
Feature Article

Against Control: An Essay

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Abstract

In this three-part essay, the authors provide a critical analysis of control as it applies to teachers' lives. In the first part, they present an overview of control as a concept that prescribes and limits behavior in the language classroom. In the second part, the authors analyze various kinds of problems that are present in the use of control in the language classroom. The third part provides an example of the importance of knowledge of students' preferences as a way to help teachers manage classes without having to rely on disciplinarian approaches. The essay concludes with a short discussion on unpredictability and nonlinearity as inherent aspects of teaching and learning.

3節からなる本稿は、教師という職能における統制についての批評的分析を提示するものである。第1節では、語学の教室における行動の規定および制限としての視点から、統制のコンセプトについて概観する。第2節では、統制の行使に伴う語学教育現場での様々な問題点について分析を行っている。第3節では、規律主義的なアプローチに依存することのないクラス運営の一助として、学生の嗜好を認識することの重要性について事例を提示する。最後に、教育と学習に内在する予測不可能性と非線形性について短い論考を行い結論としている。

The root of the word education is e-ducere, literally, to lead forth, or to bring out something which is potentially present. The opposite of education is manipulation, which is based on the absence of faith in the growth of potentialities, and on the conviction that a child will be right only if the adults put into him what is desirable and suppress what seems to be undesirable. There is no need of faith in the robot, since there is no life in it either.

—Ted Orland, *The view from the studio door: How artists find their way in an uncertain world* (2006, p. 112).

This essay had its origin in conversations we began to have after reading two articles in the first issue of *OnCue Journal*. The first, by Venema (2007), discusses the concept of Professional Learning Communities, a concept from corporate management literature, and whether they might appropriately be established in Japanese universities. In a Professional Learning Community, teachers meet regularly, adopt a shared vision of goals and a commitment to measurable results of student learning, and require specific means for assisting failing students, in many ways, noble objectives. The second, by Hanaki (2007b), discusses class discipline from the perspective of Foucault's prison *Panopticon*, which Hanaki uses metaphorically to support his approach to teaching (see the critique by Holland, 2008, and interpretations of Foucault by Oksala, 2007). In different ways, both articles seemed to promote a kind of control—the first very subtle, the second less so—that we would like to interrogate. Our essay is not just a critique of these two articles, but a product of our thinking about the theme of control that the articles inspired. For purposes of our discussion, we use “control” in a negative sense, as a top-down concept that works against the flexibility, diversity, and unpredictability

we hope to nourish in our teaching. We should note that we do not support an “anything goes” approach—our stance “against control” does not preclude careful planning and assessment.

In the essay, we make the argument that in its usual meanings—top-down authoritative mandates that prescribe and limit behavior—the concept of control is misapplied to educational settings, and to the second/foreign language classroom in particular. We first describe several kinds of control by means of hypothetical and real examples. In the second part of the essay we then offer some views on the problems we see with these various kinds of control. In the third section we follow with an example from an EFL classroom in Japan, in which the teacher responds to some of the issues raised in the first two sections. We conclude with some slightly more theoretical and philosophical perspectives on why the concept of control does not suit discussions of educational processes and practices. To support this view, we draw on a critique of Professional Learning Communities by sociologist Tarnoczi (2006) (cited but not discussed by Venema). We also take up the metaphor used by Larsen-Freeman (1997) of chaos-complexity theory to remind ourselves that unpredictability and nonlinearity are inherent aspects of teaching and learning.

Some kinds of control

1. Applied to our daily lives and to our teaching, the notion of “control” has no single meaning. For instance, a teacher might be controlled by his schedule: The alarm goes off at 5 a.m., and the buzzer gets turned off; the lights and heat go on; the stove gets turned on and the hot water put on; fruit gets cut and quickly eaten for breakfast; looking at the clock, he realizes he has 22 minutes to catch the train to school. He quickly dresses and rushes out the door, arriving at the train station just in time. He goes to the same spot on the platform as yesterday (and the day before), and boards the same car as always,

hoping for a place to sit down. The routine is soothing, and ordinarily serves us well even as it dulls the senses.

2. A slightly different version of control continues at school in the form of routinized teaching when the teacher adheres to a fixed schedule, syllabus, and materials, often resulting in formulaic teaching practices, either because such practices are mandated or because the teacher is new and inexperienced. We exaggerate here, but the point will be clear: For instance, class starts at 9:00. The teacher takes attendance from 9 to 9:05. From 9:06 to 9:10 she introduces the lesson, providing instructions for what is to be covered during the next 80 minutes. Then, between 9:11 and 9:20, the teacher writes five model sentences and highlights a grammatical rule. The students repeat the model sentences orally, while the teacher corrects possible pronunciation mistakes as outlined in the teacher's manual. From 9:26 to 9:55, the students read a paragraph from their textbook and translate it to their L1. At 9:55, the teacher passes out a handout with the "prescribed" translation on it, and until 10:25, the students check their translations against the correct one. Finally, from 10:26 to 10:30, the students fill in some blanks in the textbook. At 10:30, the teacher wakes up those students who have been sleeping and dismisses the class. Although exaggerated, the example comes from routines described to us by teachers who are required to work under very structured conditions, or by new teachers who self-impose those structures for fear of not doing their job effectively. Beyond the survival efforts made by new teachers, inherent in this version of control is the belief that, in fairness to students and in the interest of systematic and accountable learning, all teachers must use the same materials, procedures, and methods of assessment for parallel groups of students.

3. In the practices of testing, we have found yet another meaning of control: This concerns the relentless efforts to test and measure student learning and teacher competencies. Drawing on several scholars who have discussed Professional Learning Communities, Venema (2007,

pp. 5, 7, 8, 12, 15) states that one of the criteria for a Professional Learning Community is that results of learning must be measurable. Many in the TESOL field have endorsed this view. This ordinarily means that evidence of successful teaching and learning is represented by means of numbers and fixed categories, such as so-called objective tests that can be graded (and given) by computers and by means of check-list evaluation forms. The resulting scores are then reified, giving the impression that they represent something real—a true assessment of a student’s abilities or progress and of a teacher’s competence to teach, in a form that is “scientific.” The scores are then passed on to higher authorities, who use them to make decisions about students’ and teachers’ lives. (See the arguments about assessment in Casanave, 2004).

4. A fourth meaning of control is that of the disciplinarian, who confuses control with classroom management. We recognize that both the ideas of control and of classroom management have the same aim: to help students engage in an orderly and focused way in their learning activities. Nevertheless, Hanaki (2007b), misinterpreting Foucault, describes how he maintains control and discipline in the EFL classroom by creating a prison-like environment as a way to keep students focused. He first creates a “model” for the language class based on the isolation and scheduling that take place in a *Panopticon*, the institution that is designed so that every inmate can be viewed by the guards at all times. In his words, “Applying Foucault’s argument (to the case above), the students and the teacher in an EFL classroom correspond respectively with the prisoners and the guard in the *Panopticon*” (p. 26). Students sit in assigned seating arrangements, participate in English lessons according to the strict requirements of the teacher, and receive grades (rewards and punishments) for everything they do. He argues that restricting students’ sense of space and movement brings about an “implicit dimension of discipline, adjusting students to the course objectives” (p. 24). In his response to Holland (2008), he refers to this

kind of restriction and coercion as “a little push” and “encouragement” (Hanaki, 2008, p. 57).

Some problems with these views of control

1. Getting to school on time

This kind of control of a teacher’s life by a schedule is unremarkable and even necessary to some degree. It enables a teacher, and students, to get to school on time. In fact, routines such as fixed schedules can also limit our vision. However, it is possible to create some spark in the way the day begins—with the exception of the arrival time, by altering what is known and predictable in small ways. For example, simply standing at a different place on the train platform will give the teacher “a new view of the station” (John Fanselow, personal communication, October, 2006). Similarly, our walking route to campus, and to an office or classroom, can be changed from time to time, including simply walking on the opposite sidewalk. The result is that we open our vision and begin to look for and to see things we have not seen before, even though we may have walked on the same street a thousand times. Again, the point is to open our eyes to things unseen at times when life appears to be controlled by unchanging routines.

2. Adherence to mandates and formulas

In this meaning of control, teaching is formulaic and recipe-like, ruled by the clock, by the predictability of the structure and the contents of the lessons in the shared syllabuses and textbooks, and by the pressure to cover everything. Such control leaves little room for spontaneous interaction with students, for feedback, or for questions by the students’ that pertain to their learning. There is no room for digression, play, curiosity, and multiple interpretations, let alone alternative answers to the questions provided in the textbook. Control is enacted by the requirement that everyone keep up with a race against

time, in a way that is “fair” (i.e., uniformly applied) to all students and that is accountable to administrators. Discovery is replaced by concern about whether we can cover the contents of the textbook and increase students’ test scores. In cases where standardized teaching is mandated or where new teachers have not yet developed spontaneity, there may be little we can do, but the result is quite clear: Control in the form of adherence to formulas breeds boredom. Students’ and teachers’ energy is sucked out by the predictable routines created by textbooks and the accompanying packaged multimedia materials. No one benefits except for the people who produce and sell the recipes.

But there is great danger in following recipes—in standardizing our teaching. On the surface, recipes may make things run easier and more cleanly, but underneath, they erode possibilities of seeing learning and teaching as opportunities for very different kinds of students to engage in meaningful discovery and for teachers to respond to unpredictability—a basic feature of teaching and learning. Gardner (1999, p. 209) makes a strong argument as to why teachers should refrain from getting on the bandwagon of standardized teaching. In his words: “The art of teaching, however, consists precisely in *resisting* [italics added] formulas. ... [T]he teacher can and should be encouraged to be as *versatile* [italics added] as possible.”

For his part, Eisner (2002) notes that any efforts to push for standardized teaching have a basic flaw. His comments pertain not only to young students, but to college and adult learners as well:

Children, as all of us know, do not come in standard sizes. A visit to any fifth grade classroom will make plain at the outset differences in temperament, the rates with which children process different types of information, the backgrounds they bring with them to the classroom, their level of self-confidence—one could go on and on. This means that those who work with them will always need the discretionary space

and the educational imagination to invent practices that are appropriate for not only the individual child, but also suitable for the particular time and situation in which something is to occur. Standardized teaching, from an educational perspective, is an oxymoron. (p. 7)

Another way to look at standardized teaching is to compare it to the fast food phenomenon. We can think of standardized teaching as a kind of “fast-food education.” It is like walking into a well known fast food chain restaurant in our town, but this time half way around the world. It does not matter whether one is in Tokyo, Bogotá, Cape Town, or Monterey, the menu *always* looks and is served up the same. On the surface, it may seem like a good idea to have all people (students and teachers) “eating,” doing the same thing at the same time. But the educational world is not a factory or a fast-food chain, and it is a fallacy to think that students learn the same way and are going to come out of school knowing exactly the same things, with the same degree of skills and ability. Yet, some argue that teaching practices would benefit from being standardized. Venema (2007) wonders whether the import of corporate practices that have been labeled Professional Learning Communities will benefit the university language classroom in Japan. In Professional Learning Communities, teachers and administrators work in teams that share ideas and “make judgments about what works or doesn’t work on the basis of results in terms of measurable student learning” (p. 7). But there is another side to these seemingly wonderful ideas. In agreement with Tarnoczi (2006), we find this seductive discourse rather disturbing because there is danger of being trapped into a narrow system that forces people to act in consensus and to be considered outsiders if they do not. As Tarnoczi points out, “Generally, professional learning community discourse portrays conflicting beliefs as something to be avoided or resolved” (par. 19).

Moreover, although requiring consensus among teachers might

make administrative sense, policies of such nature dismiss both teacher individuality, a powerful motivating factor among students, and an appreciation of diversity. By teacher individuality we mean the ways in which teachers present, interpret and adapt the contents of a syllabus or a book and respond to particular students, all of which good teachers do. Individuality—or lack of it—is what makes us remember our best (and worst) teachers. In other words, teachers need to know that there is some room for autonomy so that various forms of interaction between them and their students can take place and have some degree of uniqueness. Discussing the importance of emphasizing diversity in teaching, Neil Postman (1995) uses the term “sameness” to describe its opposite. He defines sameness as the “enemy not only of vitality, but of excellence, for where there are few or no differences—in genetic structure, in language, in art—it is not possible to develop robust standards of excellence” (p. 79). Along the same line, as Tarnoczi (2006) points out, the idea of consensually shared goals and practices subtly devalues diversity and conflicting ideas, both necessary to stimulate the learning and growth of teachers and students.

3. Testing and measuring

One problem we have identified in the type of control inherent in ordinary testing and measuring practices is the tendency to take knowledge (often viewed as the things that the government, the school, the textbooks, and the curriculum planners decide students should know) and turn it into something that can be measured by a robot-like act of selecting one-and-only-one correct answer. With the powerful discourse of “science” and “technical reasoning” behind this view (Tarnoczi, 2006), administrators and teachers come to believe that the correct-answer test is the only accountable way to measure learning. We believe that this style of testing can be performed more efficiently by test takers who are computers. Knowledge, seen in this way,

becomes a commodity “to be acquired, never as a human struggle to understand, to overcome falsity, to stumble toward the truth” (Postman, 1995, p. 116).

But knowledge is not a commodity. If we see it as a commodity, education becomes an “act of depositing, in which students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (Freire, 2000, p. 72). Tests and quizzes then become acts of regurgitation. It is no wonder, then, that from time to time, we see students who do all the homework, come to class, and, to everyone’s surprise, do poorly on tests because they are not good at or not interested in regurgitating. However, it is often the final exam, in conjunction with weekly quizzes, that decides the fate of these students. How can we conduct assessment without being controlled by the specter of teaching to the test?

One idea is to follow Howard Gardner’s (1999) idea that learning activities need to focus on the development of understanding. He reminds us that:

Students ought to be exposed from the start to examples of understanding, and should be given ample opportunities to practice and perform their own understandings. Indeed, only if they have multiple opportunities to apply their knowledge in new ways are they likely to advance toward enhanced understandings in their schoolwork and in their lives beyond the schoolhouse walls. (pp. 128-129)

It is on these performances that students of all ages can be assessed. Students’ accomplishments can thus be evaluated by evidence of what students can do rather than just on what they know. In the L2 class, projects, portfolios, discussions, and presentations all show what students can do in their L2, in ways that go beyond grammar and vocabulary learning that is then tested. These kinds of accomplishments cannot be precisely controlled nor easily tested.

Similarly, teachers demonstrate their own competencies better through evidence of the activities they design for students and the kinds of interactions in their classes than through “objective” evaluation check lists or standardized tests of their proficiencies. In Eisner’s words, “It is ironic that in the effort to improve teaching, teachers are subject to evaluation criteria that mince, dice, and slice their teaching into bits and pieces, thereby obscuring the necessary organic character of excellent teaching” (Eisner, 1991, p. 120, note 4). Teachers’ competence in their disciplinary fields can also be shown through the kinds of professional activities they engage in. Here, too, these accomplishments cannot easily or accurately be tested and measured. The point is that, in contrast to the view espoused by those who insist on measurable and objective results of learning, the best evidence of learning and understanding on the part of both students and teachers may lie beyond the scope of testing and measuring of the so-called objective kind.

4. Classroom control

We find problematic the idea that control, of the kind discussed by Hanaki (2007b), is needed for classroom management and learning. Good classroom management and control are not the same thing. On the surface, it looks as if the compliant and complacent students in Hanaki’s class are paying attention to, and possibly learning from, their lessons, allowing the teacher to make sure the course objectives are covered. But we are not convinced that the kind of compliance that Hanaki talks about translates into engaged learning that goes beyond satisfying the teacher’s demands. Paulo Freire (2000) describes such environments as “the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness” (p. 47). The resulting behavior is “prescribed” in the sense that it is constrained and

predictable. In the third section of this essay we provide an example of a class in which students are helped to be engaged and focused without being controlled in this limiting way (see also a different view of Hanaki's teaching in Hanaki, 2007a).

Moreover, as did Holland (2008) we found the prison analogy particularly disturbing. As Hanaki (2008) admits, the classroom is not a prison, where the teacher's role is to exercise power over hapless students. Treating students like inmates in a *Panopticon*, as described by Foucault and applied metaphorically by Hanaki, is not just a way to exercise power; it is also a powerful way to prevent students from developing a positive rapport with their teacher as well as their peers. Students who are constrained by teaching practices based on classroom control disguised as classroom management often show little interest in learning. Unfortunately, some teachers even at the university level do not realize this and continue to supply their students with the same tightly controlled and routinized activities. This is so even though teachers themselves might be bored with their own routines. In this way, a vicious cycle that usually begins in junior high school or even earlier never ends. Similarly to what happens to delinquents in our societies, students in the authoritarian classroom, quickly learn to mistrust the people who are supposed to help them (the teacher in this case), and to develop a negative attitude toward learning for its own sake. Once that negative attitude has been formed, it is very difficult to change it by the imposition of more rules and recipes. Students need a classroom atmosphere that encourages them to experiment freely with both ideas and language, not an atmosphere that restricts that basic freedom, and that includes the freedom of not wanting to participate. After all, it is their choice.

In short, by supplanting management with control, teachers ensure that students will be deprived from experiencing first-hand what it means to learn another language—a creative, unpredictable, and dynamic process. Such students have a great deal of un-learning to

do by the time they enter university, if they are lucky enough to find themselves in a language class that is the antithesis of a prison.

To sum up briefly our problems with the views of control that we have described in this article, we find that approaching our lives, our teaching, and students' learning from a position of control (recipes, enforced consensus, standardized teaching and testing, physical and mental constraints) limits our vision, our willingness to experiment, to challenge norms, and to think and act creatively. Equally important, it limits the trust that students and teachers can productively have in each other. Put broadly, we agree with Solomon and Flores (2001, p. 29), who say:

When we attempt to control instead of respect, trust, and inspire one another, the results will always be strained and the consequences can be disastrous....Reliance on strict laws and severe sanctions is the hallmark not of a civilized society, but of a not-yet-civil one.

An example

In opposition to the prison analogy, we believe that it is possible to help students focus without having to resort to a rigid approach or to an overly authoritarian classroom. Our idea of a successful class is one where unpredictable things happen because students know that their ideas and views are valued and encouraged and that their input, including new questions on their part, will contribute to everyone's understanding of the topic at hand. Miguel tells a story of a class where a little creative thinking on his part helped students to become focused and to see some practical purpose for learning English:

A couple of years ago, I was asked to teach a first-year class at a women's college. The school provided teachers with a syllabus for the class, a textbook and its counterpart, a teacher's manual. The syllabus

stressed that I should encourage students to talk, write, and read in English. Chapter One in the book was entitled “Asking Questions.”

On the very first day of classes, I walked into a room with 23 first-year students. For about ten minutes, I made attempts to communicate with them. I had prepared a series of questions which I thought were relevant to the first chapter in the book, questions that in my mind were also interesting for them. I wanted them to tell me about themselves, what dreams and goals they had. However, my approach felt outdated as each one of my questions was met with silence.

While I was asking questions, I noticed that students were keeping their hands under their desks. From the place I was standing, they looked very polite and well behaved. In reality, they were checking their cell phones. Gradually, some of them began to chat. I felt ignored. This was the point where I knew something had to be done or I would lose them for the rest of the semester.

I remembered that the sixth chapter in the book was about past events. There were some black and white pictures of old buildings, as well as pictures of objects we no longer use. I decided to put together Chapters One and Six. I told my students to look at the types of questions in Chapter One, and tell me whether they were difficult or easy to understand. Some students opened their textbooks and looked at the questions. Again, I asked them if they knew these questions to which they replied, “yes.” “OK,” I said, “then, let us think of questions we would like to ask, not to the person sitting next to you but to your grandparents.” Their faces showed me that “Eh?” expression meaning “What?” that many teachers know. “Well, here is an idea,” I said. “Please look at Chapter Six. Think about the pictures you see on the first page of the chapter. Some of those pictures were taken at least 60 years ago. At that time, there were no cell phones, no email, and no computer games. Think about the things people in the pictures did every day. Then, I would like you to look again at the questions in Chapter One. Using those questions as models, write ten questions

that you would like to ask your grandparents about the time when they were the same age as you are now. For example, instead of asking “what did you do yesterday after school?” you can ask one of your grandparents “what did you do every day after school?”

One student said, “*Tsumannai*,” the Japanese equivalent for “boring.” I replied, “The best part is next.” I told them to write their questions, check them with their peers, and then call their grandparents on their cell phones, and interview them on the spot, making notes of the grandparent’s responses. Apparently, none of my students had imagined that a cell phone could be used for interviewing someone. Once they knew that they would be using their cell phones, that the questions were relevant because it was they who produced them, and that the results of their interview would have to be translated into English, they set to the task. From that moment on, I had the class interested, and participation and classroom management were no longer problems. Not only that, but we managed to cover the material from two chapters in one week. I continued to ask them to use their cell phones from time to time to check information on the Internet, or to take pictures of interesting things they saw in their daily lives and write about them. All tasks were based on the themes in the book. Testing was based on their work, but offered them options. Each week, I would ask them five questions related to the task they were expected to accomplish during the week. Students were required to answer only one question. That way they had the opportunity to demonstrate what knowledge and English structures they felt comfortable using.

We decided to share this story with readers for several reasons. First, we would like to remind teachers that with a little creativity disruptive or unengaged classrooms are usually manageable. It all depends on how we engage and respond to the syllabus, the book, the context, and the students themselves. Even in test oriented programs, it is possible to conduct classes without having to resort to coercive control techniques. Second, we would like to remind our readers of

the subjective, limited, and local nature of effective testing. How we interpret scores, what we test and how something gets tested involve humans making decisions about particular groups that we are familiar with. As such, we believe that using testing in order to establish control and to measure results that are in many cases unmeasurable, such as the results of students' cell phone interviews, is fundamentally flawed. Bill Johnston (2003) reminds us that "the learning process is a highly individual one, and the teacher – student relation is similarly unrepeatable" (p. 97). Third, we find that by connecting the contents of a textbook and a syllabus to something in the students' world, we can actually manage to cover the important points in textbooks. When students are encouraged to provide multiple interpretations, whether a reaction to a reading, or in using grammatical rules (students producing their own examples and consulting with the teacher for explanations on what works and what doesn't), they can make progress. But when and how these connections happen is unpredictable.

True, sometimes things may not work as fast as the curriculum planners would like, but whatever material is covered will be understood. In this way, we would like to repeat that we do not believe or support an "anything goes" approach to teaching, as we mentioned in the introduction. In other words, we do not believe that learning can take place in situations in which there is not an agenda of some sort. Nevertheless, our idea of a successful class is when unpredictable things happen because the teacher is not restricted by formulas. Instead, the teacher attempts whenever possible to connect the students' world with the materials. In such scenarios, students' ideas and views are valued and encouraged and their input is seen as a contribution to everyone's understanding.

Conclusion: The unpredictability of teaching and learning and the dangers of consensus

We are making these arguments against control (e.g., against measuring, standardized testing, formulaic teaching, inflexible scheduling, and overly rigid classroom management) because we believe that teaching and learning are unpredictable activities that cannot be controlled and measured precisely and still remain meaningful. These ideas are not new (see, for example, work by Dewey, Freire, Postman, Eisner, and others), and in recent years have been linked, metaphorically at least, to concepts in chaos and complexity theory. Chaos theory (a mathematical theory that emphasizes features of some systems in nature such as nonlinear complexity, sensitivity to tiny changes, and the emergence of new but unpredictable patterns) has been increasingly applied metaphorically to the social sciences and to second language research (Harshbarger, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 1997). This metaphor increases our awareness of the unpredictable yet patterned nature of human behavior and of language acquisition.

As long ago as 1989, Cziko argued that chaos theory helps us understand that “student variables such as intelligence, motivation, cognitive style, socioeconomic status, and background knowledge are at best extremely difficult to measure and impossible to control” (p. 24). In the field of second language acquisition, Larsen-Freeman (1997, p. 154) also drew on chaos theory to claim that “If SLA is indeed a complex nonlinear process, we will never be able to identify, let alone measure, all of the factors accurately. And even if we could, we would still be unable to predict the outcome of the combination.” Harshbarger (2007) as well argued that most aspects of second language learning are impossible to control. This is because language is an example of a complex system in which the results of its myriad interactions are unpredictable.

We do not know what the future is of applications of chaos-

complexity theory in the social sciences and in applied linguistics research, or whether it will turn out to be primarily a useful metaphor (Cziko, 1989; Larsen-Freeman, 1997), the basis for empirical research programs (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Eve, Horsfall, & Lee, 1997), or a passing and pretentious fad (Swan, 2004). At this point in our understanding, however, we believe that unpredictability is a feature of complex systems both in the physical and the social sciences. In line with this view, we also know that the norm for language learners is individual variability as they interact with their teachers and the million other things in their environments (Larsen-Freeman, 2006).

As for the goal of consensus—of shared visions and values—in the Professional Learning Communities discourse, we agree with Tarnoczi's (2006) critique that the discourse subtly promotes managerial control of teachers. Once teachers are required to share a consensual vision of how to teach and test, one that has been mandated and constructed by authorities with only a veneer of collaborative participation by teachers, conflicting views are seen as disruptive and as working against a collective good. Such a view, according to Tarnoczi (2006), represents a management strategy designed to control the behavior of teachers. He adds a point implied by this view: "By assuming that conflicting interests can and should [be] resolved, professional learning communities discourse promotes the notion that there is a single unitary view of education" (par. 18). As should be clear in our essay, we do not believe that a unitary view of education is possible or desirable.

We strongly support the need for change, but not change that is mandated or that requires consensus. To promote change and growth in both students and teachers, we hope to encourage, not stifle, unpredictability, diversity, and variability. And as chaos-complexity theory hints, although it may be unpredictable, learning on the part of students and teachers is not random. There are patterns, and there is change in the direction of greater complexity, as long as nothing blocks

growth. But control of the kinds we have discussed here blocks both student and teacher growth. These blocks include teaching formulas and materials that aim for standardized practices, testing that standardizes what students and teachers are supposed to know, attempts to measure knowledge in ways that limit and trivialize it, and classroom management techniques that force students into compliance.

“[Teaching is] an organic activity, one that can be described in broad outlines, that has recognizable patterns, but that is also unique in each instance of its occurrence.”

—Mark A. Clark, *A place to stand: Essays for educators in troubled times*, (2003, p. 154)

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Miguel Sosa

I have two careers, one as a language teacher and the other as a musician. After teaching music at a university in Canada, I became interested in learning--how we learn music and languages, and how we turn out the way we do. I then went back to university to learn about teaching languages. There, I was encouraged to ask questions about everything. In doing that, I discovered writing. Now, in addition to playing several piano concerts a year, I help students see how writing stories connects people.

Christine Pearson Casanave

For many years, I have been working with language teachers and students, writing and sometimes publishing, reviewing and editing

manuscripts, and reading while I walk. For most of those years, I have divided my life between California and Japan. It is less dangerous to read and walk in Monterey than in Tokyo, so in the interest of longevity and further study, I will probably spend more time there in the future.

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