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Creating Space
Drama in the Foreign Languages at the University of Iceland

1. Introduction

After several years of involvement in theatre and teaching in foreign language departments, we both came to realise how important it had become for us to involve drama – and other arts if possible – in our teaching. In line with Fleming[1], we think that dramatic art can enable us to go through and reflect on experiences outside of our daily life, which would not otherwise be possible, not within a face-to-face situation anyway. We want to demonstrate that drama ¾ in general and in the two particular ways that we are presenting here – can provide students with a learning environment in which they can interact, collaborate, engage with a foreign language, and get actively involved in their own learning. In this article, one section will discuss a theatre project in French, drawing on methods developed by Pierra[2], and will focus on oral expression. Another section will discuss a theatre project in German which focuses on how to involve creative writing techniques – which is not a common practice for drama in language teaching – and a reflective practice through portfolios that draws on methods suggested by Bräuer[3].

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1 Michael Fleming, "Cultural Awareness and Dramatic Art Forms", *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through Drama and Ethnography*, ed. Michael Byram and Michael Fleming, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 147–157, here p. 149; Michael Fleming, *The Art of Drama Teaching*, London: David Fulton Publishers, 1997, p. 4.

2 Gisèle Pierra, *Une esthétique théâtrale en langue étrangère*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.

3 Gerd Bräuer, "Reflecting the Practice of Foreign Language Learning in Portfolios (1)", *German as a Foreign Language Journal*, No. 2/2009, pp. 3–22, here p. 3.

In the past there have been different dichotomies and discussions about 'theatre' and 'drama', 'process-oriented approaches' and 'product-oriented approaches', and a distinction between 'artistic form of drama' and 'educational drama'. A process-oriented approach could briefly be described as focusing on the dramatic medium itself, and as rather informal and improvisational, whereas a product-oriented approach tends to focus on the final staging of the students' performance. The primary learning experience in the latter seems to lie in the dramatic realisation in front of an audience.[4] Fleming describes these dichotomies as false polarities and gives reasons for the emergence of a consensus that incorporates both approaches. The discussion has moved on, and we will not repeat that discussion, but we would like to point out that in our own teaching we neither strictly distinguish between process-oriented and product-oriented approaches, nor distinguish between drama as an arts discipline and drama that is being used as "general pedagogy".[5] We tend to use whichever techniques seem most helpful in any particular situation. At the outset of this polarising debate, educational drama was criticised for watering down or betraying drama as an art form by using drama as a device to facilitate learning.[6] Fleming points out that according to his own experience, new teachers often valued drama mainly as a replacement of real experience, and did not necessarily see drama as a chance to explore situations which would otherwise be denied to us in real life.[7]

We see drama as an arts discipline, and we like to involve it in our teaching. We will not discuss the debate about product-oriented and process-oriented approaches any further at this point as it has been discussed in some detail by Fleming, Heathcote/Bolton, Hornbrook, Moody, Shier[8], and others. Instead we will concentrate on the

4 Douglas J. Moody, "Undergoing a Process and Achieving a Product: A Contradiction in Educational Drama?", *Body and Language: Intercultural Learning through Drama*, ed. Gerd Bräuer, London: Ablex Publishing, 2002, pp. 135–136.

5 For the discussion about drama as an arts discipline and drama as a teaching method, see also David Hornbrook, *Education in Drama: Casting the Dramatic Curriculum*, Routledge, 1991, and Pamela Bowell and Brian S. Heap, *Planning Process Drama*, London: David Fulton, 2001.

6 Fleming "Cultural Awareness and Dramatic Art Forms", p. 148.

7 Ibid, pp. 148–149.

8 Michael Fleming, *The Art of Drama Teaching*, p. 1; Douglas J. Moody, "Undergoing a Process and Achieving a Product: A Contradiction in Educational Drama?", pp. 138–139;

aspects 'oral expression' and how to involve 'creative writing techniques and reflective practice' through portfolios within theatre projects in foreign language teaching. We agree with Moody[9] and think that an open learning environment which uses different approaches that might either fall under a theatre-based (product-oriented) or process-oriented category might be most suitable.

In order to actively engage students with experiences that are otherwise denied to us in real life teachers need to create a specific 'space' in which they are able to stimulate the students' interest in developing and realising their own ideas and engaging with their own learning. In such a 'space', the group dynamics are different from a usual classroom, and according to Boillot and Le Du[10] the relationships among students and between students and teachers are different as these experiences are 'direct' and 'lived' experiences. Drama is also different as it "operates in the realm of the unreal"[11], and according to Fleming that fact "is essential to the way it works as art"[12]. What is interesting and useful about "the realm of the unreal" is not that it replicates experience, but that it opens up various possibilities for the exploration of situations which otherwise could not be explored in real life. A student studying German might not necessarily be interested in becoming a top manager at a leading German airline, but within drama it might be an interesting experience to explore what that manager's life is about within a particular context. Rehearsals can be affected by what kind of rehearsal space (and also performance space) is available in one's institution, and can at times become a challenge.[13]

Janet Hegman Shier, "The Arts and the Foreign-/Second-Language Curriculum: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Actively Engage Students in Their Own Learning", *Body and Language*, p. 184; Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, "Teaching Culture through Drama", *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through Drama and Ethnography*, pp. 158–177; David Hornbrook, *Education in Drama: Casting the Dramatic Curriculum*.

9 Douglas J. Moody, "Undergoing a Process and Achieving a Product", p. 139.

10 Hervé Boillot and Michel Le Du, *La pédagogie du vide. Critique du discours pédagogique contemporain*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993.

11 Fleming "Cultural Awareness and Dramatic Art Forms", p. 149.

12 Fleming, *The Art of Drama Teaching*, p. 4–5.

13 Having to teach a drama course in Háskólabío (the University Cinema) with its (at the time unadjustable) dimmed light and comfortable seats does not help anyone. Surprisingly, the University of Iceland, in spite of their new building (Háskólatorg), did not include a small

Independently from each other, but for the same reasons, we decided to include a performance at the end of the working process that would be staged outside of the classroom. We think that a performance, as a final stage of the process, has a big impact on the motivation of the participants to be involved and to work collaboratively towards a common goal. A performance beyond the classroom with all the excitement and challenges that performances might involve is in many ways a special learning experience, and most of the participating students have not done anything like this before. We will discuss in the following sections the different methods we use for trying to create a space that is suitable for exploring and critically engaging with experience in a foreign language, and also how teachers and students explore how "to create meaning through an artistic form"[14]. The experience that differences in pitch, facial expression or gesture can change meaning in drama – based on responses in the rehearsals from other participants or in the performance from the audience – could also be relevant for exploring the use of the same features (pitch, gestures, etc.) and their meaning in another culture.

We regard the integration of the arts into foreign language teaching as very useful and inspiring; we also think that it is important to provide the students with space for creativity which will enable them to explore and develop their interests and understanding of a topic. At a time when an entrepreneurial discourse[15] – a discourse that seeks to introduce market characteristics such as competition, customer focus, and performance targets – has been adopted by many universities, it is important to analyse critically the evaluative categories that are used to assess learning outcomes. 'Creativity' as such might not easily translate into such evaluative categories. Drama and other arts can have a profound impact on the learning environment by allowing students to explore and experiment, and to gain a different and deeper understanding of an issue

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drama studio that could be used for rehearsals, performances, readings, and voice and speech training, etc. Hopefully the University of Iceland will be aware of this need and will provide an appropriate rehearsal and performance space in the future.

14 Fleming, *The Art of Drama Teaching*, p. 6.

15 Andrea Mayr, *Language and Power. An Introduction to Institutional Discourse*, London: Continuum, 2008, p. 26.

they are studying. For instance, Heathcote and Bolton[16] speak about the impact that drama can have in teaching culture to students who study a foreign language; drama also creates a space for trying things out and allowing the use of imagination in quite a distinctive way. We are writing as people who appreciate drama and provide space for drama, and we value bringing this space for exploring this experience of the 'unreal' (see p. 159) into our teaching. Jean McNiff[17] speaks about the importance of living one's own values and about how her work gives her considerable pleasure, but she is not so pleased when she does not manage to live her values in a way she would like to. We agree with with her and Whitehead[18] and think that it is no good to us or anyone else if the values that give our lives meaning are denied in our practice and make our lives meaningless. Based on this, we should ask ourselves whether we want to subvert and resist entrepreneurialism and its discourses in higher education, which are based on the "new hegemonic managerial discourse"[19], if these turn out to clash with the values that give our lives meaning.

Similar to Pierra[20], the theatre performers Jensen and Hermer[21] speak of "learning by playing" to describe their language teaching approach, which is aimed at the entire person and not only at cognitive skills. They aim for "a full sensory, physical and emotional appreciation of the language"[22] in order to engage the learner with the target language as much as possible. Learning by 'playing' means for them a playful approach but with a serious intention.

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16 Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, "Teaching Culture through Drama", pp. 161–162.

17 Jean McNiff, "How Do I Account For The Good In What I Claim As Quality Educational Research?", a paper presented at the Philosophy of Education Special Interest Group, at the British Educational Research Association Annual Meeting on the 7th September 2007 at the Institute of Education, University of London, 2007, p. 1.

18 Jack Whitehead, "Creating a Living Educational Theory from Questions of the Kind, 'How do I Improve my Practice?'", *Cambridge Journal of Education* 19(1)/1989, p. 137–153.

19 Nigel Thrift, 'Soft capitalism', *Cultural Values*, 1(1)/1997, p. 36, cited in Andrea Mayr, *Language and Power*, 2008, p. 45.

20 Gisèle Pierra, *Une esthétique théâtrale en langue étrangère*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001, p. 79.

21 Marianne Jensen and Arno Hermer, "Learning by Playing: Learning Languages through the Senses", *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches Through Drama and Ethnography* , pp. 178–192, here pp. 178–179.

22 Ibid, p. 179.

One could say that while drama can be useful for foreign language learning, so too can foreign languages be useful for drama. Several years ago in Sheffield, UK, one of the authors (Milde) was hired by an independent theatre company to teach actors some German phrases and pronunciation which they needed to use in several scenes. The actors didn't speak much German (or hadn't been been using it for a long time), and in order to make German their own for the play, they experimented with the German script and the German language, its sounds, pronunciation, intonation, and its words to explore and develop their roles.

One actress had a role that involved speaking English with a German accent throughout the play, so her way of playing with the language was different from the other actors as she didn't have to memorise any sentences in German. Together we (Milde and the actress) worked on the actress's basic knowledge of German phonetics and phonology (using my own teaching approach that would be useful for the actress in that particular context) which enabled her to develop her role and to be consistent in her accent throughout the play. In this case, experimenting with a foreign language clearly helped to support the actors in their artistic work, and it helped the audience to understand the meaning of the play.

2. Theatre, "paroles", learning

In France I (Ingibjartsdóttir) learned how to speak French, and it was doing theatre there that helped me most to develop a feel for the language and to experience emotions in it. It was an amazing experience to be able to connect with the text (script), and to use my life experience to express my interpretation of a French text. Even if they were not my own words, I still felt that it was me who was expressing these words. My relationship with the French language started to change. I was less afraid and I had the feeling that it could become a part of me or I could become a part of the language. That was the time when I decided to become a French teacher. Since then I have always been concerned about how teachers can stimulate students'oral expression, and how students can

experience 'subjective expression'[23] while studying a foreign language. My interest and motivation for language teaching is based on my experience with theatre.

Why theatre?

During my French studies in Montpellier, France, there was a course for future teachers in French as a foreign language which was taught using theatre techniques, *pratique théâtrale*. The main aims of this course were to increase 'subjective expression' and to perform a play in front of an audience. I participated in this course and I decided that I would integrate this kind of teaching into my work, if possible. I have been teaching French at the University of Iceland since 2005, mostly in the fields of grammar, writing, and oral expression. I had the opportunity to design my own (theatre) course for oral expression, *Leiklist*, based on Pierra's method [24], and was able to draw on my own experience in theatre. I started teaching *Leiklist* in 2007, which is an optional course in the second year of French studies. This course provides a specific pedagogical space and is different from other language courses. I try to create a supportive space for students in their learning process. The framework of the course is to stage a performance in front of an audience and communicate an interpretation a text, as proposed by the teacher. The main pedagogical goals are to give the students the possibility to express themselves in a subjective way in the foreign language, to improve their pronunciation, and, in particular, to experience learning in a different relationship with the language. It is also important that students feel themselves to be not only members of a group, but also to be individuals who are motivated to improve their speech with the performance in mind. The process lasts thirteen weeks, eighty minutes a week. The assessment consists of their participation in staging a play, performing in front of an audience, and writing (in French) about their experiences in the course.

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23 'Subjective expression' is a term also used by Pierra and means that the whole person is involved, not only the intellect, but also the body.

24 Gisèle Pierra, PhD (Linguistics), Lecturer at the University of Paul-Valéry Montpellier III, http://recherche.univ-montp3.fr/dipralang/telecharger/PIERRA.pdf (accessed November 1, 2010).

Trust and disinhibition

Dickson points out that drama techniques involve the whole person, the body, the mind, and the emotions, and she thinks that the fact that they are allowed to "use their own personalities and experiences as resources for language production"[25] is what motivates them. She underlines this aspect by drawing on McGregor et al. who think that "drama forces students to interact" because acting-out involves a 'negotiation of meaning'[26]. Dickson thinks that "drama puts the emphasis on meaning rather than on form", which according to Maley and Duff[27] "forces us to take as our starting point *life* not language". If we take life as our starting point, we give subjectivity a place in speech as well as authenticity, and we give the students a chance to communicate their own words in the foreign language.

Speaking means to take a position among positions. Dickson says that "both acting and language learning involve self-expression and require a willingness to take chances" because – and she is drawing on Smith now – "we risk our psychological well-being every time we try to speak"[28]. Also of relevance to our context is Dickson's point that "the language teacher, like the director, must minimise students' inhibitions by creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation in the classroom"[29], which is important for me in my teaching too. I start the first session of the course by asking students to sit on the floor in a circle and then ask them why they have chosen this course and what they expect from it. They also have to introduce themselves in front of the group. The answers are mostly the same: they would like to talk and improve their pronunciation and they would like to do something different in their language studies. They express a little fear because they

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25 Patricia Dickson, "Acting French: Drama Techniques in the Second Language Classroom", *The French Rewiew*, Vol. 63/1989, pp. 300–311, here p. 300.

26 Lynn McGregor, Maggie Tate, and Ken Robinson, *Learning Through Drama*, London: Heineman, 1977, p. 17, cited in: Patricia Dickson, "Acting French", p. 300. Regarding 'negotation of meaning', see also section 3 of this article, p. 175.

27 Alan Maley and Alan Duff, *Drama Techniques in Language Learning*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 15, cited in: Patricia Dickson, "Acting French", p. 300.

28 Stephen M. Smith, *The Theater Arts and the Teaching of Second Languages*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1984, p., cited in: Patricia Dickson, "Acting French", p. 300.

29 Patricia Dickson, "Acting French", p. 300.

know that at the end they will have to perform in public. I give them a chance to quit if they do not feel comfortable at this stage of the discussion. But if they stay, they are responsible for the outcome at the end. We make a sort of contract of honour to make sure that we will realise our goals. I start every session by doing a relaxation exercise. I tell students to lie down on the floor and close their eyes, then I talk to them in a calm voice to help them to connect with their body so that they may feel the energy and weight of their body. I tell them to leave behind everything that they have been doing over the day and concentrate on the nape of the neck, the back, the arms, the hands, their posterior, calves and heels. To wake them up calmly, I tell them to touch their faces and do some massage before they open their eyes. They stretch when breathing in and relax when breathing out, and breathe out with energy and sound. The students really like this exercise as it gives them an opportunity to reconnect with themselves and makes them more open for the interactions that will take place in class. I also use physical exercices to build up trust. For example, I ask students to stand up from the floor with the aid of another student. They put their backs together and have to stand up at the same time without using their hands, and they have to do this very slowly to realise the complementarity of their relationship. Pierra explains it this way[30]:

> The first phase in the series of warming-up exercises, concerning relaxation, visualisation, breathing and then contact, is important for complementarity. This phase gives the students the *psychocorporeal condition* for the relaxation part, to help them be more aware of themselves. These exercises are essential at the beginning of every session. Starting with these exercises on the floor symbolically places the students in a new space and gives them fundamental sensations. There is a new quality of concentration which brings out the dimension of play.[31]

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30 This is my translation [Á.I.] of this paragraph. For original version in Gisèle Pierra see *Une esthétique théâtrale en langue étrangère*, p. 78–79.

31 Ibid, p. 79.

Interactions and creativity

The next step is to distribute the texts I have chosen and which are not necessarily theatre texts. I have been using song texts, slam, monologues, dialogues and short stories, including work by Jacques Brel, Georges Brassens, Léo Ferré, Grand corps malade and a book by Xavier Durringer.

The students read these texts and each student chooses one or two texts that they wish to work with. The next step is to analyse the texts – how do we understand them? This work concentrates on the text and the students interactively analyse what they understand and what they think the text wants to communicate. When we are sure we understand the text, we split up into groups and start to search for ideas for staging. The students have to do their homework; they must propose something every week concerning the staging, so we can discuss it and provide some positive criticism (it is up to the students which ideas are accepted). The work at this stage involves a lot of creativity and imagination.

In her book *Une esthétique théâtrale en langue étrangère*[32], Pierra explains how during an intensive session in *pratique théâtrale* at the University of Iceland in 1992, she was able to make a distinction between different kinds of speech. The distinction she made was between *parole non-scénique* ('speech off-stage') and *parole scénique* ('speech on-stage'), which we will discuss later. The students have the possibility to experience authentic interactions in diverse discussions; they are negotiating ideas for a common goal, the performance. They have to find a way to communicate the content of the words and the texts; the interactions are motivated from a real need to communicate in the work of staging and the search for meaning. These *paroles* exist in the articulation of the creative project, which stimulates the desire for expression. It is very important not to correct the students' speech in this phase because they are supposed to use the language in their own way. Sometimes they involve their native language, but for me there is nothing wrong with this, as the communication is authentic. This work stimulates a global acceptance of oneself and one's relation with others, which helps with the deconstruction and reconstruc-

32 Ibid, p. 45.

tion that takes place when one moves from one's native language into a foreign language. The transformation which takes place results from disinhibition and gives *parole* its communicative function where the final "exigence" is aesthetic.

Rehearsal and correction

This is where the teacher's work as a director begins. My work is to guide them in their acting and correct their pronunciation and rhythm of speech. I also help with the staging. One of the most interesting and rewarding moments is when they start to feel secure and listen to their imagination in the creation of different roles and characters. It is important that they memorise the text as soon as possible so they can focus. on their body and movements without having to hold the text in their hands. Often they do not want to stop the session because they are having so much fun and have realised that they are capable of creating in the foreign langage. Different activities, such as staging, creation of meaning, and communicating, take place at the same time in the creative and expressive process. Here we can talk about the *parole scénique*. It is no longer a spontaneous *parole* but the *parole* of the text. In the work with the text there are at least two different enunciations – the characters, expressed through the text or dialogues, and the students as actors – and it is through the mediation of the student/actor and the relation between different characters that the fiction becomes reality. Nevertheless the students will meet some difficulties in staging. They are not expected to have experience of theatre; it is the teacher's responsibility to help with techniques and to stimulate their imaginations. The text can at times block the student's imagination, so it is important to discuss the situation and let the student explain in their own words their interpretation of the situation. For the development of creativity, it is necessary to *se mettre en jeu* ('to get into play'), to take risks and experience the pleasure of being oneself but at the same time someone else.[33] The last sessions involve both theatrical work and linguistic work. Once they have learned their texts, the work with *parole scénique* starts. It is in this phase that correction takes place in pronunciation, rhythm,

33 Ibid, pp. 56–57.

diction, gesture, facial expression and voice. *Parole scénique* is a useful tool here because the words and the text are not the students' and they are not responsible for the meaning or the message; somehow it hurts less when you correct someone else's words. The voice is also important in drama; the audience must hear what you say and I have often observed students discovering a new energy in their voice in this process. It is also the moment when the students decide if they want to have costumes, make-up, music and so on. Of course, sometimes we have to add some extra sessions, but this has never been a problem. They want to do well in the performance and show the audience what they have accomplished; the performance is the final step, the result of thirteen weeks of creativity and learning.

I will close this overview of my course *Leiklist* with some short comments from my students: "I gained more feeling for the language", "not afraid to talk", "we received help from one another", "they have all the same goal", "helps to get rid of shyness", "strong relationship between the students", "original way for oral expression and to use one's knowledge in a different way", "improving the pronunciation", "pleasure in learning", "responsibility", "respect", "we need a place at the University for this kind of course".

3. Rewriting, rehearsing, and reflecting

This section will discuss the theatre course (*Leiklist*) that was offered within the undergraduate programme in German (within the Department of Foreign Languages) in the spring semester 2009. The main pedagogical aims[34] of the course were to enable students[35] of the second and third years to achieve a deeper insight into drama as a literary genre, to develop a critical analysis of the play's subject matter, to get an opportunity to actively engage with the German language, and to gain an understanding of drama as performance. The assessment (the institutional aim) consisted of a

34 For distinction between the pedagogical aims and institutional aims, cf. Gerd Bräuer, "Reflecting the Practice of Foreign Language Learning in Portfolios (1)", p. 3.

35 Due to a great interest from 1st year students, and only a small number of participating 2nd and 3rd year students, I opened up the course to 1st year students, which worked well.

Picture 1: At the beginning of the process: A rehearsal.
So here we were, in an auditorium in Háskóla Bío, the University cinema, with lights dimmed enough and cinema seats comfortable enough to make students want to go back to sleep at 10am in the morning, or whenever the weather and their means of transport allowed some of them to arrive.

portfolio, an oral presentation, and participation in the performance, which was obligatory. The German *Leiklist* course, just like the *Leiklist* course in French (see above), took place over thirteen weeks in weekly eighty-minute slots. All the extra rehearsals of specific scenes with different groups of students and individuals, especially towards the end of the rehearsal period, probably doubled the contact time with the students. That is also true for some of the students who met up additionally to work on particular scenes. The challenge of not having a suitable space for drama rehearsals and small-scale performances, such as a university drama studio or just an empty classroom without tables, has already been addressed above (see p. 159). Originally I wanted the students to choose a play, but after new students kept joining and others kept dropping out, and as time was precious, I chose a project that would be based on the play *Top Dogs* by the Swiss author Urs Widmer, which the group seemed to be happy with. Given that the

kreppa, the collapse of the Icelandic banking system, had just happened a few months previous, it seemed that a play about fallen top managers who have yet to come to grips with their unemployment and loss of status might be a relevant way of exploring, critically analysing and discussing the current Icelandic situation.

Process, product, and a variety of methods

In my research in the field of spoken artistic production processes, I have usually focused on artistic processes and included the artistic product without separating it from the process. Drawing on the French literary approach *critique génétique*[36], which investigates written texts[37] in their development and context, I regard the artistic product, such as the performance of a theatre play, as part of the artistic process. I think that the artistic product should be looked at – in research terms – as only one part or stage of the artistic process, and should not be seen as a separate or independent product that exists in isolation. It can clearly not be seen as an independent product as it was not just 'thrown into its final form' but went through different stages of an artistic working process. Separating a process and a product from each other seems to be an unhelpful approach. If I apply this approach to artistic production processes in foreign-language teaching, such as the *Top Dogs* project, the two performances (of our rewritten version of an existing play) at the end of the semester are to be seen as the final stage of the artistic and collaborative working process. These end-of-semester performances are where we had 'arrived' at that point, based on our ideas, efforts and other factors, such as the availability of the performance space (basement in the Nordic House), the technicians who cleared the space and fixed the lights, and the participants. Who knows where we would have 'arrived' a week later, but would it matter? Each performance ('final stage' or 'product') shows where the collaborative process has arrived at that particular moment in time.

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36 Almuth Grésillon, *Literarische Handschriften: Einführung in die "critique génétique"*, Berlin, Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1999.

37 I developed a method for analysing spoken artistic text productions (directing analysis), c.f. Andrea Milde, "Art as a Process of Revision: The Audience and the End Product", *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*, 2(2)/2007, pp. 151–156.

Theatre projects in foreign-language teaching are interdisciplinary projects[38], and with *Top Dogs*, apart from the benefits for language learning, I was interested in the working process, the improvisations, the rewriting of the play, the ideas the students developed, and the excitement and challenges of the performances. I was also interested in the dramatic text (the written play which we used as our base), how students would interpret it, and how it would help us to explore and examine something in a way we would not usually be able to do in our everyday life, in our 'real life'. In our particular project it seemed unhelpful – maybe even impossible – to divide process-oriented and product-oriented approaches, as we clearly needed a variety of methods for our interdisciplinary project. In line with Moody[39], I think that both an open learning environment and theatre projects which work towards the performance of a play are useful and can compliment each other, and that a dichotomy between process-oriented and product-oriented approaches should not exist.

Rewriting: drama and creative writing

I wanted to integrate some creative writing techniques into this theatre project as I wanted the students to feel responsible and be actively engaged with the dramatic text they would be performing. I did not want them to learn any lines without thinking about the meaning first, but I wanted them to become aware of how they wanted to play their text, what seemed difficult to them and why, and how their play would correspond to other aspects in the play, such as the relationship to other people in the play. These are some of the aspects the participants of that course were supposed to document and reflect upon in a journal as part of a portfolio (see next section below). This task also meant that they would be asked to be actively involved in the meaning-making of the rewritten manuscript and the performance, as they could change expressions, small parts of their scripts, pauses, and emphasis, but all closely linked to the play we were using. It was up to the students how much of this creative writing task – rewriting

38 For a discussion of the arts in foreign language as an interdisciplinary approach, see Janet Hegman Shier, "The Arts and the Foreign-/Second-Language Curriculum", p. 184.

39 Douglas J. Moody, "Undergoing a Process and Achieving a Product", pp. 138–139.

parts of the original script – they would bring into the play as long as they dealt with it at some point in the process. Interestingly, most of them did not work on it in their own time and ask me for feedback afterwards but preferred working on it with me in the lesson or in additional face-to-face meetings, and this did not seem to be related to their level of German. Most of them commented in their course diary on what they were planning to do with their text and what they wanted to discuss with other students and with me.

As a teacher who is always concerned with giving enough space and stimulation for students' creativity and realisation of their own ideas, I wanted to explore whether the option of having the opportunity to rewrite, shorten or delete parts of the script in a way they would prefer would make them get more involved than if changes had been made for them. This involvement seems to have a positive effect on their learning as it gives the students more responsibility and power over their play and artistic performance.

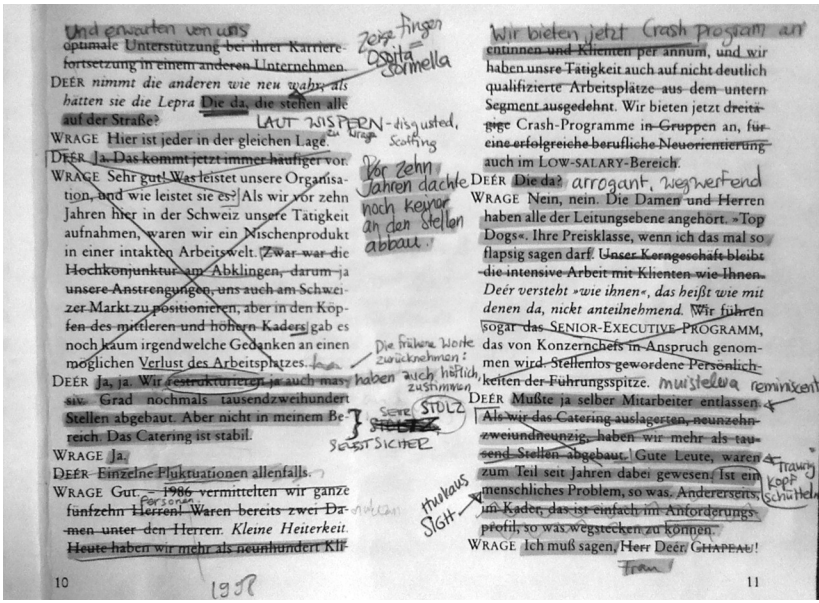
Rehearsing and reflecting: working with portfolios

For several years I have been using portfolios in my teaching, and I keep learning about new and better ways of using them more effectively. I found Bräuer's work on the use of portfolios in foreign-language learning/teaching very helpful and inspiring.[40] In the rehearsal process portfolios were used to help the students document and reflect upon their ideas, questions, difficulties, work, and suggestions. The portfolio they were supposed to submit at the end of the course consisted of a journal in which they were supposed to regularly make entries and a final reflection on the whole project. If they wanted, they could also add photos, pictures, and other relevant documents. One student submitted, along with her portfolio, her entire manuscript in which she had documented the revisions she made, using three different languages.

Similar to Shier[41], I used portfolios as 'reflective practice' in a theatre project within the foreign-language curriculum that were

40 Gerd Bräuer, "Reflecting the Practice of Foreign Language Learning in Portfolios (1)", p. 3.

41 Janet Hegman Shier, "The Arts and the Foreign-/Second-Language Curriculum", pp. 187–188.



Picture 2: A student's manuscript showing her revisions.

supposed to help students explore their ideas and how these ideas might develop or change during the rehearsals. Reflective practice "denotes stimuli for perceiving or reflecting back on one's own activity"[42], which could be a writing or reading task about how students begin to learn their text. I also saw it as a way for students to develop their own focus and analysis. Some students commented and reflected in their portfolios about the social dynamics among the participants, and how to support the whole group, while others were more interested in exploring their role, and in reflecting on their language-learning experience. Students were free to explore and to reflect on aspects of their choice, and they all found a way to connect with the theatre project, which was evident in the rehearsals and performances, and also in their writing (portfolios). Bräuer seems to be relevant for our context as he points out that writing tasks in schools are often dominated by a "*didaktischer Inszeniertheit"* (a 'staged pedagogy')[43], which means

42 Gerd Bräuer, "Reflecting the Practice of Foreign Language Learning in Portfolios (1)", p. 10.

43 Gerd Bräuer, *Schreibberatung in der Schule, Studium und Lehrerberuf*, Hohengehren: Schneider, 2009, p. 1.

Picture 3: At the final stage of the process: The performance. We have overcome our initial challenges and have met our objectives.

that teachers often try to reach the pedagogical aims via the established canon of content and methods in their particular discipline. Such a staged pedagogy, according to Bräuer, often ignores the fact that learning takes place in a concrete and individual context, which cannot entirely be anticipated or shaped by the (pedagogical) canon.[44] Drawing on Bräuer, the use of portfolios in this theatre project seemed to have taken into account the learners' individual

44 Ibid, p. 1.

and concrete context, as students could explore and reflect, and also share and discuss in the rehearsals what they regarded as relevant and interesting for them, and receive critical feedback from the group or from me. Also of interest in relation to context-oriented learning and the reflective practice in portfolios is Lave and Wenger's[45] idea of the "negotiation of meaning", which means, according to Bräuer[46], that in a learning process one has to negotiate how "the way I do something has anything to do with me".

4. Conclusion

In this article we provided two examples of theatre courses within the foreign language curricula (in French and German) at the University of Iceland, and described how the inclusion of a performance in such a project influences the aims of a course, the method of working, and the commitment required of participants. We discussed, though not exhaustively, the role of 'oral expression' and 'creative and reflective writing' within interdisciplinary theatre projects to demonstrate the variety of aims, tasks, and interests that can be integrated into courses that incorporate artistic activities. These examples are in no way meant to be prescriptive but are rather designed to inspire other teachers to consider integrating drama or other arts into their teaching. With this discussion and insight into our practice, we demonstrate that it is important for us to create an environment – a space – in which we will be able to stimulate students to be creative, to get involved in the process, and to be able to realise their own ideas. We regard the use of drama in foreign languages as interesting and useful for teachers and students, regardless of whether a performance is staged outside the classroom or not. It seems to us, judging from what we have found in the students' feedback and in our own observations, that the performance experience has a strong impact on the students' learning experience, which students describe as surprising for them.

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45 Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, cited in: Gerd Bräuer, *Schreibberatung in der Schule, Studium und Lehrerberuf*, p. 1.

46 Gerd Bräuer, *Schreibberatung in der Schule*, p. 1.

Útdráttur

Skapandi rými
Leiklist í erlendum tungumálum við Háskóla Íslands

Leikur einn eða alvörumál? Í greininni er fjallað um reynslu höfunda af notkun leiklistar í kennslu erlendra tungumála á háskólastigi. Þeir telja mikilvægt að skapa og varðveita í tungumálakennslunni svigrúm fyrir leiklist og aðrar listgreinar, ekki síst nú þegar æ fleiri háskólar virðast hneigjast til starfsháttа markaðar og stórfyrirtækja, sem samræmast e.t.v. misvel sjónarmiðum tungumálakennara.

Michael Fleming hefur bent á að í leiklist felist tækifæri til að kanna og rannsaka reynsluheim sem stendur okkur allajafna ekki til boða í hversdagslífinu og vilja höfundar sýna fram á að með leiklistinni sé hægt að búa til námsumhverfi þar sem nemendur geta með gagnvirkum samskiptum og samvinnu tengst erlenda tungumálinu nánar og orðið virkari þátttakendur í eigin námi.

Í greininni er annars vegar greint frá leiklistarverkefni í frönsku sem byggist á hugmyndum Pierra um mikilvægi munnlegrar tjáningar og settar eru fram í bók hennar *Une esthétique théâtrale en langue étrangère*. Hins vegar er fjallað um leiklistarverkefni í þýsku þar sem stuðst er við aðferðafræði Gerd Bräuer, en þar er lögð áhersla á að þjálfa skapandi skrif á ígrundaðan máta með því að útbúa þar til gerðar vinnumöppur (e. *portfolio*).

Abstract

Creating Space
Drama in the Foreign Languages at the University of Iceland

Playful approach, serious intent? In this contribution we will discuss aspects of our approaches to drama or theatre (*Leiklist*) in foreign language teaching in higher education. It is important to create – and protect – space for dramatic art and other arts in foreign language teaching at a time when an increasing number of universities

are adopting a form of "enterprising managerialism" that might or might not accommodate our values as teachers in languages.

As Michael Fleming observed, drama has the potential "to explore and examine experience in ways which would otherwise be denied to us in real life", and we want to demonstrate that drama can provide students with a learning environment in which they can interact, collaborate, become engaged with a foreign language, and become actively involved in their own learning.

In this article, one section will discuss a theatre project in French, drawing on methods developed by Pierra in her book *Une esthétique théâtrale en langue étrangère*, and will focus on oral expression. Another section will discuss a theatre project in German that focuses on how to involve creative writing techniques and a reflective practice through portfolios, drawing on methods suggested by Gerd Bräuer.