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REVIEW

Giebert, Stefanie & Göksel, Eva (eds.) (2019): Dramapädagogik-Tage 2018. Drama in Education Days 2018

Proceedings of the 4th Annual Conference on Performative Language Teaching and Learning [1]

Dragan Miladinović

1. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.14.1.10 – Please note that the proceedings can be accessed at: https://dramapaedagogik.de/wp-content/uploads/proceedings2018/ final.pdf, last accessed: 8th June 2020.

The proceedings of the bilingual conference *Dramapädagogik-Tage/Drama in Education Days 2018* in Konstanz, Germany, is the first independent publication following the yearly eponymous event. Since the conference series focuses "on best practice and research in the field of Drama and Theatre in Education specifically in second and foreign language teaching"[2], the *Scenario Journal* has followed the conference since the beginning. The entire 2015/2 issue was dedicated to the first event in 2015 and edited by Stefanie Giebert, who is, together with Eva Göksel, the co-editor of the current proceedings. Reports on the conferences 2016 and 2017 were included in 2016/2 and 2017/1. The present book review continues this existing professional dialogue between *Scenario* and the *Drama in Education Days*.

The publication consists of eleven articles in German and English, compiling reports on drama and theatre workshops as well as on projects for language education which were presented at the conference. Regarding the structure, there are four sections in the book: *Foreword*, *Basics*, *Current Research* and *Practical Inspiration*. In the foreword, which is included in English and German, the editors and conference organisers briefly introduce the authors and their articles. They also outline the genesis of the *Drama in Education Days,* hinting that their motivation to introduce this conference series in the German language region was the lack of and need for drama in education conferences. The fact that the proceedings are available online and free of charge favours the dissemination and further discussion of the work presented in this publication in the German language region but also beyond.

The second section, *Basics*, consists of two articles in German which serve as the theoretical backdrop for the articles following in the practice-focused

2 https://dramapaedagogik.de/en/drama-in-education-days-2019/, last accessed: 8th June 2020.

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section *Practical Inspiration*. First, Tanya Wittal-Düerkop discusses why drama in education should be implemented into the language classrooms and points to some fields of application. After giving a short introduction to drama in education and pleading in favour of its use for language teaching, the author presents a table of three fields of application: nonverbal exercises, guided exercises, and open, independent exercises. For each of these, she provides a list of example exercises such as improvisations for open, independent language exercises. The article offers lay readers a brief orientation and refers to basic works in the field, such as Schewe (1993), Tselikas (1999), and Even (2003), as well as to newer publications (e.g. Haack 2018). When it comes to clarity, and especially to the use of terminology, the article could be clearer, more consistent and perhaps more cautious, for instance when referring to drama in education (Dramapädagogik) as "Methode" instead of "Ansatz" (method vs. approach) (see e.g. Rösler 2019 for a discussion), or the use of "Fremdsprachenunterricht" and "Zweitsprachenunterricht" (foreign and second language teaching) synonymously without further explanation.

In the second article of this section, Natalia Dominguez Sapien points out misinterpretations of psychodramaturgie linguistique (PDL), a concept introduced by Dufeu (e.g. 2003, see also Dufeu in this issue). Dominguez Sapien points to the misunderstandings of PDL as psychodrama within the drama in education community and rejects these equating comparisons. To clarify, the author elaborates on the key characteristics of drama in education and PDL, concluding with a commented list of main similarities and differences between these two approaches. Some statements could be scrutinised from the perspective of drama in education proponents. Dominguez Sapien asserts that in PDL "[t]he content of the lessons is not pre-defined, but spontaneously developed by the participants in the course of the course" (29, my translation) and implies that this is not the case in drama in education. But it is perhaps precisely the spontaneity and unpredictability (see e.g. Even 2019 and in this issue) where the strengths of drama in education lies – something that is also emphasised in contributions to this conference proceedings, for instance when improvisational elements are discussed (see e.g. article by Hietz & Unterthiner or Giebert) or when the need of the teacher to "think on their feet" is expressed (see article by Göksel:106). It is important to note, however, that Dominguez Sapien is not concerned with disuniting the field, but, on the contrary, with emphasizing the commonalities. This is also reflected in the author's remark that her commented list is neither complete nor unchangeable, as both approaches are constantly changing and evolving. Overall, the comparison is helpful to get a quick and clear representation of key elements of the two approaches. Furthermore, the entry stimulates reflection on the discourse in and on drama in education as well as performative teaching and learning in the broader sense. And, thus, the article provides material for an important discussion: What exactly do practitioners of performative teaching and learning, theatre and drama pedagogues, language teachers and researchers mean when they

speak of drama pedagogy[3], drama in education and performative teaching and learning? And do they refer to the same concepts when they speak about these terms in German, e.g. Dramapädagogik, Theaterpädagogik, or other languages?

In the third chapter, *Current Research*, the only contribution is by Georgina Dragović who briefly introduces her dissertation project. It is a longitudinal intervention study that was conducted at two Serbian primary schools in the school year 2015/2016. One of the aims of working on this project was to address the often-cited gap in quantitative studies in performative teaching and learning research. The dissertation can therefore be seen as an important contribution to the field to fill this gap.

Practical Inspiration, the fourth section of the book, takes the biggest part of the publication and is dedicated to project and practice reports as well as workshop descriptions. It is divided thematically into the subchapters *Language through Sound and Movement*, *Focus on Grammar*, and *Focus on Literature*. In contrast to the first three contributions in the previous two sections, most of the articles in this part of the book only briefly touch on theory and focus strongly on practice-related aspects, such as details on planning and teaching classes, reflections and descriptions of projects as well as commented outlines of workshops. Nevertheless, the authors point readers to further readings should they want to engage with the topics more intensely.

The first subchapter starts with a text in German: Brigitte Hahn-Michaeli discusses her experience as a German teacher at the University of Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, where she uses a performative approach for her weekly three hours of language teaching. She is convinced that this approach is not only more successful in comparison to the conventional chalk-and-talk teaching at the university, but through interaction and group work also gives students the chance to traverse potential political, cultural and lingual borders between them. Hahn-Michaeli presents the reader with a set of exercises that she has successfully used in her context.

The second entry is in English and written by Chris Mitchell and Marieke de Koning, who describe their work at the University of Grenobles. Based in the Innovalanguages-project[4], they have established the group THEMPPO

[3] Is there – and if – what is the difference between *drama pedagogy*, *drama in education* and even *Dramapädagogik* and *Theaterpädagogik* (*theatre pedagogy*)? Very often it comes to terminological difficulties when language borders are crossed. Schewe (2013, 18) points out that discourses around these terms are potentially not only language-specific but also (research-) culture-specific and therefore suggests the use of *performative* „as an umbrella term to describe [...] forms of foreign [and perhaps all] language teaching that derive from the performing arts“ (ibid.). For consistency with the book title of the present proceedings, I will use *drama in education* in English whenever *Dramapädagogik* was used in German. A project to be mentioned in this context is the International Glossary Project, a working group of researchers and practitioners from Ireland, the UK, Austria, Germany, and Switzerland collaborating on a German/English glossary of central terms in the field of drama and theatre (in) education: https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.13.1.8

[4] https://www.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/university/flagship-projects/idefi/innovalangues-innovation-in-language-learning-625785.kjsp, last accessed 9th June

(THEMatique Prosodie et Production Orale) which, through (improv-) theatre workshops, provides foreign language student teachers with innovative tools to teach oral competence, and especially prosody. The authors offer a detailed description of their workshop concept which consists of a framework (The Awareness, Focus, Energy, Emotion, and Liberation Frame of Reference "AFEEL FOR") with two praxes (The Silent Experience and the Engaged Body) and hope to "encourag[e] teachers to value playing and having fun with language in order to achieve improved accuracy in oral expression" (60).

The final article of this subchapter is a workshop description by Anke Stöver-Blahak. The article is written in German and starts with an outline of and continues with a short report on the workshop. According to Stöver-Blahak, it aimed at giving participants an insight into the author's course on Oral Communication at the Centre of Applied Linguistics and Special Languages at the Leibniz University Hanover. Stepping into the shoes of the students, the participants worked on poems, were recorded presenting them and received peer-feedback. The approach adopted for the course allows students to practice not only their pronunciation of words but also highlights other aspects of communication, such as body language and prosody, emphasising the performative character of public speaking. Stöver-Blahak briefly touches on the concept of *Ästhetische Kommunikation* (aesthetic communication, my translation) which she adapts for her foreign language class. In L1-German classes in German schools, this is a teaching technique to prepare poems through speaking. It would have been desirable to read more details about this technique, however, given that this text is a workshop report, it might have gone beyond the scope of the text.

The next subchapter of the conference proceedings focuses on grammar. In their article *Staging Grammar,* Kristina Hietz and Dominik Unterthiner give examples how through dramatic loops and miming, English grammar in a secondary school setting can be taught performatively. The samples the authors share with the reader could be adapted for other languages as well as other target groups and are useful for repetition of known and exploration of new grammar topics.

In her article *Drama Elements in Teaching Academic Language – a Teacher's Critical Reflection*, Stefanie Giebert reviews her experience of using drama in education in her teaching over four terms at college level in Germany with specific focus on grammar and vocabulary. Written in English, the article convincingly reflects on pros and cons of applying drama in education, especially in a context where "traditional, direct instruction-heavy science classes dominate students' schedules and often also their thinking, [and] therefore, there is often a certain scepticism among some students and teachers in regards to all things 'artsy'" (75). Besides the advantages for students that Giebert witnessed anecdotally, such as encouragement to act/perform in the target language and increased engagement, she cites her own motivation to employ performative teaching. Being involved in amateur drama for over 20

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years, she was able to find her own style of teaching by integrating her passion into the classroom.

The last German language contribution of the proceedings is written by Nina Kulovics and Magdalena Zehetgruber. The authors present their project EDanUbeCATION, a name inspired by the leitmotifs education and the river Danube. The project was based at the Université de Haute Alsace in Mulhouse, and conducted over two terms with German studies students, of whom the majority aspired a teaching position at primary or secondary level. The report summarises the experiences teachers and students made working in class, such as oral and writing activities, a translation workshop with Swiss translator Marion Graf, as well as activities outside the classroom. Those tasks consisted of smaller research projects on the Danube, tandems with students who are at universities located on the Danube (Vienna and Bratislava), dance and music workshops (including the waltz *The Blue Danube*), and excursions (to the source of the Danube in Germany and the final one-week stay in Vienna). The report offers a vivid example of how to connect and intertwine learning of language, literature and culture but also exemplifies that learning takes place multimodally.

In the same section, Eva Göksel elaborates in *Building Intercultural Competence Through Process Drama* on how to facilitate intercultural learning through process drama. After an introduction to process drama, Göksel provides an insight into planning and holding the process drama workshop at the conference in 2018, which was inspired by Lensay Namioka's short story *They don't mean it*. Her reflection and description can be used as a blueprint for similar adaptions for other contexts and is therefore a valuable contribution to the fundus of examples. Nevertheless, she reminds the reader that facilitating a process drama and a positive and supportive learning environment are challenges that require rigid preparation as well as the teachers to think on their feet.

The last article of the contribution is by Alison Koushki. She writes in English about her personal journey to using drama in teaching a course on novels at the American University of Kuwait. When this course was introduced in 2012, students were assigned chapters they had to read and prepare for class. Although the course went "reasonably" (109), the students experienced difficulties due to long hours of English language instruction before this "one-hour daily side-line enrichment activity in a conventional foundation academic reading-writing course" (ibid.). Inspired by the vivid and emotional beginning of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, she describes how from 2012 onwards, the course developed. From a traditional reading and preparing a text at home for class discussion, the course format changed so that students acted out parts of the text in class. Finally, Koushki developed a course dedicated to dramatizing literature which led to a 90-minute performance of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 2016.

This collection showcases the shared experiences, positive and negative, of teachers in international settings while applying drama in education at their institutions. Although the contributions are mostly based in a university

context, the exercises, ideas, suggestions, and reflections could be adapted for a variety of other contexts, such as primary or secondary education and/or adult continuing education. The book offers a wealth of considerations for the practical implementation of similar projects with insightful and encouraging perspectives. And, finally, the book tempts the reader to research the conference organised by Giebert and Göksel, and to find out when the next *Drama in Education Days* will take place.

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