

THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA IN SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

An intercultural perspective

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Introduction

Some have argued that drama is a form of intercultural education, and I agree. However, just like travel, drama can challenge stereotypes or reinforce labels; dislodge or reinforce viewpoints. Questioning the multicultural values of our society is more relevant than ever. As drama educators, we have a responsibility to craft experiences that enable individuals to see through xenophobic and racist narratives that may be embedded around us. This chapter offers ideas for structuring drama experiences that challenge stereotypical clichés and encourage democratic citizenship, adopting a multicultural vision of society. While the argument presented is within the domain of drama and second language (L2) education, the educational offerings below can be adapted for cohorts whose primary purpose is not second language learning. This may include drama work with student teachers, international students, students of translation or interpreting, individuals seeking asylum, and, crucially, any group concerned with intercultural literacy.

This discussion focuses on drama as an art form in intercultural education and explores how the elements of drama can be manipulated to create intercultural aesthetic engagement. The chapter has three parts. In Part 1, which introduces theoretical underpinnings, I situate drama in L2 education, review frameworks for intercultural literacy, and make a case for drama as intercultural education. These premises are useful for the discussion in Part 2, where I consider the elements of drama through a praxial analysis informed by a semiotic approach. In Part 3, I join the dots to discuss the intercultural dimension of the elements, suggesting how intercultural dramatic tension may be harnessed to explore concepts that are untranslatable across languages. I delineate the intercultural profile of the elements of drama and close with a definition of intercultural aesthetic engagement.

Part 1: theoretical underpinnings

Drama in second language education

The synergy between drama and second language learning has been known for centuries. In the context of Drama in Education, as intended in the present volume, a turning point for

research in the field was Shin Mei Kao's (1994) doctoral study on process drama for second language acquisition. Here, 'process drama' refers to a dramatic form in the Drama in Education tradition, with the teacher and the participants working in and out of role (O'Neill, 1995). Kao's work pointed to a connection between learners' motivation to speak in a second language and the use of process drama, particularly the strategy of teacher in role. Kao and O'Neill's (1998) seminal text *Words into Worlds* crafted these findings into an argument that captured the imagination of many, including myself, sparking a wealth of research in the field.

Latest studies in L2/process drama document the effects of drama on the oral proficiency of learners in various language teaching contexts: English in Japan (Nfor, 2020); German with adult refugees in Germany (Best, Guhleemann, & Guitart, 2020); English with undergraduates in France (Privas-Bréauté, 2019); French in an elementary school in British Columbia (Göksel, 2019); Italian in Ireland (Piazzoli & Kubiak, 2019); English with adults in Switzerland (Scally, 2019); English with secondary students in Italy (Bora, 2019); Chinese with L2 students in China (Corderi Novoa, 2019). This list may seem long, yet it hasn't even captured a quarter of the studies published in the last two years.¹ Clearly, researchers recognise that drama can effectively support second language acquisition.

In the last decade, this field has been referred to as 'performative language teaching' (Schewe, 2013). Areas investigated include the impact of performative language teaching on the fluency and accuracy of learners, their ability in grammar, listening, reading comprehension, writing essays and poetry, public speaking, and social interaction, as well as their motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem, multimodal literacy, and intercultural awareness. While investigation in each of these subject areas could unearth a plethora of themes and sub-themes, this chapter steers towards drama and the intercultural domain.

Intercultural literacy

Learning another language opens a window into other ways of life. However, once we peek through, what we see depends on our ability to decode cultural norms different from our own. Faced with otherness, a spectrum of responses may present upon us – from feeling threatened, scared, confused and overwhelmed, to feeling indifferent, curious, intrigued, elated, at home, or indeed reborn in the new culture. As the huge variety of travel writing literature confirms, no two travellers, from the first cultural anthropologists to the most contemporary travel bloggers, have had the same impression of the same place. In other words, the encounter with the other is a phenomenological experience. As Ferdinando Pessoa put it: 'Travel is the traveller. What we see isn't what we see but what we are' (1991/2010, p. 75).

Ever since the groundbreaking concept of culture shock was identified (Oberg, 1960), we have grappled to conceptualise the developmental process of coming to terms with different cultures. The extent to which we are able to decode different cultural norms and function across cultural contexts relates to our level of intercultural literacy. In the mid-1950s, a number of 'cultural adjustment' frameworks emerged – from the three-stage U-curve culture shock model (Lysgaard, 1955), to the five-stage W-curve reverse culture shock model (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). A significant turning point occurred in the 1970s, a period of radical change, when the notion 'interculturalism' emerged (Pavis, 2010). The early cultural adjustment models had framed culture shock as a malady, an illness to overcome (Heyward, 2002). By the 1980s, new models no longer depicted culture shock in a negative light, instead, reframing it as a learning experience. This conceptual shift generated a flourish of intercultural literacy models. To name just three, Christensen (1989) advanced a five-stage developmental model of cross-cultural awareness; Bennet (1993) proposed a

six-stage developmental framework for intercultural sensitivity, from denial to integration; Heyward (2002) charted intercultural literacy as a progression in levels from monocultural (unconsciously incompetent) to intercultural (unconsciously competent). Common to these frameworks is the notion of a transition from ethnocentrism towards intercultural awareness – a generative process that begins by questioning what we take for granted. It is this active process of inquiry that can trigger the transition from monocultural to intercultural, as charted in the various frameworks described above.

Yang (2020) recently revisited the notion of intercultural literacy. He presents a model that features four components: (1) intercultural verbal communication competence; (2) intercultural attitudes; (3) intercultural non-verbal communication competence; and (4) intercultural awareness (p. 25). Within the fourth component (awareness) Yang recognises three levels, the third considering ‘empathy to see culture from an ethical perspective’ (p. 26). I agree with Yang, insofar as empathy and adopting an ethical perspective are crucial to the development of intercultural literacy. However, how can we, as educators, cross the bridge between theory and practice?

Yang attempts to cross that bridge by sharing three teaching tips. Tip 1 features authentic reading and discussion; Tip 2 describes a basic role-play exploring intercultural differences in dress codes in Australian and Japanese classrooms; Tip 3 suggests sharing YouTube clips to discuss various cultural practices. While these strategies may be useful for generating interest, I believe they only scratch the surface. What I see as fundamentally missing from these frameworks is placing an emphasis on imagination, creativity, and the arts as activators of the process of intercultural engagement at the heart of intercultural literacy. In this chapter, I argue that an effective way to support intercultural engagement is to harness imagination through the arts, and particularly through drama.

Drama as intercultural education

Intercultural education and drama share several features, as both require the ability to decentre from our perspective. In discussing intercultural engagement, Byram (1997) suggests that having an intercultural attitude requires a dual operation: (1) readiness to suspend disbelief about the cultural meanings of others, and (2) willingness to suspend belief about our own cultural meanings. Arguably, the willing suspension of disbelief, first expressed by Coleridge (1817/1965), is the cornerstone of dramatic form. It is through this willing suspension of disbelief that we experience otherness, and, in so doing, understand ourselves better.

As Fleming (1998) suggests, drama can be considered as a form of intercultural education. He outlines best practice examples through which participants were able to distance themselves from their own cultures and see themselves as ‘other’. Similarly, Heathcote and Bolton (1998) make a strong claim for the value of drama in the development of intercultural awareness. They argue that, through drama, we are always distancing, or decentring, from our own culture; indeed, ‘*that is what drama is*’ (p. 160, original emphasis). Distancing, as Eriksson (2007) illustrates, is a mechanism that regulates the intensity of emotions by filtering them between the fictitious and the real. As I have written elsewhere, a degree of aesthetic distancing is always present when learners participate in a language or culture other than their own; the conscious manipulation of aesthetic distance regulates intercultural engagement (see Piazzoli, 2010a, p. 143). As Fleming notes, when role-play is attempted with little understanding of dramatic form and distancing, it often remains at surface level. Fleming urges educators to challenge ‘a very narrow conception of drama as “kitchen sink” naturalism’ (1998, p. 75). ‘Kitchen sink approaches’ are those that overlook the manipulation of distance

and run the risk of reinforcing clichés: an example may be teacher’s Tip 2, as featured in Yang (2020). Instead, drama can afford sophisticated ways to explore intercultural engagement (Crutchfield & Schewe, 2017; Donelan, 2010; Greenwood, 2015; Hradsky, 2017).

A new angle I want to add to this conversation is harnessing drama to explore culturally specific concepts that are difficult to translate. Each language has some terms that are impossible to translate literally. From Malinowski’s (1935/2001) analysis of the translation of untranslatable words onwards, many have documented culturally specific terms that do not have a direct translation. Stored in those words is a wealth of insights into the cultural traits of those who use that language. Take the Japanese term *wabi sabi*, 侘寂 (the aesthetic notion of beautiful imperfection); the Chinese word *yuānfēn*, 缘分 (understanding that fate or destiny serendipitously brings together people, events, or things); the Italian *cazzimma* (street-savvy know-how of bending the rules with a wicked sense of shrewdness to achieve a goal); the Gaelic *aduantas* (unease or anxiety caused by being somewhere new, or by being surrounded by people you don’t know);² and the Fijian concept of *talanoa* (also used in New Zealand and across the Pacific to refer to inclusive, participatory, generative dialogue through storytelling). These words, and hundreds of others, cannot be translated directly; only sometimes can they be grasped at a conceptual level. Yet, as is widely recognised, the arts enable us to express what cannot be easily articulated, and drama can embody emotion into action.

In Part 3, I suggest ways for embodying these untranslatable concepts through intercultural dramatic tension. To get there, however, I take a praxial approach to knowledge – Part 2 of this chapter.

Part 2: the Praxis

Foundations: the elements of drama

Every art form is based on a combination of elements. In theatre and drama, the elements intrinsic to the form have been identified throughout history, from Aristotle’s *Poetics* (330 BCE/2013) onwards. These have been used to generate various classifications,³ each of them arbitrary and serving to aid comprehension of an abstract, complex construct (such as an art form). In the following analysis, I adopt Haseman and O’Toole’s (2017) classification of the elements of drama. This seminal classification first appeared in a diagram published in 1987 in *Dramawise*, a dynamic guide to drama education. This classification was theorised by O’Toole in *The Process of Drama* (1992), and later became the cornerstone for national curricular design in Australia and England. Haseman and O’Toole (2017) revised the diagram in their successor edition, *Dramawise Reimagined*. As they suggest, the dramatic elements encompass situation, characters, and relationships, which form the human context. They are driven by dramatic tension, shaped by focus, and manifested in time and space. These are organised into narrative and expressed in language and movement to create mood and symbols, which together create dramatic meaning. When performed to an audience, all this becomes theatre.

For a theoretical elucidation, readers may refer to the seminal writing of O’Toole (1992) in *The Process of Drama*, where he brilliantly theorises each element through its own chapter. For pedagogical applications, readers can consult Haseman and O’Toole’s 2017 volume, in which the authors explain each element through drama activities and resources. In the section below, I provide an overview of these elements through examples of how they can be evoked in practice. I propose taking a semiotic approach, stemming from the analysis of three sketches.

A semiotic approach

The three sketches below are drawings from a moving sequence performed by a group of teacher-artists participating in a process drama workshop I facilitated within the 2019 Drama/Language Summer School at The University of Grenoble.⁴ The tableau was created spontaneously and collaboratively by the participants.

Consider the sketch in Figure 40.1. It depicts a group of people congregated across a focal point. The people in the foreground are standing in parallel rows, separated from each other by a line of shoes. Some individuals are leaning forward while standing; others are kneeling on the floor. Participants on both sides are extending their hands across while directing their gaze downwards. In the right corner, two people are standing with hands covering their faces, denoting an emotional reaction. At the centre, one person is moving towards the focal point. The caption (*The Friend*) may point to the solitary figure – the only person standing on his own.

Figure 40.2 captures a wider perspective of the same sequence, a few moments beforehand. It reveals five more people involved in the scene: two pairs in the right corner, gazing at the congregation, and two solitary figures in the background – one of them facing away from the focal point. Here, a contrast emerges between the stillness of the solitary individuals and the dynamic poses of everyone else. The caption (*The Community*) may point to the relationship between the groups.

The sketch in Figure 40.3 reveals the focal point: one individual is being held by the others – all gazes seem to be pointed towards that person. The caption points to a keepsake.

What does that mean? And why would a participant, Roberto,⁵ three years after this moment, describe Figure 40.3 as ‘return to life’? The people depicted in the drawings are in role as a group of adults bathing a child in a river. The child is ill; bathing is part of a healing ritual (situation). The protagonists (the two solitary figures in Figure 40.2) are two 5-year-old children. They are surrounded by a group of adults, including their parents, extended family, and the elders (characters). The two children are best friends. The ill child’s parents are standing close-by. The village members watch from a distance (relationships). This ceremony is forbidden to children, but the child has defied the orders of the elders to



Figure 40.1 Bathing Ritual Tableau – *The Friend*. Sketch by Aisling McNally (reproduced with permission from the artist)



Figure 40.2 Bathing Ritual Tableau – The Community. Sketch by Aisling McNally (reproduced with permission from the artist)



Figure 40.3 Bathing Ritual Tableau – The Keepsake. Sketch by Aisling McNally (reproduced with permission from the artist)

be there. He understands his best friend may pass away, and he wants to bring him their favourite toy, a small taxi car, as a keepsake. Will the healing ritual be effective? Will the boy survive? (dramatic tension). The scene takes place on a sacred river; the shoes delineate the riverbanks (dramatic focus) in an imaginary Balkan village (place); at sunset, as the child is bathed, his friend arrives (time). The details of the story as I have recounted it (narrative) were co-created by the group as they responded to various steps: a photo of two children in a Roma camp, an improvisation with the teacher in role as the child, the performance of a poem (Figure 40.4) that mentions a river.

There was extensive verbal and non-verbal communication (language) among participants to organise their bodies in the space. The only text spoken during the tableau was: 'My friend, the taxi! I brought you the taxi!' wailed by the best friend, as he arrived at the scene. In the tableau, the dynamism is evident in the hands tending, the ill child being held, the child running (movement). The emotional current (mood) was one of solemnity and gravity associated with the healing ritual. The taxi toy (symbol) represents more than just an object; it is a symbol of

childhood (a favourite toy), a symbol of poverty (the toy was broken), a symbol of friendship (the toy as a keepsake). Each participant in that scene interpreted the piece according to their life experiences (dramatic meaning). For example, when asked to comment on that moment, Diana noted: 'Pain, compassion, empathy'. Reflection is crucial to the elaboration of dramatic meaning. A day later, Diana added: 'Yes, but also tenderness, unconditional love, peace'.

The tableau was not performed to an audience in a theatre; however, it was filmed and shown to the Summer School delegation during my keynote address on distancing and the elements of drama. In that sense, the delegation became the audience, and the scene assumed a theatrical value.

Now that I have anchored the elements in practice, I can proceed to document the complete drama structure. I use this term, drawing on O'Neill and Lambert (1982), to refer to the blueprint of a process drama.

Drama structure

Documenting process drama is like trying to catch a soap bubble: try to clasp it and it will burst. We can observe a soap bubble, watch it glide through the air, wonder, muse, delight at it. We know the experience will be momentary, and that's part of the deal. The bubble's fleeting life can leave an impression; it can change our mood. As long as it lasts, the bubble is there for our imagination to play with. Its beauty may give us joy. Yet, our own firsthand experience of the bubble is as fleeting as the life of the bubble itself. What would be the point of trying to replicate someone else's soap bubbles? Surely, we can watch someone blow a bubble, but we can never replicate that actual bubble. Once we blow our own bubbles, they will be unique. Their form will be determined by a number of elements: the intensity of our breath as we blow; the ratio of water, glycerine, and soap; the wand we use: its size, the material, and the depth of the radial ridges on the hole of the wand; the interior and exterior conditions at the time. These elements and how they combine will dictate how each soap bubble looks; whether the liquid membrane will pop or form a sphere; whether it will fly; which way it will go. Similarly, the elements of drama, and how they combine, dictate how each drama unfolds; whether and

Table 40.1 The Keepsake Drama Structure.

<i>Drama Strategy</i>	
Initiation Phase	Step 1. Warm up. Movement; Balkan music; breathwork.
	Step 2. Pre-text. Project a photograph (see Piazzoli, 2018, p. 71) of two children in a Roma camp. The first child stands thoughtfully.
	Step 3. Pre-text analysis. Describe, interpret, interrogate the photo.
Experiential Phase	Step 4. Poem. Perform the poem (Figure 40.4) divided in groups.
	Step 5. Teacher in Role. The child in the photo plays with his toy taxi.
	Step 6. Tableau. A group image of the child as he goes to the river.
	Step 7. Role Play. 20 years later. The child, now a man, is a proud taxi driver in a faraway land. Role play a scene where a tourist asks for a sightseeing tour around town – including an iconic river, which reminds the taxi driver of the river where his friend was once bathed.
Reflection Phase	Step 8. Debrief. Breathe; shake; stretch; laugh.
	Step 9. Reflection. Discuss relevant aspects of the drama.

how participants engage; the direction the drama takes. If the sketches above have captured a snapshot of a bubble, the drama structure in the below Table 40.1 is the wand used to blow it.

Every drama facilitator develops a particular approach to design. Mine is to facilitate first and draft the structure later; I often add an extra episode in hindsight. Documenting the drama in this way helps me to remain free in the improvisation. My intention in sharing this structure is to reflect on the intercultural elements rather than to prescribe a set pathway.

I first designed this drama in 2008 to explore intercultural awareness; I published it in 2018 to discuss the intercultural elements of drama. The version in Table 40.1 differs substantially from the 2008 drama structure: it privileges mood, symbol, and movement, an inclination influenced by my experience of *Butoh*⁶ and voicework in the last decade. This development traces my evolving understanding of the intercultural dimension of the elements of drama, a topic that never ceases to unsettle me.

Part 3: intercultural dramatic structure

Intercultural dramatic tension

Dramatic tension is the impediment within an emotional current that gives us the urgency to act. As O'Toole put it: 'Tension is the spring of drama. Not the action, but what impels the action' (1992, p. 133). Tension is a multidimensional element, defined as both 1) a storytelling device, planted by the teacher-artist through careful planning, and questioning, as well as 2) a set of emotional reactions in the participants (including the facilitator). In other words, the texture of tension has the duplicity inherent to all forms of aesthetic engagement, that is, creating and responding (Dewey, 1934/1980).

Importantly, tension exists in both non-narrative and narrative forms. Non-narrative tension is generated by the contrast of darkness/light, silence/sound, and stillness/movement (what Heathcote referred to as the three spectra of theatre [Wagner, 1999]). Narrative tension, on the other hand, is generated by the relationships between characters, plot, storyline, language, time, and so forth. O'Toole (1992) offers another typology to interpret dramatic tension: tension of the task (implied in seeking to fulfil a task, given constraints imposed by the situation); tension of relationships (arising from an *interpersonal* clash between opposite attitudes and motivations and/or an *intrapersonal* clash of one's values and beliefs, i.e., the tension of dilemma); tension of the mystery (suspense, anticipatory expectation); tension of surprise (caused by new unexpected constraints); and metaxis (tension caused by the gap between the real and the fiction, particularly if we are moved by the dissonance caused by their coexistence).

Over the last decade, I have been working on the interdependence between dramatic tension and intercultural engagement in process drama. In 2008, I designed a drama in which participants were in role as Japanese journalists working for an Italian magazine in Tokyo. They travelled to Italy to conduct an interview to uplift the profile of the editorial and save the magazine from bankruptcy (tension of the task). On their way to the interview, the journalists were confronted by a trade union protest (tension of the surprise). In that study (Piazzoli, 2010a), I noted that manipulation of distance in the elements of drama enabled participants (Australian and New Zealand students of Italian) to decentre from their preconceptions of the Italian culture.

In my first attempt to analyse 'intercultural dramatic tension' (Piazzoli, 2010b), I argued that whenever the theme of a drama held intrinsic intercultural tension, and socio-cultural values were clearly evoked in the pre-text, this was a hook for intercultural discussion. In

that instance, I offered some recommendations to educators, such as ‘choose an educational objective with an intercultural potential’ together with ‘awareness of dramatic tension when choosing the pre-text’ (2010b, p. 10). These are valid points. However, I now realise not all drama workshops have set educational objectives, and, even when they do, setting an objective does not guarantee its fulfilment. To return to the soap bubble metaphor, it is not only the shape of the wand but also the movement of the arm, the grip of the hand, and the rotation of the shoulders that determine whether and how the bubbles fly.

In a memo I wrote during the analysis phase of my doctoral study (working with Chinese students), I coined the expression ‘intercultural dramatic tension’ and attempted a first definition: intercultural tension is a force that engages one at an intercultural level and operates within the gap existing between two (or more) cultural systems. I noted that the intercultural sphere adds nuance to existing forms of tension, rather than being a form of tension of its own. I refined this attempt in a later essay (Piazzoli, 2017), where I suggested that unless intercultural tension is made explicit for participants, it will remain tacit. Thus, we can argue that the teacher-artist is an active agent in realising the intercultural contour of a drama. I further delineated the intercultural profile of dramatic tension in a monograph (Piazzoli, 2018), dedicating two chapters to the subject. I observed that whenever the intercultural tension in the drama was not strong enough to rouse an intercultural dialogue between self and other, participants did not acknowledge the intercultural dimension of the drama. I concluded that intercultural tension is crucial to the creation of a solid intercultural dramatic structure. This intercultural dramatic structure is characterised by

- potential for intercultural dramatic tension in the pre-text;
- scope and depth for the elements of drama to be manipulated – to create distancing and decentre;
- scope and depth of intercultural reflection (in and out of role).

I now revisit the notion of intercultural dramatic tension, complementing it with examples from *The Keepsake* drama (Part 2). I also include suggestions on how to harness the nature of different forms of tension to enable the experience of those terms that do not have a straightforward translation (see Part 1). I propose the following definitions:

- **Non-narrative intercultural tension.** This is generated by the contrast of music/silence, movement/stillness, light/dark, where culture-specific rhythms, melodies, soundscapes, movement sequences, and gestures are encoded into rituals and signs – as created by the group, and consciously managed by the facilitator. This tension colours the experience of a drama.

A vocal warm-up, with attention to breathwork, can be the base from which non-narrative intercultural tension can emerge. I have noted that targeted use of voicework, music, and movement in the Butoh tradition can generate non-narrative tension. We explored these options in a 4.5-hour workshop offered as part of the Grenoble Summer School 2019, the day before *The Keepsake* process drama. As part of that workshop, we spent one hour dancing to represent birth, young age, adulthood, and old age, while listening to Philip Glass Solo Piano (Metamorphosis); we recreated a cave using sounds; we hummed Gregorian chants in slow motion – all sources of non-narrative tension.

- **Intercultural tension of relationships.** This relates to the potential tension stemming from status and power differentials informed by different cultural values and social norms – manifested in roles and situations.

Tension of relationships may be evoked when exploring nuances of the Chinese term *yuanfen* (缘份), which is translated roughly as the understanding that it is fate, destiny, or luck, as conditioned by serendipity, that ignites relationships between people and objects or events. In the practice described above (Table 40.1), this direction may imply setting the faraway place (Step 7) to Beijing, weaving the elements to re-create a Chinese context to experience and reflect on *yuanfen*. The taxi driver may feel a serendipitous connection to his passenger as, thanks to that ride, he has rediscovered an important aspect of his past.

- **Intercultural tension of the task.** This refers to the potential tension in having to accomplish a cross-cultural task, given the different cultural systems, world views, and values associated with it. This is the trait participants will identify with most clearly, as it is standard to reflect on different cultural customs in a process of intercultural inquiry.

Tension of the task may be evoked if exploring the Italian notion of *cazzimma*, a sense of know-how and pride in accomplishing a challenging task by bending the rules. In the practice above, this may imply setting the faraway place (Step 7) to Napoli, weaving the elements to re-create the Neapolitan context to experience, and reflect on, *cazzimma*. The taxi driver may have had to overcome many hurdles, as a migrant, to get a licence to drive his own taxi.

- **Intercultural tension of surprise.** This implies the gap between two (or more) cultural worlds, which can generate a surprise in terms of how an event or circumstance is perceived by different individuals, and how they react to it. Here, crucially, is where we can discuss the notion of culture shock from a more generative, aesthetic stance.

Tension of surprise may be evoked when exploring nuances of the Japanese concept of *wabi sabi* (侘寂), the beauty of imperfection. In the practice described above, this direction may imply setting the faraway place (Step 7) to Tokyo, weaving the elements to re-create a Japanese context to experience, and reflect on, *wabi sabi*. This may see our taxi driver embrace the practice of *kintsugi*, 金継ぎ (the art of mending broken things with gold, a metaphor to embrace imperfections), to repair his broken taxi toy. The taxi driver could try to explain to his passenger why he places more value in repairing his old, rusty vehicle, rather than in buying a new one with a Government scheme.

- **Intercultural tension of the mystery.** This implies the gap between two (or more) cultural worlds, which can create a mystery in terms of how an event, ritual, or circumstance is perceived by different individuals, and how they react to it. Here we can hinge on the state of urgency and unfamiliarity posed by culture shock, to encourage the experience of ‘otherness’ in a more generative way.

Tension of the mystery may be evoked when exploring the Gaelic notion of *aduantas* (a kind of alienation, unease, or anxiety caused by being somewhere new). In the practice described above, this direction may imply setting the faraway place (Step 7) to a small town in the Gaeltacht region (Irish-speaking region in the west of Ireland), weaving the elements to re-create an Irish context, to explore and reflect on *aduantas*. The taxi driver may feel a strong alienation as he finds himself away from home, surrounded by an unfamiliar environment – until he meets an old expat from his village who is now running the local pub.

- **Intercultural tension of metaxis.** This is generated by a dissonance between the dramatic (play) context and the actual (real) context. This holds true both for those experiencing a drama in their first language and for those experiencing a drama in a second language. It is worth noting that those experiencing the drama in a second language are continuously immersed in a dual frame and constantly decoding cultural systems (unless they are simultaneous bilinguals).⁷ When playing a dramatic role, they may experience

ripples of intercultural tension of metaxis whenever they are stirred by the dissonance of their responses in the context of the drama (in the second language/culture) as opposed to how they would normally respond as themselves in their first language/culture.

Such polyphony of dissonances can lay dormant and never be acknowledged; it can linger as déjà vu; it can be consciously addressed in dialogue; or it can be further channelled in art-making processes through manipulation of the elements of drama – bearing intercultural and aesthetic value. This is why awareness and manipulation of the elements of drama are quintessential to fostering intercultural engagement.

The intercultural dramatic elements

Of all the dramatic elements, tension deserves special attention, being the glue that binds them together. As Dawson (1970) noted: ‘All works of art are fully grasped through the perception of the interrelatedness of their parts, and in drama the relation between parts is characteristically one of tension’ (p. 30). We now turn to the interrelatedness of the parts through which we can grasp the art form – that is, the other elements of drama. As Haseman observed (in Davis et al., 2007), although the *Dramawise* classification is arranged in a linear diagram, the through-line is misleading. The elements are not meant to be observed in a prescribed way; they operate in compounds (Haseman, in Davis et al., 2007, p. 64). Rather than regard them as parts of a linear diagram, I see the elements as a system of relationships coexisting in a sphere around a nucleus (dramatic meaning). Below, I map them as they emerged through *The Keepsake* drama (Part 2), rather than in their order of appearance in the *Dramawise* diagram.

In the workshop described above, the intercultural dimension manifested through the elements of mood, place, and focus, first conjured by the pre-text. The pre-text choice is essential for the success of an intercultural experience in process drama. The term ‘pre-text’ refers to the source that initiates a process drama, as O’Neill (1995) explained; it is the germ of the action, an input with a strong aesthetic charge that implies roles and infers a situation. To create a strong engagement with the intercultural dimension, the pre-text must hold a degree of intercultural dramatic tension. The pre-text for *The Keepsake* drama was a photograph of two children in a Roma camp. The vivid scenario depicted by the photograph projected on the screen and the discussion that followed (Table 40.1, Step 3) evoked a strong intercultural dimension. This can be unpacked with attention to:

- **Intercultural Mood.** The genesis of intercultural dramatic mood is tied in to non-narrative tension. In the practice above, intercultural mood was generated in the contrast between sound and silence, light and darkness, and movement and stillness, and was embedded in the attention to details: the choice of Balkan music in the warm-up (Step 1); the breathwork and choice of key words in vocal warm-up; the projection of the photograph (Step 2); the reading and performing of Kerin’s poem⁸ (Step 4). The aesthetic charge of these resources imbued a strong, intercultural non-narrative tension that permeated through the other episodes.
- **Intercultural Place.** This is key to creating what Byram (1997) identified as (1) readiness to suspend disbelief, and (2) willingness to suspend belief. In the practice described above, playing Balkan music and showing a photograph of a Roma camp conferred a sense of place. The poem (Figure 40.4) also helped to strengthen the sense of place, particularly as it mentions *Beli Vit* (Bulgaria) and the river. Manipulating the element

Birth in the Camp
Usin Kerin

I was born among old tents
amongst the gypsy whisper
telling a tale, in the moonlight
of a white, far away land.

I was born in misery, in the fields
along the *Beli Vit*, under weeping willows
where anxiety drills the hearts
and hunger weighs down the sack of flour.

I was born on a sad, Autumn day
along the road enveloped by fog,
where Need weeps with the little ones
transparent pain dripping through eyelashes.

I was born, as my mother died.
My old father bathed me in the river:
hence my body is strong today
and blood runs forcefully within me.

Figure 40.4 Poem by Usin Kerin

of place is what initiates the dual suspension of (dis)belief. In the final episode (Step 7), the man finds himself elsewhere, in a faraway land. This may allow participants to perceive their own culture from a (fictive) external point of view. Focusing on the Balkan village would help them to decentre, while the faraway land evokes their home culture, centring them.

- **Intercultural Movement.** In an intercultural light, experience and reflection can focus on kinesics (interpreting body movement as communication) as well as proxemics (interpreting personal space as communication) across different cultural systems. In the practice described above, the way the characters distributed themselves across space, according to a particular hierarchy (elderly, family, villagers), and the gestures performed in the ritual pertain to the element of movement.
- **Intercultural Focus.** Clearly setting time, place, and physical space helps to focus the drama. Intercultural dramatic focus, accordingly, helps to shed light on those issues that can afford a lived experience of the language and culture. The poem (Figure 40.4), particularly the last stanza in which the river is mentioned, became the hub of the drama. In the sketches above, the shoes act as a focus to delineate the banks of the river and serve as indicators of a society in which walking barefoot is not uncommon and shoes are shared by the community.

- **Language.** This is perhaps the most difficult element to pinpoint, as language (verbal and non-verbal communication) is ubiquitous. In drama, language can be generated in role (improvisation) and out of role (negotiations to create a tableau, for example; reflection on/within the drama). To consider the element of language in an intercultural perspective, I draw on another untranslatable word: *talanoa*. This is a traditional Fijian word used in New Zealand and across the Pacific. It refers to an inclusive, generative, participatory form of dialogue through storytelling. A group engages in *talanoa* to share ideas, skills, and experience. *Talanoa* implies that people talk to each other to build trust, empathy, and mutual respect.⁹ In the drama above, language as *talanoa* manifested in the initial discussion (as we decided the actual content of the drama through a discussion), as well as in role and out of role. Language as *talanoa* is the essence of intercultural engagement in drama.
- **Symbols.** Symbols often emerge unpredictably. In the practice above, the taxi toy as keepsake was an improvised, spontaneous detail which stirred the direction of the whole drama. The taxi may acquire intercultural symbolic value if the proud taxi driver conceived of driving a taxi as his own emancipation from poverty or as his affection for his lost friend.
- **Time.** In an intercultural key, focusing time might generate a reflection on cross-cultural chronemics (the study of the role of time in communication) across different cultures. This, in itself, could be a starting point for a process drama.
- **Narrative.** It would be interesting to compare how the same event is framed in two different cultures, perhaps through an analysis of how events are portrayed by the media in distinctive ways according to the perspectives that inform our viewpoints.
- **The Human Context.** Looking for the human context may seem like the first port of call. However, I often start from mood to arrive at the human context, to avoid falling into clichés, which Fleming (1998) describes as the ‘kitchen sink approaches’ to drama. The intercultural element of the human context (situation, characters, and relationships) in the practice described above was made implicit by the pre-text (Step 2) and made explicit in the teacher in role (Step 4) and in the final episode (Step 7).
- **Intercultural Dramatic Tension.** In the drama above, a degree of non-narrative intercultural tension was created by the music, the pre-text, and the poem. It was also generated by the relationships between characters (tension of relationships) and getting to the river in time to hand over the keepsake (tension of the task).
- **Meaning.** Meaning and the negotiation of meaning as an intercultural dramatic element necessarily tie in with the experiences of the participants, and the facilitator’s awareness as the symbolic value within the dialogue between self and other is unravelled.
- **Intercultural Theatre.** Intercultural theatre studies is an established discipline (Pavis, 1996, 2010) that examines the influences of theatre forms across cultures. While this chapter has not focused on intercultural theatre studies, the possibilities offered by this synergy are vast and deserve future attention.

In the original representation by O’Toole (1992), the *Dramawise* diagram featured in a box labelled ‘dramatic context’ and contained by three bigger boxes: context of the medium, context of the setting, and the real context. To return to our soap bubble. Each bubble is different in shape and size, as each experience in drama is influenced by the relationship of the internal and external conditions: the configuration of inner elements (that formed the bubble) has an impact on the outer shape of the bubble. We may posit, for argument’s sake, that the bubble represents the dramatic context. This is contained by a number of larger

spheres – the context of the setting, the context of the medium, and the real context – corresponding to the external environment in which the bubble floats.

The dramatic context of *The Keepsake*, as illustrated above, existed within the context of the medium (process drama), the context of the setting (Grenoble Summer School), and the real context (France in 2019 – before the COVID-19 pandemic, when the freedom to play with proxemics was something we could take for granted). In case of learners engaged in a drama in their second (or additional) language, the real context features a further differentiation, that is, the context of the host language, culture, and society, and the context of the first language, culture, and society. These contextual layers, as they interact, filter interpretation and experience.

Intercultural aesthetic engagement

Maxine Greene (1995) defines ‘aesthetic education’ as an invitation for students to be more than passive onlookers, a call to awaken people, through imagination, to dare to conceptualise things ‘as they could be otherwise’ (p. 10). For Dewey (1934/1980), the aesthetic experience is based on perception, an active receptivity or ‘receptive perception’ (p. 48), involving doing, creating, and reflecting. This active quality of perception is echoed in Greene’s description of aesthetic education, in which she frames ‘perceiving’ as an act of ‘mental imaginative participation’ (p. 13). Greene adds:

Clearly, we cannot *make* that happen; nor can we intrude when people are becoming aware in this way. We cannot grade [students] on whether or not such a phenomenon does occur. All we can do is try to invent situations that make it more likely – allowing for time, for privacy, for silences.

(2001, pp. 31–32, original emphasis)

Taliaferro’s (1998) reading of Maxine Greene’s work is particularly useful. Taliaferro highlights the notion of ‘double consciousness’ – being able to see oneself through the eyes of the other, which the faculty of imagination makes possible. In analysing Maxine Greene, she notes that ‘the task of those who possess a double-consciousness is to imagine beyond those images fixed upon us by the inner-eye of the Other’ (p. 94). Imagination is construed as a dialogue between self and other. It is precisely the double consciousness phenomenon, I argue, that defines the art form of drama as a form of intercultural education – intended as adopting the critical distance needed to experience otherness. This echoes the concept of *talanoa*, described above as a generative dialogue based on mutual respect, empathy, and storytelling.

My research has highlighted that whenever intercultural dramatic tension saturates a drama structure, it presents opportunities to sharpen the dramatic elements’ intercultural perspective into a kind of generative intercultural reflection akin to *talanoa* – a dialogue between self and other. With this concept, we can join the last dot, in what I term ‘intercultural aesthetic engagement’: using the imagination to engage in the active dialogue between self and other that characterises an intercultural quest.

Conclusion

To illustrate the elements of drama in an intercultural perspective, I have taken a multi-layered approach to praxis. First, I discussed some theoretical underpinnings. I noted that the current frameworks on intercultural literacy fail to recognise the importance of imagination in intercultural education. Second, to ground the foundational theory in practice,

I introduced the elements of drama. I referenced real examples from a process drama, captured by a series of sketches. Next, I considered a photograph and a poem that kick-started the drama, and the drama structure that supported it. Third, I reverted to the intercultural domain and converged all insights to highlight the intercultural dimension of the elements. I point out this process because it was intentional. We arrived at the intercultural domain of the dramatic elements only after having introduced the foundation of the elements, the context of the drama, the resources (signs) that mediated it, and the practice as it unfolded. It would have been unworkable to skip the first steps and jump straight to the argument, as drama theory presented in a vacuum, without practice, sign, and context, is void of meaning. The discussion was informed by a praxial analysis using a semiotic approach, starting from images and moving to a discussion of theory and practice, to arrive at the final argument.

In opening this chapter, I suggested that learning a second language opens a window into other ways of life. We have seen how drama can help us to peek through that window by means of the imagination and to reflect upon the experience through an aesthetic intercultural encounter. I have offered suggestions to reframe culture shock, and to explore the potential of embodying untranslatable words through forms of intercultural dramatic tension and reflection. I close with neuroscientist Ken Mogi (2017), author of *The Little Book of Ikigai*, who discusses the Japanese concept *ichigo ichie* (一期一会), literally ‘one time, one encounter’. He notes:

Ichigo ichie is the appreciation of the ephemeral character of any encounters with people, things or events in life. Precisely because an encounter is ephemeral, it must be taken seriously. Life, after all, is filled with things that happen only once.

(Mogi, 2017, p. 89)

Honouring what Mogi defines as ‘onceness’ (*ichigo ichie*) in the encounter with the other is the starting point for any generative experience in drama as intercultural education.

Notes

- 1 For further reviews of research in the field, including a meta-analysis of existing literature, see McGovern (2017) and Belliveau and Kim (2013).
- 2 Retrieved from <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/62243/28-weird-and-wonderful-irish-words>.
- 3 For other classifications, see Styan (1960) and Bolton (1979).
- 4 *The Role of Drama in Higher and Adult Language Education: Teacher Training and the Challenges of Inclusion. Summer School*, Université Grenoble Alpes, 22–26 July 2019.
- 5 Participants’ names are pseudonyms. I reproduce participant comments here with their permission.
- 6 *Butoh*, founded by Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, is a form of Japanese dance theatre.
- 7 Individuals who have been exposed to two languages from birth.
- 8 U. Kerin, ‘Birth in the Camp’, <http://www.asspaceaurunca.altervista.org/4.html> (my translation).
- 9 Retrieved from <https://unfcc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/2018-talanoa-dialogue-platform#:~:text=%22Talanoa%20is%20a%20traditional%20word,inclusive%2C%20participatory%20and%20transparent%20dialogue.&text=The%20process%20of%20Talanoa%20involves,skills%20and%20experience%20through%20storytelling>.

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