

A Vocationally Focused Approach to Teaching Literacy in the 21st Century: A Vygotskian perspective

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Abstract

The overriding concern with economic crisis following Covid-19 pandemic meant that literacy education became narrowly defined as skills-for-employment. There have been attempted shifts towards a much more vocationally focused agenda, focusing on what is considered to be the key cognitive and workplace skills required for successful participation in the national economic development after the pandemic.

Functional literacy links literacy with economic development, individual prosperity and vocational achievement. “The term ‘functional’ should be considered in the broad sense of providing learners with the skills and abilities they need to take an active and responsible role in their communities, everyday life, the workplace and educational settings. Functional English requires learners to communicate in ways that make them effective and involved as citizens, to operate confidently and to convey their ideas and opinions clearly (QCDA 2007). However, many young professionals with college degrees suffer an inability to use functional illiteracy, and this poses a threat to the country’s development.

This paper suggests a model for teaching 21st century literacies in which new knowledge and skills necessary for successful adaptation to changing world are continuously acquired throughout life. It proposes a functional, vocationally-focused approach to education based on Vygotsky’s perspective on literacy in the 21st century in order to promote educational reform. This approach attempts to bridge the gap between disciplinary and practical knowledge integrating language and content within a CLIL methodology.

Key words: *functional literacy, vocational skills, Bernstein’s re-contextualization, CLIL, Vygotskian perspective on educational reform, 21st century literacies.*

1. Introduction

According to a report released on 17th October 2019 by the International Monetary Fund, Lebanon is presently witnessing increased poverty nationwide, with youth unemployment at thirty per cent. The World Bank estimates that “a result of the Syrian crisis, some 200,000 additional Lebanese have been pushed into poverty, adding to the erstwhile 1 million poor,” and that up to an additional three hundred thousand Lebanese, have become unemployed.

Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic, which negatively influenced the global economy, reduced the recovery chances in the Lebanese economy to the minimum. The unemployment rate is expected to increase after the lockdown ends as Lebanon is expected to witness an unprecedented numbers of school and university dropouts. All this has left the youth with no impetus or incentive.

Young people need new skills to enter and succeed in the job market: knowledge of several languages, understanding of cultural diversity, lifelong learning which provide a second chance to young people aged 15-25 who could not complete the cycle of basic education and are left with no skills to thrive in a complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world.

The future of Lebanon needs to make better use of its youth in order to ensure development in a fast paced and globalized world. The country’s human capital presents great potential for the development of the country if investments in education are targeted towards the current needs in the labor market.

Therefore, this paper focuses on what is considered to be the key cognitive and workplace skills required for successful participation in the economy and society of the 21st century.

In the light of the current situation, “a shift towards a much more vocationally focused agenda” (Appleby & Bathmaker, 2006) is urgently needed and an increasing focus on skills for employment and life skills should intensify.

This paper argues that the current situation in Lebanon resulted in emotional strain on its youth, and consequently suggests a socio-cultural approach to teaching English as a functional 21st century literacy based on a Vygotsky’s views on educational reform and a CLIL approach to teaching literacy.

2. Vocational education and training in Lebanon

Vocational education and training (VET) focuses on the jobs and occupations which do not require extensive theoretical knowledge. It addresses practical competencies and skills. The Lebanese VET System has to develop a new vision and implement major changes in order to

deliver its mission and to prepare future generations for life and work in the 21st century (Interlaken Declaration, 2001; Ryan, 2001; Wilson, 2001).

VET in Lebanon, unfortunately, does not meet the personal aspirations of youth or the needs of local and regional labor markets:

- Communication of the competencies and skills required in various economic sectors remains weak in the absence of a national VET policy to systematically engage social partners.
- Recent educational reforms, including the 2010 National Education Strategy Framework, doesn't sufficiently address the VET sector.
- The Higher Council for VET, which is mandated to ensure the systematic involvement of social partners in VET policy design and strategic planning, last met in the year 2000.
- The Directorate General for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DGTVE) lacks sufficient financial and human resources to fully deliver on its TVET mandate at the national level.
- The first Lebanese National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established in 2011, outlining eight levels of qualifications, however, the framework was never formally endorsed.
- The 2011 Action Plan, which called for the creation of a VET quality assurance agency, was never operationalized.

These facts reflect the poor state of the VET system in Lebanon and the failure of the government as well as international donor agencies to implement the required improvements and reforms (World Bank, 2004).

It is necessary that the VET system and the market place join efforts in order to make the best use of resources and provide high quality VET for every student. They should collaborate and direct resources towards occupational and career preparation. These two foci must be brought together to provide education and training that address workforce shortages and future economic growth. They must also help direct students toward these areas where consideration given to the students' interests and aptitudes (Lynch, 2000; Ryan, 2001; Wilson, 2001).

A study was conducted to attain a description of the role of the VET, identify the problems that this sector is experiencing and their occurrence in similar countries with similar vocational training requirements. The purpose of this exercise was to form a clear picture of the situation and to assess

the feasibility and adequacy of the proposed strategic objectives for the future development of the VET sector. (Atchoarena, 2001; European Training Foundation, 1999; Lynch, 2000; Powell, 2001; Ryan, 2001; Skilling Australia, 2005; Su-Lin and Westbury, 1998; Tabbron and Yang, 1997; Wilson, 2001; World Bank, 2004; Ziderman, 1997).

The information gathered showed a multiplicity of agendas, a disconnected sector, antagonism between public and private sector stakeholders, deep rooted mistrust, lack of working relationships and linkages, an underachiever and dropouts stigma associated with students in the VET system, lack of information to parents and students alike, lack of quality, reduced effectiveness, funding problems, structural and institutional problems, antagonistic relationships, pervasive corruption at the highest levels, and a lack of general and particular policies and strategies.

Moreover, the following observations were noted by Powell (2001) and World Bank (2004):

- (a) Factional, dead-locked and highly corrupt prevailing political system (Adwan, 2005);
- (b) Absence of a clear vision, strategy, and policies for the whole education sector in general, and for the VTE sector in particular;
- (c) Concentration of public expenditures on the development of a physical infrastructure on a regional and political apportionment basis without a coherent national master plan;
- (d) A dire need for qualified administrators, instructor, and human resources at all levels and the inadequacy of human resources management structures within the government in general;
- (e) Patronage and a so-called 'clientelism' system that characterizes the citizens relationship with the government through the intercession of regional or communal chiefs; and
- (f) Failure of international donors to catalyze and bring about the required agenda of structural change by leveraging their external position, namely local politicians and decision makers

3. The gap between rhetoric and practice

Abstract theories are always questioned by educators who are faced with myriad concrete problems. However, the influence of both theory and practice is needed to face the challenges in today's world.

As a result, a gap is created between what available curricula offers and what students need to learn. In order to tackle this problem, practitioners began to search for appropriate models and techniques that match the 21st century demands on literacy skills. However, there is a lack of consensus on the precise literacy and numeracy skills that adults need in many socio-economic contexts.

According to PISA, school systems are not outstandingly successful in preparing students for the kinds of abilities and skills that build the foundation for lifelong learning. PISA attainments are based on a dynamic model “in which new knowledge and skills necessary for successful adaptation to a changing world are continuously acquired throughout life” (PISA, 2003), rather than measuring achievement in terms of specific curricula.

PISA emphasizes the mastery of processes, the understanding of concepts, and the ability to function in different situations in each domain, rather than the possession of specific knowledge.

The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) reports on the specific skills used in the workplace (OECD, 2009) which provide valuable evidence, not just on the literacy and numeracy skills that employees need in the workplace, but on the ways in which those skills interact with other skills, including ICT.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills has developed a theoretical framework attempting to place literacy and numeracy within the broader context of ‘employability skills’, which are defined as ‘the skills that must be present to enable an individual to use the more specific knowledge and technical skills that their particular workplaces will require’ (UKCES 2009: 9-10). Barton (2007: 189) identifies a gap between rhetoric and practice. He says of the mixed messages in the current discourses used by UNESCO, the OECD and the European Union:

“In my view in such statements international bodies are trying to incorporate new approaches while still keeping hold of a rigid functional approach. This is one of several areas in the study of literacy where I see attempts to fit new ideas into the creaking framework of outworn theories which cannot take the strain. UNESCO and other international agencies still need to reassess the ideas and theories underlying the aims and methods.... There is a gulf between the liberal aims of emancipation and the practical programs which are funded. The idea of conflicting definitions of literacy underlying the various approaches helps us see more clearly what is going on” (Barton, 2007:192).

“Governments need a clear picture not only of how labor markets and economies are changing, but of the extent to which their citizens are equipping themselves with the skills demanded in the 21st century, people with low skills proficiency face a much greater risk of economic disadvantage, a higher likelihood of unemployment, and poor health” (OECD, 2013).

4. 21st century literacy

Literacy is an individual human right and a tool for social change. (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006).

Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential and to participate fully in the wider society. (UNESCO, 2004)

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn” – Alvin Toffler.

The International Reading Association (IRA) position statement reported that in order “to become fully literate in today’s world, students must become proficient in the literacies of the 21st century technologies” (IRA, 2009: 1). In other words, a literate person in the new world should not only acquire reading, writing and mathematics skills, but also possess a wide range of skills, abilities and competencies “such as critical thinking, scientific reasoning, and multi-cultural awareness (NCTE, 2008; Wagner, 2008; Grubb, 2003: 3).

Definitions of literacy will continue to change as new technologies emerge (Leu et al., 2004). The information-driven nature of the 21st century constitutes the major reason why an individual must see education or literacy as a lifelong affair (Olaniran, Duma & Nzima, 2017). According to Fish (2011: 29), literacy is important in combating various challenges facing this century. 21st century literacy is more than just reading and writing, it is knowing *how to learn and know*. Students need to learn how to create and use subjective and objective knowledge. They need to be able to understand concepts as tools, which can be used to solve real-world problems.

There is a tendency, when thinking of changes in the workplace in recent years, to focus on the growing need for digital literacy. However, Levenson (2004: 85) argues that “little systematic evidence is available to evaluate whether skill upgrading is occurring in jobs throughout the economy.” He highlights a number of within-workplace developments that have or have likely increased the need for basic skills. These include greater attention to customer service as a source of competitive advantage, and the greater degree of customer contact in service sector jobs. Both of these factors push up the need for good quality communication and interpersonal skills on the part of front line staff. Job roles have become less narrowly defined, requiring more problem-solving and intra- and inter-team communication. In all industries there has been a move towards more direct employer-employee communication on topics requiring good language and numeracy skills. Increased demand for report-writing at all levels of the organizational hierarchy has been cited by employers as a motivating factor behind the setting up of Skills for Life workplace courses (Evans et al., 2004).

5. Life Long Learning and the knowledge economy

The global knowledge economy is transforming the demands of the labor market throughout the world, changing the set of skills people need to participate fully in and benefit from our hyper-connected societies and increasingly knowledge-based economies.

Equipping people to deal with these demands requires a new model of education and training, a model of lifelong learning. A lifelong learning framework encompasses learning throughout the lifecycle. It allows people to access learning opportunities as they need them rather than because they have reached a certain age.

A knowledge-based economy relies primarily on the use of ideas rather than physical abilities... It is an economy in which knowledge is created, acquired, transmitted, and used more effectively by individuals, enterprises, organizations, and communities to promote economic and social development (World Bank Institute 2001).

In the knowledge economy, change is so rapid that workers constantly need to acquire new skills. Firms can no longer rely solely on new graduates or new labor market entrants as the primary source of new skills and knowledge. Instead, they need workers who are willing and able to update their skills throughout their lifetimes. Countries need to respond to these needs by creating education and training systems that equip people with the appropriate skills.

Being successful in the knowledge economy requires mastering a new set of knowledge and competencies. Three categories of competencies are key (Rychen & Salganik 2001; OECD 2002):

- **Acting autonomously:** Building and exercising a sense of self, making choices and acting in the context of a larger picture, being oriented toward the future, being aware of the environment, understanding how one fits in, exercising one's rights and responsibilities, determining and executing a life plan, and planning and carrying out personal projects.
- **Using tools interactively:** Using tools as instruments for an active dialogue; being aware of and responding to the potential of new tools; and being able to use language, text, symbols, information and knowledge, and technology interactively to accomplish goals.
- **Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups:** Being able to interact effectively with other people, including those from different backgrounds; recognizing the social embeddedness of individuals; creating social capital; and being able to relate well to others, cooperate, and manage and resolve conflict.

Apparently, this new learning context implies a different role for teachers and trainers. Teachers need to learn new skills and become lifelong learners themselves to stay up to date with new knowledge, pedagogical ideas, and technology.

Educational systems can no longer emphasize task-specific skills but must focus instead on developing learners' decision-making and problem-solving skills and teaching them how to learn on their own and with others.

Traditional educational systems, in which the teacher is the sole source of knowledge, are ill suited to equip people to work and live in a knowledge economy. Teachers and trainers serve as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge, and more emphasis is placed on learning by doing, working on teams, and thinking creatively.

The lifelong learning model enables learners to acquire more of the new skills demanded by the knowledge economy as well as more traditional academic skills. For example, a study in Guatemala, conducted by de Baessa, Chesterfield, and Ramos (2002) on the lifelong learning model shows that learners taught through active learning in which they seek out information for themselves, improved their reading scores more and engaged more in democratic behaviors than learners not in the program.

6. Functional literacy and vocational education

Functional literacy originally signified 'real-life' contexts and purposes, because it was recognized that literacy teaching in schools did not result in the kinds of competencies regarded necessary in adult life (Levine, 1982: 256).

Levine (1982: 257) points out that the term functional literacy quickly became aligned with ideas and educational practices that form part of the human resource model which links literacy directly with economic development, individual prosperity and vocational achievement.

The Functional Skills Standards document produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) defines 'functional literacy' as embedded in and serving 'real life' contexts and purposes:

The term 'functional' should be considered in the broad sense of providing learners with the skills and abilities they need to take an active and responsible role in their communities, everyday life, the workplace and educational settings (QCDA 2007).

The use of functional literacy is conveyed in UNESCO publications by a liberal rhetoric that sees literacy not as an end in itself, but as a means to a fuller and more creative life controlled by people themselves and enabling them to gain access to their own culture (UNESCO, 2006).

The Adult Performance survey (APS) was the first major attempt to develop a survey type of instrument for adult literacy where “functional” is interpreted in terms of the measurement of competencies and vocational skills.

The notion of “functional literacy” so easily migrates to the idea of literacy skills as helping people to fit in, to be normal and the tendency for it to be used narrowly to refer to externally defined vocational skills.

Lo Bianco (2004) notes that within OECD countries the increasing emphasis on vocational education has been strongly promoted through the IALS. He notes the increasing dominance of the OECD relative to UN organizations in setting the international literacy agenda. Across OECD member countries the emergence of the ‘knowledge economy’ has resulted in increasing focus on the presumed economic benefits of literacy and promotion of literacy education in the context of the labor market rather than in community settings.

Drawing on an international review covering 20 years of research, UKCES has developed a theoretical framework detailing the relationship between the basic skills, digital literacy and broader employment-related skills. According to the UKCES scheme, English, maths and ICT skills can be considered “functional skills” and are supported by personal characteristics and traits sought by employers; being ready to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism, and take responsibility for outcomes.

7. English as a functional skill

Policymakers in developing countries need to ensure that young people acquire a language with more than just local use, preferably one used internationally (Klaus, Tesar & Shore 2002). Billions of people around the globe and especially those in developing and emerging economies who are not born in a country where people speak the *lingua franca* of global business are desperately trying to learn English for an economic necessity. English, for them, is a critical tool, which they rightly believe will help them tap into new opportunities at home and abroad. For some people ‘it seems that English and literacy are almost interchangeable (Limbrick and Aikman, 2005).

Research shows a direct correlation between the English skills of a population and the economic performance of the country. Indicators like gross national income (GNI) goes up. The EF English

Proficiency Index (EF EPI), the largest ranking of English skills by country, states that in almost every one of the 60 countries and territories surveyed, a rise in English proficiency was connected with a rise in per capita income. And on an individual level, recruiters and HR managers around the world report that job seekers with exceptional English compared to their country's level earned 30-50% percent higher salaries. Therefore, improved English skills allow individuals to apply for better jobs and raise their standards of living.

Despite technological progress, one cannot deny the truth that the prerequisite for accessing information in electronic form will always be the ability to read. Functional English requires learners to communicate in ways that make them effective and involved as citizens, to operate confidently and to convey their ideas and opinions clearly (QCDA 2007).

8. A CLIL approach to teaching literacy

Literacy instruction should be contextualized in everyday life and linked with real life activities starting from real life materials, tasks should be identified by adult learners rather than those designed by teachers and adapted from children's books and worksheets (ALRA, 1976).

“Literacy is a move within a discourse practice. When people engage in literate action, they are doing more than encoding or producing text. Like any social practice, it has a history with a set of expectations and social conventions. A discourse practice cannot be reduced to a genre or a kind of text; it is a social and rhetorical situation, in which texts play a specialized role” (Bailey, 2004: 286). Teaching should be organized in such a way that reading and writing are necessary for something and relevant to life.

People do not learn languages and then use them, but learn languages by using them (Halliday, 2004). The ability to communicate in a language can be reasonably successful, even if grammar is faulty, knowledge of words is weak, or pronunciation poor. We should all challenge the idea of waiting until I think I am good enough in the language to use the language. Rather we should use the language as a tool for communication and learning from as early a point as possible (Marsh, 2000)

CLIL is a meaning-focused learning method whose aim is learning subject matter together with learning a language (Van de Craen, 2006). It is an approach or method which integrates the teaching of content from the curriculum with the teaching of a non-native language (TKT: CLIL handbook, 2009). CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through

a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language (Marsh, 2002).

A study of bilingual teachers at different points in their careers in the USA (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012: 261) based on in-depth interviews shows how content teachers in bilingual settings came to an understanding of the key role of language in their subjects.

Explicit teaching of reading, focusing on language and content, and modeling the writing of new texts, led to uptake of language and content by students.

In contrast to educational research that focuses on memorization and repetition tasks in controlled situations outside the classroom; sociocultural researchers study teaching/learning in classroom contexts. These researchers point to funds of knowledge that students bring to the classroom, to students development of concepts that reflect their families and their own daily experiences, to the importance of dialogue between learners, teachers, and texts, and to the multiplicity of semiotic means and the diversity of teaching/learning contexts both within and outside the classroom.

Sociocultural scholars and educators view school as a context and site for collaborative inquiry and looks at human activities from the perspective of functional systems: the organization and reorganization of learners' problem-solving strategies, which integrate the social and individual experiences of learners with the culturally shaped artifacts available in their societies.

Because CLIL environments are heavily related to real-life experiences, it equips learners with crucial knowledge creation and enabling skills.

Knowledge is about context, that is, about an ability to modify a problem and select, interpret, and integrate information into a useful body of knowledge (von Krogh et al. 2000: 7; Teece, 2001).

Knowledge is a construction of reality, not abstract or universal truth (von Krogh et al. 2000: 6).

Knowledge develops and gains its value through direct observation, narration, comparison, and shared action (von Krogh et al. 2000). Uncovering tacit knowledge is thus a context-dependent process manifested as social-dialogical activities, such as conversation. In all learning environments but particularly in CLIL, learning processes are inherently context-dependent and situated. Learning a content through a foreign language is heavily related to everyday life contexts and cultural issues.

Learners need to have access to spontaneous speech, preferably in an interactive context where they can obtain plenty of information on the structure and functioning of the foreign language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Lightbown and Spada (2006) and Swain (2000), among others, suggest that a second language is most successfully acquired when the conditions are similar to those present in first-language acquisition: that is, when the focus of instruction is on meaning rather than on form and when there is sufficient opportunity to engage in meaningful use of that language in a relatively anxiety-free environment. The researchers take the position that students will learn more when the focus of language instruction is shifted away from teaching the language directly to a situation in which students acquire language naturally, through lively exchanges with other students. The key to these exchanges is content area instruction in English. CLIL offers a means by which learners can continue their academic or cognitive development while they are also acquiring academic language proficiency.

9. A Vygotskian view on emotions

Vygotsky's writings on the relationship between affect and thought remain largely unknown while his other works receive increased attention and appreciation among educators internationally. 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: 331).

Vygotsky (1978) defines the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86).

Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development as well as some of his unfinished, yet seminal, work on emotions is used as a theoretical frame for exploring affective factors in learning. The centrality of emotion for Vygotsky is reflected in the concluding pages of *Thinking and Speech*, where Vygotsky 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. (1987: 282)

We examine the ways in which lending support to others can build their confidence and at the same time help promote and sustain life-long learning and creativity especially in EFL students learning to communicate in a second language.

In recent years, both neuroscience and cognitive neuroscience have finally endorsed emotion. A new generation of scientists is now making emotion its elected topic. Moreover, the presumed opposition between emotion and reason is no longer accepted without question. (Damasio, 1999: 40)

The examination of underlying commonalities of classroom interactions between students and teachers provides insight into the role played by affect in learning and creativity. This role is 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, there is a dynamic interplay between their interactions and the ways in which they appropriate the emotional support. This interplay is examined through the zone of proximal development and perezhivanie, perhaps his least known concept. Perezhivanie describes the ways in which the participants perceive, experience, and process the emotional aspects of social interaction, "lived or emotional experience." Perezhivanie describes the affective processes through which interactions in the zpd are individually perceived, appropriated, and represented by the participants.

The study of learning remains incomplete unless the human need to connect emotionally is integrated with the need to know. As Luria (1987) points out in the afterword to *Thinking and Speech*:

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 (p: 369).

In collaboration, partners create zones of proximal development for each other "where intellect and affect are fused in a unified whole" (Vygotsky, 1987: 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.

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 perezhivanie-contributes significantly to the teacher's ability to engage the students in meaningful, engaging education.

In order to both 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" (Rose & Martin, 2012) 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. The perezhivanie revealed in the dialogue journals represents what Vygotsky described as "an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics"(1994: 342).

Mahn (2013) studied the use of dialogue journals with high school and university EFL 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' perezhivanie.

He 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. Students in Mahn's study revealed their anxiety through frequent reference to their fear of making mistakes. This anxiety inhibited their writing and caused further frustration.

Students gained confidence through dialogue journals as their writing became a vehicle for self-discovery. The narrative fluency that helped students build writing identities also helped them to develop more ideas as their focus was on meaningful communication instead of mechanics. Their fluency increased as their anxiety dropped down.

10. Conclusion

Due to Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in the economic crisis worldwide, it is important to focus on those CLIL environments where there is a close link with working life, that is, on vocational education.

A significant goal for educational reform is helping students to become life-long 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. The country's human capital presents great potential for the development of the country if investments in education are targeted towards the current needs in the labor market.

This paper doesn't present a solution for a problem but rather aims at emphasizing the issue of the importance as well as lack of educational research and reform in TVET in Lebanon. It is important to find out how TVET support deep understanding, the creation and enabling of knowledge, and life-long learning as supporting creative problem-solving processes, treating real-life problems, promoting active participation, training for individual development, and supporting networks and collective learning.

Moreover, the paper presents learning through a theoretical lens provided by Vygotsky's work on emotions and the zone of proximal development within a CLIL approach in TVET. It also depicts English as a functional language necessary for youth to thrive in the knowledge economy. CLIL offers a means by which learners can continue their academic or cognitive development while they are also acquiring language proficiency. The centrality of emotions in Vygotsky's theory bestows students with the "gift of confidence" necessary to meet the needs of all students and especially those who are facing cognitive, emotional and economic challenges.

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