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## A Brechtian theatre pedagogy for intercultural education research

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### ABSTRACT

The following article explores the potential of Bertolt Brecht's theatre pedagogy for intercultural education research. It is argued that Brecht's pedagogical views on theatre connect to those interculturalists who prioritise the embodied dimensions of intercultural encounters over a competence-driven orientation. Both share a love for aesthetic experimentation as the basis for learning and critical engagement with a complex world. The article outlines how a Brechtian theatre pedagogy was enacted as part of four drama-based research workshops, which were designed to explore international students' intercultural 'strangeness' experiences. It is described how a participant account of an intercultural encounter was turned into a Brechtian playscript by the author and then performed by participants. The analysis is based on the author's as well as the performers' reflections on the scripting process and their performance experiences. It is argued that a Brechtian pedagogy can lead to collective learning experiences, critical reflection and an embodied understanding of intercultural experience in research. The data produced by a Brechtian research pedagogy is considered 'slippery' (aesthetic) data. It is full of metaphoric gaps and suitably resonates the affective dimensions and subjective positionings that constitute intercultural encounters.

Der folgende Artikel untersucht das Potenzial der Brechtschen Theaterpädagogik für die interkulturelle Bildungsforschung. Es wird argumentiert, dass Brecht's pädagogische Sicht auf das Theater an die Interkulturalisten und Pädagogen anknüpft, die die körperbezogenen und affektiven Dimensionen der interkulturellen Begegnung über eine kompetenz-orientierte Ausrichtung betonen. Beide teilen eine Liebe für das ästhetische Experimentieren, als die Grundlage für das Lernen und die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit einer komplexen Welt. Der Artikel skizziert wie eine Brechtsche Pädagogik innerhalb von vier drama-basierten Forschungswerkshops inszeniert wurde, die die interkulturellen Erfahrungen von internationalen Studenten als Ausgangspunkt nahmen. Es wird dargestellt wie die Beschreibung einer interkulturellen Begegnung durch einen Teilnehmer von der Autorin in ein Brechtsches Skript umgewandelt wurde. Dieses Skript wurde dann von den Workshopteilnehmern aufgeführt. Die Analyse basiert auf den Reflektionen der Autorin und der Teilnehmer und nimmt Bezug auf die Skript-Entstehung und die

### KEYWORDS

Brechtian theatre pedagogy; drama-based research; intercultural education research; critical creative pedagogy; de-centred methodology; arts-based research

Aufführung. Es wird argumentiert, dass eine Brechtsche Pädagogik zu kollektiven Lernerfahrungen, kritischer Reflektion und einem körperbezogenen Verständnis von interkultureller Erfahrung in der wissenschaftlichen Forschung führen kann. Die Forschungsdaten, die eine Brechtsche Pädagogik produziert, werden als 'glitschige' (ästhetische) Forschungsdaten angesehen. Sie sind voller metaphorischer Lücken und spiegeln die affektiven Dimensionen und subjektiven Positionierungen, die interkulturelle Begegnungen ausmachen, angemessen wieder.

## Introduction

One bad experience I had when I was leaving the Barclay residences, you know the student accommodation. (...)  
 I didn't know what to do. (...)  
 And I was so afraid at that time. (...)  
 I felt so safe at the time. (...)  
 I can't stop thinking 'what if ...' something happens, what am I doing? (...)

This distilled excerpt from my research participant's (Lin's) verbatim account of an intercultural encounter was shared during one of our four drama sessions, which I facilitated for my PhD research at the University of Glasgow/Scotland. My research explored international students' intercultural 'strangeness' experiences using a drama-based pedagogy. Narrowed down to those phrases that reflect Lin's emotional state, her account reveals the act of remembering and reflecting intercultural experiences as a personal and emotional affair.

My methodological curiosity about people's intercultural experiences and ways of exploring these 'creatively' in research has to be seen in the context of conceptual and pedagogical developments in the area of language and intercultural education. The subjective and emotional dimensions of language and intercultural learning, as well as creative approaches to 'harness' these dimensions in contexts of teaching and research, have long found its way into field.

## Intercultural education and drama pedagogy

A focus on subjective learning experiences can be seen as the result of the field's transition from purely literary-based language learning models to communicative learning approaches (Schachter, 1990; Widdowson, 1978). These communicative models later also integrated the cultural dimension of language learning (Byram, 1990). Prevalent concepts of this cultural turn are 'intercultural (communicative) competence' (Byram, 1997; Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001) and 'transcultural competence' (Meyer, 1991). Both concepts are oriented towards the 'intercultural speaker' (Byram & Zarate, 1997; Kramsch, 1998). They aim to educate students into becoming critically aware of cultural difference and, more importantly, be able to act skilfully within a world where linguistic and cultural practices flow through complex social networks (Risager, 2006).

Teaching and research pedagogies of the cultural turn are for example based on ethnographic methods. These combine detailed everyday observation of one's own and other people's cultural and linguistic practices, with wider theoretical discussions on, for example, social space (Barro, Jordan, & Roberts, 1998; Corbett, 2003). Bräuer's (2002)

edited volume provides a theoretical and praxis-based perspective on a variety of drama-based approaches that focus on intercultural learning. Two drama-based approaches mentioned in the book highlight the significance of the affective dimension in particular: ‘transcultural performance’ (Axtmann, 2002) and ‘performative inquiry’ (Fels, 1998; Fels & McGivern, 2002). Both drama approaches centre around collective improvisation and practice-based reflections on students’ emotional realities, with the aim to create ‘space moments of learning’ (Fels & McGivern, 2002, p. 21) and ‘transcultural recognition’ (Axtmann, 2002, p. 47). They promote the enactivist view that meaning-making can only be achieved through body and mind interaction (Bacon, 2006, p. 139). Drama pedagogies for intercultural learning have likewise been promoted by Fleming (2003, 2004) as a way to ‘de-centre taken for granted perspectives and assumptions and explore in a fresh light the motivations and intentions underlying human encounters’ (Fleming, 2004, p. 110). Based on school-based ethnographic work in a multilingual classroom, Ntelioglou (2011) and Ntelioglou, Fannin, Montanera, and Cummins (2014) show that drama pedagogy, especially within a multiliteracies approach (The New London Group, 1996), can provide an innovative language and intercultural learning practice. Drama-based approaches capitalise for example on students’ personal, cultural and multiple language experiences (Ntelioglou et al., 2014). The hermeneutically oriented ‘interkulturelle Bildung’ (intercultural education) in Germany has also influenced my pedagogical approach to research.

Drama-based pedagogies in German foreign language didactics often follow a receptive-aesthetic approach. Drama is used to facilitate an active engagement with concepts of self and otherness, often through literary, fictional texts and with the purpose to attain ‘Fremdverstehen’ (an understanding of the other) (Bredella, 2010, 2004). Schewe and Peter’s (1993) edited volume outlines drama as new reference discipline for foreign language education. They initiate a new field for research: drama-based foreign language teaching. Since, this ‘performative turn’ has been advanced through the foundation of the bilingual (German–English), open access journal *Scenario* (<http://www.ucc.ie/en/scenario/scenariojournal/>) and a subsequent book series. These are platforms that bring together theatre practitioner, language/drama educators and scholars for lively knowledge exchange around the role of the performing arts in contexts of language – literature – and intercultural learning and research. Kessler and Küppers (2008) for example make a case for drama pedagogy as a holistic way to put into practice intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997). The authors advocate activities that combine linguistic, ethical, action-oriented, affective and cognitive learning objectives and take corporeality and sensuality as their constituting elements. Schewe (2013, 2011) posits a performative learning, teaching and research culture based on the important role that drama pedagogy has historically played as a reference discipline for foreign language didactics. Kramersch (2009) and Kramersch and Gerhards (2012) provide a wider conceptual underpinning with regard to the role of enactivist pedagogies in intercultural education and research. They emphasise the visceral, physical and subjective dimensions of language and intercultural learning and call for pedagogies which ‘capitalise on students’ personal memories, projections and fantasies’ (Kramersch & Gerhards, 2012, pp. 75 and 76). Influenced by critical theorists such as Butler (2005), Bourdieu (1991) and Foucault (1989), Kramersch (2009) promotes a view on narration in language and intercultural education that is centred around students’ private memory and imagination, rather than dis-embodied information exchange.

These embodied dimensions of the language and intercultural learning experience are also highlighted by Phipps and Gonzalez (2004). The authors reject a mere cognitive approach to pedagogy, detached from our 'human ways of being' (p. xv). Language and intercultural learning, so they suggest, should not be conceived in a skill – and competence – oriented way only, for example, as in 'intercultural (communicative) competence' (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2001). Instead they propose the terms 'linguaging' and 'intercultural being' (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004, p. 115) as alternatives. These are terms which capture the transcultural, in-flux and subjective dimensions of intercultural encounters. Research methodologies which evolve out of this focus on embodied dimensions and a turn away from competence-driven models are described as 'decentred' methodologies. These 'allow for critical [creative] spaces in which the unexpected can emerge and the narratives of subjects take on a life of their own' (Phipps, 2013, p. 9). A focus on affect and subjectivity also implicates a sharper focus on the political aspects of 'data' produced by creative pedagogical practice. Students' and research participants' 'creative artefacts' (Cummins, 2001) or 'performance-based identity texts' (Cummins & Early, 2011) can 'symbolise, explicitly and implicitly, critical issues at stake in their lives. These texts can be representative of political, social, and economic life conditions' (Ntelioglou, 2011, p. 602). Advocates of critical pedagogy in language and intercultural education (Guilherme, 2006; Phipps, 2013; Phipps & Guilherme, 2004) equally promote the importance of linking pedagogical aims and activities to the affective, social as well as political realities of students' lives. 'Every educational act is political and every political act should be pedagogical' (Guilherme, 2006, p. 170). Phipps (2014) even argues that intercultural pedagogies which are not based on this pedagogy–justice link could be more harm – than helpful. The pedagogy–justice connection becomes particularly important when working with groups who do not enjoy equitable status. Without the concrete link to social justice, intercultural pedagogies might hold inequitable structures in place, for example, for asylum seekers and refugees. 'They are excluded from the lofty aims of Intercultural Dialogue as equal exchange in many of their encounters, thus troubling the ideal and exposing its vacuousness' (Phipps, 2014, p. 115). My approach to research has to be seen in this wider context of the performative turn in the field of language and intercultural education.

My drama-based research workshops build on the embodied and relationship-based dimensions of language and intercultural learning. Notions of narration in research are thus intimately linked to participants' subjectivity. Additionally, my research approach is underpinned by critical pedagogical concerns for equitable discursive structures.

### **Brechtian theatre pedagogy**

I saw a particular potential in experimenting with German theatre maker's Brecht and Willett (1964) and Brecht (1965) theatre techniques within my drama-based research workshops. I recognised an important parallel connection to the way a performative intercultural pedagogy engages with notions of narration (Kramsch, 2009). Interculturalists seek to 'de-centre' (Fleming, 2004; Phipps, 2013) or as Brecht and Willett (1964) would say 'make strange' through creative practice taken-for-granted personal and societal assumptions. Whilst exiled from Nazi Germany for 15 years, Brecht continued his artistic and intellectual work, and critique of fascism, by laying the ground for a new modern theatre. Brecht, not unlike critical interculturalists (Guilherme, 2006; Phipps & Guilherme,

2004), advocated for a clear linkage between theatre's pedagogical activity and its social and political responsibility. Brecht was critical of the classic Aristotelian theatre because it represented the world mimetically. Brecht criticised the fact that classic theatre did not seem to question the power-structures held in place by such 'pure' acts of showing on stage. The act of aesthetic representation was no neutral affair for Brecht. He reminds us in his writings (Brecht & Willett, 1964, p. 79) that there really is no such thing as seeing [and representing] in an unmediated sense in the first place (Carney, 2005, p. 35). Instead of mimetic seeing and representation, Brechtian theatre pedagogy encouraged a complex form of seeing. 'Some exercise in complex seeing is needed – though it is more important to be able to think above the stream than to think in the stream' (Brecht & Willett, 1964, p. 44). In order to provoke his actors and audiences to think above the stream and look behind taken-for-granted concepts, Brecht designed a mode of 'de-centring' through theatre practice. He called this the 'epic' or later 'dialectical' theatre (Mumford, 2009, p. 167). The epic theatre's main creative device, now common to all contemporary theatre, was called the *Verfremdungseffekt* (estrangement effect). The V-effect was applied to all moments shown on stage – the acting style, stage arrangement, costume and set design as well as musical production. In contrast to a classic Aristotelian theatre, which arranged scenes and episodes in a linear, harmonious fashion, Brecht put them in juxtaposition and introduced interruptive devices. An actor might suddenly burst into reflective song. The audience might be directly addressed in the middle of dialogue with a social commentary on a character's underlying motivation for action. This unexpected break of classic narrative structure, now of course a well-established artistic device, startled the audience out of a mode of viewing as consumption. Instead, spectators were led to examine the unfolding events on stage with a critical eye. The V-effect enabled a critique of everyday representations through an 'aesthetic of heterogeneity' (Jameson, 1998, p. 79) on stage. This portrayed reality, and with it the self, as fragmented, constructed and ultimately changeable. Brecht's aesthetic orientation towards theatre is imbued with a sociological and pedagogical view (Franks & Jones, 1999; Otty, 1995) but does not lose sight of its entertainment role either. Brecht tells us (Brecht & Willett, 1964, pp. 71–73) that the theatre experience must be an enjoyable and not a schoolmasterly experience, because learning itself is an emotional and joyful affair. Pleasure in the epic theatre, as in language and intercultural education, is not an expendable or random by-product. Instead, pleasure is seen as being at the core of critical thinking (Bredella, 2010; Kramsch & Gerhards, 2012; Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004).

Brecht mostly worked from within the theatre institution himself, especially after his return to post-war Berlin and the foundation of the Berliner Ensemble in 1949. Still he believed that theatre's main pedagogical function lay with amateur actors and thus outside of the theatre institution (Otty, 1995, p. 92). His concern for a multiplying and changing of the means of cultural production manifests itself particularly in his *Lehrstücke*, the 'learning plays' (Brecht, Müller, & Manheim, 1977). These experimental short plays were written in the early 1920s and 1930s. They were not created for professional performers and the theatre stage but used for creative experimentation with amateur actors in community settings (e.g. workers groups). 'They were meant not so much for the spectator as for those engaged in the performance. It was, so to speak, art for the producer, not art for the consumer' (Brecht & Willett, 1964, p. 80).

(...) Lehrtheater breaks with the bourgeois theatre and provides a new revolutionary praxis.  
(...) It allows the text to be tried out in practice and changed by those who are undergoing the learning experience. (Wright, 1989, p. 13)

The Lehrtheater used Brecht's whole range of V-effects. Workshop participants' own experienced social realities were used as the basis for a drama-based inquiry into the roles and relationships portrayed in the text (Liebe, 1994). There is a long history of adapting Brecht's learning plays to various peace- and political-education contexts in Germany. This was especially advanced by peace scholar and theatre pedagogue (Steinweg, 1972, 1976; Steinweg, Heidefuß, & Petsch, 1986) and the foundation of the Gesellschaft für Theaterpädagogik (society for theatre pedagogy), with its *Journal für Theaterpädagogik* (*Journal for Theatre Pedagogy*). A special issue on the Brechtian Lehrstücke in the *Journal für Theaterpädagogik* explored its potential for intercultural learning (e.g. Koch, 1994; Liebe, 1994) but without making wider conceptual links. Frimberger (2009) expands on this connection between Brecht and intercultural learning and suggests that 'strangeness' can become a useful concept for drama-based (intercultural) language teaching. In the UK, Brecht's theatre pedagogy influenced various educational drama approaches (Cabral, 1996; Eriksson, 2011; Winston, 1996). It found application in various higher education contexts and was for example used to investigate existing educational conceptualisations in higher education curricula (Franks & Jones, 1999; Otty, 1995). Mumford and Phipps (2002) employed Brechtian pedagogy as a framework to explore the complex acts of translation, pedagogy and cultural transfer when staging a bi-lingual German Volksstück (folk play) in an intercultural context. My research continues these praxis based and theoretical explorations of Brechtian pedagogy, with a focus on how it might become useful in intercultural education research in particular.

### The research project

My research explored international students' intercultural 'strangeness' experiences through a series of four 4-hour drama-based workshops. My research focus was methodological. Aiming to give voice to participants' personal memories, projections and fantasies (Kramsch & Gerhards, 2012, p. 76), I sought to explore how a drama-based approach can build communication spaces in research, in which unexpected participant narratives can emerge and 'take on a life of their own' (Phipps, 2013, p. 9). The research's aim was to *de-centre* in a twofold way. I hoped to *de-centre*, through creative practice, participants' intercultural narratives for shared reflection and by doing so, to *de-centre* a solely cognitive approach to intercultural education research. Narration was conceived as an embodied phenomenon and not located within frameworks of dis-embodied information exchange only. I chose the term 'strangeness' in order to convey to research participants my interest in exploring the subjective and visceral dimensions of their intercultural lives. This emphasis on 'strangeness' was underpinned by my aim to keep the discursive terrain of the research open. In other words, I sought to welcome the whole range of personal, embodied and ambiguous experiences that participants might bring to, or discover within, the drama workshops. I did not want to pre-empt the nature of participants' contributions but encourage a sense of creative ownership, or what Ntelioglou et al. (2014) call 'identity investment'. Such focus on discursive openness was hoped to allow me to understand

how a Brechtian theatre pedagogy can effectively work within participants' experiences in-between cultural, individual and relational dimensions (Bredella, 2010, p. 104).

My research workshops were conducted with a group of 10 international students over a 4-week period, in November 2010, at the School of Education, the University of Glasgow in Scotland. My research participants were a self-selected group of postgraduate international students (EU and non-EU) from across academic disciplines (film studies, education, political science). They were between 25 and 45 years old and all women, with the exception of one male, Pakistani participant with an eager interest in creative methods. There was a diverse range of nationalities present (Canadian, Russian, Pakistani, Polish, Chinese, Columbian, Saudi-Arabian, Greek) and all participants were (at least) bilingual. Their reasons for participating in my research were varied. Some came with a methodological curiosity and wanted to learn more about drama-based work. Others were keen to meet other internationals and share they intercultural 'strangeness' experiences in a creative environment over a period of four Saturdays.

This was an elite and intelligent group of international MA and PhD students who had the privilege of higher education and possessed a wide range of critical and analytical skills already. Their intercultural lives as postgraduate students in the UK were politically secure and not marked by the same structural inequalities that might apply to other international groups such as asylum seekers and refugees. I could thus reasonably assume that the basis for 'open and respectful exchange' between us, as fellow postgraduate students, was established and could be built upon through a drama-based research approach. Although most participants pursued their own academic research projects, they were unfamiliar with the format of the drama/creative research workshop. Workshop 1 thus prepared participants for the 'playful' discursive structures that were at the core of my Brechtian research pedagogy. I introduced a range of simple games and crafts as a way to build our research relationships and in order to familiarise participants with the language of creative engagement and experimentation more generally. These games included, amongst other activities, modelling your partner's life in clay and an alternative version of speed dating which involved singing your favourite childhood lullaby and describing your dream profession as a child. Workshop 2 involved an introduction to improvisational drama exercises, based on Spolin's (1999) 'seven aspects of spontaneity' (p. 4), which combined coordinated movement, music as well observation exercises.

Session 3, which is the focus of this article, built on the established drama-based language of the preceding workshops and introduced a Brechtian research pedagogy more specifically. The purpose was to facilitate a more in-depth engagement with participants' intercultural experience through scriptwriting and performance. I turned a participant's verbatim account (Lin's) of an intercultural encounter, which had occurred in workshop 2, into a (Brechtian) playscript. A range of Brechtian V-effects were applied to Lin's narrative account, which was then subsequently performed by three research participants. The performance and participants' post-performance reflections were filmed. My analysis of the usefulness of Brechtian theatre pedagogy for intercultural education research is based on a range of data. This includes my reflections on the translation process from participant account to playscript, my viewing experience of the performance footage, as well as participants' post-performance reflections. The data thus spans the breadth of the creative process, from the scripting to the reflection stage, and includes my researcher-spectator perspective as well as the participant-performer perspectives.

Focussing on Lin's (estranged) narrative account from these multiple perspectives and modes of modality allows for a more in-depth understanding of how a Brechtian theatre pedagogy might function as part of a performative intercultural education research.

### Brechtian techniques used in the research workshops

Placing narration at the heart of my research, I decided to apply Brecht's V-effects, as used for example in the *Lehrstücke*, to participants' own accounts, rather than using a particular Brechtian play as textual basis. I focused on a particular aesthetic technique, what Brecht calls the 'not-but' (Brecht & Willett, 1964, p. 137):

The moment of the 'not-but' on stage embodies a moment of contradiction – the portrayal of complex social behaviour. Within this moment of confusion, a metaphoric gap is opened; a space in which the spectator is invited to move in, think and produce the sense or meaning of the image. (Carney, 2005, p. 57)

Through the creation of a not-but script, and its subsequent performance by participants, I hoped to facilitate a more in-depth reflection and engagement with participants' own intercultural stories and memories.

In the 'not-but' acting style the Brechtian actor reminds and refers to the alternative ways she could have proceeded, thus introducing what Carney (2005) calls 'dialectical ruptures' (p. 29) into her performance. This style of acting required the actor to maintain a questioning attitude towards the character she is playing. In order to bring about the moment of 'not-but', Brecht consequently sought rehearsal techniques which would help the actor to defamiliarise herself. These rehearsal techniques would also allow her to hold on to the moment of astonishment towards the character's actions and remarks. Such aids of estrangement would for example involve the use of the third person, putting the character's text into past tense, speaking relevant stage directions out loud, translating verse into prose or translating prose into the actor's native dialect (Mumford, 2009, p. 67). Applying V-effects to a participant account in my research, then sought to facilitate multiple viewpoints on intercultural experience. For research workshop 3, I turned research participant Lin's story of an intercultural encounter into a not-but playscript. Lin had narrated the highly embodied nature of intercultural life in workshop 2. She gave a vivid description of feeling out-of-place when encountering a group of youth when walking home from Tesco's (a British supermarket chain) one Sunday morning. Her account was, not unlike a Brechtian not-but performance, full of 'dialectical ruptures':

One bad experience I had when I was leaving the Barclay residences, you know the student accommodation.

It was a Sunday morning, 11am, but it seems no one is in the street. All the streets are empty. I don't know why.

And I went to Tesco to buy something and when I came back, there's a big street and I notice that there are four or five teenagers, or guys, who walk on the other side.

I just go on my way but when they noticed me, they suddenly came to me and surrounded me, you know four or five guys. And they said two sentences.

The first one is: 'Hi, can you help us?' and the second one is 'We are hungry'.

Now, at that time, I just wanted to throw my plastic bags and run away.

I didn't know what to do.

And I was so afraid at that time.  
 And then the third sentence.  
 ‘Can you tell me if there is any restaurant or supermarket near here?’  
 I felt so safe at the time.  
 And I said, ‘yes’ and I gave them directions and they left.  
 After that I still felt very uncomfortable.  
 I can’t stop thinking ‘what if ...’ something happens, what am I doing?  
 There was no one on the street that time.

When recounting her encounter to the group in session 2, Lin was still emotional about the event but also commented on her feelings: ‘I was so afraid; I felt safe; I still felt very uncomfortable’. Lin’s meta-comments on her emotional state constituted a narrative, reflective stepping back from the original event despite still communicating traces of the event’s emotionality. By doing so, she retained the ambiguity of her story and invited the listening participants, through a demonstrative storytelling, to re-imagine the course of actions. In a performative intercultural pedagogy as in Brechtian pedagogy, everybody who has a stake in the act of representing the world – audience, actors, learners, teachers and researchers – are turned into active, critical observers of their own cultural (and linguistic) productions (Fleming, 2004; Kramsch, 2009; Schewe, 2013). Lin’s participant account already bore marks of that process of active self-observation through her act of demonstrative storytelling. Applying a range of V-effects and turning Lin’s account into a ‘not-but’ script, I built on her own storytelling aesthetic:

(In this scene all stage directions are first read aloud and then acted)

First person (turns around, starts tapping):

There was no one on the street that time.

(pause)

(Everybody joins into tapping rhythmically).

Second person (turns around looking at audience/camera):

One bad experience she had when she was leaving the student residences, you know the student accommodation. It was a Sunday morning, 11 a.m., but it seemed no one was in the street. All the streets were empty. She did not know why. And she went to Tesco to buy something and when she came back, there was a big street and she noticed that there were four or five teenagers, or guys, who walked on the other side. She just went on her way but when she noticed them, they suddenly came to her and surrounded her, you know, four or five guys. And they said two sentences.

Third person (turns around, with hands in pockets, leaning forward, saying sweetly):

Hi, can you help us?

First person (turns around, adds pathetically):

We are hungry.

Second person (with folded arms, speaking slowly and well pronounced):

Now, at that time, she just wanted to throw her plastic bags and run away, she didn’t know what to do. And she was so afraid at that time. And then the third sentence.

First person (looks her directly in the eyes, smiling):

Can you tell me if there is any restaurant or supermarket here?

Second person (still speaking pronounced and slowly):

She felt so safe at the time. And she said ‘yes’ and gave them directions.

(traces the trail of sticky tape on the floor with light movements, then turns around again)

And they left.

(pauses a moment,

then looks smilingly at the audience)

After that I still felt very uncomfortable. I can't stop thinking 'what if ...' something happened, what am I doing?  
(dark)

Firstly, I allocated three speaking parts – *first, second and third person* – and turned Lin's verbatim account into a dialogic text. The first and third person represent the teenagers' point of view, the second person references Lin's speaking position. Secondly, I applied concrete V-effects from Brecht's repertoire. I translated Lin's first person account into third person narrative and turned her present tense narrative into past tense. I made an exception in the last sentence, spoken by the second person (Lin). Here, the first person/present tense remains, in order to highlight Lin's changing subject position from *she* to the more intimate *I*. Thirdly, I added stage directions to Lin's account. Taking Brechtian rehearsal practice as a guide, these stage directions were to be read aloud by the performing research participants. This act of reading aloud invited active reflection on the emotional and spatial context the stage directions suggested. These 'instructions' are normally invisible for the audience. They guide performers in the pre-production stage on how to deliver their lines and how and where to position their bodies during the performance. My suggested stage directions were emotionally and spatially exaggerated (e.g. *turns around, adds pathetically*) and written in the more immediate present tense. They did not provide a naturalistic contextualisation of the narrative in view of the original encounter. Their artificiality aimed to open a space for exploration of the emotions and behavioural choices referenced in Lin's account. 'Not-but' was also introduced through rhythmic and spatial V-effects, inspired by Brecht's 'exercises for acting schools' (Brecht & Willett, 1964, p. 129).

In order to disrupt familiar customs and habitual ways of performing, Brecht sometimes used somatic exercises that played with spatial and temporal expectations. (...) Rhythmical (verse-) speaking while tap-dancing alters the usual emphases, tempo and line flow of text, which in turn can generate awareness of the way the text was initially constructed, and of the assumptions underpinning dominant ways of reading it. (Mumford, 2009, p. 136)

Brecht used somatic rehearsal exercises with his actors, for example, 'rhythmical verse-speaking' (Brecht & Willett, 1964, p. 129). These exercises enabled reflection on the power-dynamics underlying assumed way of constructing, reading and performing texts. By integrating rhythmic elements into the 'not-but' script, and playing with temporal expectations, I made the text strange. This process of making strange thus drew attention to individual sentences spoken and gestures performed. I altered second person's speaking tempo (*pronounced and slowly*), added pauses between lines and integrated rhythmic elements (e.g. *the collective tapping of feet*) in the performance. As a distinctly spatial V-effect, I integrated 'unexpected' movement into the performance. This consisted of the sudden tracing of a sticky tape trail on the floor, found in second person's last monologue. I used more text-based V-effects, such as third person and past tense dialogue as well as more temporal-spatial techniques. These manifested through the reading of stage directions and the adding of non-text related body movements (the sticky tape trail). The estrangement techniques were integrated with the purpose to 'de-centre' Lin's original account. The performance of the 'not-but' script was hoped to enable an active, embodied inquiry into the complex emotions and behaviour referenced in Lin's intercultural narrative.

### Performing the 'not-but' script

The 'not-but' script was performed in the School of Education's (University of Glasgow) gym hall so as to allow enough space for movement. We started with warm-up exercises, based on Mumford's (2009, p. 141) suggestions for a contemporary Brechtian workshops. Participants were for example asked to observe their own features of walking and then exaggerate these whilst pacing the hall. This simple, embodied Brechtian distancing effect invited reflection on the socialised nature of our bodies. This provided an introduction to the V-effects that followed in the script and performance. After the warm-up exercises, I handed out the scripts to participants. They quickly read the short text and recognised it as Lin's account from the previous week. Then participants 'went to work' without any advice or instructions on my part. Marta, Aleksandra and Sonja volunteered to read the roles and Jamal, Amy and Karolina started to set the scene. Karolina also volunteered to film the workshop and allowed me to concentrate on my facilitator/researcher role. The rest of the group transformed found gym equipment into improvised costumes and a stage. Colourful plastic rings were used as hats and armlets and a wooden bench was brought out as the main stage element. The improvised costumes and stage arrangement lent its own appropriately unfinished, estranged aesthetic to the script performance. This emphasised the pedagogical and social nature of our drama-based research work. Participants sat in a row-formation on the wooden bench, 'embellished' with their found costumes. The *first person* was read by Sonja, the *second person* by Marta and the *third person* by Aleksandra. Several attempts at a read-through of the text were accompanied by participants' giggles. Especially Aleksandra, who had not worked with drama before, regularly broke down with laughter and thus inserted her own 'dialectical ruptures' (Carney, 2005) into the script performance. The rehearsal atmosphere was playful and definitely not a 'school-masterly experience' (Brecht & Willett, 1964). The three performers decided to sit on the wooden bench in a static in-a-row formation and close proximity to each other (Figure 1).

This gave the performance a claustrophobic feel and referenced for me the spatial discomfort that Lin (second person) experienced in the original encounter. The static formation, in which Marta, Sonja and Aleksandra performed, also heightened the artificial nature of the stage directions I added to the script. It inserted an extra layer of estrangement. Sonja's reading of the following line 'Hi, can you help us' (*third person*) serves as an example. The stage direction asked Sonja to *turn around*,

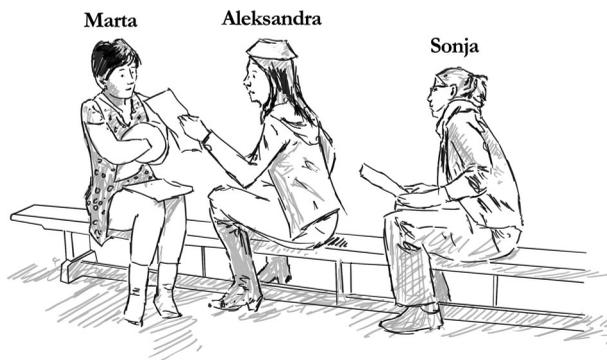


Figure 1. The three performers on the bench.

*put her hands in her pocket and lean forward.* This could only be executed awkwardly by Sonja whilst also sitting on the bench. The temporal V-effect ‘rhythmic tapping’ produced a particularly loud thumping sound when all three performers, after a short moment of dissonance, tapped their feet in rhythm. When Marta started reading her lines over the collective sound, she did not align her reading voice to the dominating rhythm first. She appeared ‘out of tune’ as if resisting the collective beat. In the last part of her speech however she turned ‘melodic’, suddenly reciting her dialogue in line with the tapping:

(...) she noticed that there were four or five teenagers, or guys, who walked on the other side. She just went on her way but when she noticed them, they suddenly came to her and surrounded her, you know, four or five guys. And they said two sentences (...)

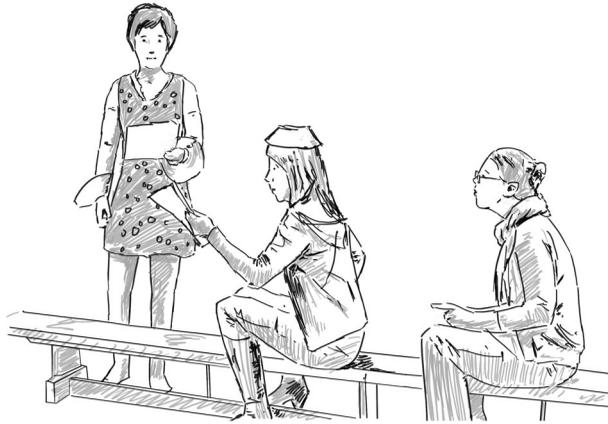
Marta’s reading in and out of the staccato rhythm, seemed to subordinate her lines to the overbearing somatic element. The stamping dominated. I associated feelings of threat and fear in Lin’s original story and ‘heard’ the teenagers’ fast approaching footsteps and Lin’s raised heartbeat. I was particularly struck by Marta’s (second person) last speech:

Second person (still speaking pronounced and slowly):  
 She felt so safe at the time. And she said ‘yes’ and gave them directions  
 (traces the trail of sticky tape on the floor with light movements, then turns around again)  
 And they left.  
 (pauses a moment, then looks smilingly at the audience)  
 After that I still felt very uncomfortable. I can’t stop thinking ‘what if ...’ something happened, what am I doing?  
 (dark)

Marta reads her lines extra slowly, like a desperate attempt to convince her audience (this is me, watching the footage now) she is safe. She gets up from the bench and traces the sticky tape trail on the floor with light, graceful movements, as if marking new territory through dance (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Tracing the sticky tape trail.



**Figure 3.** Marta speaks directly to the audience/into the camera.

She turns around and looks directly at the audience/into the camera. Her smile seems forced and her lines resonate her still lingering anxiety: *After that I still felt very uncomfortable. I can't stop thinking 'what if...' something happens, what am I doing?* (Figure 3).

I see Marta fixing a 'not-but' acting moment. Within the dialectical rupture she acted – the duality of her smile and the spoken lines (full of concern) – the 'happy ending' of the story was queried. The unspoken alternatives are only implied – *what if...?*

Marta's 'not-but' acting powerfully referenced Lin's 'embodied self' (Kramersch & Gerhards, 2012, p. 76) – and with that the visceral, affective and subjective experiences underlying her intercultural encounter.

### **Post-performance conversation**

After the 'not-but' script performance there was a lively ideas exchange amongst all participants with regard to the script's further aesthetic development for workshop 4. We talked about possible pigeon sound effects, video projections of tumbleweed and plastic bags being blown over a bare stage. We shared our musical associations of classic stand-off moments in Western epics (e.g. Morricone, 1966). In addition to these creative ideas, some of which were integrated in the subsequent script and performance in workshop 4, there was also discussion of concrete performance elements. A focus on the following conversation between Marta and Sonja allows further reflection on the use of Brechtian pedagogy and 'not-but' scripting in intercultural education research. They discuss the same performance moment (second person's last speech) I refer to in the previous section. Marta and Sonja's post-performance conversation adds an additional analytical dimension, which integrates their participant–performer perspectives:

- Sonja: And the sticky tape, I mean that is the weirdest thing. That's the oddest thing to me. That's so odd. It just has no meaning.  
 Marta: When you do it, it does make sense.  
 Sonja: How does it feel like? How does it make sense?  
 Marta: Because it's kind of a path, so it's giving the directions. When you've just come from Tesco, you are kind of retracing that path.

Sonja: Ahhh ...

Marta: And also because you have to stand up and turn around, you sort of detangle yourself from that sticky situation you thought you were in. That's how I feel like. Because when you have the other person peering at you; I suppose in the original story it's the feeling of being intimidated by these guys. And this is actually your way out. You're going to point out the way to the supermarket but you also find a way out of that situation; because you have to stand up and do something. You can escape from their eyesight.

Their conversation demonstrates how 'not-but' scripting and 'not-but' performance can lead to moments of embodied reflection on intercultural 'strangeness' experiences in research. Such reflective moments are termed variously in the intercultural education literature: 'space moment of learning' (Fels & McGivern, 2002), the opening of a 'third-space' (Kessler & Küppers, 2008) or 'transcultural recognition' (Axtmann, 2002). Brecht scholar Carney (2005) calls it the 'opening of a crisis moment'. In Marta and Sonja's conversation, such a crisis moment was provoked by the apparently meaningless appearance of a *sticky tape trail* in the script. Sonja criticises the spatial V-effect I added to the script. She describes it as 'being weird', 'the oddest thing' and having 'no meaning'. Her genuine questioning of the aesthetic validity of the V-effect in the script, opens a space for collective, embodied reflection. Marta responds to this 'crisis moment' by reviewing the V-effect (the sticky tape trail) in a twofold way. She reviews its meaning in the context of (a) her performing body and (b) in relation to Lin's emotional stance in the original intercultural encounter. She interprets the tape trail as a path that mirrors the act of giving directions in the story. For Marta, it stands as a symbol for the *dénouement* moment of the encounter. Here, Lin finds a 'gesture of coping' amidst her anxiety: 'I suppose in the original story it's the feeling of being intimidated by these guys. And this is actually your way out'. Marta's rising from the bench, her act of escaping the static in-a-row formation is felt as the mitigating moment in the story. Her dance-like movements when tracing the trail, resonate Lin's newly won feeling of safety. She has escaped the teenagers' gaze: 'You can escape from their eyesight'. The aesthetic-social process of embodied interpretation (of the V-effect) and coming-to-understand Lin's emotional situation in the original intercultural encounter, might serve as an example of how drama-based approaches can facilitate an enactivist intercultural research pedagogy. Collective, embodied understanding has emerged through a three-way process: (1) the 'not-but' scripting of an intercultural encounter, (2) participants' performance and (3) ensuing reflections spanning the scripting process, the performance and the original encounter. The estranged, scripted encounter, its performance and reflection, might be seen as a 'performance-based identity text' (Cummins & Early, 2011; Ntelioglou, 2011), which is however not simply a text-based artefact. It cannot be regarded as interview or text-based 'data' in the traditional sense. The identity text sits in-between page and performing bodies, in-between aesthetic and social acts, and thus in-between individual and collective experience. It might be best described as a form of 'slippery data' (Law, 2004, p. 3) that is full of metaphoric gaps and maintains the flavour and (emotionally and socially) complex flows of 'being intercultural'.

## Conclusion

The article investigated how a Brechtian pedagogy could be embedded within a performative intercultural education research. I used my drama-based PhD research on

international students' intercultural experiences as an example. Outlining the research's place in the performative turn, I gave particular consideration to conceptualisations and drama-based approaches which foreground students' subjective experiences. This included a focus on the complex aesthetic, affective and political dimensions of people's real world (intercultural) encounters. I have shown how Brecht connects to these performative developments in the field by linking aesthetic experimentation with a sociological view on theatre. My aim was to harness Brecht's aesthetic of contradiction for an exploration of intercultural 'strangeness' experiences. I turned a participant account into a Brechtian 'not-but' playscript by applying a range of text-based, temporal and spatial V-effects to it. The 'not-but' script was then performed by research participants. My analysis is based on my own viewing experience of the performance, as well as participants' post-performance conversation. Their critical interrogation of the V-effect's aesthetic function in the script text resulted in a moment of reflection on its emerging meaning in performance. I argued that this moment of collective embodied understanding of intercultural experience was evoked by the three-way process of (1) scripting, (2) performance and (3) reflection.

A Brechtian pedagogy is of course just one way to methodologically place narration, subjectivity and play at the centre of a performative intercultural education research. I do not suggest a pedagogical dictate, but see a potential to follow-up on the questions prompted by my analysis. What questions pose themselves for example when considering Brecht's strong concern for linking pedagogical (theatre/research/teaching) activity to social justice concerns? I have worked with international postgraduate students whose intercultural lives are, although of course highly emotionally and psychologically complex, at least (mostly) politically secure. How would (and should?) a Brechtian theatre pedagogy come into effect when working with more 'vulnerable groups'? Can a Brechtian infused research pedagogy become relevant for those who are structurally excluded from the open and respectful exchange that preludes intercultural dialogue? These methodological, ethical (and ultimately political) questions need further exploration and careful thinking. We live in a world which 'spills out and overflows in unpredictable and messy ways' (Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004, p. 3) and our performative intercultural pedagogies need to be fit for research in such a world.

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## Notes on contributor

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