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The Gift of Confidence: A Vygotskian View of Emotions

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A significant goal for educational reform and an area of focus for this present volume is helping students to become lifelong learners. An important component in meeting this objective is teachers building on their students' prior experiences, thereby helping them develop the confidence that engenders competence. In this chapter we focus on highly accomplished adult learners and English as a Second Language (ESL) students to explore affective factors that lead to sustained confidence. We look to Vygotsky not only for the theoretical framework through which to examine these affective factors, but also as a model for teachers who instil confidence in their students by offering caring support. His daughter, Ghita Vygotskaya (1999), quotes Elkonin, one of his students, to illustrate the way that his life powerfully exemplified this building of confidence:

> Lev Semonovich possessed an extraordinary ability to give support. I have probably never met a single person who was so little interested in proclaiming his own authorship as Lev Semonovich. It was the extraordinary generosity and scope of ideas of the kind of person who gave everything to everyone. (Ibid., p. 37)

While some aspects of Vygotsky's work are receiving increased attention and appreciation among educators internationally, his writings on the relationship between affect and thought remain largely unknown, although they are central to understanding his work as a whole. Our claim is that an appreciation of his work and particularly of his best-known concept – the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – is deepened through an examination of the role of affective factors in learning. Such an expanded understanding of the ZPD is important in developing pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of all students and especially those of second language learners, who face cognitive and emotional challenges as their learning involves both a new language and a new culture. 'Learning in the ZPD involves all aspects of the learner –

acting, thinking and feeling' (Wells, 1999, p. 331). We use this expanded notion of Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, as well as some of his unfinished, yet seminal, work on emotions, as a theoretical frame for exploring affective factors in learning. We also hope to illuminate the complexity of learning when thought, emotional experience and practical action are brought together in the analysis.

Vygotsky's Integration of Thought and Affect

At the time of his death at age 37, Vygotsky was working concurrently on two manuscripts: *Thinking and Speech* and *The Teaching about Emotions: Historical–Psychological Studies*. While the former (Vygotsky, 1934/1987) has become a classical psychological work, the latter, a historical analysis of the role of affect based on Descartes' and Spinoza's work, is largely unknown outside Russia, as it only became available in English in 1999 with the publication of volume 6 of Vygotsky's Collected Works. The centrality of emotion, for Vygotsky, is reflected in the concluding pages of *Thinking and Speech*, where he explores the dialectical relationship between thought, affect, language and consciousness.

> [Thought] is not born of other thoughts. Thought has its origins in the motivating sphere of consciousness, a sphere that includes our inclinations and needs, our interests and impulses, and our affect and emotions. The affective and volitional tendency stands behind thought. Only here do we find the answer to the final 'why' in the analysis of thinking. (Vygotsky, 1934/1987, p. 282)

We ourselves were led to an examination of the interrelationship between thought and affect through the directions taken in our respective research projects. We found that exploring the common themes in our work, including the central role played by caring support in facilitating risk-taking in both the learning and creative processes, made the role of affect even more salient. Using Vygotsky's theoretical framework, we draw on Mahn's (1997) research on the role of affect for students learning to write in English as a second language and John-Steiner's (2000) research on creative collaborations among adults.

We examine the ways in which lending support to others can build their confidence and at the same time help promote and sustain lifelong learning and creativity among both accomplished adults who are engaged in sustained creative enterprises and ESL students learning to write in a second language. There is already a rich and diverse literature on cognitive aspects of the zone of proximal development and dialogic, interactive and collaborative learning in the classroom. In this chapter we look at learning through the different theoretical lens provided by Vygotsky's work on emotions and make explicit

aspects of the ZPD that have not yet received the same attention. We start with a brief overview of recent developments in the study of emotion.

Emotions and Learning

Although studies of emotion have a long history in the human sciences, there is wide variation in the way emotion is represented. Most authors use what Brothers (1997) calls an 'isolated mind' approach and focus on the physiological basis of feelings not directly related to thought. However, recent research has found affect to be powerfully linked to specific brain structures, and its expression to be determined by situated social interaction. Indeed, Damasio (1999) points out that, in a variety of disciplines, recognition is being given to the importance of the productive synthesis of affect and reason and to the study of their mutually reinforcing roles. Brothers also notes that, in contrast to 'isolated mind' approaches, relational theory focuses on social interaction and conceives of emotion as interactive and shaped by human communicative exchanges (Brothers, 1997). Furthermore, in developmental psychology, Daniel Stern (1985) describes in wonderful detail the way in which infants' arousal, security and attachment are regulated by caregivers through play, naming and the shifting rhythms of their interactions.

This focus on the interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics in the origins, expression and appropriation of emotion governs our own discussion and helps to expand understanding of the zone of proximal development. Our investigation is guided by the realization that human beings come into existence, attain consciousness and develop throughout their lives in relationship to others. In our discussion of the role of affect in transformative educational practice, we focus on the aspects of social interdependence – human connection and caring support – that foster the development of competence. Of particular concern to us are the ways in which competence is built through dignified, collaborative, caring support, whether between scientists and artists or between teachers and students.

Classroom interactions between students and teachers, on the one hand, and intense creative collaborations among accomplished artists and scientists, on the other, might seem far removed from one another. However, an examination of their underlying commonalities provides insight into the role played by affect in learning and creativity. Joint activities in both are enhanced when the interactions between participants are supported by 'the gift of confidence' (a term borrowed from the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre). In the reciprocal emotional support offered by partners in collaboration – whether they are novice learners of a new language or individuals engaged in novel, creative endeavours – there is a dynamic interplay between their interactions and the ways in which they appropriate the emotional support. To examine this interplay we use three interrelated concepts developed by Vygotsky in the last years of his life:

1 the zone of proximal development;
2 the relationship between word meaning and word sense;
3 *perezhivanie*, perhaps his least-known concept. *Perezhivanie* describes the ways in which the participants perceive, experience and process the emotional aspects of social interaction.

By expanding the scope of the examination of the ZPD to include affective variables we can both amplify its dynamic character and deepen understanding of this Vygotskian concept. This approach reveals the ZPD as a complex whole, a system of systems in which the interrelated and interdependent elements include the participants, artifacts and environment/context, and the participants' experience of their interactions within it. In addition, we suggest that the complementarity that exists between these elements plays a central role in the construction of the ZPD. When a breach in this complementarity occurs because the cognitive demands are too far beyond the learner's ability or because negative affective factors such as fear or anxiety are present, the zone in which effective teaching/learning occurs is diminished.

In recent years, analyses of the ZPD have emphasized the co-construction of knowledge within a cooperative environment that includes cultural tools, varied forms of social interaction and interpersonal scaffolding (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996; Wells, 1999). Some authors have referred to these interwoven processes as the 'collective zone of proximal development' (Moll and Whitmore, 1993). Such expanded analyses of the ZPD posit the degree of complementarity as a determining factor in the success of the interaction between the participants, whether the interaction involves adult with child, teacher with student, peer with peer, or whether it occurs among a number of individuals within the ZPD. Aspects of complementarity include a common understanding of the task at hand, an appreciation of one another's cognitive, social and emotional development, and potential contribution.

The Zone of Proximal Development and *Perezhivanie*

The interdependence of these aspects of complementarity is effectively captured by Vygotsky's concept *perezhivanie*, which some equate with 'lived or emotional experience.' *Perezhivanie* describes the affective processes through which interactions in the ZPD are individually perceived, appropriated and represented by the participants. Vygotsky described the central role played by language in an individual becoming aware of, and making meaning from, 'lived experience'. He therefore used the concept of word meaning as the foundation for his investigation of *perezhivanie*. As a prelude to our examination of affective factors in the ZPD we offer an illustration of *perezhivanie*. The African American writer James Baldwin (1976) recalled the powerful influence of a white teacher who provided him with the gift of confidence as well as with a model of resistance. This woman, Bill Miller, taught and

mentored the promising 10-year-old Baldwin. 'She had directed my first play and endured my first theatrical tantrums and then decided to escort me into the world' (ibid., p. 22). Baldwin witnessed her personal courage when she fought against racism:

> Bill took us on a picnic downtown once, and there was supposed to be ice-cream waiting for us at a police station. The cops did not like Bill, didn't like the fact that we were colored kids, and did not want to give up the ice-cream. I don't remember anything Bill said. I just remember her face as she stared at the cops, clearly intending to stand there until the ice-cream all over the world melted . . . and she got us our ice-cream, saying, 'Thank you,' I remember as we left. (Ibid.)

Those children who had less connection and emotional rapport with their teacher than this sensitive, future writer were probably affected differently by the scene in the police station than was Baldwin. They had distinctly different *perezhivanija*, as their reactions would have been based on 'the specifics of their past experiences' (Vygotsky, 1934/1987, p. 341). Nevertheless, the courageous actions of their teacher provided an important emotional and intellectual experience for all of these students raised in the isolation of the black ghetto in the 1930s. Baldwin recreates the event by evoking the looks, the paucity of words, and the palpable tension within the police station, all of which contribute to the emotional subtext of this passage.

This example clearly illustrates the emotional aspect of language and the importance of human connection in social interaction, both of which are central to Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*. To explain it, he relied on the dense textures of language as motivated by feelings, enriched by previous experience and focused by volition. As Luria (1934/1987) pointed out in the afterword to *Thinking and Speech*, Vygotsky focused on this affective aspect of learning and made meaning central to his theory:

> Without the exploration of the relationship of the word to motive, emotion, and personality, the analysis of the problem of 'thinking and speech' remains incomplete. The relationship between meaning and sense, and the relationship of intellect to affect, were the focus of much of Vygotsky's work in the last years of his life. (Ibid., p. 369)

In our view, Vygotsky's examination of the ways in which meaning making and the affective aspects of social interaction affect learning in the ZPD needs further development.

Making Meaning

Vygotsky's examination of meaning as central to human consciousness has provided the foundation for its extensive study by sociocultural theorists

(Prawat, 2000; Yaroshevsky and Gurgenidze, 1997). His analysis of meaning, in which he approached the hidden, complex, affective dimensions of thinking and speech by studying the emotional subtext of utterances – what he referred to as 'sense' – is also central to his analysis of *perezhivanie*.

> A word's sense is the aggregate of all psychological facts that arise in our consciousness as a result of the word. Sense is a dynamic, fluid, and complex formation that has several zones that vary in their stability. (Vygotsky, 1934/1987, p. 276)

While meaning is often conceptualized as external and sense as internal, there is a social aspect to sense. The individual sense of an utterance includes attributes that are shaped by culture and appropriated through social interaction. The manner in which Vygotsky examined the similarities and distinctions between meaning and sense illustrates his methodological approach – seeking out the integrative, dialectical connections among complex, separate and interdependent processes. He concluded: 'Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone' (idid., p. 245).

Our own recognition of the interdependence of intellect and affect in the making of meaning and co-construction of knowledge remained obscured for a long time, as we shared our colleagues' primary focus on cognition and oral and written language use. During the past few years, however, each of us, in our separate and joint work, has come to recognize the need to examine closely the relationship between emotion and intellect. We believe that Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie* can play an important role in understanding the appropriation of social interaction. We have also come to realize that this appropriation in the ZPD plays a crucial role in transformative experiences of all types and is not limited to children and other novice learners. Careful listening, intense dialogue and emotional support sustain the cooperative construction of understanding, of scientific discovery and of artistic forms. This is true in interaction across generations – in parenting, teaching and mentoring – and among creative partners.

We start our examination of these factors by considering affect in the construction of the ZPD outside the classroom, drawing on John-Steiner's (2000) study of intense, creative collaborations. Affective factors play a substantial role in the construction of the ZPD in other than formal school settings, yet this fact is often relegated to the periphery in traditional educational approaches.

Creative Collaboration and Mutual Appropriation

In collaboration, partners create zones of proximal development for each other 'where intellect and affect are fused in a unified whole' (Vygotsky,

1934/1987, p. 373). Emotional scaffolding includes the gift of confidence, the sharing of risks in the presentation of new ideas, constructive criticism and the creation of a safety zone. Partners who have been successful in constructing such a joint system are sensitive to the sense as well as the meaning of each other's language. In producing shared texts, collaborators expand their partner's early drafts; they strive to give shape to their communicative intent by combining precision – or word meaning – with the fluidity of the sense of words. They live, temporarily, in each other's heads. They also draw on their mutuality as well as their differences in knowledge, working styles and temperament.

This sensitivity to the use of language and reliance upon reciprocal emotional support was exemplified by the writers/philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, lifelong partners in their personal and work lives. At times, they produced identical answers to questions. Toward the end of Sartre's life, de Beauvoir interviewed him about his beliefs, friendships, relationships with women, and his writing. At one point he said: 'You did me a great service. You gave me a confidence in myself that I should not have had alone' (de Beauvoir, 1984, p. 168). The profound importance of the 'gift of confidence' is apparent in many long-term partnerships (John-Steiner, 2000). When collaborators challenge long-held assumptions in their domain, they are particularly dependent on their partners' beliefs in the significance of their joint endeavours. Innovative works of literature, drama and science are nourished by sustained support – as are teaching and learning across the lifespan.

One way to look at creative collaboration and cooperative learning is to envision them as dynamic systems between individuals linked by shared objectives. The Cubist painters, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, shared a powerful vision; they aimed at revealing 'the interlocking of phenomena . . . of processes instead of static states of being' (Berger, 1965, p. 59). The joy of discovery, the commitment to remain open to one another's ideas, and a temporary erasure of individual egos, were all necessary to their work, which transformed established views of the painterly surface. During their most intensely collaborative years, these two painters chose similar scenes and each incorporated innovations by the other into his own painting. Picasso later recalled: 'Almost every evening I went to Braque's studio or Braque came to mine. Each of us had to see what the other had done during the day. We criticized each other's work. A canvas was not finished until both of us felt it was' (Gilot and Lake, 1964, p. 76).

Complementarities in skills, working methods and temperament can be very productive in collaborative activities. The resulting expansions of self are richly elaborated in John-Steiner's studies of artists and scientists. Interviews with educators and social scientists further support the crucial role, in producing new insights and syntheses, of multiple perspectives from diverse thought and discourse communities. These achievements, however, lack durability without the presence of emotional and cognitive mutuality. Understanding

the ways that this mutuality sustains a lifelong expansion of the self can inform teachers who are trying to help their students become lifelong learners.

Collaborative Learning in the Classroom

Teachers are able to collaborate with students in creating environments conducive to transformative teaching/learning if they attempt to understand their lived experiences, knowledge and feelings. Doing so will help reveal the complexities of students' cognitive and emotional development. A teacher's awareness of students' ways of perceiving, processing and reacting to classroom interactions – their *perezhivanija* – contributes significantly to the teacher's ability to engage the students in meaningful, engaging education. Moll and Greenberg (1990) have shown that building on the funds of knowledge and the culturally shaped ways of knowing that children bring to the classroom helps accomplish this goal.

In order both to discover and build upon these funds of knowledge, teachers may find dialogue journals of great value. In these journals teachers and students can carry on a sustained written dialogue and make the kind of human connection that yields insights into the students' lived experiences. To clarify the concept of *perezhivanie* and the ways in which it can contribute to the creation of transformative learning experiences, we look at the students' appropriation of the interactions between themselves and their teacher in these journals. The shared cognitive and emotional interaction in journals facilitates the transformation of experiences from interpersonal to intrapersonal and makes the authors more metacognitively aware of their own writing process – an important aspect of learning to write.

Vygotsky used the distinction between meaning and sense to analyse the process of the individual's appropriation of social interaction. Drawing on the above concepts, Mahn (1997) studied the use of dialogue journals with high school and university ESL students to examine the role of affect in learning. Viewing dialogue journals both as a pedagogical device and as a lens through which to view students' *perezhivanija*, we next explore ways in which students develop emotional and cognitive mutuality in educational settings.

The Value of Dialogue Journals

Journals in which a teacher and students carry on written dialogues have been used by teachers at every level as a means of getting to know their students, engendering trust and lending support (Stanton et al., 1988). Through dialogic interaction in journals, students give salience to experiences that shape their identity and reveal ways that their educational experiences are

shaped by affect in relation to ethnicity, culture, gender and class status. As they do this, teachers become more aware of their students' lives and *perezhivanija*. The genuine caring support teachers can offer their students is especially important in high-anxiety activities such as writing in a second language. With a teacher's gift of confidence, students can face their anxiety and take risks with their writing.

Mahn (1997) carried on year-long written dialogues with his high school and university ESL students in journals in which they wrote for 10–15 minutes at the beginning of class on whatever topic they chose. They were encouraged to focus on authentic communication and not to worry about mistakes. They were free to jump from topic to topic and to draw on their own interests and experiences. The relationships that were developed in the journals became an important part of the culture of the classroom, as the confidence that students gained through their journals carried over into the academic writing in Mahn's and other classes. The collaborative aspect of the journal writing and the creation of a relatively risk-free environment also carried over into the course as a whole and contributed to the construction of a collective ZPD.

Students in Mahn's (1997) study of ESL writers revealed their anxiety through frequent reference to their fear of making mistakes. This anxiety inhibited their writing and caused further frustration as they were stymied in their ability to communicate their ideas. In a reflective piece of writing in her journal, one student wrote: 'Because I could not express my feelings completely, I feel heavy pressure in my chest' (Pi Lan). Another student added: 'the grammar ghost was present in every sentence and between the lines' (Jabar). A number of students related that their anxiety was heightened by pedagogical approaches that put the major emphasis on form and mechanics rather than on communicative intent.

By contrast, students gained confidence through dialogue journals, and their writing was transformed as it became a vehicle for self-discovery. The narrative fluency that helped students forge writing identities also helped them to develop ideas more completely in academic writing. 'Writing in journals has built my confidence in writing and lately, I found that writing helps me understand something deeper' (Dat). 'Journals have made writing a lot easier for me. I feel confident when I am supposed to write an essay or something. I am not scared any more when I hear the word "essay" ' (Minh).

Key to identity formation was the focus on meaningful communication instead of mechanics. 'For the first time in my life I see English teacher who want his student to be released from the verbs and tenses prison and to wake up from the grammar nightmare. It was a relief' (Jabar). As students became less anxious about their writing, they reported that they became more fluent. They found that when they wrote more rapidly they could get their thoughts down on paper instead of losing each thought as it was edited and re-edited in their minds before committing words to paper. 'The good strategy that

really helped was writing without stopping and always having my brain and my hand connected to each other' (Ali). 'My hand and mind work without thinking about it. By learning to write as I'm thinking, the journal makes my thinking flow and helps my idea run smoother' (Jose).

Another student, Trang, provided a metaphor that summarized the experiences of a number of students:

> I realized that journal really help me to write down my idea without any blocking into my elbow. When I have idea in my head and I start to make it go down my arm to the paper, if I think about grammar, structure my idea blocks into my elbow and never goes to the paper.

These comments offer a powerful image of thought imprisoned between mind and hand; Mahn found their thoughts could be released through caring and supportive interaction.

Vygotsky (1934/1987) described the complexity of the move from thought to written utterance/speech in his description of the internal planes of verbal thinking:

> The motive gives birth to thought, to the formation of thought itself, to its mediation in the internal word to the meanings of external words, and finally, to words themselves. (Ibid., p. 283)

He underscored the possibility of a short-circuit occurring at any point along this complex path. However, the complexity of the move from thought to written language is further compounded when a student is writing in a second language. Valuable insights for developing effective pedagogical approaches for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students can be gleaned by examining students' views on the various obstacles they encounter and attempt to transcend along the paths from thought to written speech. As collaborators we, too, have experienced the silence of uncertainty, relieved by the co-construction of new meaning.

A recurring theme in the students' reflections on the use of dialogue journals was that the responses they received from the teacher played an important role in motivating them and giving them the confidence to take risks with their writing. This confidence, developed through the genuine support in the teacher's responses, helped them to express ideas and emotions that they might not otherwise have attempted. 'I saw a different side of the language. I realized that I could actually write in English. Not only I can write but I get compliments for my writing, and that's very important to me' (Aphrodita). 'Sometimes when I wrote something, I think that people would not understand what I'm trying to say. Every time when I wrote journals and you write little comments on it I feel that I can express what I want to say' (Pancha). The emotional fine-tuning that occurred in dialogue journals thus helped to

establish relationships that became the foundation for the collective ZPD of the class as a whole. In the process of creating zones of proximal development through their journals, they also learned about themselves as writers. 'It is probably through the dialoguing with real or imagined others in the process of textual composition that even the most knowledgeable others are able to continue to learn in the ZPD' (Wells, 1999, p. 320). Without understanding the students' *perezhivanija* and the ways that their zones of proximal development are affected by their responses to interactions in the classroom, it is difficult for teachers to offer the support that will motivate their continuing development.

Word Meaning and Sense in a Second Language

In her study of beginning writers and the zone of proximal development, Petrick-Steward (1995) suggests that we think of the ZPD in the activity of learning and teaching as being mutually and actively created by the child and the teacher: not 'as a characteristic, of the child or of teaching, but of the child engaged in collaborative activity within specific social environments' (ibid., p. 13). An important consideration in educational reform is to discover what is necessary to establish classroom environments in which opportunities are created for students to understand their experiences with language and literacy acquisition, their interaction with parents and peers, their value systems and beliefs, and their ways of making meaning of the world. Such understanding can be revealed through dialogue journals and other classroom activities that promote student engagement and awareness of their learning processes.

Through engaging in meaningful communication in their journals, the students developed their own sense of words along with deepening their understanding of word meaning. Students who are acquiring a second language are taught meaning when they are given definitions that they then have to reconcile with their understanding of equivalent forms from their first language. 'The dictionary meaning of a word', wrote Vygotsky (1934/1987, p. 245), 'is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diverse realization in speech [and writing].'

Second language learners face the challenge of reconciling their developing word sense and word meaning in English with the word sense of the equivalent word in their native language – what that word evokes for them personally. Word meaning in English will predominate over word sense until they develop fluency, until words sound right, until they get a feeling for the language, and until they develop the systematicity and automaticity required to convey profound ideas in English. As has been argued above, all these aspects of fluency are facilitated by their use of dialogue journals. Other methods that can be used to support the acquisition of fluency and the subtle shadings of meaning

in a second language include the teacher providing learners with diverse, meaningful models of text, tailored to their needs and concerns, and also creating opportunities for them to write in their native language.

Through interaction in their journals and by shifting the focus from form and structure to meaning, students reflected that they could think better in English, i.e. that they could use inner speech more effectively and draw on word sense to express complex ideas more effectively. They became less concerned with the dictionary meanings of words and began to have confidence that drawing on their sense of the word would not interfere with effective communication. An important part of this process is to instil in students through classroom practice the understanding that it is acceptable for them to take chances in their writing and to develop confidence in their own voices. In a similar vein, creative collaborators are able to take chances in presenting their new work to a doubting and critical audience as they support each other in facing and overcoming their anxieties. It is in this way that creative collaborators and teachers and students construct their joint zones of proximal development.

Conclusion

In an era of increased emphasis on students' scores on standardized achievement tests, the challenge facing those who seek educational reform is to transform teaching practice so that it reflects a greater appreciation of learning. A broad research initiative undertaken by the National Research Council focuses on the advances that have been made in understanding how children learn and how this knowledge can be used to improve student learning. A shift away from 'diligent drill and practice' and toward a 'focus on students' understanding and application of knowledge' is being advocated (NRC, 1999, p. xi). Our contention is that affect plays an important, yet often neglected, role in students' understanding and application of knowledge. Once this is recognized the next challenge is to develop ways in which teachers can gain an appreciation of their students' understandings and experiences of classroom activity and interaction – their *perezhivanija*.

The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in schools underscores the importance of reform efforts focusing on creating teaching/learning environments that foster 'mutual respect, trust and concern' (Wells, 1999, p. 333). An essential part of students' *perezhivanija* is provided by interpersonal relationships in the classroom. Such relationships are especially important with second language learners, who face additional cultural and linguistic challenges (see Dalton and Tharp, this volume).

While we have described the use of journals as a way of understanding these students' *perezhivanie*, journal writing will not be as effective with some students, such as those who have strengths in areas other than writing.

For these students, oral interviews that probe their responses to particular activities or teachers' observations of students during an activity can also provide glimpses of their *perezhivanija*. What we are suggesting is that part of a dynamic ZPD is providing the metalanguage that relates to the processes of learning, including the affective processes, and not focusing solely on the skills. The teacher needs to pay particular attention to the affective language that students use so that such language can then be more fully incorporated into the dialogic exchange. Students often provide vivid descriptions and powerful metaphors, but these rarely get interpreted as involving both the cognitive and affective aspects of their learning. The relationship between the students and the teacher clearly determines the character of the context for language use and acquisition.

In both of our studies we saw the power of caring support in instilling the confidence with which to meet difficult challenges, to sustain creative endeavours and to attempt something new – all important aspects of sustaining lifelong learning. Vygotsky's caring support described at the beginning of this chapter derived in part from his understanding of the relationship between affect and reason and the importance for education reform of an expanded notion of the ZPD that included emotion.