Peter Lutzker

The Art of Foreign Language Teaching

Improvisation and Drama in Teacher Development and Language Learning

2nd Edition

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Introduction to the 2nd Edition

The first edition of this book, which appeared in 2007, has been out of print for a number of years. In considering the possible reasons for a new edition and the form it should take, a number of issues needed to be addressed. What seemed most crucial for a second edition was to consider the relevance of what had been written more than 14 years ago in the light of the world as it is in 2021. A further and related consideration was the necessity of taking into account those relevant developments and publications that have occurred in the intervening years, which led to the question to what extent new material could be incorporated. Expanding the second edition, however, contradicted my wish to somewhat shorten the original version. Clearly, reexamining the validity and topicality of teaching as an art in 2021 while attempting to integrate and discuss a broad range of recent publications and, at the same time, trying to reduce the length of the first edition would be a clear case of trying to 'have one's cake and eat it too'. Choices had to be made.

After reviewing as much of the new material as possible, I came to the conclusion that I would try to inform the reader of recent developments and publications in the form of an overview in a new introduction, rather than attempting to integrate this material into the original text. There were different reasons for this decision. Obviously, to do justice to what has been published in the meantime would have significantly lengthened the original text. A possible alternative would have been to focus more on recent material and reduce what stood in the original. What spoke against this was that my intention had been to give a background and a lasting foundation for the development of the concept of teaching as an art. Even in the light of the very interesting developments that have occurred in the last fifteen years, I remain convinced that my original choices and sources have, in fact, stood the test of time very well, and can continue to provide an inspiring and fruitful basis for further developments.

The main body of the text has been somewhat shortened at a number of points, mostly with respect to its original academic context. The first edition was a revised version of my Ph.D. thesis which meant that there was a pronounced emphasis on establishing an encompassing and well-documented academic basis for the entire work. Although the Ph.D. thesis was even longer than the book, the first edition still evinced many elements of that intention. For those readers who, for whatever reasons, are interested in having a somewhat fuller academic version, I would thus suggest trying to obtain a copy of the first edition.

While reducing some of the academic background material, I have, nevertheless, not reduced the focus on the qualitative research which was carried out in the context of in-service teacher education, nor on my practitioner-based research which was conducted in the context of an intensive 10th grade drama project. Both the descriptions of those projects and the ensuing discussions and conclusions drawn from that research have remained largely the same. I have also kept most of the original overview of the historical development of the concept of teaching as an art in European and Anglo-American contexts, as this, to my knowledge, has not been comparably covered in other works. Finally, I have also left the first introduction which elucidates both the underlying concept of the book and its structure.

What has been added will be found in what follows in this introduction to the 2nd edition and in a new chapter which has been added as an appendix. In the appendix I consider the relevance of what I wrote in the first edition viewed from the perspective of the summer of 2021 and the concept of teaching as an art within the broader context of considering the future of teaching and learning in an age increasingly shaped by the digitalization of all aspects of life. As these changes, along with the educational paradigms which underlie them, clearly affect foreign language teaching, I consider it essential to address them in this new edition.

i An Overview of Relevant Developments in Foreign Language Teacher Education and Language Learning

In examining and developing the concept of foreign language teaching as an art, I attempted to integrate the two closely related but nevertheless separate fields of foreign language teacher education and foreign language learning. The premise behind this was that the development of the artistry of the teacher was a necessary prerequisite for foreign language teaching as an art to be realized in practice. This led to the book being divided into two separate parts, each with its own background material, qualitative research study and its respective discussions and conclusions. At the same time, I attempted at different points and particularly in the final chapter to elucidate the underlying relations between these two different perspectives.

Accordingly, in attempting to review the relevant developments that have taken place in the last 14 years, I have been faced with the daunting challenge of reviewing large bodies of material in each of these fields, along with their own incorporation of related areas. Even after reducing these findings to those

most directly related to the focus of each part of the book, there have been many new contributions to these fields which in the context of an extensive literature review would all deserve to be discussed in detail. However, for the above-mentioned reasons, I have chosen to focus on the work of a few leading institutions and individuals and afterwards to simply inform the reader of a number of further publications that appear to me to be the most relevant. The full bibliographical details of those publications that I have simply listed and not explicitly discussed, can be found in the bibliography at the end of the book. Moreover, I do not expect to have managed to cover all the material that could be considered. In fact, in making use of the wondrous possibilities of the internet, I also came across authors whose earlier writings I would have gladly incorporated into the original if I had known of their existence at that point. Considering the length of the book, perhaps it was just as well.

It seems appropriate to begin with two principal sources which have made significant contributions to ongoing developments in these areas. The online Journal Scenario, hosted by Cork University in Ireland, and the series of articles, books, conferences and networks which they have generated, have provided a unique contribution to the fields of drama in teacher education and drama in foreign language learning and, in a wider sense, of a performative approach to teaching and learning. The founders and driving forces behind this journal are Manfred Schewe from Cork University in Ireland and Susanne Even from Indiana University in the United States. Schewe has also been the author and editor of numerous leading articles, chapters and books. In conjunction with the entire Scenario Project, and through the efforts of Schewe and his colleagues, University College Cork also offers a broad array of Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral Courses which in highly innovative ways bridge the gap between the performative arts and education. Susanne Even is responsible for the artistic focus of the foreign language teacher program in the Department of Germanic Studies at Indiana University-Bloomington. She has also published widely, making the case for performative approaches in teacher education.

Since both Schewe and Even work in the field of teaching German as a Foreign Language, the Scenario journal and book publications are often available in both German and English. With their focus on drama and performative approaches they have continually succeeded in bridging gaps between the teaching of different foreign languages. The broad range of international contributors, both in their conferences and publications, attests to the global dimensions of this endeavor. Along with the 'first generation' of contributors who include longstanding and leading figures in these fields, a second younger generation

has emerged as highly active both in their research and in a continuing series of publications, some of whose works will also be mentioned in this introduction.

Schewe's explanation of the intentions of a performative approach to language teaching gives a clear picture of the guiding impulses out of which Scenario was created:

> It is the intention of a Performative Foreign Language Didactics to avail of the wealth of forms found in the arts for teaching and learning purposes. It is, above and beyond the disciplines usually associated with foreign language teaching and learning (e. g., general pedagogy, first language didactics, psychology, linguistics and literature) actively seeking dialogue and exchange with the arts… (…) The goal of foreign language didactics is to create a new approach to teaching and learning whereby emphasis is placed on forms of aesthetic expression. This means that special attention is given to 'language form' and to the pleasure and even desire to play with words, sentences and expressions. 'Form' also implies the ways in which the body speaks and how sound, word, sentence and movement all interact with each other.[1]

In 2018, in the context of a Scenario Conference in Germany, a 'manifesto' was published in which the principles underlying the entire Scenario project were formulated:

- Educators and students alike do not only communicate orally, but also use additional means of expression, so that they are involved in the creative teaching and learning process *with their "head, heart, hands and feet"*. The focus is no longer exclusively on results, but increasingly on the concrete teaching and learning activities from which lesson content is created.
- The ability to *experience empathy through a change of role and perspective*, for example, by being in someone else's shoes in role, is of central importance.
- The educator initiates and supports *democratic and participative learning processes* and becomes a facilitator of learning processes in which students take on responsibility as autonomous co-designers and co-creators.
- Competency is only fully acquired through practical application, i. e. experience. *Performative methods can be used to simulate authentic contexts.*
- *Knowledge acquisition requires space*, i. e. an inspiring learning environment in which educators and students can move freely.
- *Sustainable learning requires time*, i. e. an adequate pacing and distribution of topics and projects.

1 Schewe 2013.

- *Mistakes are seen as learning opportunities.* This requires rethinking the definition of assessment, as it would then no longer focus on penalising errors.
- *The whole world is a stage.* (…)[2] (emphases in original)

Another principal source of contributions to relevant fields is the online journal Humanising Language Teaching (HLT), hosted by the Pilgrims Organization formerly based in Canterbury and now in Oxford, England. Although not as specifically focused on the central themes of my work as Scenario, the range of what they have published under the umbrella of humanism has consistently included articles which have addressed these themes in different ways. A regular contributor and arguably the pioneer in introducing drama and different forms of performative and creative approaches to foreign language teaching is Alan Maley, whose seminal contributions to the field were first published in the 1970s and who has remained highly prolific to this day. His article on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of HLT in 2019 both elucidates the importance of this journal and his own thoughts:

> So why should we be celebrating the 20th anniversary of HLT Mag?
> The hegemony of testing and evaluation, the temptations of easy-fix technological solutions, the creeping encroachment of academic research at the expense of teaching expertise, the flat-lining of publishing, and the blight of bureaucratisation – all have contributed to a narrowing of the opportunities for teachers to explore independently the nature of learning and teaching and their role in it. In the face of this sometimes depressing scenario, HLT Mag has kept the flame of humanistic inquiry and experimentation burning.
> Just out of curiosity, I checked every issue of HLT Mag since it's foundation in 1999. There are certain recurrent themes. Among the most frequent are:
> Teacher Development. In the very first issue, Paul Davis' major article 'What is Teacher development' (Davis, 1999) in a way set the scene. Effectively, all successive issues have been focusing, in one way or another on possible answers to that initial question.
> Aesthetic approaches to teaching and learning: stories and story-telling, wisdom stories, creative writing, art, music, drama, clowning, literature. There is abundant material on all these aspects of enriching learning through the arts.[3]

In 2014, Maley together with Chaz Pugliese co-founded "The C Group: Creativity for Change in Education" which has in its various publications and contributions

2 Jogschies, Schewe & Stöver-Blahak 2018.
3 Maley 2019b.

at international conferences consistently made the case for humanistic and creative approaches to foreign language teaching.[4]

In addition to Maley, there are a number of other leading figures in the U.K. who have continued to pursue and further develop the concept of teaching as an art. They include Adrian Underhill, many of whose contributions are directly connected to a central focus of my own work – the role of improvisation in teaching.[5] Mike Fleming has continued to work both nationally and internationally in further developing performative approaches to teaching foreign languages.[6] Fleming, a regular contributor to Scenario, is also one of the editors of the highly informative Routledge International Handbook of the Arts and Education.[7]. Mark Almond has long been nationally and internationally active in incorporating drama and performative approaches into foreign language teaching.[8]

Michaela Sambanis has connected relevant findings in the neurological sciences with the incorporation of peformative approaches in foreign language teacher education and foreign language learning in numerous publications as well as in the practice of teacher education at the Freie Universität in Berlin.[9]

Martyn Rawson has extensively addressed the themes of teacher education and language learning from the perspective of Waldorf Education in a series of recent publications which also include a study together with Catherine Bryden on the effects of theatre clowning courses in pre-service language teacher education.[10]

Erika Piazzoli has published a major work, *Embodying Language in Action: The Artistry of Process Drama in Second Language Education*, focusing on the manifold possibilities of working with process drama in foreign language learning and the crucial role of embodiment in this context.[11] She has also written about her innovative work with students with learning disabilities; a highly welcome development in this field.[12]

In drama education, John O'Toole, along with his collaborators and students, remains a central figure not only in Australia but internationally.[13]. His work

4 http://thecreativitygroup.weebly.com/
5 Maley & Underhill 2012; Underhill 2014, Maley & Underhill 2019.
6 Fleming 2016, 2017.
7 Fleming 2015.
8 Almond 2005, 2013, 2019.
9 Sambanis 2013, 2016, 2018, Sambanis & Walter 2019.
10 Rawson 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Bryden & Rawson 2021 (in press).
11 Piazzoli 2018.
12 Piazzoli 2019.
13 O'Toole 2003, O'Toole & Dunn 2020.

has continued to be relevant and inspiring for foreign language teachers, as evidenced by an online conference with him in April 2021, organized by Scenario and attended by language teachers throughout the world. Among the many developments which have grown out of his work is the International Drama/Theater and Education Association (IDEA).[14]

In teacher education, there have also been significant new contributions to the concept of educating teachers to become artists in their respective fields. Keith Sawyer, whose work I already referred to in the first edition, has remained a highly active and innovative figure, particularly in exploring the relations between creativity, improvisation and teaching.[15] Donald S. Blumenfeld-Jones has sought to bridge the gaps between creativity, aesthetics and ethics, and has made an eloquent case for the central role of aesthetics in teacher education.[16] In a chapter called "Aesthetics in Academics and Classrooms" he directly addresses those themes which are central to my approach to teaching as an art:

> At the outset, let us consider this simple point: our task is to help our learners discover their aesthetic knowing and their sensory perception capacities as a valuable dimension of their thinking/knowing and thus, enhance their lives on many fronts. What we can do for our teacher preparation students, they can do for the students they will teach. In this way, aesthetic consciousness as a valued mode of knowing and being will become more commonplace within our society and culture.[17]

He concludes his chapter with the following remarks:

> As you will have noticed, in this chapter the emphasis is on seeing/feeling/perceiving as an artist sees/feels/perceives. We emphasize the act of art-making as the location from within which aesthetic consciousness develops. We do this without requiring or expecting that our learners will become professional artists. We only require and expect that they will immerse themselves in the act of art-making *as a species of aesthetic knowing*. This point cannot be too strongly stressed.[18] (italics in original)

In choosing to highlight the work of these prominent journals and educators, I have unfortunately had to leave out many authors whose relevant and recent contributions to those fields deserve to be considered as well. What follows is an undoubtedly incomplete selection of further relevant books, chapters and articles which have been published since 2015. The titles themselves give a clear

14 www.ideadrama.org/
15 Sawyer 2012, 2019.
16 Blumenfeld-Jones 2012, 2016.
17 Blumenfeld-Jones 2016.
18 Ibid. 27.

indication of how this field has both deepened and expanded in recent years. Articles and individual chapters are given with quotation marks, book titles are in italics. The complete references are given in the bibliography.

Belleza, Annemaria (2020): "Developing Performative Competence and Teacher Artistry: A Pedagogical Imperative in the Multicultural Classroom."

Bernstein, Nils & Lerchner, Charlotte (eds.) (2014): *Ästhetisches Lernen im DaF-/DaZ-Unterricht. Literatur – Theater – Bildende Kunst – Musik – Film.*

Conte, David & Thiem, Annegret (eds.) (2021): *Literatur performativ: Spanische Lyrik der Gegenwart – Literatura performativa: poesía española actual.*

Crutchfield, John (2016): "Brief Encounters: Reflections on the Performative Integration of Creative Writing in the Foreign Language Classroom."

Elis, Franziska (2015): "Mit dramapädagogischen Methoden sprachliche und kommunikative Kompetenzen fördern"

Fanselow, John (2020): *Small Changes in Teaching, Big Results in Learning.*

Fleiner, Micha (2016): "Museum Education and Performative Teaching and Learning: Words, Bodies, Images."

Haack, Adrian (2018): *Dramapädagogik, Selbstkompetenz und Professionalisierung. Performative Identitätsarbeit im Lehramtsstudium Englisch.*

Hallet, Wolfgang & Carola Surkamp (eds.) (2015): *Dramendidaktik und Dramapädagogik im Fremdsprachenunterricht.*

Hensel, Alexandra (2020): *Fremdsprachenunterricht als Ereignis. Zur Fundierung einer performativ-ästhetischen Praxis.*

Hillyard, Susan (2016): *English through Drama.*

Jaffke, Christoph (2021): *The First Four Years of English: A Hands-On Approach to the Waldorf Way.*

Maley, Alan (ed.) (2019): *Developing* Expertise *through Experience.*

Maley, Alan & Tomas Kiss (2018): *Creativity and English Language Teaching: From Inspiration to Implementation.*

Mages, Wendy K. (2020): "Educational Drama and Theatre Pedagogy: An Integral Part of Training English-as-a-Foreign-Language Teachers."

Mentz, Oliver & Micha Fleiner, (eds.) (2018): *The Arts in Language Teaching: International Perspectives: Performative – Aesthetic – Transversal.*

Passon, Jenny (2015): "Auf dem Weg zur performativen Fremdsprachenkompetenz. Eine Darstellung theater-und dramapädagogischer Ansätze."

Prabhu, Neiman Stern. (2019): *Perceptions of Language Pedagogy.*

Schmenk, Barbara (2015): "Dramapädagogik im Spiegel von Bildungsstandards, GeRS und Kompetenzdiskussionen."

Sievers, Ulrike (2017): *Creative Teaching-Sustainable Learning. A Holistic Approach to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*

Vaßen, Florian (2016): "The Diversity of *Theaterpädagogik* in German Schools – Theater and theatrical training in the context of teacher education, as a method of instruction, and as an artistic/aesthetic school subject."

ii Performative-Artistic Approaches within Traditional Frameworks

The developments I have described in the previous section have occurred within broader educational contexts that are generally far removed from artistic thinking and practice. The individuals that have been mentioned work outside those mainstream educational policies that are still predominant in schools and in teacher education programs throughout the world. In following their own performative-artistic paths, they remain to a certain extent 'outliers' both in a larger educational landscape and in most of the daily practice of foreign language teaching.

In his 2019 article celebrating the 20th anniversary of *Humanising Language Teaching*, Maley looks back on those five factors which he views as having been the primary hindrances to the broader introduction of creative, humanistic and performative approaches into language teaching:

- **Testing**
  The huge and rapid expansion of testing which took place in the 1990's and continues today has exerted a huge influence on curricula, published materials and on courses offered. Following the spread of IELTS and TOEFL in particular, the teaching of English is now firmly shackled to the testing bandwagon. This leaves little room for the exercise of the individual, creative methodology which was so common in the earlier period, since all efforts are now directed to fulfilling the demands of the test.
- **Technology**
  What had been no more than a flirtation with technology until the late '80's became an obsessive love affair as we moved into the '90's and beyond. Inevitably, teaching has come to depend on a range of technological systems and practices, partly as a reflection of the digital revolution which is a major component of most students' daily lives and partly for their intrinsic attraction. (…)
- **Academicisation**
  Increasingly, teachers have come under pressure to acquire academic qualifications. Following on from the rapid expansion of MA pro-

grammes, many teachers are now urged or tempted or obliged to pursue PhD programmes. In many cases, the prospects of promotion without a PhD are negligible. The spread of PhD fever is accompanied by a dedication to the idea that 'more research is needed'. The research paradigm is now widely accepted as central to progress in the profession. (For a contrasting view, see Maley, 2003, 2016.)

- **Publishing**
  ELT publishers were previously at the forefront of promoting creative ideas in teaching methodology. However, under the combined pressure to cater to the demands of examinations and tests, and the rising investment costs involved in publishing comprehensive, global course book packages, the major publishers have become risk-averse. One result is that most course packages are near-clones of each other. Another is that it is now far more difficult for an aspiring writer with a good idea to get published. Yet another is that teachers are increasingly expected to follow the expensive course packages their managers have purchased for them. Creative exploration has thus become more difficult.
- **Bureaucratisation**
  In the late 80's, ELT was bitten by the management bug. Many, if not most, teaching institutions were squeezed into a business model, with an emphasis on 'the bottom line', efficiency, delivery of learning packages, vision statements, all run by 'managers' wielding spread-sheets, pocket calculators and an impressive command of jargon borrowed from business. Furthermore, especially in the public sector, the plethora of instructions, regulations and box-ticking now required tends to divert teachers' energy from the primary task of helping learners to learn.[19]

Many of these hindrances which Maley elucidated in 2019 have continued to increase their dominance over educational policies and also taken on new forms. This is particularly the case with the growing role of digital technology, which is a theme that I address extensively in the appendix to this 2nd edition.

In considering the immense political, financial and institutional dimensions of what Maley has termed the "Gang of Five", it becomes all the more heartening to see what has nevertheless transpired in furthering artistic, humanistic and performative approaches to foreign language teaching. There have been and continue to be schools and universities throughout the world in which students are given opportunities to experience the richness and transformative possibilities of learning a foreign language through such approaches. The

19 Maley 2019b.

articles which regularly appear in the above-mentioned journals and the broad range of books which continue to be published provide continual proof of the ongoing development of creative, performative and artistic ways of teaching. My hope is that making this book available in a second edition will contribute to these developments.

I remain convinced that the struggle to make foreign language learning more artistic and more meaningful for learners will continue to be carried on throughout the world by creative and dedicated individuals in schools and universities who are motivated by both the thankful responses of their learners and the joys of teaching.

Peter Lutzker
Stuttgart, July 2021

Introduction to the 1st Edition

The intention of this study is to explore and develop the idea that *foreign language teaching can be an art*. This will encompass both considering the meaning of artistry in language teaching as well as the possibilities which artistic processes offer pupils in language learning. The first section focuses on the in-service education of language teachers in theatre and improvisation workshops; the second section examines high school pupils rehearsing and performing a full-length play in a foreign language. Thus, this work views the fields of *language teacher education* and *foreign language learning* within a common conceptual framework.

This study has been deeply shaped by my experiences in teaching English to high school pupils in a Steiner School in Germany for more than two decades and in training Steiner School teachers for nearly 15 years. In both of these contexts, having experienced how meaningful artistic and particularly dramatic activities can be for pupils and teachers has led me to continually explore possibilities of working in this manner. This has contributed to significant developments in my own language teaching, as well as to a restructuring of the design/s of teacher education programs with which I have been associated. With respect to the latter, the most far-ranging consequence has been the institution of intensive workshops with professional actors, directors, storytellers and clowns as an integral element in language teacher education. In conjunction with these developments, the annual European Steiner School language teacher conference *English Week* was founded in 1996, based on the central idea that concentrated artistic work with outstanding professionals could lead to decisive steps in a teacher's personal and professional growth. The highly positive reactions to this form of in-service training, reflected in oral and written feedback as well as in the popularity of *English Week* which has become the largest conference of its kind in Steiner education, attest to the deep meaning which this type of work has proven to have for many language teachers. This has also led to the inclusion of such courses in the context of other in-service and pre-service programs, primarily, but not exclusively, in the framework of Steiner teacher training.

At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that this approach to teacher education raises a number of crucial questions and issues. Although both feedback sessions and written evaluations can be revealing with respect to what participants directly experience in such workshops, the decisive question of what this will later come to mean for them remains unanswered. Thus, a