Chapter 2

The Ethics of Performative Approaches In intercultural Education

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Introduction

The following chapter is an exploration whether the use of performative approaches in intercultural (language) education can contribute to the adoption of a more ethically sound critical pedagogy and the avoidance of universal assumptions and essentialism. My investigation was triggered by an unexpected 'story of hope' written by Nam Ha and Yun, two young people who have recently arrived in the UK as asylum seekers and refugees. Their story hints at the myriad of diverse life situations and identity positions concealed under the descriptive (and sometimes reductive) rubric 'refugee'. Nam Ha and Yun's story in particular resonates with the vibrant hopes for a good life brought to our classrooms. How do our intercultural pedagogies respond to such a story of hope? With the aim to critically examine the conceptual underpinnings of our performative pedagogies, I pursue two objectives. Firstly, before discussing drama pedagogy, I provide a detailed critical discussion of what we have achieved in intercultural language education so far, especially with regards to conceptualising critical intercultural pedagogies which avoid universal moral claims and encourage active stances of inquiry into difference. Secondly, I review drama pedagogy in light of the critical literature to discuss its role as ethical praxis. Do performative approaches stand as *critical* intercultural pedagogies?
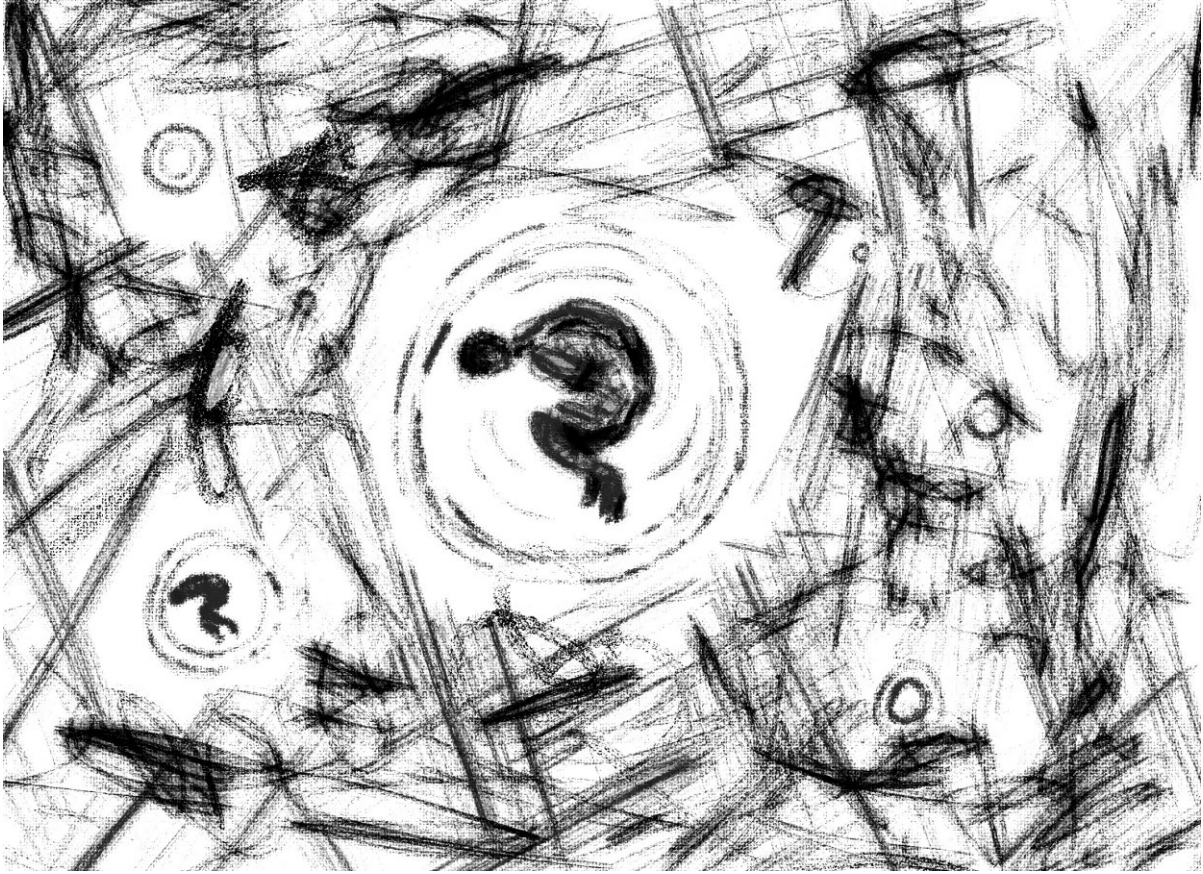
Figure 1: Hatching into a good world, from darkness to light (Nam Ha and Yun's story).

> This is an egg – a baby animal – it hatches into a good world, from darkness to light, with small black eyes and little feet. Its heart is beating fast – everything is new and scary. He wants to find somewhere safe. So he goes to Scotland. Everything is different. It's very hard to find love. He finds peace and freedom. He sees wonderful things – they are soft and lovely colours. He feels relaxed and comfortable. He feels hope for the future. A rainbow! He finds love, friendship, someone to hold hands, someone to help, to be together, to look after each other. To make a beautiful sound together. Together they are happy, they laugh and play like family. They are full, altogether complete. (Nam Ha and Yun)

I introduce this chapter with a short creative writing piece by Nam Ha and Yun, two sixteen year old ESOL college students in Scotland, UK. Their story emerged as part of a creative writing workshop during a residential weekend, and was later performed in a drama workshop. Objects and music were used as stimuli for the creation of what Cummins (2001) calls a performance-based 'identity text'. Such identity texts can "symbolise, explicitly and implicitly, critical issues at stake in students' lives and can be representative of political, social, and economic life conditions" (Ntelioglou, 2011: 602). Nam Ha's and Yun's story cannot be easily linked to specific 'issues' in their lives, much less to a singular identity position. Their creative production is fictional – it is a short, poetic story about a little animal that ventures out into a scary world to find love. It is not a literal narrative or testimony which mirrors factual events, in 'authentic' documentary style, about Nam Ha's and Yun's personal lives. Their fictional story had a powerful effect on us, the listening teachers and researchers, who attended the residential weekend with the students and facilitated the creative workshops. There was an attentive silence when the story was read again amongst us in the evening, after the day workshops were over. On the part of the teachers there was an enormous pride that students had communicated their story in English, a language they had just started to learn.

Nam Ha's and Yun's story spoke beyond our fixed ideas of 'refugee subjectivity'. Their story resonated not so much a trauma of the past, for example, but a relentless hope for the future. In the story, such hope is symbolised by the animal's quest for a home place where it will be surrounded by love and a caring community. The home metaphor is of course a significant symbol of hope when evoked in contexts marked by the complete loss of home. Writing about the dynamics of individual and social healing in countries that have suffered unspeakable violence and trauma, peace scholars Lederach & Lederach (2010) link the experience of the loss of home to the feeling of internal uncertainty and the loss of a sense of self.

Figure 2: What was taken for granted as 'normal' has disappeared.

> Violence destroys what was understood and known. What was assumed, taken for granted as 'normal' on a daily basis, has disappeared and people suspend, or outright lose the capacity to feel *at home*. Home often serves as a relational metaphor of feeling *surrounded* by love, a sense of well-being, shelter and unconditional acceptance. Violence destroys this feeling and the capacity to be oneself without mistrust or pretension; it destroys a sense of *at-homeness*. (Lederach & Lederach, 2010: 63)

The home metaphor poignantly reveals the significant link between the process of regaining a sense of trust, in oneself and in others, and the presence of social surroundings that foster a sense of 'at-homeness'. Through Nam Ha's and Yun's fictional story, we, the listening teachers and researchers, were confronted with this home metaphor and the symbol of hope it stands for. Nam Ha's and Yun's story provokes us to position ourselves, not in the face of a single, personal story, but in the face of 'hope': How do our educational concepts and practices speak to this story of hope and 'at-homeness'?

Background

Nam Ha and Yun are part of a group of 19 ESOL students at a Glasgow College, whom I got to know through my work as postdoctoral researcher on the UK-funded, AHRC - large grant project "Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State" (RM Borders). The RM Borders project sets out to investigate intercultural and multilingual practices in contexts where the subject of the encounter, and his/her languages, are under different forms of 'pain' and 'pressure' – psychologically, socially and politically. As part of a team which comprises community artists and researchers, I explore the role that performative approaches can play within such 'contested' intercultural and multilingual encounters.
The Glasgow ESOL classroom, which Nam Ha and Yun belong to, is a highly intercultural and multilingual environment. During break time, I hear the sounds of Kinda, Arabic, Farsi, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Dutch, French, Pushto, Borgow, Tigrinya and Amharic. English, for all of these young people, is an additional language, sometimes an L2 but often an L3 or L4. Students are between 16 and 20 years old and have left, and often lost, parents and relatives to escape countries that, because of the escalations of war, political conflict and/or repressive state actions against citizens, made normal and peaceful lives impossible for them.

ESOL teachers at the college developed a unique course programme, called 16+, which takes students' specific psychological needs as well as their rich, acquired life skills – emotionally, practically, intellectually – as the starting point for pedagogical conceptualisations and activities. The 16+ programme integrates creative arts pedagogies, outdoor learning programmes, extensive personal guidance provision and sustained collaborations with local counselling and mental health services into the 'traditional' ESOL curriculum. The residential weekend, during which Nam Ha and Yun wrote their story of hope, is a fixed event in their school year. We (teachers, researchers, students) spent a weekend at the Allanton Peace Centre in Dumfries (Scotland) to enjoy the centre's beautiful location, eat home-cooked food and engage in outdoor learning activities and creative arts workshops.

My encounter with the students brings to mind the very *different* 'intercultural journeys' that lie behind us. It inevitably raises questions about the inequity and power dynamics that are built into our relationship. Unlike the students, I enjoy the privileges of an EU citizen with the right to work in the UK. In light of my position of power as a white, educated female researcher, with secure political status and 'home place', and confronted with students' own hopes for 'at-homeness', how can we learn and work together? This necessarily triggers wider theoretical questions around the ways our educational conceptualisations respond to the structural inequalities experienced by students like Nam Ha and Yun. Anthropologist Malkki (1995) reminds us, however, to be cautious. The legal term refugee functions "as a broad legal or descriptive rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological and spiritual situations" (p. 496, quoted in Dennis, 2008: 212).
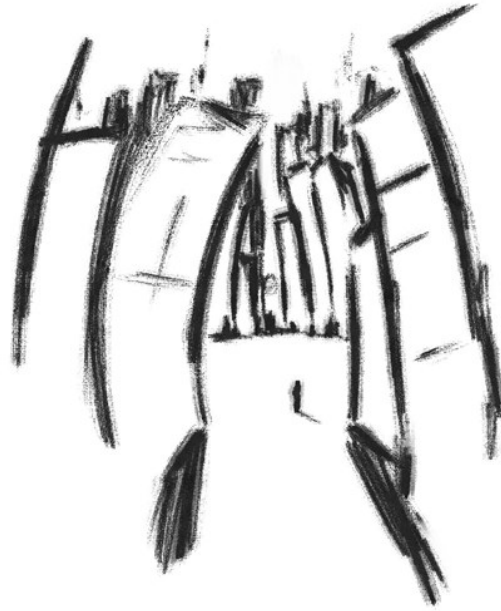
Figure 3: There are many narratives of being and belonging.

What happens to intercultural language education when it takes up the cause of 'humanity', in the face of this multiplicity of narratives of being and belonging, but without making those essentialising judgements, on who is a 'good' and 'bad' refugee, which pervade some political discussions at present? This question leads us into the realm of critical pedagogy.

Critical intercultural language pedagogy

> I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions – a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994: 12)

Critical educators and scholars in the field of intercultural language education (e.g. Phipps & Guilherme, 2004; Guilherme, 2006; Phipps, 2014; Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004; Levine & Phipps, 2012) have long advocated for intercultural language pedagogies and educational concepts that take into account learners' complex, lived experiences. They call for pedagogical approaches which do not only 'transgress' boundaries, but aid in establishing the broader conditions in which students can develop their full potential, individually and in wider society. These critical educators remind us to read competency not solely as open-ended potentiality, located within the individual and dependent on best efforts and harder work. We are instead asked to consider how educational environments, and the wider societal structures that hold these in place, enable and nurture, or equally often, disable the individual's disposition to become 'competent' in the first place (see e.g. Levine & Phipps, 2012). 'How people use language is strongly influenced by the situation in which they find themselves' (Blommaert, Collins, Slembrouck, 2005: 9), sociolinguists remind us. In an ecological view of language learning (Levine & Phipps, 2012), the speaker's inability to communicate, learn or 'flourish' in an educational environment is not solely caused by a position of lack or deficit located within the individual. It is rather considered a 'spatial' problem *for* the speaker, embedded in the communicative conditions and educational requirements produced by the environment (Blommaert, Collins, Slembrouck, 2005). Static and individualised notions of competence, in which the frameworks that construct the individual as having an (educational) deficit remain hidden from view, can especially disadvantage learners like our Glasgow ESOL class. Students bring a vast range of rich life and language experiences to the classroom, which however are often not validated within existing educational structures.

Sociolinguists term this an institutionally produced 'deficit orientation' towards students; one which implicates them in a position of lack (e.g. of English language fluency) rather than capability (Grainger, 2013; Grainger & Jones, 2013).

A critical education, so Freire (1973; 1995) believes, starts when we think from within these contested relationships and struggles with our environment. Here, education is not seen as the mere consumption of classic canons, things worth knowing and languages worth learning. Instead, critical education positions the student, with her past life experiences and future hopes, at the centre of the educational encounter. Entrusted to act as a responsible subject, the student enters a dialogic educational space. Here, she does not just 'receive' knowledge from an expert educator, but plays an active role in setting the educational agenda as well as educating others by drawing on her past experiences and capabilities. In other words, the student-teacher relationship is democratised. Within this democratic orientation, difference and conflict is not played down or denied but ultimately seen as an asset for critical pedagogy. An active engagement with difference allows the wider realities of social contestation that affect students' lives to become visible. This opens a space for reflection on how educational practices might hold them in place or equally 'transgress' them. In this way, critical educator bell hooks (1994) cautions against the liberal educational ideal of a "harmonious diversity", in which multiculturalism does *not* upset any social relations or the educational status quo, but is imagined to flow smoothly "within cultural forms of uninterrupted accords" (ibid: 31). Turner (1994) describes this as a "difference multiculturalism" which prescribes difference for political aims (exemplified in the 'melting pot' idea or the 'rainbow coalition') but limits the individual's ability to negotiate her identity or even reject her inherited culture. In its extreme form, Prato (2009) suggests, difference multiculturalism can "exacerbate ethnic differences, essentialising them and limiting the individual's scope for the definition of self-identity" (ibid: 2). An undisturbed intercultural education space in which difference doesn't lead to wider, critical reflection but can be easily 'consumed', can then run the danger of exoticising otherness in a form of cultural determinism.

In an interview with Giroux, a leading figure in radical education theory, Guilherme (2006) explains how intercultural competency models in the field of language and intercultural education (e.g. Byram, 1997) should in this respect not just aim to produce undisturbed intercultural, educational spaces, in which difference is *overcome*, awareness fostered and understanding achieved, with the aim to 'guarantee' a harmonious diversity. Instead, Giroux and Guilherme (2006) encourage modes of critical engagement *with* students' complex and contested experiences. Here cultural difference does not just become a precondition for the existence of intercultural language education, or a problem that needs fixing through pedagogy. In other words, critical pedagogy sees difference not as a universal, abstract asset or obstacle but as a fully embodied phenomenon; one that cannot be regarded in separation from particular living and breathing bodies and the contested social realities these bodies find themselves in. In her critical discussion of Byram's (1997) intercultural competence model, Hoff (2014) explains how the five *savoirs-* model's underlying notion of human universality could in this respect run the risk of working towards undisturbed educational spaces in a mode of passivity, rather than result in an active stance of critical inquiry:

> [T]he wish to highlight universal aspects of the human condition is made at the expense of actively and inquisitively investigating cultural difference. (ibid: 512).

Rather than promoting an active engagement with different perspectives and (multi-sensory) manifestations of migratory experience, Hoff argues, Byram's model might inadvertently support uncritical processes of socialisation – in a mode of 'adopting' the other's cultural and behavioural values (ibid). Although Byram's intercultural competence model (1997) encompasses forms of knowledge (of self and other) and skills (relate, interpret, discover, value)

which encourage critical engagement, these are always employed with a view towards the more conceptually closed aims of awareness-raising and intercultural understanding.

On the one hand, the *savoir être*-dimension of the model, for example, explicitly encourages curiosity, openness and a mode of de-centring from (universalising) cultural beliefs (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002: 12). On the other hand, the model cannot fully disengage itself from its tendency towards a cultural relativist framework, in which the 'intercultural narrative is realised through the process of mediation' (Dasli 2011: 26).

> While these forms of knowledge stem from an increased understanding of one's sense of Self and that of the Other, they are constantly put into question during the process of mediation. This process, which initially swings from one reason-modelled conviction to the other, provisionally settles in a relativised context where the intercultural narrative is realised. (Dasli, 2011, 26)

In the same vein as Dasli (2011), MacDonald & O'Regan (2009, 2012) caution against a conceptual reliance on relativist or universalist frameworks. Unlike Alred, Byram and Fleming (2006) who commend the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a useful starting point in the everyday intercultural negotiation of value positions (p. 125), MacDonald and O'Regan (2012) caution against such reliance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they argue, might work well as a wider moral framework but could lead to ethical inertia when faced with concrete "exorbitant acts of the other" (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2012: 6) in everyday life. Everyday intercultural improvisations often require "on-the-spot" ethical judgement "as part of a necessary and ongoing reflexive intercultural praxis" (ibid: 6). A reliance on moral universalisms might potentially lead to an *incapacity to act* and the closure of an open discursive terrain. In its extreme form, a desire for 'conceptual purity' can actively prevent communication:

> The Western alliance's 'War on Terror' and the Jihadism of Al-Qaeda are both examples of claims which are being used in this [universalising] way. They each represent a will to truth which colonises the discursive terrain according to its own perceptions, based as they are on the presupposed obviousness of their own moral privilege. (ibid: 8)

MacDonald & O'Regan (2009; 2012) thus rightly problematise wider, universalising tendencies inherent in intercultural communication concepts and pedagogies. These can run the danger of pre-empting the 'transformation' of the other – towards the 'higher ideals' of awareness-raising, openness or intercultural understanding – and erase the difference between self and other.

> A politics of presence is stalking the corridors of intercultural communication. This is an Enlightenment desire for plenitude, for the satisfactory repletion of ideas and outcomes, and the resolution of difference. In other words, it is the desire we as interculturalists have for fulfilment and purity in the concepts that we employ in our work and in the consequences which they portend; and so there is a desire for justice, equality, understanding, openness, truth, etc., an organic ordering of the intercultural whole, in which these elements are all neatly ordered and arranged. (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2009: 6)

MacDonald & O'Regan (2009) caution that even well-intentioned educational ideals can result in pedagogic practices that can lead to discursive closure and ethical inertia which stall open dialogue and critical action. 'Progressive' intercultural concepts can prove vacuous, or even function to hold wider, inequitable structures in place, if they do not actively acknowledge people's concrete, lived realities. 'Difference' should not just be defined 'culturally' but as always in relation to people's wider life conditions (materially, politically, psychologically). Intercultural concepts and pedagogies can potentially do damage to students like Nam Ha and Yun, when they do not take their real world experiences – often of injustice and inequality – into account for their formulations of justice, equality, understanding etc. Phipps (2014)

explains the negative effect universal frameworks can have on students who are more vulnerable to structural inequality:

> Intercultural Dialogue may work and make sense in stable, secure jurisdictions where there is relative 'freedom from fear and want' (Nussbaum, 2011), but it is at best limited and at worst dangerous when used in situations of conflict, vulnerability, insecurity and aggression. (Phipps, 2014: 115)

Phipps explains this conceptual paradox in the context of UNESCO's (2013), the British Council's (2013) and the Council of Europe's (2008) definitions of Intercultural Dialogue – as *'open and respectful exchange between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds'* (2014: 116). Groups, such as asylum seekers and refugees, who do not enjoy equitable status, Phipps writes, "act as symbolic examples of a subaltern who are excluded from the lofty aims of Intercultural Dialogue as equal exchange in many of their encounters, thus troubling the ideal and exposing its vacuousness" (ibid: 115). The "desire for conceptual fulfilment" (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2012) in intercultural pedagogies can then entail a structural violence when it is unequivocally assumed that the equitable discursive structures for 'respectful dialogue' are already established. The other's (e.g. the asylum seeker's, the refugee's) 'transformation' towards the preconceived value of 'respectful exchange', which she or he doesn't have the agency to determine, can then become an obligatory moral act. It safeguards the purity of the intercultural concept but holds existing, inequitable structures in place.

An ethical praxis of responsibility

Figure 4: What happens to people's hopes for a better future?

> Without responsibility, the hope which is carried in the possibility of the other that, for example, things might be different one day, as well as the praxis which such hope implies, would be denied. (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2009: 13)

With reference to Ricoeur (1992), Levinas (1997) and Derrida (1981), MacDonald & O'Regan (2009; 2012) call for an ethical praxis in intercultural education which avoids universalising truth claims but takes as its guiding principle an "ethics of responsibility for the other" (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2012: 11). Ethical considerations are linked to people's concrete hopes and life experiences and aim "at the good life with and for others, in just institutions" (Ricoeur, 1992: 170, quoted in MacDonald and O'Regan, 2009: 9). Here, the otherness of the other is not transformed and difference erased. It is brought out for active, critical inquiry and a formulation of educational practices that can resist "deficit orientations" (Grainger, 2013; Grainger & Jones, 2013) towards students. In such ethical praxis of responsibility, students' hopes for 'at-homeness' (Lederach & Lederach, 2010) can then find expression from within the process of working towards more equitable relationships in 'just institutions'. In her critical review of cosmopolitan education, educational philosopher Todd (2007; 2008) affirms the importance of not basing educational conceptualisations on the premises of preconceived appeals to human universality and dignity, as found, for example, in liberal arts education models (e.g. Nussbaum, 1997). 'Humanity', so Todd writes, should not be considered as an abstract, given fact or a legitimisation for education. Instead, 'humanity' should act as a

"provocation" and lead to praxis-based reflections on the validity of those concepts and educational practices, which we evoke in the name of a humanity-oriented education.

> The respect, dignity and freedom, which have become signs of humanity, are not bred from within, but in relation to the disturbing and provocative event of being confronted by another person [radically different to oneself]. It is here, in this provocation, where I see the promise of education itself. For it allows into education the difficult prospect of responding to others as an actual practice of justice (however incomplete such practices might be) without deferring it to some future that will one day arrive. (Todd, 2008: 9)

Not unlike MacDonald and O'Regan (2009; 2012), Todd locates the promise of an education that faces humanity 'head-on', within the imperfect, but responsibility-oriented pedagogies which emerge out of responding to students' concrete, present needs (psychologically, materially, politically) and hopes for their future lives. Educational practices, when located within this responsibility-oriented pedagogy-social justice link, do not claim an alleged neutrality. They act as moral and political practices. They involve resistance against discriminatory tendencies in wider educational structures and pay close attention to practices that allow students' experiences and concrete hopes for their future to be present in classroom learning. Students 'humanity' – as for example manifested in Nam Ha's and Yun's story of hope – then becomes a cause for praxis-based educational reflection on the possibilities for 'just' educational practices, rather than a foundational principle for universally applicable 'best' practices. An ethical praxis of responsibility in intercultural language education then asserts one of critical pedagogy's radical statements: "every educational act is political and every political act should be pedagogical" (Guilherme, 2006: 170). With reference to Freire (1973; 1995), Trueba & Bartolomé (2002) call into question notions of 'teacher neutrality' and 'best practice' prevalent in most teacher education programmes:

> According to Paolo Freire, beyond technical skills, teachers should also be equipped with a full understanding of what it means to have courage - to denounce the present inequities that directly cripple certain populations of students - and effectively create psychologically harmless educational contexts. (Trueba & Bartolomé, 2002: 289)

Teachers' critical engagement with how an ethical praxis might take shape in their specific educational contexts should thus be a key element of teacher education. This could for example involve reflection on how pedagogical activities can connect to students' complex lives, migratory experiences and hopes for a 'good life'. In other words, a sole focus on methodological questions, best teaching practice and notions of teacher neutrality might inadvertently hold hegemonic discursive structures in place, if these are not shaped and changed by students' presence and their lived realities. Students like Nam Ha and Yun might not benefit from an intercultural language education, which defines Intercultural Dialogue's 'respectful exchange' only methodologically. They can be educationally disadvantaged, because the wider educational and societal structures that disable this important goal for them remain invisible and thus go unquestioned.
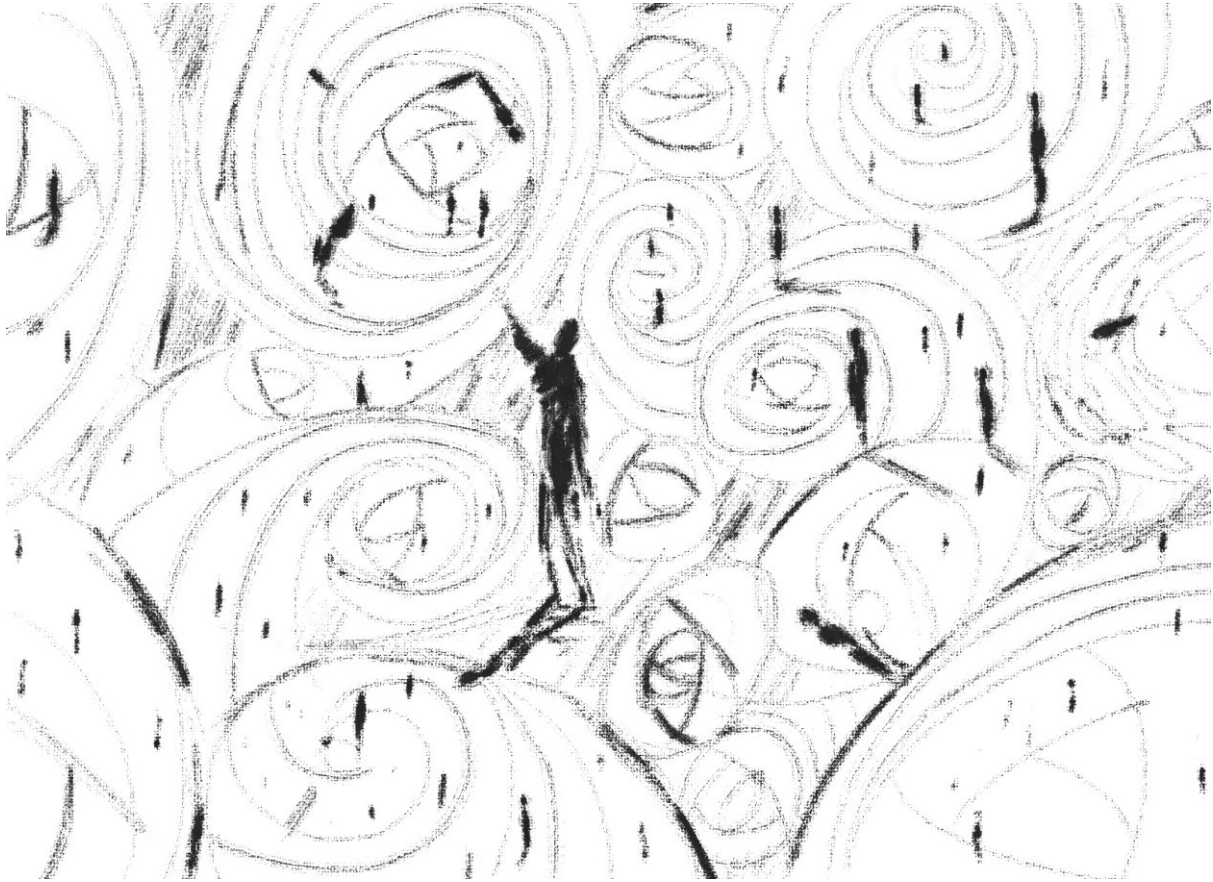
Figure 5: How can we encourage students' full narratorial selves?

Educational practices and concepts that work *towards* humanity rather than conceptually presupposing it thus need to connect notions of competence and agency to the collective work of establishing the wider conditions in which the student's full "narratorial self" (Kramsch & Gerhards, 2012: 76) can be present.

This also includes pedagogical attention to the damage that the loss of 'at-homeness' (Lederach & Lederach, 2010) might have exerted on students' minds (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Halvorsen, 2002). Although a detailed discussion of this psychological dimension is beyond the scope of this chapter, language education should be mindful of the role that pedagogic activities might play in producing "psychologically harmless educational contexts" (Trueba & Bartolomé, 2002: 289).

> These are practices which pay attention to the damage created by exposure to the multiple pervasive varieties of conflict, trauma and mistrust which are part of the present global condition or to the loss of identities caused by present circumstances […]. (Phipps, 2014: 119)

In other words, "restorative practices" (Phipps, 2013) recognise that notions of hope and resiliency, especially significant for students who have experienced trauma in their lives, are often associated with creative processes (e.g. Yohani, 2008; Rappaport, 2014). In addition to these restorative dimensions, the inclusion of performative approaches in intercultural language education also asserts language and intercultural learning itself as a visceral, physical and subjective process. It always involves students with their whole bodies (Kramsch, 2009; Kramsch & Gerhards, 2012; Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004; Schewe, 2013).

[L]anguage teachers should be much more aware that the bodies they have in front of them in the classroom are, in fact, acquiring the language with all their senses; not just their brains, but their eyes, their ears, their touching, their smell, their taste, and that they should appeal to the senses in a much greater way than they usually do. (Kramsch & Gerhards, 2012: 75)

Language and intercultural learning is a multisensory process. This should be reflected in intercultural language pedagogies which place students' subjectivity and sensory experiences at the centre. In a turn away from skills/competence-oriented intercultural models, Phipps and Gonzalez (2004) propose in this respect the terms "languaging" and "intercultural being" (ibid: 115). These are terms which capture the performative dimension of language and intercultural learning. 'Languaging' pedagogies thus promote collaboration and creative processes. They cultivate a notion of narration in intercultural language education which is linked to subjective and affective dimensions. Can drama pedagogy serve as an example of a 'languaging pedagogy' that facilitates a critical and multisensory engagement with difference in intercultural language education?

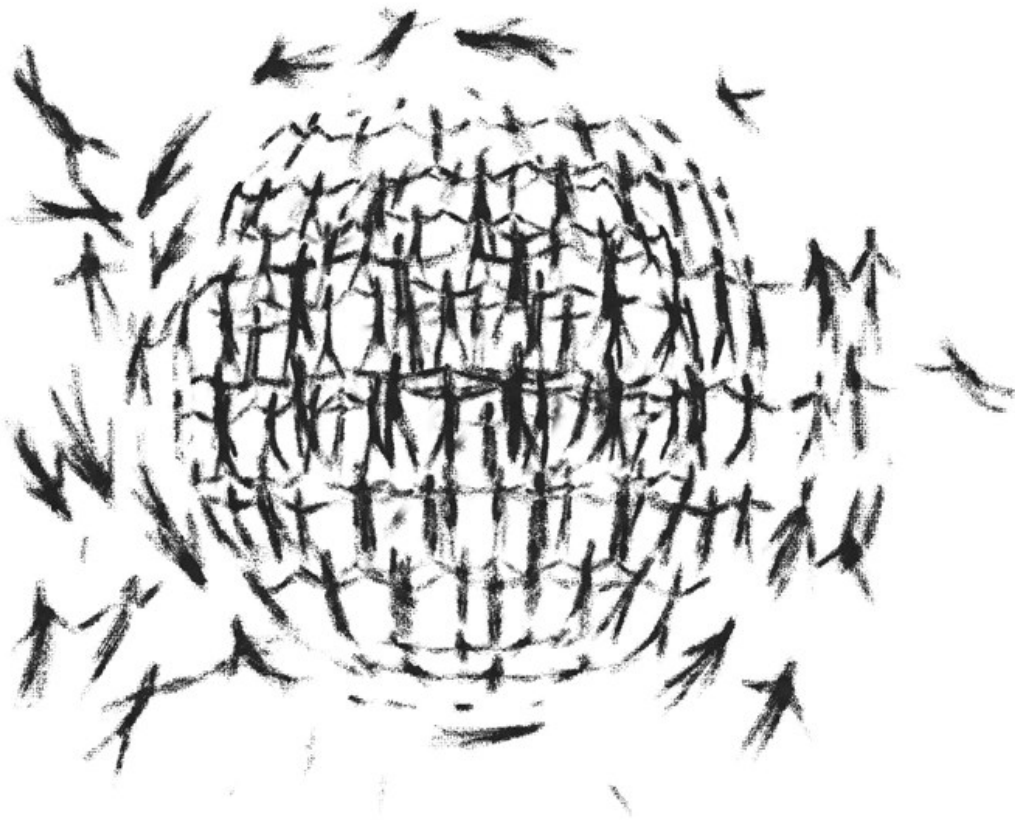## Drama pedagogy: a languaging practice?

Figure 6: Learning cultures that accentuate performative experiences.

Over the last two decades, drama pedagogy has helped to lay the foundations for a new teaching and learning culture which accentuates physicality and centres on 'performative experience'. (Schewe, 2011)

Drama pedagogy has long acted as an important reference discipline for foreign language didactics (see Schewe, 2011; 2013). This brought forth various drama-based approaches which emphasise to varying degrees the methodological, psychological and political dimensions in intercultural language learning. What unites the various approaches that emerged in the wake of the performative turn in language and intercultural education is their kinaesthetic orientation and stance as dynamic learning tools. They are employed for the purpose of "intercultural training" (Feldhendler, 1994; 2007), "expanding students' multi-lingual and multi-modal self-expression" (Rothwell, 2011), "reducing learners' language anxiety" (Piazzoli, 2011) or providing opportunities for "reflective and transformative explorations of self and other" (Donelan, 2002).

Concerning intercultural education in particular, we find a methodological focus on the potential of drama pedagogy to realise intercultural competence objectives. Kessler & Küppers (2008) as well as Cunico (2005), Choi (2004) and Boehm (2011) for instance make the case for drama pedagogy as a holistic way to put into practice intercultural (communicative) competence (Byram, 1997). Drama pedagogy is thought to foster awareness of the interpersonal dimension, including the moods, emotions and attitudes that are embedded in the languages we use (Cunico, 2005). Corporeality and sense experience are described as the constitutive elements of an intercultural language learning that combines linguistic, ethical, action-oriented, affective and cognitive learning objectives (Kessler & Küppers, 2008). The drama-based language classroom thus becomes a space of experimentation and kinaesthetic learning, in which cultures, and both one's own and others' identities, can be explored, questioned, developed and invented, all within the "safe space" of the drama (e.g. Fleming, 2003, 2004; Donelan, 2002) – and to transformative effect.

Does drama pedagogy, when used in service of these intercultural competence objectives, conceptually rely on a universalist orientation? Does drama pedagogy implicitly promote discursive closure when it is in service of the 'higher ideals' of intercultural understanding and awareness-raising? Asked in reverse, does drama pedagogy's focus on students' bodies and lived experiences not (implicitly) assert a critical pedagogical orientation? Does drama pedagogy not 'automatically' promote an active stance of inquiry in intercultural language education; one that opposes a consumer-oriented "banking education" (Freire, 1973) and the creation of 'docile' student bodies? In other words, does the use of drama pedagogy in intercultural language education not guarantee a mode of 'languaging', which cultivates forms of engagement that are aesthetically unencumbered by a desire for conceptual purity?

I would argue that the caution and reflection concerning universalising intercultural conceptualisations (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2009, 2012; Phipps, 2013, 2014; Todd, 2007, 2008) equally applies to drama pedagogy when used in the work with learners who are more vulnerable to structural inequality. Dunn, Bundy & Woodrow (2012) give an example from their drama work with newly arrived refugee children:

> In choosing to base the drama upon a playful, fantasy-based narrative, we were hoping to avoid the kind of responses to resettlement and resilience that apply a deficit model or focus on the challenges this experience brings. (Dunn, Bundy & Woodrow, 2012: 496)

Dunn et al. carefully connect their methodological objectives – the development of English language skills as a key aspect of supporting refugee children's resilience (ibid) – to the wider psychological and political dimensions at play in their students' lives. Through the use of a fictional narrative that is centred around Rollo, a young robot who has travelled to Earth from a distant planet with her robot dog Sparky, the educator-researchers invite their students to inhabit positions of expertise (e.g. as interpreters for Sparky who cannot speak English). They build on students' strengths, real-world interests (in animals, robots) and their sense of play.

Narrative practices which put students in a position of lack or deficit (e.g. of English language skills) or forces them to relive traumatic events are avoided.

In addition to Dunn et al.'s (2012) example, Arizpe, Colomer & Martínez-Roldán (2015) reveal the benefits of using fictional, fantasy-based narratives. Arizpe et al. work with the wordless picture book *The Arrival* (Tan, 2006) to develop a form of 'intercultural literacy' which takes newly arrived refugee children's life experiences and hopes for their own futures as the starting point for multimodal activities and conversations. Drawing on school-based ethnographic work in a multilingual classroom, Ntelioglou et. al. (2014) also show that performative approaches, especially within a multi-literacies (The New London Group 1996) approach, can build on students' personal, cultural and multiple language experiences (Ntelioglou et al. 2014) and put them in a position of expertise rather than deficit. Educational psychologist Yohani (2008) emphasises how using photographs and an image-based "hope quilt", can foster discussions based on hope and strength that are led by the children. Dennis (2007, 2008) reminds us, however, to consider that the telling of stories is no neutral affair.

> The personal story in the refugee context represents a complex, cultural, political and social currency. [...] It is thus necessary to question how theatre [and other performative approaches] translates to the refugee context where people are required to tell their stories – over and over and over again. Who is listening? [...]. The refugee context is structured around the repeated requirement to tell within a culture of institutional disbelief [...]; a story is represented as currency to earn the next stage of entry. (Dennis, 2007: 357)

The act of storytelling in performative pedagogies, far from being universally empowering for every participant, is caught up in a complex net of psychological, social and political effects. These can resonate beyond the specific pedagogical situation. In a context like our ESOL classroom, for example, where students like Nam Ha and Yun have experienced the pressure and potential trauma of having to tell and re-tell their personal story in an institutional setting (the UK's Home Office), careful ethical reflection on how the performative method constitutes and reconstitutes its tellers and listeners is imperative.

Conclusion

Performative approaches in intercultural language education hold the potential to be powerful languaging practices which stand in the tradition of critical pedagogy and defy the modernist templates of adoption models. Drama pedagogy, for example, can work from students' embodiment and from within the complex overlap of aesthetic, affective and political dimensions *towards* 'just' educational practices. I suggest therefore that we have to be careful not to put performative approaches too quickly in service of universalising moral aims and methodological objectives. Instead, I propose that performative pedagogies in intercultural language education should not be regarded as a dynamic intercultural learning tool only but as complex, aesthetic translation practice. Such aesthetic translation practice embraces fiction, multi-modality and a narrative practice full of metaphoric gaps. The performance-based "identity texts" (Cummins, 2001) that emerge from such aesthetic translation practice, as Nam Ha's and Yun's story demonstrates, do not necessarily produce 'authentic stories'. They cannot be easily 'consumed' as just another intercultural narrative flowing smoothly within our existing concepts. The students' relentless story of hope, love and home place, in the face of the very complex and often (socially, politically, psychologically) contested lives they live in the real world, upsets our social relations and educational status quo. It confronts and challenges us educators and researchers to position ourselves in the face of such hope and examine how our pedagogies hold up to the pressure. Theatre scholar Ridout (2009: 12) says that "it is in the situation of doubt, in the moment of choice, when you ask yourself, 'How shall I act?' that you

are opening up the space of ethics. Performative approaches might be regarded as ethical praxis in intercultural language education not when they offer anything of the ethical in and of itself, but when their aesthetic processes lead us (teachers, researchers, students) into critical reflection on the kind of educational and societal spaces we build in the name of 'humanity'.

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