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Review

Mentz, Olivier & Fleiner, Micha (eds.) (2018): The Arts in Language Teaching: International Perspectives: Performative – Aesthetic – Transversal. LIT Verlag: Zürich [1]

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1. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.13.1.10 – Note that all views and opinions in this book review are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the SCENARIO editors.

The Arts in Language Teaching: International Perspectives: Performative – Aesthetic – Transversal is an engaging collection of essays exploring the established and emerging dialogues between language teaching and performativity. In bringing together language pedagogy and the performing arts, the editors Olivier Mentz and Micha Fleiner demonstrate there is much to learn from integrating the two disciplines.

In the opening chapter – *Performativity, Learning and Aesthetic Education* - Mike Fleming explores the tensions between learning goals and aesthetic outcomes. In doing so, Fleming discusses notions of *learning in* and *learning through* the art of drama; the inclusivity of the latter being a natural way for drama to be used in language teaching. Despite the idea of *learning in* being often rejected as a narrow and traditionalist approach in which aesthetic goals are privileged above all else, Fleming suggests that there is much to be gained from engaging with drama (art for art's sake) as an art form on a deeper level. He argues that the common use of role play in language teaching is limited in scope and, by adding depth to a role play (e.g. considering a character's motivations), a deeper (rather than surface) learning experience emerges. If *learning in* - which the author suggests is valuable in itself - rather than *learning through* the art of drama in language teaching is to be successfully implemented, there are implications for professional training, such as giving language teachers some of the same skills required of drama specialists. Despite the necessity for training in the art of drama, Fleming acknowledges that reducing such training to following a set of mechanical rules is not possible.

In *Performative Foreign Language Didactics* (PFLD) *in Progress*, Manfred Schewe argues that language teachers should see themselves as *Formmeister* or Form Masters and use techniques such as still images and other aesthetic forms in their classroom practice. The chapter is an interesting case study of the author's work with second year students of German, where he used performative

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approaches to teaching and learning. Schewe's discussion highlights that there are many layers of meaning to be uncovered using such embodied approaches, echoing the importance that Fleming places on the need for training for prospective teachers in the previous chapter. The use of tableaux in pre-service teacher training is explored in the later chapter *Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of using Tableaux to Facilitate Teaching and Learning in the Literature Class* by Logamurthie Athiemoolam. The author makes the important observation that using dramatic techniques such as still image is "a very empowering and conscientising process [. . . leading. . .] to collaborative meaning-making" (177).

The performative integration of creative writing in the foreign language classroom is discussed in John Crutchfield's chapter *Brief Encounters: Reflections on the Performative Integration of Creative Writing in the Foreign Language Classroom*, in which he argues for "*embodied action* and *co-presence/witnessing*" (54) in performative pedagogy didactics. In arguing for fully realised performative processes, Crutchfield outlines a workshop for in-service and pre-service foreign language teachers in which creative writing and performance practices are integrated. More than in other pedagogic practices, students are actively engaged with their bodies and minds; a common process in drama and theatre education, namely praxis. Crutchfield suggests that the teacher should be regarded as a performing artist and that there is a need for a "more systematic collaboration between the performing arts and teacher education programs at universities" (68). Such collaborations would open up many possibilities for enhancing pedagogical practices of both performing arts specialists and their colleagues in education.

Voice training in the performing arts is often integral in equipping students with the skills to learn through practice; the body is the tool used to explore the subject. For students learning in a foreign language, the ability to be confident in speaking in another language can be enhanced by them feeling assured in their use of breath control and articulation. In the chapter *Voice as Aesthetic Element of Language Learning*, Erika Piazzoli and Claire Kennedy offer an account of foreign language teachers' participation in voice training workshops culminating in the development of a "voice nurturing" programme (75) for language students. The conclusions suggest that the purpose of such voice training programmes should be concerned with freeing the voice rather than making it more technical. Language learning and using one's voice to do so is an embodied and lived, rather than abstract, experience. In other words, the act of doing becomes a portal to deeper learning.

The need for performativity being part of teacher training is discussed in Susanne Even's *Nothing Moves if You Don't Let Go: Performativity in Teacher Training*, in which she argues for an approach best encapsulated with Shakespeare's famous words, "[a]ll the world's a stage":

> A performative approach to education in general and to foreign language learning in particular is needed to break up traditional classroom dynamics, transcend the given roles, and let in different worlds. (94)

The discussion of active participation as a performative pedagogy strategy is developed into an exploration of the difference between *role-taking* and *role-creating*. In the former, students read aloud pre-scripted lines for pronunciation or structural practice. In the latter, they are engaged in meaning making by inventing details of the people who say these lines, thereby creating a meaningful context. In a performative pedagogy, Even's assertion that roles and rigid teaching plans are transcended means that "teaching *is* performance, and each lesson is like a play with different actors" (101), making it closer to improvisation than a tightly scripted play. In drawing inspiration from improvisational theatre, Even picks up on the reciprocal nature of improvisation in which *listening* is the most important aspect. In doing this, students become co-creators of their own journeys and "make learning matter to them; they critically scrutinize content and investigate worlds in co-constructed performances" (104).

A performative approach regards students as learning agents, where there is a joint construction of knowledge between teacher and learner. This practice, as Even identifies, has a long tradition in drama pedagogy, particularly in the work of Cecily O'Neill, whose technique of process drama is reported by Eucharia Donnery in a later chapter. In *Process Drama Projects: Performing and Traversing Second Language Acquisition in Social Issues*, Donnery states that to "develop linguistic abilities in tandem with deeper, holistic understanding of social issues" (196), mental agility is needed to switch from one language to another which "could foster creativity and the capacity for empathy" (253) among students. In drama pedagogy, the value of dialogue, collaboration and reciprocity that exists in interactions with students enables empathy to occur.

Innovation in language teaching is discussed by Peter Lutzker in his chapter *Moving Language: Learning and Practicing the Art of Foreign Language Teaching*. In emphasising teaching as an art, Lutzker draws on the complexity of language acquisition and linguistic-kinesic research, in which "the largest amount of information is encoded in the thousands of unconscious physical movements made by speaking and listening" (109), arguing this is as important as the language itself. As with other chapters, the importance of embodiment in language learning is emphasised and, once again, this returns to teacher training methods thus facilitating transformative forms of learning. Lutzker writes:

> I am convinced that the well-established and critically viewed dichotomy between what students learn in teacher education and the actual realities of classroom teaching can most fruitfully be addressed by approaches which are deeply rooted in aesthetic experience and artistic practice. (133)

Thus, the inclusion of drama and other performative activities - in which intuition and 'being' itself are given primacy - are integral in helping language teaching move from traditional approaches to a more holistic method where the artistry of teaching is paramount.

In *Teaching and Learning Labs in EFL Teacher Education: Performativity and Reflection in Focus*, Michaela Sambanis and Christiane Klempin explore the benefits of a Teaching and Learning Lab (TLL) for teachers in developing performativity. Through these learning labs the acquisition of theoretical knowledge is explored in relation to praxis, thus emphasising the importance of theory being informed by practice and vice versa. For a teacher, it is not enough to plan effective lessons but to also to 'stage' them. For the participants in the TLL, performativity was realised as staging a professional role distinct from a private persona, producing spaces of interaction in difficult circumstances (e.g. when learners do not want to learn), offering flexibility and spontaneity, and treating the learner as co-constructor of the process. In other words, performative teachers have many more options available to them. The authors suggest that participants engaging in Teaching and Learning Labs have a greater depth of reflection-in-action thus improving competencies in performative teaching.

In *Museum Education and Performative Teaching and Learning: Words, Bodies, Images*, Micha Fleiner discusses the role of performative teaching in museum education to provide "a more detailed picture of how performative didactics and museum education can create a meaningful interplay between teachers, language students, and extra-curricular learning sites" (185). Where other chapters in this book have shown the positive benefits of bringing language teaching and the performing arts together, an important aspect of a specific site for this fusion of subjects demonstrates the further possibilities for innovation in teaching and learning.

The emancipatory potential of performative pedagogy in language teaching is explored in Jennifer Kitchen's chapter on *Playfulness in Ensemble Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare*, in which a "focus on playfulness reveals the critical, discursive processes by which ensemble spaces are created and are able to function as an alternative to normative 'default' pedagogies within schools" (212). Using a case study of the UK's Shakespeare Schools Festival, Kitchen shows how ensemble working over a period of time (a common practice in theatre making) fosters specific relationships rather than educational ideals. At the centre of making ensemble pedagogy an effective and useful practice is creating an appropriate space where playing is possible; most importantly, these spaces should offer opportunities for risk-taking. Necessary for nurturing and supporting this playfulness is the development of ensemble over a period of time such as in Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert approach and O'Neill's process drama.

The importance of language learning and teaching being explored in an embodied sense is foregrounded throughout this book. Uniting these chapters is the potential of the playfulness of performative pedagogies, whether it is through image making, improvisation, or freeing the voice. The authors all demonstrate that there is some fascinating practice already in progress. For example, the use of process drama to foster a positive spirit of equality and empathy for peers is important in the development of empathy; something

argued by Sandrine Eschenauer in *Translanguaging and Empathy: Effects of a Performative Approach to Language Learning*. This book would be of interest to a range of audiences, most notably foriegn language and drama teachers although anyone interested in the power of performativity in teaching and learning would also find this a fascinating collection of essays. The central message of this book is that performative pedagogies facilitate effective collaboration and co-constructed knowledge, which should be appealing to everyone involved in education.