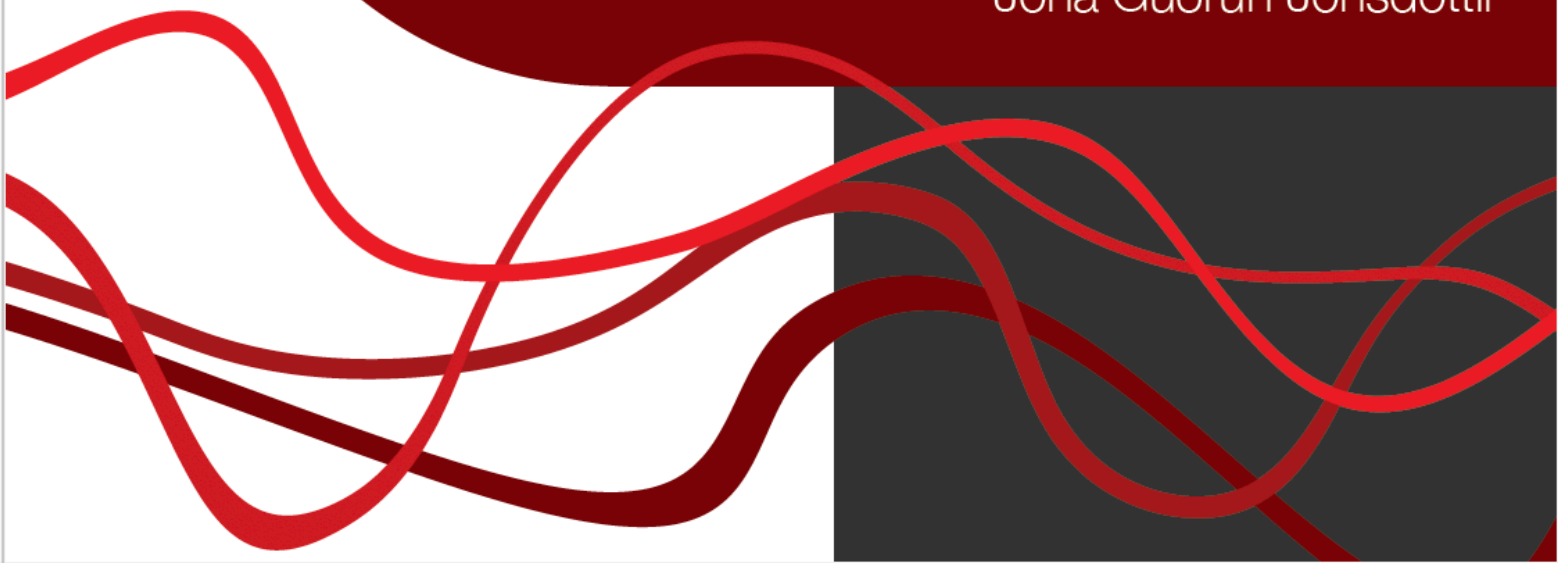


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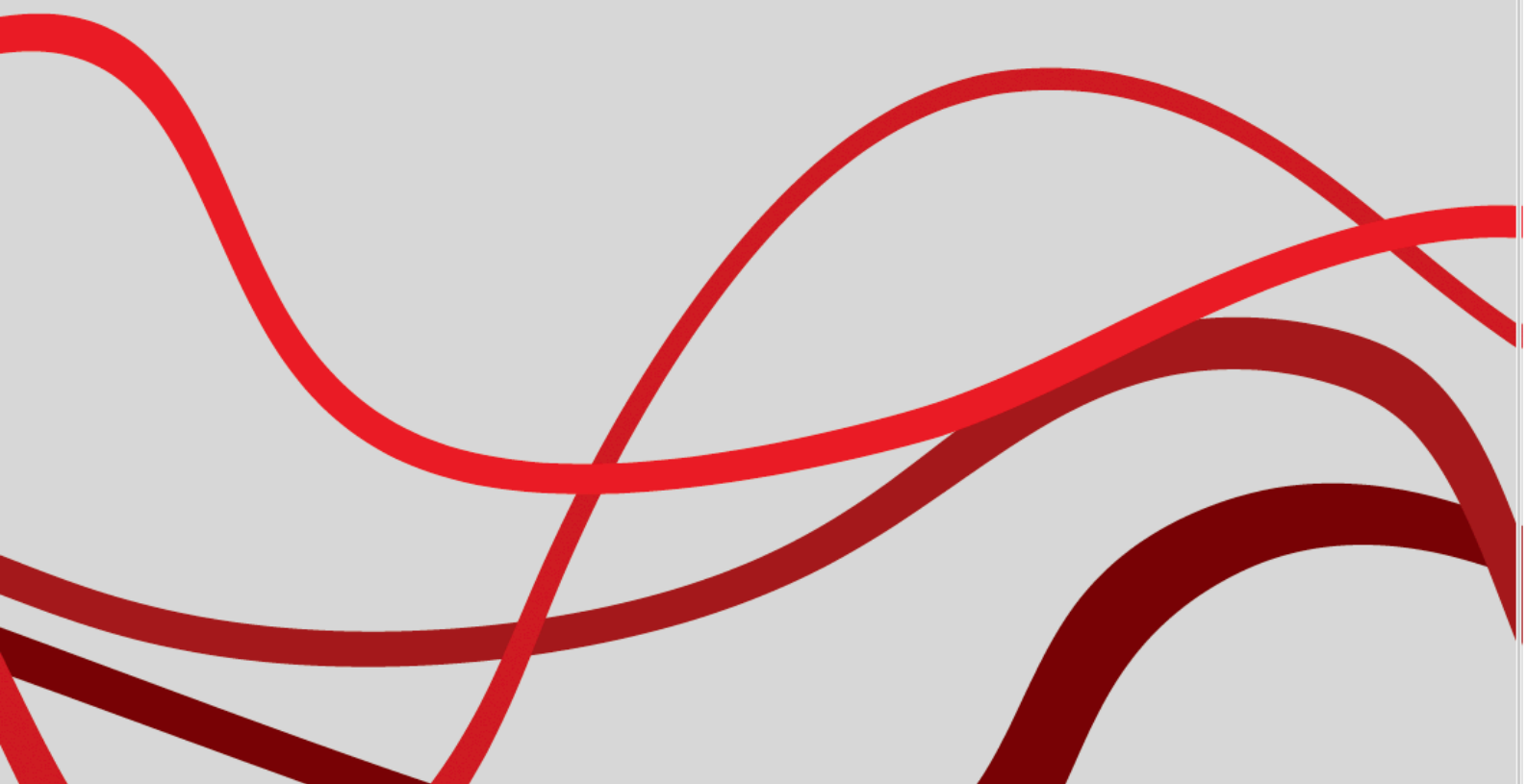
# Performance and Performativity

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## Red thread to From simulation to dissimulation



Jóna Guðrún, Rannveig Björk

Thank you for bringing our attention to the dark side of artist-led learning. As researcher-practitioners, artists and drama teachers we find the simulation or (dis) simulation fascinating. We are in the business of the world of "what ifs", the make-believe world where anything can happen. Theatre is an art of imagination so we offer a red-thread from the theatre, especially from children's theatre.

The first memory of theatre.

## Jóna Guðrún's memory

My first memory of going to the theatre was when I went with my family to see an Icelandic play called the Golden Gate by Davíð Stefánsson, which was performed at the National Theatre in Reykjavík. I was maybe 12 years old and I remember how excited I was because I thought going to the theatre was something very special. I didn't know what to expect but in my mind it was something of a mystery world and I thought the theatre building was old and graceful, like a castle. Everyone was dressed up in a solemn mood. I remember clearly the main actors whom I felt had great power and the story which affected me deeply. I also remember the lights. It was like they had their own life and colours, exchanging all the time to create a new atmosphere every time. It was magic!



Stuðlaberg





## Rannveig Björk's memory

My first memory of theatre was going to the National Theatre of Iceland. I don't remember how old I was, probably around four or five years old, and I don't remember the play or what it was about but I do remember the magic. The magic about going to the theatre. I remember the smell, the silence, the excitement, the music, the red carpet and the red curtains. I remember the crystal chandelier in the crystal hall. I was mesmerized. It was like I could not breathe because if I did, the magic would disappear. The house itself looked like an álfaborg (elf city) or castle with its black rock (stuðlaberg) rising from the ground all the way to the sky. It was like it was calling me to come in here where the magic happens. It was magic!



Theatre for children and  
Theatre in Education



The Submarine by Gunnar Eiriksson, National Theatre, Iceland.

Theatre for children or children's theatre can consist of a regular play, often a simple storyline or fairy tale like *When the Robbers Came to Cardamom Town*, *Ronja the Robbers Daughter*, *Karius and Bactus*, where children don't participate in the story. In Theatre in

Education the child is an active participant. Theatre in Education comprises a prepared performance (often by professional actors, or drama students) supported by active audience participation, often in the form of interactive drama workshops. These are facilitated

by the actors/teachers using a variety of methods in drama. The performance can build upon a fictitious story, or a historical or contemporary problem. This offers young people performance practices that have the potential to disrupt fixed polarities between art and instrumentalism, education and entertainment, populism and elitism, process and product, activity and passivity, participation and spectatorship" (Nicholson, 2009, p. 80). The theatre becomes a medium for action, for reflection, but most importantly for transformation. But what about children as spectators? Do they learn by watching a performance, and if so, what do they learn? Can theatre help them create their own ideas and develop new skills? The question we would like to raise is: is there a **Dark Side** of theatre in education? When you tell or show young people, in a performance, that the world as you know it is going to disappear, or you need to recycle to save the planet, are we manipulating the audience? Should we have a code of ethics when working in theatre in education? Is it ok to lecture the audience

about the danger? Is it ok to scare them? There is a greater risk that by both scaring them and by lecturing them they will turn against the idea. What needs to happen is as in other performances - you need to affect them.

An Icelandic children's play called *The Submarine* by Gunnar Eiríksson is a good example. The play talks about the environment and the story is about a young girl, Argentina, living in a submarine because the world is no longer habitable. The young audience are being educated by watching the play. They know that the world is not submerged, and Argentina does not live in a submarine, but for a short time they believe and at the same time accept the message. Children are smart and they know when they are being manipulated. We need to give them the freedom to experience and evaluate themselves. It comes with a great responsibility to create good Theatre for children.

It's the end of the world as we know it  
It's the end of the world as we know it  
It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine  
(Lyrics by R.E.M.)

# Performative inquiry

## To enhance language learning

Rannveig Björk Thorkelsdóttir  
Jóna Guðrún Jónsdóttir

### Introduction

There is something special about going to the theatre and the magic it makes. To bring a child to a theatre is potentially a life-changing experience, as well as an opportunity for a unique kind of learning. The theatre is a world of “what ifs”. The child is transported to a make-believe world where anything can happen. The theatre can also be a place of learning. Through theatrical literacy and the story telling and the ability to sit and watch a performance without distraction, learning can occur. The benefit of children going to the theatre is that it encourages empathy and cultural awareness; it develops critical thinking skills, promotes wellbeing, and is fun. But not all children have the opportunity to go

to the theatre. They do not have the habitus. Pierre Bourdieu (2012) argues that there are three kinds of capital in society that determine social power and inequality: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. He has developed concepts that can be transferred to different research areas. Field, habitus and cultural capital are some of the most used. Smith and Riley (2009) quote Bourdieu when saying that family and school play a crucial role in the different allocations of habitus: “These institutions work to give people from affluent backgrounds an unfair advantage over those from the working class” (p. 131). To fully understand Bourdieu’s theory of power, we must understand his explanations of ‘symbolic violence.’ Symbolic violence



occurs in the school system. The school system maintains, promotes and distributes the values of the middle class. The children of the lower classes are made to accept the ethos that the culture and values of the middle class are worthier than their own, and recognised by all parties, including subordinates (Bourdieu, 2012). Therefore, drama and theatre education are important in schools, giving all students the opportunity to take part in a “What if” world regardless of the social class they belong to. In a constantly changing world where technology is developing rapidly, drama has something to offer that other subjects do not have, because it gives us the opportunity to imagine and enact futures and try out ideas. It also has a unique place in the curriculum because drama enhances intellectual, creative and embodied education where teachers have a powerful tool for transforming students through teaching (Anderson, 2012). In the Icelandic national curriculum (2013), drama is presented both as subject and as a method of instruction. In the curriculum guide, drama is an arts subject aiming at the method of the theatre but also as a pedagogy supporting the students’ learning processes in other subjects, for example language learning. Drama works both as a template for learning in general, and as a subject in its own right. Through drama the pupils can learn to interact with one another in a safe space, try out different social roles and through role-playing they have

the opportunity to explore aspects of what it means to be human (Thorkelsdóttir, 2018). Through drama, pupils may develop their self-expression, they can build the confidence and the skills needed to work with others, and drama may also enhance creativity. Learning can be seen as something “that emerges during performative exploration” where the learners “interpret the actions, events, responses” and “engage with empathy and conviction in the performative spaces” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 49). The focus in this article is on fifteen teacher trainees becoming drama teacher specialists, in their second year of education, and the potential they see in using drama for language learning. The focus is also on the two drama teachers teaching them and their learning experience.

### **The project – *The space between***

As researcher-practitioners, we conceptualise our research and practice in such a way that the two are continuously informing each other. Given that we understand practice as research and research as practice, we invited our students to engage in the project called *The space between* during the autumn semester of 2020. The project had two aims; the first was to find out whether and how we can conceptualise drama or performance as a meaningful way of language learning. The second aim was to look at and to reflect on our own practices to build bridges between pedagogical and theoretical

aspects of teaching and learning, to explore the space between, which is what we expect of our teacher trainees. Hence the research questions for this article are: *How do drama teachers' students experience the possibilities of using chamber theatre performance for language learning? How can artists/educators build bridges between pedagogy and theoretical aspects of teaching and learning in and through drama?* According to John O'Toole and Joanne O'Mara (2007, p. 207), there are four "paradigms of purpose" in using and teaching drama. They are *cognitive/procedural*, which means gaining knowledge and skill in drama; *expressive/developmental*, meaning growing through drama; *social/pedagogical*, meaning learning through drama; and *functional/learning*, learning what people do in drama. In many texts about drama in education these purposes are interwoven. In this article the focus is on *expressive/developmental* and *social/pedagogical* learning through chamber theatre. Learning and understanding takes place when the students explore various roles, investigate different aspects of human relations, and make independent decisions while in the role-play setting. Cecily O'Neill (1985) stresses that the most important task in drama education is the creation of a shared dramatic context, a fictional world, in which it is possible to explore and examine ideas, issues, relationships and content areas. It is both real and unreal at the same time (O'Neill,

1985). In making and staging drama / theatre, they learn how to be focused, innovative and resourceful, and collaborate and take responsibility through drama presentation. Through this, students develop creativity, imagination, aesthetic understanding and critical thinking, but they also learn to speak and listen. When students take part in a play, they are performing with and for others in a theatrical space; when the students stop to observe one another's work and change from "actor" to "spectator", they become percipients of their own work. Trust and understanding are shared in the theatrical space of drama education. It is at that moment that learning can happen both for the "actor" and "spectator" as they both learn by doing, listening and seeing. James Yarker (2001) describes the relationship between performers and audiences as a partnership, intended to challenge audiences intellectually and emotionally.

### **Short overview of the literature Contemporary cultural studies of the body**

Michael Anderson (2015) claims that in many classrooms the body and mind seem to be separated in learning. One of the unique claims of the arts, especially dance and drama, is the use of embodiment in the process of creation (p. 239). In drama, embodied learning is often discussed based on the

body philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962/2002), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2009). Chris Shilling (2007, p. 200) states that many contemporary cultural studies of the body are under-theorised and rely too heavily on empirical descriptions. Smith and Riley (2009, p. 270) comment on this critique and state that focus on description is part and parcel of the move to the body itself; that is, the very desire to materialise cultural theory in rooting in the body is a de facto move away from the cultural in the form of norms, beliefs, discourses and narratives. This perspective on the body as an under-theorised cultural perspective can also be of great interest for drama education, but also a challenge. Lynn Fels (2009) argues that "... in arts education, it is understood that embodied learning opens the possibility for new ways of understanding and engagement" (p. 127). She also describes the complexity of embodied learning:

Embodied within my own understanding of complexity in education and performative inquiry is the interplay of breath, presence, and absence within the intimacy of relationship, time, engagement, inquiry, language, and location. (p. 140)

She goes on to ask,

We know that we learn through drama. But how do we conceptualise drama or performance as an action site of learning?(Fels, 2009, p. 140).

### **Language learning through drama**

Drama challenges students to use language in a diverse style and for a wider purpose than ordinary conversations, as they use imaginary activity in the whole context. According to Lai-wa, Yuk-lan, Yin, and Shuk-kuen (2014) drama generated dialogue between students and teachers, which made the teachers aware of the importance of creating a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom. It also made the students' needs more visible since they were no longer seen as mere pieces of homework or test papers, but human beings with feelings and emotions, where everyone expressed themselves in an individual way. Learning and teaching through drama is important to achieve positive results in improved spontaneity, articulation, fluency and greater use of language (Wagner, 1998). Students increase their vocabulary and improve their grammar and narrative structure when working through drama with body and mind working together (Wagner, 1998). Jun Liu (2002) reveals that drama offers new dimensions of learning foreign languages. She points out that there are two approaches to teaching foreign languages. The traditional approach of teaching focuses on dividing teaching into

segments like words, collocations and so on. The other approach focuses on meaning where the spotlight is on the learner and the learning process. Drama gives the opportunity to focus on meaning instead of form where body, mind and language come together, and students have to stretch their imagination beyond their linguistic boundaries. Ása Ragnarsdóttir and Rannveig Björk Thorkelsdóttir (2013), agree, adding that, when students are involved and take control of their own study and situations through drama, they learn language and use dialogue in and according to the situation they are in and whom they are talking to and they become more responsible for their own learning. Betty Wagner (1998) and Rannveig Björk Thorkelsdóttir and Ása Ragnarsdóttir (2019) presumed that drama in education created an experience through which students might come to interpret human interactions, empathise with others, develop understanding and expand perspectives and learning.

According to Erica Piazzoli (2014) the main focus in additional language teaching since the 1980s has been on creating a relaxing atmosphere to lower the strain and minimise the barrier when learning a new language. Heidi Haraldsen and Siri Ingul (2017) agree and add that using drama in language teaching provides the students with an opportunity to use the language in a spontaneous and realistic way in fictional scenarios. It also enables students to digest their

language learning process in an interesting and different way. Piazzoli (2014) adds that drama gives students the opportunity to enhance fluency, participation and motivation on many levels of learning languages.

According to Piazzoli's research (2014), when students learned language through drama, they experienced that they were not being judged and could be more relaxed in all approaches to the study material. Students felt that learning by means of drama gave them the opportunity to study language through a cognitive and physical experience, which made the learning real and memorable for them and situated the language more firmly in a cultural context (Piazzoli, 2014).

### **Theoretical Perspective Performative inquiry in drama as a site of learning**

Lynn Fels (2012) identifies performative inquiry in four key areas: to listen deeply, to be present in the moment, to identify stops that interrupt or illuminate our practice or understanding, and to reflect on those stops, in terms of their significance, implications and why they matter (Fels, 2012, p. 53). Performative inquiry (Fels & McGiven, 2002) is also the exploration of a topic or issue through performance (p. 27). It "opens spaces of intertextual play within which social responsibility and individual and



communal response may be investigated that provides a momentary entrance into 'other' worlds embodied in play and reflection" (p. 32) and "is a research methodology that recognizes and honours the absences, journey-landscapes, and space-moments of learning". Fels and George Belliveau (2008) define learning as something "that emerges during performative exploration" where the learners "interpret the actions, events, responses" and "engage with empathy and conviction in the performative spaces" (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 49). Learning is thus seen as a performative inquiry. Performative inquiry recognises performance, creative engagement and emergent creation as an action site of inquiry and learning. Researchers, through arts practise, investigate creative, critical and, in collaborative engagements, communal, embodied action and reflection. Performative inquiry introduces to education research what artists know and practise, that the arts embody research in order to create, engage, express and query (Fels, 2015). According to Fels (2012), performative inquiry is a way of being engaged in research on stage, in the classroom, in relationships to each other and the environments within which we find ourselves, collectively and individually. With this in mind we created a chamber theatre performance with our teacher trainees at the University of Iceland aiming at performance as an action site of learning languages.

### Chamber theatre as a site of learning

Chamber theatre, story theatre or narrative theatre fills an important gap between narration and theatre performance. This method of the theatre is about adopting literary works, using extracts from the original text in minimal settings (Breen, 1986). Chamber theatre illuminates text by linking *telling* with *showing*. According to Robert Breen, who introduced the technique of chamber theatre, the technique is for dramatising points of view in narrative fiction. The narrator is encouraged to talk to the audience in a voice from the characters' world and take the audience into that world. He invites them to see for themselves. The narrator also has the freedom to move in time and space. The students are encouraged to study the story or novel for the unique or individual perspective presented (Breen, 1986). The method uses all the elements of theatre such as sound, movement, stillness, plot and character. It uses light and shadows and the presence of actors in a symbiotic relationship with the written accounts that guide the process. By keeping sets simple and making the production more theatrical and intimate, chamber theatre forces the actors and audiences to focus on the story and the performance rather than the spectacle. By performing through chamber theatre, the focus is on the text, the narrative. No effort is made

to eliminate the narrative points of view which characterize fiction; indeed, the storyteller's angle of vision is emphasised through physical representation on stage (O'Neill, 1985). Because of the 'tell and show' element, both the spoken word and physical activity have to be made very clear. The performance is *show me a story*, making both actors on stage and spectators explore the literature or the topic through performance. The text can be fiction, fairy tales or poems, but not originally written for performance. Chamber theatre requires a narrator who, as the central character, delivers his or her own thoughts, feelings and actions while others in the group act out what the narrator is saying (Neelands & Goode, 2015).

In the beginning, the group explores the text they will be working on to better understand the plot and structure of the story. A script must be written and the discussion is about allowing students to participate in the writing. This is a method of adapting literary works to the stage using a maximal amount of the work's original text and often minimal and suggestive settings. Through drama the students use body, gestures, facial expressions and voice, as they work on expressive/developmental and social/development learning. In chamber theatre the narrator can break the fourth wall of theatre and speak directly to the audience, explaining what is going on in the story. All the actors can become the narrator. Students are given time

to rehearse the play where each participant is a character and/or a narrator. The whole setting of the play is very simple and there is no need to have any scenario or stage configurations. Chamber theatre can be performed almost anywhere. It has more realistic costuming and actual movement around the stage, but is not complete stage acting and typically has pantomimed props rather than real ones. The uniqueness of chamber theatre lies in the dual role of each member in the cast - as actor as well as narrator speaking and explaining what is going on to an audience. Through that process, learning can occur for both parties.

### **The design of the development project and data collection**

In this research project we chose a qualitative approach in order to catch the fine-grained and subtle aspects of drama teachers' learning trajectories as well as looking into our own teaching practice. The project is based on a socio-cultural understanding of learning, and on the basic assumption that we are social and cultural individuals who interact and think together with others, and that we always learn. Knowledge is constructed and it is based on the societal and cultural context (see Säljö 2016; Vygotsky 1978). The aim of the project is to explore and understand whether drama or performance can be interpreted as a way of learning a language, since learning can be seen as something "that emerges during

performative exploration" where the learners "interpret the actions, events, responses" and "engage with empathy and conviction in the performative spaces" (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 49). Learning is thus seen as a performative inquiry. Hence the first research question for this article is: *How do drama teachers' students experience the possibilities of using chamber theatre performance for language learning?* The main focus is on the 15 teacher's students, aiming at becoming drama teacher specialists, in their second year of education. The data was collected over a five-month period in the autumn of 2020 through class observation, field notes and video observation. The students met four times in the classroom and four times on Zoom. They were given a story (Cap-o'-Rushes, 1890) to work on. The main method was observation in the classroom, supported by video observations and photographs of certain situations and group interviews. Given that we understand practice as research and research as practice we reflect on our own teaching by writing logs and by reflecting on our teaching practices we endeavour to make them more meaningful. The aim is to build bridges between pedagogical and theoretical aspects of teaching and learning, to explore the space between, which is what we expect of our teacher trainees. The second research question: *How can artists/educators build bridges between pedagogy and theoretical aspects of teaching and learning in and through*

*drama?* After each class, we, the teachers, met to explore key experiences and interaction. We wrote together and responded to one another's writing to better understand our practice for the benefit of our students. And we wrote reflective logs. When using reflective logs, the researcher is recording his and her learning experience; that is, feelings and reflections on what the researcher is seeing and learning at the site. Jack Mezirow (1981) argues that reflection is vital to ensure that the researcher's perspective is transformed, and it is part of an emancipatory process of becoming aware of how and why social and cultural assumptions have constrained researchers' views of themselves. We positioned ourselves as interpretive researchers with hermeneutic inspiration. The research project was based on studies of practice in a school context. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim (Lichtman, 2013). All data was analysed by open coding and repeatedly read in search of patterns and aspects. Data analysis was based on induction, a process during which the examiner forms expectations of potential results. Thus he/she reads and analyses the data acquired, revealing patterns or themes on which conclusions are based and presented as final results (Lichtman, 2013).

## Findings

To set the stage we began with a narrative from our logs as reflective practitioners as our

logs had a transformative effect on the student work. By writing a reflective log we did more than just reflect on our learning experience, what we saw and learned at the site. By being a reflective practitioner, we managed to change our teaching methods for the benefit of our students. After teachers' reflection we turned to the students where the focus was on expressive/developmental and social/pedagogical learning through chamber theatre. The task was to find a way to work at language learning through chamber theatre.

### Teachers' reflection

By writing a reflective log we hoped to better comprehend our choices in teaching and by reflecting on our practice we sought to understand our practice by exploring how we embody the theoretical and pedagogic frames through which we invite our teacher candidates to learn. After each class we met to explore key experiences and interaction. We wrote together and responded to one another's writing to better understand our practice for the benefit of our students.

We set out to give our students the opportunity to work with something new in drama. We had never taught chamber theatre as a technique for language learning. The students were supplied with the story of Cap-o'-Rushes to work on and lectures about chamber theatre, and had enough time to write, prepare and rehearse, but it still

appeared as if they had not fully understood their task - or they did not take enough time to sufficiently study the frame and/or the rules of the technique.

Why are the students doing it like this? They are not doing it as we taught them to do. Why? What was wrong? They are not telling with showing. They are only telling with one narrator. Why don't they take turns as narrator? Maybe we didn't explain it right. We need to teach how to do it in a different way. But how? Should we stop them and ask them to start over? (Researcher reflective log).

Part of using performative inquiry is to listen deeply and define learning as something "that emerges during performative exploration." What happened with the students is that they just did the performance as a short play with one actor telling the story throughout. Almost with no text.

/.../ I just realised that they might need more teaching or training in drama. Maybe chamber theatre is too difficult for the students as the aim of the project is to explore and understand whether drama or performance can be interpreted as a way of learning a language. They



are only in their second year of becoming drama teacher specialists (Researcher reflective log).

As the reflective log indicates the product did turn out less performative than expected. That said, one wonders if students need a greater challenge to take a project more seriously, for example, being presented with a real audience they can build an actual conversation with. This could make the project more vivid, and the students would experience acting out through the technique of the chamber theatre.

We need to do it with them. But can we, do this? From an ethical point of view? We need to be on stage with them, not as teachers but as researchers, to build the bridge between them and us for the educational context to achieve a creative learning process for all.

What we learned was that when we did “show and tell” the students understood the technique of chamber theatre. It was not until we put ourselves on stage and physically showed them the framing of the theatre that they fully understood its technique. The learning that took place in that show-and-tell opened the discussion later on. So, in a way we did build a bridge between the researcher and the teachers, as well as between teachers

and students, by inviting them to engage in our research, which turned out to be a learning process for all participants.

While teaching something new, such as chamber theatre, focusing on language learning, we did ask ourselves whether we should have provided the teacher trainees with more time to assist the pupils. This might have given them the role of a critical friend, which could lead to a stronger process without actually directing or demonstrating, thus strengthening the foundation of the project. Chamber theatre clearly challenges students to use language in a wide range of registers, styles and purposes and provides a lot of possibilities. The communication that takes place between the narrator, the actors and the audience is an extremely good learning process, where students exchange words and sentences and engage in discussions. They are also exposed to the structure and the communicative meaning of language where new words and sentences can be discovered. It was of particular interest, even if the project did not go as we anticipated, that our trainees saw the opportunity of using chamber theatre with their pupils. They learned that through chamber theatre, language learning in compulsory education can take place on many levels, since pupils have to both write and understand the script and perform the play, building their voice, expressive / development and social competence.

## Language learning through chamber theatre

In the beginning the teacher trainees were given a story to work on and time to write, prepare and rehearse. They also had to rehearse the play and perform on stage where they had to fully learn and embody the text through communication with the other actors. They had to communicate with the audience through the narrator where further language learning took place. At the same time, they had to keep in mind how and whether their pupils were learning. The teacher trainees met, and we met them both in classes at the university but also online. In addition, the trainees were able to meet to work on the task by themselves. In the interviews three aspects were visible, *talking and expression, developing the pupils' social skills and useful pedagogy through language learning.*

## Training for pupils in talking and expression

Our findings indicate that working in and through chamber theatre had an impact on the students. Many of the students said it was an impressive way of teaching:

*.../I like working like this and I think it will increase their (the pupils) vocabulary. The pupils have the chance to decide which words to use and which not. And they can*

*use their own ideas and stories, for example, when the narrator says something.*

They also talk about how chamber theatre can create freedom for their pupils to learn stories and narratives in a different way. As one student explains: "They (the pupils) have to create their own sentences and come up with multiple ideas, for example, when the narrator says something". The students agreed that this was very important in language learning. Being able to talk and to express oneself to the audience and explain what is going on in the performance is unique. Breaking through the fourth wall intentionally lends more opportunities to language learning. When an actor (pupil) steps out of his or her role and becomes the narrator, magic can happen.

When a character switches roles and becomes the narrator, he can break through the fourth wall and talk to the audience, which gives him the opportunity to, for example, translate the text by asking the audience if they understand. In that way every pupil, no matter which language they speak, can understand the play.

He continues: "The pupil can explain the whole play to the audience. He can ask questions like:

“Do you know what is going on here?” He can translate the text for every pupil where both he as the narrator and the audience have to use a second language. He can ask the actors to repeat what they just did or said, so that everybody can understand what is going on.” This way both the actor/narrator and the audience can learn, through communication. Learning and teaching through drama is important to give positive results in improved spontaneity, articulation, fluency and wider use of language (Wagner, 1998). Pupils can increase their vocabulary and improve their grammar and narrative structure when working through drama where body and mind work together (Wagner, 1998).

### **Pupils develop their social skills**

The students thought it was interesting to look at the possibilities that chamber theatre can offer for inclusive education. As this student explains: “Pupils who are usually taken out of class for special education can now stay in the classroom, as chamber theatre gives all the students a possibility of taking part. Rather than getting a book or asking to attend some special education classes, they can learn more through drama”. Another student pointed out that chamber theatre gives pupils the opportunity to develop their social skills.

Pupils that need additional support in their study are usually

taken out of the class in special education learning classes but through chamber theatre they get the opportunity to be a part of the whole group where they can enhance their social skills. Many of the pupils do not have sufficient skills in their own mother tongue.

Through chamber theatre students can deepen their understanding of their mother language and it can also be a good way of teaching children who have Icelandic as their second language. “It is also very good to use chamber theatre to teach Icelandic as a second language, for example for immigrants. They, like other pupils, have to be able to use their own language.” Drama provides the opportunity to look upon meaning instead of form, where body, mind and language come together, and students have to stretch their imagination beyond their linguistic boundaries (Liu, 2002). They can do this through chamber theatre. The students added that they found it interesting how the performers could mix languages during the play. The narrator might speak in one language and the actors in another language. Another actor again might speak in a third language and so on, giving the narrator the role of translator for the audience. In this way all the pupils/actors can speak in a mixed language, which can help foreign pupils to speak their own languages, because they do

not have enough knowledge of or practice in speaking their mother tongue. They also added that despite the pupils being at different levels of language learning, they can learn from each other. "They can for example take the script home to study it further at their own pace, to be then ready to follow the process on an equal basis with the group". As it is not an obligation to become a narrator, the pupil who is not as confident in speaking the language can participate in other ways, for instance, in acting and telling during the show.

*/.../and it can also be useful to mix students together; that is to say, pupils that speak different languages where they can speak their mother tongue or their second language. By doing so all the pupils can have a voice and truly take part in the performance.*

Asking all the pupils to learn the text at home helps them to take part in the performance. The pupils have to understand the text to be able to perform it. The pupils have to translate the text into their mother tongue and learn their lines. They have to have a deep understanding in order to be able to show and tell. Another student pointed out that it is really important for pupils to take part who usually do not have voices in the classroom because they do not speak the

language. Participating and speaking their own language in a school performance can be empowering for the pupils that do not speak the native language. By taking part they can be seen and heard and by doing so they become members of the school culture and hopefully bring their own culture and value to the school (Bourdieu, 2012). By being involved in school productions, they can even influence the community they live in.

### **Useful pedagogy**

All the students agreed that impressive learning occurred during the chamber theatre. By using the performative approaches they felt more relaxed and thought it was a fun process. As this student describes:

*/.../ I think that it could be both useful and more relaxed for pupils to learn in this way. By taking the pressure off performing a whole show, as chamber theatre is more like show-and-tell, the learning is made more fun. Even if it is a performance, it is just a different kind of performance.*

When rehearsing for the performance the students use their body and their physicality for creating characters and trying out different roles.

The students also believed that, if given the opportunity to try out chamber theatre in



compulsory education, they would do it. As one student pointed out:

Pupils love to act so you can presume that while students are 'playing' they are deepening their learning at the same time. And everyone gets the chance to blossom on his or her own terms. By writing a script with fellow pupils, chamber theatre enhances the pupils' vocabulary and spelling while they also learn about the structure and meaning of the language they embody on stage.

Another student noted that when working as a group through chamber theatre; "we believe that pupils not only develop their language learning but also their social skills, teamwork and their voice technique through physical activity, and when they get the opportunity to build a character they are learning." As Fels and Belliveau, (2008) point out, "learning can be seen as something that emerges during performative exploration" where the learners "interpret the actions, events, responses" and "engage with empathy and conviction in the performative spaces." Chamber theatre is the theatre of embodiment and narrative. It is a performance of ensemble. No one is the main actor or leader; everyone is working together as a team and everyone has a role to play. Everybody is important. That is truly showing

and telling. Teachers play an important role by transforming the pupils' learning, for example, by using drama (Anderson, 2012).

### **Conclusion.**

Our findings conclude that chamber theatre can have a wide-ranging appeal when learning languages. Our students believe that pupils can develop socially acceptable speech and manners and a means of self-expression, and they develop empathy and self-control (*social/pedagogical*) (O'Toole & O'Mara, 2007) by taking part in performance. Through physical presence and response, as both actors and spectators, the pupils learn to be recipients of their own work and they can create games with each other (*expressive/developmental*) (O'Toole & O'Mara, 2007). The pupil has direct contact with the audience, both actors and spectators. They have the opportunity to examine the language through communication and activities that take place. The narrator has the power to reach out to the audience to explain actions or meaning and ask questions to shed light on words or actions. Students learn to listen and talk, as pointed out by O'Neill (1985). The students felt they were not being judged and could be more relaxed in all approaches to the study material through drama (Piazolli, 2014). In creating a play/theatre, the students believe that pupils learn appropriate manners at a performance. Through the making of a play, aesthetic knowledge via the art subject of

drama is met through the methods of theatre. Findings also show, as Wagner (2018) and Ragnarsdóttir and Thorkelsdóttir (2013) agree, that chamber theatre can be an influential way of learning languages where pupils, through imagination and creativity can increase their vocabulary when they are allowed to choose words, sentences and actions on their own terms, where they take responsibility. Through drama, pupils can also discover possibilities in language learning beyond traditional subject boundaries where body and mind are interwoven and embodied learning opens new ways of understanding just as Fels (2009) stresses. Our findings also show, as Neelands and Goode (2015) indicate, that the narrator has many functions by telling and showing, where the narrator can communicate through their feelings and thoughts. The findings reveal that the teacher trainees become aware of what they do in drama and understand what they learn in drama. They also learn that combining drama and language learning offers the possibility of developing practical skills and knowledge of mutual benefit to both teachers and pupils, making language learning memorable through direct experience. Chamber theatre is an effective way to instil in students a deeper understanding of the elements of a story: character development, plot, and fictional environments through narrative fiction. The concept of chamber theatre is not new, but working with its technique to enhance language

learning is. If the technique of chamber theatre can develop pupils' ability to empathize with others and become better communicators perhaps a new scope and new horizons in learning and teaching praxis can be revealed.

We also recognize the parallels between the needs and supports shared by teacher trainees and teacher educators. By writing reflective logs and by reflecting on our own practice we can hopefully bridge the pedagogical and theoretical aspects of teaching and learning, which is what we expect of teacher trainees.

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