Foreword

Dear Readers,

The 12th issue of SCENARIO comes with a specific Italian accent. Five articles are based on conference papers for *Plot me no Plots: Theatre in University Language Teaching* that took place at the University of Padua October 14-15, 2011, arranged by the *Dipartmento di Lingue e Letterature Anglo-Germaniche e Slave*. The organizer of the event, Fiona Dalziel, had outlined the goals of the conference in the Call for Papers as follows:

> The seminar aims to give those interested in the role of theatre in university second language education the opportunity to share their research, ideas and practical experiences. These could range from the use of drama techniques such as improvisation in the communicative language classroom to full-scale production of theatrical works, and may relate to the teaching of any modern language. Participants will be able to explore the relationship between theatre and language curricula from a number of different perspectives and reflect on the power of the stage in fostering language and intercultural learning.

Nicoletta Marini-Maio (Carlisle, PA) outlines the particular setting and focus of the conference and summarizes from her perspective which aspects of theatre-based foreign language teaching and learning are highlighted by the various contributors.

The following five articles relay specific forms of theatre-based language, literature, and culture education.

In their article *Looking for Henry: Improvisation and Storytelling in Foreign Language Theatre*, Fiona Dalziel (Università degli Studi di Padova) and Andrea Pennacchi (Padua) describe how they adapted Shakespeare's *Henry VI* (Part One) together with students of English at the University of Padua. Taking on a canonical play of this caliber is a real challenge for students, and the authors impressively retrace the different stages that led to a final performance, with particular focus on the students' and teachers' experiences during the process of adaptation.

In his article *Stuffed Pants – Staging Full-Scale Comic Plays with Students of Italian as a Foreign Language*, Filippo Fonio (Université de Grenoble) sheds light on the use of the comedy in the context of Teaching Italian as a Foreign Language. In his experience, staging comic plays particularly inspired students and got them to explore cultural-specific and also non-verbal and paralinguistic phenomena.

In *Engage or Entertain? The Nature of Teacher/Participant Collaboration in Process Drama for Additional Language Teaching*, Erika Piazzoli (Griffith University, Brisbane) explores the complexity of process drama. Based on her teaching experiences with both adult learners of Italian and continuing teacher education, she investigates the potential of the techniques "Teacher in Role" and "Mantle of the Expert." In the context of drama pedagogical language education, the author critically assesses the idea of the "teacher as entertainer" and instead advocates more research to be conducted in the concept of the "teacher as an artist."

Lorna Carson (Trinity College Dublin) approaches the focus of the conference from the perspective of language teaching and learning research. In her article *The Role of Drama in Task-Based Learning: Agency, Identity and Autonomy*, she theoretically investigates these three concepts within the task-based approach to foreign language teaching and learning. Following this, she connects these concepts to the evaluation of dramatic activities that were implemented in an "English for Academic Purposes" course for postgraduates at an Irish university. She concludes that dramatic activities meet the criteria of an "authentic task," thus catering to learners' needs and helping to support the foreign and second-language acquisition process.

Ivan Lombardi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano) leads SCEN-ARIO readers for the first time into digital spheres through his article *From the Curtain to the Façade: Enhancing ESL/EFL Learners' Communicative Competence through an Interactive Digital Drama*. He introduces the computer game, or rather, the "digital drama" *Façade* that, according to his experience, can play an important role in enhancing English language competence. Based on "ludic methodology," he demonstrates using the game in order to effectively achieve foreign language learning goals in line with the Common European Framework of Reference.

Following these five articles based on the Padua conference, the author team María Isabel Fernández García, Mercedes Ariza, Claudio Bendazzoli, Maria Giovanna Biscu, and Yvonne Grimaldi reflect on 20 years' experience with TiLLiT (Theatre in Language and Language in Theatre) in interpreter and translator training at the University of Bologna Forlì. In their article *The Effective Action of Theatre in the Educational Mapping of Linguistic and Intercultural Mediators*, they refer to final student theses that demonstrate how, through their engagement with theatre-based forms, these students acquired transferable skills that played an important role in their subsequent professional lives.

This issue closes with Gabriella Caponi-Doherty's (University College Cork) review of *Dramatic Interactions: Teaching Languages, Literatures, and Cultures through Theater – Theoretical Approaches and Classroom Practices*, edited by Colleen Ryan and Nicoletta Marini-Maio, and Micha Fleiner's (Pädagogische Hochschule, Freiburg) report of a conference at the University of Graz on *Drama als Methode – Theaterorientierte Unterrichtsformen in Schule und Universität* (Drama as a Method – Theatre-Based Education in Schools and Universities).

As in previous times, we precede this issue with our rubric *Texts Around*

Theatre. Again, we present a literary text, this time an excerpt from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "Bildungsroman" *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship"*.

We hope that this "Italian issue" provides you with new encouragement and stimulation and wish you all the best for the New Year 2013.

The editors

Manfred Schewe / Susanne Even

Vorwort

Liebe Leserinnen und Leser,

Diese 12. Ausgabe von SCENARIO ist stark italienisch akzentuiert. Fünf Artikel basieren auf Beiträgen zu der Tagung *Plot Me No Plots: Theatre in University Language Teaching*, die vom 14. bis 15. Oktober 2011 vom *Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Anglo-Germaniche e Slave* an der Universität Padua ausgerichtet wurde. Fiona Dalziel, Organisatorin der Tagung, hatte im 'Call for Papers' deren Ziel wie folgt umrissen:

> The seminar aims to give those interested in the role of theatre in university second language education the opportunity to share their research, ideas and practical experiences. These could range from the use of drama techniques such as improvisation in the communicative language classroom to full-scale production of theatrical works, and may relate to the teaching of any modern language. Participants will be able to explore the relationship between theatre and language curricula from a number of different perspectives and reflect on the power of the stage in fostering language and intercultural learning.

Nicoletta Marini-Maio (Dickenson College, Carlisle, PA, USA) vermittelt einen Eindruck von dem besonderen Ambiente und dem inhaltlichen Schwerpunkt dieser Tagung und fasst aus ihrer Perspektive kurz zusammen, welche Aspekte theaterbezogenen Fremdsprachenlehrens und -lernens in den verschiedenen Beiträgen beleuchtet wurden.

In den darauf folgenden fünf Artikeln werden von den jeweiligen Tagungsbeitragenden spezifische Formen theaterbezogener Sprach-, Literatur- und Kulturvermittlung vorgestellt.

Fiona Dalziel (Università degli Studi di Padova) thematisiert zusammen mit Andrea Pennacchi (Padua), wie sie zusammen mit Anglistik-Studierenden an der Universität Padua Shakespeares *Henry VI* (Part One) adaptierten. Ein Stück dieses kanonischen Kalibers zu adaptieren ist eine große Herausforderung für Studierende, und die AutorInnen zeichnen eindrucksvoll die einzelnen Etappen nach, die zur Aufführung vor einem Publikum führten. In ihrem Beitrag *Looking for Henry: Improvisation and Storytelling in Foreign Language Theatre* richten sie den Blick insbesondere auf die Erfahrungen, die im Prozess der Adaptionsarbeit von Studierenden und Lehrenden gemacht werden.

Filippo Fonio (Université de Grenoble) setzt sich in seinem Beitrag *Stuffed Pants – Staging Full-Scale Comic Plays with Students of Italian as a Foreign Language* mit dem Aspekt der Komik auseinander. Er beschreibt seine Erfahrungen mit der Aufführung von komischen Stücken im Rahmen des Italienisch als Fremdsprachenunterrichts. Dazu gehört, dass die Studierenden sich durch

solche Stücke besonders begeistern lassen und sich bei Einstudierung und Aufführung des komischen Stückes intensiv mit kulturspezifischen, speziell auch nonverbalen und paralinguistischen Phänomenen auseinandersetzen.

Erika Piazzoli (Griffith University, Brisbane) richtet den Fokus in ihrem Beitrag *Engage or Entertain? The Nature of Teacher/Participant Collaboration in Process Drama for Additional Language Teaching* auf die komplexe Inszenierungsform Process Drama und beleuchtet anhand ihrer Unterrichtserfahrungen mit erwachsenen Italienischlernern bzw. Fortbildungspraxis mit Italienischlehrern insbesondere das Potenzial der Inszenierungstechniken *'Teacher in Role* und *Mantle of the Expert*. Im Kontext einer dramapädagogischen Gestaltung von Fremdsprachenunterricht sieht die Autorin ein Verständnis von "teacher as entertainer" als problematisch an und plädiert dafür, Forschunganstrengungen verstärkt auf die weitere Erkundung des Konzepts "teacher as artist" zu lenken.

Lorna Carson (Trinity College Dublin) nähert sich dem Schwerpunkt der Tagung aus Sprachlehr-/lernforschungsperspektive und setzt sich in ihrem Beitrag *The Role of Drama in Task-Based Learning: Agency, Identity and Autonomy* auf dem Hintergrund eines aufgabengestützten Fremdsprachenunterrichts zunächst theoretisch mit den Konzepten Agens, Identiät und Autonomie auseinander. Im zweiten Teil ihres Beitrags bezieht sie diese Konzepte auf die Evaluation von dramatischen Aktivitäten, die im Rahmen eines *English for Academic Purposes*-Kurses für Postgraduierte an einer irischen Universität durchgeführt wurden. Sie kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass dramatische Aktivitäten die Kriterien einer "authentischen Aufgabe" erfüllen, somit Lernerbedürfnissen entgegen kommen und den Fremd- und Zweitsprachenerwerbsprozess voran treiben helfen.

Ivan Lombardi (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano) führt SCENARIO-Leserinnen und Leser mit seinem Beitrag *From the Curtain to the Façade: Enhancing ESL/EFL Learners' Communicative Competence through an Interactive Digital Drama* erstmalig in digitale Sphären. Er stellt das Computerspiel bzw. "digitale Drama" *Façade* vor, das seiner Erfahrung nach eine wichtige Rolle bei der Förderung der englischen Sprachkompetenz spielen kann. Auf dem Hintergrund einer spielorientierten Methodik ("ludic methodology") demonstriert er, wie das Spiel eingesetzt werden kann, um fremdsprachenunterrichtliche Ziele im Sinne des Europäischen Referenzrahmens effektiv zu erreichen.

Im Anschluss an diese fünf Artikel, die aus der Konferenz an der Universität Padua hervorgegangen sind, reflektiert das Autorenteam María Isabel Fernández García, Mercedes Ariza, Claudio Bendazzoli, Maria Giovanna Biscu und Yvonne Grimaldi in dem Beitrag *The Effective Action of Theatre in the Educational Mapping of Linguistic and Intercultural Mediators* über 20 Jahre Erfahrung mit TiLLiT (Theatre in Language and Language in Theatre) im Rahmen der Übersetzer- und Dolmetscherausbildung an der Univeristät Bologna Forlì. Spannend daran ist, dass dabei auf Abschlussarbeiten von Studierenden Bezug genommen wird, in denen deutlich wird, wie sie durch die Mitwirkung an theaterbezogener Arbeit übertragbare Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten entwickelt haben, die für ihren beruflichen Werdegang eine wichtige Rolle gespielt haben.

Die Ausgabe wird abgerundet durch Gabriella Caponi-Doherty's (University College Cork) Rezension des von Colleen Ryan und Nicoletta Marini-Maio 2011 herausgegebenen Buches *Dramatic Interactions: Teaching Languages, Literatures, and Cultures through Theater —Theoretical Approaches and Classroom Practices* und Micha Fleiners (Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg) Bericht über eine Konferenz an der Universität Graz zum Thema *Drama als Methode: Theaterorientierte Unterrichtsformen in Schule und Universität*.

Wie in vorherigen Ausgaben stellen wir zu Anfang der Ausgabe in der Spalte *Texte ums Theater* wieder einen literarischen Text vor, diesmal einen Auszug aus Johann Wolfgang von Goethes Bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96).

Wir hoffen, dass von dieser "italienischen Ausgabe" viele neue Anregungen ausgehen und verbleiben mit den besten Wünschen für das Neue Jahr 2013.

Das Herausgabeteam

Manfred Schewe / Susanne Even

Theatre's Impact on Wilhelm Meister

Now, this harmonious cultivation of my nature, which has been denied me by birth, is exactly what I most long for. Since leaving thee, I have gained much by voluntary practice: I have laid aside much of my wonted embarrassment, and can bear myself in very tolerable style. My speech and voice I have likewise been attending to; and I may say, without much vanity, that in society I do not cause displeasure. But I will not conceal from thee, that my inclination to become a public person, and to please and influence in a larger circle, is daily growing more insuperable. With this, there is combined my love for poetry and all that is related to it; and the necessity I feel to cultivate my mental faculties and tastes, that so, in this enjoyment henceforth indispensable, I may esteem as good the good alone, as beautiful the beautiful alone. Thou seest well, that for me all this is nowhere to be met with except upon the stage; that in this element alone can I effect and cultivate myself according to my wishes. On the boards a polished man appears in his splendor with personal accomplishments, just as he does so in the upper classes of society; body and spirit must advance with equal steps in all his studies; and there I shall have it in my power at once to be and seem as well as anywhere. If I further long for solid occupations, we have there mechanical vexations in abundance: I may give my patience daily exercise.

From: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*, Vol. I (of 2), Book V, Chapter 3. Translated by Thomas Carlyle, The Project Gutenberg eBook - http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/36483/pg36483.txt - 2.12.2012

In this rubric we present various perspectives on theatre – historical and contemporary, intercultural and culture-specific, unexpectedly weird, unusually suspenseful, disturbedly gripping, fascinatingly enigmatic . . .

Die Wirkung von Theater auf Wilhelm Meister

Ich habe nun einmal gerade zu jener harmonischen Ausbildung meiner Natur, die mir meine Geburt versagt, eine unwiderstehliche Neigung. Ich habe, seit ich dich verlassen, durch Leibesübung viel gewonnen; ich habe viel von meiner gewöhnlichen Verlegenheit abgelegt und stelle mich so ziemlich dar. Ebenso habe ich meine Sprache und Stimme ausgebildet, und ich darf ohne Eitelkeit sagen, daß ich in Gesellschaften nicht mißfalle. Nun leugne ich dir nicht, daß mein Trieb täglich unüberwindlicher wird, eine öffentliche Person zu sein und in einem weiteren Kreise zu gefallen und zu wirken. Dazu kömmt meine Neigung zur Dichtkunst und zu allem, was mit ihr in Verbindung steht, und das Bedürfnis, meinen Geist und Geschmack auszubilden, damit ich nach und nach auch bei dem Genuß, den ich nicht entbehren kann, nur das Gute wirklich für gut und das Schöne für schön halte. Du siehst wohl, daß das alles für mich nur auf dem Theater zu finden ist und daß ich mich in diesem einzigen Elemente nach Wunsch rühren und ausbilden kann. Auf den Brettern erscheint der gebildete Mensch so gut persönlich in seinem Glanz als in den oberen Klassen; Geist und Körper müssen bei jeder Bemühung gleichen Schritt gehen, und ich werde da so gut sein und scheinen können als irgend anderswo. Suche ich daneben noch Beschäftigungen so gibt es dort mechanische Quälereien genug, und ich kann meiner Geduld tägliche Übung verschaffen.

Aus: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. In: *Goethe. Berliner Ausgabe 10. Poetische Werke. Romane und Erzählungen II*. Berlin 1988, Aufbau-Verlag, 304-305

In dieser Rubrik Texte ums Theater *stellen wir historische und zeitgenössische, kulturübergreifende bzw. -spezifische, unvermutet schräge, ungewöhnlich spannende, verstörend mitreißende, faszinierend schillernde etc. Perspektiven aufs Theater vor.*

Theatrical Plots in a Spectacular Setting

An Introduction to the Padua Conference

Nicoletta Marini-Maio

Palazzo del Bo is an impressive historical building that hosts part of the University of Padua. At the Bo, you may walk through the huge Sala dei Quaranta [Room of the Forty], so called because of the portraits of forty famous foreign students, such as Copernicus, who attended courses at this prestigious university. Then, you can stop before the podium from which Galileo Galilei used to teach math and physics between 1592 and 1610. Finally, you may enter the Teatro anatomico [Anatomic theater], the first place in the world where students of medicine could carry out research on dissected bodies: the anatomic table is still there, surrounded by six circular wooden tiers of three hundred seats. This was the spectacular scenario of the international seminar *Plot me no plots: theatre in university language teaching* (Padua, October 14-15, 2011),[1] an inspiring opportunity to compare research findings, methods, and pedagogical perspectives with a very special group of colleagues teaching foreign languages through drama and theater in a number of countries across the world. [2]

The materials presented were varied as the audience had the opportunity to listen to lectures, watch clips in several languages from actual play productions, and discuss or practice innovative drama activities. Finally, both days a group of international students from the University of Padua directed by Pierantonio Rizzato, actor and director, entertained the participants with dramatic interludes in the style of commedia dell'arte. The combination of research-based and performance-driven presentations in the theatrical setting of Palazzo del Bo permeated the event with an exhilarating theater-within-the-theater feeling, which transpired through the participants' easiness – and willingness – to span from theoretical approaches to class practices and impro sessions.

The ample spectrum of contributions presented in *Plot me no plots* had the impressive effect of putting in perspective the pedagogical discourses and cutting-edge methods that cross the teaching and learning of the foreign language through theater in several countries across the world. I would like to

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[1] I would like to thank Fiona Dalziel wholeheartedly for organizing this wonderful seminar, the Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Germaniche e Slave of the University of Padua for sponsoring it, and all the speakers and participants for gathering in Padua to share views on teaching the foreign language through drama theatre. I would also take this opportunity to thank Colleen Ryan for being my long-time companion in the exploration of theatre and drama in the teaching of foreign languages. She could not participate in the conference, and I deeply missed her insightful reflection during this fascinating experience.

[2] The detailed program of the seminar, with the speakers' names and their talks' titles is available online at http://www.maldura.unipd.it/theatreandlanguageteaching/ (accessed on June 2, 2012).

draw attention to three main directions of research and pedagogical practices that emerged from the seminar: 1.) the novelty – and necessity – of quantitative research in exploring the potential of theater in foreign language learning, 2.) the perceived effectiveness of theater in embodying and understanding the cultural "other," 3.) the pedagogical emphasis on a stress-free learning environment, positive group dynamics, and lowering of the affective barriers.

Data collection and analysis was the main focus of a few presentations that illustrated research or case studies of different scope and extent. Lorna Carson shared the outcomes of her quantitative and qualitative investigation on the processes of "designing and delivering dramatic tasks" and the related products of "language output and assessment" within the framework of task-based learning.[3] While several scholars have analyzed the notions of process and product in the field of theater in foreign language teaching (cf. Les Essif 2008: 7-12, Marini-Maio and Ryan-Scheutz 2010: 16-17, Moody 2002; Ryan-Scheutz 2010: 295), Carson's detailed discussion of the structure of a theatrical task-based learning activity and of its assessment – with reference to the psychological and cultural concepts of agency, identity, and autonomy – shed new light on the potential of theater as a pedagogical tool and offered invaluable inputs for further pedagogical experiments. Donatella Mazza's, Ariel Schindewolf's, and Michaela Reinhardt's presentations on theater-based experiments, respectively, in German, Spanish, and English, also had a substantial quantitative focus, showing the growing importance of collecting data in drama-based activity within the field of foreign language acquisition.

Embodying the cultural "Other" has been for a long time the main focus of my own work on teaching and learning Italian through theater, and I was very pleased to be invited to present a paper on the role of theater in intercultural understanding in our "cosmopolitan" world (cf. K. A. Appiah 2006). With specific examples from my Antigoni Italian theater project,[4] I argued that theater allows the members of its community to move between and experience different cultural environments, thus encouraging the appropriation of the Other's cultural codes (cf. Ryan and Marini-Maio 2012: 1-4).[5] In the field of Theater Studies, the notion of theater as an intercultural production has been examined extensively, but only recently has it become a central concept in foreign language learning as well. The participants showed great sensitivity to this topic, which was very relevant throughout the seminar. Maryann Henck's, Elzbieta Szczawinska and Adriana Wojcieszyn's, and Teresa Zonno's presentations centered on intercultural understanding as well. Although in different ways, since their projects diverged in their scope and content, Szczawinska, Wojcieszyn, and Zonno interestingly related to the idea of unity – or disunity – in Europe, showing that the pedagogy of theater in foreign

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[3] The quotes are extracts from the packet of abstracts distributed at the seminar.

[4] Please see my chapter Re-Creating *Antigoni*: Promoting Intercultural Understanding through Empathy in Ryan and Marini-Maio 2012: 295-326.

[5] Besides many others important contributions, I would like at least to mention Patrice Pavis's analytical work (cf. Pavis 2001). Recently, Pavis re-discussed the intercultural role of theater in the globalized world (cf. Pavis 2010).

language learning has strong connections with the real world.

Most of the speakers described case studies illustrating the effectiveness of theater in enhancing foreign language learning by means of specific techniques, such as psychodramaturgy, use of masks, humor, computer games, process drama and other improvisation activities, child imitation, and internet-based theatrical activities. Notwithstanding the great variety of their approaches and materials, they all emphasized the psychological effects that their theatrical techniques had on learners: positive group dynamics, (Maria del Carmen Arau Ribeiro), a stress-free learning environment (Ivan Lombardi, Elzbieta Szczawinska, Adriana Wojcieszyn), the lowering of the psychological barriers (Filippo Fonio, Andreas Häcker, Christopher Mitchell, Erika C. Piazzoli), enhanced bodily communication (Filippo Fonio).

The speakers came from Great Britain, Ireland, Poland, Germany, Italy, France, USA, and Australia. It was extremely interesting exchanging approaches and methods applied in contexts that differ in their pedagogical conventions, economic resources, and other geo-social reasons. *Plot me no plots* clearly showed that theater in foreign language education is becoming a well-established academic field and a specialized pedagogical practice led by experienced instructors. The specialists using theater as a transformative teaching and learning experience have achieved the goal of giving "an authoritative voice to their innovative pedagogical practices," which was not the case a few years ago, when they were still "reluctant" to stand up as a specialized community in the field of foreign language education (cf. Marini-Maio 2010: 239).

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Looking for Henry: Improvisation and Storytelling in Foreign-Language Theatre

Fiona Dalziel Andrea Pennacchi

Abstract

This article describes the role of improvisation and storytelling in a student production of Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part One* at Padua University. It explains why the student directing the play and language instructor chose this challenging piece and how they attempted to increase engagement with the project by involving the participants directly in text adaptation. The article explores the improvisation and storytelling activities proposed to the students, which had the aim of fostering their language competence and creating strong group dynamics while familiarising them with the play. These tasks formed the basis of the final version for performance, which consisted in a selection of the original scenes together with some novel scenes, linked together by short narratives produced by the students themselves. In describing this experience, the authors reflect on the benefits of the multidisciplinary nature of foreign language drama, where influences as diverse as Bertolt Brecht, Peter Brook and Bruce Lee can converge in a truly learner-centred approach to second language acquisition.

1   Introduction

The reflections that the authors of this paper wish to share with fellow practitioners have been gleaned from their experiences with the Padua University English Drama Workshop (for further details see Dalziel et al. 2011), and in particular from the performance of *Roses (the war of . . .)*, the group's own adaptation of *Henry VI, Part One* by William Shakespeare in 2001. As the programme notes that accompanied the show declared:

> The performance is a semi-serious study of *Henry VI, Part One*, by William Shakespeare. The play tells of the political struggles between English nobles leading up to the famous Wars of the Roses and terrible war between England and France, famous for the role of two heroic figures: the brave Talbot on one side and the heroine par excellence, Joan of Arc, on the other. The English theatre group set out to deconstruct the play, performing a selection of scenes and exploring the potential of the figure of the narrator. The whole group participated in the adaptation of the text and the narrative sections.

The workshop was an extra-curricular activity and the majority of participants were studying on a four-year degree course in Modern Languages and Literature, ranging from first to fourth-year students. However, there were also members of the group from other faculties such as Political Science. In this particular year, there were 18 participants, of whom three were taking part in the workshop for the third or fourth year, and three for the second year; of the remaining participants, one had attended other acting courses, while the rest had no or very little previous acting experience. The final performance was open to the general public and was attended by friends, family members, university and school staff and students.

The production of this play represented the workshop's first departure from contemporary theatre, although members had previously had a taste of the Bard through Stoppard's *15-minute Hamlet*. The role of Fiona Dalziel in the project was that of general co-ordinator and language instructor, while Andrea Pennacchi was responsible for the initial theatrical training of participants and directed the play. This paper will focus on two important features of the workshop, improvisation and storytelling, highlighting how these served to foster the development of students' performance and language skills, and gave them the opportunity to give vent to their creativity and express their emotions.

As Marini-Maio (2010: 239) notes, those involved in full-scale foreign-language productions "generally are reluctant to give an authoritative voice to their innovative pedagogical practices", and yet this field, which is by nature interdisciplinary, has the potential to bring together expertise from numerous different areas. In the case described here, the weekly sessions leading up to the final performance were *co-taught* by two practitioners, bringing to the drama workshop a wealth of wide-ranging interests, experiences and influences. The language instructor had been teaching English to language degree students at Padua University for over ten years and had been coordinating the theatre workshop since its conception three years before. At the time, she was attracted by the social-constructivist view of learning, a perspective which values all learners' previous knowledge in the belief that "reflection on experience can lead to personal change" and that such change occurs in a social context so that "our development will be framed by the relationships and dialogue that are available to us" (Roberts 1998: 44). Thus in her university courses, she was attempting to foster learner reflection on the process of language learning in a collaborative and learner-centred environment. With respect to her own professional development, she was intrigued by the concept of reflective practices in language teacher education and the concept of "ownership". Bailey et al. (1996: 25) argue that the "ownership principle" means "that by giving students a voice in the classroom decision-making process, the teacher fosters a feeling of joint control and personal involvement." The director, on the other hand, was about to embark upon a PhD in Medieval English Literature, while at the same time keeping alive his interest in the theatre by attending numerous workshops in Italy and abroad. His main influences in that period derived from the actor Mamadou Dioume, directors Peter Brook and Eimuntas Nekrosius,

and the Italian storyteller Marco Baliani. Another, and perhaps somewhat surprising, source of inspiration was Bruce Lee, including the martial arts expert's following maxims:

- Research your own experience.

- Absorb what is useful.

- Reject what is useless.

- Add what is specifically *your own*. (our italics)

As will be made clear in this paper, ideas of *ownership*, coming from very different sources, were guiding principles in the workshop, bringing together the language instructor and director in an approach which placed learner agency, autonomy and identity (Carson in this issue) at the forefront, and allowing the workshop participants to discover things by themselves, so that the *sages on the stage* were indeed the students themselves.

2   Choosing Henry

In selecting texts for full-scale performance, foreign-language theatre practitioners have to take into account the level of competence, aims and interests of participants. Choosing a contemporary text will clearly give students the opportunity to work with language which they may perceive as useful and relevant, especially if their main aim of attending the workshop is that of improving their language skills. Moreover, as Fonio and Genicot (2011: 83) note, the cultural content will probably be "more up-to-date". The workshop described here had strong ties with the university's Department of English and German Language and Literature (see also Dalziel et al. 2011), and the participants were mostly students taking a modern-language degree course with a strong literary focus, including the study of Elizabethan theatre. However, despite the undoubted appeal of Shakespeare for the group, one might have expected the choice of a better-known, more popular play, and one which is easier to perform. In fact, one of the first entries of the logbook that the director kept throughout the two-semester workshop read as follows:

> *Henry VI*, a nasty piece of work. Shakespeare still heavily influenced by Marlowe. English national history, with no interest whatsoever for an Italian audience (except perhaps for the bits with Joan of Arc), a violent and nationalistic soap opera, full of names and characters.

And yet it was the director who had suggested the play to the language instructor for that year's performance, for a number of reasons. During his studies of Beckett, he had been struck by the *cleverness* of writing theatre in a foreign language in order to escape from all temptation of rhetoric, a temptation

ingrained in the use of one's mother tongue. At the same time, the multicultural
actor and singer Moni Ovadia had praised the then newly-founded English
Theatre group, not only because of the enormous teaching opportunities it
opened up, but also because it provided a space for acting and telling a story
in which the actors (and the director) were distanced from the routine and
clichés associated with their native language by expressing themselves in a
foreign language, one with a different rhythm, pace and sound. In other
words, he had come to appreciate the power of foreign-language theatre in
bringing about *estrangement*, to use Brecht's term. Thus his thoughts turned
to a play which he felt to be the most Brechtian of Shakespeare's plays, where
Shakespeare appears to be criticising, almost parodying, the cult of the hero
(as Brecht does in *Galileo*). He felt that *Henry VI, Part One* would provide a
very strong distancing effect, especially for an Italian audience, accentuated
by the historical distance, and that this would enable the audience to reflect
on the nature of power and human conduct. He thought that a possible side
effect might be that, not being emotionally involved in the historical events
themselves, the students would be able to concentrate on the language, the
story and the emotions of the characters.

Proposing *Henry VI, Part One* to a group of students who were taking part in
an extra-curricular activity, where intrinsic motivation was the sole reason for
participation was clearly a challenge. Indeed, for the workshop organisers, the
appeal of the play lay also in the challenge itself. The text needed to be adapted
to make it accessible for an Italian audience; the task of the language instructor
and director was to involve the students themselves in this process. As Fonio
and Genicot (2011: 83) affirm:

> [. . .] staging a foreign language play that presents a certain degree of
> linguistic and cultural thickness offers the teacher a series of possibilities
> when working with students to adapt (part of) the text, to readjust its
> dialogues for a certain audience, or to study cultural materials from the
> same area or tradition which could enrich the staging or clarify difficult
> scenes [. . .]

The following sections will illustrate how, by means of improvisation and
storytelling techniques, the student-actors also became student-dramatists,
how they got inside the history play and transformed it into something of their
own, how they mixed Shakespearean and modern English, and how they finally
realised that they all had a story to tell.

3   Improvising Henry

Improvisational activities may be introduced into foreign language teaching in a
number of different ways, ranging from the use of drama games in the classroom
(see for example Maley and Duff 1982) to improvisational theatre workshops
(Matthias 2007). When the aim of a drama project is to put on a full-scale
production in the target language based on a scripted play, improvisation is often

an important part of the warm-up activities learners engage in before roles are assigned and parts memorised (MacDonald 2011). Many of the advantages of getting students to improvise are identical to those derived from such activities in theatre education in the mother tongue, including the encouragement of spontaneity, creativity, risk-taking and collaboration to name but a few. As Spolin (1999: 4), in her inspiring exploration of improvisation, reminds us:

> Spontaneity is the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly. In this reality the bits and pieces of ourselves function as an organic whole. It is the time of discovery, of experiencing, of creative expression.

Keith Johnstone, whose work on status has been of great value, reminds us that "every inflection and movement implies a status, and [. . .] no action is due to chance, or really 'motiveless'" (1981: 33). By introducing the concept of status into improvisation, he argues that scenes can become more "authentic".

For the foreign-language instructor involved in drama projects, it soon becomes clear that many of the benefits that can be derived from improvisational activities fit well with theories and approaches to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and language teaching. One important feature of improvisation activities is that they represent authentic tasks, although in somewhat different ways depending on their role and aim. First of all, as with simple role-play tasks, learners may be required to improvise "real-life" situations; in the classroom, however, performing these short scenes in front of the class, albeit entertaining, remains a "classroom" activity. In the theatre workshop, when small groups are asked to improvise in front of their peers, they are engaging in a truly authentic drama task. It should be noted, however, that the scenes they act out may at times be far from "real-life": while some activities are based on "ordinary" events from everyday life, others require students to envisage the most far-fetched scenarios, such as a television interview with Little Red Riding Hood, Frankenstein or Joan of Arc. Clear parallels can be drawn between improvisation and task-based learning: learners are provided with the "who" and "where" of a situation, and have to solve a problem successfully (Matthias 2007) in a process that will involve aspects of SLA such as production of comprehensible output, hypothesis testing and negotiation of meaning. It is important to note that the task will be deemed successful if a group manages to engage and amuse their peers, rather than if the teacher/instructor praises their language use. Thus, rather than being afraid of making mistakes, learners will be encouraged to take those risks which are so beneficial to language learning.

"In any form of art we seek the experience of going beyond what we already know" (Spolin 1999: 16). Spolin is speaking about "physicalization", which may be seen as particularly important in foreign-language drama. It is well known that effective communication is dependent on both verbal and nonverbal language, and improvisation brings physical expression to the fore. Learners come to understand the importance of the whole body in communication, and "physical mutual intelligibility" (Fonio and Genicot 2011: 81) is encouraged.

As MacDonald (2011: 271) notes: "The notion of presence as a whole and complete person is essential to improvisation." Moreover, the element of fun involved also giving learners the opportunity to lower their affective filter (Marini-Maio 2010) and build up their confidence, both in their acting skills and in their language competence (Nunley 2011). The motivation deriving from the sheer hilarity of many improvisation tasks is heightened by the collaboration involved. Spolin (1999: 9) notes that a "healthy group relationship demands a number of individuals working interdependently to complete a given project with full individual participation and personal contribution". This mirrors the view of autonomy in language learning, seen as something implying learning both with and from one's peers (Little et al. 2002).

Language learning also requires the acquisition of pragmatic, or sociolinguistic, competence, which can also be fostered by improvisation activities, especially with Johnstone's (1981) attention to *status* in mind. As Matthias (2007: 56) affirms, "Role-plays and skits encourage students to understand language as a system of communicative choices". By focusing on the role relationships implicit in any given scene, learners can be helped to understand the subtleties of register variation (Dodson 2002: 161) and to pay attention to appropriate language use. Finally, if the ultimate aim of a drama workshop is the staging of a scripted play, improvisation can also serve the purpose of familiarising students with a literary text and getting under the skin of the characters (Fonio and Genicot 2011). It can be a valuable means of generating ideas for possible text adaptation on the part of the participants themselves (MacDonald 2011; Moody 2002; Hegman Shier 2002), thus fostering what may be termed "devised theatre".

In working towards the student performance of *Henry VI, Part One*, the director proposed a number of improvisation activities loosely based on the events in Shakespeare's play, in particular on the opening scene, in which three messengers arrive during the funeral of King Henry V, bringing progressively worse news about the war with France (*I Henry VI*). In the first improvised sketch, which students performed before having read the play itself, the "where" was the kitchen of an unspecified lord, and the "who" were the kitchen staff and three messengers. The instructions were simply that during a normal day's work, three messengers passed by the kitchen one after the other on their way to take their news to members of the nobility; each brought more disastrous tidings than the previous one, just as in the original text. It was the task of those working in the kitchen to react to the news without neglecting their duties. Thus the participants could experience the emotions arising from the text, albeit as players of a different status from those in Shakespeare's first scene.

After having read the first act of the play, the students improvised a variation on this first theme, which forced them to reflect on the tensions emerging right from the start of the play between the Duke of Gloucester and the Bishop of Winchester as a result of their political ambitions. In this improvisation activity, the situation was identical but half of the members of the kitchen staff were asked to pretend to be supporters of Gloucester, while the others were to

reveal their partiality for Winchester. While the students rushed around the steamy surroundings from one roasting spit to another, what began as simple affirmations of allegiance grew into an outright war of words, which got more and more heated as the amounting failures in France became apparent. The experience was exhilarating for all involved and also served the purpose of highlighting the power struggles of Shakespeare's protagonists. A third and final variation saw the students (most of whom were indeed female) transformed into women of the court, including "lovers" of Gloucester or Winchester, looking at events from a new perspective and once again bickering over preferences.

Improvisational activities such as these saw students actively engaged in their theatrical and language learning, creating characters and expressing emotion with their whole bodies. In other words, they could be said to have been *researching their own experience* (to go back to the Lee's maxims quoted above), or, in a social constructivist perspective, making sense of previous knowledge by means of social interaction. At the same time, they became familiar with some of the underlying themes of the text, such as the petty squabbles arising from the desperate struggle for political power, and yet these were accompanied with a great deal more laughter than one might expect from one of Shakespeare's history plays.

4   Telling Henry

One of the entries in the director's logbook read: *"C'è molto racconto in Shakespeare"*, which can be translated as "There's a lot of story in Shakespeare". This reflection led to the decision to help students get into the play by means of storytelling. To start with, after having read the entire play (most students using an edition which had the Italian translation alongside the original), participants were asked to tell the group members which was their "favourite" scene of all. They were given a week to prepare to tell the story of this scene, which they did sitting in a circle on the stage; the story was to last no longer than 3 or 4 minutes. The benefits of such an activity were numerous: the students realised that telling a story effectively so as to convince their peers that theirs really was a "great" scene was challenging, especially in the target language. It involved their overall communicative competence but also narrative skills such as selecting what exactly to "tell" and transforming one scene into a complete story, with beginning, middle and end. As Johnstone (1981: 113) notes, university students may not understand storytelling as well as small children do, so the activity aimed to help them to re-discover and re-acquire a skill perhaps lost over the years. Another vital component was that of listening; very often when pair or group work is carried out in the foreign-language classroom, learners are so intent on their own contribution that they do not pay attention to their peers, thus depriving the communicative event of authenticity. Yet, as the director noted at the time "in order to tell a story, we all must learn to listen to stories", and the result was that the storytelling activity came to resemble in some ways a "group therapy session" (director's logbook). A final

task consisted in attempting to tell the entire plot of the play in less than two minutes: those brave enough to take up the challenge were rewarded with their peer's appreciative laughter.

A further storytelling-related activity proposed by the director was inspired by Marowitz (1990). Students were asked to choose extracts from the monologues of the play, learn them by heart and perform them in front of their peers in a variety of ways or in different imagined settings. So a "story" from the play could be told in a hurry, as a fairy tale or whilst drinking coffee, re-arranging a room, looking for something, singing or cleaning the floor. One memorable example was that of the chivalric hero Talbot announcing his plans to surprise the French in Orléans as if he were selling *Tupperware*. Making use of the concept of estrangement, the activity had a surprisingly quick and strong effect on the students' skills: by concentrating on an action incompatible with the words spoken to the point of absurdity, they resisted the temptation to "over-act" which can be strong in the rendition of monologues, and acquired a higher degree of naturalness in their language use. In this way, they managed to get closer to the characters they were playing, moving in the direction of a combination of distance and empathy, which characterises the performances of the Italian storyteller Marco Baliani (Marini-Maio 2011), whose work the director greatly admires. The final aim of the storytelling tasks was to help the group decide to select scenes from the original play for their adapted version. At this point the students had *absorbed what they felt to be useful* and so could proceed to *reject what they deemed useless*. This will be further explored in the following section.

5 Assembling Henry

> Quando metti in scena Shakespeare hai sempre l'impressione di costruire giocattoli con pezzi di bomba atomica.

> When you put on Shakespeare, you always get the impression that you are building toys out of pieces of an atomic bomb.

> (director's logbook)

The activities described above helped students to acquire an idea about their own Henry, but what they had in their hands was a jigsaw which still had to be pieced together. In the process of assembling the pieces, the students first picked the scenes of the play they wished to perform, basing their choices on the improvisation and storytelling activities they had taken part in. These scenes were then shortened and the language simplified by the language instructor (see Dalziel at al., 2011, for how in later years, this process was also undertaken by the participants themselves). To these, the students added others that were original and inspired by their improvisations. For example, we saw the English preparing to attack the French in a Second-World War bunker, with red and

blue magnets being moved around a whiteboard to indicate losses and gains of cities.

The scenes were stitched together with short narratives providing the missing details required for the audience to follow the plot; these were written by the students who were to perform them and thus the participants themselves became the playwrights. For example, after the first scene, the student playing the part of the Bishop of Winchester remained on the stage and was joined by one of the messengers. Their narrative began as follows:

A: Paola, do you think they understand what's going on?B: Well, I mean, it's a bit of a mess. It took us two months to make sense of the story.A: I told Andrea the story was too complicated. There are too many characters!B. He's the director.A. We need a way to make the plot clearer.B. Yes, the war, the French against the English. A: It's like a chess game isn't it? The narrators did not merely tell a story, but they had their own persona and saw events from a particular perspective. The student playing the Countess of Auvergne's maid (her Porter in the original play) started her story by bemoaning the fact that she had only two lines to say. To cap it all, after launching into her interpretation of the events, she was rudely interrupted:

Maid: While here in France everything seems to be calm, the seeds of the War of the Roses are growing [. . .] Richard Plantagenet chooses a white rose while the Duke of Somerset goes for red. But they have to be careful because a white rose can soon become red, with blood.Messenger (arriving with a red and a white rose in her hand): This is the very beginning of the famous war of the Roses.Maid: Who are you?Messenger: The messenger.Maid: Sorry? Who?Messenger. Act one, scene one. Meanwhile, Winchester . . . Maid: What are you doing here?Messenger: My part.Maid: Well, I don't think so! Messenger: Will you stop interrupting me.Maid: I only had two lines!In all the narratives, students drew inspiration from both the improvisation and the storytelling activities; they tried to link distance with emotion in a play which they had adopted as their own.

6   Conclusion

As Carson (in this issue) points out, language skills can be greatly enhanced by a combination of the *rehearsed* and the *spontaneous*. This article has attempted to show how even when the ultimate aim of a foreign language drama project is a *product* in the form of a full-scale performance, improvisation and storytelling can play an important role in making the *process* as, if not more, important. As Hegman Shier (2002: 188) suggests: "Innovations that grow out of the rehearsal process often find their way into final performances, a reminder that this is process over product". The activities outlined in this article can also help students to acquire in-depth knowledge of and important insights into the text and, by means of various distancing techniques, to focus on *story* and *emotion*. In doing so, students can move towards that ownership of the product which is deemed to be of great value by practitioners involved in theatre in education, in

language learning and in foreign-language drama (Moody 2002). To go back to one of the director's initial sources of inspiration, Bruce Lee, the participants in the workshop started off from *their own experience*, and most certainly *added something specifically their own*. In the language instructor's view, the whole approach adopted was in line with social-constructivist views of learning as they themselves assembled the play through collaboration and interaction, making choices and taking risks. As a result, the contribution of the practitioners was not one of imparting knowledge and passing on techniques, but of fostering an environment where they could become co-owners of the play, along with the students. So, did we find Henry? In the end, the audience enjoyed the show; it was full of "sound and fury", and there was much laughter too. The student actors stormed through the deconsecrated church in which the performance was held, waving sticks and flags, shouting lines in English, but nobody got hurt.

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Stuffed Pants! Staging Full-scale Comic Plays with Students of Italian as a Foreign Language

Filippo Fonio

Abstract

Staging full-scale plays in Italian with French non-specialist students, following a predominantly product-oriented theatrical approach, may prove very beneficial in terms of students' commitment and of intercultural learning. Students' involvement in the staging project and their motivation in learning can be further stimulated by the staging of comic plays. As emphasized in this paper, the social approach to the comic which Henri Bergson proposes in *Laughter* (1900) offers many useful hints which can be exploited by teachers interested in teaching foreign languages through theatre practice. The paper also deals with the teaching of paralinguistic features, which is particularly interesting for students to explore in connection with the Italian comic tradition and the staging of full-scale plays.[1]

1   Introduction

This paper is based on my experience of teaching Italian as a foreign language, but also of stage directing and playwriting. It deals in particular with the staging of full-scale plays with students and discusses the assets of teaching foreign languages through the comic, which is especially valuable for introducing learners to the features of nonverbal communication. The title of the paper refers to a comic device often linked to gender issues, which I have made use of in several staged plays. The "stuffed pants" device involves the simulation of a large apotropaic sexual organ, or changing someone's appearance in other grotesque ways.

I have been staging full-scale comic plays in Italian for four years in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Grenoble, working with groups of ten to fifteen non-specialist students (i.e. students who are not majoring in Modern Languages), whose proficiency in the target language ranges from intermediate to advanced level (for further details, see Fonio & Genicot 2011). In this period, I have worked on different types of projects,

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[1] I am grateful to Fiona Dalziel for her language revisions.

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and in particular on writing and staging devised theatre with my students, on adapting novels or movies for the stage (in collaboration with students and playwrights), or on proposing more classical productions of ready-to-stage plays – always with the stamp of comedy!

2 Why full-scale plays?

The first question I would like to discuss in the paper is the following: why is staging full-scale plays with foreign language students an effective way, both for them and for me, to enjoy an intercultural experience, which is useful for them to enhance their linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (Council of Europe 2001: 13-14)?

This question refers to a well-known debate, summarized by Moody (2002). He underlines that "process-oriented" and "product-oriented" approaches to drama teaching differ in terms of their respective goals:

> On the one hand, a process-oriented approach tends to focus on the dramatic medium itself, in which the negotiation, rehearsal, and preparation for a more informal, or improvisational, in-class dramatic representation becomes the focus for language learning. On the other hand, a product-oriented approach emphasizes the final staging of the students' public performance, wherein the concluding dramatic realization in front of an audience is viewed as one of the primary goals of the learning experience. (Moody 2002: 135-136)

The main advantage of a process-oriented approach to foreign language drama teaching is that of an "open learning environment" (ibid.: 138), which is not based primarily on literacy and text-related activities. As regards the product-oriented approach to foreign language learning through theatre practice, its main goal is to stage sketches or full-scale plays with students for public performance.

Process-oriented drama teaching partisans claim that public performances partially obscure the goals of teaching and learning through drama, because the learners' attention tends to focus on the final performance. My experience so far has persuaded me that public performances are, on the contrary, a powerful stimulus for students to maintain their attention and concentration. Moreover, activities related to the various practical aspects of the staging process – from the playwriting or play adaptation to costumes and props, set and lightning design – correspond closely to the communicative and action-oriented approach of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), upon which many foreign language syllabi are now based (see Fonio & Genicot 2011). In fact, the action-oriented approach of the CEFR cries out for strongly task-oriented language teaching and learning activities, and the different steps of the staging process offer the teacher the opportunity to propose to students simple task-divisions. In addition to the tasks related to the staging process, which are intended to be accomplished in a participative way by pairs or small

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groups of students, the production of a staged play at the end of each academic year allows my students to perform in Italian and French festivals. On these occasions, students are actively involved in practical matters related to travel and accommodation and to the pre- and post-event communication plans. Most of these tasks must be performed in Italian, which is both a challenging and an enriching experience for the students.

The interdisciplinary learning connected to the staging process of a play is probably one of the greatest benefits of adopting a product-oriented approach to theatre practice in foreign language pedagogy. During the different steps of the theatrical project, students have to familiarise themselves with, and to be able to present to others, a rich variety of textual typologies in the target language, either through oral or written activities. Through this documentary research, the learners' autonomy is fostered during the study phase of the staging process. They show strong motivation in undertaking autonomous documentary research: the most interesting of their original texts are used as complements to the staging process or incorporated into the play, and almost every student wants the script of the play to be his or her own. This approach to documentary research is further enriched by the continuous exchanges students have with the teacher as well as with their classmates, which gives birth to a constant dynamic of discussion, negotiation and purposeful communication (for the case study of a similar pedagogical process, see Ryan-Scheutz & Colangelo 2004). The scheduling of public performances is certainly an incentive for the students to accomplish the various activities effectively and on time. If students feel that their research into and elaboration of appropriate materials result in a successful staging process, their commitment to the whole project will increase and this in turn will result in a richer script.

Finally, from the teacher's perspective, the staging process may be conceived as a collective macro-task that includes many individual or small-group micro-tasks, and task performance is perfectly in line with the communicative approach to foreign language learning. Moreover, students' reports show how strongly learners have been impressed by performing collective creations produced by each member of the group through his or her own personal contribution.

3 Why the comic?

The second question this paper focuses on is why the comic, especially if combined with the staging of full-scale plays, constitutes a powerful vehicle to achieve intercultural learning goals?

Almost every teacher practising the staging of comic plays or sketches with students would agree with the paradox that the strong desire, and sometimes the anxiousness that students feel in their yearning to make the future audience laugh, introduces a high degree of seriousness in classroom activities from the beginning of the staging project. Even if it is the first theatrical experience for most of the students, they immediately grasp the importance of maintaining seriousness during rehearsals and performances, as if they were naturally

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conscious of the social function of the comedy-monger. This tendency is probably connected to one's everyday life: it is in fact quite common to experience the varying effect obtained when, in telling a joke in front of an audience, either we are able to keep our role until the dénouement, or we start laughing. In the second case, we, as the masters of ceremony, are not able to wait until the time is right before allowing ourselves to laugh, and thus we miss the chance to achieve the most valuable effect, because timing is one of the most important parameters in the comic.

This is particularly evident while performing for the first time in front of a large audience, because seeing and/or hearing the audience laugh when one is telling a joke or making funny movements on stage – not forgetting that being in disguise always enhances the comic effect – gives the performers immediate proof of efficacy. My students have always reacted in a very positive way to "hot" audiences and to the strong emotions they feel every time the show becomes somehow interactive. They even experienced situations where they had to stop acting until the audience stopped laughing. Performing in a foreign language is an even more powerful challenge to one's self-confidence, especially in the case of novice students actors.

When staging comic plays with a strong textual component, seriousness and concentration have to be maintained throughout the whole staging project, and not only during public performances. All thorough work on text-centred comic theatre, in particular in a foreign language, begins with a meticulous close reading of the script, because a deep understanding of the text is necessary in order to perform it with accuracy both on a literal and expressive level. As the comic is a deeply rooted cultural form, and humour is often based on cultural mechanisms, the sociocultural reading of the script needs to be particularly accurate.

If "situation comedy" kinds of tricks and devices are of particular interest and use in a pedagogical context, the Italian theatrical tradition also offers an inexhaustible source of comic characters and jokes. The heritage of *commedia dell'arte* in fact forms the basis for a great amount of modern and contemporary comedy. A very important feature that these culturally different traditions have in common is that both situation comedy and *commedia dell'arte* very often use stereotyped plots and characters. They both also have the tendency to propose exaggeratedly stereotyped characters.

I am basing some of the remarks contained in this section on Henri Bergson's philosophical essay *Laughter* (1900). The idea of using Bergson's framework in order to interpret the comic and laughter (which is, in Bergson's opinion, the symptom of the comic) as social phenomena is in fact particularly stimulating from a pedagogical point of view. Moreover, Bergson's theory of laughter, which is close to Sigmund Freud's interpretations of humour, is a cornerstone in the definition of the comic, and his conclusions are to be found in other classic books on the topic, including Johan Huizinga's *Homo ludens* (1938).

In order to conduct an enquiry into the mechanisms of laughter as a socially based device against excesses of individualism, Bergson proposes a strong

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relationship between laughter and human vices, physical or moral defects (clumsiness, greed etc.), passions (sexual desire, jealousy etc.) – which is particularly apparent if we think of Molière's comedies, for instance. But, and this is a fundamental point in Bergson's analysis, it is important, on the one hand, to try to push these characteristics to the extreme while performing, and on the other hand to do it in a natural way, in an imitable Aristotelian way, in order not to prevent or inhibit, but on the contrary to stimulate laughter, because: "A deformity that might become comic is a deformity that a normally built person could successfully imitate" (Bergson 1900: 18). A mocking imitation which maintains verisimilitude is, in other words, essential to cause laughter, as otherwise the dominant feeling of an audience would be (com)passion, and not the "intelligence" (ibid.: 11) which is necessary to laugh at a situation.

This kind of "imitative grotesqueness" is often enhanced, according to Bergson, through disguise: "A man in disguise is comic. A man we regard as disguised is also comic. So, by analogy, any disguise is seen to become comic, not only that of a man, but that of society also, and even the disguise of nature" (ibid.: 26). It would thus be legitimate to affirm that the comic is able to show an entire society in disguise:

> As we are both in and of [society], we cannot help treating it as a living being. Any image then, suggestive of the notion of a society disguising itself, or of a social masquerade, so to speak, will be laughable. Now, such a notion is formed when we perceive anything inert or stereotyped, or simply ready-made, on the surface of living society. (ibid.: 27)

Some examples taken from our 2011 and 2012 productions will illustrate the importance of those components of the comic in foreign language teaching and learning. The play we staged in 2011, *Cercasi marito pensionato. . . importante che muoia subito* ("Wanted: retired husband. . . the most important is that he dies soon") was an adaptation of a play written by the young Italian playwright Giovanni Allotta. Last year play, *La villa dell'assassinio ovvero Dialogo di un assistente alla regia con la sua anima* ("The murder mansion, or Dialogue of an assistant director with his soul") was co-written by me and Chiara Piola Caselli.

Both plays contain many "grotesquely stereotyped" characters related to the different milieux they portray. *Cercasi marito. . .* depicts a very traditional and religious Sicilian country world, in which we can find, amongst other characters, a hunchback doctor who only listens to money talk, an equally greedy middle-aged woman and a gloomy homosexual undertaker. *La villa dell'assassinio* is a parody of the professional world of theatre, with a frustrated assistant director, neurotic theatre stars in decline and young rampaging soap opera and television wannabes.

During the writing/adapting and the staging process, we worked on developing and pushing to the extreme the characterisation of the grotesque. This exaggeration was pursued with a precise pedagogical aim, i.e. to prevent excesses in the identification process with the grotesque or stereotyped characters through a series of improvisations and other activities based on

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the authentic materials (videos, newspapers articles, pictures, extracts from literature) collected by the students during their research. These excesses are particularly dangerous for shy students and for those who are taking part in their first theatrical experience and who are already rather clumsy on stage. A complete identification process would in fact result in a less credible performance both for the actors and for the audience. Bergson helps us on this point in recalling that "natural or imitated clumsiness" is probably the most frequent source of laughter for an audience, and if we think of the repertoire of fixed expressions (often imposed by masks, by the way), stiffness and automatisms in movements and attitudes that *commedia dell'arte* offers we will immediately acknowledge the importance of helping students play the characters' clumsiness instead of focusing on their own uneasiness.

Moreover, novice students-actors tend to break down completely if they temporarily lose the perception of being on stage "in role", or worse if they do not seize the difference between being on- and off-stage. That is why working with the "exaggeratedly grotesque" allows one to maintain a safe distance between the actors and their characters. This distance is perfectly perceived by the audience, who are thus allowed to enter quite easily into the fictional framework of the play as soon as it is understood that the actors are exaggerating the grotesque on purpose. Turning stage fear – which is quite a common sentiment – into stage frenzy through the creation of exaggeratedly grotesque but convincing characters is thus necessary because only a fully committed actor is able to make an audience laugh during a public performance. Half-convincing characters tend in fact to show, rather than to hide, the weaknesses of amateur actors, while strongly pushing on the accelerator of the exaggeratedly grotesque allows audiences to believe the unbelievable.

Let us think of swearing and bad words for instance. The students instinctively react with prudery over the uttering of swear words on stage, in front of their parents, boyfriends and girlfriends, university pals and teachers. I have often had this kind of reaction early in the staging project, when, normally, the script is already there but the characters have not been sufficiently worked on. In order to enable the students to free their minds and speech, I usually deploy a series of exercises geared to developing the respective character's exaggeratedly grotesque nature. These exercises entail, for instance, creating a scapegoat that is then successfully reintegrated into the group. Afterwards, the students are able to perform their characters by pushing excess to its limits.

In addition to what has been mentioned above, another good reason for having students engage in comic theatre is that it is one of the most powerful ways to create social cohesion, both between the students who are staging the same play and between the students and the audience, as we have just seen. According to Bergson, and what everyone knows from their daily experience, laughter is an inclusive dynamic: you don't join in laughing if you don't feel like you are part of the "laughing community".

When performing in public, one of the most immediate ways to create, or to check, the existence of a sense of community with the audience is the use

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of asides (i.e. remarks addressed to the audience but not to be heard by the other characters of the play). For example in *La villa dell'assassinio* the assistant director often makes use of asides to show the audience his real opinions about the other characters of the play, which gives way to very funny wordplay, such as: "Ecco Moreno Badedas, accompagnato dalla sua dolce metà . . . [*A parte*] metastasi" ("And here is Moreno Badedas, accompanied by his sweetheart . . . [*Aside*] metastasis"). Also in our adaptation of *Cercasi marito. . .* asides were quite frequent, as they were normally used to deform with parody other characters' words, as in "Seychelles" misshaped in "sei ascelle" ("six armpits").

Wordplay is obviously only one of the comic forms which it is possible (and probably easier) to exploit for a pedagogical aim. "Comedy of situations" and "comedy of characters" are both important when working on Italian comic theatre, as we have seen, and I am convinced that they are also amongst the most immediate ways to convey cultural contents. For example, in adapting *Cercasi marito. . .* we used comedy of situations to render ridiculous the mournfully serious atmosphere of death rituals popular in the Italian countryside. So, the undertaker who is supposed to take away the dead body of the merry widow's husband tries to make as much money as possible out of the woman's conformism, which obliges her to honour the dead through luxurious paraphernalia; in particular he describes different kinds of coffins as if referring to the range of optional devices for cars (which also gives the teacher the chance to work on technical vocabulary). In addition to the lexical richness which wordplay allows the students to experiment with, the staging of culturally-rooted comedy plays also gives the learners access to the extraordinarily ancient and successful tradition of this genre of Italian theatre. Staging an Italian comedy play nowadays, especially from a pedagogical perspective, requires contextualising the text in its complex literary and cultural tradition, which can be accomplished through the aforementioned documentary research undertaken by the students. In order to understand specific cultural contents when staging and acting a play, students have to engage in activities which allow them not only to focus on oral production and rendition, but also to enhance listening and reading of documents inherent to specific topics related to the cultural contents of the chosen play (for example improvisation exercises starting from videos based on the use of dialects as a social marker and as a diaphasic variety in Italian conversations, or on idiomatic linguistic features and professional jargons). Thus, devising plays with the students through the reading of literary texts and improvisation activities (as we did in 2008 starting from the novel *Mai sentita così bene* by Rossana Campo) is also helpful in enhancing their cultural awareness. The same could be said for less complex tasks related to the constant discussions and exchanges required during the staging process (as described above).

The cultural importance of stereotypes should not be forgotten either. European cultural history and civilisation show that, when it comes to stereotypes, every one of us refers to national stereotypes, or at least to cultural *a priori* strictly connected to the image that every representative of a culture

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possesses of the other, or the others. That is why we, as teachers, are able to transmit to students, precisely by the fact of working on, and with stereotypes, rich contents in terms of cultural features. Working with stereotypes, and in particular with exaggerated and grotesque ones, greatly contributes both to transmitting cultural contents to students, and overcoming neophytes' stage fear. For example, in 2011 we worked with stereotypes related to masculine and feminine issues in Southern Italy, and we also had the chance to discuss the topic with the playwright himself. Giovanni Allotta led a three-day workshop with the students in Grenoble, that was very useful in order to understand and to contextualise stereotypes. He allowed the students to enter the playwriting process showing them how his exaggeratedly grotesque characters originated from "normal" people he met in his daily life, and reproduced the same process of "deforming everyday life" with the help of the students. These activities led them to understand the deep relations which connect real life and theatrical creativity through the work on stereotypes.

Dealing with this kind of exaggerated and grotesque comic theatre obviously creates a delicate balance between uses and abuses of clichés and stereotypes. If we consider, for example, *commedia dell'arte* and all its successors in the Italian comic tradition, from Carlo Goldoni to Dario Fo, it would be easy to recognise a series of (stereo-)typical comic characters, whose gestures, crystallized expressions etc. should be studied very carefully every time one tries to re-enact plays which are located in the same theatrical current. It is dangerous, in fact, to approach verbal and nonverbal stereotypes in a thorough way while working with learners who have a rather distanced and often indirect relationship with the foreign country and its society. The risk in these cases is to contribute to creating a distorted image of the target culture. It is therefore very important to offer counterexamples and to contextualise stereotypes in order not to lose the extraordinary cultural richness that stereotypes convey.

4   The comic as a way to teach nonverbal features of language

If we look at the Italian theatrical tradition, both from a stage-oriented and from a pedagogical perspective (as in Frassica 2009), a quick glance at its history from *commedia dell'arte* onwards will reveal the remarkable role played in it by mimic comic, or by comedy which combines wordplay and mimicry.

The culturally rooted nonverbal component of Italian comic theatre provides a way of introducing paralinguistic features into the foreign language classroom. The acquisition of nonverbal competences is in fact closely connected to fluency in oral communication, because the mastering of paralinguistic traits helps students to emphasise their speech, but also to bridge linguistic gaps as regards words and expressions. Moreover, proficiency in nonverbal traits of the foreign language distinguishes culturally aware learners from those who are merely exposed to bookish oriented teaching.

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So, if passive paralinguistic knowledge is essential so as to acquire "intercultural awareness" (Culham 2002: 96), an active competence in nonverbal traits allows learners to accompany, complete, enhance meaning, because gestures are a powerfully iconic way to convey meaning. In the Italian cultural tradition, touching is, in particular, one of the paralinguistic parameters which is more difficult for non-native speakers to understand and to incorporate into oral communication (and quite often teachers tend to forget that kinesics is strictly connected to paralinguistics).

In my experience, staging physically engaging comic plays is an easy way to make students aware of the gestural patterns of communication in the foreign language, and careful work on dramatic and theatrical techniques should never neglect the nonverbal component of the target language. It is important to propose activities which allow one to introduce a progression in nonverbal features, from eye contact to more articulated sequences of movements, also in order to help students to memorise paralinguistic traits. Moreover, playing with gestures often means, for non-native speakers, risk-taking at a higher degree than simply performing a script which has been memorised.

The emotional tension that is often generated by bodily engaging exercises also helps students in finding unexpected and unpredictable (para-)linguistic skills in themselves, or in creating them in ways that make sense. This is particularly evident when exercises on paralinguistic features are proposed in a dialogical form, for example in pairs or small groups, since the dynamics of speaking and listening through the nonverbal (Culham 2002: 109) engages students in an effort to make their messages understandable to their peers.

This is particularly useful when a full-scale play is to be staged, because gestures form a pattern which is parallel and complementary to the text, and which needs to be memorised with the same accuracy. That is why I have always asked my students to analyse theatrical texts as if there existed another text running parallel to the spoken lines, which describes the paralinguistic traits of each character.

In conclusion, staging full-scale comic plays with students not only enhances motivation to learn different aspects of the target language, and in particular paralinguistic features, but it is also a form of learning which is deeply rich in cultural contents.

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Engage or Entertain? The Nature of Teacher/Participant Collaboration in Process Drama for Additional Language Teaching

Erika Piazzoli

Abstract

This paper was presented at the conference 'Plot me no plots: Theatre for University Language teaching' held at the University of Padua in October 2011. The presentation included a practical demonstration of the teacher-in-role strategy and a discussion. Process drama is an experiential approach that has been gaining momentum in the field of language teaching; it is a genre of applied theatre in which the participants, together with the facilitator, engage in the co-construction of a story. As an improvised dramatic form, it encourages negotiation of meaning through the process of experience and reflection. In this article, I reflect on the nature of the collaborative process between teacher and participants in process drama, drawing on my doctoral research on the aesthetics of process drama for teaching additional languages. In this research, I worked with three cohorts of adult language learners, studying Italian as a Second Language (L2), and three cohorts of teachers of Italian (L2) new to drama. I draw on classroom data to illustrate two of the main dramatic strategies of the form: 'teacher-in-role' and 'mantle of the expert'. I introduce these strategies, situate them in a theoretical context and discuss issues and implications when teaching to engage, rather than to entertain.

1 Introduction

Process drama is a genre of applied theatre in which participants, together with the facilitator, engage in the co-construction of a dramatic world (Bowell and Heap 2001). The origins of process drama date back to the 1970s, when educators Bolton and Heathcote started to practice and reflect on what was then referred to as 'drama in education' (Bolton 1979). Educational drama as an experiential pedagogy was used to teach history, drama and English (L1) in a variety of educational settings, mainly primary and secondary contexts. In the 1990s, Cecily O'Neill laid the structural foundations for the pedagogy (O'Neill 1995). O'Neill describes process drama as a thematic exploration, rather than

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isolated skits, where the outcome is not predetermined, but discovered in process. Process drama proceeds without a script, does not culminate in a final performance, and is characterised by the absence of any external audience. All participants (including the teacher) take on different roles and become involved in the creation of a story, experiencing a dramatic context for educational purposes.

In the field of Additional Language (AL) teaching, in the last two decades process drama has gradually gained recognition as a valid approach (Stinson and Winston 2011). The first step towards an integrated AL process drama approach took place in 1998, with the pioneering work of O'Neill and Kao (1998). The researchers conducted an empirical study at the University of Taiwan, with a group of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL); they described process drama as a 'liberating approach', consistent with communicative principles of language teaching. Since then, process drama has been used in various contexts to facilitate language learning, with some promising results. For example, Stinson (2008; 2006) experimented using process drama with EFL learners in Singapore; Araki Metcalfe worked with English learners in Japan (2001) and Japanese learners in Australia (2007); I conducted some research with adult learners of Italian (Piazzoli 2010); while Rothwell (2011) specialized in process drama and assessment in the teaching of German. Other quantitative and qualitative data suggest that drama can be beneficial to stimulate fluency in the target language, increase motivation (Belliveau et al. 2007), and make meaning (Yaman Ntelioglu 2011).

These encouraging results generated a desire to fund specialized teacher training programs, which could help AL teachers to assimilate the approach. Indeed, as Schewe (2002) has argued, language pedagogy can benefit considerably from drama in education. However, recent studies have unveiled a degree of *resistance* in some AL teachers, new to process drama, when implementing the approach in the classroom. Despite admitting it was a helpful tool to promote language learning, two cohorts of teachers from two independent studies manifested resistance (Araki Metcalfe 2008; Stinson 2009) in using process drama independently in the classroom. I believe this apparent contradiction might stem from trying to adopt an *instrumental* stance, when working with an *aesthetic* mode. In effect, when learning process drama, teachers are not just learning a new method; they are apprehending a dramatic form. Attempting to use process drama in an instrumental way, without attention to the artistry, can be a sterile, fruitless gamble (Dunn and Stinson 2011).

A characteristic of process drama is that the teacher often takes on a role within the drama, actively engaging in the improvisation with co-participants. This strategy, referred to as 'teacher-in-role', is particularly beneficial for L2/AL learners; indeed, it has been described as "one of the most effective ways to begin a process drama" (Kao and O'Neill 1998: 26). However, playing a dramatic role can be a daunting task for an unexperienced teacher; its purpose can easily be misinterpreted, either by the teacher or by the participants and,

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if misunderstood, it can be counter-productive for the learning environment. In this paper I analyse these dynamics, focussing on one specific issue: the function of engaging learners, as opposed to entertaining them, in the language classroom. I analyze the nature of teacher/learners interaction during the improvisational process, situating my argument in relation to educational literature and offering examples from my reflective practice.

I draw on data from a research project on the aesthetics of process drama for additional language learning, involving three cohorts of adult learners of Italian as a Second Language (L2), and three cohorts of teachers of Italian (L2). Each cohort participated in fifteen hours of process drama, either as active participant (student-participants), or participant-observer (teacher-participants). All the dramas were digitally-recorded for research purposes. The data collection took place in mid-2010 in three language teaching institutions (a university and two private schools) in Milan, Italy. I used multiple case studies, framed by reflective practitioner methodology (Schön 1983), to observe and explore the kind of engagement generated by L2/AL process drama. Through phenomenological lens, I focused on learners' communicative, intercultural, and affective engagement, and how these can influence dramatic and aesthetic engagement. In this paper, I draw on one of the three case studies, analyzing transcripts of classroom interaction, students and teachers' interviews, and questionnaires, to reflect on the nature of the teacher/student collaboration in the L2 drama classroom.

2   Process Drama: Structure and Strategies

Although process drama depends on improvisation for its *content*, it relies on a set framework for its *structure*. The support of a teaching structure in the planning is crucial for the smooth functioning of the improvisation. To begin with, a process drama always starts with a 'pre-text' (O'Neill 1995), an initial stimulus which launches the dramatic world. The pre-text can be an image, a newspaper article, a song, a short film or other item; any stimulus which triggers curiosity and motivation. This is similar to the communicative language class, where the L2/AL teacher may begin the class with an initial input to brainstorm, elicit vocabulary and introduce the main theme. In process drama the pre-text also provides the initial input, but goes beyond that; it becomes an ongoing thread for the entire duration of the drama. It constitutes the platform on which to create the roles and situation of the dramatic world; it contains the implicit tension which will fuel the dramatic explorations; it evokes unanswered questions that can create a particular mood or dramatic focus. After launching the pre-text, the process drama structure can be divided into three phases: the *initiation* phase, where participants create their own roles and become immersed in the dramatic situation; the *experiential* phase, where participants explore the dramatic world through several strategies, or 'conventions'; and a *reflective* phase, where participants reflect on the learning, making their own meanings explicit (O'Toole and Dunn 2002). Within each

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phase, the participants experience a number of scenarios, or 'episodes'. These episodes are not inter-connected in a linear, chronological sequence, but follow a non-linear narrative, playing with spatial and temporal dimensions in order to explore a theme, within the realm of human emotions and behaviour.

For the purpose of this paper, I focus on the *experiential phase,* the central phase of the process drama teaching structure. During the experiential phase, the facilitator makes use of *dramatic strategies*, or conventions, to structure the experience. Currently there exist over eighty process drama strategies, documented elsewhere (Bowell and heap 2001; Neelands and Goode 2000); each convention has a different purpose and can be used by the educator to create empathy, or distance, with respect to a certain theme or dramatic situation. An experienced drama educator will have assimilated most of these conventions and will intuitively know when to use one, rather than another, in the course of the experiential phase, following the participants' responses to the drama. In particular, amongst all conventions, two strategies underpin the core of the experiential phase: 'teacher-in-role' and 'mantle of the expert' (Heathcote and Bolton 1995). These strategies, often misunderstood by teachers new to process drama, are crucial for a smooth functioning of the drama; hence it is important here to clarify their function.

The 'teacher-in-role' strategy was created by Heathcote (1973); it involves the teacher taking on a role within the drama and improvising alongside the participants. It is an innovative pedagogical strategy which involves a number of changes to traditional classroom patterns of interaction. Firstly, teacher-in-role involves a *status change*: it reverses the Teacher/Students (T/STS) hierarchy of the traditional, teacher-centred approach, where the teacher may ask rhetorical questions to the students, encouraged to respond only when called upon. This requires the teacher to become aware that she/he is enacting a social role as 'teacher' in the classroom-environment, to consciously step out of this role, and take on a different role. Through teacher-in-role, the facilitator can choose to have a lower status than the participants, setting up a more interesting dynamic in terms of agency, power and control. Secondly, 'teacher-in-role' involves a *language register change*: in line with the status and of the new role, the language undertaken by the teacher will necessarily change. This exposes participants to 'authentic' registers of communication (Van Lier, 1996). In doing so, it opens up to other socio-linguistic contexts, normally not practiced in routine L2/AL classroom dynamics. As a result, 'teacher-in-role' creates a *change of interaction dynamics*; it engages participants in dialogic communication, in line with sociocultural principles of language learning (Lantolf, 2000).

Similarly, 'Mantle of the Expert' also reverses the T/STS hierarchy of traditional classroom interaction. This pedagogical strategy was also created by Heathcote, in collaboration with Bolton (1995), and it is often presented in parallel with teacher-in-role. As has been argued, it is now recognised as a major vehicle to teach the curriculum in a highly creative and meaningful manner (Winston 2011). In 'Mantle of the Expert', students take on the role of *experts* to carry out a task and/or to solve a mystery within the drama.

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Students might become expert scientists, journalists, or anthropologists who are commissioned to carry out a project within the drama, in order to shed light on an ambiguous situation. For example, in my practical demonstration at the 'Plot me no plots: Theatre for University language teaching' conference in Padova (2011), I asked the conference delegates to take on the role of BBC journalists, who were short of work and were desperate for any story in order to keep in the business (video clip 1). I took on the role of a homeless man, who had once been a scientist in the Neutrino OPERA team experimenting on light particles. The journalists, who had prepared some questions for the scientist, were unaware of his current homeless state. Indeed, the function of teacher-in-role is to challenge stereotypes, to generate tension and provoke a reaction. The journalists were expecting to meet a successful scientist; they found an outcast, preoccupied with mathematical riddles, sitting on cardboard boxes. When they met him, they had to interact and respond, in role, quickly adapting to this new situation. Using 'Mantle of the Expert', the power dynamics were reversed: due to their higher status, the journalists had the agency to offer the homeless scientist a chance to share the story that brought him to misery. The homeless man was initially suspicious, but would gradually become persuaded to share his story with the journalists. In that instance, I combined teacher-in-role (taking on the role of the homeless) and mantle of the expert (enroling participants as journalists) to demonstrate the beginning of a process drama workshop, which could have led to investigating what happened in the Neutrino experiment team, writing a story for the BBC, preparing a current affairs on the story, and so forth, according to the group's imagination. In terms of its application to L2/AL teaching and learning, 'mantle of the expert' is particularly helpful, as it can boost confidence levels, lowering the speakers' affective filter, increasing willingness to communicate spontaneously, and decreasing language anxiety (Piazzoli 2011) therefore creating an environment conducive to Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

'Teacher-in-role' and 'Mantle of the Expert' function as strategies for learning, as well as significant principles of teaching (Kao and O'Neill 1998). Both strategies are grounded in constructivist theories of learning, according to which knowledge is not passively poured into students' heads, but it is actively constructed by each learner. They are based on the idea of 'cognition' not as an *item* located within the individual thinker, but a *process* distributed across the knower, the environment in which knowing occurs, and the activity in which the learner participates (Barab and Squire 2004). They align with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of learners Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which holds that when learners participate in spontaneous, symbolic play, taking on the *personae* of others, they can reach a developmental level above their actual level. Process drama resonates with this notion, as it considers 'playing' as highly beneficial for the learning process. It endorses Bruner's argument (1976) of 'play' as a behaviour that minimises the consequences of one's actions, providing opportunities to try out combinations of new behaviours without anxiety or external pressure for success. The constructivist framework also aligns with AL

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learning theories, as adult language learners operate within the learners' ZPD when learning a language (Platt and Brooks 2002). Through teacher-in-role and mantle of the expert, AL process drama teachers can work within the ZPD to model language and provide a level of scaffolding. During the experiential phase, learners are empowered and exposed to authentic registers of verbal and non-verbal communication; during the reflective phase, the teacher can guide learners to reflect and analyse the language arising in the improvisation.

The teacher taking on a role resonates with Eisner's (1985) discourse on 'teaching as an art'. Eisner argues that teaching is an art guided by educational values, personal needs and beliefs held by the teacher. Echoing Dewey (1934), Eisner defines 'art' as a process in which skills are employed to discover ends through action, as opposed to 'craft' where skills are employed to arrive at preconceived ends. He advocates that artistry in teaching is important because the teacher who functions artistically provides learners with sources of aesthetic experiences that can foster *exploration, risk-taking* and *disposition to play* (1985: 183). Of course, Eisner's principles of teaching as an art can be applied to the teaching of any disciplines; specifically, in the teaching of AL through process drama, Eisner's paradigm becomes even more significant as risk-taking, exploration and play are the essence of improvisation, the vehicle through which the language teaching/learning occurs.

3 Teacher-artist or Teacher-entertainer?

In both 'teacher-in-role' and 'mantle of the expert', the teacher's aim is not acting, nor entertaining, but *engaging* participants through the art of improvisation. As Kao and O'Neill point out:

> The initial purpose of taking on a role is emphatically not to give a display of acting, but to invite students to enter and begin to create the fictional world. When the teacher takes on a role in the interaction, it is an act of conscious self-presentation, and one that invites the students to respond actively, to join in and to extend, oppose or transform what is happening (1998: 26)

O'Neill (2006) calls the process drama teacher a 'teacher-artist', working alongside the learners in a process of dramatic exploration. She argues that, in process drama, the teacher is likely to function most effectively from within the creative process, as 'co-artist' with his/her participants, rather than remaining on the outside of the work (2006: 51). The relationship between artist and co-artists in process drama is a complex one. The teacher simultaneously covers four functions: playwright, director, actor and educator; the participants function as playwrights, directors, actors and learners. Both teachers and participants concurrently engage in all four functions, negotiating a dynamic spiral of creative exchange (Bowell and Heap 2005). However, as O'Neill reiterates (2006), the 'actor function' of teacher-in-role is not to be understood as a display of acting: the teacher working in role engages in an 'act of conscious

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self-presentation' that invites the students to respond actively. In O'Neill's words, "Students are challenged to make sense of what they see, to become aware of their own responses, and to use these responses as impetus for action" (2006: 109).

In this sense, it is clear how the process drama teacher is operating as an artist. However, in 'Structure and Spontaneity', O'Neill (2006) points out the subtle, but fundamental difference between the teacher as *artist*, and the teacher as *entertainer*: the teacher-artist involves the students as active co-artists; the teacher-entertainer involves the students as passive audience. The extract below is a transcript[1] of an 'unsuccessful' teacher-in-role intervention, where my participants, with no experience in process drama and little willingness to collaborate, did not engage in the artistic exploration. This was part of a one-off process drama demonstration to recruit potential participants for my case study intervention. I was in role as Mario, a lonely Customs Officer, working in the International Airport of Milan:

1. (Teacher [TiR], in role as Mario, arrives and sits on a chair)

2. (6 second silence)

3. TiR: Well?

4. S1: Can we ask questions?

5. TiR: What questions?

6. (A mobile phone rings)

7. TiR *(agitated)*: Who is it? Who's there? Who is it? Is it someone who forgot their passport?

8. (Giggles)

9. TiR *(excited)*: Who is it? Is it for me?

10. (Giggles. 5 seconds silence)

11. TiR *(miserable)*: Well... it's never for me. That's the problem.

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[1] These transcripts have been translated from Italian (L2) into English. Translating data is a complex issue when dealing with qualitative research reports. As Marshall and Rossman point out (2006), a number of considerations need to be addressed: 1. acknowledging that the data has been translated, 2. acknowledging whether the translator is the researcher or someone external, and 3. Whereas the translator was involved in the analysis. In this research project, the data was translated into English by the primary researcher; the translations were further checked for accuracy by an associate researcher, who is a NAATI accredited translator (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) from Italian into English. As the originals are utterances by speakers of an Additional Language, the English translation has attempted to reproduce, where necessary, the presence of grammar mistakes.

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12. (An SMS notification alert from the same phone)

13. TiR (turns to the mobile phone owner): Is it for me?

14. (Laughter)

15. S2: No, it's for me.

16. TiR *(disappointed)*: It's for her. Is it for you, Miss, are You sure?

17. S2: Yes, I'm sure.

18. (5 seconds silence)

[2.1.2: 30:52]In this instance, the participants are not actively interacting, except for the one student directly involved. In the transcript, one can note the lack of collaboration, the gaps of silence and the nervous giggling. Visual cues from the video recording data are also significant in terms of body language: I lean forward towards the participants, while they remain stiff. As the phone rings, I, in my role as Mario, incorporate this event into the drama, improvising a response; the participant directly involved responds sharply, without playing along in the drama. There is a mismatch in expectations, and the situation becomes stagnant. After this 50-second interaction, my efforts painfully continue for another seven minutes and, gradually, I captured their attention. However, most participants did not feel the need to collaborate; they were framing me as an 'entertainer', passively gazing as I 'performed' a role.

O'Neill (2006) warns that the notion of teacher as 'performer' can be misleading; drawing on McLaren (1986), she argues that the 'teacher-as-entertainer' is *not* the function of teacher-in-role. "The teacher-as-entertainer may engage the students", O'Neill argues, "but they remain a passive audience of isolated and un-reflective spectators. When students remain isolated viewers of the action, they are being entertained" (2006: 108). The entertainer, she argues, is not the most effective model for the teacher, as it won't generate an active response. On the contrary, the teacher-artist generates an active, improvised response.

Improvisation as an art is based on the principle of 'accepting', rather than 'blocking' other players (Johnstone 1999), actively listening and responding, rather than 'cutting off', or using pre-conceived ideas. These basic principles of improvisation are the foundation for any improviser, and underpin the core attitude of 'teacher-in-role' strategy. However, from the episode above I realized that it is not enough for these attitudes to be *implicit* in the teacher' system of beliefs; they also need to be made *explicit* to, and shared by the participants. When working with any students, and especially with non-drama students, it is essential that the teacher discusses these values in the first class, as a premise for the work to follow. Owens and Barber refer to this agreement as 'the drama contract', "when a practitioner and a group enter into an agreement to do something on mutually agreed binding terms" (2005: 5). By openly

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discussing these principles, the teacher helps participants to feel "ownership of their drama" (2005: 7) so that the artist/co-artist collaboration can be more balanced. In other words, for process drama to be a truly artistic collaboration, teacher and students' attitudes *need to align* in the language/drama classroom. If that does not occur, students might frame the teacher as 'the entertainer' in spite of her own implicit beliefs of functioning as a 'teacher-artist'. In the next section, I provide an example of a different type of interaction, a 'teacher-artist' collaboration.

4   Teacher-artist: A Case Study

The case study described below took place in a private school of Italian as Second Language in Milan, Italy, where I designed and facilitated a 15-hour process drama, mixing different research methods. For this case study, I worked with a group of eight adult learners of Italian (the brave ones who returned after the one-off session described above) at an intermediate level of proficiency, and a group of four teachers of Italian (L2). The teacher-participants in this case study had extensive experience in L2 teaching, but had no experience in drama. They took observational notes, and participated in individual interviews before and after the class. They also participated in a focus group at the end of the drama intervention, where I used the Video-Stimulated Recall (VSR) research strategy to generate discussion. This technique consists in showing teachers video extracts of classroom practice and getting them to comment or free-associate. VSR has been used extensively in educational research to prompt participants' cognitive mechanisms, to gain insight into implicit theories and beliefs and into relationships between beliefs and actions (Ethell and McMeniman 2000). Student-participants were interviewed individually and in a focus group, where I used a kinaesthetic method of interviewing, based on the props from the drama, as a trigger to stimulate discussion. Student-participants also completed a set of five questionnaires (one at the end of each workshop) self-evaluating their engagement levels with one *specific* moment of the drama (of their preference). The questionnaire was based on three parameters: communicative, intercultural and affective engagement, using a scale from 0 (not engaged at all) to 10 (highly engaged). The questionnaires were written using simplified language, in line with participants' needs as non-native speakers. As a teacher-researcher, I kept a reflective journal with my phenomenological observations. I used NVIVO 9.1 software for managing, coding and cross-referencing all data sets.

The drama intervention was structured as a series of five 3-hour workshops; in this particular case study, the course was offered by the School as an intensive one-week program. The pre-text I used to design this process drama is the award-winning short film *Buongiorno,* a five-minute piece produced by BekaFilms (2005) and directed by Melo Prino[2]. In the film, a middle aged man

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[2] Material used with permission of producer BekaFilms and director Melo Prino.

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wakes up in the morning to discover that his own reflection in the mirror is alive. The protagonist goes back to sleep, and the viewers are led to believe that those images were nothing but a nightmare; however, a daunting twist reveals this to be his real-life condition, featuring a grotesque 'nightmare-within-the-nightmare' sequence which will ultimately terrify him. The film is silent, except for one word uttered by the mirror reflection: *'Buongiorno*!' ('Good Morning'). The soundtrack of the film, by composer Ennio Morricone, is more eloquent than any dialogue to create a mood of suspense, trepidation and angst.

Figure 1: A frame from the short film 'Buongiorno', used as a pre-text for the process drama.

After viewing and discussing the pre-text, I enrolled the participants as 'psychologists', who had been commissioned to help the protagonist of the film. As a group, we decided on a name for the protagonist, his age and personality. The only detail I provided was his profession: he worked as a teacher of Italian as a Second Language and, that day, he had not gone to class. In role as the director of the psychologists, I told the team that after experiencing the mirror delusions, the man had developed a mental block and refused to speak; he had frozen inside the lift of his apartment block. The participants/psychologists had to devise a rescue plan for the man, guided by myself in role as the team director. A complete account of this process drama is beyond the scope of this paper; the learning structure and strategies have been thoroughly documented elsewhere (Piazzoli 2011b).

For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the *function* of 'Teacher-in-Role' and 'Mantle of the Expert' and on its implications on participants' engagement. To begin with, I used the teacher-in-role strategy taking on the role of the director of the psychologists. This role was not an overtly low-status role, like, for instance, the homeless scientist in the example above. My choice in taking the role of 'the team director' was dictated by the fact that the cohort of students had never done any drama before; as their first drama, they needed to be guided in the process. However, there are many ways of manipulating role and status; one is through the *attitudes* of the role. I chose to play the role of a disorganised, hopeless, anxious leader, constantly needing the validation of the team members for reassurance. Through the attitudes of my role, I embodied a status lower than my team members', heavily relying on their expertise.

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Both teacher-in-role and mantle of the expert worked together to empower the learners, reversing the classroom status dynamic. Below is an extract from the transcript of the first teacher-in-role episode (video clip A)[3]:

1. TiR *(anxious)*: if that's OK with you, I'll give you this task *(panicked)* – don't touch!

2. (Hiro, Yoriko and Sandra laugh)

3. TiR: I'll give you this task, I assign you this task; you have three days. . . to convince this. . . fellow. . . (*turns around to read patient's name*) 'Ferro'. . . to talk. . . or to try to analyse what's happ–

4. Yoriko *(provocative)*: –Excuse me, but I. . . have to make my dog go for walks, I don't have time (*uninterested, confident face*). For me ... my dog is more interesting *(sarcastic smile)*.

5. TiR: Of course! You find your dog more interesting! Perhaps we could do a case study on You[4]?

6. (Olga and Sandra laugh)

7. Yoriko: No!

8. TiR: At this stage –

9. Yoriko: No, no, I don't want to, the dog is mine!

10. TiR: But how will you feed Your dog, if next year you'll find Yourself without a job?

11. Yoriko: No, I keep job. . .

12. (Hiro laughs)

[2.2.3, 26:30] One can note how, in Turn 4, Yoriko openly interrupts and challenges the teacher-in-role, subverting the traditional pattern of classroom communication. Also note my improvisation (Turn 5), in response to her provocation and the negotiation of meaning that follows. At first, it is likely that Yoriko does not understand my comment as she replies "The dog is mine" (Turn 9); however, through the course of the improvised interaction, we are able to negotiate the meaning without interrupting the flow. In my journal, I comment:

> Through this interaction, Yoriko implies a willingness to be playful, confronting. She is not scared of challenging my high status in the drama (CS2 RJ, p.16: 53-55).

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[3] All participants signed an informed consent, agreeing to be in this video; all names in the transcripts are pseudonyms.

[4] Capital Y denotes use of formal register in Italian (*Lei*).

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Later in the same episode, another participant unexpectedly interrupts me. As I am about to leave the space, I get up, walk to the end of the space to shake a psychologist's hand. A commotion arises out of this gesture (hand-shake), and its significance in terms of power and status. From my perspective as teacher-artist improvising, I had not planned for the hand-shake at all; it was a spontaneous gesture, done as a closure to the end of the meeting. I randomly picked Catherine (in role as Dr. Pazzarella) for the hand-shake as she was sitting at the back; my intent there was to infiltrate the participants' space, to provoke them into action. Such provocation is definitely picked up by Olga (video clip B):

1. TiR: You have to... find as much information as possible, and create an action plan. Is that clear? (Stands up, goes to the back and shakes Catherine's hand): Thank You!

2. Olga *(confronting)*: Why always only...?

3. (General nervous laughter)

4. Olga: Only Pazzarella?

5. TiR: Dr. Pazzarella –

6. Olga: I have come, too!

7. (Sandra laughs nervously and turns around to the others)

8. TiR *(provoking)*: Yes, You've come, but You always come... (*hesitates*) but... Dr. Pazzarella never comes... and she is much more important.

9. (Olga nods, subjugated)

10. TiR: We all know it, don't we? *(Turns around to the others)*

11. (Tense silence)

12. TiR (standing right in front of Olga): But look... (provoking) I don't know... if You really care... *(holds her hand to shake it)*

13. Olga: (nodding) Yes, thanks (firmly shake hands)

14. TiR: Thank You *(challenging)*. So... why don't You draft the report for the action plan?

15. Olga *(hesitating)*: Ehm yes.

16. TiR: Alright. I'm looking forward to i–

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17. Olga: Yes, I am. . . my heart is here, in this building. . . with. . . with You, Miss Colombo.

18. (General laughter)

19. TiR *(flattered)*: Thanks! *(Insecure, anxious)* Will everything be OK?

20. Olga (reassuring, confident): I think it will.

[2.2.3:28:52] In this extract, we see Olga reclaiming her status over another participant (Catherine). We also see the subtle interplay of status and power between Olga and the teacher-in-role: in Turn 1, I hold the power by demanding an action plan; by Turn 19, I delegate my power to Olga, by anxiously asking if "Everything will be OK". During the interview that followed, Olga states:

> [In process drama] you need to create the class yourself. Everything. . .
> like, it's all about your imagination and things you want to say, want
> to. . . show, and when you are going to a standard class we're just kind
> of following the rules. Here, you choose the direction yourself. (Olga,
> p.3: 14-18)

In this extract, Olga captures the essence of process drama as imagination and meaning-making, or "Choosing the direction yourself". In the two classroom transcripts above, the actual nature of the utterances is close to that of a real conversation, in terms of agency and autonomy (van Lier 2007). As for the quality of the language, Yoriko pinpoints this well in the interview:

1. Yoriko: When we had the meeting, this is a new experience for me because usually, first I think, if the teacher asks me something, I think a lot, I arrange [the thoughts] a bit in my head and speak.

2. Erika: Sure

3. Y: But during the meeting and. . . I couldn't think, it was like a live conversation!

4. E: Yes, improvisation; and. . . so you've learnt that. . . you can improvise?

5. Y: Ye– [...] it's not too difficult, because I live with Italians anyway.

6. E: That's right, so you're always improvising!

7. Y: Yes, so every day I'm training *(laughs)* in this

8. E: Exactly, well done!

9. Y: Yes

10. E: And so. . . but in class it didn't. . . it didn't happen very often?

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11. Y: Yes, it happened but... like, sure, different... this is like at home, in the street, very reality.

12. E: Yes; and what about in the classroom, it isn't like it is at home?

13. Y: Not really. Each – sometimes it is, like... we chat together, during the break. (Yoriko, p.3: 4-20)

In this extract, Yoriko is comparing the kind of language arising from the improvisation to language in the streets, at home or 'during a break' in her L2 lesson (Turn 13). She is describing a kind of TL which is not classroom-bound; in her own words, "very reality".[5] Yoriko's opening comment also sheds light on her inner cognitive mechanisms for speech production ("First I think: if the teacher asks me something, I think a lot... and then I speak") and how these are altered by improvisation, to produce a TL that is more spontaneous, what she defines as "a live conversation" (Turn 3). These comments resonate with the discussion above on process drama triggering willingness to communicate spontaneously in the TL.

Below is an extract of the interview with teacher-participant Alfonso, who was observing this session. Alfonso is an accredited teacher trainer, with ten years of experience. Commenting on this episode, Alfonso says:

> The moment when... I think, from their point of view, it was most grat-
> ifying when they took on the role of ... the psychologist and... in that
> moment, there they were the real protagonists, because they had to in-
> teract for three, four minutes taking on a role... completely opposite to
> themselves, and so this made them feel... special; and they all particip-
> ated with the same intensity. (Alfonso, p.12: 46)

It is precisely the nature of this 'intensity' that my research is concerned with; the kind of intensity, in terms of engagement, created by particular dramatic strategies rather than others. During the teacher-participant focus group VSR session, I showed videos of this episode and asked teachers to comment: all teachers-participants who had attended that workshop stated that, in that episode, Yoriko and Olga seemed particularly engaged on a communicative and affective level (TP FG, 12:55).

Indeed, cross-referencing these observations with the student-participant questionnaires, they confirm a high engagement in communicative and affective levels. [Insert table here] As the questionnaire data reports, both Yoriko and Olga indicate being highly engaged on a 'communicative' level, rating it at the highest score (10/10); both are slightly less, but still very engaged on an 'affective' level (9/10 and 8/10). Furthermore, the video recording of this episode indicate high engagement levels in terms of body language and physiological responses in the participants' behaviour. The visual data thus confirms high engagement levels on a communicative/affective domain.

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[5] Original text: *"molto realtà"*.

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As for the intercultural level, both participants indicated to be moderately engaged (5/10). The discrepancy between participants' perceptions of their communicative/affective and intercultural engagement has generated further findings, connected with implicit/explicit *intercultural tension* in the drama, which are beyond the scope of this discussion (paper presented at the XI ACIS conference, University of Melbourne, July 2011).

Overall, by cross-referencing data sets it seems that these strategies impacted positively on students' willingness to communicate in the TL, and especially when the teacher-in-role was framed as teacher-artist, rather than teacher-as-entertainer. By comparing the two transcripts above with the transcript in the previous section, a difference emerges in how a mutual understanding of the 'teacher-artist' stance differs to a 'teacher-entertainer', in terms of active engagement, dialogic interaction and agency.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I introduced process drama pedagogy for teaching Additional Languages, focussing on two main strategies: teacher-in-role and mantle of the expert. These experiential strategies are innovative as they challenge the classroom power dynamics in terms of status, agency, and interaction. By reversing the role/status dynamics, they can be beneficial in stimulating confidence in the L2/AL speaker, lowering speakers' affective filters and creating a more spontaneous language.

I discussed the artistic collaboration involved between facilitator and participants, and the core principles of improvisation upon which it is based. I identified a difference between the 'teacher-entertainer' and 'teacher-artist', with the former resulting in a passive engagement, the latter producing an active engagement. I argued that, for this to occur, the improvisation requires the teacher-in-role to operate as a teacher-artist. However, the issue remains of how to design teacher training processes that can help language teachers to apprehend the aesthetic mode of process drama pedagogy, and the kinds of training experiences necessary to establish the flexibility required to operate as a teacher-artist in the language classroom. These, and other questions regarding AL process drama teacher education, are yet to be mapped out in future research.

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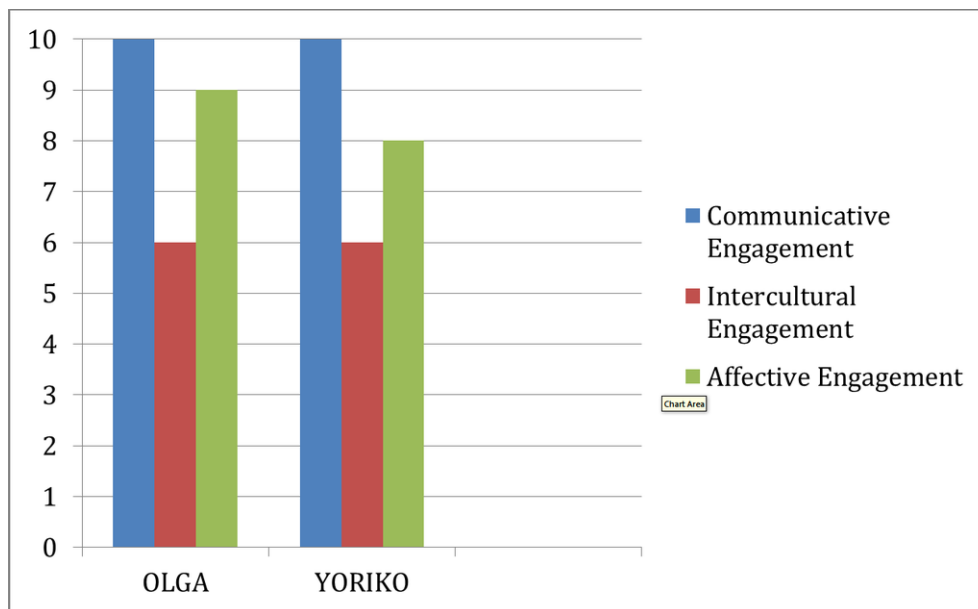
Appendix

Figure 2:   Student-participant self-scores of engagement levels (after workshop 2, 'teacher in role' episode).

The Role of Drama in Task-based Learning: Agency, Identity and Autonomy

Lorna Carson

Abstract

Drama is a genre which connects the public and private, the rehearsed and the spontaneous, the self and the other. These intriguing relationships may be examined, from an applied linguistic perspective, through the concepts of agency, autonomy and identity. This paper discusses the role of drama in university language learning within a task-based framework, and draws from an example of a collaborative drama task designed for postgraduate students in an *English for Academic Purposes* programme. It explores how the ideas of agency, autonomy and identity can help conceptualise this type of curricular activity, and presents the design and implementation of a dramatic task, and reviews learner evaluation of the task's perceived impact as an alternative learning approach which lowers affective barriers, the benefits and challenges of a collaborative task, and perceived growth in language proficiency.

1 Introduction

This paper is based on a plenary address at the "Theatre in University Language Teaching" international seminar, hosted by the *Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Anglo-Germaniche e Slave* at the *Università degli Studi di Padova*. It discusses the role of drama in university language learning within a task-based framework, and draws from an example of a collaborative drama task designed for postgraduate students in an *English for Academic Purposes* programme. The first part of my paper explores how the ideas of agency, autonomy and identity can help conceptualise this type of curricular activity, and describes how dramatic tasks can fit into the language classroom. The second part presents the design and implementation of a dramatic task, and reviews learner evaluation of the task's perceived impact as an alternative learning approach which lowers affective barriers, the benefits and challenges of a collaborative task, and perceived growth in language proficiency.[1]

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[1] I'm grateful to Dr Deirdre Murphy, who gathered the student evaluations discussed below, and to Dr Fiona Dalziel, for her invitation to participate in the international seminar on theatre in university language teaching.

2 Agency, autonomy and identity

Drama is a genre which provides regular and intriguing paths connecting the public and private, the rehearsed and the spontaneous, self and the other. The relationships between, on one hand, introspection, subjectivity and the focus on the individual, and, on the other, performance, intersubjectivity and the collective, may perhaps be illuminated by examining the concepts of agency, autonomy and identity as studied in the field of applied linguistics. Various taxonomies place these three terms at different levels within theoretical models, and the three concepts are themselves boundary-crossing notions in the humanities and social sciences – defined and investigated in different ways by philosophers, social psychologists, sociologists, and so on. I briefly describe and define each concept individually (although acknowledging how they interconnect), as a preface to my discussion of how dramatic genres and techniques afford opportunities for enhanced language learning processes and products. In doing so, I follow van Lier's (2010) tripartite delineation of agency, autonomy and identity as essential aspects of the human condition. I will draw on van Lier's explorations of these concepts in more detail below.

2.1 Agency

Turning firstly to *agency*, it may be understood as an individual (or collective) capacity for self-awareness and self-determination: decision-making, ability to enact or resist change, and take responsibility for actions. This anthropological or psychological understanding of agency (rather than grammatical or semiotic, another area of enquiry) forms a body of study within applied linguistics and its preoccupation with the task of how second (and foreign) languages are learned. Van Lier (2010) deftly captures the nature of us-as-agents in a world of other agents by describing how agency refers both to "the ways in which, and the extents to which, a person is compelled to, motivated to, allowed to, and coerced to, *act*", and equally, "the person deciding to, wanting to, insisting to, agreeing to, and negotiating to, *act*" (van Lier 2010: x, emphasis in the original). This tension between object and subject echoes Freire's (1996) fundamental assumption that our ultimate human condition is to become a responsible Subject, to act upon and transform the world around us; subjects know and act, whilst objects are only known and acted upon and lack the power to transform and enact. Van Lier (2008) proposes three core features of agency relevant to the study of classroom language learning. The first feature is initiative, or "self-regulation by the learner or group"; the second feature is interdependency – "it mediates and is mediated by the sociocultural context"; the final feature is "an awareness of the responsibility for one's own actions vis-à-vis the environment, including affected others". He uses agency as the umbrella term for these subject-rather-than-object discussions and analysis, but points readers towards another way of approaching the same concepts – this time, under the umbrella term of *autonomy*.

2.2 Autonomy

The study of autonomy within this paradigm of action and responsibility is best encapsulated by the work of David Little, who stresses, like Freire, the ontological impetus to take control and to do things for ourselves and conceptualises autonomy as a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little, 1991: 4). One of the most important contributions of the work of both Little and van Lier in illuminating this very fundamental aspect of the human psyche, the compulsion to act, to take initiative and control, is their articulation of what Conte and Castelfranchi (1995) term *bounded autonomy*, the relations of dependence that link agents. Van Lier describes (2010: x) the "Janus-faced nature of autonomy", which looks in two directions at the same time, to the personal and to the social, to "myself" and to "the other". Little emphasises that the freedom that learner autonomy implies is always conditional and constrained: "because we are social beings, our independence is always balanced by dependence, our essential condition is therefore one of interdependence" (Little 1991: 5). There may be a certain amount of definitional overlap for some between agency and autonomy. Whilst these terms are closely related, they tend not to be used interchangeably. It can be helpful to understand agency in terms of an individual's actions (determined by self or others), and to recall Little's definition of autonomy as a psychological capacity that is ultimately or successfully expressed in self-determined actions. In the related literature on motivation and self-regulation, and the specific role of agency (and how it is delineated from autonomy), I refer readers to Deci and Ryan's theory of motivation, self-determination theory (2002). Within this school of motivational studies, the nuanced interplay between what may be understood as agency and autonomy is illuminated in the two of the essential elements of the theory of self-determination, that (1) humans have inherent tendency toward growth development and integrated functioning, and (2) optimal development and actions are inherent in humans but they don't happen automatically (Deci and Vansteenkiste 2004).

2.3 Identity

Studies of human *identity* (see e.g. Elliott, 2011, for an overview; Kaufman, 2004; Giddens, 1991; Bakhtin, 1981) help articulate how various facets of selfhood contribute towards achieving personal goals, relating to other agents and other agents' goals, and how the tightrope of interdependence is negotiated, successfully or otherwise, in different domains of life including the language classroom. Riley distinguishes between identity in the sense of "personal identity", an enduring sense of the self articulated in and through a repertoire of discursive positions ("social identity"), defining and delimiting the individual and what is common to all individuals. In this conceptualisation, the Self is private and subjective, the source of individual agency, and the Person is public and intersubjective, the site of social identity (Riley 2010: 376-79). Other instances of this type of conceptualisation can be traced to Bakhtin's (1981)

discussion of identity and the dialogic, how individual identity fluctuates depending on and within contexts, or within sociocultural perspectives on language learning, which engage with how an 'L2 identity' may be constructed and mediated by language and language learners (see, e.g. Kramsch, 2000). Agency, autonomy and identity are powerful, multi-faceted constructs. But, surely the pressing and practical implications of our discussion so far only point us to the perennial obstacles of the formal language classroom? Lack of communication, lack of engagement, lack of participation. Do we have to leave our identities, agency and autonomy at the classroom door, or can learners develop L2 identities, and individual/social agency and autonomy within the language classroom? The next section examines how the use of drama in the language classroom can foster authentic involvement, communication and engagement.

3 Task-based learning and drama

Task-based language pedagogy is an increasingly well-explored area in applied linguistics (Legutke and Thomas, 1991; Prabhu, 1991; Willis and Willis, 2007), with some robust attempts to define and delineate the nature, scope and purpose of a task in the language classroom. One of the common denominators that links the many weak and strong definitions of task-based learning (ranging, for instance, from once-off exercises to more structured and extensive activities) is the emphasis on *authenticity* – that tasks should help learners become language users, in a situationally authentic way, and/or with interactional authenticity (Ellis 2003). Skehan (1998) provides a helpful schema to determine what may be considered a task in the area of formal language learning:

- Does it engage learners' interest?

- Is there a primary focus on meaning?

- Is there an outcome?

- Is success judged in terms of outcome?

- Is completion a priority?

- Is the activity something that occurs in 'real life'?

Using drama in the language classroom (Stern 1980; Healy, 2004; Ryan-Scheutz and Colangelo 2004; Dalziel et al. 2011) seems therefore to be a credible way of fostering both situational and interactional authenticity in language use. The benefits of improvised dramatic activities and rehearsal are particularly relevant to what Dougill (1987: 6 – 8) refers to as "unpredictability in language use": language is by its very nature unplanned, and every statement is open to any one of a number of responses. Dougill cites the example of a role-play

in which neither student is aware of the other's role as a means of replicating this situation, where, "[d]rama activities help to bridge the gap between the cosy and controlled world of the classroom and seemingly chaotic composition of language in the world outside". Healy (2004) also touches on the balance between "collaboration and risk-taking". Scripted drama also provides the opportunity to create imagined roles and situations with authentic contexts for meaning-focussed L2 interaction; Maley and Duff (2005: 1) highlight the ability of drama to recreate a communicative event: "[b]y fully contextualising the language, it brings the classroom interaction to life through an intense focus on meaning". With these points in mind, when we apply Skehan's schema (1998) to drama, we can affirm that:

- Drama engages learners' interest, both as participants and as audience members

- There is a primary focus on meaningis a concrete outcome (individually, from short utterances to extended monologues, and from sketches/one act plays through to full productions)

- Assessment is based on the outcome (whether in rehearsal or performance)

- Completion is therefore vital, at least to the extent that utterances are delivered

- It is a real-life activity. Everyone is familiar with drama although they may never have been involved in acting or production.

Having set out a brief rationale for tasks which involve drama in the language classroom, we now turn to a closer examination of their design and organisation.

4   Design and implementation of dramatic tasks in the language classroom

The English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme at Trinity College Dublin has two interconnected strands: intensive pre-sessional modules before the start of the academic year, and weekly in-sessional modules during term-time. Both programmes are offered to students who are not native-speakers of English, and have grown to cater for up to two hundred language learners. The EAP curriculum is delivered through group tasks with spoken and written components, and students are expected to maintain their own individual portfolio of work. The chief aim of the EAP programme is to equip postgraduate students with English language support sufficient for their needs in the academic domain. The proficiency levels required for successful functioning at fourth-level are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) common proficiency level C1. At C1 level, a non-native speaker of

English is expected to be able to understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning; to express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without too much obvious searching for expressions; to use the English language flexibly and effectively for academic, professional and social purposes; and to produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects.

The challenges of such a programme, and the rationale for using drama in the curriculum, is the agreed need (both 'perceived' by teachers and the university, and 'expressed' by students and supervisors) to provide multiple opportunities for different types of output and different types of discourse, given the variety of roles that a postgraduate student necessarily assumes as researcher, student, conference presenter, lab partner, and so on. Students engage with many different interlocutors, for a variety of purposes, and most lack confidence, to give one example, in distinguishing between different types of discourse, and in speaking in public settings.

The curriculum designed for this programme is intended to foster lifelong, autonomous language learning. The task-based learning approach makes use of authentic academic resources to engage learners in real-life academic tasks with both oral and written components, organised in sets of group tasks which provide the curriculum's overall thematic content and structure. Currently four main tasks are used in the EAP programme (one task per week, pre-sessional modules; up to two tasks per term, in-sessional modules):

- Conducting an academic seminar

- Discussing and debating current affairs

- Compiling and publishing publicity brochures

- Producing a short drama to be performed in class.

The drama task outlines the production of a short dramatic sketch to be performed in English at the end of a group of sessions in front of an audience comprising class-members and other classes where possible. Students are asked to write, in groups, either an adaptation of an existing piece of work or to create an original piece for production. Suggestions of genre are provided. Group members must also contribute to a programme/flyer which can function as a location for advertising, biographies, and critical reviews. A task overview and general guidelines are provided for students, and reproduced here:

> Overview:
>
> In your group, create a short drama to be performed in class. This can be either an adaptation or original work, e.g. murder mystery, segment of an existing film or novel, modern version of a traditional folk story or fairy tale. Each member of your group should take one or more parts, and also help create a programme/flyer, which may include advertising, biographies and critical reviews.

Guidelines:

- The drama should take about 15-20 minutes to perform

- The presentation must be interactive: students must interact and communicate with one another during the presentation

- Make sure that each member of your group has an adequate speaking role

- Students must not read from the script during the presentation (you are of course welcome to use prompts/notes). Don't worry if you get stuck and cannot remember what you intended to say: try to improvise, or ask the others in the group to help you out

- At the end of the presentation, the assessors will spend a few minutes asking questions to each member of the group.

The schematic categories provided within the Common European Framework of Reference help specify the activities and competences involved in such tasks, and the types of strategies that learners may deploy, acknowledging the importance of ludic, imaginative, artistic and aesthetic uses of language (Council of Europe 2001: 55), which simultaneously involve productive, receptive, interactive and mediating activities. The task specification provided for students contains the following statement of learning goals, derived from the illustrative scales of the Common European Framework of Reference:

Drama Project C1 proficiency level: learning goals

- In this task you will learn to deliver a short piece of drama in fluent English using stress and intonation to convey finer shades of meaning precisely.

- In selecting your theme and writing your script you will learn to summarise information from different sources in a coherent and succinct manner scanning quickly through texts to locate relevant details.

- As you write your script you will learn to draft well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative text in a style appropriate to the audience in mind.

This text in the task specification was derived from scaled descriptions of the activities and strategies involved in delivering *public announcements* (C1/C2 level descriptor), *processing text* (C2 level descriptor), *coherence and cohesion* (C2 level descriptor), *reading for orientation* (B2/C1/C2 level descriptor), and *creative writing* (C1 level descriptor).

Students can be expected to deploy a range of strategies as they plan, execute, evaluate and monitor completion of the steps involved in this task, (ibid: 63), including, for instance:

- Locating and creating resources

- Considering their audience

- Rehearsing (individually and as a group)

- Adjusting the task to suit individuals/group

- Adjusting the product to suit the audience/time-frame

- Compensating (for lack of time/resources/knowledge)

- Building on previous knowledge

- Piloting their final product

- Self-correcting/improving.

The drama task described here was carried out in a pre-sessional EAP module in 2010, in a class of eleven postgraduate students (eight different nationalities; eight female and three male students, aged 22-50, from a variety of academic disciplines). As for previous group tasks, the drama project was prepared almost entirely in class, in approximately one hour of class time for five days, before the task's performance. Group One performed a parody of the fairy tale of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, renamed *Snow Ball*, Group Two did an abridged version of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Over the course of the following four days, the groups prepared and rehearsed the content of their dramas. This involved a variety of sub-tasks:

- Group discussions to determine the topic of the drama, establish the plot outline and allocate characters to each participant;

- For those group members unfamiliar with the chosen story, online research to find the original story;

- Reading extracts from the original novel and watching selected scenes from the film adaptation, to understand the story and to practise pronunciation (Group Two only);

- Script-writing 1: Composing individual scripts (by each group member for his/her own dialogue, or by designated group members);

- Script-writing 2: Combining all individual scripts into a single script (by the whole group or by one designated group member);

- Reading through scripts together to rehearse dialogue, and to check and practise pronunciation;

- Reading through individual script while watching film in order to practise pronunciation (Group Two only);

- Creating an advertising poster

- Making costumes and props.

After five hours of preparation, the groups performed in front of the class, with costumes, sets and props. After both performances, students reviewed the successes and difficulties of the drama task in a class discussion, and details of their evaluation shared below. In their written evaluation of the drama project, students were encouraged to describe positive and negative aspects of their experience, in the preparation and performance of their task. We focus on three themes that emerged from their evaluations: experiencing an alternative learning approach/lowering affective barriers; benefits and challenges of group work; enhanced language proficiency.

5   Discussion

This section discusses student feedback regarding drama as an alternative learning approach, the benefits and challenges of group projects, and the perceived linguistic outcomes of the drama task. Students provided positive feedback about the way the drama project brought them together with other learners, given the isolating nature of postgraduate study in general, and the focus elsewhere in the EAP course on individual work. One student remarked that he had never been involved in any drama before, and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to play a character: "When you are . . . asked to act someone, to act someone is not you; it's very interesting because . . . I didn't do this before." Another student found it enhanced her memory: "I'm more dynamic. I think it stays more in my memory when there is some performing, people actually doing things rather than writing or filling gaps, you know". Performance seemed to lower students' inhibitions in the classroom. One student with previous experience of drama described how in the drama project the students were "learning through emotion. . . your mind is freer – you are not stressed". She believed that the task of performing the drama project was so absorbing that she forgot about the element of English instruction and focussed only on the performance: "I was thinking [about] the production only. . . .I was unaware we were in an English course".

Krashen's (1981) hypotheses regarding second language acquisition propose that a learner's 'affective filter' is impacted by a number of psychological variables, such as self-esteem and levels of stress and anxiety. Learners who feel stressed and anxious in the classroom are unlikely to take risks or participate in activities. Drama seems to be a powerful way of drawing learners into a task unlike other traditional language learning tasks. From learners' comments above, the balance of rehearsal and performance seems to create a space within which learners can be more fully themselves both as individuals and corporately. We now turn to examine their experiences of group-tasks in more detail.

The drama project provided an opportunity for students to share individual strengths, talents and identities within the context of an English language

learning project. For instance, students in each group who had a keen interest in art took on responsibility for the production of the poster and costumes. One student mentioned this ability to play to each student's strengths as one of the highlights of group work: "I prefer working in groups. I think you get more when you put people together ... we use what each of us know the best". Another student from Group Two spoke of his enjoyment of the intercultural interaction that went along with group work. He claimed that it gave students the opportunity to share information about their own countries and to learn more about the other students: "The most interesting thing is that people [come] from different backgrounds so ... we talked not only [about] the project, we talked [about] other things, very interesting things."

The two groups did not seem to progress with the same ease through the tasks involved. Group Two showed close collaboration and teamwork at every stage of the project preparation, and the students seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves throughout. One of this group's members attributed the positive atmosphere to the example set by a small number of the group: "If there's two or three people very active, the rest ... will follow them." Another student emphasised the importance of a positive group dynamics to the successful outcome of the project, and praised her own group for its camaraderie: "Everyone was really enthusiastic so it was really easy". This contrasted with that of Group One, struggling with the task's preparation. There was initial difficulty in establishing the exact storyline of the performance that persisted throughout the week, with a rather tense start to their performance. Students described a lack of "cooperation" between two group members as the most difficult aspect of executing the project, and how the group dynamic suffered when the same two members failed to follow the decisions that had been made by the group in the previous day's meeting. These group members also stressed that these challenges ultimately proved to be relatively minor, and failed to deter their overall enjoyment of the project. Much of what is described above regarding students' experiences of group work aligns with the 'real-world' reality of collaborative activities: at times frustrating, unfair, with difficulties in assigning roles and activities, but also enjoyable, productive and enabling ("you get more when you put people together ... we use what each of us know the best").

Understanding the constructs of agency, autonomy and identity here can provide an insight into what goes on within the catch-all label of 'group-work': Group Two suffers for instance when two individuals work at cross purposes. There remains much to learn about the nature of the group dynamic, particularly the concept of 'bounded autonomy' (Conte and Castelfranchi, 1995) in the language classroom, and the use of drama seems to mirror the complexities of real-life and our essential interdependency (Little, 1991), learners as agents in a world of other agents (van Lier, 2010). In the next section, we examine the third theme that emerged from students' in-class and written evaluations of the drama task.

In their spoken and written evaluations, students were asked to describe

the aspect of their English language learning that they felt had benefited most from participation in the drama task. Their responses covered a wide range of language skills, including perceived improvements in the areas of speaking (confidence), listening, reading, vocabulary range and control, confidence/automaticity of language use and phonological control. Reading and vocabulary related to reading the original story and working together as a group to produce the play's script from this source document. In this section on perceived impact on language learning outcomes, we concentrate on two specific areas of improvement mentioned by students: confidence/automaticity of language use and phonological control.

One student described how her confidence in her ability to speak English in front of others had grown substantially since taking part in the drama project: "For me it's really good because when you pretend to be someone else it's easier to talk in front of people". Another student highlighted the role of drama in helping the learner to improvise: "I really think it [drama] improves your speaking qualities in front of a public . . . [The aspect of my English that most improved was] the retrieving of information when you have to improvise or to change something." A member of Group One attributed her improved pronunciation during the performance to a lowered 'affective filter', "When your mind is busy thinking [about] the performance, you don't think too much 'My pronunciation's very bad!' You are more – spontaneous I suppose . . . I'm not aware". A member of Group Two described how the pressure of performing in front of an audience helped her focus on accuracy: "When I'm speaking the dialogues I know that somebody will watch me, therefore [I try to be] more precise than before!"

Students' perceptions of enhanced language learning outcomes are vital, especially when these may be accompanied by a misconception of the purposes of a language programme (where students, on arrival, may expect a grammar-focussed course, or a conversation class, for example). These types of perceived enhanced outcomes of course could be investigated in a more systematic way, and matched, for example, with the traditional assessed outcomes of a course. Nevertheless, the drama task engendered positive perceptions of enhanced learning in students, and the development of L2 identities as spontaneous language users, comfortable with their growing social identity as an L2 English speaker.

6 Conclusion

The evaluative feedback received from university language learners involved in the drama task indicates how a real-life communicative framework can be constructed within the walls of a classroom. Within such a framework, we see that authentic or 'real-life' (simultaneously enabling, frustrating, uncomfortable, productive) communication takes place. Of course, it helps that learners are keen to use the target language for their own academic and personal goals, and that the target language is the lingua franca of the

classroom. Nevertheless, it can be argued that there is something very special about the nature of drama which allows students to engage powerfully with each other, to draw on their own personal stories, and to generate both 'off-line' and 'on-line' communication. It is in the very interaction, the to and fro, between the rehearsed and performed, the private and the public, the exploratory and then planned, that learners grow in awareness both of the language learning process, and of the nature of their language learning products or utterances. In this task-based framework, learners plan, prepare and cooperate in unpredictable communicative situations and with challenges of the group dynamic, yet with the support of scripted communication and in the perspective of a final performance. One key question we are currently addressing in this programme is how students' own backgrounds, cultural sensibilities and learning preferences have an impact on their level of involvement and satisfaction with group learning, drama and task completion. An empirical investigation of collaboration learning is underway, examining the student experience of task-based learning from a longitudinal perspective.

The interaction described above by students, which echoes my earlier conceptualisations of agency, identity and autonomy, is a powerful indicator of where learners are stretched and pulled, and where they push and grow. This recalls van Lier's (2010) distinction between ways in which learners are "compelled to, allowed to act", versus "how learners decide to, want to, agree to, and negotiate to, act". Learners become co-agents, visibly interdependent both in the dramatic process and product. This creates a vital living bridge between the individual and the social. This bridge (which can be understood as real-life or authentic communication) is mostly artificial in a language classroom context: accepted by all to be a necessary ill, and lessened somewhat by the group's decision to pretend to engage in the 'social' and to present an acceptable 'individual' face for the sake of the classroom dynamic; authentic interaction only takes place outside the classroom door and after class, rarely in the target language.

This present paper has presented a conceptualisation of task-based learning that is located within a discussion of agency, autonomy and identity. It has argued that the use of drama in such a framework fulfils the schema for an authentic task, apt to meet the learning needs of language students, and to foster progress in second and foreign language learning. Drama tasks such as those outlined here allow for communication between "personal identity" and "social identity" (Riley 2010). Until learners act as themselves in the language they are learning, and learn to express their personal identity, they remain artificially trapped in social representation and unable to express individual needs and wants; in the words of Giddens (1991: 70), "What to do? How to act? Who to be?"

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From the Curtain to the Façade: Enhancing ESL/EFL Learners' Communicative Competence through an Interactive Digital Drama

Ivan Lombardi

Abstract

Façade is a one-act interactive digital drama about a marital crisis. The player is asked to play the role of a friend of the couple, and to try to cope with the situation by using his or her interaction skills. In this paper, I argue that *Façade* may be a valuable tool for teaching English as a second/foreign language, especially for the development of communicative competence. In order show how *Façade* may be used effectively, I (i) highlight the features of the tool that can play a meaningful role in language teaching; (ii) give examples of drama techniques that best exploit *Façade*; (iii) trace the techniques back to a methodology of reference; (iv) stress the primary importance of the *human factor*, the learners and teacher, over the technological tool. I then linger on the role of the teacher in activities that involve *Façade*, as well as other digital media. My proposal is presented under the metaphor of the *edurector*.

1 Observing the Façade

Façade[1] is a computer game (with a difference) developed by Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern. Since its release in 2005, it has been acknowledged as one of the most impressive AI-based digital participatory dramas (Hubbard 2002), especially praised for its plot, its natural processing of the English language feature, as well as the professional voice acting and the advanced 3D environment. In this paper, I intend to introduce this software and recommend its use in English language teaching as a tool to enhance communicative competence.

The goal of the whole *Façade* project is, in the programmers' words, to "create a compelling, well-written story that obeys dramatic principles, designed with many potential ways to play out" (Mateas & Stern 2001: 1). In order to achieve this purpose, the chosen structure is that of a "domestic drama" (Mateas &

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[1] *Façade* is a freeware software, and is available for download at http://www. interactivestory.net/download/.

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Stern 2005b: 665). The *dramatis personae* are Trip and Grace, a married couple in their early thirties (Mateas & Stern 2004a), and of course the player, an old friend who has been invited to their house for a (supposedly) pleasant cocktail party. Apparently, Grace and Trip are a model couple, socially and materially successful. Shortly after the player's arrival, though, the player himself or herself becomes "entangled in the high-conflict dissolution of Trip and Grace's marriage" (Mateas & Stern 2003: 3), and "unwittingly [...] an antagonist of sorts, forced by Grace and Trip into playing psychological 'head games' with them" (Mateas & Stern 2005c: 2). Their marriage, as will soon be clear:

> has been sour for years; deep differences, buried frustration, and un-spoken infidelities have killed their love for each other. How the façade of their marriage cracks, what is revealed, and the final disposition of Grace and Trip's marriage, and Grace and the player's relationship, de-pends on the actions of the player (Mateas & Stern 2005a: 21).

It will be up to the player to mediate between Trip and Grace, or to take sides; to play peacemaker, or to stir up hurt feelings – and let the cat out of the bag for good. Different interaction choices and actions will cause different events to be triggered. Consequently, the player can play through the interactive drama several times, and thus reveal alternative endings.

2 Behind the Façade

2.1 Computer game *vs.* interactive drama

Façade certainly shares major traits with digital games. From a technical, or even a semiotic point of view there is no significant difference: the *Façade* software runs on regular computer hardware (on both Windows and Macintosh operative systems), and needs no additional input device, other than keyboard and mouse. The on-screen objects allow the user to manipulate the relationships between objects and the environment (i.e. the principle of *interactivity*) and the inalienable, constitutive dichotomy between play and narrative[2] is not only fulfilled, but also expressly planned and balanced by the authors:

> [...] we explicitly wanted to push on the question of the compatibility of agency and narrative. This meant both creating an architecture that af-fords the authoring of non-linear, player-responsive narrative performed in real-time, and implementing a small but complete, high agency *inter-active drama* within that architecture (Mateas & Stern 2005a: 2-3).

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[2] *Play* and *narrative* are two definitional characteristics of a video game. Without the *play* dimension, the action on the screen would develop by itself with no user interaction – in the same manner as a movie; removing the *narrative* dimension would instead turn the game into a pointless (and certainly not fun at all) series of inputs and commands with no meaningful effect and no goal to achieve. It goes without saying that different video games, and video game genres, have different *degrees* of play and narrative features: arcade games like *Pong* or *Tetris*, as borderline examples, represent the smallest possible degree of story; adventures or role-playing games, instead, often reduce the play, the agency dimension to a minimum, while presenting long and complex screenplays and stories.

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Ultimately, what makes *Façade* a computer game with a difference is the *random rule* it involves. Like real actors, the characters on the screen can occasionally 'improvise' (i.e. the AI can randomly select conversation topics from a wide pre-programmed list). Grace and Trip can act and express themselves as *believable agents*, "autonomous characters exhibiting rich personalities, emotions, and social interactions" (Mateas & Stern 2001: 1), virtual presences "with the ability to do several intelligent activities in parallel – for example, to gaze, speak, walk, use objects, gesture with their hands and convey facial expressions, all at the same time" (Mateas & Stern 2004a: 2). The player has hardly any control over such 'spontaneous' behaviour – which is what ultimately supports replayability.

As Salen & Zimmerman (2004) and Juul (2005) claim, video games cannot accept such an aleatory[3] intervention of chance in gameplay. The enjoyment of playing a video game comes mostly from a personal challenge, from the struggle to achieve a goal which can only be accomplished by one's own ability to tackle obstacles, solve puzzles, and so on; the hazardous thrill of luck is a different kind of pleasure, and it cannot be in any way influenced by the player. By definition, the role of the player and his or her choices (i.e. cause-and-effect actions) are crucial. This means that chance and randomness are confined into a narrow, undefined space. Otherwise, the video game would only become frustrating:

> To include forcedly aleatory elements [in a video game] means to risk provoking feelings of frustration. The maximum degree of unpredictability that a player can accept in a simulation, in fact, is basically close to the degree of imponderability implied in reality. If the intervention of chance in gameplay is not wisely calibrated, the risk of making the video game excessively easy or wildly difficult is high. This would consequently cause the video game to lose all of its appeal, and therefore the enjoyment it can provide the player (Lombardi, in press: 91).

Having said that, *Façade* proves not to be frustrating at all, and its occasional unpredictability[4] is an integral part of the enjoyment it offers. This peculiar condition is made possible by the *non-linearity* of its narrative dimension. Unlike screenplays, which are determined from beginning to end, the underlying story in *Façade* flows on life-like rails, akin to a stage experience with real actors who are motivated to make a theatrically dramatic situation happen (Mateas & Stern 2003). In IT terms, the simulation rules are in fact constantly revised, updated "in an attempt to give the player a well-formed overall experience with unity, efficiency and pacing" (Mateas & Stern 2003: 6). The virtual synergy between such a non-linear fiction and the player agency – which, as previously stated,

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[3] The French anthropologist and sociologist Roger Caillois, in his 1958 book *Les jeux et les hommes*, suggests a four-categories schema, a classification of games in which every category is represented by a main trait, a "play impulse": *agôn* (competition), *alea* (chance; hence the choice of *aleatory* in text), *mimicry* (simulation), *ilinx* (vertigo).

[4] Due to an 'algorithm of randomness', written in ABL [ebl], *A Behavior Language*, a language "specifically designed to support the creation of life-like computer characters (believable agents)" (Mateas Stern 2004a: 135).

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does not entirely fit in the definition of a digital game – can be thus called an
interactive drama.

2.2 Drama *vs.* interactive drama

Since Laurel's 1986 pioneering work, interactive drama has been defined as a
virtual world inhabited by fictional and computer-controlled characters, within
which the player experiences a story from first person perspective – that is,
through the simulacrum's 'eyes'. The identification process is consequently
strengthened, and the player virtually mirrors his or her *avatar*: he or she
assumes a *new identity,* which is distinct from his or her own (*débrayage*, see
Lombardi, in press), but serves as a mediator to add a new layer of meaning
to the performing action. The main character is therefore the player (meaning
both *contestant* and *actor*), and his or her choices "deeply shape the path and
outcome of the story, while maintaining a tight, author given story structure"
(Mateas & Stern 2005b: 645). An equilibrium is hence reached between free
agency and a structured narrative in dramatic form, thus distinguishing such
a peculiar digital *pièce* from other conceptions of video games or interactive
stories[5].

   The features discussed so far emphasize the role of interactivity – that is, the
novelty factor with respect to traditional drama. The structure of an interactive
drama, though, is definitely similar to the classical, Aristotelian structure
of tragedy. It involves, as core elements: plot, character, diction, thought,
spectacle and song (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450a; Laurel 1991; Mateas & Stern
2005b). To explain how interactivity fits into this long-term established pattern,
Mateas (Mateas & Stern 2005b) resorts to three phenomenological categories
– previously proposed by Murray (1998): *immersion*, *agency*, *transformation*.
Immersion – "the feeling of being present in another place and engaged in the
action therein" (Mateas & Stern 2005b: 647) – is actually implied in the model
by Aristotle: it is the necessary means for the spectator to experience κ΄αϑαρσις
(katharsis). Transformation is embodied in this model, too, in the form of
change in the protagonist. According to Mateas & Stern (2005b: 648), then:

> While immersion and transformation exist in some form in non-interactive
> drama, the audience's sense of having agency within the story is a genu-
> inely new experience enabled by interactivity.

Agency, in Murray's terms, can be described as "the satisfying power to take
meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices" (Murray
1998: 126), which is conceptually different from interaction. The latter is,
in fact, a collaborative participation in an event – in the history of drama, it
is nothing new, as the structure of a *theatre of interaction* is well established
and especially common nowadays. The former, agency, has instead been made

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[5] Not surprisingly, since the publication of *Computers as Theatre* (Laurel 1991), interact-
ive digital dramas have been included in several projects and experimentations for language
teaching and learning – see Bacon *et al.* (1993), Hubbard (2002), Carroll (2009).

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possible by computer technology, which allows the player to have a decisive impact, a crucial effect on the virtual environment, thus *dramatically* reshaping the direction of the narrative. Through interactivity, the player has the ability to control almost every element on the stage within the *canovaccio* – the fundamental structure of story.

In order to integrate agency into Aristotle, Mateas (Mateas & Stern 2005b: 649) introduces the player as a key element in the *character* category. Therefore, "[b]y taking action in the experience, the player's intentions become the formal cause of activity happening at the levels from language down to spectacle". Diction, thought, song and spectacle, then, represent the material resources for the player to act, the elements available[6] for him or her to play with.

3 Cracking the Façade

3.1 The *communicative* core: natural English language processing

In an interactive drama, and in *Façade* especially, diction (language) is the key for player intervention, and it is intended as a way to build the story, to guide the dramatic event through different development courses (see section 1.2). It can be said that the player becomes the playwright, the cause of the plot, by expressing his or her intentions and sharing them with the virtual characters.

Unlike many other similar projects, whose interactivity is allowed by interfaces with predetermined interaction cues and actions (Hubbard 2002), *Façade* allows the player to type a line, in English, with his or her keyboard. The AI will then deploy a natural language processing tool (NLP, thoroughly described and explained in Mateas & Stern 2004b) to recognize the meaning and answer, both verbally and non-verbally, in a coherent manner. As a result, a believable *dialogue* is produced:

> Dialog is a powerful means for characters to express their thoughts, thus instrumental for helping the player to infer a model of the characters' thoughts. Conversely, dialog is a powerful means to influence character behavior. If the experience makes dialog available to the player (and most contemporary interactive experiences do not), this becomes a powerful resource for expressing player intention (Mateas & Stern 2005b: 650).

Language – in its broadest sense, which also includes body language – is mostly deployed as a dialogue between the player, typing communicative inputs, and the two interlocutors, providing audio-visual and kinaesthetic feedback, as well as new conversational inputs when needed. In order to conform to the player's expectations, AI-controlled linguistic-communicative statements play on one

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[6] Availability shall here be understood in parallel to the notion of *affordance* in usability. According to Norman (1988), the term affordance depicts the sum of qualities that an object, an environment, an interface bears in itself, allowing a user to perform an action. A button, for example, affords pushing and will not afford twisting. By *availability* I therefore mean the affordance, the potential that said material resources have to produce action.

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main peculiarity: the focus on responding to the *pragmatic effects of language*
("what a language utterance does to the world", Mateas & Stern 2004b: 1),
rather than on the written form of the text (i.e. its morphosyntax; this choice
also allows the dialogue management system to overlook a few typos and
BrE/AmE spelling differences) or its semantics. For example,

> if the player types 'Grace isn't telling the truth', the NLP system is re-
> sponsible for determining that this is a form of criticism, and deciding
> what reaction Grace and Trip should have to Grace being criticized in
> the current context (Mateas & Stern 2004b: 1).

In the field of applied linguistics, this underlying mechanism of determining
pragmatic pattern is commonly referred to as *speech act* (Wilkins 1976)
recognition.

Practically and essentially, the conversation in Façade takes place in (pseudo)
real-time (keyboard input → processing [in the order of milliseconds] →
dramatic response). The virtual characters' *linguistic-communicative abilities*
are perceptively well-structured, as they can talk widely around the central
topic of the story. They can also understand (technically: process) a reasonably
large variety of off-topic remarks from the player, as long as they contain a
speech act – e.g. to greet, to thank, to ask, to insult, and so on.

From a perceptive point a view, the above-mentioned verb *talk* is appropriate.
An additional feature of the interaction in *Façade* is, in fact, Grace and
Trip's professional voice acting, supplied respectively by actors Chloe Johnston
and Andy Bayiates[7]. It is also worth emphasizing that speech chunks are
preeminently oral. Subtitles are not available.

3.2 Design features and proxemics in *Façade*

Figure 1: Trip and Grace, viewed from first-person perspective

On-screen objects are designed for interaction (in form of manipulation,
collecting, observation) and avail (see footnote 5) the physical element of the

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[7] See: http://www.interactivestory.net/faq/.

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drama. The player can navigate in the environment and interact with objects (e.g. drinks, pictures) via keyboard and mouse – the latter also being used as a trigger for non-verbal communication with the virtual characters: gestures, touching, hugging, kissing. Thus, the proxemics of the dramatic event is integrated into the architecture of the software. Ultimately, the design (which includes both the architecture and the game mechanics) of *Façade* is also a *formal constraint*, in the sense that it indirectly tells the player what he or she will and will not be able to do *on stage*. It provides

> the material resources for action at the level of spectacle [as well as] a clean, transparent interface [which] insures that agency (and thus immersion) will not be disrupted (Mateas 2004: 27).

4   *Façade* as a tool to enhance English language competence

When I first played *Façade*, back in 2006, I had fun – which is, of course, fundamental. I found myself employing my whole communicative competence in English, and putting a huge effort into achieving the most absurd situations, the funniest reactions, the most different endings I could imagine. I went on until I exhausted poor Trip and Grace with my pertinacity and unpredictability. As I embroiled friends and colleagues in playing this interactive drama, I noticed that the attitude was common. Furthermore, being a non-native speaker seemed to add a tad of intrinsic motivation and pleasure in controlling the dramatic virtual environment. Therefore, I started to work on the in-built language teaching potential of *Façade*, and developed suitable techniques, which I traced back to a productive methodology. This methodology is intended to exploit the mechanism of interaction for the enhancement of ESL/EFL learners' *linguistic-communicative* skills (as defined in Kao & O'Neill 1998).

4.1   Towards a *ludic* methodology for language education

According to Kumaravadivelu (2009: 84), the term *methodology* refers to "what practicing teachers actually do in the classroom in order to achieve their stated or unstated teaching objectives". Similarly, the Italian tradition of language education studies defines the methodology as "a collection of principles and actions that aim to a didactic end" (Lombardi 2012: 3). Within the same tradition, the methodology is integrated into the hierarchical framework proposed by Balboni (2006), which is largely based on Anthony's three-tier framework (1963). In Balboni's model, the methodology is juxtaposed with the *approach* on the one side, and with the *techniques* on the other. The approach ultimately represents the underlying teaching philosophy; instead, techniques are the single practical actions that a teacher may undertake to reach his or her didactic aims. Not surprisingly, the latter term is often in the plural form: a methodology will always include and integrate more than one technique.

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In order to achieve their aims effectively, techniques need proper *tools*. The role of *Façade* will just be that of a tool, which can be integrated into several techniques, all adhering to the dictates of a *ludic* methodology (cf. Caon 2006).

Ludic, as stated in Lombardi (2012: 3) "does not (just) mean 'playful', it also involves the philosophical and anthropological concept of *ludicity*", as described by Conceição Lopes (2005; 2008), Rutka (2006) and Lombardi (2012, in press). Ludicity should be understood as a state, "not just characteristic of childhood, but [...] shared by all age groups" (Conceição Lopes 2005: 3), which mirrors the flow-like behaviour in games: "an intrinsic attitude characterized by gratuitousness, liberty, enjoyment, creativity, relationship with the world around" (Lombardi 2012: 3).

Developing language skills with a ludic methodology does not generally mean having fun; of course, if tools and techniques contribute to enjoyment as to education (like *Façade* hopefully should), so much the better. *Ludic learning*, instead, is bound to:

> respect this fundamental state of humankind, which since the early childhood stands up as the main resource for discovering, experiencing, growing up [...] – the cornerstones of education in its broadest sense (Lombardi 2012: 3).

Briefly, the main principles of this methodology are:

- attention to learning environments;

- centrality of learners;

- meaningful learning (as outlined in Novak 1998);

- multi-sensuous engagement;

- pluriculturalism and cultural relativism (i.e. the awareness that every language, and thus every culture has its own traits – and different traits do not justify value judgements. Cultures cannot be better or worse, only different).

Techniques that fit into such guidelines should be able to enrich communicative competence (Liu 2002).

Enhancing learners' *communicative competence* means helping learners improve not only their knowledge of linguistic notions and formal grammar (*linguistic sub-competence*), but also developing parallel sub-competences, which are as important as the former. I am mainly referring to *paralinguistic* and *extralinguistic* sub-competences, i.e. the consciousness of the key role that paralanguage and non-verbal communication, respectively, play in interactions. Furthermore, the idea of communicative competence entails the *socio-pragmatic* sub-competence – the knowledge of cultural prerogatives, of accepted social practices, of diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variations, and so on[8].

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[8] This paradigm of communicative competence, formulated by Balboni (2006), is grounded

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4.2   Possible uses of *Façade* in the language classroom

Façade may help to introduce ludic patterns into known teaching techniques and established good practices. Here I will focus on three examples: *role play* (i), *open dialogues* (ii) and *role making* (iii). Further collections of drama-based techniques for language learning that might gain new life blood thanks to *Façade* may be found in Holden (1981), Dougill (1987), Kao and O'Neill (1998), Burke and O'Sullivan (2002) and Maley and Duff (2005).

   With role play techniques (i), learners are meant to play one role on the basis of a draft. The draft usually points out the communicative situation, as well as its pragmatic purpose. The purpose may be either invented by the students and self-imposed, or dictated by the teacher. *Façade* may be used to provide both the situation and a goal to achieve. Learners will be catapulted into the interactive story and should be encouraged to creatively build the dramatic event, with the aim of reaching a specific pre-negotiated goal (e.g. to bring Trip and Grace back together). As students are free to choose their own way to reach the pragmatic purpose, their production of communicative acts will be subordinated to their will and to their ability to interact in the target language (cf. Kao and O'Neill, 1998) – thus allowing the teacher to evaluate the learners' capability to achieve a given communicative goal.

   Open dialogues (ii) imply that the learner knows the context and situation of the dialogue, as well as the other characters involved in the interaction. The learner is then asked to react to the communicative inputs that interlocutors provide. He or she still plays an active and leading role, but his or her competence is mainly put to the test in reference to the adequacy of answers and reactions during the conversation. As stated above (see sections 1.2 and 2.2), the characters in *Façade* are life-like, that is they can move, act and talk *independently*, like real people. They can also *choose* (from a closed, but still perceptively huge set) a conversational path to change topic, break the silence and avoid awkward moments. Exploiting these peculiarities with open dialogue techniques means treasuring the flexibility and the adaptability of the software, in order to recreate believable communicative acts. The dialogues thus created are driven by the virtual characters, and are therefore initially unpredictable for the student: he or she has to face a situation which is not predetermined, and has to advance through the story and eventually manage to reach an ending. The didactic aim of this activity is to allow learners to try out their command of the English language (cf. Balboni 2008). The teacher may interpret the results to get feedback on the learners' linguistic-communicative effectiveness and autonomy in a situation which is perceived as realistic[9].

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firmly in previous language teaching theories. It moves from Hymes' classical definition (Hymes 1967), integrates the components highlighted by Canale and Swain (1980) and takes into account later revisions of the concept, like the ones collected by Angelis and Henderson (1989). It also adds several insights on the socio-cultural and pragmatic sub-competences, which have been studies thoroughly by the Venetian school of language teaching methodology in the last twenty years.

   [9] Clearly, the *situation* is not 'real', because it takes place in a virtual environment. Still, the

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Role making (iii) gives the student full responsibility for the interaction: purpose, communicative acts, psychological key, genre, norms. In game terms, full responsibility is equivalent to free play, which can be translated, in *Façade*, as interaction without set limits. This means that the learner leads the dramatic conversation and may route and detour it at will: he or she might (consciously or unconsciously) change his or her goal; try different approaches towards the situation; switch between taking Grace's or Trip's side; abruptly change register and/or attitude towards the characters. Briefly, the player/learner can refine communicative strategies and negotiation skills in an environment that provides constant feedback, and at the same time helps to reduce the level of emotionality involved in drama-based activities – the latter being a peculiarity of written techniques, like the ones in which *Façade* can play a major and meaningful role. Moreover, since they require a free and active stand on behalf of the learners, such techniques often lead to a flow state (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) and possibly to a final shift in the focus, from *English as a target language* to *the use of English as a medium* to achieve a goal.

In role making, the role of the teacher is not marginal at all. He or she will have to supervise the didactic action, and, most of all, will need to encourage post-activity discussions: comparisons, exchange of strategies and practices, problems faced and critical situations handled, remarks and considerations, afterthoughts. Reflecting on the techniques used with the students is a non-optional moment of techniques themselves. Quite the contrary, this moment provides feedback on whether teaching objectives have been achieved or not.

4.3 The *Human Factor*: learner – edurector

In the context of the ludic methodology for language education, the learner plays an active and pivotal role (see section 4.2). He or she is asked to be the protagonist of his or her learning process. Clearly, the learner will only be able to take control of it on the operational level of techniques, by interacting with tools and manipulating teaching materials. In order to play the main role in *Façade*, the player needs to be able to use his or her interaction *skills* in English. In addition, the player should be well aware of his or her personal *ability* in interaction, i.e. the set of cognitive processes, communicative strategies and rules that allow dialogues to be established. For this reason I have included, within the methodological paradigm, the interactive drama among the tools which may be effective with advanced learners of English as a second or foreign language. Beginners, in fact, may not just lack the vocabulary to interact: they also might have not yet developed the capability to manipulate communicative acts autonomously – and may therefore perceive the task demanded by *Façade* as overwhelming, and be frustrated.

In my opinion, *Façade* may be a valuable tool when used with learners who

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experience is real, as it takes place within the player. What happens in a digital space is always meaningful to the user – otherwise, digital products could not be perceived as "compelling" (Mateas Stern 2001: 1), as worth spending time and energy on.

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can at least:

> interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular
> interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either
> party. [Who] Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects
> and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and
> disadvantages of various options (Council of Europe 2001: 24).

The above-mentioned description refers to the B2 level of the *Common European
Framework of Reference for Languages*. A B2-level learner is described as an
independent user and, with reference to interactive abilities, should be able to:

> initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conver-
> sation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this
> elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming
> comprehension, inviting others in, etc (Council of Europe 2001: 28).

Should the teacher find that his or her pupils are below the B2 level, he or she
must be aware that techniques involving the use of *Façade* may be unsuitable
to the classroom or group of learners. On the other hand, if some pupils
demonstrate clear autonomy when discussing and in dialogues, while some
others do not, the teacher should see this heterogeneity as an opportunity and
take advantage of it. He or she should try to create working pairs (or groups
of three people, at most) among the pupils, possibly grouped mixing different
levels of experience with digital games or dramas, as well as gender, character,
cognitive style – and confidence in their communication skills in the second
language. Pairs are probably the best solution in order for positive social
dynamics, such as peer cooperation and mutual help (cf. Egenfeldt-Nielsen
2007), to occur – though they do not *magically create* a stronger learning
experience by themselves.

Since the rise of communicative approaches in the 1970s (cf. Mitchell &
Miles 2004), the idea of a *magister ex cathedra* has been challenged. The ludic
methodology for language learning, which is in great measure an application of
humanistic approaches, is on the same wavelength, and is based on the notion
of the teacher as facilitator. Within this methodology, the task of a facilitator is:

- to create a context wherein the pupil can learn the language in a diffused
  playfulness;

- to adopt a varying and negotiable didactic that adapts itself to the
  characteristics of the learning group, which then in turn adapts itself to
  different learning modalities that favour diverse cognitive styles and that
  encourage an interaction among the members of the group;

- to program activities that permit the conciliation of disciplinary contents
  with the students' interests and that favour their learning modalities, and
  second, that supply the scaffolding, the support, and the incentive for the
  development of linguistic-communicative, expressive, cognitive, social,
  and intercultural competence (Caon 2006: 49-50).

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In addition, the teacher should create a *meaningful relationship* with the students.

When working with digital media, the metaphor of the *edurector* (Lombardi 2012; in press) is probably an efficient embodiment of the above-mentioned notion. Edurector is a portmanteau for *educator* and *director*. The teacher is required to become an educator in the sense that his or her aim should be not only to transmit vocabulary and highlight the grammar of a second or foreign language. An educator should integrate teaching with particular attention to the pupils' personal sphere: their learning styles, interests, motivation, future goals. Hopefully, with this information the teacher/educator will be able to offer a more customized (i.e. personally meaningful for the student) learning experience.

A teacher becomes a director when he or she:

> Directs the "players", i.e. looks after students, supports their motiva-
> tion, points their attention towards elements of significance, watches
> over involved social dynamics, holds the reins on the group, suggests
> and organizes activities, and shares with "actors" the responsibility for
> the fulfilment of established didactic ends (Lombardi 2012: 4).

In techniques that use *Façade*, then, the teacher will not fade away and be subordinate to the interactive tool. His or her role will still be vital, as a negotiator of didactic goals, a motivator, a counsellor – and, from time to time, a prompter, too.

5   Conclusion

Within the established paradigm of the ludic methodology for language education, I have proposed the interactive drama *Façade* as a tool to enhance the communicative skills of advanced learners of English as a second/foreign language. I have pointed out how the tool influences teaching and how it should be used with respect to the main actors in the "field of didactic action" (Balboni 2007: 33): student, teacher, language. So far, my research has been conducted mainly on the theoretical apparatus. Future work should focus on application and experimentation in schools and universities as well as conducting empirical research into the effectiveness of *Façade*. Both the methodology and related techniques will surely benefit from data collected by means of field work.

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The Effective Action of Theatre in the Educational Mapping of Linguistic and Intercultural Mediators [1]

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1. This paper is based on an earlier and more extensive version in Spanish entitled 'El aula de teatro universitario en la formación de mediadores lingüísticos interculturales: intersecciones entre teoría y experiencia' (Fernández, Ariza 2011) and published in Villalba, F. and J. Villatoro (eds.) (2011): Educación intercultural y enseñanza de lenguas. Vol. 3. Málaga: Prácticas en Educación. Edición digital Letra 25, 22-33. The present version was edited and summarized by all the authors (María Isabel Fernández García wrote §2, §2.1 , Mercedes Ariza §3, Claudio Bendazzoli §1, §2.3, Maria Giovanna Biscu §2.2 and Yvonne Grimaldi §2.4; the conclusions were jointly drafted) and translated into English by Claudio Bendazzoli.

Abstract

This paper is based on the University Theatre experience at the Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators (SSLMIT) of the University of Bologna (Forlì campus) over the last twenty years. A great number of trainee translators and interpreters has had the opportunity to explore the world of theatre in a foreign language, which can be referred to as TiLLiT (i.e. theatre in language and language in theatre) or stage-classroom. This activity has been carried out within a comprehensive educational context, enabling participants to acquire both general and specific competences, as suggested in the European Higher Education Area. Evidence of this can be found in the final dissertations that some students-actors wrote to complete their curriculum. Four dissertations in total will be considered to illustrate the effective action of theatre, which enables its main protagonists to establish a direct link between theoretical notions and experience.

1 Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to show the value of university theatre in second language teaching/learning and, more specifically, in the acquisition of the intercultural communicative competence (Fernández García et al. 2009) by illustrating to what extent university theatre had an impact on the curriculum of four undergraduates at the Advanced School of Modern Languages for

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Interpreters and Translators (SSLMIT) of the University of Bologna (Forlì
campus). Indeed, this has been the object of reflection and observation for
several years within the university theatre groups of SSLMIT, where an intense
theatrical activity has been going on since 1992.[2] This activity is carried out
within a comprehensive educational context, enabling participants to acquire
both general and specific competences, as suggested in the European Higher
Education Area (González & Wagenaar 2006). After nearly twenty years of
theatre in a foreign language, it has been possible to observe and acknowledge
that the experience gained on the stage-classroom makes it possible to transform
theoretical notions of the academic curriculum into know-how. Evidence of this
can be found in the final dissertations by some students-actors. The theoretical
insights proposed by the students themselves are particularly significant, as
they are focused on tangible signs of the existing shared ground between
trainees' stage experience, the development of the intercultural communicative
competence, and their future as linguistic mediation professionals.

In the present paper, four dissertations in total will be considered. These were
produced during a three-year project, which was organised by the Centre for
Theatre Studies of the Department of Multidisciplinary Studies in Translation,
Languages and Cultures (SITLeC, University of Bologna, Forlì campus). The
project was entitled 'The stage-classroom in linguistic and cultural mediator
education. A harbour for discoverers of otherness' (or, more simply, *Discoverers*)[3]
and was structured into three main stages, namely (1) *Discovering the other*,
(2) *Talking to the other*, and (3) *Listening to the other*. Each year corresponded
to one stage and a number of undergraduates were involved in its development
and research activities, as there was a direct link between the project itself and
the university theatre experience of the Spanish group at SSLMIT.

2 The stage-classroom: a space to develop mental plasticity

University theatre in a foreign language stands as a concrete answer to the
needs posed by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), its main priority
being based on an educational model to teach students *how* they can learn,
i.e. acquiring the skills to achieve the following objective: learning to learn.
Within the context of the EHEA, L2 teaching/learning has stimulated a debate
on determining which methodologies are most suited to acquire, in an efficient
way, both linguistic skills and the intercultural communicative competence.
The present work is relevant to this debate starting from a concrete scenario:

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[2] In the academic year 2010-2011, the University Theatre at SSLMIT included eight different
groups, each of which set up a performance in one of the following languages: French, Spanish,
English, German, Japanese, Slovak, Bulgarian and Portuguese (see the webpage of the *Centro
di Studi Teatrali* – Centre for Theatre Studies http://www.centrodistuditeatrali.it).

[3] The original title of the project is in Spanish: 'El aula-escenario en la formación de fu-
turos mediadores lingüísticos: un puerto para descubridores de la otredad' or 'Descubridores'
(Fernández García Biscu 2005-2006; 2008).

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linguistic and intercultural mediator training at the SSLMIT of the University of
Bologna at Forlì. [4]

Transferable competences are considered a critical part of interpreter and
translator training (see, for instance, Kalina 2000). Indeed, such skills are a
priority in any professional field and can guarantee life-long learning, because
they last throughout time. As will be highlighted in the following sections,
the stage-classroom and university theatre give students the opportunity to tap
on multiple resources and skills at the same time, thus taking advantage of
experience-based learning and adding value to their knowledge base.

University theatre activities at SSLMIT have always been carried out on
a voluntary basis by both students and staff as an extra-curricular activity.
Interested students must be members of a students' society called SSenzaLiMITi, [5]
which can apply for financial support from the University. The local Department
and the Centre for Theatre Studies also sponsor the TiLLiT initiatives, and
some members of staff take part as facilitators in some groups. Depending on
students' availability and interest, every year there can be more or less university
theatre groups in any of the languages that are taught and studied at SSLMIT
(i.e. Italian, French, German, English, Russian, Spanish, Bulgarian, Arabic,
Slovak, Portuguese, Japanese, Finnish). Moreover, the Department organizes
workshops that are open to all students, particularly to those involved in TiLLiT,
and supports the groups that may require the advice of external experts (e.g.
choreographers, directors, professional actors and so on). Each group holds
weekly meetings and rehearsals from the beginning of the academic year in
October until May, when all the final performances are staged in a festival
lasting two or three evenings, depending on the number and duration of TiLLiT
shows. The festival is open not only to the students of the local campus,
but also to any other student, university staff and ordinary citizens. Indeed,
this festival has become part of a wider programme of cultural initiatives and
events, which are organized and held in collaboration with both academic and
community-based institutions.

The university theatre groups can select any text or subject to be put on stage
(sometimes a common theme is agreed in advance); some groups may even
be involved in research projects, as was the case with the specific examples
described in this paper. [6]

In the following sub-sections, the TiLLiT experience of four undergraduates
at SSLMIT – Luciano Baldan, Angelo Nestore, Dalila Crobu and Eleonora Gentili
– will be illustrated, taking their final dissertation work into account. Their

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[4] The SLLMIT (Advanced School of Modern Languages for Interpreters and Translators)
offers one BA-equivalent programme in Cultural and Linguistic Mediation (three year under-
graduate degree course) and two MA-equivalent programmes (two year postgraduate degree
programmes) in Translation and in Conference Interpreting (further details are available on its
webpage http://www.ssit.unibo.it).

[5] The name 'SSenzaLiMITi' is a pun on SSLMIT and literally means 'without limits'.

[6] For more details on the TiLLiT activities at SSLMIT, see Fernández García et al.
2009 and the webpage of the Centre for Theatre Studies (Centro di Studi Teatrali) www.
centrodistuditeatrali.it which includes the full archive of the shows performed every year.

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projects dealt with the use of IT in language mediation and theatre, university
theatre and translation skills, the role of Malinche in mediator training, and the
exile experience in theatre and interpreter training.

2.1 Theatre and Information Technology

The work by Luciano Baldan (2008) is entitled 'Educational routes to discover
the other: language mediation, theatre and new technologies'. This is a
multifaceted study in which multidisciplinarity and diverse personal interests
converged on the stage-classroom. Luciano Baldan had obtained a BA in
Information Technology in 2004, with a project on virtual environments on the
Internet. After that, he also took a career in Translation and Interpreting (BA
at SSLMIT), where he played an active role in the above mentioned research
project called '*Discoverers*' (stage 1 and 2): he decided to carry out his internship
within that project, collaborating with the State Prison in Forlì, the Respite
Centre of the local Mental Health Unit, the 'Dante Alighieri' primary school and
'Felice Orsini' secondary school. Against this background, he played a number
of roles: actor, web designer, musician, composer, playwright, intercultural
mediator and theatre coach. In the conclusions of his theoretical work, Baldan
advanced that all the activities involved in the stage-classroom helped him
transform the theoretical notions acquired throughout his curriculum into
concrete knowledge, in that real life experience was the missing link between
theory and practice. This was a fundamental step to get closer to the job market
and make the most of the skills developed during his training (Baldan 2008:
56).

The following is the route Baldan went through to achieve the conclusions
mentioned above: starting from the training objectives established by Hurtado
Albir (1999) in learning Spanish as a foreign language and practising dialogue
interpreting, he reflected on the skills acquired and developed by means of the
stage-classroom / TiLLiT method.

As regards language skills (Spanish as a foreign language), Baldan stated that
he managed to further develop his understanding of read texts, identify language
variation in texts, get familiar with the use of sources and documentation, and
develop correct pronunciation and intonation.

As for dialogue interpreting-related skills, he enhanced his ability to pay
attention and concentrate for long periods of time without interruptions,
managed to develop split attention (auditory and visual), memory skills,
promptness in responding to situations, physical and mental strength, and
objective self-evaluation.

Eventually, his gradual acquisition of transferable skills has enabled him to
have high employability: in 2011 he worked as translator and guitar trainer,
teacher of English as L2, coordinator of a drama workshop in a primary and
secondary school, and web designer for academic institutions (e.g. he designed
web pages of research projects and international conferences).

As a final evaluation, two aspects in particular should be emphasised. Firstly,

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IT skills acquired in his first BA were strengthened and widened thanks to theatrical creativity. Secondly, he was led to discover one of the key factors in successful intercultural communication: taking part in the *Discoverers* project, Baldan felt that he had matured, professionally and personally, had become more aware of marginal situations and understood that communication is possible whenever an effort is made so that one is free of the barriers imposed by individualism.

Among the IT assignments accomplished by Baldan, the website of the Centre for Theatre Studies[7] is an important resource available to any scholar and researcher. A wealth of information can be found on the cultural and scientific activities organised by the Centre itself. Moreover, this website includes an archive of the TiLLiT activities held at SSLMIT (1999-2009). Interestingly, cyberspace can help users challenge the ephemeral and transient nature of theatrical meetings and go beyond the borders of local stages.

2.2 Theatre and Translation

In his dissertation entitled 'The TiLLiT experience and translator training', Angelo Nestore (2008) addressed the role of artistic experience and, in particular, theatrical experience in the acquisition of translation skills. He took part in the third stage of the *Discoverers* project (i.e. listening to the other), thus making a comparison between two figures: the actor and the translator. He investigated to what extent his participation in university theatre in Spanish may have influenced the acquisition process of his translation competence.

According to Nestore, the TiLLiT experience triggered his motivation and interest in research, speeding up his learning time thanks to the activation of resources and skills such as memory, reflexes and, above all, creativity.

Generally, intensifying creative processes may influence one's personal dimension and future professional life. In this particular case, Nestore contributed to writing the script of a performance ('Twenty years are nothing') about the *desaparecidos* in Argentina. During this activity, he immersed himself in poetic writing in Spanish, and this led him to develop a profound interest in literary translation, with immediate consequences on his post-graduate education choices. After graduating in October 2008, Nestore attended a Master in Translation, Cultural Mediation and Interpreting at the University of Malaga (Spain) and then he enrolled on a PhD programme with a research project on the translation of subversion in graphic novels.

The theoretical framework adopted in his analysis was the holistic model of translation competence and the related sub-competences established by the PACTE research group (PACTE 2001: 41).[8] Below is a summary of the results

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[7] The Italian full name of this centre is 'Centro di Studi Teatrali. Aula di Studi Scenici e Comunicazione Interculturale' (http://www.centrodistuditeatrali.it).

[8] PACTE is the acronym for 'Proceso de Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora y Evaluación', i.e. Process of Acquisition of the Translation Competence and Evaluation (see website of this research group: http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/pacte/en).

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reported by Nestore with reference to the skills he was able to strengthen thanks
to his TiLLiT background:

> communicative competence in two languages, especially textual, elocution
> and sociolinguistic competence;

> extralinguistic competence: bicultural and encyclopedic knowledge;

> instrumental/professional competence: knowledge and use of document-
> ation sources, organisational skills and ability to work in a team;

> psycho-physiological competence: ability to apply psychomotor, cognitive
> and behavioural resources;

> transfer competence: ability to go through the whole transfer process
> from an original text up to a translated text;

> strategic competence: conscious and unconscious, verbal and non verbal
> processes that are used to solve problems found in the development of
> the translation process.

Many of the skills listed above are surely common to any other translation
trainee. However, Nestore pointed out that the TiLLiT experience considerably
intensified his motivation and helped him speed up his learning process, in
that he was led to reflect upon and directly experience the translation process,
thus shifting his focus from a purely linguistic dimension to the cultural and
emotional side of source/target texts (Nestore: 58-59).

2.3 Theatre and Intercultural Mediation

In her final dissertation 'The role of Malinche in linguistic and cultural mediator
training: theatrical experiences' (2009), Dalila Crobu focused on *how* the
relationship between her persona as character and her persona as person could
become a source of (self) training and learning. She studied the 'first' mediator
ever, known as La Malinche, but also as Doña Marina or 'lengua', i.e. language
– a term used by native people and conquerors to refer to interpreters, and
analysed to what extent the character she had interpreted and played twice on
the stage had influenced her as a person and as a learner.

La Malinche enabled her to create a space at the edge, i.e. to develop a
personal observation point for her and her peers' training as language and
intercultural mediators. From this theatrical vantage point she was able to
become more aware of her own identity and culture, thus developing the ability
to understand the views of the other. Interesting observations can be found in
this work, e.g. when Crobu mentions that it is not possible to accept the other's
cultural paradigms if one has a mono-cultural mind. In this respect, enhancing
one's mental flexibility can be the key to gain access to multicultural encounters.

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The entire work was based on her two-year TiLLiT experience. In her first
performance in 2007 she acted as 'interpreter of indigenous people' in a comedy
by Lope de Vega (The New World Discovered by Christopher Columbus). Her
character was Palca-Malinalli Tenépatl, a young native of the new world who
welcomed the invaders on Baracoa beach. She discovered the notion of identity
in diversity when she saw her image reflected in a mirror she was given by the
Spaniards. This 'powerful' theatrical object triggered different communicative
reactions, leading to both success and failure, but above all it magnified the
profound gap generated by the encounter with the other.

The new territory explored as Palca – the character, together with the
three dimensions you/I/we –, made it possible for Dalila to engage in a
second performance called 'Labyrinths' (Fernández, Bendazzoli, Biscu 2008),
based on texts by Octavio Paz. Here she played a 'triple' character: Doña
Marina+Malinche+Capitán Malinche/Cortés. The poet of otherness (Paz
1961, 1993) provided her with a scenario in which she also acted as a
mediator between the members of the drama group, thus softening conflicts
and networking experiences so that, eventually, the way out of the labyrinth
could be found both on and off stage.

Eventually, a significant observation resulting from Crobu's TiLLiT experience
is that when the curtain was lowered at the end of the show "I realised that by
performing as Palca I was able to develop mediation skills in such a way that no
textbook about interpreting theory could have ever taught me" (Crobu 2008:
58).

Such a personal conclusion is well in line with the theoretical framework
designed by Luigi Anolli in his essay *La mente multiculturale* dealing with the
multicultural mind. Thanks to experience/performance, the intercultural actor
has the possibility to train himself/herself and shape a multicultural mind,
i.e. a versatile, open and complex mind, which is tolerant and pluralist, able
to benefit from diverse emotional patterns in order to manage interpersonal
relations and avoid communicative wrecks (Anolli 2006: 19).

2.4   Theatre and Exile

Eleonora Gentili wrote her final dissertation upon completion of a four-year
degree course in Conference Interpreting. The title of her work is "The exile
experience in linguistic-cultural mediator training. Theatre and inter-culture"
(Gentili 2007). She examined the new professional figure of linguistic and
cultural mediators within the framework of intercultural communication and
ethno-empathy theory. She defined the set of necessary skills of a profession
aimed at building communicative bridges, in contexts involving multiple
ethnicities and cultures. The interaction of social, economic and institutional
actors with ethnic and cultural differences entails conflict resolution and
mediation between interested parties, so as to favouring their living together
and mutual awareness. As a prerequisite of effective professional practice (in
legal, administrative, business, health care and sociocultural contexts), Gentili

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decided to focus on the issue of wandering and exile in the human condition, proposing this as a heuristic tool to understand the current forms of dis/location, which are fundamental in a century characterised by cultural and geographical displacement. Against this background, it seems that by acknowledging the nomadic condition of human beings it was possible to develop the empathetic competence, thus achieving active listening and awareness of the other, be it an economic exile or a manager. This appears to be the only way to accomplish authentic intercultural mediations.

The study by Gentile confirmed the hypothesis whereby the TiLLiT experience can favour the acquisition of the ethno-empathetic competence, which is essential to understand dis/location and dis/placement phenomena. To this end, she analyzed the process experienced by two students who took part in the Spanish TiLLiT and performed 'Two exiles' (in May 2006) from 'Terror and Misery in the First Franco' by José Sanchis Sinisterra (Gentili 2007: 158-162). The students involved played the role of two brothers, Jorge and Leandro, who were living two different exile conditions (i.e. the former was in a 'geographical' or 'physical' exile, as Jorge had moved from Spain to Mexico after the Spanish Civil War; on the other hand, Leandro was living in a sort of inner, more psychological exile: he remained in Spain but had lost his freedom as he had been a supporter of the Republican faction).

Besides studying the script, the two students-actors researched background information to build up their characters. For instance, they collected images and tunes pertaining to the relevant historical period; they also interviewed their grandparents and other relatives to retrieve a collective memory on life during Fascism and the Second World War. All these elements gave them the chance to directly experience an issue (on stage) they had only read about or studied as 'something' that has been present 'sometimes' and 'somewhere' in history. Indeed, they admitted that they were also able to recall and recognise a wider array of feelings and emotional 'signs' related to the exile experience even in their personal lives (Gentili 2007: 158-162).

As a final result, it was possible to conclude that both students-actors had a comprehensive experience in their body-mind of the universal human condition of exile. For this reason, they were able to recognize it and recall it in their daily lives, prior to and after the show. Their life on the stage, in turn, allowed them to listen to and recognize the voice of the other embedded in themselves. In this respect, one of the most significant conclusions is that the training potential of theatre can be found in the authenticity of theatrical fiction, as stage pretence can reveal the truth of reality. Such a potential may ensure and explain the acquisition of the empathetic competence, which can make linguistic mediations authentic and honest – an alternative perspective on what is usually considered a faithful vs. unfaithful translation or translator. Furthermore, the empathetic competence is likely to strengthen compliance with professional codes of conduct.

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3   Assessment

In order to assess the comprehensive and integrating methodology adopted in
the stage-classroom, the criteria designed by Fernández March (2006: 50) were
taken into account. These are based on five variables, which were proposed by
Prégent (1990) with the objective to providing trainers with the opportunity to
select a suitable teaching method for the competences they aim to strengthen
and stimulate: (1) Level of cognitive objectives; (2) Favouring autonomous and
long lasting learning; (3) Degree of control over one's learning experience; (4)
Number of participants; (5) Number of working hours.

(1) The level of cognitive objectives is higher, as this methodology makes
it possible to shift from the lower levels found in Bloom's taxonomy (i.e.
knowing, understanding and applying) to the higher levels, which include
analysing, synthesising and evaluating (Bloom 1990). In all the case studies
considered above, students with a TiLLiT background decided to take their
university theatre experience to a higher level and write their final dissertation
on a research subject that was fully relevant to their TiLLiT experience. In
some cases, this even had an impact on their professional development or post-
graduate education choices.(2) The capacity of TiLLiT to favour autonomous
and life-long learning is high, in that students become more responsible in
planning and fulfilling learning tasks. Each performance could be considered as
a 'module' according to the task-based learning approach, including workshops
and seminars, which help students accomplish their theatrical task (eventually,
the audience response will shed light on the students' level of preparation and
autonomy). Moreover, students have little time, and a considerable effort
is demanded from them to take part in the TiLLiT activities. Indeed, these
activities are carried out in the evening or at night, entirely on a voluntary basis
as no credits are awarded. However, students do not seem to be discouraged
and show even a greater motivation to learn, even more so as they get closer to
the end of their TILLIT experience.(3) The degree of students' control over their
learning is high. By acting autonomously and expressing creativity, students
play a protagonist role in their learning process. Although they may receive
some guidance and suggestions from teaching staff, the latter are perceived
as facilitators who can share knowledge and provide inputs, which will then
be managed by the students themselves. Indeed, they contribute to content
creation through their ideas, interests and reactions to the group's decisions.
They feel personal involvement and take advantage of teamwork to fulfil a
variety of tasks (Fonio & Genicot 2011: 79), increasing their awareness of the
resulting beneficial effects on their future professional lives. In many cases,
given the emotional impact of TiLLiT, this experience has been considered
fundamental to achieve greater self-esteem – a key aspect in learning (Gargallo
López 2006). As stated above, university theatre at SSLMIT has always been an
extra-curricular activity and is managed directly by students. Only some groups
are also helped by staff members, who play the role of facilitators and guarantee
continuity (though many students take part in university theatre every year

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throughout their curriculum, they may be involved in exchange programmes, study placements abroad, internships and so on).(4) The number of students to be involved, i.e. the size of the working group, is medium, ranging from 15 to maximum 30 participants. However, there have also been groups of just two or three students. Such a great variation is mostly due to the fact that the full curriculum is available for a limited number of languages (i.e. English, French, German, Spanish and Russian), and this has an impact on the potential number of available students. (5) The amount of working time required (i.e. preparation, rehearsal, meetings and corrections/revisions) is high. University theatre usually starts at the beginning of the academic year in October and ends with a final public performance in May. As a consequence, the stage-classroom includes several meetings with students and, above all, a great number of hours to be spent in research and preparation of materials, as well as stage setting and costumes. All this (extra) work for corrections and revision of students' theatrical activity is bound to increase towards the end of the academic year, when more and more meetings and rehearsals are necessary.

4   Concluding remarks

In this paper four final dissertations by trainee translators and interpreters who took part in university theatre at SSLMIT were illustrated to highlight the effective action of (university) theatre (in a foreign language) on future professional intercultural mediators. Indeed, the flexible and collaborative dimension of the stage-classroom seems to be particularly suited to successfully meet the challenges posed by the rapidly changing environment of higher education.

   In each of the four cases presented above, the students were able to take advantage of the TiLLiT experience, pointing out a great number of skills and transferring them from the university theatre workshop or the stage to their professional life. In particular, they emphasised the key role of university theatre in linking the theoretical notions acquired throughout their curriculum to know-how and real life experience. Given the crucial role of transferable skills, these four final dissertations stand as a valuable tool to promote university theatre in different learning environments and stimulate students to become independent learners.

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Review

Dramatic Interactions: Teaching Languages, Literatures and Cultures through Theater—Theoretical Approaches and Classroom Practices, edited by Colleen Ryan and Nicoletta Marini-Maio

Newcastle- upon -Tyne, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2011; 405 pp; ISBN: 1-4438-26502

Gabriella Caponi-Doherty

This rich collection of essays is an apt follow up to the excellent previous volume on theatre and language pedagogy – *Set the Stage! Teaching Italian through Theater. Theories, Methods, and Practices* – published by the two co-editors - Colleen Ryan (Indiana University) and Nicoletta Marini-Maio (Dickinson College) – in 2009. While the previous volume was intended specifically to offer resources to teachers and students to help them incorporate the Italian theatre tradition into the language curriculum, this new collection seeks to confirm the effectiveness of using theatre for foreign language teaching and learning by offering examples where drama is used with other taught languages, such as French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, but also Romanian, Russian and Japanese. The book stems from the recent fertile pedagogical research carried out by Appiah, De Lauretis, Pavis, Pireddu and De Marinis – just to mention a few – which considers theatre both as a cultural product and as a constituent of a teaching philosophy on intercultural learning. For the editors, "Theatre is the literary genre which most actively engages the cultural learner and maximises his/her ability to appropriate what is other" (2). The contributors to this volume are educators who have been working in public or private institutions mainly in the US for many years, teaching foreign languages with theatrical texts and techniques or teaching drama in a foreign language. In all their essays the scholars' unshakeable faith in the power of theatre as a teaching tool to foster intercultural curiosity and understanding shines through.

The book is divided into five organic sections: "Why Theater? Practical and Philosophical Perspectives"; "Performance-Based Pedagogies for Foreign Languages and Cultures"; "Performance–Based Practices in the Foreign Language Classroom"; "Embodying the Cultural Other: Recreations, Improvisations, and Adaptations"; and "Theater in the Curriculum and in the Community: Program Design, Learning Objectives, and Assessment." In Section I, Les Essif (University of Tennessee) shows how something difficult like cultural uncertainty could be

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taught through performance exercises. Essif describes a very challenging class project, which entailed staging a performance, along with his students of Jean Giraudoux's 1930s play, *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu – Tiger at the Gates* in English. His objective was to discover "the twenty-first century theatrical community's relation to this "between wars" French play about personal, social and national conscience behind the Trojan War and behind all wars" (17). To explain the principle of uncertainty, after reading, discussing and condensing the text in a number of scenes, the students were asked to perform an exercise drawn from the *tableau vivant*. Essif distributed the roles, which included two extras for the main characters – Helen and Hector – , and he did not inform the theatrical group as a whole about which character each actor played. Once the *tableau vivant* was completed, the students were asked to step back and to examine the depiction of the fixed scene in relation to their original condensed scene. In the subsequent discussion it emerged that the exercise had attained quite a level of theatrical uncertainty – many of the actors had misidentified some of the characters and where not clear about the group's relation to their character. Quite surprisingly, however, it also became clear that the actors were comfortable with that level of uncertainty, so much so that they collectively decided to perform the play like a rehearsal to manifest the Brechtian alienation effect of the exercise. Through this innovative exercise the students accepted the uncertainty of the artistic process and it was through the theatricality of the play that they were able to grasp its cultural force and relevance and "in the final production, the actors were still rehearsing the performance of a cultural hypothesis, not delivering a cultural thesis" (21).

Dominica Radulescu (Washington and Lee University) after describing communication in foreign language as a performing act, moves on to describe the liberating possibilities available in performing in a foreign language and being in contact with a foreign culture. Talking about her 2007 experience as a Fulbright scholar in Romania where she taught feminist interpretation of canonical theatre works, she describes her realization that she "had become too comfortable in [her] Amerocentric feminism" (54) and had to reacquire "foreignness" in order to question herself.

Bettina Matthias (Middlebury College), instead, wrestles with the irksome question of switching the traditional language department's focus on literary studies in favour of cultural studies and signals the necessity of finding new ways to teach literary texts.

Sections II, III and IV contain a rich variety of experiences on the use of theatre texts and techniques to acquire a greater cultural awareness. For instance, the original use of the Performance Cycle to underscore language acquisition and foster a "meaningful awareness of the target culture" (88), used by Patricia Sobral (Brown University) in her Portuguese class, addresses the problem that foreign language classes are not drama classes and that language teachers are not necessarily trained in the performing arts. Or the challenging case study described by Yumiko Hashimoto (University of South Wales) in which drama techniques and principles – specifically the method of Hirata Oriza's

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"contemporary colloquial theatre" – were used in a 2002 advanced Japanese oral course to develop appropriate and versatile linguistic and communication techniques, so essential in Japanese society where there are many levels of linguistic politeness and where inappropriate speech style is penalised more severely than in other societies.

Finally Section V includes three essays which, albeit diverse, are connected by the concept of drama as catalyst. Colleen Ryan (Indiana University) deals with Italian curriculum development, describing the Goldoni project which was a "formal attempt to integrate one theatrical author and text into the entire Italian Studies curriculum at a medium-sized private research university during the spring semester of 2007" (329).

Laura Miccoli (Universidad Federal De Minas Gerais) addresses the lack of specific guidelines on how to conduct valid and reliable assessment of drama-based language courses, which have become an alternative to traditional courses of English as a second language.

In the last essay of the book, Thomas Simpson (Northwestern University) relates a five-week residency of the *Teatro delle Albe* and the tour of Marco Paolini at Northwestern, and the rippling effect they had which extended far beyond the boundaries of Chicago and the enhancement of Italian contemporary culture in the US.

The book, with a solid theoretical basis supported by a wealth of distinctive examples of class practices and experiments, is inspiring: a cohesive work which, by investigating drama and performance as an object of study and exploring the pedagogical benefits of a cross-disciplinary approach to language study, will definitely encourage a greater incorporation of theatrical texts and techniques in foreign language courses at every level.

Drama als Methode: Theaterorientierte Unterrichtsformen in Schule und Universität

Eine Veranstaltungsreihe des Fachdidaktikzentrums der Geisteswissenschaftlichen Fakultät Graz.
Karl-Franzens-Universität im Wintersemester 2012/13.

Konferenzbericht von Micha Fleiner

Im Wintersemester 2012/13 fand an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz eine Veranstaltungsreihe zum Thema „Drama als Methode: Theaterorientierte Unterrichtsformen in Schule und Universität" statt, die im Zeichen des Forschungsschwerpunktes „Lernen – Bildung – Wissen" stand. Konzipiert und federführend betreut wurde die Veranstaltungsreihe vom Fachdidaktikzentrum der Geisteswissenschaftlichen Fakultät Graz, dessen zentraler Leitgedanke neben einer transdisziplinär ausgerichteten Lehr-Lern-Forschung die Vorstellung einer zukunftsfähigen Vernetzung zwischen schulischen und hochschulischen Akteuren bildet.

Vor dem Hintergrund gegenwärtiger Forschungsergebnisse der Neurobiologie, die auf eine positive Korrelation zwischen synästhetischen Arbeitsformen und einer nachhaltigen Persönlichkeitsbildung hinweisen, sucht die Veranstaltungsreihe, praxisrelevante Umsetzungsmöglichkeiten dieser Erkenntnisse am Beispiel drama- und theaterpädagogischer Lernformen und -techniken aufzuzeigen. Das Veranstaltungsprogramm folgte hierbei einer zweifachen Stoßrichtung: Die zu Beginn des Wintersemesters organisierte Eröffnungsveranstaltung, die sich einem fachübergreifenden Einblick in forschungsbasierte Fragestellungen zu Drama- und Theaterpädagogik widmete, bildete gleichsam die Grundlage zu einer fachpraktischen Vertiefung im weiteren Verlauf des Semesters in Gestalt thematisch gezielt ausgerichteter Theaterworkshops.

Mit Blick auf die aktuelle Veranstaltungsreihe verwies die Leiterin des Fachdidaktikzentrums, Univ.-Prof.in Dr. **Sabine Schmölzer-Eibinger**, im Rahmen der Eröffnungsveranstaltung am 19. Oktober denn auch auf die in hohem Maße transformative, d. h. neue Denk- und Wahrnehmungsräume generierende Qualität dramapädagogischer Lehr-Lernprozesse. Für einen verstärkten Einsatz theaterästhetischer Ausdrucks- und Gestaltungsfelder im Bereich der Sprachlehr- und -lernforschung sprach sich in seiner Eröffnungsrede auch Univ.-Prof. Dr. **David Newby** aus. Er begrüßte das verstärkte disziplinübergreifende Interesse an performativen Vermittlungsansätzen als wertvollen Beitrag zu einer zeitgemäßen Unterrichtspraxis im schulischen ebenso wie im hochschulischen Bildungswesen.

Ausgehend von einem fachwissenschaftlichen Überblick über die Entwicklung drama- und theaterbezogener Methodenkonzepte von den Anfängen bis zur

Gegenwart fokussierten Dr. **Ingeborg Ledun-Kahlig** und **Harald Dier** in grundlegendem Sinne die Notwendigkeit eines nachhaltigen Brückenbaus zwischen bewährten Methoden des traditionellen Fremdsprachenunterrichts mit inszenatorisch akzentuierten Zieldimensionen. Ein abschließend vorgenommener Ausblick verdeutlichte die inhaltsreiche Bandbreite der Veranstaltungsreihe, die theoriebasierte Zugänge zu Interaktions- und Inszenierungsmethoden mit praxisorientierten Lösungsansätzen in Form themenzentrierter Workshops zu den Bereichen Educational Drama, Playback-, Forum- und Improvisationstheater konzeptionell verknüpfte.

Am Beispiel einer jüngst im Grazer Raum durchgeführten Studie zu schulischen Theaterworkshops in französischer Sprache reflektierten **Barbara Horngacher** und **Ulrich Kaiser-Kaplaner** Hintergründe und Möglichkeiten für den Einsatz dramapädagogischer Methoden im Fremdsprachenunterricht. Anhand der Auswertungsergebnisse des empirisch begründeten Datenmaterials konnte aufgezeigt werden, dass die Mehrheit der in die Untersuchung eingebundenen Lernenden einen signifikanten Zuwachs in Kompetenzdimensionen wie Fremdsprache, performativer Ausdrucksgehalt und Persönlichkeitsbildung erreichte. Eine spontane zielsprachliche Aktivierung aller Veranstaltungsteilnehmerinnen und -teilnehmer vermittelte in diesem Zusammenhang ein lebendiges Bild des mehrdimensional angelegten Forschungsdesigns. Erfreulich war zudem, dass die Referierenden eine bewusste Akzentverlagerung zugunsten des – in der dramapädagogischen Forschungslandschaft erfahrungsgemäß stark unterrepräsentierten – Bereichs der Französischdidaktik legten und auf diese Weise den Anstoß zu einer Ausweitung des fremdsprachendidaktischen Diskussionsfeldes gaben.

Auch **Maria Fasching** thematisierte die Situation des dramaorientierten Fremdsprachenunterrichts an österreichischen Schulen: Hierzu präsentierte sie Ergebnisse aus ihrem gegenwärtigen Forschungsprojekt, in dessen Rahmen sie die Methode *Drama in Education* im Englischunterricht des Sekundarschulwesens evaluierte. Anhand fragebogenbasierter Erhebungen unternahm sie eine Perspektivenanalyse österreichischer Schüler/-innen und Fremdsprachenlehrkräfte zu inhaltlichen Kategorien wie Sinngehalt, Kontext, Quantität und Relevanzsetzung dramapädagogischer Unterrichtsangebote. Obschon der offizielle Abschluss der Untersuchung noch aussteht, lassen die vorab dargestellten Ergebnisse bereits erahnen, dass der Einsatz von *Drama in Education* an den untersuchten Lehranstalten in mehrfacher Hinsicht einen Beitrag zur Qualitätssteigerung des Sprachlehr- und -lernprozesses leisten konnte.

Im Anschluss hieran beleuchtete **Micha Fleiner** zunächst definitorische Überlagerungen des Begriffes *Dramapädagogik* und plädierte für eine stärkere begriffliche Konturierung. Mit Blick auf die Rolle der Dramapädagogik im Fremdsprachenunterricht widmete er sich sodann der Frage, welche konkreten Kompetenzen – performative, kognitive, ludisch-affektive – Schülerinnen und Schüler im Rahmen eines dramapädagogisch ausgerichteten Fachunterrichts erwerben können. Überlegungen dieser Art, so Fleiner, implizierten immer auch die grundsätzliche Problematik, über welche Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten

eine Fremdsprachenlehrkraft, die dramapädagogische Lehr-Lern-Prozesse im schulischen Unterricht zu integrieren beabsichtigt, letztlich verfügen sollte. Vor dem Hintergrund eines abschließenden Problemaufrisses über die gegenwärtige Situation der Dramapädagogik im deutschsprachigen Raum unterstrich der Referent mit Nachdruck die Notwendigkeit einer systematischen Implementierung performativ-ästhetischer Kompetenzdimensionen in die hochschulische Ausbildungsphase angehender Fremdsprachenlehrkräfte.

Im Zentrum der gemeinsamen Abschlussdiskussion – angeleitet durch **Stefan Egger**, einem profunden Kenner und aktiven Mitgestalter der drama- und theaterpädagogischen Szene im österreichischen Raum – standen weiterführende Überlegungen zum spannungsreichen Verhältnis von dramapädagogischer Forschung und Praxis sowie zum Stellenwert einer definitorischen Systematisierung. Den Veranstaltungsteilnehmenden – Studierende, Dozierende, Referierende und praktizierende Lehrkräfte – bot sich auf diese Weise eine interessante Plattform zu einem offenen und konstruktiven Austausch rund um den facettenreichen Themenkomplex *Drama als Methode*.

Den Auftakt in die dramapädagogische Workshop-Reihe bildete am 22. November **Karl Eigenbauer**, dessen Veranstaltung eine anwendungsnahe Auseinandersetzung mit Techniken und Methoden des *Educational Drama* im Kontext des Englischunterrichts fokussierte. Im Modus handlungsgenerierender „Als-ob"-Situationen sensibilisierte Eigenbauer die Teilnehmenden für die Grundlagen kreativer Gestaltungsarbeit ebenso wie für die Potenziale körpersprachlicher Ausdrucksmittel in den Bereichen Gestik, Mimik, Stimme, Kinesik und Proxemik. Ein wesentliches Ziel des Workshops, in dessen Mittelpunkt methodische Arbeitsformen wie *still images*, *hot seating*, *alter ego*, *character pot*, *teacher in role* und weitere mehr rückten, bestand darin, Fremdsprachenlehrerinnen und -lehrer zu einem bewussten und reflektierten Einsatz theaterästhetischer Unterrichtsaktivitäten in fremdsprachlichen Lehr-Lern-Settings zu ermutigen.

Mit **Daniel Feldhendler** ist es der Veranstaltungsleitung gelungen, einen namhaften Experten aus dem Ausland zu gewinnen, der die Entwicklung drama- und psychodramapädagogischer Lehr-Lern-Formen im Bereich der Fremdsprachendidaktik im deutschsprachigen Raum seit ihren Anfängen maßgeblich förderte. Praxisnahe Einblicke in seinen über vier Jahrzehnte gewachsenen Wissens- und Erfahrungsschatz vermittelte Feldhendler denn auch seinen Workshop-Besuchern in Graz am 14. Dezember: Am Beispiel des darstellungsbezogenen Ansatzes „Das Leben in Szene setzen" illustrierte er, welch vielgestaltige Einsatzmöglichkeiten das Zusammenspiel von Psychodrama mit humanistischen und dramapädagogischen Verfahren dem fremdsprachlichen Fachunterricht eröffnet. In teilnehmerzentrierten Handlungskontexten wurden hierbei einzelne Elemente des Playback-Theaters und der Sprachbiographie-Forschung in kreativ-spielerischer Manier erkundet – dies stets aus dem Blickwinkel der aktuellen Fremdsprachenvermittlung, d. h. in engem Bezug zu kommunikationsbezogenen Zielsetzungen des *Gemeinsamen europäischen Referenzrahmens für Sprachen*.

Das Feld der Fremdsprachendidaktik verlassend, thematisierten die beiden abschließenden Workshops performativ motivierte Lehr-Lern-Verfahren unter besonderer Betonung eines fachgebietsübergreifenden Zusammenhanges: So stellte eine aktive Annäherung an die Methoden des Forumtheaters – einer ebenso lehr- wie konfliktreichen Form des demokratisierenden Theaters – das inhaltliche Kernanliegen des Workshops am 11. Januar dar. Hierzu entwickelte Dr. **Michael Wrentschur** mit den Teilnehmenden biographisch begründete Konfliktszenarien, die zentrale Impulse für eine gemeinsame Inszenierungs- arbeit lieferten. Eine vertrauensvolle Arbeitsatmosphäre, die den Prinzipien Partizipation, Kommunikation und Toleranz in besonderem Maße Rechnung trug, ermöglichte ein zwangloses Erproben performativer Lösungswege. Ergän- zende Theaterübungen und -spiele zu Motivation, Teamgeist und ästhetischer Gestaltungsarbeit, die den Teilnehmenden nicht zuletzt wertvolle Anregun- gen für die eigene Lehrpraxis boten, flankierten die anwendungsbezogene Grundausrichtung der Veranstaltung.

Einen inhaltlich bewusst entgrenzenden Akzent setzte die am 25. Januar durchgeführte Abschlussveranstaltung in dem Sinne, als sie theaterbasierte Arbeitsformen und Improvisationstechniken auf das breite Feld der Naturwis- senschaften zu übertragen suchte. **Elisabeth Krön** förderte den situationsad- äquaten Einsatz szenisch-dramatischer Lernformen im spezifischen Kontext des – traditionell stark kognitiv geprägten – naturwissenschaftlichen Unterrichts. Hierfür präsentierte sie den Besucherinnen und Besuchern eine breite Palette an motivations- und interaktionsfördernden Übungsformaten – z. B. zu den Kompetenzfeldern Improvisations- und Inszenierungsarbeit oder Rollen- und Figurenentwicklung –, die allesamt dazu dienten, naturwissenschaftliche Lehr- inhalte nicht allein auf theoretisch-analytischem, sondern in erster Linie auf leiblich und sinnlich spürbarem Wege zu vermitteln.

Resümierend lässt sich festhalten, dass es den Organisatorinnen und Organisatoren der Veranstaltungsreihe „Drama als Methode: Theaterorientierte Unterrichtsformen in Schule und Universität" – ein besonderer Dank für ihr hohes persönliches Engagement gebührt an dieser Stelle Dr. **Ingeborg Ledun-Kahlig** und **Harald Dier** – gelungen ist, ein inhaltlich facettenreiches und qualitativ gehaltvolles Veranstaltungsprogramm zu entwickeln. Neben aufschlussreichen Einblicken in die gegenwärtige Situation der Dramapädagogik – namentlich im österreichischen Raum – verdeutlichte die Veranstaltungsreihe zudem, in welchem Maße es einer engen wechselseitigen Verknüpfung zwischen Schule und Universität nachzuspüren lohnt. Diese Zieldimension ist nicht zuletzt insoweit von erheblichem Belang, als der Grad an fach- und länderübergreifender Vernetzungsfähigkeit dramapädagogischer Akteure im schulischen, hochschulischen und außerschulischen Bereich in maßgeblicher Hinsicht über die zukünftige Entwicklungsdynamik einer performativ-ästhetisch ausgerichteten Fremdsprachendidaktik zu entscheiden vermag. In diesem Horizont stellte die dramapädagogische Veranstaltungsreihe der Karl-Franzens- Universität Graz einen ebenso notwendigen wie verdienstvollen Impuls für eine dialogorientierte Profilbildung dar.

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