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And who says it doesn't make sense? Drama in third-level language classrooms

a practical approach

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Abstract

This article examines possible implications of Drama in Education (DiE) used in the third-level language classroom. It is based on a series of lessons that I conducted with university students of German, an analysis of the students' feedback and my own observations. I argue that the small number of publications on the use of DiE in university teaching should not be interpreted as a signal that drama pedagogy does not have a place at this level; on the contrary, this approach has potential that should be highlighted rather than overlooked. In the first part of the article, I will focus on the theoretical basis of DiE, namely central characteristics, implications for the language classroom, and practical issues regarding the practice of language teaching and learning through drama. In the second part, my practical work will be presented and discussed in more detail.

1 Drama in Education in Theory

> Drama is like the naughty child that climbs the high walls and ignores the 'no trespassing' sign. It does not allow us to define our territory so exclusively: it forces us to take as our starting point LIFE not language. (...) It does not respect subject barriers. (Maley/Duff 1997: 15)

Drama in Education (DiE) cannot be described as a linear teaching strategy. Instead, it should rather be seen as a dynamic teaching and learning process during which a multitude of different drama-based methods are applied in order to achieve aims relevant for a specific target group. There is a long tradition of practitioners using dramatic methods and activities in pedagogical contexts. Nowadays it can be found in and outside the school context and is used for specific and general educational purposes[1], including language teaching.

[1] A very recent example of this is the DiE Asperger-project in Dublin, Ireland, led by Carmel O'Sullivan, Trinity College Dublin (Department of Education).

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1.1 Central Characteristics of DiE

The following definition embraces central elements of DiE and their practical implications and also reflects upon important theoretical issues:

> Drama in Education is an enactive learning process which derives from our unique ability to imagine, emphasise and project. It is a collaborative medium, accessible to all, the purpose of which is to explore past, present and future experience, our own and others', in an attempt to make sense of the world in which we live. The distinctive features of this process are 1. The creation of an 'as if' context and fiction. 2. The taking of roles. 3. The motive power of feeling engagement within the fiction or metaphor and 4. The primacy of experiencing the "here and now" of the drama. (Norman 1999: 9, quotes from *Issues in Educational Drama*)

Within this definition, a number of theoretical features can be distinguished that are common to a DiE practice I base my work on: The definition highlights imagination, emphasis and projection that leads to the notion of 'metaxis' which O'Toole (1992:30) defines as "[t]he tension between the real fictional context and the real context." It also implies the concept of DiE as 'processual work'[2].

My work draws on a holistic learning model that identifies affective motives as crucial for learning[3]; the stimulation of motivational factors and personal growth is therefore considered as important as factual learning. DiE's inherent 'collaboration' might help to promote these aims. Silberman (1996: 6) considers collaboration to be central to contemporary learning theories. He states that in giving students tasks in which they depend on each other, teachers capitalise the social need students have and encourage and motivate them to collaborate and talk. Subsequently, he stresses that active learning can be promoted through collaborative activities.

On a different theoretical stance, I want to highlight the potential of fictional or 'as-if' settings and role-plays. Although this seems to be stating the obvious, I believe that the fundamental difference between DiE activities and theatre work needs to be explained: While in the latter there is an audience and a rehearsed play, the former lacks an external audience and the group activities are unrehearsed. My teaching experience shows that fictional settings usually encourage students to engage actively, since they generate rich opportunities for language use in a safe learning environment (see Schewe 1993: 401). Furthermore, the "process of learning through drama (. . .) is especially suitable for providing rich opportunities for meaning making for learners of all kinds" (Norman 1999: 12).

In terms of 'learning outcomes', Bowell/Heap (2001) among others stress

[2]Although this has frequently been challenged by practitioners, there seems to be an understanding that *process* is a crucial element of DiE. For further reading please refer to e.g. O'Neill (1995), Neelands (1985) or Fleming (1998).

[3]More information about learning models and research (particularly highlighting foreign language acquisition) featuring affective learning dimensions can be found for example in Dörnyei (2001), Apeltauer (1997), Riemer (2001) and Schewe (1993).

that DiE promotes the learning of the art form[4] but also personal and social learning. Byram/Fleming (2002: 143) argue, that "drama also involves looking beyond the surface to the values which underlie them, and as such it provides an ideal context for explorations of cultural values, both one's own and other people's." For language teachers it is of particular interest that DiE enables the teacher and learner to work on literature, culture and language in an integrated way rather than in isolation (cf. Schewe 1993)[5].

DiE activities are learner-focused, concerned with the construction of imagined experiences and not dependent on a script. Neelands (1985:6) also emphasises the social aspect of creating and interpreting meaning through imagined action and language. Hence, the learning outcomes comprise more than mere factual learning.

1.2 DiE in Language Teaching

> Drama here is not serving merely as an arbitrary means to an end but is actually affecting the end or outcome. In this case the end 'learning a foreign language' changes to 'learning a foreign language in a way which focuses on the richness and complexity of human behaviour' or, to put it in another way, it is to approach language in its cultural context. (Fleming 2003: 149)

Language learners will always have to face the challenge of entering into a different linguistic and cultural world when using and practicing the new tongue. I would argue that DiE can help to ease possible inhibitions through dramatic methods and the fictional context the students are working in. Liu (2002: 56) suggests that "...unlike Focus on Form, the starting point of Focus on Meaning is not the language but the learner and learning process." Through DiE, authentic speaking situations can enhance the students' intrinsic motivation to speak and learn more about the language in question. Additionally, O'Neill (1990: 18) claims that "[d]rama can provide a powerful motivation to speech, and this speech does not occur in isolation, but is embedded in context and situation where it has a crucial organizing function." Also, collaborative tasks and fictional contexts in the language classroom can break up the affective filter[6] and moderate students' anxieties.

During my teaching experience in third-level language education, I have often observed that the students' willingness and engagement to participate in discussions is greater if they can speak in roles. Byram/Fleming (2002: 143) state that drama as an art form works paradoxically: It brings the participants

[4] Neelands (1992) calls it aesthetic learning.

[5] Other theorists who argue that DiE is beneficial for language learning processes are for example Scheller (2004), Wagner (2002), Even (2003) and Tselikas (1999).

[6] Krashen coined this expression. He says that "...an affective filter can keep input from getting in. We used to speak of a mental block, a block against language learning. Filter is another word for mental block (...) what the filter says about pedagogy is that the more we do to lower the filter i.e., the more our classes are low-anxiety, the better off our students will be." (Krashen 1982, quoted in Henrici 1996:107).

closer to the subject because they are emotionally engaged in the activity, but at the same time a distance is being established because everybody agrees that it is a fictional context.

Last but not least, the fun-factor should not be underestimated. Unarguably, language learning is hard work, but dramatic tension and the exoticism of some of the assignments within a DiE setting can help the students focus on the practical usage of the target language and enjoy using it as a tool to communicate. Although it is hard to prove, I am convinced that this bears central motivational potential for language teaching.

1.3 Structuring and Internal Coherence

> Drama has the "potential as a highly motivating teaching strategy when properly structured." (O'Sullivan 2000: 16)

In DiE sequencing plays an integral part in lesson planning. 'Sequencing' here, according to Davis (1998), stands for the step by step staging of tasks by the teacher which is externally observable and should be inherent in any lesson plan. Another critical issue is how to achieve internal coherence signifying the internal logic of corresponding tasks and activities (ibid.). Bowell/Heap (2001) suggest a four step structure to plan lessons, embracing context building, narrative building, deepening and reflexion.[7] O'Neill (1995: 38) calls the very impulse to create a context the 'pre-text'. It determines the dramatic action, establishes location, atmosphere, roles and situation. She also stresses that essential elements of a story such as human subjects and the dimension of time and place need to be taken into account (O'Neill 1995: 45). In other words, only if the students believe and invest in the situation will they be engaged enough to sustain the activity, contribute to the discussions and learn in this collaborative working context. Investment can lead to a higher level of motivation[8] which is crucial to the learning outcome. To that end, Neelands (1985: 83) advises to go beyond the narrative into the plot and action. With that in mind, the fundamental question is how the participants can be engaged in the activities. Heathcote (1999: 32) suggests that "the event must have a focus, usually through productive tension which has to be injected deliberately." Tension will only be created through an engaging focus that needs to be appropriate to the aim, the participants' age and the structure of the group. It will help the group members to invest in the situation and react to it.

Additionally, the question of framing needs to be addressed when planning a lesson. 'Framing' here signifies a defined focus on an issue so that students will automatically find themselves in a prescribed situation and with prescribed objectives that can be variably close to the students' lives. O'Toole (1992: 111) depicts a frame to be "embodying the qualities: surface and depth. Here,

[7] Fleming (2003: 53) gives a helpful overview on questions that might help to structure a lesson.

[8] Dörnyei (2001) defines motivation as the reason why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it.

'surface' is the particular dramatic invention or style which is being employed. (. . .) 'Depth' is the *role distance,* that is, the distance and also the angle of viewpoint (. . .).'' Techniques such as drawing, sculpturing and writing in role, as well as the convention 'teacher in role'[9], promote the framing of an activity according to the lesson's aims and objectives.

1.4 Leading a Group in DiE

The scope of this article does not allow an extensive overview of all strategies, techniques and conventions that can be used within a DiE context.[10] However, the role and responsibilities of the teacher will be briefly talked about next.

When planning a lesson a teacher must be aware of the available teaching methods and techniques and choose them according to the requirements of the class. In addition to that, because the outcome is not absolutely foreseeable, she needs to have a certain tolerance of ambiguity. Another important issue to consider is the quality of the group atmosphere. O'Toole (1992: 105) highlights that "the drama depends to a large extent on the trust existing within the classroom." Additionally, another group related parameter needs to be addressed at this point, namely proficiency of methods. If a group is not accustomed to small group activities and group discussions, group improvisations on the spot would probably be unsuccessful. Therefore, techniques need to be introduced and practised before applying them in a dramatic setting.

Finally, I want to focus on a convention called 'teacher in role' that can be very beneficially employed to lead groups into a fictitious world, raise interest, and encourage involvement.

> This complex tactic (. . .), in which the teacher or leader initiates the dramatic world by adopting a role, offers both a change of stance to the teacher/leader and an opportunity to function as playwright within the work. It is important here to examine its operation as a means of engaging participants in active contemplation and inviting them to live in both the real and imagined world. (O'Neill 1995: 125)

The teacher will set the time and setting, and prescribe the register and language from the first moment she addresses the group. In her role, she can develop a narrative, provoke tension and challenge thinking. In showing the group that it is safe to immerse into a fictitious context, the group members usually follow quickly and invest in their roles.[11] Simultaneously, internal coherence and sequencing still need to be taken into account. Neelands (2001: 32) explicitly

[9] For more information on the technique 'teacher in role' see Neelands /Goode (2001: 32)

[10] For a comprehensive overview on drama conventions, please refer to Neelands (1988), Neelands and Goode (2001), Fleming (1997) or Rohd (1997).

[11] I have experienced this in classes at university level in which I had acted as a teacher in role previously. Students sometimes spontaneously adopted roles within discussions as a means to drive the discussion further through arguments that would not have been mentioned if it had not been for the students' fictitious roles.

points out that "the teacher is not acting spontaneously but is trying to mediate her teaching purpose through her involvement in the drama." This technique provides an interesting means to create authentic speaking opportunities, which is fundamental to language teaching. Finally, Bolton/Heathcote (2002: 160) argue that "one of its purposes is to bring a degree of authenticity beyond the extended ability of the students – and, as such, has a potential in language methodology."

1.5 Rationale for the Practical Work

The implementation of DiE might seem risky at university level because the number of contact hours is usually quite low and the students are not necessarily accustomed to dramatic methods being used in the language classroom. I have noticed, however, that theatre related methods are beneficial to discussions, interpretation of texts, as well as group dynamics. Therefore I would like to present a series of lessons in which DiE methods were used in fourth year university language classes. Like Bailin (1998: 46), I claim that in drama creativity is not necessarily confined to spontaneous improvisation, which I trust would be challenging to my students at first. I think that apparent non-dramatic elements[12] such as drawing a house plan, the conventions 'role on the wall'[13] and 'tableau'[14], will help the students to interpret a story and understand its general structure.

2 Scheme of Practical Work

> I find this approach to class excellent (...). It is an extremely interesting class and we cover so many things in such a short time.[15]

2.1 General Information

The sessions were conducted for fourth year German language students, including Erasmus students, who graduated at the end of the academic year 2005/2006. The participants were used to group work and communicated in German during the classes which were taught in the target language.

The sessions are based on a German short story. Strict drama practitioners may consider working with a text as an inferior form of activity, but Fleming (2003: 96) counter argues that "there should be no reason (...) why working with texts should not be as creative and engaging as other activities." O'Neill (1995: 5) goes further in saying that texts "operate as pretext, enriching, controlling and sustaining the students' explorations, including writing in role."

[12] These can be dramatic tasks according to O'Toole (1992: 111).
[13] For more information see Neelands (1998:97).
[14] For more information see Neelands (1998: 98).
[15] Comment by one of my students.

Moreover, the text will provide a number of cultural elements that can be discussed in class and worked with through DiE activities.

The practical work to be described and evaluated in this article will cover three sessions of 50 minutes.

2.2 Aims of the Project

These aims can be grouped into three different sub-categories encompassing language-skills, short story, and mode of learning. These sub-categories will now be elaborated upon further:

Language skills:

The students are asked to . . .

- use the German language creatively.
- use German in different modes and registers.
- use German in authentic speaking situations as a tool to solve problems.
- practise all basic language skills throughout the project.

Short story:

- The students will interpret the short story in depth; learn about the characters and their roles in the story, the underlying time structure, story line and plot, as well as intercultural issues.
- They will find out about the structure and stylistic features of a German short story.

Mode of learning:

- The students will be asked to work in ways which they have not encountered so far. They will experience alternative methods of looking at texts and of presenting their results.
- They will also be asked to work with their peers collaboratively.

2.3 Objectives of the Project

- Students will read and interpret the short story.
- They will learn about the general structure and characteristics of a German short story.
- They will use German in writing and orally in different registers and work on a variety of different language tasks.
- The participants will be asked to write their first short story in German at the end of the project.

2.4 The German Short Story Used in the Sessions

I have chosen the short story *Die Tochter* by Peter Bichsel. The story embraces a variety of issues that may be of interest to students: The relationship between a girl working in a large city and her parents who live in a town, her aspirations to leave home, as well as mutual perspectives across generations. Therefore, it contains ample possibilities to switch perspectives and to initiate discussions. What is more, the story is very short, which enables me to let the students read it in class and still work with the text afterwards, all in one lesson. It also comprises some very interesting stylistic and linguistic features.

On account of this, I am starting the first lesson with a very short extract to raise the motivation and interest of the group to learn more about the story. Moreover, the structure of the text is very clear, which allows me to use it as a prototypical structure for the story the students write at the end of the third lesson.

The three sessions will now be presented as detailed lesson plans and corresponding comments.

3 Description of the Practical Work

3.1 Lesson One

Socialform[a]	Drama convention	Material	Task	Teacher activity
1. Plenary				Introduction Welcome and inform the group that we will work on German short stories during the next couple of weeks.
2. Small group activity		Extract of the short story (see Appendix A)	Read the extract in your group[b], discuss who is "sie"[c], and what the relationship of the characters involved might be.	Assist if there is a question or ask questions if a group is stuck.
3. Plenary		Blackboard, chalk	Discussion of the findings	Write down ideas of the groups on the blackboard
4. Individual work		Short story	Read the short story; underline what you find interesting in regard to the content and language of the story.	Give a short introduction to the author and the time of writing the text, then hand out the texts. While the students are reading, assist, if necessary.
5. Plenary		Blackboard	Discussion, revision of first impression.	Pick up on unfamiliar language features, answer general queries about the text. Come back to the content of the story and ask students on how their initial expectations met the actual content of the text and why.
6. Small groups	Drawing (house plan[d])	Paper	Discuss how the family might live. Then draw a house plan.	Walk around, encourage the students to come up with their idea of how the family lives. Help them to overcome their anxiety to actually fill the "gaps" in the text with their own thoughts.
7. Plenary		House plans	Present your findings to the group.	Chair the discussion. Set homework: Request they read the text again and write down important explicit and implicit information they find about the characters of the text.[e]

[a]This category provides information on how the individual members of the group will be

3.2 Commentary

The introduction to the story through the extract worked very well but took more time than I anticipated. At first the students found it challenging to make sense of the short text and subsequently find an appropriate setting, but I felt that they really worked hard to come to a conclusion that every member of the group was happy with. Here, one important issue was to come up with settings that were *likely* instead of 'right' or 'wrong'. The claim that everything was possible as long as it could be explained needed to be highlighted and I took my time to talk to the small groups and encourage them to come up with their own interpretation of the extract. The presentations of the different ideas were lively and interactive. The level of involvement of the participants was high and I felt that they showed a genuine interest in working together and explaining their ideas. Reading and discussion of the story was unproblematic and fruitful and led nicely to the drawing of the house plans.

The text gives a vague description of how the family lives, focussing very much on the daughter's belongings. To reflect on who the three characters are, and how they live together, the students were asked to draw up a plan of the whole home, including the parents' room(s). I gave each small group a blank paper which proved to make the task more challenging as if I had handed out a plan of a house or a flat instead. Although the students seemed to have a clear idea of the relationship between the family members, they had problems in imagining a 'Swiss' or 'German' home. On one hand, a plan would have eliminated that problem and probably enabled the students to focus more on the relationship and hidden hierarchies within the family visibly represented in the house/flat. On the other hand, the students had an intercultural task to work on and benefited from the experiences of their peers who had previously lived in German speaking countries. Generally speaking, all the students were very actively engaged and enjoyed presenting their results to the plenary. In the lively presentations, the students constantly referred to the text in order to explain their ideas. Their presentations proved that they had started interpreting and actively working with the text. One interesting finding for all of us was that, although the drawings varied greatly, every group had dedicated the biggest and most comfortable room to the daughter. Since there was not a lot of time left, I suggested that we would look at the house plans again in the next session. Then I set homework whereby the students had to look more intensively at the explicit and implicit description of the three characters.

3.3 Lesson Two

Social form	Drama convention	Material	Task	Teacher activity
1. Plenary		House plans	Discuss and explain your results.	Why was it that every group has chosen to give the biggest room of the flat to the daughter? Chair discussion.
2. Small group work	Role on the Wall	White paper	Draw the outline of your character on the paper. Write into the outline what you found in the text and what you would imagine the person to be like. On the outside of the outline write which external forces affect the persons.	Explain task, help, if help is needed.
3. Plenary		Drawings (see Appendix B)	Present your findings.	Lead discussion.
		Short story.	Discuss, what makes the story work, what creates the tension the story needs to be interesting	
4. Whole class with three volunteers standing in front of the class.	Space between[a]	Chairs, table	Tell the volunteers how and where to stand in order to place them for a family photo.	Ask for volunteers. Set task. Encourage the group to try out different options, ask the students to explain their choices.
5.a see 4	Tableau[b]	Chairs, table	Group the parents in the way they would wait for their daughter in the evening.	see 4
5.b. see 4	Thought tracking[c]	Chairs, table	Tell the class what your character thinks.	Ask the volunteers to tell the group what they think in role.
5.c. see 4	Tableau	Chairs, table	Tell the volunteers how to stand/sit at the moment the daughter enters the room on her arrival.	See 5.a.
5.d. see 4	Thought tracking	Chairs, table	See 5.b.	See 5.a.

3.4 Commentary

The session started with the discussion on why the students felt that the daughter would probably occupy the biggest room in the family home. The reasons were multifaceted but all came back to the rich description of the daughter's belongings in contrast to the lack of information with regard to the parents' living area. The convention 'role on the wall' picked up on the homework and worked very well. The students were asked to find their own group depending on which character they wanted to work on, so each small group worked on one character only. If the students added their own ideas, then they had to explain how these would fit the information they had extracted from the text. Generally speaking, the students discussed the task thoroughly and obviously enjoyed themselves while drawing and writing. Also, all students used the German language to communicate and even the weaker students were actively involved in the discussions, mainly because they wanted to make their ideas known.

In the plenary discussion, not only the different characters were talked about, but also the linguistic features that were used to create a certain atmosphere and which expressed time and place. In order to highlight the family situation and also to prepare the students for the next exercise, they were asked to organise a 'family photo'. I chose this task because I wanted to focus on the different interpretations of the groups. When asking for volunteers, I specifically mentioned that some acting would be involved. Therefore, students who would not feel comfortable to be exposed in such a way could opt for contributing to the activity with their interpretation of the story orally. Furthermore, I had chosen to only use tableaux and thought-tracking so that neither particular acting skills nor a great deal of language was needed. Also, the volunteers only had to react to the suggestions of the group. Interestingly, not only the 'usual suspects' volunteered, but also students who would normally not be too involved in class activities. To my surprise, the students started talking in role and improvised the scene (see point 5 in lesson plan). The level of commitment within the group was exceptionally high and the students were very actively engaged in contributing ideas. What amazed me most was the students' willingness to improvise in German.

I felt that a discussion at the end of the lesson was needed, because I wanted to give the group time and space to talk about their experiences and reflect on how this way of representing their interpretation would mirror the way they saw the text. The students stated that they felt the exercises were helpful to come to terms with different aspects of the story and did not make the impression of being overtaxed by the conventions. As a result of this very active lesson, I decided to conduct a whole-group improvisation in the subsequent lesson.

3.5 Lesson Three

Social form	Drama convention	Material used	Task	Teacher activity
1. Plenary		Homework (problem letter, diary entry)	Hand in homework.	Collect homework and delete the names.
2. Plenary	Teacher in role[a]	Documents	Help the editor of a newspaper to raise the number of sold papers.	Narrative: The chief editor of our newspaper has sent out a memo to warn the journalists that unless the numbers of the sold papers rise, everybody's job is at risk. The editor (teacher in role) has come up with the idea of featuring family stories in the weekend supplements to boost sales. The previous day she received an envelope with documents that seem to be personal from an anonymous source. She is hoping that these documents will be the starting point for the articles. Since it is Thursday already, ideas for possible stories need to be found as soon as possible.
3. Individual work		Documents,	Read through the 'documents', decide on a topic / topics and a title / titles.	Set task of reading through the texts and find possible topics / headings for a newspaper article.
4. Plenary	Group impro-visation	Blackboard, chalk	Discussion on findings, vote for the best topic and title.	Lead discussion, make notes on the blackboard and organise a vote on the topic.
5. Pair work	Pair impro-visation (sitting back to back)		Make a phone call to one of the family members (be aware that they might not be too pleased with journalists contacting them. Maybe they even do not know about the problem yet!), try to convince them	Explain task and make notes of the most common errors made by the students.

3.6 Commentary

In this last session on *Die Tochter* I wanted to go beyond the story and work on possible diversifications of content and perspective. Therefore I chose the setting of a newspaper's staff meeting. This allowed me to use the students' written texts and put them into a very formal speaking scenario. The setting allowed the students to share their ideas in a more unconventional way and actively work with an unknown text written by one of their peers. The group improvisation worked very well. After a split second, when the students were obviously surprised about my sudden change of behaviour, they immersed into the lives of editors and journalists and quickly tried to adapt to the language register and the appropriate wording of prospective titles. The ideas they had developed in their homework were rich in variation and the subsequent discussion on which topic to work on was genuine and lively. In the end, the group voted for one setting that led to the phone call. This was challenging for some students, but everybody was proud to have mastered the task successfully in the end. We discussed the possible challenges of this formal phone call, and I believe that the participants learned a lot about different registers to be used in such a context.

The last task I set was to collect central characteristics of a short story. Although the end of the lesson might at first not appear to belong to the rest, I felt that it was important to stress the relationship between the class activities and the theory. I also wanted to equip the students with the theory they would have to consider while writing their first short story. I was very happy with the reactions of the class to this particular assignment. I did not have to add anything, since the students quickly summarised the features of a short story themselves and proved that they now had a base to work on.

4 Overall Comment and the Students' Feedback

My impression was that the students participated actively and creatively throughout the project and obviously liked the creative aspect of it. I also felt that the methods employed helped them to understand aspects of the short story and train their general language skills. Drama purists could argue that the methods used are not dramatic enough, and I agree that the employed conventions and activities were the safe choice. Nevertheless, they were already stretching the boundaries of conventional (third-level) language teaching and therefore were perceived as special by my students.

4.1 Students' Feedback

I asked my students to fill in a questionnaire (see Appendix C) after the three lessons described above in order to get an idea on how they perceived the methods employed.

In Appendix D (Table 1), the responses to the question on what the students *liked about the methods* are shown. The numbers in brackets refer to the number of students stating the given categories.

The list of things the students *did not like* or *would change* is shorter and noticeably more individualised. Hence, in Appendix E (Table 2), I only mention points that were raised by more than one student.

Appendix F (Table 3) lists the students' ratings[16] on a scale from 1 (excellent) to 6 (unsatisfying) for the following seven statements:

The methods used to introduce the short story and to work on *Die Tochter* . . .

- Q1:. . . helped me to interpret the text in depth.
- Q2: . . . helped me to empathise with the characters.
- Q3: . . . helped me to understand the structure of the short story better.
- Q4: . . . helped me to communicate with others.
- Q5: . . . motivated me to write.
- Q6: . . . motivated me to speak.
- Q7: . . . helped me to understand the text.

5 Discussion of the Feedback and Conclusion

After having looked into theoretical aspects of DiE, I presented a practical project that I conducted at Dublin City University, Ireland, during the winter semester 2005/06. I have outlined both the sessions and the participants' feedback.

The students undoubtedly considered the methods helpful and beneficial for investigating and working with the story. Nevertheless, the ratings show that despite the overall positive response to the methods, the motivational aspect in reference to speaking and writing is not scoring very high. This surprised me greatly, since I felt that the texts produced by the students when writing in role were generally very well done and that the level of discussion and the quantity of utterances made by the students including those students, who normally would not speak as much, was quite high indeed. Considering this discrepancy, it would be interesting to further investigate the students' self-perception in relation to the teachers' perception, as well as student motivation and performance, within a DiE framework.

On the positive side, the ratings suggest that the methods have helped my students to interpret and understand the text in depth and to work intensely

[16] I strongly suspect that at least two students have mixed up the scale in taking 6 as the best and 1 as the worst (which would correspond with their other answers). I have, nevertheless, presented the grades as they occurred in the forms.

on the characters. Furthermore, they were able to identify and name the key elements of a short story effortlessly at the end of the project. This indicates that a high level of personal engagement with the text was achieved and that critical text analysis was triggered by the students' involvement in the various drama-related activities. I do not want to claim that DiE methods work in all aspects of language teaching, but I want to argue in favour of using these when suitable, and also support their circulation among foreign language teachers in third-level foreign language teaching. DiE has the potential to evoke using the target language creatively and in doing so increasing the students' willingness and commitment to engage in challenging tasks. For me, this is a valid reason to implement these methods into the teaching and learning of foreign languages at university level.

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A Appendix A

A.1 Extract of Short Story

Über Mittag blieb Monika in der Stadt, sie aß eine Kleinigkeit, wie sie sagte, in einem Tearoom. Sie war dann ein Fräulein, das in Tearooms lächelnd Zigaretten raucht.

Oft fragten sie sie, was sie alles getan habe in der Stadt, im Büro. Sie wusste dann aber nichts zu sagen.

B Appendix B

B.1 Drawings of House Plans



Figure 1: House plan featuring the daughter

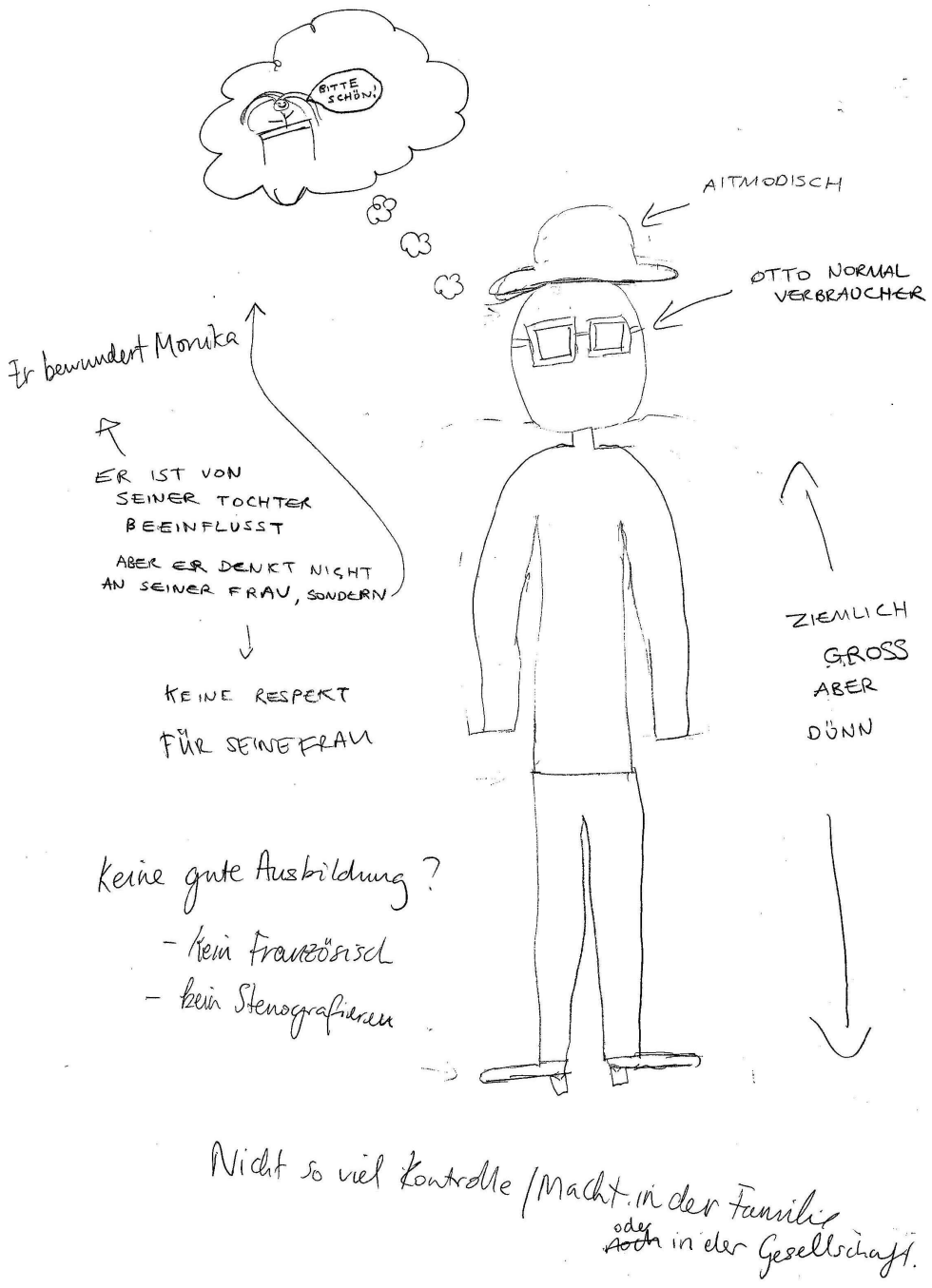


Figure 2: House plan featuring the father

C Appendix C

C.1 Questionnaire

Die Tochter

Please give as detailed information as possible:

- This is what I liked about the methods used to work on the short story "Die Tochter" (and why):
- This is what I didn't like (and why):
- This is what I would change (and why):

Please grade the methods used in the last three lessons (1: very much – 6: not at all)

The methods used to introduce the short story and to work on the "Tochter"...

- ... helped me to interpret the text in depth. _____
- ... helped me to emphasise with the characters. _____
- ... helped me to understand the structure of the short story better. _____
- ... helped me to communicate with others. _____
- ... motivated me to write. _____
- ... motivated me to speak. _____
- ... helped me to understand the text. _____

Any further comments are welcome here:

Thank you very much for your help!

D Appendix D

E Appendix E

F Appendix F

F.1 Evaluation

The methods used to introduce the short story and to work on Die Tochter . . .

- Q1: . . . helped me to interpret the text in depth.
- Q2: . . . helped me to empathise with the characters.
- Q3: ..: helped me to understand the structure of the short story better.
- Q4: . . . helped me to communicate with others.
- Q5: . . . motivated me to write.
- Q6: . . . motivated me to speak.
- Q7: . . . helped me to understand the text.

(The grades range between 1 being excellent to 6 being unsatisfying)

Table 1: Students' Ratings