CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	First Performative Teaching and Learning Symposium
Authors	Fleiner, Micha;Kriechbaumer, Stefan
Publication date	2013
Original Citation	Fleiner, M. and Kriechbaumer, S. (2013) 'First Performative Teaching and Learning Symposium', Scenario: A Journal of Performative Teaching, Learning, Research, VII(2), pp. 118-121. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.7.2.11
Type of publication	Article (non peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	10.33178/scenario.7.2.11
Rights	© 2013, The Author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Download date	2026-10-31 07:57:48
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/12777

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

ISSN 1649-8526
Scenario
Language • Culture • Literature
Volume 2013 · Issue 2
http://scenario.ucc.ie

Conference Report

First Performative Teaching and Learning Symposium

Exploring Performative Practices across Disciplines

Micha Fleiner Stefan Kriechbaumer

On 13th and 14th September 2013, University College Cork (UCC) hosted a symposium which centred on performative practices across different disciplines. It was officially opened by **David Ryan**, Vice-Head for Teaching and Learning at the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences, UCC, who congratulated the Departments of German and Drama and Theatre Studies, UCC, on organising the first symposium of this kind in Ireland and thus engaging with theoretical perspectives and practices which aim at paving the way towards a new, performative teaching and learning culture.

The organisers had formulated some guiding questions: What is the essence of the 'performative'? Are there any indications of an increased 'performative orientation' in some of our disciplines? Could the 'performative concept' signal a whole new way of thinking and acting in the field of teaching and learning? What are the characteristic features of performative teaching and learning? How does one learn to teach in a performative way?

The two-day symposium opened with a keynote address by **Wolfgang Nitsch** (Professor Emeritus of Education, University of Oldenburg & Honorary Professor, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), Port Elizabeth), followed by eight papers, finishing with a panel discussion.

In his keynote address *Towards performativity as an integrative focus in arts-based learning and inquiry*, Wolfgang Nitsch discussed theoretical concepts as a background for analysing performative approaches in learning and teaching. He recalled the paradigm of invisible (i.e. unconscious, unintentional or subversive) vs. visible (conscious, intentional or legitimate) curricula in institutions, which was developed by the psychoanalytical and pedagogical theorist Siegfried Bernfeld in the twenties. Nitsch then followed with the paradigm of implicit and explicit, closed vs. open pedagogical codes, that was conceptualized by Basil Bernstein on the basis of his sociolinguistic research in the sixties. Both paradigms seem to be relevant in order to understand and contextualize the plurality of programs for performativity in education, from progressive and community education in the thirties to competency-based training in the seventies to learner-centred and site-and-media-based entrepreneurial vs. aesthetic or arts-based education in recent decades. With this background in mind, he discussed notions and definitions of performativity in education, based on a small as against a larger number of sensory and cultural

Copyright © 2013 the author[s]. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.7.2.11

practices, either being added or integrated and with a weak or strong component of reflexivity and contemplation (cf. Bert Brecht on the interplay of empathy and irritation (*Verfremdung*) resulting in critical practice). Thirdly, he reported how drama and visual arts practices have emerged from traditions and concepts within an ongoing programme of exchange and cooperation between teachers, educators and academics in Lower Saxony and South Africa. Established in 1998 in schools and youth centres in townships, the programme's emphasis was on reflecting post-colonial dependencies, racism and multilingualism in schooling. Finally, he recited two poems he had written, responding to poems written by teachers in an INSET (In-Service Training) course at NMMU on the role of languages in their life history and school practice ('Childish' and 'Tabula rasa').

In her paper *Learning to see – playing with realities. How professional theatre shares its learning experiences and working methods*, **Bärbel Jogschies** (Theatre Pedagogy Section, Hanover State Theatre) showed what steps the Hanover State Theatre is taking to win new audiences through participatory methods. She gave three examples: (1) a study course for students of German as a Foreign Language, which is designed to prepare a stage performance, (2) a study course for prospective teachers, in which different theatre methods are explored, (3) the organisation of an intercultural school theatre festival involving theatre groups from various countries. She concluded by summarising the advantages of performativity in the contexts of teaching, learning and research.

Peadar Donohoe (Artistic Director, Cyclone Repertory Company, Cork; Lecturer in Theatre and Drama Studies at Cork Institute of Technology, School of Music) presented a paper entitled *Performative transistions: Adapting actor status training exercises for bullying prevention in the primary classroom,* which gave participants an insight into his PhD research project at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). Through the explorative use of role-play and status exercises the aim of the exercises is to help learners defend peers from those who engage in bullying behaviour. In this scenario, learners are coached in a role-play called the 'Defender Role-play' through which they explore the use of confident status behaviours in defending peers from bullying. A drama teacher who has taught both actors and non-actors from early years to adult, Mr Donohoe engaged the symposium participants in exercises he has tried out with Social Care students at Cork Institute of Technology to address the need of displaying confident behaviour in job interviews.

In her paper, *Blustering Buffoon or Engaging Pedagogue: What is Lost and Gained in Bringing the Performative to Education*, **Carmel O'Sullivan** (School of Education, TCD) reported on students' associations with the terms 'performance' and the notion of 'performativity' in educational contexts (e.g. drama, embodying learning and visualisation). She weighed up the potentials and possible risks of performative approaches in terms of authenticity, and contrasted the key term 'performativity' with 'performance' of the teacher, the latter possibly encouraging student passivity. She concluded by calling performativity in a teaching and learning context a promising 'new direction' in

educational research.

The following speaker **Trina Scott** (CIT Cork School of Music) opened with an overview of performative approaches to teaching and learning theatre history. In her contribution entitled *What to do with the chorus? A Performative Approach to Teaching and Learning Theatre History* she presented the results of a recent research project conducted with Irish students of BA students in Theatre and Drama Studies at Cork Institute of Technology. The project examined their gain in performative competences within one academic year. These included both theoretical knowledge (methodology, learning strategies) and practical abilities (presentation skills, use of voice and space, soft skills).

Next, **Róisín O'Gorman**'s presentation *Performative pedagogies: Between moving and stillness* offered a series of provocative ideas and images around the intriguing but not entirely settled term of 'Performative pedagogies'. Following a reflection on the legacy of the term 'performative', in particular in the fields of theatre and performance studies, she drew attention to the dynamic paradox within teaching and learning which marks learning as a process-based on-going endeavour rather than a finish-line, product-orientated episode. Using a series of images, she aimed to playfully evoke how teaching and learning must continually engage with processes of movement and exploration while also taking moments to pause and re-calibrate the journeys taken. Leaning on Michel Serres' work in *The Troubadour of Knowledge* she demarcated some parameters of what he terms 'the third space', that is, an open territory within the learning process, a place of not knowing, a place between the excitement of exploration and the stillness of being in the known.

Micha Fleiner dealt with *The idea of the performative in the German university context* by shifting the emphasis onto the integration of foreign language studies and performing arts in the sector of higher education. Giving an overview of his current PhD project supported by the University of Education Freiburg (Germany) and UCC, he underlined the growing importance of performative practices across disciplines for future language teachers. "A particular interest should be paid to a broadly structured approach of performative teaching and learning", Fleiner concluded, "which does not limit the idea of the performative to the field of drama and theatre, but actively involves the entire range of arts-based experiences with foreign languages."

In his contribution *Performative Teaching and Learning – a Modern Languages Perspective* **Manfred Schewe** (University College Cork) initially focused on early connections between dramatic art, teaching, learning, and living, followed by a brief account of how since the 1980s drama in education advocates and foreign language specialists became increasingly committed to the building of bridges between their disciplines. After this excursion into the history of the subject he referred to examples from various modern language disciplines in order to illustrate that worldwide performative practices are increasingly applied by teachers at primary, secondary and third level. He distinguished between small and large-scale forms of staging language, literature and culture and concluded by presenting a theoretical model of *Performative Foreign Language Teaching*

and Learning.[1]

Mike Fleming (Durham University), who was unable to attend the symposium but sent some further reflections on a performative teaching and learning culture, linked the notion of 'performative' to the notion of 'action', underlining that the former term is subtly stronger with its implication of conscious, outward expression and intention. 'Performance', according to Fleming, is not just cognitive but embraces ideas about the importance of the body in teaching and learning; there are resonances here with the concept of 'embodiment' in cognitive science, which sees the origins of mind in bodily experience, not just in the brain. He related the concept of 'performative teaching and learning' to existing terms in drama and theatre practice such as 'process drama'. While certain research projects have shown a special interest in the potential for integrating the arts with foreign language teaching, the possibilities of performative teaching and learning go right across the curriculum.

The concluding roundtable discussion on the exploration of performative practices across disciplines centred on various aspects which are to be further developed. These include culture-specific performative traditions and their applications in arts-based disciplines, intercultural/post-colonial perspectives on performative teaching and learning, and performative practices in bi-/multilingual educational settings. Further issues to be explored are the role of and the challenges for the teacher/scholar/artist/practitioner on the one hand, and the impact on students/audience/participants on the other. Moreover, the importance of past, current and future research on aspects of performativity was highlighted. A key question addressed was the interrelationship between art and education: What exactly and how can teachers and students learn from professionals in the fields of Drama and Theatre, Film/New Media, Music, Dance, Visual Art? All these points have laid the foundation for planning a first international conference on 'Performative Teaching, Learning and Research'. This conference, which aims to pave the way towards a performative teaching and learning culture, will be held at University College Cork from 29th May to 1st June 2014.

For details in English please click here. For conference information in German please click here.

[1] See section 5 in his article Taking Stock and Looking Ahead: Drama Pedagogy as a Gateway to a Performative Teaching and Learning Culture in SCENARIO 1/2013.