Towards a performance-based approach to language learning

Scott Thornbury

- performance as production
- performance as usage
- performance and performativity
- 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.

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.

'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.

other-regulation

self-regulation

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'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

A   well |what's the · |what's the 'failure with the ↑FÒOTBALL| I

mean |this · |this I don't 'really ↑SÈE| 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
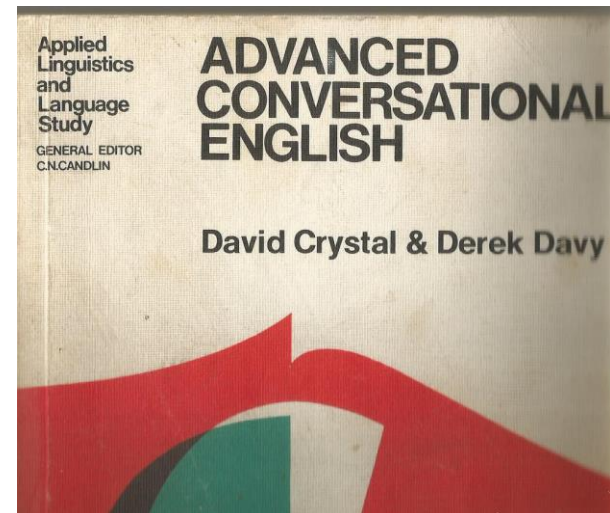
'Competence refers to the Ideal, performance refers to the Fall.'

Bernstein, B. (1970 [1972]) 'Social class, Language and Socialization', in Giglioli, P.P. (ed.) *Language and social context.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 160.

'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,* London: Edward Arnold, p. 38).

'Dynamic systems theory does away with the distinction between competence and performance… Dynamic system researchers feel no need to invoke an underlying mental competence to explain human behaviour in context. Instead, an organism's ongoing activity continuously changes its neural states, just as growth changes the physical dimensions of the body.'

(Larsen-Freeman, D. & Cameron, L. 2008, *Complex systems and applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press, p.17)

'In a dynamic perspective, performance emerges from a confluence of subsystems within a particular task environment.'

Thelen, E. & Smith, L. (1994) *A Dynamic Systems Approach to the Development of Cognition and Action*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, p. 84.

'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

"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.

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'Identities are a product of our ongoing performances of acts that are largely pre-scribed… We do not write our own scripts, although we do have some space for change…

We are as we are because of how we speak.'

Pennycook, A. (2007) *Global Englishes and transcultural flows.* London: Routledge, pp- 70-71.

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

Pennycook, 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.

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

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

'In language education the supposition is that because linguistic meaning and its modes of symbolisation have together evolved from embodied experience, then these symbolic structures will be made more memorable if they are reinvested in the movements, gestures and imagery from which they were conceptualised. 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.

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

Jean-Rémi Lapaire

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

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'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.

THEORY	APPLICATION
performance as production	psychologically real, assisted
performance as usage	experiential, interactive
performance and performativity	re-iterative, appropriated
performance as embodiment	holistic, enacted
performance as drama	fluent, expressive

'Learning is ever thus. It takes place in a social context, involving action, reaction, collaborative interaction, intersubjectivity, and mutually assisted performance.'

Ellis, N.C. (2008). The dynamics of second language emergence: cycles of language use, language change, and language acquisition. *Modern Language Journal* 92/2, p.242.