International Journal for Dialogical Science
Spring 2013. Vol. 7, No. 1, 115-128
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GLOBALIZATION, LOCALIZATION, UNCERTAINTY AND WOBBLE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT. In this article, I unpack what Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) have cited as the gift or dread of uncertainty, and the role dialogue plays in navigating that uncertainty. Working from a Bakhtinian (1981) stance, I ask educators to wonder about the ways the local and global respond to each other and how we, through our many I-positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), respond to both. As the field of education struggles to catch-up with ever-burgeoning technology that brings the world and our uncertainties about the world to our fingertips, this article theorizes the role of uncertainty in the classroom, particularly as it occurs at the intersection of the global and the local. As teachers and students venture into dialogically primed spaces, they often do so with questions and doubt. It is in such spaces where what I call wobble (Fecho, 2011b) happens, an indication that change is occurring and attention should be paid. When forces of globalization and localization transact in classrooms, wobble and uncertainty play out. The intent is to open a dialogue on dialogue and unpack how learners and teachers might come to see uncertainty as "an experiential feature of a self in action" (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 4). Ultimately, I conclude the article with suggestions for educators and policymakers about what better to expect when we move dialogical self practice into educational settings.

KEYWORDS: Dialogical self, Bakhtin, globalization, education

As I write this sentence, Ian Altman is an English teacher in a high school located in a small city in the US Southeast. The school is an intriguing mix of children of parents with professional careers, who are predominantly White, and working class and working poor children, who are predominantly African American and Latino. Of that last ethnic group, many are what the federal authorities list as undocumented, meaning they have no authorization papers to live in the US and are considered by those same authorities to be here illegally. Often, Ian has no idea if the Latino/as sitting in his class have come to the US through approved channels and, at least from personal and academic stances, he doesn't care. They are students under his charge and he seeks to educate them to the best of his ability.

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However, policy enacted, implemented, and enforced by state and federal officials have made it increasingly more difficult for Ian to ignore the implications of what this lack of documentation means for his students and for him as their teacher. Specifically, the plight of one student, Marisol (a pseudonym), has caused Ian to become an advocate for her in particular and undocumented students in general. Angered by state policy that would not allow Marisol to attend the university of her choice and federal policy that severely limited her access to financial aid, Ian—in conjunction with colleagues, supportive university faculty, and members of the Latino and Anglo communities—developed a multi-pronged strategy for raising community consciousness and garnering financial and legal support. Through a series of fundraisers, community forums, and legislative writing campaigns, Ian has found ways to support his students who are only guilty of being brought to the US by their parents in search of, among other things, a better education. And Marisol—a young woman who by nature and nurture is soft spoken and demure—has become an advocate for herself and others as she frequents rallies and legislative meetings to speak for her cause.

Such public advocacy has not been without risk. For Marisol to admit her undocumented status in a well-attended and open forum on a university campus is to place her in jeopardy of being identified by federal immigration officials. Both Ian and Marisol were involved in an encounter with a state politician who tried to bully her at an intermission at one of these forums. Ian, as a teacher in a state with little organized labor support, opens himself for dismissal at the whim of disapproving school and district administration. Even tenure-protected university faculty who have supported Ian's efforts have been chastised for using state property (e.g., computers, email systems) for political reasons.

A common conception often characterized by teachers is the idea that the classroom is rarified space, somehow different and perhaps also protected from "the real world." I argue that such has never been true, that "the real world" or, more accurately "the wider world," has always impinged on classrooms. That which was global has routinely been in transaction with that which has been local. Denying so doesn't alter the reality. But what have changed greatly over recent times are the speed, frequency, and weight of those transactions. The rise of electronic communication means that the wider world is only a mouse click away. An increase in global dependency suggests that the surveyed borders of countries—once seeming so real that one could imagine flying over them in an airplane and being able to witness a red line in the sand below—have become contact zones (Anzaldua, 2007; Pratt, 1991) where cultures mingle, transact, and remain in complex and messy dialogue.

As the last sentence and perhaps the whole of the text above has intimated, the intersection of the global and the local manufactures a certain degree of uncertainty for

those at the center point of that intersection. As teachers and students venture into dialogically primed spaces they often do so with questions and doubt. It is in such spaces where what I call wobble (2011b) happens, an indication that change is occurring and attention should be paid. Just as wobble can be a harbinger of physical change—for example, the wobble of a decelerating dreidel spinning on a table—it can also indicate emotional or intellectual change, as our belief system or emotional state undergoes shift or reassertion. When forces of globalization and localization transact in classrooms, wobble and uncertainty play out.

The primary objective of this article, then, is to explore what such transactions mean for dialogical education. In particular, I unpack what Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) have cited as the gift or dread of uncertainty, and the role dialogue plays in navigating that uncertainty. Working from a Bakhtinian (1981) stance, I ask educators to wonder about the ways the local and global respond to each other and how we, through our many I-positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), respond to both. As the field of education struggles to catch-up with ever-burgeoning technology that brings the world and our uncertainties about the world to our fingertips, this article theorizes the role of uncertainty in the classroom, particularly as it occurs at the intersection of the global and the local. The intent is to open a dialogue on dialogue and unpack how learners and teachers might come to see uncertainty as "an experiential feature of a self in action" (2010, p.4). Ultimately, I conclude the article with suggestions for educators and policymakers about what better to expect when we move dialogical self practice into educational settings.

A Theoretical Discussion

The soul of this article is rooted in Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theories about dialogue and language. Accordingly in this section, I begin with a discussion of the theories of Bakhtin as they relate to this article and follow this with an exploration of dialogical self theory as explored by Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010), paying particular attention to their explication of globalization, localization, and I-positions. I then connect my idea of wobble (2011b) to these theoretical discussions and suggest how, when taken as a whole, this combination of thought presents interesting and much needed considerations and opportunities for classrooms.

Transacting with Dialogical Theory

Working shortly after the Russian Revolution, Bakhtin (1981) argued that dialogue is constructed via language and that language is always encountering tension between centralizing forces bent on unification and decentralizing forces leaning toward individualization. Bakhtin labeled this process as *heteroglossia*—literally "different tongues"—and, from my stance, what matters here is trying to achieve some modicum of balance in that tension; skewing either way is problematic. To move too far toward

central unification is to reify use, meaning, and understanding of and through language. Yet, to slide all the way to the opposite end of the continuum creates a state of such intense individualization that much might get said, but little, if anything will be understood.

Bakhtin (1981) also emphasized that meaning is made in context and is constructed through response. He argued that understanding and response are contingent upon each other. Utterance, response, and meaning are merged in a recursive, continual, and transactional process. And we cannot help but respond. As you are reading this, you might be nodding in agreement or nodding off, rolling your eyes or rolling thoughts around your head, scratching your brow or scratching ideas on a pad, or doing any number of related activities. Each is a response. We can't, it seems, help but respond. And because the response is seated in an individualized temporal and spatial context, the meaning we generate is equally individual and specific to that context. Until I've in some way encountered a baobab, pinon, eucalyptus, or some other species of tree, my understanding of *tree* is dominated by the oak outside my window. What I know of *tree* to any given moment is limited by my response to a discrete set of experiences and contexts.

Transacting with Dialogical Self Theory

If language undergoes centripetal and centrifugal tensions, then that which we socially construct through language often undergoes the same oppositional tugging. Psychologists Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010), in particular, argued that the global and the local, given the rush and spread of technology that facilitates digital communication, more so than ever before exert such tension on the individual. They explained how the self is "extended in space and time." As a result, individuals are less likely to be primarily products of a stabilized and mostly homogeneous local culture, but, instead, transact with a range of cultures either face-to-face or digitally on a daily basis. Such a mesh of transactions places the self in a process of becoming that reflects many complex layers of transaction even as it "answers to these influences from it's own agentive point of view" (p. 2).

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) have suggested that as we are in dialogue with contexts around us, we are simultaneously in dialogue with the many cultural contexts within us, what they call I-positions. Specifically, they argued that "human beings develop relationships not only with other people, but with themselves" (p. 120), wherein dialogues of conflict, criticism, agreement, consultancy, and the like take place. As such, humans possess a multiplicity of I-positions (e.g., I as domineering, I as thoughtful, I as enjoying punk music, I as a dweller in cities) with marked differences among them. Such an understanding of the self points back to Bakhtin's (1981) notion of centripetal and centrifugal forces in that the self endeavors to maintain

a sense of coherence or unity without relinquishing the differences. Indeed, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka explained that "dialogue needs difference and diversity as its fertile ground" (p. 130). A plurality of I-positions insures a healthy and continual dialogical construction of self.

Put hopefully not too simply, humans are multicultural beings existing in multicultural contexts. As such, we can be simultaneously in digital dialogue with a creator of anime who lives in Japan while hearing an inner voice admonishing our adult self for reading too many comic books. Considering our example of Ian and Marisol, it's easy to see how he has struggled to not over rock his educational boat while remaining true to his commitment to support her in her education. The imposition of federal and state policy representing more global interests has triggered multiples local transactions. The result is a complex mesh of responses that have both local and global impact.

Transacting with Wobble

Under the best of terms, globalization and localization enter into dialogue through the contextual experience of the individual. However, these transactions between the global and the local often result in various degrees of uncertainty marked by disorienting complexity, ambiguity, deficit knowledge, and unpredictability (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) as individuals try to make sense of contradictions posited by other belief systems that cause their own to wobble (Fecho, 2011b). As such, wobble is a calling to attention, a provocation of response. When something wobbles—a wheel on a car, a glass of wine on a waiter's tray, a child's top, the Earth on its axis—we notice. It causes us to stare and consider. Wobble taps us on the shoulder and induces us to ask why. It nudges us toward action. It suggests we get off our chair and do something.

For wobble, you see, marks a liminal state, a state of transition. Where there is wobble, change is occurring. Something that has been static is now lumbering alive. Or sometimes the opposite condition is happening—a plate spinning at great speed atop a wooden dowel is slowing down. Or a malfunction has taken place—the rim on a bike tire has bent, for example—and that which had been smooth and precise now moves erratically. No matter what the case, where wobble exists, things are changing. That which was once *this* is moving slowly—at least at first—toward becoming *that*.

Yet even as I assert that as wobble occurs, change occurs, I need to qualify what I mean by change. Very often we construe change in dramatic and finite terms: a person was a bigot, but now they live without prejudice or the building that stood on the corner before the earthquake is now a heap of rubble. I'm not arguing that such changes, particularly the latter and more physical change, don't occur, but am arguing that much finer, nuanced, and complex changes are the minute-by-minute substance of our

experience. From my stance, this dramatic and finite conception of change is frequently a limiting conception of educational research—the assumption that change is large, immediate, linear, and permanent. Instead, change is most often minute, gradual, recursive, and in flux.

Thinking Across These Ideas

Putting this discussion in Bakhtinian (1981) terms, the word is "directly, blatantly oriented toward a future answer-word" yet it is also "forming itself in the atmosphere of the already spoken" (p. 280). As such, change has one foot in what will be, but the other in what has been. As Bakhtin (1986) explains, "there can neither be a first nor a last meaning," but instead the totality of meaning exists in an infinite chain and "each individual link in it is renewed again and again, as though it were being reborn" (p. 146). In such a cosmos, change might not be a new perspective, but a deeper and more clarified affirmation of an existing one. Change might not be that I'm thinking something entirely new, but that I'm thinking in new or deeper ways about something I've come to accept.

Still, it must be reinforced that by the mere utterance or acting of a new response, change of some type and to some degree has occurred. The context is different because a new response has been added into the accumulation of responses. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin (1984) noted that the same words offered in sequence by two different responders result in different meanings. In his example, a person saying "Life is good" after someone else has just uttered the same words is to have the repetition stand as an affirmation of the original. Such could be so. But, depending on tone and inflection, the repetition could also be an expression of wonder, irony, incredulity, or, in some extreme case, mechanized conformity. No doubt other possibilities exist. Significant to the point is the idea that, with each new response, all previous responses and contexts are reborn (Bakhtin, 1986). Old beliefs now exist in new contexts and consequently might look better or worse for the difference.

A state of wobble merely signifies a need to pay attention to a situation rife with change potential; it is not the change itself. As the eternal tug of war between centripetal and centrifugal tensions occurs (Bakhtin, 1981), we encounter wobble as one of those two opposing forces gains a moment's advantage over the other. In paying attention to that moment, individuals might make choices that facilitate or exacerbate the change, but they are also as likely to act in ways that qualify or stunt the movement. Dialogue will always entail movement, but it might not always be straight and forward. As a result, when we enter a dialogically charged wobble state, we enter a space of uncertainty where the outcomes are very much up for grabs and may not always move in directions we would prefer.

Although the uncertainty caused by wobble can and, I would argue, should be viewed as an opportunity for learning, it is often seen as a state to be avoided or diminished as quickly as possible. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) indicated that uncertainty is often reduced by retreating from dialogical spaces, acceding to a dominant voice, sharpening boundaries between self and other, or, somewhat paradoxically, seeking new voices with the expectation of gaining some insight not previously available. These tacks all aim for pre-dialogical forms of certainty; they seek to achieve a stable position by avoiding dialogue with the underlying issues. However, these two psychologists offer a fifth category of response, one that aims for a post-dialogical resolution by "going into and through this uncertainty rather than avoiding it" (3) so that the experience shapes what one is in the process of becoming. As such, "uncertainty is not just a positive or negative feeling state, but rather an experiential feature of a self in action" (p. 4). It is in this last category of response where we can use dialogue to navigate the uncertainty.

Ian and his student Marisol encountered this "experiential feature of a self in action" (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 4) through various moments of wobble as they tried to establish their responses to state and federal policy imposed on their local classroom from a distance. Ian, as he labored to develop a dialogical practice within a school undergoing much state and federally-mandated standardization, recognized the centripetal and centrifugal tensions inherent in his classroom and tried, with varying degrees of success, to open his transactions with students to multiple agendas, perspectives, and understandings. As such, it was often a generative space where students were supported in using inquiry and critique to make individual meaning for themselves. But it could also be less generative when the limiting aspects of the federal mandates made his teaching context feel less open and expansive.

In sum, Ian tried to create a classroom practice in which literacy was used to immerse teacher and students in an ongoing reflective conversation with the texts of their lives (Fecho, 2011a), despite more global efforts to standardize that practice and the students who engaged it. As he and other teachers like him strive to establish their dialogical practices, the more global policy as handed down from Washington DC and interpreted by state officials encounters their more local classrooms in complex and far-reaching ways. As he pays attention to and tries to understand the wobble caused by these encounters, Ian constructs more complex understandings of his practice and of the stakeholders who engage that practice. In doing so, he raises many questions. Perhaps the most important question—and the one we will address here, at least in part—is this one: what happens when the global and the local transact in classrooms, and what might this mean for dialogical education?

Translating Theory into Practice

It is one thing to discuss the theoretical possibilities of globalization, localization, uncertainty and wobble. It's quite another thing to then suggest what all that dialogue means for classrooms in general and literacy classrooms in particular. But this is precisely where this article is headed and where I believe that those of us who grasp the possibilities of dialogical and dialogical self theory in terms of education need to venture. I want those of us who educate in K-12 classrooms to consider, in a broad schematic way, what the intersection of globalization and localization means for classrooms and how better to seek the advantages offered.

Prior to that actual discussion, however, I want to clarify some terminology. Although it might feel awkward at times, I have already and will continue to refer to *more global* and *more local* spaces, as well as *more monological* and *more dialogical* spaces. In such cases, I am bringing the modifier *more* into play. My intent here is to respect the centripetal and centrifugal tensions of language as described by Bakhtin (1981). Based on my reading of Bakhtin, it has become my understanding that humans are always in dialogue, but that, given these opposing tensions, we exist in spaces that become more monological or more dialogical, but never wholly either. Such would also be the case for global and local in that we as humans may be open to influences that are more local or more global, but also never completely one or the other.

Acknowledging the Dialogical Self

In order for theories of the dialogical self to manifest themselves in classrooms, teachers and teacher educators need to acknowledge that dialogues exist within humans as well as among humans (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Upon that acknowledgement, teachers and teacher educators then have to consider what it means for their classroom and act upon those considerations. For example, if literacy teachers rely upon a series of decontextualized writing prompts to propel their writing programs (e.g., Write an essay of your view of euthanasia; Write a narrative about your most embarrassing moment), then little is being done to foster writing as a meaning-making dialogical activity. How could it be so? The prompts come at the whim of the teacher; they have been given no critical examination or discussion by the students prior to their being pronounced; they may or may not contain any relevance to the students nor is any attempt made to generate such relevancy; and they exist in the consciousness of teachers and students only as long as it takes to write and grade them, after which they are discarded, forgotten, and certainly not connected to the next prompt or lesson. In some classes, the two writing prompt examples above might be given on consecutive days despite their differences in tone, subject matter, and genre.

However, if teachers come to acknowledge the existence of dialogue across I-positions and external contexts, then they position themselves to imagine ways that

writing can extend and deepen those dialogues. Instead of a disconnected and impersonal series of prompts, writing becomes part of a complex and intimate weave of ideas. More directly, writing gets seen as responsive to writing that has gone before and pitched toward writing that is to come. Within this mesh of responses, students are encouraged to dialogue not only with an external audience, but also with themselves as they try to make meaning of topics and ideas that have, do, and will transact with their lives. By using writing as a means of expression, teachers can enable students to construct a more coherent self composed of lively inner dialogue across I-positions. In particular, such work can help students come to terms with identity contradictions that, particularly in adolescence, are the source of much angst.

The plight of Marisol and students like her are called to mind. As she and others who the mainstream marginalize seek to make sense of such randomized absurdity, the opportunity to see the literacy classroom as a space for dialoguing through the uncertainty and complexity is paramount. As Marisol attempts to respect cultural, familial, and personal expectations that she defer to authority and remain out of the spotlight, she finds it necessary to construct a more proactive and politically present response to the more global policies that seek to limit her opportunities and potential. As she works at being the student who does all her work quietly, but well and keeps herself somewhat under the radar of authorities, she simultaneously labors at calling attention to her issues and speaking out against that injustice.

Having a teacher like Ian who has engaged her in dialogue and helped her to channel her own dialogue has provided Marisol with a means to acknowledge and navigate the uncertainty she inhabits. Rather than ignoring the issues of the wider world that he and his students bring through the door of his classroom, Ian gives them credence and means for making sense of their complexity. By providing multiple opportunities for his students to make meaning of text through written and oral dialogue, Ian has provided his students with tools for engaging the uncertainties and absurdities that the world sends their way.

Re-establishing More Equitable Global/Local Tension

It is my belief that Bakhtin (1981) was not arguing for the dissolution of the centripetal tension exerted on language; he understood the need for degrees of unity to foster communication. But he did argue that over-centralization created languages that became stultified and meaning-limited. His argument for heteroglossia—for the renewed emphasis on individualization of language—was an attempt to have linguistic and literary scholars recognize the importance for maintaining an ongoing and somewhat more equitable tension between stabilization and diversification. He was calling attention to the tension and establishing the necessity of that tension. A shift to either extreme does not make for a dialogical space.

My goal is much the same regarding more global policy and its effect on more local classrooms. Although I am not enamored of much of the standardization policy that has come out of Washington DC and other national legislative bodies around the globe (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2008; Meier & Wood, 2004), I also understand that national leaders would want some influence in the education of a nation's youth. And I'm enough of a realist to understand that federal education policies that mandate various form of standardized testing, standardized curriculums, and teacher accountability will not disappear overnight, particularly because, at least in the United States, such policy is one of the few issues in which the major political parties are fairly close in agreement, despite research evidence that questions the validity of those policies (Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, & Stecher, 2000; Kohn, 2000; MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004; Menken, 2006; Ravitch, 2010). This lack of partisanship is especially evident in that, as of this writing while a Presidential election is in full swing, the subject of education rarely surfaces as an issue, mainly because it's hard to parse the differences between the parties and their candidates.

But I am not calling for a reification of such policy and, instead, am trying to prevent such reification. Those who make policy in spaces that are more distant from local classrooms need to honor the voices and perspectives of those classrooms. Such policy must be open to local input and interpretation. In addition, policy should be seen as fluid and open to change as contexts shift. As local stakeholders—administrators, teachers, parents, students, community members, and the like—respond to more global policy, those who wrote, enacted, and implemented that policy need to respond with more than silence or, worse, elitist and patronizing bromides. Rather, response needs to be of a kind that honors the local response and seeks dialogue.

Without this re-establishment of a more equitable global/local tension we will continue to disenfranchise both mainstream and marginalized families. For the former, school has become a location for wearying credentializing, and, for the latter, a soul deadening exercise in exclusion. Teachers—particularly the bright, creative, and innovative—also feel the push of exclusion and too many seek refuge in educational spaces that respect their intellect and foster their ingenuity. Such spaces, most of which exist outside the auspices of K-12 public school, acknowledge the need for the global and the local to remain in dialogue. The eventual result of the lack of substantive dialogue will be a widening of the divide on the one side of which educational *haves* flourish and on the other side the larger numbers of the educational *have nots* languish.

Finding Comfort in Wobble and Uncertainty

If the heading for this section sounds like a Zen koan, the connection is not incidental. The paradoxical or oppositional nature of koans dovetails neatly with the centripetal and centrifugal tensions of language as described by Bakhtin (1981). That

vision of language entails both collective unity and individualized diversity, both of which would seemingly be at odds, yet are requisites of a living language. Similarly, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) indicated that "constancy and change, like continuity and discontinuity, do not exclude each other and may well co-exist in the development of the individual person" (p. 96). Paradoxes populate dialogical spaces and, in doing so, create a wobble and uncertainty among teachers and students who enter. If we as educators embrace dialogue, we must embrace the wobble and uncertainty that accompanies dialogue.

It is important for us as teachers and learners to become comfortable with that which is uncomfortable, to find the tranquility in the chaos, to seek stability in wobble. It is in such places of diverse nature where dialogue and learning flourish. If we strive to construct meaning only in spatial and temporal contexts that are free of tension, unmindful of wobble, and vacuumed of all uncertainty, then learning becomes a matter solely of replication rather than innovation. However, as Vygotsky (1978) suggested, if we allow ourselves to enter learning spaces where we are less certain of what we know, but are willing to trust an experienced other, we can negotiate that uncertain Zone of Proximal Development and emerge in a state of independence for that which we once were dependent.

But we must be willing to undergo wobble and the uncertainty it entails. A vignette by the British actor Michael Caine as related to Terry Gross of National Public Radio's *Fresh Air* illustrates this point. Gross was asking Caine about how he had developed the voice, presence, and skills of an actor and he told about a situation he had encountered during a rehearsal for a play. While enacting a boisterous scene, a fellow actor had flung a chair across the stage in such a way that it had blocked the door from which Caine was to make his entrance. Disconcerted and anticipating this might happen again, Caine asked the director how to best handle the situation. The director shrugged and matter-of-factly responded,

> "Use the difficulty."
>
> Caine paused a beat. "Use the difficulty? What do you mean?"
>
> "I mean if it's a tragedy, smash the chair to pieces, and if it's a comedy, trip over it."

Teachers in dialogical classrooms have to be willing to use the difficulty. To stretch the director's advice, "If it's a dialogical classroom, call the difficulty into question." Rather than denying or ignoring tension as presented by more global issues transacting with more local classrooms, teachers need to devise ways to help students and themselves enter into an exploration and unpacking of that issue. Not that the issue can necessarily be easily or entirely resolved, but that systematic, intentional, and sincere heed gets paid to that issue. At the very least, students need to see that the difficulty was used.

There is an axiom variously attributed on the World Wide Web to people as diverse as the peace activist William Sloan Coffin, Jr, the science fiction writer Ray Bradbury, and the naturalist John Burroughs. Each speaker had his variation and I'm more given to one of the wordings attributed to Bradbury, which relies less on faith and more on initiative: "Living at risk is jumping off the cliff and building your wings on the way down." The situation is a scary one, but, yet, what can be more immediate and necessary space for invention and learning?

A dialogical classroom needs to be one where teachers and students risk uncertainty, where they immerse themselves in a process of meaning making that is in response to the uncertainty they feel. It is through continued dialogue with that which is unknown, unclear, unresolved, and/or in process that we come to new understandings about our selves and our worlds. If entering such contexts seems uncomfortable and uncertain, then we need to seek comfort in the certainty that such is the way of dialogue.

Moving Forward

Ian and Marisol are not extraordinary people. Both are hardworking, earnest, committed, and smart. But none of those attributes distinguishes them from millions of teachers and students around the globe who daily seek to make meaning of complex global/local transactions. What perhaps does set Ian and Marisol apart from many teachers and students is their willingness to enter dialogical learning spaces in which uncertainty and wobble come with the territory. Whether through necessity or desire, they freely engage in dialogue with each other, with the educational policy that often feels selective and oppressive, with the subject matter of the literacy classroom, and with the many I-positions that construct their more unified identities.

What we ask of Ian and Marisol is in no way easy to implement. Even if we in education are to imagine state and national policy that would shift in directions more favorable to classrooms that are more dialogical, teachers and students would too often need to re-imagine themselves as dialogical learners. Given that so few living examples of dialogical classrooms exist and considering the stultifying requirements of the ultra-standardization process that have overcome far too many classrooms world wide, teachers endeavoring to create more dialogical learning communities would have to engage with much dialogue and uncertainty of their own in order to realize these ideas in practice. But really that is the first step: the willingness to perch on the cliff and jump with only a vague sense of the wings one might build in order to soar.

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