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Researching Voice as an Aesthetic Element in Second Language Learning through Process Drama

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When speaking in a Second Language, *voice* is strongly connected to emotion, intercultural identity and self-perception. As Van Lier (2004) notes, Second Language (L2) students may be feeling tongue-tied, unable to confidently utter new sounds, if their new cultural identity is not a choice, but has been ‘allotted’ to them - creating a barrier between their thoughts and their ‘new’ identity. On the other hand, if students are encouraged to become agents of their own learning, infusing emotion into language, they can be inspired by a felt-experience of their new identity in the second language and culture.

In this seminar, I introduce my research on the aesthetics of voice in L2 process drama. First, I situate the discussion in the context of voice studies and L2 process drama research. Process drama is an embodied approach in language learning focussed on drama as process, rather than drama as a product. I define terms like ‘aesthetics’ and ‘embodiment’ in education, taking a sociocultural perspective to second language acquisition (McCafferty & Stam, 2008). To support the literature, I present some findings from my PhD on the aesthetic dimension of L2 learning through process drama.

Next, I consider methodological issues related to designing research tools that are compatible with process-based, embodied approaches. I discuss two projects I recently completed: the first one explored the effects of embodied pedagogy to teach Italian to adult students with an Intellectual Disability, at the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (Trinity College Dublin). The second project focused on evaluating a voice actor training programme with undergraduate students of Italian, at Griffith University, Brisbane (Australia). Finally, I share my work-in-process in Padova, in collaboration with Fiona Dalziel, on the role of creativity in a group of migrants’ L2 learning processes.

References:

McCafferty, S.G., & Stam, G. (2008). *Gesture: Second Language Acquisition and classroom research*. New York: Routledge.

Perry, M. & Medina, C.L. (2016). *Methodologies of embodiment: Inscribing bodies in qualitative research*. Oxon: Routledge.

Van Lier, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Norwell, Massachusetts: Kluwer Academic Publishers.