

Drama: Threat or Opportunity? Managing the ‘Dual Affect’ in Process Drama

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Abstract

In this paper we discuss the construct of ‘dual affect’ and its relevance to drama pedagogy in a foreign language teaching context. We draw on a research project involving a group of advanced learners of Italian using drama-based strategies. We begin with a theoretical discussion of dual affect, aesthetic distance, and protection mechanisms in the drama/language classroom. Next, we contextualise the research study and analyse student-participants’ responses in selected moments of the drama. The analysis suggests that, while some student-participants experienced the dual affect of drama as a threat, others found it a stimulus for reflection and a challenge. We argue that this may have had an impact on their perceived learning outcomes and on their willingness to communicate in the target language. We take this opportunity to reflect on the importance of managing dual affect in the process drama classroom, especially when working with advanced language students who have no prior experience in drama-based pedagogy.

1 Introduction

In this paper, we discuss divergent responses when students work with process drama to learn a foreign language. We adopt a Vygotskian, sociocultural perspective on language learning (Lantolf & Thorne 2006). Specifically, we analyse how the experience and management of dual affect (Vygostky 1976) can have an impact on learners’ motivation and perceived language learning. The project aimed to observe tertiary Italian language students’ responses when using drama to explore contemporary Italian cinema and theatre.

In using drama as pedagogy, we drew on several dramatic conventions, including voice work, image theatre, and process drama strategies. Process drama (O’Neill 1995) is an extended dramatic form in which the teacher works (often in role), with the students, to co-construct a dramatic world. Its foundations can be traced to Vygotskian theories of play (1976), and Bolton’s (1979) conceptualisation of drama in education. Since the pioneering work of Kao and O’Neill (1998), process drama has been used in a variety of

language-learning contexts, with encouraging results. For example, Stinson's (2008) research indicated that, through the use of process drama, ESL learners' test scores rose significantly. This aligns with Rothwell's (2011) and Yaman-Ntelioglu's (2011) findings in relation to process drama work with students of various second and additional languages (L2/AL).

As O'Neill (1995) argues, process drama stems from a 'pre-text', a stimulus that launches the dramatic world. Previously, we had hypothesised that using a *visual* pre-text might be particularly beneficial for L2/AL process drama beginners (Piazzoli 2010). In the current project we initially aimed at investigating this claim by exploring students' responses to both *visual* (scenes from a film) and *textual* (excerpts from a script) pre-texts, in order to gauge any differences. The responses seemed specific to particular learners and their individual learning styles, and we did not identify an overall trend favouring visual over textual pre-texts. Instead, what did appear to influence the participants' engagement was their ability to manage the dual affect of the dramatic frame. As often happens in qualitative research, we therefore shifted our focus, to examine the different ways in which participants experienced the dual affect, and how this influenced their perceived learning of Italian language and culture.

2 Drama and Dual Affect

Vygotsky's (1976) theory of play is an essential starting point for theories of drama and dual affect. Vygotsky argued that, during play, a dual affect is sustained by the player: the emotional state of the 'play context' may be different from that of the 'actual context'. In Vygotskian terms, while playing, the child "weeps as a patient, but revels as a player" (1976: 549), renouncing her/his immediate impulses and coordinating her/his behaviour to the rules of the game. Vygotsky claimed that a child's greatest achievements, within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), are possible in play:

In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form. (1976: 552)

Although Vygotsky referred to children, this theory has been widely applied to adult learners. Bateson (1976) also formulated a seminal theory of play, which aligns with and complements Vygotsky's. He observed that behaviour in play is characterised by a paradoxical frame: the actual behaviour, and what that behaviour stands for. In Bateson's words: "The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite" (1976: 121). Bateson further highlighted the double paradox of play: not only does the playful nip not denote what a real bite would, but, significantly, the bite itself is fictional.

In drama too, emotions occur on a dual plane: the real and the fictitious. Bolton (1979: 128) draws on Vygotsky to identify this interplay as intrinsic to dramatic form. He recognised two kinds of emotional responses in drama:

first-order responses, to the “immediate meaning of a concrete event” (actual context); and second-order responses, to the “symbolic meaning” (drama context). Second-order emotions can be as intense as first-order, and are no less real, but differ in *quality*. While in *first-order* emotions there is an immediate, practical interpretation, in *second-order* emotions there is a symbolic interpretation. Thus, the raw emotions triggered occur simultaneously in two contexts, and may contradict each other; it is precisely this relationship that defines drama. As Bolton puts it: “Drama is metaphor. Its meaning lies not in the actual context nor in the fictitious one, but in the *dialectic set up between the two*.” For Bolton, this dual experience of the emotions needs to be re-channelled through a cognitive operation, or reflection, following the experiential phase. O’Toole (1992: 98) similarly defines dual affect in terms of emotional responses, as the ability both to empathise (step into another’s shoes) and to remain emotionally distanced from the events being dramatised – and to move between these emotional stances: “the participant can stand in another’s shoes, unconsciously feeling ‘this is happening to me’ (the first affect), and simultaneously conscious of the form ‘I am making it happen’ (the second affect).”

The notions of aesthetic distance and protection in the drama are also crucial in our attempt to make sense of language learners’ management of dual affect. Eriksson (2007) defines ‘aesthetic distance’ as a poetic quality existing on a continuum, where an excess of distance results in an abstract, or over-distanced aesthetic experience, while lack of distance results in an overly realistic or under-distanced experience. He identifies three perspectives for framing the concept of ‘distance’ in drama education. First, distance can function as a *protection mechanism*, filtering between the fictitious and the real, constructing a dramatic world where challenging emotions can be experienced in a safer environment. Second, distance as an *aesthetic principle* is key to becoming aware of the dramatic context and having the means to articulate drama traditions. Third, distance and its purposeful manipulation can be intended as a *poetic device* (Eriksson 2011). Distancing for protection, as Bolton (1984) notes, is a crucial aspect of drama teaching:

Because drama is such a powerful tool for helping people change, as teachers we need to be very sensitive to the emotional demands we make on our students. The notion of ‘protection’ is not necessarily concerned with protecting participants *from* emotion, for unless there is some kind of emotional engagement nothing can be learned, but rather to protect them *into* emotion. This requires a careful grading of structures toward an effective equilibrium so that self-esteem, personal dignity, personal defences and group security are never over-challenged. (1984: 128)

The drama educator needs to be aware of protection issues, so that the participants can safely experience and explore emotions. Distancing strategies in the drama may require the facilitator to introduce roles and situations that are not threatening for the participants, and use the elements of time and space to distance the participants from a situation.

In L2/AL process drama in particular, there is also a degree of distancing intrinsic to the form, as the participants experience the drama in a non-native language, and have an ongoing, underlying concern for coping with new language items and their processing. Given these complexities of experience, how can different language learners respond to the dual affect of drama? And what are the implications for their language learning, especially when emotions in the two contexts contradict each other? In this paper, we address these questions with reference to research conducted with language students at university.

3 The Project: Italy through the Theatre and Cinema

We worked with fourteen undergraduate students enrolled in 'Italy through the Theatre and Cinema', a third year course in the Italian Studies program at an Australian university. The first author designed and facilitated eight 1.5-hour process drama sessions as an integral part of the 13-week course. After each session, the student-participants completed an open-ended questionnaire, in English, with questions about their experience as a language learner and an artist. At the end of semester, seven students participated in individual, semi-structured follow-up interviews aimed at drawing out their lived experiences in the drama. We used NVIVO 9.1 qualitative software for coding, cross-referencing and analysing the data collected.

The course was structured in two blocks, concerned with cinema and theatre respectively. An introductory process drama workshop was held early in the first block, involving basic drama strategies, with scenes from the first set film – Giuseppe De Santis's (1949) neorealist masterpiece *Riso amaro* ('Bitter Rice') – as pre-text. In line with the tenet that adult learners need to understand the purpose behind what they are doing (Schutz 1970), participants were also provided readings on existing research into L2/AL process drama.

Following this introduction, we used the second set film — Marco Tullio Giordana's (2000) *I cento passi* ('One Hundred Steps') – as the basis for the first three weekly process dramas. The scenes selected as pre-texts were replayed in the drama workshops and explored through a variety of dramatic strategies. The set text for the theatre block was the 2008 play *Sotto paga! Non si paga!* ('Low Pay? Don't Pay!') by Dario Fo and Franca Rame.¹ Excerpts were selected as pre-texts for four process drama workshops, at which they were read aloud by the teacher and again explored using various strategies. Students' performance skills and involvement in the dramas were not part of the course assessment.

The main themes explored through the film and the play related to, respectively: the Mafia, with its cultural connotations as the family-bound code of *omertà* (silence); and the collective social identity of the *lavoratore precario* (temporary worker) in contemporary Italy. Most importantly, what was

¹ This is an updated version of Fo's 1974 play *Non si paga! Non si paga!* ('Can't Pay? Won't Pay!')

explored in the process drama was not the texts themselves, but possibilities *beyond* the texts, hinted at by the authors, which required the participants to co-construct and experience a dramatic world.

4 The Context of the Setting and the Students' Roles

O'Toole (1992: 30) underlines the significance of the "context of the setting" in drama in education, where "the whole fictional context needs to be negotiated taking [the] context of the setting into account ... [and] the interaction ... between the fictional context and the real context ... is always present." The participants have roles in the real context – rights and obligations in the social unit that is the class group – as well as in the fictional context. Each person's behaviour in their role in either context depends on the tasks they are set, the constraints imposed and their personal characteristics including their capabilities. He noted that personality, cultural and relationship factors from the *real* context may interfere in the *dramatic* context.

In our case, of process drama in an adult Italian language course, it is important to appreciate some specific features of the context of the setting, because they imply ways in which the management of the dual affect might be either enhanced or hindered, and the need to protect the participants *into* emotion might therefore assume particular significance. Students' personal dignity and self-esteem can be threatened at any time in a language course, especially in a university environment, because of the gap between what their critical and creative selves might wish to communicate and the extent to which their command of the target language permits that to be achieved. In this context, a feeling of success in process drama has the potential to be very rewarding, with the distancing perceived not just in terms of 'we're making this happen' but 'we're making this happen *in the language we're learning*'. However, there is also the potential for any anxiety to crystallise into: 'Do I understand and speak the language well enough to contribute to making this happen?'

The roles in the real context of the Italian class for the participants in this project reflected their diversity as individuals. Australian English was the first language for all of them except José, a Spanish-speaker from South America. While most were aged 19-22, their ages ranged up to around 50. They entered the course with different proficiency levels and cultural knowledge, as well as a range of language learning styles, personalities and motives for learning Italian. They also brought different reading and viewing habits and expectations regarding the enjoyment of fiction in films and literary texts. Finally, while two had enjoyed many years of drama at school (Grace and Marcel), most had no such experience, and one even had a vivid memory of being branded as 'not suitable for drama' in her first year of secondary school (Jess).

At the same time, the students entered the course – like any other – as a collective undertaking. As it is an advanced course, the students were experienced language learners: they knew that they and their classmates would need to feel comfortable and protected in the language class, and would

manifest different learning styles and behaviours. From our observation in class, and from their interview comments, it was clear that many students in this cohort exhibited marked attention to the class atmosphere and a sense of responsibility for the effectiveness of activities, which involved appreciation for the teacher's need of support as well as that of the fellow students. This sense of responsibility was probably partly attributable to the fact that many of them already knew each other's Italian-class personas and behaviours, having already been in the same courses over several semesters and built relationships of trust among themselves. This meant, for instance, recognising their own and each other's timidity or extrovertedness, openness to being publicly corrected or not, and primary concern with fluency or accuracy. One participant (Sasha) saw herself, for example, as being the one always prepared to speak up in class, despite her grammatical or pronunciation errors, in order to "avoid an embarrassing silence." Another (Marcel) saw himself as prone to talking too much and needing to monitor his own behaviour to leave space for the others.

5 The Participants' Overall Responses to the Process Drama Experience

In this setting, what were our participants' overall responses to the process drama experience? In the following discussion of their positive and negative experiences and their responses to the teacher-in-role (TiR) strategy and working in and out of role, we do not claim to provide an exhaustive account, but to illustrate the range of reactions.

Each interviewee conveyed some understanding of having entered a fictional context and experienced empathy for a character. For example, Anna used the expression "getting into what the character would have been feeling", while José emphasised "I was trying to think as the character, talk as the character." Sasha referred to "*being* somebody totally different" [our emphasis], and her comments on one character's frustration at a certain point suggested she had shared his worldview for a time. She certainly felt she had stepped into characters' shoes, although – as discussed below – these were sometimes "uncomfortable shoes."

The students appreciated that being in role was not limited to improvised, spoken interaction or 'acting out', but could take various forms. Indeed, several remarked on the empathy they felt with characters while engaged in solitary, written activities. For example, Marcel found that writing a letter in role as the brother of the hero of *I cento passi* allowed him insight into the suffering of a character he had previously disliked.

Interestingly, the participants expressed contrasting reactions to the teacher being in role. For Grace, the TiR strategy was particularly engaging; discussing an activity with the teacher in role as a primary school teacher, she said:

"Because you separated the not-TiR activities very well from the TiR activities, so there was definitely this stepping into this ...kind of

environment. . . and because of how you were dressed, how you moved, how you spoke, . . . yeah, I immediately felt like a child.”

Jess too found that the teacher, by going into role, helped her get involved in ‘making it happen’:

“I . . . maybe would have felt shy, you know, going in and. . . but you know having seen you perform like this with emotion. . . I think we felt more comfortable, to try it... Rather than [you] just saying ‘go and do this’. I think it. . . it sort of engenders more commitment to the activity, because the teacher’s also doing it.”

By contrast, for Sasha, the teacher going into role was sometimes disconcerting. In this quotation from her interview she seems to be describing a situation in which the real context encroached too far into the fictional and she felt she was failing to ‘make it happen’ despite working hard:

“It was more serious when [the teacher] was involved in it because of that expectation – I should know how to react but I don’t. And so again, there was another blockage. There’s added pressure to deliver. . . ”

The activities in which nobody was in role (neither students nor teacher) also appealed strongly to several participants. These included reflection activities, and those in which as a group they explored a character from a third-person perspective. It was striking that two interviewees commented on the activity of unpacking the views of two police-officer characters in *Sotto paga* as enlightening them on the meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right’ in politics in a way that no amount of academic reading and Italian studies courses had done before!

The interviewees gave diverse accounts of what they had gained from their experience of process drama. For José it was beneficial for development of both his language proficiency and intercultural knowledge; he found that having to draw on his language skills on the spot allowed him to really use and extend his Italian. He also noted that, through the drama, he was able to understand some sociocultural issues, to “relate to them” even though he had never been to Italy. For Grace, it was particularly beneficial for vocabulary development:

“it gave students. . . different ways to. . . express. . . it meant you could cover a lot of vocabulary and a lot of new contexts. . . like, I will never be a child in a Sicilian school, and will never be the wife of a factory worker. . . so it was interesting to learn vocabulary in those contexts.”

Grace also stressed the value to her of the drama activities increasing the opportunities (with respect to normal class) for learning from what other students said.

However, Sasha said she felt “blocked” in her use of language when she was uncomfortable in role, and that therefore it did not advance her language skills but only her cultural development. Anna too recalled fear in certain moments that she might not find the words to play a role. For Anna, however, a significant

benefit was a new strategy she identified for her own learning – that in the future she would put herself in role sometimes when reading an Italian novel or watching a film.

Although feeling demoralised in terms of language development, Sasha attributed to the process drama a positive effect on the sense of class community:

“it made us connect on a different level. . . we talked more on the bus afterwards. . . Collective. . . you’re all in it together.” Grace suggested this kind of benefit too, saying it was “a really fun way to engage with people I’d known for a while, I had been in class with for probably two years.”

The students tended to link their impressions of process drama to their individual learning styles. Clearly the multi-medial and multi-modal nature of process drama had allowed many of our participants to notice some tool(s) or type(s) of activity that particularly worked for them. For example, Marcel liked “doing vocal things” and exploring sounds, and related this to his interest in certain areas of linguistics. Elizabeth described herself as a visual learner, for whom seeing and hearing words worked well during certain activities. Jess and Anna both reported appreciating the written activities because they could take their time – both liking to have that kind of buffer for their production in Italian. José saw improvising speech as beneficial to him because he realised it made him stretch his capabilities.

6 Individual Participants’ Experiences of the Dual Affect

We now look more closely at four very different students’ experiences of the drama, analysing their responses in relation to the management of dual affect.

6.1 Sasha

Of the interviewed students, Sasha was the one we considered to be most in difficulty in negotiating the interaction between the real and the fictional contexts. Some of her comments conveyed unease – especially her description of being in role as sometimes like “wearing uncomfortable shoes” (occurring twice in the interview) – and a sense of not being engaged and not able to use her Italian. The crucial negative experiences were in playing roles that she did not like, especially that of a worker who betrayed her colleague Margherita – a character from *Sotto paga* — to their boss. In this process drama, all students were enrolled as workers at the call centre where Margherita had a temporary job. The educational goal was to help them connect to the notion of *lavoratore precario* (temporary worker) as a social identity in Italy, a key theme in the play. The teacher was in role as the boss, who found out that Margherita had been absent from work (linking to the plot of the play). Each student had to decide whether to denounce Margherita or not, on the basis of the role card she/he was issued, which included *attitudes towards Margherita*. Sasha felt obliged to denounce her because, according to her role card, they had had a falling out. Of

this experience, she commented: “I was uncomfortable with playing this person because... I wouldn’t react that way.” She experienced “a blockage” as she could not identify with her hostile role.

In seeking an explanation of Sasha’s discomfort, we found her comments on the difference between her experience of process drama and of ‘role-plays’ in a past course illuminating: it was clear she had not before been required to play a role. She reported a precise memory of a ‘role-play’ in which she was a traffic warden interacting with a driver over a parking infringement. As Sasha put it, she “played herself as a traffic cop”, meaning that she behaved as Sasha would if so employed, rather than as a ‘mean’ traffic cop. As she had not done drama at school or elsewhere in life either, it seemed her experience of assuming roles had been limited to this kind; she had not experienced what it felt like to play someone who thought and behaved differently from herself, and to suffer the negative reactions of others to that role. She remarked:

“One of the things that I didn’t like was trying to go: No! That’s the personality I’m playing; that’s not my reaction to this situation; so don’t judge my personality on that!”

The reason for her discomfort thus seemed to be that she was not able to acknowledge the dual affect of dramatic play, or did not make the necessary assumption of distancing, so she was not confident that her classmates and the teacher would distinguish between Sasha in role as the treacherous colleague (drama context) and Sasha as member of the class (real context). This was particularly significant, we think, because the betraying role contrasted sharply with her (and indeed our) view of her typical role in the real context of language classes. In normal classes she usually seemed very much at home: lively, supportive – of the teachers as well as fellow students – and participatory. She saw herself as shouldering part of the responsibility for the success of class activities, someone who spoke up despite having to struggle to express herself in Italian.

Ironically, precisely when Sasha was feeling uncomfortable in the role that clashed with her view of herself, the teacher found Sasha to be making the most significant and useful contribution to the call-centre drama, and therefore the language class. In role as the character who betrayed Margherita, Sasha was doing exactly what the drama needed, i.e. generating dramatic tension to provoke the other participants into action; she was thus behaving consistently with her typical role in the real context.

By contrast, Sasha remembered a positive experience in role as the uncle of the hero of *I cento passi*, when, as she said, she drew on her affection for José, who played the nephew, Peppino, as a boy. In this case she evidently liked the role and was made comfortable by the match between her relationship with the classmate and the uncle’s with Peppino. However, recalling that episode, she concluded: “I guess it wasn’t really process drama because I was... playing myself.” This statement matches her understanding, expressed elsewhere in the interview, of playing a role as a matter of “replicat[ing] as best as [she] can.”

But such a view does not align with drama education philosophy. Process drama is not about 'replicating a character as best one can'; it is about evoking and experiencing authentic emotions, albeit in a dramatic context. As Bolton (1984) underlines, *second* order emotions (in the drama) are no less real than *first* order emotions (in the actual context); they are just of a different quality.

What Sasha recalled as the most enjoyable moment in the process drama program was the making of a freeze frame of the policeman's dream (one of the characters from *Sotto paga*). She enjoyed "having an idea" and was pleased with her contribution to her group's work. She was therefore on familiar ground, in terms of taking responsibility for the class functioning well. Notably, the dream activity was a tableau, and the participants were *out of role*. Being out of role, Sasha had protection and distancing, while at the same time creating a scenario and using her imagination, which she reportedly enjoyed. In this tableau, they worked off the play to create the dream of an autocratic, right-wing policeman, who had been fooled by the left-wing, witty, female protagonist. Sasha and her group were able to create a scenario that was a symbolic interpretation of the characters' political and personal traits, interwoven with the plot of the play. The sequence was played out several times, and functioned as a platform for class discussion and analysis. In recalling the dream sequence, Sasha was very eloquent; she spoke from the character's point of view, indicating a degree of imaginative projection (Bundy 2005), a quality of aesthetic engagement. Thus, during that episode, she was engaged in the drama, cognitively, and perhaps to some degree emotionally, but not in role.

Despite this positive experience, Sasha's other comments suggested that, overall, she was left with some frustration and a perception of herself as inadequate in process drama ("You could only be creative within the boundaries you were set"), attributed to some extent to perceived insufficient Italian proficiency ("If I can't get it out in a safe environment"), and accompanied by a certain defensiveness. We see this as directly linked to her inability to manage the dual affect, to identify and manipulate what Bateson (1976) called "the double paradox of play."

6.2 Marcel

Two participants had had extensive experience in drama beforehand, and their perceptions of the process drama certainly contrasted with Sasha's. One of these, Marcel, is particularly interesting to compare with Sasha, because he also commented (several times) on playing a role that he did not like, but as an example of a rewarding experience. The pre-text of the process drama concerned was a famous scene from *I cento passi*, when the hero Peppino openly shouts in the street to his brother, Giovanni: "Only 100 steps separate us from them!" – referring to the local Mafia boss, and breaking socially accepted taboos, i.e. the code of silence. The purpose of the workshop was to help the participants experience what mafia power dynamics are like for the locals, rather than subscribing to a stereotypical view offered by mainstream media.

The participants watched the scene, focusing on Giovanni's reaction to his rebel brother shouting those 'unspeakable' words (which eventually cost Peppino his life), noting Giovanni's body language and emotions. Subsequently, they had to first imagine and vocalise Giovanni's thoughts in a chorus, and then individually write a letter from him to Peppino. They were asked to read their letters aloud, with the teacher reciting extracts from Peppino's 'unspeakable words' in between, and a still frame of the two brothers projected on the wall behind them.

Within this dramatic context, it seemed that Marcel embraced the opportunity to explore Giovanni, even though he did not like this character: "I didn't like [Giovanni], really, when I watched the film; and then you had to like him – because you had to be him! . . . It was really useful. It was really different." When asked if Giovanni could be excused for not acting against the Mafia, he replied: "Oh no, [*convinced*] No way! [*Laughs!*] No way! I don't think he's innocent at all. I think... he knows what's going on, so he can't be innocent." Interestingly, however, Marcel added that he did not write the letter with this attitude, because "Giovanni would not have been thinking this. He would have been thinking that he was 'right.'" Thus, Marcel was clearly able to differentiate between what Bolton called his *first* order emotions (real context) and the *second* order emotions (drama context).

Moreover, Marcel appreciated hearing the others' letters and other points of view. Later in the interview, he referred to that episode again, explaining that, having done theatre and considered that we play different roles in life, he was interested in hearing about different students' interpretations of Giovanni. Evidently, Marcel relished the dramatic context for the opportunities it provided him to explore the texts and use and extend his Italian while at the same time getting a more in-depth understanding of the characters' motives.

We see the differences between Marcel's and Sasha's handling of the dual affect as probably largely attributable to Marcel's prior experience: he had studied drama for eight years at school and university, and evidently moved with ease between the fictional context and the real context, taking for granted the aesthetic distance between the roles he played and himself. But it is also likely that he had less invested in his role in the real context than Sasha: he had not been part of the same cohort in previous semesters, and had entered the group with a (well-founded) high level of confidence in his linguistic and intellectual ability. He described himself as someone who contributed too much in class ("I never shut up in that class anyway").

6.3 Grace

The other participant with extensive prior experience in drama, Grace, also appeared to be comfortable moving between the real and fictional contexts. She described herself as a 'drama kid' at secondary school; at university, she was enrolled in an education degree and had just finished a process drama course, although not in a language-teaching context. Grace's case is interesting to

consider further because she had a similar level of Italian proficiency to Sasha's and similar lack of confidence in her proficiency, but she was not an extrovert like Sasha and Marcel, and had much less propensity to speak in class than either of them. Her explanation in interview of why she usually did not speak much in class was that she thought more slowly than other students, so that by the time she worked out what to say the conversation had moved on. She added that she did not want to speak if that meant slowing the class down and "inconveniencing others"; she knew "there were lesson plans to be followed." These comments reveal a sense of responsibility to the class and to the teacher, but manifested differently from Sasha's.

Unlike Sasha, Grace observed that going into role made it easier for her to speak than she usually found in class. And this was despite some concern she felt about her language proficiency, fearing she might not be able to find words for what she wanted to say when in role. Grace also found it very easy to switch to the make believe, as soon as the TiR's 'costume' went on, for example, or the characters took up position:

"That arrangement of being on the ground, and being . . . a closer bunch, together. . . and because we were playing children as well, I immediately felt. . . uh! you know, more playful. . . yeah. . . which made me more relaxed."

Grace seemed to take for granted that nobody would confuse her with the roles she played. It evidently had not occurred to her that she might feel uncomfortable in role, or in relating to the TiR, in the class setting. When asked if she had felt uncomfortable when the TiR, as an authoritarian Italian primary school teacher, 1950s style, plunged them into a very rigid classroom environment, Grace's voice expressed surprise, as she said "No, I mean, 'cause. . . it was drama. . . it wasn't. . . I know you're not like that as a teacher and, I mean, I'm not a child, so. . . yeah, it was part of the. . . game." Nor did it occur to her to feel embarrassed about being in role as a child; when asked how it felt to be speaking like a child to her classmates — other adults in the real context — she answered only in terms of how it fitted into the fictional context, with no reference to what anyone would think of her in the real context.

What was particularly noticeable about Grace's way of describing the process drama was the kind of distinction she made between drama workshops and 'normal' class:

"I definitely separated in my head the two sections" [and] "I wasn't thinking as critically in the process drama sections. . . There were elements of being critical, 'cause you had to consider characters but um I think. . . I felt more like it was. . . not a switch off but. . . just more playful. . . rather than analysing and everything like that."

For the drama workshops she was leaving her critical brain behind and becoming playful, and evidently expecting others to do so too, and to interpret her behaviour as that of Grace-in-role rather than Grace-the-intelligent-and-critically-thinking student. And Grace's perception that the teacher going into

role enhanced the experience – contrasting with Sasha’s uncertainty about TiR episodes – can be seen as consistent with this ease of distancing.

6.4 Jess

Jess came to the process drama, like Sasha, with no prior experience of drama, yet we see her as having developed appreciation for drama-based pedagogy, as the semester progressed, and as a consequence having changed her view of herself and her language learning style. Her starting point included a view of herself as not creative; in her own words, in situations where she thought she was supposed to be creative she would tell herself “My brain doesn’t work like that; I can’t do it.” This was associated with the experience of being labelled ‘a sport kid’ rather than ‘a drama kid’ at the start of secondary school, after which she had assumed drama would never be part of her life.

In the first process drama workshop she felt she had *not* done “a good job”; she reported thinking she had written something “silly” in her role card, compared with the other students. Although she felt self-conscious at the time, she was glad they were required to share their work because it helped her understand “what [she] was supposed to do.” When specifically asked if her self-consciousness had persisted she said “no. . . like everything else, it shifted as the classes went on.” Indeed, on the questionnaire after week 7 she wrote “I never think I can do artistic things”, but in the interview she explained how her view shifted: “I never thought that was my thing. . . [but] We had to do sculpture and. . . I always felt satisfied that we’d done. . . a good job.” So, while drama was not an approach that she initially embraced or expected to learn from, she discovered by experience that she did learn from it and developed trust in the approach:

“You realise after every workshop that . . . I gain so much in terms of knowledge, like what I’ve talked about. . . you realise oh this activity is really worthwhile if you just apply yourself. . . at the end it makes sense.”

We see Jess as having adapted to the process drama in a fairly natural way, and acquired confidence in moving between the fictional context and the real context. She evidently *did* enter the dramatic context, and perceive herself to be inside a character when in role – “It kind of clicked, oh, that’s how the character would have felt” and “you could feel what it was like. . . what it might be like to be him!” Indeed, she suggested that as a result of the experiential drama she was able to feel more empathy for people in certain situations, such as the temporary workers depicted in *Sotto paga*, than she previously had. Yet she appeared comfortable that any character she explored was her creation, which nobody would confuse with herself.

It is possible that going into role was less challenging for Jess than for Sasha because she was less at risk of having her identity or role in class undermined in the drama. Jess did not know most of the cohort well before the course started, having not shared courses with many of them, and she did not present herself as usually taking responsibility for class dynamics, but included herself

among those she criticised for being passive when circumstances permitted. Her comment on the process drama that “I felt. . . like were all in it, we were all in it together, everyone was enjoying themselves” suggested that her sense of being at one with the group was better than she usually expected to feel in class. This contrasts with Sasha’s feeling that she could not be her usual self in the class group.

Indeed, it would seem that Jess’s role in the real context was not only protected, but *changed* positively by the process drama experience. She came to see herself as someone who could be artistic, and she described herself as “[feeling] open, while I usually feel closed up” in the questionnaire after class in week 12. Furthermore, she recognised that she had learned in new ways through drama, that she would not have imagined herself doing beforehand. When asked in interview why, in the questionnaire after class in week 7, her response to the question “What did you learn today?” included the word ‘doing’ underlined, she recalled an activity in which the students acted out emotions (jealous, alone, etc.) and observed that “[because of] physically doing them, I feel like I’m never gonna forget. . . the words and what they mean.” She stressed she had never done anything like that before. She evidently felt better able to contribute to class activity, and thus to live up to what she saw as an increased responsibility to do so that process drama entailed (“you felt. . . more responsibility to do the task well”). So we see her as learning something new about herself, and extending her conception of her own learning style, in a way that meant her role in the real context of the class group also changed.

7 Drama as Threat or Opportunity? Managing the Dual Affect

What lessons can we learn from these different experiences of the dual affect, and in particular Sasha’s discomfort leading to disengagement? O’Toole (1992: 26) observes: “the act of entering a fictional context may be said to be entering a play-frame. Inside this frame the perspectives and apparent reality will be different from outside. It is by agreement ‘not real’... It provides *some* protection from external consequences for those who step inside it.” In our case, it appears that Sasha did not perceive sufficient protection and was troubled by what she saw as ongoing “external consequences” for the image others had of her as a person, as a fellow classmate and in her teacher-student relationships. We propose that the cause was her insufficient preparation for distinguishing between the real context and the fictional context compounded by the specific way that some of her roles in the fictional context were in conflict with her strongly perceived role in the real context, characterised by empathy and sense of responsibility towards both fellow students and teachers. This is a valuable lesson for us, given that it concerns an extroverted student who is always prepared to speak up in class and might have been expected to embrace process drama.

This points to ways we can modify the approach to be taken in future. In addition to the current introduction to process drama as pedagogy, we see the

need to provide an introduction to managing the dual affect. In order to help students *who are inexperienced in drama* make meaning of, and manage, the dual affect, we now see it as important to introduce the concept explicitly before they participate in the drama, and also to allow time at the end of a drama for them to reflect, not only on the language and culture learning, but on their experiences of the dual affect. During such a reflection session it may be productive to allow individual students to explain any discomfort, and to acknowledge and explore that as a group. It may also help to do this *during* a drama at times, stopping the improvisation when necessary to ensure they do not lose sight of the fact that they are identifying with “what they *know* to be a fiction.”

The benefits of drama were particularly noticeable in this case in bringing out a student like Grace who normally speaks very little in class, and in the effects on Jess, who arguably embodies Vygotsky’s image of a player becoming “a head taller than herself” once she had learnt to value the experience of drama. Paraphrasing Vygotsky, not only did they cry as patients but revel as players, but their revelling held particular significance – for them and for us – in the challenging context of a language course for adults. Each of our participants related their experience of the process drama to aspects of the specific setting, and the recurrence of references to the idea of responsibility in class was notable. So Sasha’s experience of drama as “wearing uncomfortable shoes” in this setting brought home to us the importance of training the students in the dual affect, to ensure the ‘contract’ is properly established before entering in role and re-established as necessary during and after a drama.

Sasha’s response also led us to conclude that, in order to ensure protection, when using role cards in process drama, participants are best invited to create their own attitudes towards a given situation. Although role cards are efficient to scaffold language structures, if the attitude they carry locks a participant into a response then it may cause defensiveness, or disengagement.

A teacher tackling the introduction of drama into an adult language course has to seek to understand how each student is prepared for coping with the dual affect (as well as with uncertainty that is always potentially present in a situation of change), and engage the student from that starting-point, but without the benefit of individual interviews such as we have been able to conduct here. And ongoing reflection in class on the meta-processes of learning and identity may be necessary. This is a tall order, and it must be accepted that drama-based pedagogy does not necessarily work with every adult learner, but only with those who agree to work with the medium and are willing to take a risk.

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