

Towards a performance-based approach to language learning

Scott Thornbury

IH Barcelona ELT Conference
February 2019

- performance as usage
- performance as production
- performance as identity work
- performance as embodiment
- performance as drama

‘We thus make a fundamental distinction between *competence* (the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language) and *performance* (the actual use of language in concrete situations).’

Chomsky, N. (1965) *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*.
Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, p.4

Bulldogs bulldogs bulldogs fight fight fight.



Bulldogs fight.



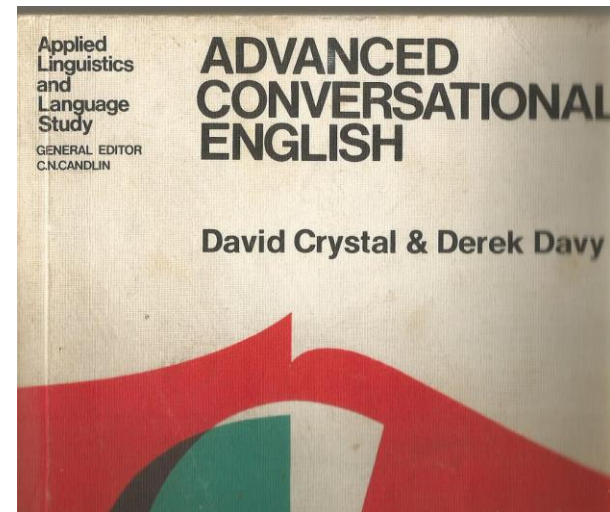
Bulldogs bulldogs fight fight.



Bulldogs bulldogs bulldogs fight fight fight.

A well |what's the · |what's the 'failure with the ↑FÒOTBALL| I
mean |this · |this I don't 'really ↑SÈÈ| I mean it · |cos the
↑MÒNEY| · |how 'much does it 'cost to get ÌN| |down the ↑RÒAD|
|NÒW|

B I |think it ↑probably – it| 5
|probably 'is the ↑MÒNEY| for |what you ↑GÈT| you |KNÓW| – erm
I was |reading in the ↑paper this ↑MÒRNING| a a |CHÀP| he's a



Productive -- but grammatical?

1. The –er, the –er: *The bigger they are, the harder they fall.*
2. NP, NP! *Him, a lawyer?!*
3. It [be] [adjective], NP: *It's incredible, the difference.*
4. What is X doing Y? *What's this cup doing here?*
5. [noun] by [noun]: *day by day, bit by bit*

‘Instead of rejecting what is messy, we accept the mess and build it into the theory.’

Halliday, M.A.K. (1978) *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold, p. 38.

“Language is ... to be viewed as a kind of pastiche, pasted together in an improvised way out of ready-made elements...”

“Speaking is more similar to remembering procedures and things than it is to following rules...”

Hopper, P.J. (1998). Emergent language. In Tomasello, M. (ed.) *The New Psychology of Language: Cognitive and Functional Approaches to Language Structure*. Mahwah, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp 166 – 167.

“you must being!”

CONTEXT	ALL FORMS (SAMPLE): 100 200 500	FREQ
MUST BE DOING		198
MUST BE GOING		188
MUST BE GETTING		144
MUST BE THINKING		96
MUST BE FEELING		90
MUST BE WORKING		56
MUST BE JOKING		54
MUST BE HAVING		49
MUST BE KIDDING		47
MUST BE WONDERING		45
MUST BE TALKING		36

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)
<https://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>

CONTEXT	ALL FORMS (SAMPLE): 100 200 500	FREQ	ALL	%	MI
MUST BE JOKING		54	3255	1.66	10.76
MUST BE DREAMING		33	4803	0.69	9.49
MUST BE KIDDING		47	7122	0.66	9.43
MUST BE IMAGINING		11	3825	0.29	8.23
MUST BE WONDERING		45	18404	0.24	8.00
MUST BE HIDING		26	11347	0.23	7.90
MUST BE FEELING		90	70044	0.13	7.07
MUST BE LAUGHING		23	18463	0.12	7.02
MUST BE LYING		29	23729	0.12	6.99
MUST BE THINKING		96	94784	0.10	6.72
MUST BE DOING		198	201574	0.10	6.68

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)
<https://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>

We deserve medals all right, but pay for them? They **must be joking!** " Clearly we had reached the point where expl

atterman told me tonight, though, that he likes earthquakes. You **must be joking!** No. He said, ' They're fun. They

s. " A little hundred-ton cargo ship entrusted with freighting beans? You **must be joking.** " Perry stroked his beard and

iving a blister on Meig-Ian's palm and gaped at him. " You **must be joking!** Look at these people -- and if you've no m

blinked with amazement, then broke into a hearty laugh. " You **must be joking!** " was all he could get out. Nor did his

sh lesbians? No way. You know, Irish gay men? You **must be joking.** Our existence seemed to be quite a shock to a l

" You might try telling him. " # " You **must be joking.** We've spent years not knowing about Dad's swing. "

y do they need to go out? # Parties? # " You **must be joking.** " # She doesn't like socializing. # " I never

se for " legiscide. " # Joseph B. Cicero, Albany Park # **Must Be Joking** # In expressing the popular view that welfare

I read it again hoping to find the punchline, surely this guy **must be joking!** # True, this latest scandal is no Waterga

e took no notice and if they were aggressive she acted as if they **must be joking.** How could anyone love her when st

said. I'd never heard it before. I thought he **must be joking.** " Papa, are you saying that I have my own heart

e. # -- You are truly the height of impertinence! Surely you **must be joking!** # -- Not at all! I have written about the fa

A different set of numbers start running backwards... # STEED # You **must be joking...** 349 EXT. CATWALKS - CONTI

aking inquiries. Were you paid at all for your labor? You **must be joking.** No pay. Nothing? Nothing whatsoever. (Foot

ars " before. She understood the words he was saying but thought he **must be joking,** playing a terrible joke on her a

d businesses manage their money. # OPINION: Robert Muldoon **must be smirking** crookedly in
ed to me, but I knew she **must be smirking**, pleased by her clever insult. She wanted me to be s
of predatory power is spreading. # The King of Swaziland **must be smirking!** Sad to see Africa ev
thinks tomorrow. # West Bengal's CM **must be smirking** now. # When her government threw a
e for the next decade... so depressing. Fossil Fuels **must be smirking** themselves silly. # heads in

you must be joking



must be



must be ...ing



“The King of Swaziland must be smirking!”

“Learning grammar involves abstracting regularities from the stock of known lexical sequences.”

Ellis, N. (1997). Vocabulary acquisition: word structure, collocation, word-class. In Schmitt, N., and McCarthy, M. (Eds.) *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition, and Pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GdSC1Z1Kzs

“If language is learned for worldly use, the learning process itself must be use-based”.

Churchill, E., Okada, H., Nishino, T., and Atkinson, D. (2010) ‘Symbiotic gesture and the sociocognitive visibility of grammar in second language acquisition’. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94, p. 249.

- performance as usage
- **performance as production**
- performance as identity work
- performance as embodiment
- performance as drama

The production stage:

‘It is a pity that language learning in the classroom so often stops short at [this stage]. Many teachers feel that they have done their job well if they have presented the new material effectively and given their students adequate, though perhaps controlled, practice in it. All the same, no *real* learning can be assumed to have taken place until the students are able *to use the language for themselves.*’

Byrne, D. (1976) *Teaching Oral English*. Harlow: Longman, p. 2.

The production stage:

‘It is a pity that language learning in the classroom so often stops short at [this stage]. Many teachers feel that they have done their job well if they have presented the new material effectively and given their students adequate, though perhaps controlled, practice in it. **All the same, no *real* learning can be assumed to have taken place until the students are able *to use the language for themselves.***’

Byrne, D. (1976) *Teaching Oral English*. Harlow: Longman, p. 2.

Activities should be designed 'to allow learners to experience some of the normal psychological pressures felt by people engaged in real communication.'

Gatbonton, E. and Segalowitz, N. (1988) 'Creative automatization: Principles for promoting fluency within a communicative framework', *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 3, p.486.

Activities should be ...

1. genuinely communicative
2. psychologically authentic
3. focused
4. formulaic
5. inherently repetitive

Gatbonton, E. and Segalowitz, N. (1988) 'Creative automatization: Principles for promoting fluency within a communicative framework', *TESOL Quarterly*, **22**, 3.

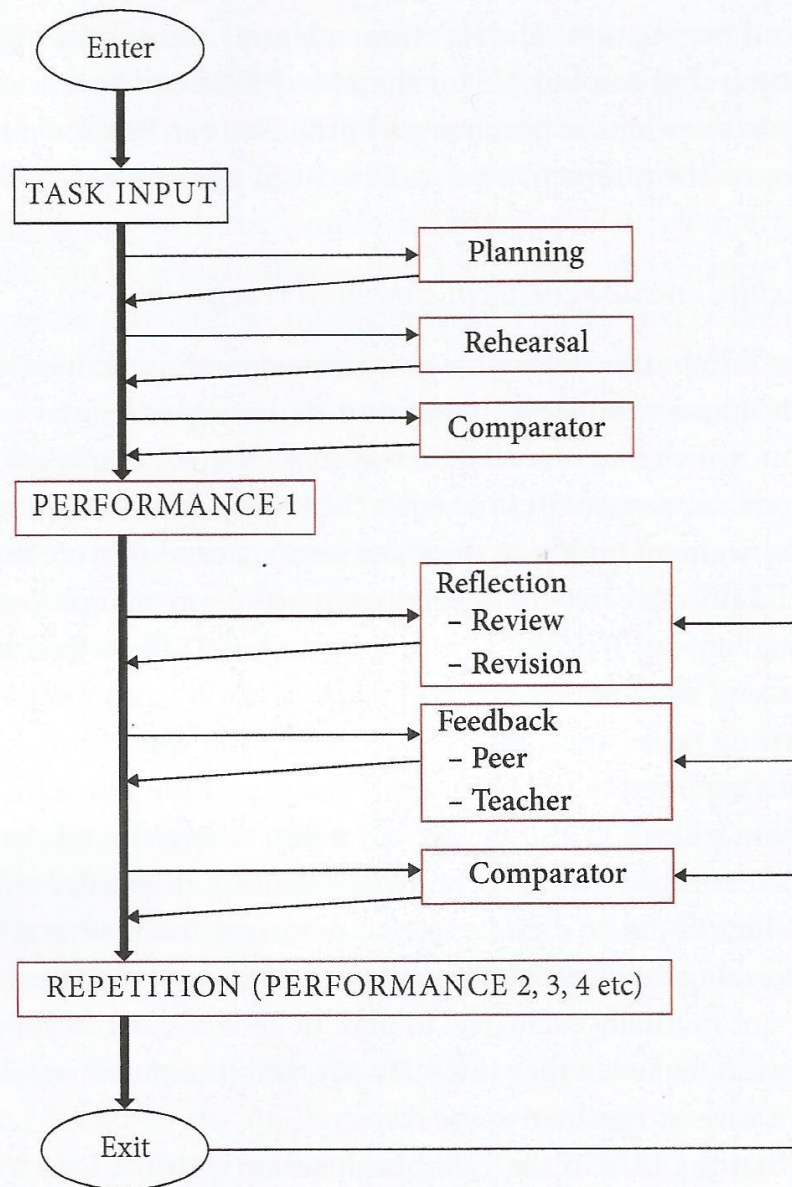


Figure 2. A framework for enhanced repetition in language learning tasks

Lynch, T. (2018) Perform, reflect, recycle: enhancing task repetition in second language speaking classes. In Bygate, M. (ed.) *Learning language through task repetition*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

other-regulation



self-regulation

‘Teaching consists in assisting performance through the ZPD [Zone of Proximal Development]. Teaching can be said to occur when assistance is offered at points in the ZPD at which performance requires assistance.’

Tharp, R.G. & Gallimore, R.(1988) *Rousing Minds to Life: teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.31.

‘Video games operate by a principle of performance before competence. Players can perform before they are competent, supported by the design of the game, the “smart tools” the game offers, and often, too, other, more advanced players (in the game or in chat rooms).’

Gee, J.P. (2007) *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. p.218

- performance as usage
- performance as production
- **performance as identity work**
- performance as embodiment
- performance as drama

‘The self ... as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location...; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented....’

Goffman, E. (1959) *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor, p. 252-253.

‘Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through *stylised repetition of acts*... [It is] a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment.’

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity (10th anniversary edn)*. London: Routledge, p. 179.

‘We are the products of our performances
... It is the repeated performances of
language and identity that produce the
semblance of being.’

Pennycook, A. (2007) *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*.
London: Routledge op.cit, p. 63.

‘Since I lack a voice of my own, the voices of others invade me [...] By assuming them, I gradually make them mine. I am being remade, fragment by fragment, like a patchwork quilt.’

Hoffman, E. (1989) *Lost in Translation*, London: Vintage Books, p. 220.

‘Shadowing’ (Subvocalizing)

‘...when my mind works on vocalizing it inside, I hear the sound. I hear myself saying the sound.’

‘While the teacher is saying it?’ I asked.

‘Almost as an echo of what the teacher is saying.’

‘In your own voice, or in his voice?’

‘I hear myself saying it, in my own voice.’

Stevick, E. (1989) *Success with foreign languages: Seven who achieved it and what worked for them*. New York: Prentice-Hall, p. 83.

'In Arabic, after basic work on pronunciation, we started with dialogs,' Frieda continued. 'For me it was more than an academic exercise. It was very important for me, as a person, to be able to know how to say, "I'm going to the university," or "I'm studying my Arabic." ... 'Wait a minute!' I interrupted. 'It sounds like there's something very important here. It was not only a matter of being able to recite it, to perform it in class ... but it was also that you made this a part of yourself, you really put your whole self into it!'

'Oh, yes! Your whole self has to be in it!' Frieda replied. 'I would speak to myself in Arabic at home, you know. If I knew how to say to myself "I have to look for my hairbrush," I would say it. My mother would think I was crazy, but...'

Stevick, E. (1989) *Success with foreign languages: Seven who achieved it and what worked for them*. New York: Prentice-Hall, p. 105.

‘Sociolinguistics says that how you act [and talk] depends on who you are;

Critical theory says that who you are depends on how you act [and talk].’

Cameron, D. (1995) *Verbal hygiene*. London: Routledge, pp. 15-16.

‘Sociolinguistics says that how you act [and talk] depends on who you are;

Critical theory says that who you are depends on how you act [and talk].’

Cameron, D. (1995) *Verbal hygiene*. London: Routledge, pp. 15-16.

- performance as usage
- performance as production
- performance as identity work
- **performance as embodiment**
- performance as drama

“Ultimately all the meaning of all words is derived from bodily experience.”

Malinowski, B. 1935. *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, vol. 2. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 58.



Lapaire, J-R. (2006) *La grammaire anglaise en mouvement*. Paris: Hachette.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZyTkLpy4qU&t=0s>

“Language is not only about *expressing* meaning, but *shaping* meaning and *performing* meaning.”

Jean-Rémi Lapaire

‘The body can be rethought as the expressive instrument of the language that must be taught.’

Holme, R. (2009) *Cognitive linguistics and language teaching*.
Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, p.53.

- performance as usage
- performance as production
- performance as identity work
- performance as embodiment
- **performance as drama**

'The results of our study suggest that the use of drama techniques in language classrooms can have a significant impact on L2 oral fluency relative to other learner-centred communicative language practices. [Moreover] the drama techniques employed in our study appear to help learners develop strategies that are generalisable to a variety of novel speaking tasks.'

Galante, A. & Thomson, R.I. (2017). 'The effectiveness of drama as an instructional approach in the development of second language oral fluency, comprehensibility, and accentedness.' *TESOL Quarterly*, 51/1: p.132.

'The results of our study suggest that the use of drama techniques in language classrooms can have a significant impact on L2 oral fluency relative to other learner-centred communicative language practices. [Moreover] the drama techniques employed in our study appear to help learners develop strategies that are generalisable to a variety of novel speaking tasks.'

Galante, A. & Thomson, R.I. (2017). 'The effectiveness of drama as an instructional approach in the development of second language oral fluency, comprehensibility, and accentedness.' *TESOL Quarterly*, 51/1: p.132.



<http://handsupproject.org/>

THEORY	APPLICATION
performance as usage	experiential (use-based)
performance as production	interactive, repeated, assisted
performance as identity work	appropriated, (re-)voiced
performance as embodiment	holistic, enacted
performance as drama	fluent, expressive

‘One acquires a language in order to act, and by acting, in a world where language is performative. This is exactly why and how children learn their first language, and it accounts as well for most of the second/additional language learning going on in the world today.’

Atkinson, D. (2002). Towards a sociocognitive approach to second language acquisition. *Modern Language Journal*, 86, p. 537.