers is Table 9.1: Types of Second-Language Classroom Talk? Are there other types that could be included in the table?
7. Inquiry dialogue is concerned with expanding the topics and talk of an activity. It assumes that language learning needs will emerge through the talk. What opportunities, if any, does this offer you in your learning and teaching context?
8. What kind of research issues does this chapter raise, and how could some of these issues be researched?

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Improving the talk of the language classroom can have clear potential benefits for language learners. A possible action research project could start with the issue of identifying the types of talk that occur in a teacher's classroom and then make successive changes to introduce more inquiry dialogue.
2. Inquiry dialogue has the potential to support second-language learning in a variety of ways. More longitudinal studies are required that investigate what aspects of language benefit the most from dialogic approaches to classroom teaching. There are several possibilities for a mixed-methods research design that can weave quantitative and qualitative data analysis together to describe and explain classroom language development over time.

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