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This article is part of a collection of practitioner research on the theme of “Engaging With and Exploring Autonomy, Creativity, and Well-Being for Learner Development” for Issue 9 of the Learner Development Journal (LDJ9), edited by Stacey Vye, Robert Moreau, and Ivan Lombardi. Published once a year, each issue of the Learner Development Journal follows a Community of Practices approach over a period of approximately 18 months in which contributors work together, under the guidance of the editors, to share, respond to, and develop their research and writing.

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Creating Mindful L2 Selves in a Meditation-Based Activity in Higher Education

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In this story of practice I share my experience with a two-part meditation-based activity that I taught during the discipline “Applied Linguistics” which is part of the TEFL Program at the School of Modern Foreign Languages (FALEM) at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) in Brazil. Drawing on the L2 Motivational Self System Theory (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) and the Complex Adaptive System (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) that interprets additional language learning as a dynamic and open system of multiple interactions, I was interested in understanding the motivational factors of an undergraduate student that emerged in a chart, collage, and two narratives he created. The research questions that I used to guide this study concerned the aspects which contribute to increase motivation, creativity in language learning, and how the student perceives well-being inside and outside the classroom. As the methodology, I conducted the data analysis by using the six-phase thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), which provides the following structure for making meaning from data: (1) becoming familiar with the data and identifying items of potential interest; (2) generating codes; (3) generating initial themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. The analysis revealed that the student saw well-being as a part of his language learning process and associated it with stress and emotion management. Furthermore, his focus on well-being enabled him to reflect on a perspective changing position, self-regulated his feelings, nurtured positive thoughts, enhanced his sense of agency, and developed a sense of belonging.

Nesta história de prática, relato minha experiência em uma atividade planejada em duas partes, inspirada na prática de meditação, que ensinei durante a disciplina “Linguística Aplicada” da Faculdade de Línguas Estrangeiras Modernas da Universidade Federal do Pará, Brasil. Com base no Sistema Motivacional Autoidentitário de L2 (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) e nos Sistemas Adaptativos Complexos (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) em que a aprendizagem de línguas adicionais é interpretada como um sistema aberto e dinâmico de múltiplas interações, busquei compreender os fatores motivacionais de um estudante de graduação, a partir do que emergiu de uma tabela, uma colagem e duas narrativas feitas por ele. As perguntas que usei para orientar este estudo dizem respeito aos aspectos que contribuem para a promoção da motivação, da criatividade e como o aluno percebe o bem-estar dentro e fora da sala de aula. Como metodologia, utilizei a análise temática em seis fases (Braun & Clarke, 2022) que fornece a seguinte estrutura para interpretar os dados: (1) familiarizar-se com os dados e identificar itens de potencial interesse; (2) gerar códigos; (3) gerar temas iniciais; (4) revisar temas; (5) definir e nomear temas; e (6) produzir o relatório. Os resultados mostram que Fred percebeu o bem-estar como parte de seu processo de aprendizagem da língua e fez associação com o gerenciamento do estresse e emoções. Além disso, esse foco no bem-estar permitiu com que ele refletisse sobre um posicionamento de mudança de perspectiva, autorregulasse seus sentimentos, cultivasse pensamentos positivos, aumentasse seu senso de agência e desenvolvesse um senso de pertencimento.

Keywords

motivation, creativity, well-being, meditation-based class, L2 selves

motivação, criatividade, bem-estar, aula inspirada em meditação, eus-possíveis de L2

My Story With Creativity in Higher Education

I first became interested in creativity studies in 2019 as I was preparing myself to apply for the professional master’s degree in the Graduate Program in Creativity and Innovation in Higher Education Methodologies (PPGCIMES) at UFPA, being accepted into the Class of 2020. At that stage, I was also transitioning from being a toddler teacher to a pedagogical coordinator of English language, technology and innovation at the elementary and middle school where I currently work. The synchronicity of events led me to explore creativity for both academic and professional purposes.

In the syllabus of my master's degree course, the two mandatory subjects were *Creativity* and *Innovative Teaching and Learning Methods*. Both disciplines significantly contributed to my learning process and expanded my way of thinking and observing the world around me. They also enhanced my self-awareness and deepened my connection with teaching and learning processes. Back in 2020, the controversial side of studying creativity for me was that the more I delved into the topic, the more convinced I became that learners usually stop imagining at some point in their school life. In my opinion, the issue is that imagination is often considered a child-related concept, which discourages us from envisioning life as we grow older, as if imagination were not part of adult problem-solving, anticipation in future planning, or even a valuable aspect of our dreams. The duties and rush hours we adults face in our busy lifestyles diminish our will to keep wondering.

According to Robinson (2015), by the time we have been through education, schools have suppressed students' individuality, imagination, and creativity, primarily due to standardized tests. From my perspective, not much happens differently in tertiary education because of the rigidity of teaching plans and methodologies used in universities that do not cover creativity in its social and cultural dimensions. Alencar et al. (2017) stated that the development of creativity is not a priority in higher education. The authors presented several studies from different countries such as Brazil, England, and Iran that show empirical evidence of the lack of attention towards the creativity abilities of college students. Also, the study revealed that many faculty members have limited knowledge of creative approaches and are unfamiliar with the literature on creativity in educational settings.

This study resonated with me because I believe educators must cultivate a university culture that values and encourages the development and expression of students' creative potential. Back to Robinson's words, "[...] if you change the experiences of education for those you work with, you can change the world for them and in doing so become part of a wider, more complex process of change in education as a whole" (Robinson, 2015, p. 74). I believe that the best place to start thinking about how to change education is exactly where we are. In my case, and for the purposes of the current study, it means focusing on TEFL programs in higher education, where pre-service teachers can develop openness and learn to adopt different and new perspectives when dealing with challenges in their language learning path.

Considering that, as soon as I had the opportunity to teach in a higher education classroom, even if I was in my teaching internship as a doctoral student, I added to my activities what Beghetto (2016) calls "creative openings." These are unplanned opportunities during the class for developing new and meaningful actions and ways of thinking. According to Beghetto (2020, p. 20), "[...] [b]y making small openings into existing lessons and activities, students can be invited to explore, generate, and produce new ways of thinking about what they have been taught." I decided to take meditation as the path to explore how the uncertainties of creative openings are aligned with the concept of complex adaptive systems (CAS).

Hence, in this story of practice, I report a two-part meditation-based activity that I conducted in 2023 during the Applied Linguistics course offered by the School of Modern Foreign Languages (FALEM) to undergraduate students from the TEFL Program (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), Brazil. In this activity, I intertwined creativity, motivation, and well-being in the light of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) Theory (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), considering the additional language learning as a Complex Adaptive System (CAS) (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). It was part of my teaching internship as I am a doctoral student in the Graduate Program in Language

and Literature (PPGL) at the same university. This marked a turning point in my academic life since it was the very first time that I had lectured in an undergraduate program.

In this experience, I decided to use a meditation-based activity because it allows stress management, promotes break time of quiet moments to self-regulate feelings and emotional reactivity, and displays an open mental state to nurture positive thoughts and attitudes. As Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Niemiec (2018) encourage us, it is worthwhile increasing the meditation moment by bringing more of “us” to the practice as we activate sensory awareness and attention to the joy of life. Additionally, I argue that meditation-based activities play a powerful role in promoting well-being, inviting individuals to perceive their processes and performances, such as work or learning, with greater satisfaction.

Therefore, in this story of practice, I aimed to encourage undergraduate students to be aware that, despite the additional language learning trajectory being non-linear, unpredictable, open, adaptive, and dynamic, they can create visions of self and of their future to plan long-term progression with motivation and well-being. By saying that, the research questions that I explored in this study are:

- What aspects of the meditation-based activity contribute to increase motivation and creativity in language learning?
- How can meditation-based promote well-being inside and outside the learning environment?
- How does the student perceive well-being activities as part of their language learning process?

I first provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of this study, which comprises the L2MSS theory (Dörnyei, 2019; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) within the framework of additional language learning as a CAS (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). In the same section, I discuss the creative openings concept (Beghetto, 2016, 2019, 2020) and present well-being as a topic which fluctuates in language learners’ interactions and experiences inside the classroom and beyond. This is followed by the methodology of the study, which includes the context in which I explained the connection between the L2 selves and complex adaptive systems to the students (and why I did so), the participant description, and the procedures of data collection. Then, I move on to the finding and discussion. Finally I present my concluding thoughts, which encompass my learnings and realizations.

Theoretical Underpinnings

In this section, I discuss and interrelate the theories that underpin the following discussion and findings of this story of practice.

Principles of Complex Adaptive Systems within L2 Motivational Self System Theory

The concept of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) in the context of language learning dates from the late 1990s when Larsen-Freeman (1997) published her seminal article “Chaos/complexity science and second language acquisition.” In this article, Larsen-Freeman argues that the reductionist way of examining the language learning process from its components alone, such as the teacher, the students, or the environment, is a traditional perspective that should undergo a dynamic and nonlinear paradigm shift. Since language acquisition involves the integration of diverse agents and elements, including the environment, cultural contexts, individual differences, and the language system itself, Larsen-Freeman (1997) asserted that the new principle should focus on the interactions of these factors in leading to the emergence of new patterns and behaviors. This is one of the main principles of CAS

theory, characterized by the emergent behavior of the system. It postulates that the whole is more than the sum of the parts and cannot be fully predicted by examining the individual elements in isolation.

Taking this into account, I believe the L2MSS theory proposed by Dörnyei (2005) and revised by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) can be used to implement the CAS principle. This can be achieved by investigating how the integration of the possible selves as “parts” of one’s language learning process might mediate ongoing behaviors linked to one’s actions. The L2MSS theory comprises three elements (Dörnyei, 2005): the ideal self, the ought-to self, and the L2 learning experience.

In the beginning, the focus of the L2MSS theory was on the student’s characteristics that marked his or her individual differences. That cognitive dimension of an individual’s aptitudes was useful to language acquisition research until that moment. However, as CAS theory started attracting considerable interest across the field of Applied Linguistics, extended L2MSS theory by integrating the concept of multiple interconnected components and multiple interacting influences, which influences L2MSS theory.

Hence, I argue that the elements from L2MSS theory—the ideal self, the ought-to self, and the L2 learning experience—under the auspices of complex theory, cannot be viewed in isolation as each responds and adapts to the other. Also, both the ideal self and ought-to self lead language learners to visualize images of their roles and imagine future self-guides that are no longer understood as fixed goals, but rather as dynamic constructs in their contexts of learning (Henry & Liu, 2024; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Imagination and vision (Dörnyei, 2005) are two other concepts that were added to L2MSS theory. Learners can regulate their behavior and set their goals by projecting possible selves as a desire to act, as well as by creating and projecting images and senses from the “here-and-now self” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) to the “not-yet self.” Metaphorically speaking, this is similar to a rehearsal of situations that have not happened yet, but are latent for potential growth and change. I find support for this in Glăveanu and Beghetto (2020), who affirm that it is only in people’s imagination that what does not exist or what could come into being is created as future-orientation. The authors call this creative experiences that are “forms of thinking, doing or making” (Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2020, p. 4). Plus, anchoring this with CAS theory, it is through the imagination that we, human beings, can build a broad view of “[...] how our part fits” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 108).

In the next section, I explore how teachers can open up spaces for creative experiences in what Beghetto (2016) calls “creative openings,” where students may nurture well-being in their process of learning.

Creative Openings: Predicting the Uncertainty

Importantly, the memory of the “old,” the adaptation to existing knowledge, the combination of ideas from previous experiences and the imagination of the new possibilities, are together parts of a broad cyclical system that is creativity. We can never have enough creativity as it is an essential human being condition for our existence in a world that is both natural and human-made. It is a biological, psychological, and social human trait that gives us the breath of any desire to change something usual or develop something new.

According to Vygotsky (2004), there are two types of human activity: reproductive activity and combinatorial or creative activity. The former is based on reproducing already known behavioral patterns, which basically relies on the repetition of our previous experiences and the retrieval of earlier impressions. The latter also relies on our acquired experiences but

combines the elements from them to generate new behavior. Both types of socio-cognitive function are equally important because reproductive activity provides us with the necessary knowledge for adaptation in the world, whereas creative activity formulates new actions and new behaviors. The most exciting aspect of this combination of ideas for me is that it is socially and culturally mediated. One's previous experiences are at the same time individual and collective, and what may emerge in the future from this dialogue brings together the already-known and the imagined, holding them in uncertainty.

Taking this into account, it is possible to assert that in order to be creative, teachers must explore beyond sameness, by changing from old patterns that can be useful and comfortable, but that rely on repetition, to the possibility of accepting the unfamiliar, the novel, the uncertain results of L2 language learning experiences. In real-time classroom discussions, it can be challenging for teachers to gauge the relevance of the unpredictable. Fortunately, however, as mentioned above, the novel emerges from previous knowledge that can be explored through dialogue between teachers and students. This naturally introduces some uncertainty into the curriculum, as it is hard to predict where such exploration might go.

According to Beghetto (2013), there are some surprising moments of creative potential that emerge from planned lessons. Take, for example, what might happen when a teacher expects a known answer to their question, but the student responds to it in an unexpected fashion. Beghetto (2009, 2016, 2021) argues that creative openings are not necessarily creative ideas, but potential moments for creativity to happen in educational settings where socio-psychological and material interactions are encountered. He further claims that, the uncertainties that emerge from "in-the-moment" thinking and action in the classroom can serve as a guidance for subsequent choices and actions. They may also echo students' everyday experiences and interactions, where familiar knowledge finds new contexts in which to create fresh combinations. However, if the teacher overlooks this possibility, chances to promote a dialogue in the classroom may be easily missed.

I believe that creative openings can intentionally be planned as part of the class for the students to explore and learn new experiences under any uncertainties. What is more, university teachers can evaluate these creative openings by reflecting in action and reflecting on action with the students. As Schön (1983) explains, *reflection-in-action* involves evaluating one's actions while actively performing a task, enabling individuals to react to unforeseen events by making quick adjustments and revising strategies in the moment. On the other hand, *reflection-on-action* occurs after the action has taken place. It involves a more intentional and structured process of reviewing and analyzing past actions and decisions, with the goal of learning from the experience and exploring alternative strategies for future situations.

From my point of view, creative openings can be opportunities to enhance students' motivation in their language learning processes, considering that not only inside the classroom they can learn to manage their learning goals or set of goals, but also outside the classroom, where they encounter a variety of language communities such as their family, friends, workplaces, peers, etc. University teachers can use both skills to adjust their lessons to the needs of their students and improve their curriculum and teaching methodologies, ensuring that each lesson builds upon the failures and successes of the previous one.

In terms of L2 language experiences, it is worth emphasizing that reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action resonate in the temporal dimension of student motivation because, according to Dörnyei (2000, p. 519) the element of time "[...] is relevant to the study of motivation in at least two crucial areas: to account for (a) how motivation is generated and (b) how it fluctuates and further develops over time." In accordance with this, Runco (2022)

asserts that creativity is a process where one interacts with the environment as s/he moves through time.

Finally, relevant to this story of practice in additional language learning as a CAS, I align my position with Henriksen et al. (2022, p. 114) in recognizing that creativity, uncertainty, and mindfulness meditation coexist. Since such activities involve the manifestation by students of unscripted and unplanned emotions, insights, and ideas, teachers can design classes in which students' problems and understandings are connected to academic goals. Drawing on Beghetto (2021), this may occur when students are given opportunities to define certain elements of the learning creativity process such as choosing the tools they are going to work with to express themselves. I have depicted this in the methodology and discussion and findings section that follow by highlighting the creative openings that emerged during the meditation-based activity. I narrate this from a reflection-on-action perspective, emphasizing the moments when I let go of control. In doing so, I realized that the student was carrying the weight of his academic life, which had become emotionally overwhelming.

Methodology

This section presents the context of this story of practice, the participant, and the data collection procedures. This involved a two-part meditation-based activity that I taught in 2023 in my teaching internship as a PhD student in the TEFL Program at the School of Modern Foreign Languages (FALEM) at UFPA during the Applied Linguistics course.

The Context

I was in charge of teaching the topics "Language Learning as a Complex Adaptive System" (Part 1) and "Motivation" (Part 2) in the Applied Linguistics course at the School of Modern Foreign Languages (FALEM) at UFPA. I decided to cover each on separate days. On the first day, I encouraged creative openings in the class by letting the students revisit their English learning trajectories and then share their reflections, which could be perceived either as challenges to be overcome or threats to be avoided. Regardless of which scenario emerged during the sharing moment, I—as a teacher—was expected to give the students tools for them to explore their creative skills and find the learning goals which would increase motivation and enable them to perceive well-being in the language learning process.

In Part 1, the class explored the concept of language learning process as a Complex Adaptive System by discussing its characteristics of being non-linear, unpredictable, open, adaptive, and dynamic. We emphasized how interactions among agents (parents, teachers, students, peers, etc.) and different elements (objects, culture, emotions, social rules, etc.) shape our ability to think and act in the target language, while simultaneously influencing each other (Paiva, 2013). I then asked the students to reflect on their language learning journeys holistically, emphasizing relationships and processes over static structure. At this moment, I understood they needed to freely create a visual representation, such as a drawing or diagram to illustrate that.

In Part 2, I shifted the focus of the class to "Motivation." I began with a discussion of the concept, tracing its evolution within the field of language learning, and looking at it through the different perspectives related to it (social-psychological, cognitive, self and identity-based, sociodynamic). Grounded in Dörnyei's L2MSS theory (2005) and inspired by the idea of students envisioning different self-images, I introduced the students to the possible-self concept, including the actual self that was the "starting point" for the meditation exercise. Afterwards, I required them to draw a four-column chart on

paper, laptop, or cellphone and write about themselves in the following categories: the actual L2 Self, the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and L2 language learning experiences, respectively. Next, I instructed them to spend a few minutes getting focused on each column as soft music played in the background. I also asked them to move back and forward on the actual self while reflecting on the possible selves and their L2 learning experiences in the chart. Finally, the class was encouraged to close their eyes, breathe in and out, and visualize multiple versions of themselves, attending to their thoughts and feelings as they arose in the moment. At the sound of a bell, they opened their eyes and recorded the scenarios emerging in their minds.

The Participant

The participant in this research, Fred (pseudonym), had enrolled in the School of Foreign Modern Languages at UFPA in the second semester of 2021 at the age of 29. He was one of the students in the 2023 class, and I purposely invited him to participate in this study because I was impressed by the fact that he learned English on his own during the social isolation of COVID-19 pandemic, showing how autonomous and motivated he had been in his language learning journey. Fred was also learning Spanish and French.

Data Collection Procedures

To analyze the data, I used Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase thematic analysis, a method widely applied in social and human sciences research. I chose this approach because it focuses on making meaning from data through six steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data and identifying items of potential interest; (2) generating codes; (3) generating initial themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. In my study, Fred was invited to write two learning narratives, one for each class. I then applied the six steps to both texts, which I refer to as *Narrative 1* and *Narrative 2* throughout this story.

I immersed myself in the narratives to identify meaningful features related to well-being and motivation in language learning. First, I identified initial codes to label key aspects such as lack of passion, changes, becoming/transformation, and risk-taking. Then, I grouped them to form broader patterns, resulting in overarching themes. Each theme was reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the narratives. In doing so, I identified three main themes: (a) reflections followed by a perspective changing; (b) beliefs the individual should hold to prevent negative outcomes or achieve positive outcomes; and (c) the importance of creating a conducive learning environment. These were analysed through the *reflection-on-action* perspective (Schön, 1983), which means that the analysis focused on Fred's reflections after the meditation-based activity.

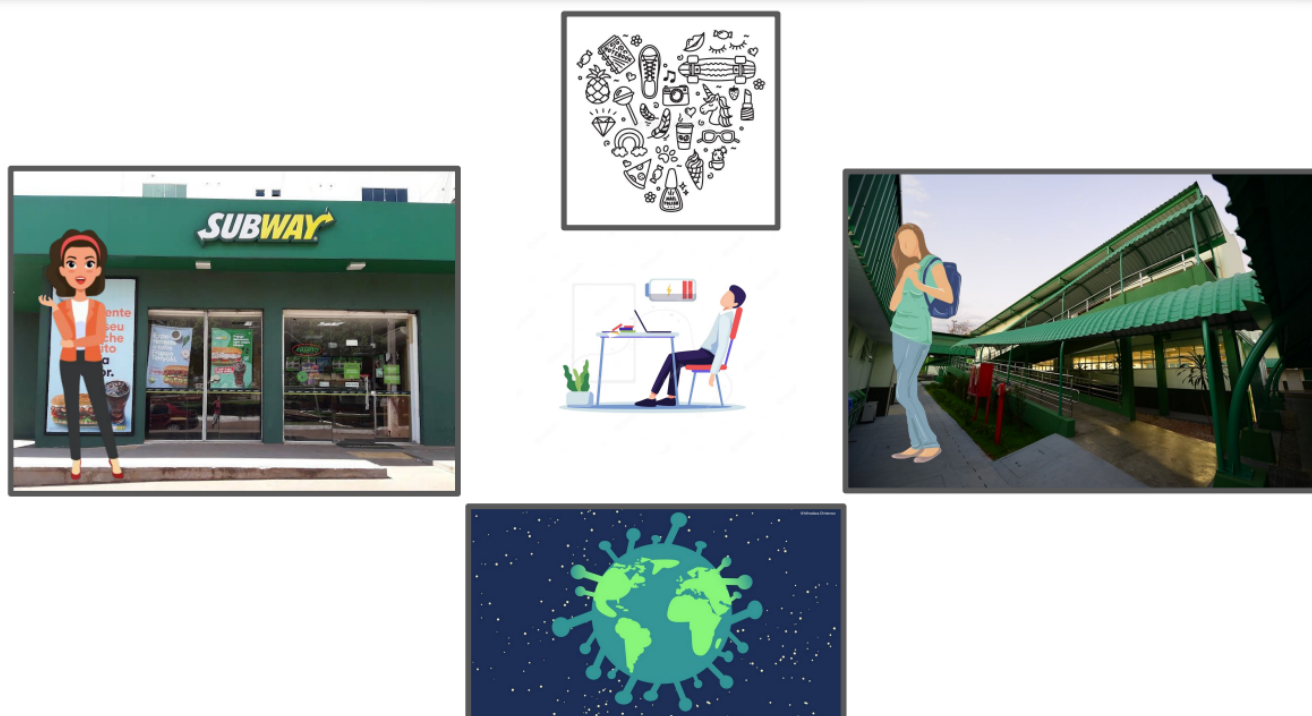
Discussion and Findings: Another Story, Another Student's Point of View

In this section, I explore the discussion and findings from the data analysis, focusing on the collage that Fred created in Part 1 and the chart in Part 2 of the meditation-based activity, which illustrate the *reflection-in-action* aspect. I also discuss the two narratives he wrote after classes, indicating some reflections on action that express that L2 learning experience. I emphasize that these four tools were interpreted together and intertwined throughout the analysis.

Fred's Creative Skills Through Tools

To illustrate his language learning journey, in Part 1 Fred opted to create a collage. Through this visual representation, he sought to illustrate that his language learning was influenced by numerous factors beyond the linguistic domain as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Fred's Visualization of His Language Trajectory



His collage depicts a situation that resulted from meeting an old friend by chance whom he chatted with at the entrance of a fast-food restaurant. Fred reported this in this way:

I remember that this friend spoke so passionately about the undergraduate biology program she was enrolled in that it drove me to reflect on the fact that I had never felt such a beautiful emotion like that towards any profession or field of studies. It was the starting point of a series of events which resulted in me now living in the capital of Pará and studying English, Spanish, and French so passionately and so hard to pursue that strong desire of becoming a good language teacher. (Fred's Narrative 1, 2023).

Concerning this situation, Dörnyei (2019, p. 20) asserts that the interest of the field of the L2MSS theory is "[...] trying to understand what energizes learners to initiate and then sustain the long journey of mastering a foreign/second language." Based on this, I argue that Fred's encounter with his colleague marked the beginning of his language journey and can be considered an example of an L2 learning experience.

My learning language journey began in a very different way, influenced not only by one single element but by various small elements that, in fact, did not have to do exactly with languages and resulted in big changes that led me into this language learning universe. That example illustrates how language learning can be seen through the lenses of Complexity in SLA, once it goes beyond examining the phenomenon of language learning as something isolated. It provides a wider view that considers the

influence of other elements, such as beliefs, emotions, identity, context, autonomy, culture, and so on in the language learning process. (Fred’s Narrative 1, 2023).

In the context of complex adaptive systems, narratives are crucial in making a retrospective of the past for understanding how systems adapt and evolve. Fred looked back on his own story, reflecting on how language learning is so complex in that various agents and elements interweave to influence the process, demonstrating its systemic nature. Also, through the meditative activity, he was able to perceive his language learning process by remembering that experience: “Participating in that meditation process helped me (to) relax and reach an overview of what was happening and what I was doing. I could unwind and step away from the chaotic world I was in. Despite the short duration, it brought some calm to my mind” (Fred’s Narrative 2, 2023).

In Part 2 of the activity, Fred created a chart that presented his L2 selves and served as a kind of list of the activities that he might consider mandatory to enhance his language skills (e.g., applying to a proficiency test, using apps) as a schema for him to elaborate his visions. Table 1 below illustrates Fred’s notes.

Table 1. Fred’s L2 selves

Actual L2 Self	Ideal L2 Self	Ought-To L2 Self	L2 Learning Experiences
Can communicate Can talk to anyone Can express myself Can give presentations	More confident More academic More fluid	Study to TOEFL Take more risks Use apps to talk	Conversation course TANDEM Studying to TOEFL

In the “Actual L2 Self” column, Fred recognizes his current abilities, such as being able to communicate, express himself, and give presentations in English. His “Ideal L2 Self” reflects his aspirations to become more confident, academic, and fluent, aiming to talk to anyone with ease. The “Ought-to L2 Self” highlights the actions he believes he should take to meet external expectations and personal responsibilities, such as studying for the TOEFL exam, taking more risks, and using language apps for speaking practice.

Finally, the “L2 Learning Experiences” column lists his ongoing efforts to improve, including participating in conversation courses, engaging in TANDEM language exchanges, and continuing his TOEFL preparation. From my point of view, it is important to highlight that connecting with people is also a significant aspect of the L2 learning experiences. For instance, when he encountered his colleague on the street and saw her happiness with her career, it prompted him to reflect on his own academic path. This experience led him to reconsider his studies and brought about certain turning points in his journey. I understand that these elements together provide a comprehensive view of how Fred perceives his current status, future goals, perceived obligations, and practical learning activities.

As a PhD student in charge of teaching those young adults, I felt delighted that Fred engaged in self-reflection and perspective-shifting during the meditation-based activity. I noticed that he was deeply engaged and motivated with his own language learning process. I demonstrate these aspects in Table 2 below, in which I explore the themes that emerged from the two narratives, highlighting aspects of well-being and motivation during these creative experiences. To support each theme, I have included in the table selected illustrative quotes from Fred’s narratives of learning.

Table 2. *Emerging themes from both narratives*

Themes	Fred's Reflection on Action	
1. Reflections followed by a perspective changing	I strongly believe that Complexity Theory can capture and explain my journey so far very well, demonstrating that the small event of talking to a friend led me to question my views on learning and career, disturbing a system very solid, which aroused bigger changes, with the introduction of new elements (Narrative 1)	In a student's life, it's easy to get lost in the daily life without much reflection, especially when managing family, work, and studies. Reflection is crucial to understand our desires, identifying what we are doing right or wrong, and adjusting our decisions correctly. (Narrative 2)
2. Beliefs the individual should hold to prevent negative outcomes or achieve positive outcomes	If it was not for a very complicated situation I had to deal with at work that day in January, I would not have left my workplace later, and I would not probably have met by chance a past friend at the entrance of a Subway fast-food restaurant. We walked some places in town and talked a lot. (Narrative 1)	I was conscious that some developments were needed as I didn't want to be just an ordinary speaker but rather a teacher. To achieve that, I had to study the language formally, aiming for fluency in academic English and overall language proficiency. I wanted to express myself more naturally, struggling less. (Narrative 2)
3. The importance of creating a conducive learning environment	The activity helped me take more risks and explore additional alternatives for studying and developing my language skills. It made me realize that I was too busy and needed to find more time to invest in my language studies. (Narrative 2)	This semester, I am determined to dedicate more time to language studies, take it easy, and invest more time and energy in learning languages (English, Spanish, and French). I love studying languages, it brings me joy, that is the reason that brought me here to this point of my life. The meditation activity definitely helped me achieve this level of awareness. (Narrative 2)

The thematic analysis characteristic of being detached from a specific theory allowed me to intertwine theories, as can be seen in this story of practice. In addition, I could have some flexibility in interpreting and reflecting on the themes in a creative and engaging way as I moved backwards and forwards in the analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2022), thematic analysis is not a linear approach but a recursive process in seeking to understand the participant's subjective experience.

For me, an interesting aspect of Fred's attitude is how he drives his reflections to a perspective-changing position. After revisiting some emotions from the past as well as desired projects and aspirations in the future, the learner elaborates self-images of himself that motivate him to change behavior and evaluate consequences. This is related to the "conditions necessary for self-images to energize motivation" (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 92), which Fred demonstrates throughout his narratives. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) assert that a desired future self-image must be:

- a. *available*: Fred seems to have a clear understanding of his ideal and ought-to self-guides as he communicates his desires. He also identifies what he is doing “right or wrong.”
- b. *differ from the current self*: Fred questions his own views of learning and career in order to put some efforts to realize his aspirations.
- c. *elaborate and vivid*: Fred details his future images in a way to explore additional alternatives for studying and developing language skills.
- d. *plausible*: By understanding his limitations and potentials, Fred is able to take more risks on his language learning process.
- e. *in harmony with the learner's social environment*: Fred's ideal and ought-to selves seem to be balanced in the purpose of his language learning development. It motivates him to become someone who is “part of the global community.”
- f. *effort-demanding*: Fred acknowledges that he was in need of finding more time to invest in his language studies.
- g. *be regularly activated in the learner's working*: Fred affirms that in order to be an English teacher, he needs to constantly study the language, aiming for proficiency.
- h. *accompanied by relevant and effective procedural strategies*: Fred mentions some strategies to learn the language such as using apps, studying for proficiency tests, seeking opportunities to speak in English.
- i. *offset by a counteracting feared possible self in the same domain*: Fred remembers how “tired out, stressed, and extremely busy” he was in that semester at the university, but, by participating in the meditation class, he “could unwind and step away” from the problems and become calm.

Fred reflected on how envisioning self-images gave him an overview of his learning process and studies. He could reflect on his desires, decisions, and ways to stay committed to language learning goals. It brought more of Fred to the practice as the visions of himself conveyed images “[...] that the learner will then internalize to some extent” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 88). I believe that it has become imperative to give room for students to be able to feel confidence and encouragement in higher education, so, the meditation-based activity was meant to be a practice for the student to self-regulate feelings and stay mentally open to positive thoughts as Fred affirms in Narrative 2:

I understood the importance of self-empathy, acknowledging that I was going through a tough time, and it was okay not to perform as well as I would in a more conducive environment for language studies. Nonetheless, I was proud of my achievements. (Fred's Narrative 2, 2023).

Another positive benefit that I considered was the enhancement of his sense of agency, because he believes that the more effort he puts in his learning process the more feasible and positive the outcomes might be. In accordance with Oxford (2018) and Sulis et al. (2022), being agentic empowers learners to make changes and nurture their well-being system as well as they learn from their experience and from the influences of the environment in a self-organizing movement.

The environment is another important aspect that can engage a student's emotions through the sense of belonging. Since creating a conducive learning environment is related to the learner's present experiences, their inclination to learn fluctuates based on their degree of integration within a community of practice (Fukada et al., 2022). According to Pavlenko & Norton (2007) and Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), belonging to a community also requires the learner's imagination, where their desires are able to expand and reach out to wider worlds. From my personal view, when Fred imagined himself as part of a community of practice

and envisioned moments of sudden realization, he could find the well-being necessary to sustain his motivation to keep learning. For instance, in Narrative 2, Fred highlighted his identity and abilities, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

I knew I could communicate, interact with others in English, share my ideas, and express myself. I wanted to become someone who was part of the global community and I knew I could achieve it. I was conscious that some developments were needed as I didn't want to be just an ordinary speaker but rather a teacher. (Fred's Narrative 2, 2023).

I did not mention this before, but at the end of Part 2 of the meditation-based activity, I read to the class a poem that I had written specially for the students. It talked about my own learning process while teaching them for the very first time at the university. To my surprise, a few weeks later, Fred and I ran into each other in the street and he told me he had started rewriting poems after my class. This lets me affirm that the meditation-based activity was a strategy to explore the creative openings in and beyond the classroom.

I am proud that the whole activity seemed all creativity-encouraging, including the discussion and material interactions (the chart, the collage, the meditation experience, the bell, etc.). This is an important part of enabling creativity—representing their language learning through another medium. The uncertainties that arose “in the moment” through the creative openings and are then reflected on served as a form of guidance for students' future decisions and actions.

Concluding Thoughts

Even though we could not predict what would emerge from Fred's L2 experience, we can say that the uncertainties that emerged from the meditation-based activity were aligned with the student's learning goals. By creating visions of successful possible selves, Fred perceived well-being as part of his language learning process. The learner showed kindness with his language learning process, managed stress, reflected about feelings and emotions, drove his reflections to a perspective-changing position, self-regulated his feelings, nurtured positive thoughts, enhanced his sense of agency, and developed a sense of belonging.

It would be necessary to undertake a longitudinal research study to measure how much of these aspects deeply reached Fred, but from a short-term perspective, his “here-and-now self” was motivated, because he expressed some desires for change, demonstrating his motivation for his language journey. In the meantime, Fred believes he can continue creating visions of himself and of his future to plan long-term progression.

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