



Building Interdisciplinary Bridges Across Cultures

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Abstract

Our research started in 2014 with the performance of a workshop designed to investigate the relationship between perception, thoughts, language and body movement among adults with different backgrounds and with no previous experience on body expression or dance techniques.

We all agree that poetry is a complex and powerful artistic expression: it is emotion, excitement, passion and doubt. Lindenberg (2013) outlines the “poetry’s subtle, splendid way of asking us to look at things (everyday things, vast and sublime things) anew—to re-see the world, to re-see the language we use to describe the world to ourselves, to cease taking these things for granted.” However, many teachers, when they work poetry in class, use analytical activities to try to simplify poetry understanding. Also, very simple poems are often chosen, in order to avoid metaphor ambiguity and focus on vocabulary. For that, we firmly believe that if we want to help students experience poetry, we should develop other educational strategies on the opposite direction: raise up for emotion, boost the poetic essence of poetry, go mad, fall in love with its eccentricity and complexity. Some didactic strategies to promote this alternative approach to poetry are: (i) Allow students and teachers to focus on parts of the text, for instance in one verse, in order to understand it deeply, to apprehend it. (ii) Experience different ways of understanding: talking but also translating words into other modalities: movement, singing, images. (iii) Encourage cooperative work and discussion: reading as a coral activity in which everybody gives new perspectives and make the interpretation richer and polyhedral. (iv) Promote the comprehension of arts through creation. Our goal has been to develop new tools for teachers seeking for new interdisciplinary experiences to comprehend poetry, not only through rational strategies but also through emotional activities.

We decided to look further into the connection between words and movement and in 2015, we developed two new workshops (“Dancing Words” & “Poetry: talk too much or say nothing at all”): The first one explored the effect of words and short sentences in people's bodies (both phonetically and semantically). Also, it examined whether letting the body express and react to language may help readers or students to create their own poetic imageries so that they can better understand, enjoy or create poetry. We propose that the combination of oral poetry and body movement or dancing, which are two powerful resources to experience the passion

that poetical words enclose, may serve as a new approach for poetry teaching. The second one, explored how can we use movement to help pupils and students to enjoy poetry. We worked with poems in which musicality was very important -"zing-zings d'azot/ engalzen brunzidera/ als zenits dels atzars/ d'enzes zero/ zombi esbotzat/ què etzibes de zona en zona? enzims?" (Casasses, 2002)- and comprehension was not possible only through logical analysis of sentences, or connection with previous live experiences of the readers: students had to approach the poem -or some verses of the poem- through the synesthetic experience.

From these workshops and our experience as teachers, we conclude that (a) deep comprehension of poetry do not consist in making the implicit explicit, but also in exploring the subjectivity of the reader, that awakes with every poem he reads. (b) Dialogue is the main learning tool that students have in all disciplines but especially in literature; it is necessary to foster dialogue and active participation in classes of literature to ensure understanding and artistic expression. The proposed horizontal dialogic, democratic and cooperative approaches are always richer and more demanding than questions or exercises orchestrated by the teacher. We are convinced that the teacher shouldn't be an instructor but a guide, who shares the learning process with the students, and understands education as a horizontal process not based in power relationships. Teacher must always respect the previous knowledges of the students and their aesthetic preferences (Freire, 2003) and let them be, let them grow, let them learn from their mistakes. Mistakes are the key, the beginning of the learning experience. Even though, dialogue does not always allow readers to explore all kind of emotions that poetry arises. That's why we think that (c) Explore art (poetry) through art (dancing, for instance) is an important strategy for a holistic approach to poetry.

Bio

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