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Language Composing as the Conceptual Axis of a Four-Domain Educational Paradigm

Introduction

The chapter outlines an authorial proposal for education being predominantly conceived and organised through the prism of language. The proposal rests on the key concept of language composing derived from foreign language learning but supported by numerous pedagogical considerations. The text makes regular (and predominant) references to a set of other publications addressing – from the theoretical and empirical perspectives – (a) the proposal in question and its subcomponents and (b) its wider scientific context in the form of the so-called ERL framework, that is a pool of studies and initiatives focused on the educational role of language (carried out or led by the chapter's author). The power of language composing follows from fact that language underlies and binds education and as such affects our views, behaviours, emotions and thoughts. Accordingly, language merits a special place in educational studies and systems, whilst language composing constitutes a means of putting words (and interdisciplinary theories) into actions.

Theoretical Grounds

If it is language that predominantly determines our learning and shapes (or constitutes) our knowledge, then paradigmatic reasoning concerning education must have linguistic grounds. To fully cover all relevant issues/phenomena, such a paradigm needs to encompass four educational domains, the operationalisation of which can be achieved by prioritising the concept of language composing and resting educational reasoning and activities on it.

The paradigm presented below rests on the premise that the difficulties generally associated with learning a foreign language only – which is an enterprise posing a combination of risks and difficulties, amplified by being in a public setting like the classroom (Allwright & Bailey, 1991: 174) – are also shared by classes on other subjects in that the use of language universally requires a certain ‘strength’ or robustness of character to withstand (Allwright & Bailey, 1991: 174), and students’ submission to negative feelings (the risk of “losing their face”) leads to their withdrawal.

Two paradoxes relating to the educational position of language persist: first, despite its omnipresence in the education of all disciplines, language remains to be taken for granted across various educational systems and has not – officially – become the central “building block” in the formation of school curricula despite teachers serving as “discourse guides” and classroom talk being the primary means of negotiating the curriculum (Mercer, 1995: 83) and underlying the classroom culture (Breen, 2001: 135); second, although this omnipresence was long ago recognised and accepted through the so-called “linguistic turn”, accompanied by the later acceptance of the fact that knowledge is based on categories derived from social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978b), the philosophy and methodology of (first/native and second/foreign) language learning have not been employed to underlie and construct upon linguistic/glottodidactic concepts novel and modern educational paradigms. In school curricula language has remained on an equal footing with the other subjects as if it was not an element they all share, which runs counter to a whole range of recent theories and findings pertaining to the educational role of language, including publications addressing different (and overlapping) strata:

- a) the personal dimension of education, emphasised by studies concerning such issues as identity, subjectivity, self-expression, etc., which, when considered jointly, clearly demonstrate students’ need and search for consistence in whatever they learn, the interpretative character of knowledge construction, or the intra-personal formation of “personal” language (intralanguage);
- b) the social dimension of education, discussed in writings on interpersonal exchange of meanings, social anxiety (to speak), willingness to communicate, etc., which, viewed together, point to language as either facilitating or hindering educational interaction on practically any given discipline or topic;
- c) the psychological dimension of learning, analysed in publications devoted to such issues as cognitive dissonance, sense of achievement, emotional intelligence, etc., which jointly point to the importance of one’s individual network of terms and development of language awareness;

d) the instructional dimension of learning, taken up through analyses concentrated on double coding, elicitation techniques, scaffolding, zone of proximal development, etc., which, as a whole, show the dependence of students' utterances on the language of others and the way it is employed in education.

The position of language in education has clearly a paradigmatic character in that the role of language is evident in all four educational domains – axiological, psychomotor, affective and cognitive: it determines, respectively, what we *think of* particular subject matter, what we can *do with* it, how we *feel about* it, and how we *construe* the world (i.e. what world image we form). Additionally (and reversely), if language (co-)determines our beliefs, actions, affect and thinking, then it matters greatly how language itself is treated across the four domains. In other words, the comprehensive status of language depends on how (and how explicitly and how effectively) particular educational systems promote a specific approach to language, entail (physical) experiencing of language, generate emotions concerning language, and (co-)shape language image of the world. This four-stratum dependence on language I refer to as the ERL Model¹, covering:

LANGUAGE BELIEFS	LANGUAGE ACTIVITY
LANGUAGE AFFECT	LANGUAGE MATRICES

Such (omni-)presence of language in the four educational domains can be implicit or explicit, with the latter proving more beneficial for students and teachers, and thus more advisable in education. In other words, the more talk about the interplay between language and students' beliefs, activity, emotions and thinking, the better it is for students' overall development; and the more comprehensive this kind of analysis, the stronger the relationships between the four educational domains not only on the level of language. Systematic emphasis on how students relate language to the four educational

¹ The ERL model was first introduced by me in 2017 as underlying a set of initiatives focused on the *educational role of language* referred to ERL Framework, i.e. (1) ERL Conferences: annual events bringing together academics whose interest intersect education and language; (2) ERL Network: an informal structure created for the purposes of smaller student-oriented international projects; (3) ERL Association: a formal organization established for the purposes of bigger international projects, the scope of which reaches beyond the four educational domains and additionally covers relationship between language, on the one hand, and schooling, culture, methodology and personality, on the other hand; (4) ERL Journal: a biannual designated for (empirical and theoretical) papers on cross-disciplinary, educational and linguistic issues. More information concerning (1) & (2) can be found at educationalroleoflanguage.ug.edu.pl, whilst initiatives (3) and (4) are presented at educationalroleoflanguage.org.

domains fosters their sense of ownership of the discourse, their sense of being empowered, which, on the part of teachers, as Van Lier notes, call for open-ended IRFs (initiation-response-feedback) requiring a greater depth of processing on the part of students (despite teachers remaining “unequivocally in charge”) (van Lier, 2001: 95–97).

It follows from the above that there is a need for a new educational paradigm so as to resolve the two paradoxes named and to accentuate language across the four aforementioned domains. The key constatation made in this chapter is that **the concept of language composing helps put the paradigm in question into practice and it may be argued to have been missing in educational discourse, which might have delayed the implementation of the linguistic turn.** The chapter’s eponymous term is understood here as a process whereby language elements are – consciously – put together coming from two different “pools” – conventional expressions, on the one hand, and spontaneously formed word combinations, on the other hand. Its definition rests on resemblance to music, where any successful musician needs to have become familiar with well known pieces before coming up with their own novel arrangements. This reasoning applies not only to language learning but to all (school) subjects, the studying of which combines – on the conventional stratum – familiarisation with terms, mastery of definitions and subject-specific ways of naming things, and – on the spontaneous (authorial) stratum – juxtaposition of concepts, formulation of cross-curricular references, and developing inter-thematic competence². Such two-tier processes of language (and thus knowledge) composing occur within particular subjects and topics as well as across them. The former (narrower) type of composing thus covers the use of, say, conventional mathematical, geographical, historical, etc. propositions (be it *Forty divided by four is ten*, *Scotland is north of England*, *The second world war broke out in 1939*, respectively), whilst the latter (wider) strand consists in novel conceptualisations blending concerning these subjects (be it *If two angles of a triangle have one hundred degrees, the third one must have eighty degrees*, *Wales is west of the country which is south of Scotland*, or *The second world was ended thirty one years after the first one had broken out*, etc.). With the two dimensions juxtaposed against each other, we arrive at the following matrix representing the overall concept and direction of language composing:

² The distinction between conventional and spontaneous language and the discussion of its implications might be made more refined by juxtaposing it against the two modes of classroom discourse introduced by B. Bernstein, i.e. horizontal (typified as everyday, oral and common-sense knowledge) and vertical (entailing a series of specialized languages with specialized modes of inquiry for the production of especially written texts (Bernstein, 1996: 170–171). Yet, we shall confine ourselves here to the conventional-spontaneous stratum as this division appears more readily understandable and as such will help us avoid further sub-classifications and resulting complications.

Table 1. Four facets of Language Composing

LANGUAGE COMPOSING covers:		conceptual innovativeness	
		conventional	spontaneous
thematic affiliation	within one subject	(A) conventional propositions on one subject	(B) spontaneous propositions on one subject
	across subjects	(C) conventional propositions on different subjects	(D) spontaneous propositions on different subjects

Source: own analysis.

Although what the matrix shows is only very general and rough, it does reflect major degrees of linguistic complexity and overall progress, with component (A) constituting the lowest level (and smallest difficulty), (D) – the highest degree, and (B) and (C) (in either order) occurring as intermediary stages. This being the case, the matrix can be employed to devise more detailed subject(s)-specific representations of language-oriented achievements (be it with regard to oracy or literacy) and can be juxtaposed against the four educational domains so as to recognise learners’ different achievement profiles, positions, or approaches. This issue will be further developed in the section concerning methodology below, where a preliminary attempt at a language-based typology will also be made.

From the theoretical perspective, language composing needs to be regarded as one step further than *knowledge construction*, with the former emphasising the authorial (artistic) element of learning. If we choose to accept – in line with the *linguistic turn* – that our knowledge consists essentially in the assignment of meanings “driven” by language and that each – in line with the *narrativist turn* – that language serves as a “a peculiar medium thanks to which complex internal narrations convey meanings” (Wasilewska, 2017: 137), it follows that *knowledge* and *language* can be frequently equated for educational purposes and then, as a result, the difference between the two previous concepts boils down to the “distance” between *construction* and *composing*. As dictionaries define the former as, for instance, “building or forming by assembling parts” (Wikidiff) and the latter as “making something [especially from a number of simpler elements (Dictionary.com)] by merging parts” (WikiDiff), language composing reaches beyond *knowledge construction* in that the former encompasses creative coalescence, uniting/blending things, and thus arriving at novel wholes (cutting across thematic borders and thus evading the school-like practice of subjects division).

Empirical Justification

As empirical studies consistently show, the role of language tends to be substantially diminished at schools, with classroom speech serving only a subservient role. Accordingly – and most detrimentally – language remains a construct falling outside teachers’ and students’ reflection, even partially in the case of L1/NL/L2/FL education. This stands in stark contrast to our up-to-date knowledge concerning the educational role of language: as unequivocal findings indicate, for example, (the articulation of) the so-called *directed utterances* can have a powerful effect on learning and render educational incidents personal. By combining the conventional with the spontaneous, language composing helps build a paradigm in which the deficiencies mentioned are prevented.

Different threads of evidence substantiate language composing, the primary of which relate to the classroom position of speech proving secondary. There occurs evident downgrading of language if, as studies show (Daszkiewicz, Wenzel & Kusiak-Pisowacka, 2018), language – or, more specifically – classroom speech, is viewed by students as useful (only) in performance of tasks rather than as an educational goal per se. At the most, language proves to be seen as necessary in the learning of other subjects (which appears more apparent for students, who regularly encounter texts or classroom talks), but the studies in question show that students do not tend to regard speech as a desirable personal attribute which they might wish to aspire to attain. In such a situation in which speech serves classroom purposes rather than the other way round, language is not “in the educational limelight”, which runs counter to the premises (and “promises”) of language composing. In other words, if language retains its diminished secondary role only, its power as a drive leading students from the conventional to the novel/the spontaneous is largely wasted and, as a consequence, authorial semantic links are not made and a crucial load of knowledge is lost.

As other empirical data shows, the role of language is diminished in that it remains a construct falling largely outside students’ reflection, particularly with regard to the axiological and affective domains (Daszkiewicz, 2019: 28). When asked to reflect on questions pertaining to four educational domains, relating in half to facts and in the other half to opinions, students prove to demonstrate several important characteristics: (a) most importantly, they show scepticism with regard to questions concerning emotions (e.g. *What emotions do the words you’ve learnt create in you?*); (b) they report not having been asked questions relating to their beliefs (e.g. *What do you think of the words*

you've learnt?), although at the same time students show remarkably positive opinions along the lines that “it is good to know what pupils think about what they learnt and if they [these words] are necessary or not”; (c) this discrepancy between the lack of students’ encounters with such questions and their appreciation of the value of such considerations implies that students’ subjectivity is not properly respected on the level of language; (d) students’ scepticism regarding questions concerning the affective side of language (e.g. *How do you feel about using the words you've just learnt?*) seems to suggest that students “fall victim” to “conspiracy of silence” concerning emotions generated by language elements.

The third thread of evidence justifying language composing as the pivotal educational concept pertains to the powerful effect of (the articulation of) conventional expressions in the learning of all school subjects. Whilst educational categories falling into language reproduction tend to be frowned upon and have a low reputation across subjects, it has been demonstrated – in a study on the benefits of the so-called *directed utterances* (Daszkiewicz, 2016: 223) – that, first, verbal conventionality boosts creativity and so reproduced language forms serve as a tool for “seamlessness” between reception and production, and, second, learners experience directed utterances most positively (both when employing them by themselves as well as when hearing them used by others), which remarkably adds to their sense of ease, satisfaction and security. From the perspective of language composing essentially comprising the conventional and (before) the spontaneous, any degree of disregard for reproduction constitutes a severe stumbling block. The similarity to music becomes strong here as without the awareness of what notes match or can follow one another and without the experience of how they have sounded together in pieces composed thus far, no musician can tell how novel and, as a consequence, how “understandable” his music is to others, many of whom have heard a wide range of more or less common compositions.

Apart from language conventions (important “building blocks” of language composing) proving markedly beneficial for learning, there is also something paradoxical in them providing grounds for the process of learning becoming strongly personal (although we generally think of conventions as being highly impersonal components of language). This phenomenon has been demonstrated from the pedagogical, didactic, linguistic, and psycholinguistic perspectives (Daszkiewicz, 2018: 27–34) as running well across the educational board, in the light of which the disrespectful treatment of learners’ encounters with conventionality is tantamount to most regrettable ignorance of their language personality – similarly to the effect of the said disregard for students’ reflection on issues pertaining to the axiological and affective side of language use.

Methodological Applications

Language composing enables conceptualisation of education organised around the linguistic component. In practice, for the four-domain paradigm based on the eponymous concept to be genuinely comprehensive, language composing needs to be implemented on two levels: (a) on the level of application (instruction), it requires implementation of didactic concepts such as (language-based) achievement patterns, semantic groupings and juxtapositions, glottodidactic (bipolar) shifts positioning learners with regard to their accuracy vs. fluency, receptive vs. productive skills, etc.; (b) on the level of reflection (research), it implies the need for studies encompassing the two dimensions named, that is analyses of students' (and teachers') approach to language across the four educational domains and their conventional vs. spontaneous uses of language across various subjects.

Language composing, as delineated above, is a voluminous concept, which renders it possible to conceptualise education through the prism of the linguistic component. The full implementation of the concept in question must draw on its instructional and empirical potential. In other words, it needs to apply to two pillars/interpretations of *methodology*, that is both to teaching (and learning) techniques as well as educational research. Its **didactic implementation** can well be envisaged by the following applications to teaching and learning (which are presented below – for the sake of clarity – with reference to only one language skill, namely speaking, although similar conceptualisation can be made with the other skills, with writing being the one with which it may be the easiest for teachers of subjects other than language to start with):

- achievement patterns – The plainest application of the eponymous concept rests on the aforementioned recognition of its four subcomponents, the increasing complexity of which implies that the most frequent situation of students is when their mastery of conventional utterances [marked as (A) exceeds that pertaining to spontaneity (B), and, in the other dimension, their abilities within one particular topic (referred to as (C)] exceeds that cutting across thematic fields (D). We can view such relationships between the components as representing 'the typical achievement pattern' (ABDC) (with repetitive utterances proving simpler than creative statements), with any other arrangement being less frequent and denoting 'atypical achievement patterns' (say, BACD, BCAD, CABD, CBAD, or – hypothetical but highly unlikely – CDAB, CDBA, DABC, DBAC, DBCA, or DCBA), whereby creativity is found less demanding than repetitiveness.

- meta-reflection – Whichever component of language composing or whichever achievement pattern we deal with, under the paradigm discussed here it is crucial that the pattern be juxtaposed against the four said educational domains, so that it is clear what stance with regard to them is represented by a given student. To exemplify the essence and significance of this point, we can envisage students differing in these two dimensions:

Table 2. Exemplary language-composing-based achievement patterns

No.	Language identity through the prism of language composing	Language identity through the prism of educational domains	Selected implication
Student 1 (reticent)	A > B > C > D (i.e. highest abilities in conventional uni-thematic utterances, lowest abilities in spontaneous cross-subject language)	the importance of language not appreciated (l. beliefs), few unforced utterances (l. activity), speech not recognised as a highly educational phenomenon (l. affect), reproductive use of terminology (l. matrices)	marked difficulties in eliciting speech from the student, especially with regard to self-expression
Student 2 (repetitive)	A > B > C > D (as above)	the importance of language appreciated (l. beliefs), regular unforced utterances (l. activity), speech experienced as educationally potent (l. affect), reproductive use of terminology (l. matrices)	dominance of conventional utterances hard to convert to more authorial language
Student 3 (outspoken)	B > A > C > D (i.e. a strong inclination towards spontaneous uses of language)	language seen as a driving force in education (l. beliefs), regular unforced utterances (l. activity), free speech clearly enjoyed (l. affect), creative use of terms (l. matrices)	ongoing information on the student's personal understanding of a given subject
Student 4 (creative)	B > D > A > C (i.e. a clear preference of the conventional side of language, with regard to both uni- and cross-discipline utterances)	language regarded as the driving force in education (l. beliefs), extensive unforced utterances (l. activity), willingness to speak and enjoyment derived from "playing" with language (l. affect), constant search for new perspectives and interpretations (l. matrices)	numerous opportunities to relate to other subjects, potentially at the partial cost of foundations formulated with fixed language
...			

NOTE: The examples (types) included in the table constitute solely a limited selection of possibilities. Another simplification worth noting is that they present a very general, i.e. multi-faceted picture of students' position with regard to language and its use. In order to arrive at such global representations, systematic unidimensional analyses are required. Yet, despite the generality of the profiles outlined in the table, we can see the direction and educational benefits to be gained under the eponymous paradigm.

Source: own analysis.

- structural considerations – Another application can draw on a kind of strategy taken from L2 learning practices, whereby thematic issues are juxtaposed against semantic possibilities; for example, any particular semantic field such as *Sport, Health, Holidays, or Work* etc. can be considered in terms of how EFL students learning it are able to use different grammatical tenses, conditionals, passive voice, or reported speech. By analogy then, under the paradigm outlined herein it is worthwhile considering any topic from any school subject through a similar prism. Plain (or perhaps even slightly absurd) as such a technique may appear, it fosters students' productive use of language, active way of learning any specific subject matter, reflection on the linguistic side of school subjects, and highly conscious bilingualism. From the perspective of teachers, such practices are both demanding and educational for them and render their role very close to that of foreign language instructors, whose feedback consists in providing information for learners to confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses formulated about the language being learnt (Tsui, 1998: 186), which in the case of general education rests on learners' and teachers' interdisciplinary competence;
- glottodidactic shifts – Yet another way of applying language composing to teaching and learning is thinking in terms of shifts typically emphasised and recommended in foreign language learning practices and viewed as reflecting progress from beginner to advanced levels of language proficiency/mastery. Specifically, the learning of any subject matter can oscillate between such language-user (predominantly bipolar for the sake of clear direction) characteristics as *accuracy (correctness)* and *fluency, reception and production, monologue and dialogue, redundancy and entrophy, and artificial and authentic (texts)*.

Apart from didactic implications, the concept of language composing prompts specific **empirical considerations**. Under the paradigm in question it becomes essential to study students' approach to language and what we may call the extensiveness of their attitude. Such (external and classroom) studies need to encompass the two dimensions outlined in the previous sections so that it becomes clear to both students (and teachers) how they approach language on the thematic stratum and within/across the four educational domains. Whilst the former studies will consist in analysing how students deal with conventional and spontaneous texts, the latter will entail multi-perspective analyses of where (i.e. in which educational domain) they locate language. [There also exists an option of the two dimensions being covered in the same studies, the resulting subject of which might be, for instance, what students think of or how they feel about conventional vs. spontaneous uses of language (a study problem juxtaposing the components of language composing against the axiological and affective domains), or how conventional

or spontaneous language students use when asked to present particular thematic issues (a study problem relating the said components to the psychomotor and/or cognitive domain).] The studies in question can be exemplified here by one item of research in which it was studied how university students approach classroom speech (Daszkiewicz, 2017: 123–133). They were asked to (a) justify (in a loose written form) their decisions to speak in the classroom and elaborate on what their motivation to do so is (which is to say in empirical terms that they were supposed to “climb up the ladder” by reflecting on their personal general motives/values), and to (b) briefly report on circumstances they associate with their spoken classroom performance (which in empirical terms means that their second task was to “climb down the ladder” by referring to specific situations). The study proved the respondents’ approach to classroom speech being very narrow in that their accounts of personal decisions to speak were essentially deprived of both references to more general values or specific circumstances determining their productive use of language. More generally speaking, the results show students’ speech not to be subject of their conscious regular classroom reflection and not to constitute their educational goal per se (for the sake of interdisciplinary educational enhancement or overall development of their personality). This can be argued to be one type of aftermath following from the fact of students not experiencing on a regular basis their teachers’ thinking aloud and describing their thoughts and processes, which has recently been recommended by some researchers observing that by doing so, teachers make the invisible aspects of teaching visible (e.g. Clark, 1992: 75).

Interdisciplinary Implications

We may look at language composing as underlying any person’s interdisciplinary competence. It is due to the apt and extensive use of language by others that we tend to be amazed by their knowledge as the people we listen or talk to – creatively – “jumps” across issues and/or disciplines. Why not, then, formulate school curricula on the basis of semantic blends expanding the boundaries of our language – and, thus, knowledge? Although at first sight it may appear strange to prioritise all across the educational board – in accordance with the ERL model presented above – what students think of language, what they can do with language, how they feel about language and how they see the world through it, it naturally follows from the so-called linguistic turn that language is a strong “glue” binding education and, consequently, any radical, i.e. paradigmatic changes of educational systems are most promising when relying on language composing and glottodidactic findings and principles.

Thinking of education in terms of language composing unravels and emphasises the universal phenomenon whereby people's knowledge is found admirable due to their apt use of language across issues and disciplines. As C. Anderson, the president and head curator of TED, notes, it is with language and thanks to its astonishing efficacy that in just a few seconds the whole structure of in a group of strangers' minds can be re-created (Anderson, 2016: 17). Lack of language use inevitably implies lack of such admiration or cognitive change. From the perspective of the four components, it is particularly the case when a person's application of language reaches far beyond repetitive stretches of text and through novel combinations of word elements unfamiliar message is conveyed. Yet, as studies show, conventional (or directed) utterances are also positively experienced when produced by others, meaning that they, too, contribute to listeners' reverence for those who can use language fluently (Daszkiewicz, 2016). Although it is unreasonable to assume that listeners regularly attribute their admiration of how others speak (or write) to the degree of conventionality or spontaneity, the phenomenon undoubtedly occurs when it comes to language users blending different topics and disciplines (i.e. fields (C) and (D) of language composing as presented above). Neither is it sensible to presume that such admiration of the others' use of language requires any awareness of how language relates to the second dimension discussed (i.e. beliefs, behaviours, affect, and thinking), but, similarly to how it works with components (A)-(D), the more comprehensive the language users' awareness of language is, the more likely their interlocutors' appreciation becomes.

The above being the case, it is worth rendering language composing a key organisational category for the construction of school curricula and selection of learning/teaching methods. As follows from our considerations concerning the predominance of language in one's competence in any school subject, "filtering" subject content through linguistic categories by means outlined in the previous section will enlarge a set of perspectives on any particular issue. In other words, there are at least two direct effects to be instantly expected if we view education through the lenses making up the eponymous paradigm: (1) far more personal experiencing of any subject matter conceived in terms of what students *think of* the language denoting it (be it terminology, definitions, classifications, paraphrases, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, etc.), what they can *do with*, how they *feel about*, and how they *see* the world *through* that language – i.e. language beliefs, activity, affect, matrices; and (2) markedly enhanced competence resulting from considering the subject matter from the perspective of conventional vs. novel/spontaneous word combinations, which is a type of outcome resting on the fact that one can benefit a lot by explaining to oneself or to others what specific subject matter means

(along the lines of the well known principle that one learns the best when teaching); the effect in question can easily be prompted by regular implementation into learning and teaching tasks and questions traditionally employed in foreign language methodology such as *Give me a sentence with the word...*, *Complete the following sentence...*, *How to say in different words...?*, *Try to speak for one minute speaking about...* etc.

The proposal of language composing (as well as the entire ERL model) further implies that reasoning concerning language becomes tantamount to that concerning any school subject. Although it may appear at first to be rather strange to impose such heavily linguistic methodology on the learning/teaching of all school subjects, there appear no sensible arguments speaking against it – particularly in the light of the fact that it has become commonplace for educators and writers dealing with general education to refer to concepts which inevitably rest on language (although it is frequently not explicitly stated) such as collaborative narrative, discourse (providing learners opportunities for co-construction), co-narration, or multi-voicedness (Pontecorvo & Sterponi, 2002: 138–139). The (highly explicit) implementation of linguistic means across different school subjects generates students' awareness of their gaps in knowledge revealed by posing questions such as those exemplified in the previous paragraph, and provides most valuable information on, for instance, (a) the distance between their receptive and productive competence across school subjects (which can be viewed here as the distance between their passive and active mastery of subject matter); (b) the likelihood of particular subject matter being employed after students have completed their schooling, which is the stage frequently associated with the time when lots of the knowledge acquired at school starts to be forgotten (as not being verbally revised); (c) the character of students' difficulties in learning particular disciplines, often resulting from the linguistic stratum of subject matter; the recognition of how significant an obstacle the language of a given subject is serves an increase in the validity of achievement assessment; (d) the degree in which particular subject matter is linguistically fixed or flexible (in mathematics, for instance, there exist conventional ways of reading calculations, but also multiple possibilities of discussing word problems requiring apt use of, say, addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division).

Owing to the equipollence above, that is the inevitability of language determining (driving but also blocking the learning of any given school subject), radical, meaning paradigmatic changes in educational systems involve linguistic phenomena. Under the proposal outlined herein, composing language entails composing with language as it is language that binds education and brings the learning/teaching of all subjects together. It goes without saying that education as it functions now needs to be conceptualised anew. Much to

the detriment of students, educational systems across the globe continue to disregard “the glue” of all subjects, which language is. The aftermath of this prolonged fundamental error is severe, with students not capitalising on the synergy of language beliefs, activity, affect and matrices, not reaching as high in their education of different subjects as they might if they prompted themselves to reflect and use conventionally and spontaneously their language. From the teacher’s perspective, the paradigm outlined above implies accentuating what has been referred to as the personal ‘talk and action’ mode of discourse and downgrading the other modes, that is professional and institutional (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999): what comes to the foreground here is what educators (verbally) do with a view to building up their students’ language, with their actions consisting in error correction, giving marks etc. becoming secondary.

Conclusion

Although the line between the concepts of knowledge construction and language composing may appear vague, when we refer to the dimension of conventionality-spontaneity, the reasoning resting on language composing offers at least twofold benefits for education – (i) “downward” benefit: observance of the steady component of language which “carries” a crucial volume of substantive knowledge and as such should never be disregarded, and (ii) “upward” benefit – reaching for the artistic component and cherishing (language) creativity across topics and disciplines. The juxtaposition of language composing against the four educational domains has a huge paradigm-building potential and yields numerous findings and applications at the level of both classroom instruction and educational research.