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Performative L2 Teaching in Steiner/Waldorf Schools in Europe and Asia: The Role of Theatre Clowning and Scaffolded Reflection

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This article illustrates one way in which L2 teachers can learn to teach performatively. It explores the practice of theatre clowning in Steiner/Waldorf teacher education and ongoing teacher learning developed over the past 20 years and how it can help L2 teachers to develop performative teaching dispositions. L2 teachers have to be creative, imaginative, skilled in narrative and performative presentation as well as being spontaneously responsive to student needs and capable of improvisation in unexpected teaching situations. Theatre clowning has been previously studied in teacher development and this study affirms the outcomes of that research and adds the contribution of structured reflection to L2 teacher education and professional development. The study offers an initial theoretical account of theatre clowning and suggests that it can be a valuable contribution to performative L2 teacher learning, especially when supported by reflection.

INTRODUCTION

L2 teachers in Waldorf schools have to be skilled at improvisation, storytelling, mime and non-verbal communication. They also need to have general teacher dispositions such as creativity, empathy, self-confidence, humour and have presence in the classroom. As described by Bellezza (2020), performative teachers have to be able “to create, to be team players, to demonstrate inter- and intrapersonal qualities, to show the ability to adapt, to deal with the unpredictable, to solve problems, to embrace diversity, to multi-task—in other words, to *perform*” (23). Fleming (2016) refers to performative teaching and learning not as a particular classroom methodology but rather as a concept that encourages an embodied, playful, joyful approach that valorizes emotion as much as cognition; it is therefore an attitude rather than a method. In the context of L2 teaching and learning, Schewe (2020) associates the term performative arts with focusing on artistic process without necessarily aiming to perform for an audience. Performative teaching means using what Bellezza (2020) calls a performative-humanistic approach. For Even (2020), performative teaching

transcends drama methods and drama activities and, indeed, might not feature dramatic performances at all. Instead, it points to a different mindset of what it means to teach—and to learn—away from mere presentation of facts, standardized procedures, and static knowledge towards an approach to teaching and learning that is characterized by teachers and learners making their own connections, forming relationships, co-constructing

knowledge, seeing mistakes as learning opportunities, and regarding the process of learning as essentially dynamic and unpredictable (Even, 2020, p. 4).

The question is: how can teachers learn performative teaching, especially if they are not ‘natural talents’? This article explores how theatre clowning using reflection can contribute to L2 teachers’ learning dispositions to performative teaching.

The pedagogy of L2 teaching in Steiner/Waldorf¹ schools requires teachers to practice performative teaching, and this is the field both authors work in. Catherine Bryden is a clowning facilitator and experienced L2 teacher, Martyn Rawson is a teacher educator and L2 teacher, and both of us live and work in Germany, though we teach courses internationally. Waldorf education (Dahlin, 2017; Rawson, 2021a) is one of the largest alternative education movements globally. There are currently 3,142 educational institutions in 74 countries (Paull & Hennig, 2020), served by around 200 teacher education programs. Over 20 years ago a group of Waldorf L2 teachers based in Germany started annual English Week events out of a recognition that L2 teachers need to develop performative skills through working with a group of professional artists in the areas of storytelling, improvisation, drama, speech and theater clowning. In subsequent years similar ‘Language Weeks’ have been established for teachers of French, Russian and German as a second language, and most Waldorf teacher education programs in Germany now include this kind of work in their initial L2 teacher and class teacher education programs. In recent years, this work has been extended to include Waldorf L2 teacher education in China, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and Taiwan. This paper focuses on the contribution of theatre clowning to L2 teacher development and draws on data in the form of narrative writing gathered from 107 participants in clowning workshops in Germany, including teacher students in an International Masters’ program in Waldorf education.

THEATRE CLOWNING IN WALDORF EDUCATION

The idea of using theatre clowning in Waldorf teacher education was first proposed by Skillen (1997). He suggested that there is a need to cultivate and extend teachers’ powers of language perception, referred to as *sense of language* (Lutzker, 2002, 2014, 2017), which includes the ‘reading’ of gestures and body language. Skillen suggested that L2 teachers need to cultivate awareness of their own speech and movements and understand their effects on learners. Skillen, himself an accomplished storyteller and drama teacher, writes,

the teacher is required to practice an art of teaching which mediates between language, conceived as a sensory reality, and its sense organ; conceived in whole-body terms... the second language teacher’s task then is to re-open access to this sense, and this must be done using materials and processes analogous to those of primary orality. So in its early stages, language teaching must be a kind of ‘applied orality’ ...but even when the stage of literacy is reached, oral values dare not be neglected, for in them lies the very life of language” (Skillen, 1997, pp. 113-114).

In order to learn to do this, he suggested teachers should experience improvisation and drama, in particular Vivian Gladwell’s approach to theatre clowning. This idea was taken up as the core of the annual International English Week conference courses, which have been running annually since 1998.

The practice of theatre clowning in Waldorf L2 teacher education was first documented by Lutzker (2007, revised edition 2021). That study focused on the work of Vivian Gladwell, whose roots lie in the Bataclown theatre clowning tradition and the performance pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq (Evans & Kemp, 2016). Lutzker’s study highlighted that participants (both student teachers and teachers) gained confidence and readiness to engage with unexpected situations in the

classroom, that they felt they had gained a new receptivity and attentiveness, that the activity was rejuvenating, and that they increased their trust in their own creative abilities.

Lutzker (2021) points out that an essential part of the clowning process is reflection and the mutual sharing of experiences among fellow workshop participants, guided by the clowning facilitator. Following each exercise or clowning session, the participants talk about their experiences, difficulties, and moments of break-through and then the others who have been observing share their perceptions. These discussions are followed up with open-ended questions based on what has been said. The circle then shares moments or images that moved them. The facilitator might add technical suggestions to support the next improvisation exercise, but otherwise the participants are asked not to judge or offer advice. The task of the facilitator is to explain the exercises, retain a formal structure in the reflection, and create a safe space, ensuring that participants only offer respectful descriptions of their own lived experiences. At the end of each workshop, participants are asked to record their reflections in journals. The co-authors decided to explore this aspect of reflection within the workshop process by asking participants, as in Lutzker's original study, to use narrative writing to describe their experiences at the end of the workshop and make these available to us, so that we could gain insight into the reflective process within what is essentially a performative activity.

We agree with Bellezza (2020) when she says, “while a great deal of emphasis on the part of researchers has been placed on learners’ needs, expectations, and styles, I believe not enough investigation has gone into teachers’ education, their role, and the effects that training and practice or the lack thereof have on students’ learning experiences...” (p.40). This paper builds on Lutzker’s “milestone in foreign language pedagogy” (Bellezza, 2020), by re-visiting clowning workshops with L2 teachers, this time with another facilitator and taking account of the role of structured reflection in the process.

L2 PEDAGOGY IN WALDORF SCHOOLS

The theory of Waldorf L2 is embedded within the overall theory of Waldorf education (e.g., as outlined in Dahlin, 2017 and Rawson, 2021a), which space does not permit a fuller account of here. A number of generative principles have been derived from this pedagogical anthropology that have led to certain ways of teaching and learning L2.

Waldorf pedagogy depends on certain embodied teacher dispositions and beliefs relating to learners’ developmental stages and learning processes, which dispose them to pedagogical action. Rawson (2020) has likened this capacity to knowing-in-practice (Kelly, 2006) and to what van Manen (1991, 2008) calls pedagogical tact or knowing-in-action. As skilled practitioners, L2 teachers (among others) use their pedagogical craft-knowledge to shape learning situations for their students, both in their preparation and in the actual classroom situation. This is what Lutzker (2021) refers to as the art of teaching. The process of combining pedagogical elements in a given context for a specific purpose requires skilled artistry to realize in the classroom. A teacher’s presence is a key factor in the learning process. By presence, we mean “being wide-awake to one’s self, to one’s students and to their learning in such a way that ...learning is served through skilful and compassionate analysis and access to both subject knowledge and pedagogical strategies” (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 284). Presence is both a precondition and outcome of teacher-student relationships built on a day-to-day basis. As Biesta (2019, p. 264) has argued, “young people [want] to learn something, learn it for a reason, and learn it from someone.” Rawson (2020, 2021b) has described how Waldorf teacher education and professional development seeks to cultivate dispositions to presence, on the one hand through hermeneutic study leading to embodied ways of seeing and knowing, and on the other hand through transformative artistic practice, including theatre clowning. We believe that theatre clowning can contribute to learning dispositions to presence (Even, 2020) in teaching. Presence refers to the active link between verbal and non-verbal teacher immediacy and student learning; teacher cognitive presence enables

students to construct meaning, social presence enhances authenticity and teaching presence enhances learning (Witt et al., 2004).

It is important to stress that theatre clowning is not primarily concerned with techniques that can be used in the L2 classroom, though some may be. It is more about attuning the teacher to the pedagogical moment (Lutzker, 2014), which is why it is also used increasingly for class teachers as well. It enables teachers to put themselves in the situation of the learner, who doesn't come to the lesson with a plan. In clowning, it is the experience of *not having* a plan or set of intentions that is important. This involves letting go, opening oneself to what is emerging, accepting, welcoming and engaging constructively with what emerges. This operates in the exercises from three perspectives: one's own experience, my perception of the other and, during the sessions, witnessing empathically the process in others. In many exercises, two people 'perform' and the rest observe with empathic interest. It is about developing the awareness of what is emergent in the given situation, often through observing others in the process, and subsequently making this conscious through the use of reflection.

A short description of a typical clowning exercise by co-author Bryden may illustrate the processes involved. Exercises and warm-ups in a theatre clowning workshop focus on inviting connection to oneself, to others and to what is present in a particular moment. The emphasis is on body movement and awareness, eye contact, breath and voice, along with making space for playful confusion. In one exercise, participants look around the room to see what catches their attention. Once they have seen something, they walk to the object to look at it close up. After doing this several times, they are invited to make a sound as they near the object. Making sounds changes the exercise making everyone more visible. The exercises are followed by feedback. Participants usually share feelings of embarrassment or surprises such as enjoying making noises. Gradually participants learn to improvise, be spontaneous and fine tune skills such as receptivity, attentiveness and empathy; they also begin to realize that that this work is not about 'getting something right' but rather about how they feel while doing an exercise.

The exercises also engage pre-verbal dimensions of mutual recognition, intentionality and communication, which are seen as preconditions for meeting and encountering the other. Clowning also uses exercises in which the encounter is dialogic, in which understandings are constructed in the situation. Such communicative understanding is particularly important in the L2 classroom when the lessons are conducted in the target language and where situated learning is important. The students should be able to very quickly grasp what is intended. Since clowning works without scripts and pre-set themes, the participants have to let go of their assumptions and intentions and 'read' the situation as it is, and more importantly, as it is emerging, though in the L2 classroom situation the teacher has of course intentions and directs the students' attention to the relevant themes or skills. Given that much L2 learning involves role play, enactment, and drama, such performative skills in the teacher are essential, so that they can more effectively support the learners and mediate their experiences. Furthermore, we believe that the reflective dimension of the clowning workshops is an important aspect of teacher learning, as Rawson (2021b) has shown in his study of reflection in Waldorf teacher education.

All teachers, but especially L2 teachers, need what Loebell (2017) calls creative agency in unexpected situations. The classroom needs to be a safe space in which learners are relaxed enough to cope with the ambiguity of not fully understanding, that they feel able to improvise in the target language and respond situationally without fear of making mistakes. Learners need to feel they can communicate and be understood in the target language. It therefore helps if the teachers can empathize with students' hesitancy in letting go and taking risks. Like any performance artist, teachers have to be able to quickly learn through reflection and feedback from peers and be able and willing to transform themselves professionally.

THEATRE CLOWNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A THEORETICAL SKETCH

Theatre clowning in L2 teacher education has drawn on a number of sources and has family resemblances to a number of other performance activities, though it has its own practice and methodology which has yet to be fully described and theoretically positioned. Educational theatre clowning obviously draws on the tradition of the clown, whose primary characteristic in whatever field clowning is practiced is that the clown is intuitive. Today clowning has a wide range of applications in therapy, emergency pedagogy, actor training, and now teacher education.

Jacques Lecoq drew on this rich heritage and physical theatre when exploring mask and clown work. Following Lecoq (Evans & Kemp, 2016), what distinguishes the clown from the actor is a way of looking at the world that is different and unexpected. What the clown performs is not scripted and has a fluid character since the clown adopts and modifies a variety of personae. These roles are not character interpretations of a role because the clown persona, the performer and the role are temporarily aligned; the clown is not playing a role, the clown is the role, though transiently. The clown also has the ability to play with the audience “and to create a sense of complicité with them by using play to connect with them” (Peacock, 2009, p. 14). Indeed, the qualities Lecoq (2006) valorized most were *jeu* (playfulness in the sense of being open and not trapped in a role or function), *complicité* (mutuality, shared awareness, common understandings) and *disponibilité* (availability, openness, actively curious and receptive to the environment, especially other people). The otherness of the clown is symbolized by costume and mask, and its most essential form, by the red nose, the smallest mask in the world.

Kemp (2017) draws attention to three other key notions in Lecoq’s approach. The first is *tout bouge* - everything moves. This is linked to playfulness but also implies ongoing change and transformation and points to the observation that at source, all thoughts, feelings, gestures, words and actions involved embodied movement and perception. Kemp links this idea to recent studies in embodied cognition (Gallagher, 2006) and the idea that sensorimotor experience is the basis for conceptualizing the world. We believe reference could also be made to Massumi’s (2002) notion that the intrinsic connection between movement, affect and sensation (including perception) as properties of the body are sources of qualitative change in a person’s engagement with the world and are also preconditions for emergence. Massumi observes that “perceptions are possible actions” (p. 91), and that anticipations are perceptions of emergent change. This is actually a good description of the clowning process and also of presence and pedagogical tact, the ability to anticipate the emergent moment in the classroom situation.

The second key idea in Lecoq’s approach is *le fond poétique commun*, which is linked to the notion of movement but goes further in suggesting that people share a foundation of sensorial knowledge based on physical engagement with the material world, which underpins mutual situational knowing. This relates to Lakoff and Johnson’s (2003) idea that sensory experience in the world forms the basis for metaphors we construct to explain complex concepts. In the case of theatre clowning, situated shared understandings draw on common embodied experience that generates a temporary experience of recognition: “we know - we understand”. This links with *sense of language*, described above. The third idea of Lecoq is *dynamique*, which implies a blend of rhythm, force and space and a pre-reflective level of activity and engagement with our immediate environment, including the other. Each of these qualities experienced in clowning links to what Berger (2013), in connection with translation, called the pre-linguistic realm of language which enables us to have shared understandings through different languages.

Following Biesta’s (2013) notion of subjectification in education, the subject is unexpectedly summoned by the other or by the situation to step up, take responsibility for the situation and for her desires and actions. The interruption can be suppressed, ignored or the subject can open herself to being changed by the encounter and thus brings about transformative self-formation. In theatre clowning, the subject plunges into the given situation unprepared,

without a plan, without a script or a role and engages with the other and her embodied self. In order to be open to alterity, we offer ourselves as a sentient and social space to the other. It is a profound form of generosity. The inner gesture of a theater clown is 'yes!' to the other, to what we encounter. In the data gathered in this study, one of the most frequently expressed experiences was the sense of liberation of agency that accompanies opening to the other.

Describing her own work as a theatre clowning facilitator, co-author Bryden characterizes clowning as an art of relationships, emphasizing authenticity and emotional transparency as essential elements. The clown is in continual relationship to her own feelings, to others and to what is taking place in the *now*. These practices are vital for teachers. Clowns are not acting, they are being. Clowning opens up a world of play, playing with fictional stories, without need for coherence. However, their eye contact with the audience shares that they are fully aware that they are pretending. They can step in or out of a role, and reveal their true feelings about the role in the play. The clown invites us to be more flexible, fully ourselves, and to celebrate all that it means to be human.

In theatre clowning the facilitator is both guide but also clown, making the role ambivalent and vulnerable but possibly also therefore more effective in building trust because of the way the roles of teacher and student/participant become blurred. In L2 teacher education, the primary function of clowning is neither therapeutic nor primarily aesthetic, but rather starting to learn dispositions, such as a capacity for improvisation, the cultivation of the sense of the language of gesture, openness to what is emergent in the students, being a resilient learner (coping with resistance and learning from mistakes) and acceptance of one's embodied sense of self as a basis for agency, which are seen as vital to L2 teachers.

Lutzker's (2007) study of theatre clowning in teacher education showed empirically that participants gained confidence and readiness to engage with unexpected situations in the classroom, that they felt they had gained a new receptivity and attentiveness, that the activity was rejuvenating, and that they increased their trust in their own creative abilities. He concludes that

The rejuvenating effects of the process are evident in what the participants wrote. Overcoming their intense fears, the participants learned to let go of their 'plans' and trust their own and others' imaginative potential. Within an 'empty space' participants discovered a new world full of creative possibilities. Clowning thus offered the participants the direct experience of a creative and personal 'knowledge in action' which differed substantially from anything they had previously experienced. These experiences were dependent on the presence of the other participants both in regard to working together, as well as in their resonance as an audience and later in feedback. The vital significance of the group in supporting these developments was referred to in most of the responses (2007, p. 218).

As Lutzker points out, an essential part of the clowning process is reflecting and sharing feedback. In the clowning workshops in this study this occurs in two stages; following warm-ups/games and improvisations, and at the end of a workshop session. The facilitator prompts with open questions and seeks to create a safe space for personal contributions related to direct experiences, rather than technical judgements, advice or analysis. The facilitator might round up a reflection session by pointing out some of the technical elements, themes or challenges which arose, or close with a question to consider for the next session. Participants are encouraged to keep journals during the workshop, recording experiences in the same open-hearted, non-judgmental, curious style. The following session might include a warm-up or improvisation structure where participants re-live/play out moments or images that are still present with them. During a weeklong workshop, the closing circle includes a review of impressions, struggles, learnings, and open questions.

THE RESEARCH

The data was collected in the form of narrative writing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) over the course of three years and six separate workshops, drawing from a total of 107 participants. At the end of each course the participants (L2 teachers in Waldorf schools and teacher students during their practice year) were invited to write down their responses to the questions: *What did you experience during the workshops? What was your experience of the feedback and reflection process?* Few of the participants were native English speakers and they included teachers of English, French, Spanish, and Russian as additional languages. The reflections were either written in English, German or French, which we then translated as necessary. For the purpose of this paper, the authors conducted some follow-up interviews with participants. These texts were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009), in several cycles of reduction (Saldana, 2009) to identify comments and descriptions of lived experiences from which emergent themes could be constructed in relation to the research question. In a further process of abstraction, super-ordinate themes were identified across the various emergent themes. To distinguish the participants' voices, those cited are numbered starting with p1 [participant 1]. In what follows, we illustrate the main themes we constructed from the data. We have quoted participants verbatim.

KEY THEMES

1. The role of reflection within the process

Ninety-six percent of the participants mentioned the value and role of reflection in relation to teaching and personal development. This is a typical example:

The reflections were personally very important in order to sort and order the deep experiences in a bigger context - this in particular has a strong and direct link to being a teacher. (p47)

The exercises during the workshops required the participants to observe each other during the activities and to draw on this in the subsequent reflection phases:

The reflection supported the process of exact observation and highlighted the alignment or difference between the various participants and how they acted. Explanations about the intentions of clowning supported my own authentic experience within the improvisation exercises. Thus, clowning became a field of practice in which I could experience myself and my responses to others and enhanced my capacity for spontaneity. (p98)

Through this process of observation and reflection 100% of the participants were able to notice how the workshop process affected them:

I started with considerable mistrust in (social) interactive games, in encounter groups, at the beginning of meetings etc., but I quickly got involved and encountered the other participants. Joy and lightness arose in the exercises. With growing curiosity, I noticed how much I was able to perceive the others and what was in the atmosphere beyond what was possible to see in the gestures, movement, gait and facial expressions. Reflecting was a great help for me. A lot of things became comprehensible through being put into words afterwards. I learned to allow myself to enter into the situation and thereby what was experienced in the feeling, the movement or eye contact and afterwards to re-experience these qualities with more distance. I consider myself no longer as vulnerable as I was. In

the action I was more able to attend to the other person and the situation and less to myself and therefore less likely to lose the thread. I experienced the reflection actually as the most important part (though of course without the action nothing can be learned) because our attention is focused through verbalizing and thus to a deeper effect than during the actual exercises. Thus, the experiences in the situations became tangible for me in the review. (p35)

2. Letting go

Another recurring theme was that of gradually learning to let go and being present (90% of participants mentioned this theme):

Learning to let go and not control situations and people; being myself...or rather... acknowledge my feelings and what is going on at that moment. Notice and include others, feeling safe. Daring to be. I can evolve as a person and as a teacher. (p52)

Connected to letting go is the experience of opening up to self and other and the interest this generated (mentioned by 85% of the participants):

In the clowning seminar I experienced a progressive letting go. Over several exercises I noticed how precious listening, noticing and admiring another can be, in order to develop a shared story. Out of spontaneous situations something authentic revealed itself, which was apparent to both performer and audience in a lively way, what it feels to be a clown from the inside. More and more we were able to abandon rehearsed forms of speech, gesture, thought out ways of being and acting and more and more an inner spontaneous poetry emerged, a poetry of humor and life itself. I was able my second workshop to more quickly, more willingly open to the other and to get into the spirit of the exercises. Each day I went to the course with growing curiosity, fascination and wonder for what would emerge and joy in discovering one's own hidden talents and those of the other participants. I increasingly noticed that ever deeper layers of humanity welled up in waves, making authenticity to a life-feeling. I experienced this as a particular gift, and felt I would be able to generate similar interest in my students in school. (p12)

3. Cultivating teacher dispositions

Eighty-five percent of participants made links to teacher dispositions or habits of mind necessary for the L2 classroom. The process of empathically observing self and others in the workshop exercises helped some participants discover the attitude teachers need towards their students:

As observer of the others, I noticed that some people, especially those who seemed to be most struggling to open up, produced a new picture in me, a gentler picture that generated empathy in me. The reflection was also very important in understanding the pedagogical significance of clowning- what happens when I meet another person with an attitude of appreciation and admiration? The other opens and become beautiful... (p24).

Seventy-five percent of participants made a connection between observing others, self-observation and reflection and the classroom teaching situation:

Through the reflection one can recognize the basic methods of teaching. This recognition helped me recognize my own feelings and understand the experiences I had doing the exercises and I could apply this to my teaching situation. I discovered new sides to my character- I always want to plan everything before I act- but here I learned to trust that I

can act out of the situation, open, not with a head full of thoughts. I gained something natural in my activities. This is a very effective way to learn the method- through one's own feelings one learns faster, deeper and more sustainable. There was an intimate atmosphere among the learners, and everyone gains trust. I opened fully. (p3)

Another participant noted that her attitude to learning from mistakes changed, which is an important pedagogical stance,

In the reflections we discussed a wide range of such issues and found answers ourselves. The reflection gave us a sense of security and confidence because we were able to recognize that everything is good, in the sense that we can learn from it, each process in everyday life, even mistakes, are helpful, even supportive- which is the opposite of what we often think. (p8)

The same participant felt that some of the mirroring exercises used in the clowning workshop were felt to be useful preparation for the classroom:

The exercise of mirroring was already a form of reflection. Standing in front of a class is like improvisation because in order to get their attention we need to ensure that body language, gesture and words align. (p8)

Another aspect linking the experiences in the workshops with the classroom was expressed by one participant as follows:

Concerning my pedagogical skills and abilities the workshops showed me how important it is to be in contact with your own emotions and they can be an instrument or better a way of being that can create an openness in the classroom that allows pupils to relate to the subject in a strong way. I'm more that ever convinced now that this emotional connection is essential in teaching. (p10)

4. Presence

Some 90% of participants expressed the connection they felt between being allowed to be themselves in the workshops and being a better teacher through being more present and authentic in the lessons and in communicating more joy in learning.

For the teacher to be able to truly meet the other, the child, one has to be fully present and in full essence or beingness. That's so hard to achieve and practice. But I believe, based on my experience that clowning can strengthen and deepen that. If I could embody this, I think I can really succeed in many ways and for sure I'll be a joyful teacher! :) If one succeeds on this (which I also aspire for myself), it will have a great implication in the inner development of the teacher and in effect her/his own work. (p74)

Sixty-five percent of participants highlighted how the experience in the workshops related to their classroom persona:

It helped to recognize that I can let go and achieve something, to open myself in classrooms situations. It helped me to extend my consciousness about myself and the effect I have on others, to overcome my own weaknesses and fears and have fun doing so. It helped me to tackle my weaknesses in my teaching. (p101)

In teaching I continuously need a certain courage to deal with uncertainty. The workshop helped me to face the abyss and recognize the plurality of the possible. The exercises helped me become more conscious but also at the same time, much dissolves in a relaxed smile. One can develop the necessary spontaneity and empathy for situations in which one feels uncertain. (p38)

After the data had been analyzed, we conducted interviews with three clowning participants who had done several courses and asked them to look back and think about what they thought they learned doing clowning and what it was like doing subsequent courses. All three were certain that they encountered unexpected challenges in the classroom with less fear and greater openness, and experienced a greater willingness to encounter the other. Pursuing this finding constitutes the next stage in our research.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In our brief outline of the skills and attitudes required for L2 teaching in Waldorf education, we highlighted the importance of presence in the classroom, the ability to respond to the moment, ‘reading’ the other and having ‘sense of language’ in the specific sense outlined by Lutzker, and ‘applied orality’- that is, a range of performative skills. The participants’ statements confirmed that the exercises involved these aspects to some extent. The clearest outcome was that the scaffolded reflection process was considered to be an important part of the learning process. Observing others with empathy and the reflective process seems to be almost as powerful as actually doing the exercises. This confirmed that reflection is a vital part of the clowning workshops. There is frequent reference to noticing, listening, admiring, discovering, opening up to what is emergent. We interpret this as evidence that the exercises and approach cultivate a sense of trust, embodied empathy, or inner participation which we associate with Lutzker’s (2017) sense of language but also with a particular quality of the performative approach that can be understood in terms of Massumi’s (2002) notion of being in a perpetual state of emergence, and that specific practices can develop this into creative moments of doing and insight. Indeed, it suggests that sense of language might also be called sense of emergence.

The data also suggest that experiences that can be described as presence, being present or coming into presence, are often associated with letting go and that this calls for courage in one’s own intuitions and trust in the other. We have not cited them here for lack of space, but many statements confirmed Lutzker’s (2007) original study regarding the value of improvisation in clowning and the cultivating of artistic sensibilities, which participants felt would enhance their art of teaching ability, being able to communicate without words, and the aspect of encountering and engaging positively with the unexpected. Our reading of the statements, but also the behavior of the participants in the workshops, suggest that this involves a subtle shift towards greater teacher agency. This shift may be characterized by two processes. The first involves overcoming the sense of holding back from pedagogical action because of fear of failure, and the second involves being willing to act in spite of the risks. We feel that both of these processes have the dual effect of freeing up the teacher and at the same time enabling students to experience the role-modeling of their teacher in this kind of risk taking. Part of this is the disposition to resilience in learning expressed in the willingness to make mistakes and learn from them. A second aspect is the potential freeing up of the teacher to opening herself to the pedagogical possibility of the situation and the needs of the students. Teachers are often preoccupied with delivering their prescribed curriculum, meeting targets, being effective in terms of evaluations, and are perhaps not open enough to the learning potential of the actual situation and the actual needs of the learners in the given situation.

This study is limited in its scope and was not funded. However, data continues to be collected from L2 teachers who have practiced and deepened their interest in clowning over many years.

Our tentative conclusion from what we have presented here is that theatre clowning can prepare L2 teachers to be receptive to what comes from the students in the classroom situation, which cannot be predicted and does not always fit what has been planned. It is good that teachers have lesson plans with aims and criteria, but it is also good that teachers can recognize what happens in unplanned ways, and be able to greet it (clowning facilitators encourage participants to say yes to what is offered). This activity can help L2 teachers have the courage to leave their lesson plan, trust themselves and the students, be open to the possibility that something useful will emerge. Reflection helps the teacher to understand what happened, to judge its fruitfulness. In particular, we believe it can help teachers be able to recognize and support the growth of unconstrained skills, which can go on growing beyond school and throughout life. What also matters is the process of getting there—the *métodos*—the route the educational journey takes. This should support the self-formation of the person.

For L2 teachers in any school that values performative teaching, we believe that performative skills are essential, and these are not easily learned in conventional teacher education settings. It may take activities such as theatre clowning as well as storytelling, drama, improvisation to unlock the performer within. We believe that these artistic processes benefit from structured reflection. In particular, we believe that theatre clowning can enable L2 teachers and student teachers to experience performance not in the sense of entertaining an audience but in the sense of using the whole body and voice to respond actively to emergent situations in the classroom. The confidence gained through such exercises and processes supports the teachers in developing greater awareness of gesture, body language, using shared intentionality and being able to improvise meaningfully in unexpected situations.

NOTES

¹ Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf School for workers' children in the Waldorf Cigarette Factory in Stuttgart in Germany in 1919 (Dahlin, 2017). Schools following this approach are variously called Steiner (e.g., in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Australia) or Waldorf (e.g., in the USA and Germany). The terms are synonymous. This article uses Waldorf in alignment with the educational approach rather than the person.

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