

BLC Roundtable, October 9, 2020

Annamaria Bellezza, Lecturer  
Italian Studies Department, University of California at Berkeley  
[ambellezza@berkeley.edu](mailto:ambellezza@berkeley.edu)

**A) Performance Studies** is an interdisciplinary field of research that draws from the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts. It focuses on the pervasiveness of performance as a central element of social and cultural life, including not only theater and dance but also such forms as practices of everyday life, storytelling and public speaking, avant-garde performance art, popular entertainment, micro-constructions of ethnicity, race, class, sex, and gender, non verbal communication, and political demonstrations — potentially any instance of expressive behavior or cultural enactment. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*

**B) Critical Language Pedagogy** is defined as an approach to language pedagogy where language teaching is a tool for developing learners who are 1) critically aware of social problems that emanate from oppression and injustice and 2) able to argue and counter-argue, hence triggering critical discourse in the classroom.  
*Principles of Critical Language Pedagogy: A Literature Review*

**C) Performative Teaching and Learning** refers to an approach that uses techniques and strategies coming from the arts, especially theater. It is an approach that promotes engagement, identity formation, ownership and active participation, in which body and emotions take center stage alongside cognition.  
*My definition*

**Suggested reading** on Performative Teaching and Learning, Teaching as an Art, the Performing Body and Teacher Training:

Bellezza, Annamaria. *Developing Performative Competence and Teacher Artistry: A Pedagogical Imperative in the Multilingual Classroom*. To be published in the November Issue, 2020 of the L2 Journal..

Look out for another article to be published in 2021 titled *Teaching the Conflicts in Foreign Language Education*, co-written by Ruti Adler, Annamaria Bellezza, Claire Kramsch, Chika Shibahara, and Lihua Zhang

## **D) Italian through Theater: from Page to Stage**

*“Life in the Time of Corona”*

Over the course of 5 weeks, students were asked to:

- 1) write a story in narrative mode set in the context of the times we were living, as writers
- 2) tell the story orally to the class, as story-tellers
- 3) adapt the story for the stage and write a script, as playwrights
- 4) edit each other’s scripts collaboratively, as editors
- 5) cast students to play the multiple characters they created, as directors
- 6) perform the parts assigned to them, as actors
- 7) reflect on **a)** the interpretation and performance of their work by others **b)** how **embodying** the conflicts in the stories told by students, helped them better understand other perspectives, and feel the power struggles not only of the characters in each respective script, but the power dynamics of the actors/students while grappling with language and meaning, through their respective Italian-American, Mexican-American, Russian-American, and Chilean-American cultural lens, as critics.

**E) Script for *Six Immigrants in search of a border* (my translation from Italian)**

**José:** I lost five years of my life at Soledad Prison for a crime I did not commit.

**Kevin:** I am sorry, but I believe in our justice system.

**José:** You are sorry? And what justice? Do you know what's like to look like me, no job, no education, and an accent...

**Kevin:** I have an accent, so what.

**José:** No, *my* Chicano accent.

**Kevin:** Look, I have many Mexican friends...

**José:** Your bourgeois international friends from Mexico City don't count. They are... *like you*.

(he looks at Kevin straight into his blue eyes)

**Kevin:** Right, I guess we all have to be poor and brown to get it.

**José:** (pauses, then tries a different approach) What's the word *border* to you?

**Kevin:** A line separating two countries.

**José:** Do you know what it means to me? Do you know what it means to Amir, to Kayla, to Malek who walked for days, got robbed, got raped, and saw family members drowning in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea when their rickety, overloaded boat capsized on their way to Italy?

**Kevin:** I am sorry, I truly am, but what do you want me to do? Solve the problems of the world? Do you also want to blame me for getting the virus?

**José:** Yes, I am. We had no access to information, no access to masks, didn't have the luxury to work from home like you people...(pauses)...ever tried to put yourself in *our* shoes?