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Developing Performative Competence and Teacher Artistry: A Pedagogical Imperative in the Multicultural Classroom

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Teaching performatively is an art that must be honed and developed through sustained practice. In this paper, I explore the theoretical considerations of a *performative-humanistic* approach to second language acquisition and the practical applications for a performance-based pedagogy, which is meant to offer readers an occasion to reflect on what it means to prepare students to become reflective and critical performers on the world stage. Particular attention is placed on the unique roles teachers play, and the responsibilities inherent in those roles. The paper is also an invitation to revisit existing approaches and practices through a performative lens engaging in a dynamic interdisciplinary dialogue, reflecting on the aesthetic dimension of language learning, and exploring the potential of the theatrical experience in the construction of a Self able to represent, perceive, create, and reflect.

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> "…teaching is not just tangentially or metaphorically but *fundamentally* an art."
> John Crutchfield (2015, p. 104)

We live in highly performative, hyper-connected, multilingual societies. Our environment requires us to develop a performative literacy that would empower us to better function as more self-aware, reflective performers on the world stage. From kindergarten to our first job interview, we are called upon to create, to be team players, to demonstrate inter- and intra-personal qualities, to show the ability to adapt, to deal with the unpredictable, to solve problems, to embrace diversity, to multi-task—in other words, to *perform*. In these contexts, *performing* is understood as both *playing* multiple roles and *creating* something, which, regardless of the nature of the product, is expected to be original, aesthetically appealing, and interpretable by diverse audiences.

Within the educational context, the type of performative competence needed to free the creative spirit and mind that would enable students to yield such "products" has to be developed, practiced, and experienced by teachers first, as they play a fundamental role in devising approaches and methodologies that either facilitate or hinder the construction of students' multiple identities. Understanding performative competence—which encompasses both communicative and intercultural competences and is an extension of symbolic competence[i]—calls for a pedagogical shift away from the prevailing cognitive, instrumental orientation in education towards a performative-humanistic understanding of "teaching and learning with head, heart, hands, and feet" (Schewe, 1993, p. 7), in which students acquire

several kinds of "significant learning" (Fink, 2003) through a multisensory and multimodal experience. This pedagogical reorientation requires practitioners to develop and expand their "perceptual, experiential and relational capabilities" (Lutzker, 2016, p. 238).

In this essay, I will focus on the discussion around theoretical considerations of a performative-humanistic approach to second language acquisition; I will also present practical applications for a performance-based pedagogy, which are meant to encourage readers to reflect on what it means to prepare students to be reflective and engaging individuals, and which places particular attention on our unique roles as teachers, scholars, practitioners, and researchers as well as the responsibilities inherent in those roles. My contribution is also an invitation to evaluate existing approaches and practices to teaching and learning, and revisit them through performative lenses. I hope readers, especially the ones who are unfamiliar or new to performance-based approaches, will be inspired by the findings and encouraged to start engaging in a dynamic interdisciplinary dialogue, reflecting on the aesthetic dimension of language learning, exploring some of the activities I propose, and becoming themselves agents for change who will pave the way for creative pedagogical approaches and curricular innovation in their respective departments.

In what follows, I will first focus on a definition of *performative teaching and learning*, then I will explain what a *performative-humanistic approach* to second language teaching entails, and, finally, I will concentrate on the implications for practitioners. Based on my experience at the University of California at Berkeley—where I was given the opportunity to experiment with drama and theater techniques, expand my teaching repertoire, and successfully create performative projects—I will then make suggestions for steps to take in introducing a drama-based pedagogy in language departments, and I will present a model small-scale five-week performance workshop. I will conclude with the challenges researchers may face in investigating the role of teachers in performance-based pedagogies and the effects of their pedagogical formation on syllabus design and curricular development.

PERFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING: TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM

Drama pedagogy lies at the core of an innovative performative teaching and learning culture that emerged out of the First International Conference on *Performative Teaching, Learning and Research* at University College Cork, Ireland, in May 2014.[ii] The findings that surfaced from this "pedagogy in transition" (Even & Schewe, 2014, 2016), reaffirmed and solidified the fundamental tenets that I, together with a growing number of scholars and practitioners, believe to be true about the dynamic interplay between teaching (with specific reference to language, culture, and literature) and the role of the arts, in particular theater/drama, in the creation of a self who is able to represent, perceive, create, and reflect. These shared beliefs can be summarized in the following concepts:

1) teaching as an art is a performative event that cannot be dissociated from the artistic-aesthetic experience (Eisner, 2002; Lutzker, 2007);
2) exploration, discovery, and transformation are only possible through meaningful encounters with diversity and in-betweenness; theater provides a fertile space for such encounters (Vaßen, 2016);
3) comprehensible input begins with our sensory knowledge: we learn through all our senses; body and mind are inextricably connected in the coding, decoding, and

construction of meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Pineau, 2011b; Sambanis, 2016); and we acquire knowledge through our multiple intelligences in a variety of learning styles (Gardner, 1983);

4) performance theories can contribute significantly to the field of education in the exploration of knowledge acquisition, identity formation, and relationship development (Newton, 2014);

5) teachers and learners are actors, directors, authors, and spectators in a reality that is constantly renegotiated, debated, and interpreted. Reality is both individually and socially constructed under constant influence of the power relations within society (Kramsch, 2009b);

6) long-term, transforming practices need to be cultivated alongside goal-oriented training (Lutzker, 2016), and greater emphasis should be placed on teachers' familiarization with drama pedagogical approaches in order to prepare future educators for a very performative profession;

7) a rethinking of curricula has to occur, replacing the two-tiered language-literature structure with "a broader coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole" from the beginning, and where interdisciplinary collaborations are encouraged (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007, p. 237);

8) innovative theoretical perspectives, research, and practices are absolutely needed to reinvigorate and re-energize language programs, which must develop "strategies for taking up the challenges of globalization" (Kramsch, 2009b, p. 192) by preparing teachers to be "transcultural, go-between, critical educators who can better respond to the new economic and political conditions of a globalized economy in an increasingly more diverse society" (Kramsch, 2009b, p. 193).

It is clear that no single approach or methodology would, on its own, bring about the kind of meaningful learning experiences that progressive educators wish for their students. There exists a great variety of teaching and learning styles, and, in our contemporary teaching environment, "we are moving away from a universal methodological culture towards methodological pluralism" (Seitz, 2016, p. 304). However, I argue that a performative-humanistic approach, when skillfully and conscientiously adopted by experienced teachers, will produce unique learning experiences for the students.

In drama pedagogy, the word "performative," as applied to foreign language teaching, is understood as an umbrella term meaning approaches inspired by and derived from the arts—visual arts, music, dance, theater, and so on. Without getting into a long explanation of the different ways in which the terms "performance," "performativity," "drama," "theater" are understood across disciplines by different scholars,[i] I will simply define *performance* and *theater* as being more product-oriented with a focus on audience, while *performativity* and *drama* as being more process-oriented with a focus on students. As such, I understand process drama as the necessary, preparatory stage for any theatrical endeavor.[iii] *Performative teaching and learning* refers to an approach that uses techniques and strategies coming from the arts, especially theater. This approach should not be seen just as the introduction of a particular methodology to the classroom, but rather "a concept that can re-focus theory and that embodies a culture of learning that promotes engagement, joy, ownership and active participation" (Fleming, 2016, p. 203) in which body and emotions take center stage alongside cognition. The theatrical art form, as Schewe (as cited in Vaßen, 2016, p. 252) points out, should serve in the drama

pedagogical foreign language classroom primarily as a "source of inspiration" and a "model of orientation" (p. 38).

A performative approach that is also *humanistic-affective* is crucial in nurturing a performative teaching and culture that values the development of both the intellectual and the emotional dimension of students. The aim of a humanistic education, as Gertrude Moscowitz (1978) explains, is "combining the subject matter to be learned with the feelings, emotions, experiences, and lives of the learners" (p. 11). To this end, it is critical—especially in the foreign language classroom—to build a safe environment where students feel free to open up. This requires empathy on the part of the instructor, and a willingness to be vulnerable, to take risks, to share ourselves through storytelling, and to actively listen. As Moscowitz (1978) further explains, "there is a relationship between sharing, being accepted by others, and self-acceptance. Learning cannot be carried out in an emotion-and-value-free environment. In any learning situation feelings are always present and should be drawn upon, as they exert an influential role" (p. 14). Abraham Maslow, one of the fathers of humanistic psychology, regarded satisfying the basic psychological needs of people as vital. Among these needs are respect, belongingness, dignity and esteem. As self-actualization is considered by humanistic practitioners "the all-inclusive human need which motivates behavior at all times in all places" (Combs & Snygg, 1959, p. 38), they believe education's goal should be the development of self-actualized individuals, which can be realized by focusing on the attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationships between the facilitator and the learner. They maintain that "the preparation of teachers must consist of educating human teachers in human relationships" (Patterson, 1993, p. 147). The more time we spend getting to know our students and letting them know us, the more readily and easily they will participate as active learners in their education.

In my approach, which I call *performative-humanistic*, I use both process drama using affective-humanistic techniques, and scripted theater using acting techniques with a view to self-exploration and reflection on that which is Other and Foreign.

UNDERSTANDING TEACHING AS AN ART: A PREREQUISITE TO A *PERFORMATIVE-HUMANISTIC APPROACH*

> "To be able to think about teaching as an artful undertaking,
> to conceive of learning as having aesthetic features..."
> Elliot Eisner (2002, p. xii)

I want to debunk the myth that in order to be a practitioner of a *performative-humanistic* approach teachers have to possess particular artistic talents or a predisposition to histrionic behavior. The statements I hear the most from lecturers are: "It's not for me, I am not an actor;" "I am here to teach, I am not a clown;" "I like to draw a line between me and my students." These assertions show an inadequate understanding of what performative teaching and learning means due to a lack of exposure to drama pedagogy theories and praxis. Lecturers who feel they don't have "what it takes" to teach performatively need to be made aware that they already are creative performers who write scripts every day inside and outside the classroom. The missing link is that of training and practice in bringing out the artistic, the personal, the emotional, the physical, and the aesthetic side of their teaching in order to develop their performative competence (see Hallet, 2010).

It is in this context that understanding the concepts of *attunement* and *flow* become crucial. In Lutzker's (2016) definition, attunement is "the condition of our openness for perceiving

and dealing with what we encounter" (p. 235), while flow is described as "those special moments in which we most fully live our lives" (p. 238). We have to be *attuned* to the emotional, affective, and cognitive dimensions of students, in harmony and in tune with both their words and their silences in order for flow to happen and grow. At the same time, we have to become more attuned to contradictions and complexities and to "the bizarre mixture of improbabilities that human beings are" (Bakewell, 2016, p. 226) in our diverse classes. Rhythm, pace, timing—which are part of flow—have to be organized organically in lesson plans that I conceive as *structured improvisation* or, in Claire Kramsch's (2009a) words, "a kind of unpredictability by design" (p. 203) with enough flexibility to allow for surprises, creative moments, and unexpected revelations, and the right amount of structure to frame the experience within malleable boundaries.

Unless teachers develop, experience, and practice flow themselves, no meaningful transfer to students can occur. Performative competence cannot be acquired over the course of one workshop or summarized in a module. It is a lifelong process that needs to be explicitly addressed in teacher education. Performance-based approaches are often presented as the next esoteric "cool thing" your colleague is doing, and training in performative pedagogies often consists in a one-day deal offered under the heading "professional development." Moreover, language pedagogy workshops for graduate student instructors only go so far in exposing students to performative-based didactics, confined as they often are to functional communicative approaches. What is needed is systematic and sustained practice, which would enable teachers to break with the familiarity of conventional praxis, step out of their comfort zones, learn to go beyond their everyday consciousness, and experiment new paths in the "construction of actuality" (Wulf & Zirfas, 2007, p. 10). In order to become master of any art, Peter Lutzker (2016) asserts, practitioners have to become "transformed through practice" (p. 234). Practice has to be embodied in their movements, in the way they think and feel: "It is not the attainment of the goal that transforms the practitioner; the entire process of practice is, in itself, also a process of transformation" (Lutzker, 2016, p. 234).

Unfortunately, teacher artistry is still grossly undervalued and greatly malnourished. In a world of "global, market-driven, English-speaking capitalism," to borrow Kramsch's (2009a, p. 194) words, that places enormous value on efficiency, productivity and standardization, where computer-mediated communication has created a sort of homogenization, "doing away with borders" and where "the spread of a common language fosters the illusion that we all think the same," it becomes imperative that language teachers "offer precisely what computers cannot do, namely, reflect critically on its own symbolic and virtual realities" (p. 194). In the next decades, students and teachers will require competencies beyond the basic communicative ability to convey information. "It is no longer adequate to give students 'a tourist-like' competence to exchange information with native speakers", Kramsch (2006) writes, as they will need "a more sophisticated competence in the manipulation of symbolic systems" (p. 251). Such competence can be nurtured through a performative pedagogy. Negotiating meaning, reframing discourse, exploring alternative realities, tolerating ambiguity, empathizing with others, and imagining past, present and future "what… if" scenarios is exactly what happens in what I call successful performances—both on the stage and in real life. Theater can help "imagine a future that is not restricted to one language or one semiotic modality," and, together with poetry, music, narrative, and painting, it "brings about cognitive benefits such as hypothesizing, problem-solving, evaluating cause and effect that are similar to those gained through scientific thought" (Kramsch, 2009a, p. 198). The multicultural students that populate our classrooms today, "living at the intersection of multiple linguistic codes, modalities of expression, personal memories and cultural backgrounds, with their

bodies, hearts and minds" (Kramsch, 2009a, p. 198), can indeed find fulfillment in a collaborative artistic endeavor such as a theater performance. These endeavors "enable [students] to envisage and give expression to hybrid cosmopolitan worlds, on the margins of established genres, styles and canons of beauty. Art gives them the cognitive and emotional maturity to imagine future scenarios of possibility that might, eventually, change the social order" (Kramsch 2009a, p. 198-199). The symbolic competence needed to achieve this becomes then also performative in that meaning making happens in real time—it's improvisational, it's spontaneous, it's authentic in a way no textbook can be. Barbara Schmenk (2016) goes so far as to claim that the only way to achieve symbolic competence is through a performative teaching approach, and that a text becomes authentic only when we give it life and meaning through our voice, body and emotions in a process where both students and teachers are co-present and co-determinants in the act of creation as it would be in one of Marina Abramovic's[v] interactive, participatory art performances, in which the artistic-aesthetic experience is co-constructed by artist and spectators.

UNDERSTANDING THE PERFORMING BODY, SELFHOOD, AND ALTERITY IN THE PERFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING CULTURE

> "It is from the body that we think, feel and act."
> Trevor Butt (2004, p. 8)

Re-Training Our Senses. The connection between language and the senses in the process of meaning-making is an aspect that has "long flown under the pedagogical radar" (Even & Schewe, 2016, p. 178). There needs to be a conscious effort to reposition body and emotions at the center of the entire L2 enterprise. There are several aspects that should be incorporated into the learning process: the body as "a central communication device and instrument of perception" (Even & Schewe, 2016, p. 181); the voice with its infinite repertoire of tonalities and pitches (Gobl & Chasaide, 2003); and their role in communicating emotion, mood and attitude, together with the performative potential of spaces inside and outside the classroom, and the development of one's physical presence. Our obsession with understanding content often prevents us from experiencing, and Erika Fisher-Lichte (2016) reminds us that "if we don't train perception and the senses, we will never ever get anywhere" and exhorts us to start educating a different kind of awareness, not only promoting certain contents and ideas. In supporting Elyse Lamm Pineau's argument that learners have been conditioned to straitjacket their bodies and restrain their emotions when entering the classroom as though they were disembodied minds, Deborah Newton (2014, p. 2) highlights the need to retrain and relearn our habits by moving away from the Cartesian dualist concept that separates body and mind and from traditional cultural binaries such as subject-object, passive-active, speaker-listener. In her article, Newton explains how Lamm Pineau (as cited in Newton 2014, p. 2) places the performing body at the center of a critical performing pedagogy in which "the performative element can create the liberating conditions that have the power to remove what McLaren calls *the shackles of enfleshment*" in order for liberating pedagogies to be developed. As Newton (2014) explains, McLaren's notions of "enfleshment" (described as culturally constructed habits) and "refleshment" (described as our innate ability to learn alternative behavior) can help us understand "much of the thinking behind performative pedagogy" (p. 5). Here is how Newton (2014) comes to her conclusion:

> Refleshment then confirms that our habits can be broken and what is learned can be unlearned and new ways of being can be developed that are more enabling than the old habits (Pineau, 2002, p. 44). In other words, refleshment desensitizes the prejudices embedded in our cultural tradition. It is the discipline of performance… "that provides practical methods for breaking through, breaking down, and rebuilding the body's naturalized habits" (Albright, 1993, p. 45)… [and in so doing also] "break[ing] down those cultural binaries which can be extraordinarily powerful in reinforcing and maintaining a traditional, myopic understanding of teaching and learning." (p. 6)

It is by retraining all our senses that we can help students perceive and interpret the world around them in new and surprising ways.

Training in liminality. If, as Florian Vaßen (2016) posits, drama pedagogy is indeed based on the disruption of the obvious, "where, if not in the artistic process—and in theater above all—are experiences with difference and confrontations with alterity possible?" (p. 251). Practitioners of drama pedagogy would agree with Fisher-Lichte (2010) in that "performances epitomize the state of in-betweenness," and that its participants are automatically transferred into "an in-between state, such as the state between co-determining the course of a performance and being determined by it" (p. 1). Accepting ambiguity, dealing with positions sometimes non-negotiable, and planning future scenarios are abilities students need to develop when found in the uncharted territory of the kind of encounters for which there is no map. "A performance comes into being only during its course, which cannot be entirely planned or predicted. It is characterized by a high degree of contingency" (Fisher-Lichte, 2010, p. 1). The experience participants undergo over the course of a performance becomes then, in Ficher-Lichte's words, a "liminal' experience"—students journey from threshold, which I define as a state of temporary symbolic paralysis (as the temporary inability to 'read the signs'), through a passage or transition resulting into a transformative experience of some sort.

Given that any performance is born out of the negotiation of meaning between a diverse group of individuals, Fisher-Lichte (2010) argues, "performances cannot transmit given meanings. Instead, they themselves bring forth the meanings that come into being over their course" (p. 1). It is these new meanings and new experiences, which arise from self-reflection in the face of unfamiliar, disorienting situations that enable students in the dramatic process to come to understand that "the continuous self" is a myth and that, on the contrary, the human being is a "perpetually collapsing and self-reconstituting atom," a "self-contradictory complex" and a "conflicted multiplicity" (Brecht as cited in Vaßen, 2016, p. 262), and it exists in a constant process of identity construction. It is the theatrical experience, as Vaßen (2016) argues, that makes "a productive tension between Self and Other" possible (p. 263). It is in theater that we are granted "permission to slow down perception, to explore what is uncertain, indeed to surrender, uninhibited by the constraints of culture" and "to develop a disposition to tolerate ambiguity" (Eisner, 2002, p. 10).

It is precisely this *disposition* to tolerate the ambiguous nature of our diverse, multilingual beings that we should strive to cultivate within students; and it is the *permission* afforded by the theatrical art form that would allow us to explore the powerful connection between language, emotions, body, and space in the construction of new experiences born out of a process of self-awareness and critical thinking.

FROM THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

As a language lecturer, I have been a fervent advocate of a performative approach to language teaching for my entire academic career, trying to persuade skeptical colleagues of the advantages of a theatrical component in the language curriculum, and fighting for the right of performance courses to be an integral part of the program. A theatrical component in language departments enriches and reinvigorates curricula, opening up spaces for more critical reflection in college language classes. Nicoletta Marini-Maio and Colleen Ryan-Scheutz (2010)[vi] brilliantly address the urgency for a rethinking of language programs, offering an impressive collection of essays on teaching Italian language, literature and culture through theater, which should be required reading for anyone interested in exploring the theories, methods and practices of a performative oriented pedagogy.

My teaching philosophy, approach, and praxis have been informed by an array of theoretical perspectives by specific scholars in diverse fields (applied linguistics, performance studies, aesthetics, critical performative pedagogy, critical studies, neuroscience, arts education, social anthropology, educational psychology, drama in education and in second language acquisition); by my training as an actor at the Tisch School of the Arts in New York City, and at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco; and by my experience as a language lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley.

My research on pedagogical applications of theater techniques to L2 teaching follows Brad Haseman's (2006) paradigm of "practice-led research" as it is initiated in practice and carried out through practice. I also subscribe to Seitz' (2016) theorization of a new "performative research" paradigm whose aim is not "to capture reality in graphs or to test existing hypotheses, but to aspire to be one with practice, to activate tacit knowledge, and generate new insights while processing, dealing with, and handling practice" (p. 307).

In light of the theoretical considerations presented above, it logically followed that I had to combine "the science of experience" (pedagogy) with "the art of experience" (theater) (Vaßen (2010), cited in Vaßen 2016, p. 264). I drew on my passion for both teaching and performing to show how students in both classes—the acting class and the language class—go through a similar learning process with a shared common goal: to communicate something *as authentically as possible* under the unpredictable circumstances of a given context. This, coupled with a firm belief in a humanistic-affective education centered on the symbiotic relationship between students and teacher as well as the need for an approach that would help students develop self-awareness and critical reflection, brought me to develop several projects over my years at UC Berkeley. Based on my experience, in this section I offer suggestions on how to introduce a drama-based pedagogy in language departments.

The first step in re-orienting language pedagogy *performatively* would be to invite a practitioner of drama-based approaches in Second Language Acquisition to give a lecture on the subject in order to get faculty and graduate students interested and excited about performative-based teaching and learning, which would lead to a more innovative teacher training education in pedagogy workshops. Next would be to offer a practical workshop where participants can experience first-hand what drama pedagogy does with words, bodies, and space, and where they can acquire the so-called "tools of the trade". Once language lecturers feel comfortable enough to experiment with students, they should start with simple role-plays and scenarios, which are at the base of all dramatic activity. Then, as a first attempt, they should work on a fifteen-minute in-classroom scene with a familiar small audience or no audience at

all (this is the small-scale theater workshop I describe below), using techniques from both process drama and scripted theater. As confidence level in the approach grows, lecturers could then progress to preparing a one-hour theater showcase (i.e., four scenes taken from different plays or modern adaptations of existing works) in a larger space with a departmental audience. Next would be the production of a larger scale project: a full-length play in a black-box-theater with an inter-departmental audience. Finally, as a more challenging and ambitious project, lecturers from different language programs could organize a *multilingual* student performance, drawing students from all the language departments at their institutions, and make the performance open to the wider community in a theater off-campus. Successful implementation of a performance-based language pedagogy at various levels could then lead to the proposal of a new course titled *Language Through the Arts* (in my case, the title was *Italian Through Theater: Advanced Language in Performance*), which would be a requirement for language majors and minors, and an elective for all other students.

I have followed this exact sequence at my own institution, giving first a lecture and then a workshop, experimenting with both the small and large-scale projects I have just described over the course of ten consecutive years, and finally teaching the theater course proposed to and approved by the Department of Italian Studies. I observed that, while the process varied slightly from project to project, the cognitive, artistic, and aesthetic outcomes were consistently similar. Following is a step-by-step outline of the small-scale theater workshop that I created with my intermediate Italian students.

THE SMALL-SCALE THEATER WORKSHOP: A MODEL FOR DRAMA-BASED PEDAGOGY

Establishing Clear Goals and Assessment Strategies

I have worked with a wide range of theatrical texts, but the one I selected for this model is Carlo Goldoni's *La locandiera* (usually translated as *The Innkeeper* or *The Mistress of the Inn* or *Mirandolina*). Published in 1753, *La locandiera* is a three-act comedy, which is considered a masterpiece of Italian theater. Over the centuries, it has become one of the most performed works from the Italian tradition.

Before introducing the project to students, it was important to reflect on several crucial issues:

1) How do we, as lecturers of language, help the multicultural 21st-century student develop the kind of performative competence that goes beyond the functional, communicative approach?
2) How do we help students examine their values, beliefs, collective memories and subject positions? How do we help them reflect on issues of power struggle, race, gender, class, and social justice? How do we make them more critically aware of language and the power of words?
3) How do we help them build "future scenarios of possibilities and narratives of hypotheticals" to construct new meanings (Heath and Kramsch, 2004, p. 87-8)?
4) How do we help students acquire the necessary analytical and interpretive tools to transition into more challenging upper division literature classes?
5) How do we capture and galvanize our audiences' attention, challenged by a barrage of high-tech devises competing with our live, collective performances?

6) How do we infuse learning with the emotional dimension needed to grow? How do we help students become more perceptive, creative, and engaging individuals?

The answers to some of these questions would require a longer discussion and a rethinking of curricula. Yet, it soon became clear that answering the last question would provide a good starting point in answering all of the others. Having arrived at the conclusion that the artistic-aesthetic dimension *feeds* the cognitive aspect, stimulates it, engages it, and provides the foundations on which to elaborate and reframe realities, my project became first and foremost an exploration of the tight connection between language, emotions, body and space through the analysis, interpretation and enactment of a dramatic text.

Another crucial preliminary step in designing a drama-based project is to establish clear goals and assessment strategies. Given the hybrid nature of my workshop (including linguistic and performance elements), goals and assessment also had to be hybrid. Goals had to take into account both the language and the theatre component. For me, the question was: what do I want students to retain after they graduate, beyond what L. Dee Fink (2003) calls the "understand and remember kind of learning" (p. 5)? Is it the correct use of the subjunctive or a certain character in a story that inspired them, touched them deeply, and caused them to think differently about themselves and others? I wanted students to retain the latter. Given these pedagogical priorities, the goals then became the following:

- Developing an appreciation for the theatrical art form and the power of language, body, and emotions.
- Fostering intercultural understanding and collaboration.
- Learning to analyze, interpret, and reflect on a dramatic text and a character.
- Encouraging self-confidence in speaking and narrating.
- Learning about class, gender, and power in 18th-century Italy.
- Discovering something new about oneself and others.

Regarding assessment, the question was: how does one give an objective evaluation of a creative process? I concur with Barbara Bolt (2008) in that "the performative principle demonstrates that iteration can never produce the same" and that "a performative paradigm operates according to repetition with difference" (p. 10). Given the hybrid nature of the experience then, assessment had to be both process- and product-oriented— a combination of more traditional discrete point testing on vocabulary and grammatical structures in context, essay writing, journal entries, online research, pronunciation and diction (the language component) as well as character study, text analyses, memorization, rehearsal process, performance, and individual effort (the theatre component). Assessment had to be frequent and immediate, conducted throughout the five-week period, and had to include self-evaluation and peer assessment.

In order to reach the goals stated and conduct meaningful assessment practices, I used what Fink (2003) calls "rich learning experiences" in which students achieve several kinds of significant learning simultaneously (the actual production of the play), and "in-depth reflective dialogue"— i.e., opportunities for students to think and reflect on *what* they are learning, *how* they are learning, and the *significance* of what they are learning (journal entries and essays). Once goals and assessment were in place, we were ready to start.

The Five-Week Workshop

Our theatrical experience was conducted over the course of the last five weeks of the semester in an intermediate Italian class (third semester of language). I explained to the students the nature of the project and reassured them that no acting experience was required. Their reactions were varied: a few of them were excited, a few apprehensive, a few indifferent. And here is an analogy between acting students and language students: in both cases, they convene on the first day of class in a room with a group of strangers who have different degrees of shyness, exhibit different levels of apprehension, carry with them different personal histories, with a different set of expectations, but with the same goal in mind: to communicate something to an interlocutor, whether that be another actor in a scene, an audience, or the local butcher in Italy. They all need to get their message across, and they do it with words, with pauses, with facial expressions, with gestures, with the intonation of their voice, with their posture, and with the way they construct sentences. In other words, they *act* and, in performing a role, they play status games to establish power relations, as no interaction is devoid of intention or motive.

Week One

Introduction to theater. We brainstormed the topic and concentrated on the following questions: "What is theater and how is it relevant in today's society? How does it compare to movies? Do you go to the theater? If the answer is yes, what kind of experience are you looking for? If not, why?"
The following is a summary of students' answers to the last question:

I go to the theatre:
– because I like live performances.
– because it makes me feel part of a collective experience.
– because I feel strong emotions.
– because it's a sensory experience like no other.
– because it causes me to think in a way that film doesn't.

I don't go to the theatre:
– because I have never been exposed to it.
– because it's expensive and not as accessible as movie theaters.
– because the closeness of the stage makes me nervous.
– because it's too physical, too loud, too "over the top."
– because it requires too much concentration.

Field trip. We attended the production of a modern adaptation of *We won't pay! We Won't Pay!* at the Jobsite Theater in San Francisco. The play is a political farce written by Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo in 1974. The themes of hunger for food, dignity, and justice seen through the story of a couple of anarchic working-class housewives are at the core of Fo's farce. Students were required to write a short summary of the play together with their impressions of that specific adaptation. They shared their thoughts with the class the following day. This was an opportunity to introduce to the students one the most famous Italian playwrights, a

master of farce and comedy, known for his relentless criticism of church, state, and bourgeois morality—all topics that we discussed in class.

Discussion of genres. The exposure to the performance generated several questions: "What is a satire? What is a farce? What purpose does comedy serve? Is it pure entertainment or escapism? Is it meant to raise political and social awareness? Can you think of American comedic writers and satirist? How far should they go with their social and political commentaries?"

Discussion of the idea of adaptation. The following questions came to the surface in our discussion: "What is an adaptation? Why do we have adaptations? Do they always work? Have you seen any modern adaptation of plays or novels? Can you think of a modern adaptation of a classic you would love to write?" Students came up with works such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and others.

Humanistic activities and acting exercises. We spent the rest of the week engaging in humanistic activities in order to get to know one another and unchain our imagination through storytelling and story-writing. The first written assignment was to write an original autobiography. Other activities included acting exercises (such as improvisation, role plays, and association games) to learn to stay in the moment and stay connected to one another. These exercises are often challenging at the beginning as we are schooled to control our bodies, emotions, voices, thoughts, and future outcomes. Thus, students had to learn to "let it all go"—or at least try. One of the first lessons learned in acting classes is to be in the moment, to stay connected, to listen, and then to respond to the interlocutor's words, moods, and movements. Students had to exercise active listening: paying attention to the information given to them, processing it, and then responding within seconds in the same way they would in a real-life situation in the L2 culture.

Week Two

Introduction to the play. As I mentioned above, the work I selected was Goldoni's *La locandiera.* I chose this play for very specific reasons. First of all, the text alone provides a wealth of opportunities to explore the history, literature, language, social mores, class and gender issues of 18th-century Italy, and to draw comparisons across ages and cultures. I also selected a comedy because, by its very nature, it is a more physical genre, more immediately understandable for an audience with little knowledge of Italian, and because "laughter lowers apprehension, mitigates embarrassment, and establishes a kind of intimacy, a sense of community" (Marini-Maio & Ryan-Scheutz, 2010, p. 302). Also, comedic plays "lend themselves to literary and cultural analyses since, as per the comedic tradition, they also examine and critique societal norms with a focus on class and gender differences" (p. 302).

Moreover, Goldoni's contribution to theater is unique: his reform of theater is crucial in understanding the demise of the *Commedia dell'arte*, a theater form based on improvisation, stock characters/masks, and fixed plot situations, and the birth of the *Commedia di carattere* as opposed to the *Commedia all'improvviso*. Goldoni imagined a new theatre, an expression of the rising bourgeoisie and the declining aristocracy that emerged with the age of Enlightenment. This became an opportunity to talk about class issues, and the students' second written assignment consisted in a reflection on the following themes: "What do the words aristocracy and bourgeoisie evoke for you? What do they suggest in your country?" Students gradually learned that there was a need for a theater that reflected the new times not just in terms of class but also of gender. The title itself, *La locandiera* is a tribute to the rising power of women:

the main character is *Mirandolina,* an independent, entrepreneurial woman who refuses to get married and runs her own business by herself. We see her using her artful skills and wit to manipulate three boastful nobles so that they would continue to spend money at her *locanda* (inn). In short, the work was revolutionary at the time. This is also the century where women could have a *cicisbeo*, a professional lover, younger in age, and at their service. A conversation about *cicisbeismo*, love, and marriage in the 18th century followed in our classroom, again drawing comparisons across ages and cultures. Why did people marry then? For nobles it was for political alliances, and to preserve lineage. But what about Mirandolina? She married for practical reasons. This led to a discussion on the idea of marrying to have a family as a bourgeois construct. Their third written assignment addressed the following topics: "What is the role of women and men in today's society? In your culture? In your community? What was it like in your parents' and grandparents' generations? What do you think of the institution of marriage and the idea of family?"

Finally, the language and register of the text, although challenging, was important in understanding the way in which the aristocratic class spoke and how their choice of words and specific grammatical structures informed their gestures.

First close reading: linguistic and cultural analysis. There are different ways to analyze a text. In a literature class, students would probably analyze the text in terms of genre, narrative voice, and categories of time and space. It would be a more structural, technical analysis. I explained to the students that we were going to approach the text from a *dramatic* point of view as this was a text that was written to be performed, and that our analysis was going to be *character driven*, very much like students would approach it in an acting class.

The part of the play we analyzed together in class were Scenes IV to IX in Act I, which I turned into one single long scene with some editing to make it more accessible to students. In this excerpt the Marchese (Marquis) and the Conte (Count) are competing for Mirandolina's love—the Marquis offering his title and protection, and the Count offering his wealth—meanwhile a misogynous Cavaliere (Knight) mocks them both stating that a hunting dog is four times more useful than a woman. At that point, Mirandolina launches into a monologue in which she rejects the Marquis's and the Count's proposals, puts the Cavaliere in his place, and claims her freedom and independence.

During our first reading of the newly-edited scene, we focused on specific words, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical structures that immediately informed students of the power relationships between the characters. We focused on formal addresses, imperatives, and titles. For example, the names of the noblemen—*Marchese di Forlipopoli, Cavaliere di Ripafratta, Conte d'Albafiorita* (Count of Blossomed Dawn when in fact *Tramontoappassito*, "Withered Sunset," would have been a more fitting name for a member of a declining aristocracy)—are outlandish, exaggerated names. Some of the topics we addressed were the following: "are these characters to be taken seriously? What do these humorous, made-up names tell you about their status? The name Mirandolina means 'worthy of admiration:' what does this say about her? Think of the words *decoro*, *contegno*, *gentilezza* (modesty, composure, affability): three qualities women had to exhibit that have to do with countenance, attitude, traits. What do these words mean today? Do they still refer to women? The word *arte* (art) often referred to Mirandolina's ability to manipulate, means 'wit, treachery.' What do we make of that association? Are witty women to be considered mistrustful? Or is art to be considered deceitful?" These are just a few examples of the wealth of opportunities for discussion that simple words in the text provided. Throughout the week, we practiced vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in context by playing such games as "18th-century hangman," "whose line is it," and writing cloze passages.

Second close reading: scene analysis. Scene analysis is one of the fundamental components of an actor's training, which I found to be incredibly useful when applied to the analysis of any literary and non-literary text, and also profoundly inspiring in the development of my humanistic-performative approach. The techniques employed in the scene analysis I shared with my students were crafted by playwright David Mamet as part of his Practical Aesthetics Approach to acting, which I learned as part of my acting training at NYU with one of his disciples, Lee Michael Cohn. Simply explained, in this practical approach the actor doesn't disappear, he doesn't morph into the character, nor does he work himself up to any physical or emotional state; rather, "the actor has to find a way to live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances of the play" (Cohn, 1986, p. 5).

In analyzing any scene according to this approach, there are six questions to bear in mind:

1) What is the character literally doing?
2) What is the intention/action of the character in the scene (her main goal)?
3) What are the tools/means she uses (i.e. strong action verbs to achieve the goal)?
4) What is the obstacle (what is preventing her from achieving her goal)?
5) What are the stakes (what happens if she doesn't succeed)?
6) What is this action like to me? (This concept is called the *as if*, which is the mnemonic device to help the actor bring the action to life).

While proceeding with the analysis of the five characters in the scene (the three noblemen, Mirandolina, and the servant Fabrizio), I explained to students that it was necessary to break down the entire text in terms of *beats* and *as ifs*. In acting terms, a *beat* is a single unit of action (the intention of the actor in a particular line or sequence of lines). An *as if,* which I introduced above, is a hypothetical situation drawn from the actor's experience— i.e., the actor would perform the action based on the *as if* situation chosen.

Here is an example of how we broke down an excerpt from Mirandolina's speech (Scene IX, Act I) according to the scene analysis just presented:

> *Beat*: "È nemico delle donne? Non le può vedere? Povero pazzo! Non avrà ancora trovato quella che sappia fare. Ma la troverà, la troverà. Con questi per l'appunto mi ci metto di picca."
> "He is a sworn enemy of women? He can't stand them? What a fool! He hasn't found yet the one who is going to set him straight. But he will, he will. I am going to see to it that he does." [My translation].

> *What is Mirandolina literally doing:* venting.
> *Intention/Action:* to challenge, to defy authority.
> *Stakes*: her freedom and independence will be compromised if she doesn't succeed.
> *Tools:* to mock, to persuade, to cajole, to reject.
> *Obstacle*: danger that the noblemen could take their business elsewhere.
> *As if:* students will perform this action (to challenge and to defy authority) *as if*, for example, they were trying to put an arrogant, egotistical boss in his place.

Students would perform their *as ifs* first for a few minutes; then they would immediately transition into the actual beat, keeping the same action/intention in mind throughout the scene.

Once the entire text was broken down and analyzed in terms of *beats* and as *ifs*, and once students had answered the six questions related to each character, they had gained a much deeper understanding of the power dynamics of the characters. It is the application of this Practical Aesthetics Approach used in acting training to the analysis of a dramatic text that brings an added component and a new performative dimension to the more conventional literary close readings of theatrical texts.

Week Three

I divided the class into three groups of four students so that we would have three casts of actors for the same scene; each student chose their role and gender and were in charge of the process (as classes vary in enrollment from semester to semester in terms of number and gender, assignment of roles have to be flexible and agreed upon by all students). Then, I provided students with a vocabulary list of theater terms (script, line, beat, action, objective, blocking, turn, stage left, stage right, prop, and so on). In the next phase, students began to enter reflections in their journals. For their fourth written assignments, they had to write a backstory of their character, creating a detailed imaginary life. As a vocabulary building exercise, their task was to write a list of ten adjectives and ten active verbs to describe the personality of their character.

Throughout the week we also worked on the following aspects:

- diction, pronunciation, rhythm, pitch, intonation, register (we practiced specific tongue twisters and exercises to raise the palate for better clarity);
- body language and gestures ("What happens if you add a gesture to an utterance? How does it make you feel? How does that inform your character?");
- memorization and *as if* exercises described earlier;
- online research for costumes ("How did nobles and bourgeois dress during Mirandolina's time? What kind of wigs, shoes, tights, ruffled shirts would they wear?")

At this point, the most exciting part of the process had begun: students started to experience what happens when they speak the words they have read as if they were their own, when they breathe life into the characters on the page and see them move across the room, when they put on a feathery hat, when they fully embody their character and it takes a life of its own.

Week Four

We rehearsed the scenes: each cast of four students presented the work done, and the other two casts would offer feedback. We videotaped the final performance, took photographs, and then looked at students' videos in class as well as online performances shown at theaters in Italy, Ireland, Poland, and in the United States. Moreover, we read articles on Goldoni's productions in Italy and abroad to discover the relevance and modernity of the play. We concluded the workshop with a roundtable discussion and sharing final reflections. The students' fifth written assignment consisted in a review of their peers' performance.

Week Five

We worked on a written modern adaptation—I wrote my own adaptation first, which students read and critiqued. Students then worked in the same groups, and created completely new scenarios set at immigration offices, strip-clubs, corporate offices, hospitals, cafés, the White House. The new Mirandolinas were bartenders, interns, nurses, politicians, scientists, and they were of all gender presentations and orientations. The new aristocrats were lawyers, doctors, producers, directors, pimps, the Kennedys, business students. In terms of the language, students wanted to use modern slang, so I compiled a list of Italian expressions based on their scripted dialogues.

The successive two steps would have been a performance of the adaptation and the analysis of a different dramatic text, following the same journey embarked in *La locandiera*. The students were eager to immerse themselves in this new project. Yet, given the tight schedule of the workshop, I had to leave this phase for a future time.

Students' Final Reflections

All students' final reflections on the experience consistently coincided with the intended goals of the project. Here is a summary of their thoughts over a period of ten years, which I grouped into *humanistic*, *performative*, and *linguistic and cultural* goals.

Humanistic
- Made strong connections with classmates, learned about diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- Discovered new dimensions of myself ("an assertive side I didn't know I had", "a sense of humor I thought I lacked", "I was able to tap into emotions hard to reach") and discovered others in a new light.
- Became a better team player and a better listener.
- Increased self-esteem ("I felt good about my role in the project").
- Felt empowered ("embodying my character made me feel powerful and in charge of the learning process").
- Felt a sense of accomplishment.

Performative
- Gained an appreciation for theatre and a new respect for actors.
- Learned how to analyze a text and a character in a way that felt real.
- Gained a better understanding of the text through acting.
- Discovered a creative side.
- Learned to better deal with ambiguity and unpredictability.
- Pushed me to stay focused and to react to the truth of the moment.
- Inspired me to take a theatre class or other performance related courses.

Linguistic and Cultural
- Increased appreciation for the symbolic power of words and gestures.
- Increased self-confidence in speaking and expressing opinions.
- Better pronunciation and enunciation.
- Built a richer vocabulary.

- Heightened awareness of class and gender differences in Europe, in the United States, and in students' other countries of origin.
- Inspired to know more about Italian culture, history, and literature.
- Encouraged to reach out to students of other cultures and make more transcultural connections.

A theatre production, such as the one just described, offers students a journey of self-discovery, an opportunity to experience a truly collaborative endeavor, a window into the historical and social context in which a text has been written, a way into the inner life of a character, a chance to witness the power of words from page to stage. As Even and Schewe remark (2016), a performative journey can indeed "influence one's own biography, and can have an immensely formative, personality-building effect" yielding "new, forceful, life-confirming and energizing experiences" (p. 179). Will students remember the past subjunctive after finals are over? Probably not. Yet, they will remember Mirandolina's speech, as well as all the engaging, thought-provoking conversations we had around class, gender, and power. They will remember how they became a community of actors for five weeks, and how empowering and humbling at the same time the journey was: a new experience that decentered their individual experiences for a moment in time while re-shaping and re-framing their realities.[vii] And, as Kramsch (2009a) remarks, it is through the aesthetic experience of theater that students could "act out the social subjects they might want to become" (p. 195).

CONCLUSION

What I perceive to be the challenges in re-orienting foreign language teaching performatively are not so much budgetary university and departmental constraints that may discourage language lecturers from pursuing innovative pathways, and may prevent institutions from providing funding for research and training in the field of performative teaching and learning. It is rather the lack of meaningful exposure to drama pedagogy in existing teacher education programs (with the exception of Germany and Great Britain where performative pedagogies are alive and well), and the consequent fear of stepping into the unfamiliar, the desire to maintain the status-quo in language programs, a parochial understanding of the role of language teachers in the 21st century, and a lack of the kind of curiosity, enthusiasm and passion needed in a performative event such as the teaching of language, culture and literature.

In view of what has been argued so far, I share Seymour Sarason's (1999) sentiment in urging teachers to consider their profession within the larger multilingual, multicultural context, re-examining the terms of their obligations to their audiences—the students—in order to realize that, as Sarason eloquently states, "the implementation of an 'authentic performance' begins with an internal commitment to exploring their own unique roles both as actors and as teachers" (p. 15). At the peak of the inherent value system of performance, he explains, is *authenticity*. Audiences come to the theater with different expectations; but, among them, the most important is that they want "to get out of themselves," they want to be "transported" (p. 15) into another world—and so do students in our classrooms. They want to embark in an exploratory voyage of alternative realities, playing with the realm of possibilities. And, as Sarason (1999) concludes,

> …if every person is unique, so is every role, and it is capturing that uniqueness and conveying it to the audience that is the difficult obligation of the actor (the teacher). If,

indeed, performers take their audiences to that other world by way of their understanding and harnessing the 'uniqueness' of their roles, so shall we understand the grave necessity of exploring our own uniqueness with all our varied nuances as authentic educators. (p. 29)

In conclusion, while a great deal of emphasis on the part of researchers has been placed on learners' needs, expectations, and styles, I believe not enough investigation has gone into teachers' education, their role, and the effects that training and practice or the lack thereof have on students' learning experiences, syllabus design, and curricular development. With the exception of Lutzker's *The Art of Foreign Language Teaching,* which can be considered a milestone in foreign language pedagogy, and Erika Piazzoli's *Embodying Language in Action: The Artistry of Process Drama in Second Language Education,* which significantly contributed to the scholarly debate on performativity in education, the concept of teacher artistry and teaching as an art has not been sufficiently illuminated and needs to be further explored. There is a demand for a professionalization of training in performative methods that can help researchers develop forms of cognition based on the body and the senses, as well as a demand for more innovative textbooks and materials to help teachers become virtuosos in teaching language, culture, and literature through a performative approach. I concur with Eisner (2002) in calling for a formulation of educational policies to understand the potential of the arts, especially theater, in "transforming consciousness, refining the senses, and enlarging the imagination" (p. 4) of students, which are key components of a performative competence in action for the multilingual subject of the 21ˢᵗ century. Through my exploration of the interplay between teaching and the arts, performative theories, and drama-based pedagogies, and my work as a practitioner of the art of teaching foreign languages, I hope to have contributed to the dialogue around this innovative "pedagogy in transition." The performative-humanistic approach I propose, which combines affective and acting techniques in bringing out the personal, the creative, the emotional, and the aesthetic dimension of both teachers and students, together with the Practical Aesthetics Approach in the scene analysis model I offered, will hopefully contribute to this important conversation.

NOTES

[i] Symbolic competence as described by Claire Kramsch (2009 cited in Kramsch 2015) is understood as "an ability to understand the symbolic value of symbolic form and the different cultural memories evoked by different symbolic systems" and an ability "to draw on the semiotic diversity afforded by multiple languages to reframe ways of seeing familiar events, create alternative realities and find an appropriate subject position between languages" (2009 cited in Kramsch 2015). Symbolic competence is later redefined by Kramsch (2011 cited in Kramsch 2015) as "the ability to manipulate the three dimensions of language as symbolic system: symbolic representation, symbolic action, symbolic power." For further reading on symbolic competence see Vinall (2016).
[ii] This conference was followed soon after by the International Conference on Performing Arts in Language Learning (October 2014, Rome, Italy), and later by the International Conference on Performative Spaces in Language, Literature and Culture Education (May 2017, Cork, Ireland).
[iii] For further readings on performance and performativity see also Judith Butler (1993), John L. Austin (1975), Richard Schechner (2004), Barbara Bolt (2008), Brad Haseman (2006), Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008), Erving Goffman (1956), Janelle G. Reinelt (2006), and Maaike Bleeker (2015).
[iv] Erika Piazzoli (2016) defines "process drama" as differing significantly from scripted theater in that it has "no external audience, no pre-defined script, and no lines to memorize. The students are invited to actively co-create and embody a collective story. The teacher-artist's task is to weave students' contribution into a captivating narrative, creating dramatic tension to arouse students' communicative, affective, and intercultural engagement.

In this sense, process drama aims to engage language learners in an aesthetic and intercultural experience within the target language".

ᵛ Marina Abramović is a Serbian American conceptual and performance artist. Her work explores body art, endurance art and feminist art, the relationship between performer and audience, the limits of the body, and the possibilities of the mind. For an example of her participatory art, see her Ted Talks performance "An Art Made of Trust, Vulnerability and Connection", on December 22, 2015. The YouTube link is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4so_Z9a_u0

ᵛⁱ Nicoletta Marini-Maio and Colleen Ryan-Sheutz are the authors of Set the Stage, Teaching Italian through Theater, published by Yale University Press in 2010, a collection of essays by scholars and practitioners containing theoretical discussions on and practical applications of a performance-based pedagogy as a way to rethink and reinvigorate curricula.

ᵛⁱⁱ For a study of education as "a process of decentering" see Lippitz (2009).

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