

ANU Language Teaching Forum

Tuesday 24 October 2023

This year's final seminar on Tuesday 24 October, 4-5pm. Takuya Kojima who has joined the School of History, Culture and Language, ANU as a Lecturer in Japanese Language and Studies this year will be joining us to share his work on "Unpacking Cross-boundary Learning in Foreign Language Education: Theoretical Understanding and Practical Application." Please see the abstract below and join us on Zoom through this link

<https://anu.zoom.us/j/89708276384?pwd=QUI4TUpMQitCdnIBck12cFJTQVkyQT09>

This presentation will explore the possibilities that cross-boundary learning may open up for us, engaging in foreign language education (FLE). To this end, it first introduces cross-boundary learning—learning which occurs when moving from one context or community to another—and its associated concepts: vertical and horizontal development, especially from a situated learning viewpoint (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It then provides a concise overview of select studies informed by cross-boundary learning and, lastly, suggests its possible application to FLE in Australia.

In FLE, we tend to consider that learning occurs when learners accumulate linguistic knowledge and become more skilful and faster at utilising it. Those advocating for cross-boundary learning call this type of learning vertical development. While such learning is vital for learners, excessive focus on it can inadvertently create a uniform image of an ideal learner using the language fluently without making mistakes. This image might become a source of struggle or, in the worst case, lead to dropout. Such a trend has been observed more often lately when FLE is increasingly perceived as a leisure activity rather than an investment (Thomson, 2019).

To address this concern, we can draw inspiration from cross-boundary learning, which pays attention to an alternative type of learning, horizontal development, without dismissing the importance of vertical development. Horizontal development emphasises learning as the transformation of an individuals' relationship with social activity (Beach, 1999) and a reconsideration of their present and future identities (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). When horizontal development becomes their focus, learners may realise the existence of various learning pathways beyond being proficient, possibly leading to longer-term and more profound engagement in their learning endeavours.

To date, a handful of studies in FLE, including our own (Kojima & Fukui, 2023), have illustrated the potentials that cross-boundary learning can offer to learners. These include a transformed understanding of where their learning occurs, how they engage in learning, and who they are, as well as who they want to become. In short, these studies have highlighted the promotion of learner autonomy and the diversification of learning pathways in their cross-boundary learning. Such studies have suggested that cross-boundary learning can have a positive impact on learners and, more importantly, can be cultivated through educational design. Thus, this presentation will conclude by suggesting a few possible approaches to our educational practice that promote such learning in the Australian context.