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Space and time for understanding(s): The recursive cycle of language education and classroom *enquiry*

1. Introduction

The background of the reflections here reported goes back to a series of professional events, and theoretical engagements that emerged almost concurrently, while I was involved in an Exploratory Practice (EP) practitioner inquiry as a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) teacher, and, at the same time, investigating the effects of current technocratic models in the administration of educational practices. This chapter discusses the understanding(s) I gained while juggling three different educational roles that are usually conceived as being separate. It seeks to synthesize the perspectives that arose from crossing boundaries imposed by my roles: (a) as the MFL teacher concerned with engaging her language students with learning; (b) as the EP practitioner-researcher puzzling her practice in search of more inclusive scope for her pedagogy; and (c) as the educational theorist concerned with identifying space(s) and time(s) for an ecological pedagogy through the dominance of neoliberal educational practices.

In the form of a reflexive essay, this chapter seeks to challenge the conventional boundaries of the practical (language pedagogy), the epistemological (practitioner-research) and the theoretical (critical educational theory). I discuss how those three professional remits might have conflicted, and blurred into each other, while seeking to provide a theoretical frame to the understandings gained through my work as a practitioner-researcher and language educator. I also consider how the synergy emerged has helped me nuance my current professional identity as a language educator and practitioner-researcher, while strengthening an awareness of the ethical and moral dimension of my profession (Edwards-Groves, Brennan Kemmis, Hardy, & Ponte, 2010; Gieve & Miller, 2006; Kemmis & Smith, 2008a)). Thus, the chapter advances three major interlinked arguments.

Firstly, I suggest a view of education aimed at fostering individual “self-expression”, “self-development” and “self-determination”, so that it is possible “to help people live well in a world worth living” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 25). Although this proposition does not veer teaching techniques, curriculum design and implementation, and assessment away from a classroom focus, it remains critical of traditions focusing on “pedagogy as method” and “means-ends (instrumental)

thinking” (Ax & Ponte, 2008, p. 7; see also Kemmis, 2008). Furthermore, in foregrounding a view of education aiming at the development of the whole range of human capabilities, this proposition challenges an idea of education that segregate professional performances and *life*. In other words, my argument is that educational action is understood as *praxis*; namely, ontologically grounded pedagogical action; “morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field”, but also “history making” (Kemmis, 2010). Educational action bears responsibility of its moral, social and political consequences.

A notion of education as axiological commitment supports my second argument. As practitioner-research might help place a greater emphasis on educational values, it may enable practitioners to understand the consequences of their practice in terms of present responsibility towards what and whom inhabit their immediate environment but also in terms of “intergenerational responsibility” (Van Kannel-Ray, 2006, p. 117); namely, as care for the present and for “*possible, probable and preferred futures*” (Adam, 2008, p. 114, original emphasis; see also Puig de La Bellacasa, 2017). Indeed, Exploratory Practice “as a form of fully inclusive practitioner research” (Hanks, 2017a), increasingly implemented in language education, posits great emphasis on sustainability, *Quality of Life* and ethical responsibility (Gieve & Miller, 2006; Hanks, 2017a & b). Understood holistically as acts of living and lived embodied experience, both research and pedagogy might aid practitioners to see that the many constraints traversing a classroom *qua* result of market-based models of educational administration (Ax & Ponte, 2008; Gray & Block, 2012) are constraints to *life itself*.

Finally, this chapter makes an epistemological case for a greater reliance on trans-disciplinary forms of “knowledge production” (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2003) or, specifically relevant to practitioner-research, on *emerging understanding*. An underpinning conceptualisation of this chapter is that *life* is a complex phenomenon. In complexity terms, as Kostoulas (2018) succinctly explains, knowing, and we can also include “understanding”, does not rely on analytical dissembling; nor is it about predicting future states through the generation of a single unifying explanatory framework that encompass any phenomena under study. Understanding what occurs in the everyday classroom can be then seen as *emergent* in that educational events or phenomena are the result of processes of self-organising *life*, which ultimately resist any quantitative reduction of its components. If we borrow imagery used by Choi and Pak (2006) to contextualise trans-disciplinarity, we might equally say that an *emerging* phenomenon is like a cake, in which the original ingredients are no longer distinguishable in the final make. This phenomenon can be accommodated by the equation ‘2+2=Yellow’, meaning that any change occurring is radically qualitative.

However, while the idea of emergence seems to have convinced methodologists and larger areas of university-based research, including Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Applied Linguistics (see Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Larsen-Freeman, 2012), (language) teachers struggle in embedding those insights in their professional development or day-to-day classroom doings. In their everyday practice, teachers, but also educational managers and students, resist any ideas that question or disrupt practices based on the assumption that there exists a linear and mechanistic relationships between classroom occurrences and actions. Teachers, in particular, are uncomfortable with innovation other than new teaching techniques. I have personally experienced this stubbornness while being involved in the Exploratory Practice project reported by Slimani-Rolls and Kiely (2018). It took us, the participant language teachers, almost a year to begin to detach from institutional routinized practices and teaching “scripts” (Ax & Ponte, 2008). That meant that we would not let go easily on the idea that practitioner-research is a practice solely concerned with ‘successful’ interventions aimed at improving educational provisions, rather than one caring for *life* itself.

In Section 2 and 3, I introduce and discuss the theoretical/methodological and epistemic frameworks that have informed my reflections, such as Exploratory Practice, Practice Theory, and a notion of multiscale spatio-temporality. Although for expository reasons those frameworks are outlined in succession, in fact, the underlying assumption throughout the chapter is that they have meshed into one other while being held together by my concerns for more inclusive forms of language pedagogy. Indeed, an account of those frameworks is interspersed with references to my classroom work. Core to Exploratory Practice, “understanding” will be advocated for language teachers and learners as a mode of attuning to or sensing the interplay of the multiple spaces and times/rhythms (Lefebvre, 1992/2004) inhabiting and clashing within a classroom, while striving to achieve a better Quality of Life. I also claim that “understanding” has the capacity of *making* new space and time for the instantiation of diverse pedagogical ecologies.

This particular notion of “understanding” allows to question an idea of learning and teaching as a sum of fixed learning outcomes, replicable in the scripts designed by public policies and managerial strategies. However, in order for this educational view to be challenged, *life* must be sensed and understood in its complexity; and, importantly, its resources re-appropriated sustainably through everyday pedagogical practice. This is discussed in Section 4, where, after considering my concerns with the technocratic model of learning and teaching in language education, I suggest the potential of practitioner-research to challenge it. This discussion leads me to reflect on my understanding(s) at the time of writing in the concluding Section 5.

2. Positioning “Understanding”: Practitioner-Research as Sustained and Sustainable Pedagogical Practice

The framework of this chapter is tributary to a number of theoretical traditions, epistemic views and pedagogical orientations. They have meshed into my reflections and have supported my work for “understanding” in tandem with my language students. However, as Exploratory Practice has been a central influence in my practice and a thrust in moving my theory forward, I begin positioning “understanding” by introducing EP.

2.1. Exploratory Practice as an Inclusive and Ethical form of Practitioner-Research

I first approached Exploratory Practice for I saw it as a sustainable pedagogical practice that could fit my busy life as a language educator. Furthermore, EP would align with my espoused idea of education as promoting self-expression, self-development, and self-determination. Indeed, as I became involved with it, it appeared to me that EP was able to respond to major epistemological, ontological and ethical challenges for language pedagogies.

As previously mentioned, Exploratory Practice is “a form of fully inclusive practitioner research” whose framework draws on a set of principles revolving around inclusivity and sustainability. EP is inclusive since both learners and teachers “investigate their own learning/teaching practices while concurrently practising the target language” (Hanks, 2017a, p. 2). More specifically, it focuses on collegiality “bringing different stakeholders (learners, researchers, teachers) together as they set their own, personally and professionally relevant, research agendas”. EP is also sustainable since the enquiring process becomes part of everyday classroom practice rather than being initiated by an external observer/researcher, outsider to the classroom life. Indeed, an EP enquiry does not add an extra burden to the already constrained life of teachers and learners as normal pedagogical practices are deployed as investigative tools. As mentioned earlier, EP’s principles highlight “an overarching concern for Quality of Life” (Hanks, 2017a) for both learners and teachers. By prioritising an understanding of Quality of Life as being prior to seeking to improve it (Hanks, 2015), EP addresses “ethical concerns such as trust, respect, reflexivity and shared responsibility” (Miller, 2010, p. 6).

2.2. Understanding Classroom Life: The Teachers’ Perspective

My practitioner-research work towards *understanding classroom life* has been pivotal in many senses. It has symbiotically reconnected my teaching and learning to the epistemological, ontological and ethical domains of complexity around which the arguments of this chapter revolve. In working for understanding and, hence, exploiting an education thrust towards wonder and problem-posing (Freire, 1968/1996), EP has helped me redefine my professionalism as a language teacher. It has

allowed me to engage in a recursive cycle of understanding by encouragement to fathom further the extent to which external ‘forms of agency’ (Miller, 2010) were indeed conditioning my classroom practice to the detriment of values such as inclusiveness and Quality of Life.

In the next sections, I illustrate how Exploratory Practice has contributed to the directions of my practice, by focusing specifically on puzzlement, and sustainability of resources for Quality of Life. Those are aspects which make EP unique in terms of articulating my arguments and answering the concerns of this essay. They also allow me to address the notion of *life*, as an overarching and encompassing dimension. They will be introduced as I discuss my involvement with EP.

2.3. My involvement with Exploratory Practice

My involvement with EP began at the end of 2014, when, as an MFL teacher, teaching Italian to undergraduate students in the UK, I joined an EP practitioner-research project envisaged as Continuous Professional Development (Slimani-Rolls & Kiely, 2018). The project was aimed at university-based language teachers to investigate and understand their immediate context of practice. Six university-based language teachers joined the project and worked together for two years. When the project ended, a smaller group of language teachers, including myself, spontaneously initiated new strands of investigation, which, at the time of writing, are still in progress. Indeed, the reflections here contained feed on my ongoing explorative work.

Puzzlement is an important dimension in EP (Hanks, 2017a & b). A puzzle is a why-question, which both teachers and learners raise in relation to instances in their practice (learning, teaching and quality of life) that appear as counterintuitive. My early puzzle was about my learners’ engagement with my feedback (Costantino, 2018). I wondered why my learners did not seem to engage with it, thus missing what I thought was a useful learning opportunity. On reflection, my puzzle clearly highlights a performative struggle in having to abide by the protocols of my classroom. This was also the case for some of my co-researchers. For example, Houghton (2018) wondered why he was not able to engage his students in learning vocabulary in his EAP class. Lecumberri (2018) and Rawson (2018) wondered respectively why their students were constantly using their mobiles in class or spoke Italian amongst themselves in her French class. While our concerns seemed to be relating to classroom management, they could also be read as instances of discomfort arising from not meeting the tacit rules, taken-for-granted knowledge and expectations of our classroom. A puzzle can then be viewed as an early *sensor* of the tensions dwelling within the *life* of the classroom. It brings them to the fore from the multiple times/rhythms, the institutional and the personal, traversing the equally multiple material and symbolic spaces of a classroom.

Sustainability of Resources for Quality of Life

At the beginning of my project, I began to enquire about my puzzle by relying on my *classroom resources*. In fact, EP suggests “[i]ntegrating the work for understanding fully into existing curricular practices in a way of minimizing the burden and maximizing sustainability” (Hanks, 2015, p. 3). For practitioners, resources are their taught subject matter, their pedagogical knowledge of principles and strategies of teaching, local familiarity with their students, and their traditional classroom activities such as pair and group work, class discussion, and so forth. EP literature refers to the latter as PEPAs, or ‘Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities’ (Allwright & Hanks, 2009, p. 157).

The deployment of PEPAs as tools for classroom enquiry is an important move to challenge what I previously called classroom “scripts”. By the latter, I understand crystallisation of learning and teaching theories but also policies embedded into the life of a classroom. As I elaborate on later, those “scripts” are abstract spaces and times that channel and flatten the multiple ecologies of a classroom into the instrumental linearity of learning objectives. The administration of feedback to my students, which I assumed would mechanically ‘produce’ learning, is an example of classroom “script”. PEPAs, as investigative tools, on the contrary, are not instantiated in a logic of means-ends. Rather, they are engaged with in a collaborative open-ended search for meaning, that is, symbolic space, in which the taken-for-granted assumptions on roles and capabilities are continuously challenged. In my inquiry, for instance, I realised that my students, who I thought were not engaged with my feedback, were instead truly concerned with their learning. I deployed class conversations where my students discussed their approach to and view of feedback; I also used self- and peer-correction activities; discussions on the use of particular grammar structures along with conventional grammar worksheets. In fact, as I went along with those classroom activities designed to investigate my puzzle, but also to practise what I perceived were learning gaps, I discovered that my students were highly able to apply the grammar rules whose application they consistently failed in their tests. It became clear to me that my students, registered in a very intensive course, struggled in managing the *complexity* of times and spaces of our classroom. Squeezed in the intermingling and clashing of their personal time(s) with the restrained times of their educational institution, students were unable to fully express their linguistic capabilities.

One major understanding I gained about my teaching was that despite being an experienced teacher, I restrained my learners’ capabilities within the pre-set spaces and time of my practices. Although, those institutional frames clashed with my espoused values of inclusive and non-transmissive education, they were part of my teaching routine and I did not question them. For instance, I expected my students to learn mechanically from my feedback, implying that they were

blank slates on which to write grammar rules. I was unable to see the complexity of learning as intersubjective and embodied experience. PEPAs worked as powerful resources, as classroom activities become redeployed in new and meaningful learning contexts.

As PEPAs respond to a puzzle rather than to the sole aim of achieving learning objectives, they engender dialogic forms of inquiry, *making* space and time for “alternative practical”, “ethical”, “affective”, but also cognitive “ecologies” to emerge (Puig de La Bellacasa, 2017, p. 23). Hence, from a multiscalar perspective, PEPAs can be also viewed as contingent and local tools through which it is possible to tap into the broader pool of *life* and world resources.

3. Discussing “Understanding”: Theories and Epistemologies

Approaching EP and becoming involved in practitioner-enquiry occurred against the backdrop of my interest in understanding social and educational practices. At the time of my early EP puzzle, such interest relied on developments in practice theory and practice philosophy (Kemmis et al., 2014; Schatzki, 2001), which foregrounds human practices as co-existence unfolding socially, culturally and historically. Although the parallels between my theory and practice were not initially self-evident, my work as a practitioner-researcher appeared to have some affinities to those views. Those accounts seemed to allow me to reflect upon the epistemological affordances of practitioner-research and its ethical grounding. However, as I was making those theoretical connections clearer, my practical and pedagogical work began to selectively inform my theoretical concerns and interests. In other words, theory began to feed on my practice, strengthening it, and vice versa. This engendered a loop that ever since has recursively informed my work for understanding.

Theory has contributed to my pedagogical and practitioner-research in many ways. It has enabled me to situate the forces that might have traversed the *life* of my classroom, as I was going along with my practitioner-enquiry. It has nuanced the notion of *life*, explicating how it connects to the everyday classroom practice, which has unfolded as I tried to report on my work as a practitioner. Importantly, theory has shed light on the nature of puzzlement as a way of *sensing* the tensions between the many spatio-temporalities inhabiting my classroom. Furthermore, it has situated both puzzlement and classroom *resources* against the backdrop of multiscalar practices, understood as embodied in space and time (Lefebvre, 1992/2004, 1974/1991; Shotter, 1993), as bundles of “sayings, doings and relatings” (Choy, Edwards-Groves, & Grootenboer, 2017; Kemmis et al., 2014) participating and sharing activities in broader forms of life (Wittgenstein, 1953/1958). The latter in turn entail shared *resources* organised in our cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political world (Kemmis et al., 2014; Habermas, 1987). It is the presence of these *resources* stretching out diachronically, through history and traditions, and synchronically through the mutual

interconnectedness of forms of life that we can locate the notion of *life* which underpins my understanding of educational practices.

The *cultural-discursive* resources enable us to use language and discourses in and about a specific practice. Theories of learning and their applied version in classroom activities are resources of this kind. They circumscribe what can be appropriately described, interpreted and justified. Resources are present in *material-economic* arrangements, which make possible the unfolding of the activities undertaken or occurring in the course of a given practice in multiple spaces and times. For instance, we can think of a standard classroom timetable and time (two-hour sessions across a 24-week schedule within an academic calendar) inscribed within particular learning spaces or set-ups, such as particular classroom layouts. Finally, the *social-political* resources make possible “*the relationships between people and non-human objects* that occur in the practice” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32, original emphasis). Examples of these arrangements are “the organizational functions, rules and roles in an organisation, or the communicative requirements of the *lifeworld* processes of reaching shared understandings” (p. 32). Those might be internal and external, national and supranational policies; internal institutional bylaws. Those resources might also be the use of and access to physical resources for educational purposes, such as the visibly concrete space of a building, a computer in an IT lab, but also the less immediately visible space of data management. Kostoulas (2018) argues that access to such resources creates educational affordances for action, which suggests that they are sites of possible transformation and challenge to sedimented power.

A multileveled and scalar view of the classroom resources has important repercussions on how classroom pedagogy might be understood and experienced by teachers and learners. As mentioned in the *introduction*, this calls for challenging a concept of pedagogy that traditionally has been revolving exclusively around core activities such teaching methods, curriculum and assessment, which is a challenge to a traditional separation between pedagogy and *life*. As pedagogies are inherently linked and involved in the interrelation between cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements, the very idea of pedagogy needs to be revisited as encompassing a number of layers of reality. Pedagogy is highly involved in the broader scope of policy and historical context. Hence, pedagogical practices dwell and are inscribed in what Lefebvre (1974/1991) names as a three-dimensional space (*the conceived, the perceived, and the lived*), while being traversed by the linear, non-linear and cyclic time made of natural but also socially produced rhythms (1992/2004).

Lefebvre’s conceptualisation of space and time is useful as it adds an extra layer of intelligibility to the view of multi-layered practices outlined above. It supports an understanding of puzzlement as a

sensor of tensions, and one of classroom as being replete with world and life *resources*. In relation to a (language) classroom, we can think of *conceived space* as the abstract space of representations; for example, scientific and social theories, ideas, discourses, acts of speech and policies. Those are made of descriptions, and definitions, namely locutory and perlocutory speech acts that allow for communication and social orientation to take place (Schmid, 2008). Amongst representations of space one can list theories of learning and teaching, along with the managerial protocols implemented in educational institutions. *Conceived space* encompasses all the three layers of practices seen earlier: the cultural-discursive, the socio-political, and the material-economic. What specifies those domains is the way in which they relate to everyday practices. *Conceived space* is abstract, that is, distant from and imposed to (educational) actors.

According to Lefebvre, *space* is also *perceived*. Indeed, our everyday classroom can be viewed as an instance of a number of *spatial practices* in which our sayings, doings and relating, as well as those of others, are mostly taken-for-granted. We hardly question the presence of the students in our classroom, the building in which we work, our content and pedagogical knowledge, our classroom management and learning techniques and methods. *Spatial practice* ensures continuity and degrees of cohesion through level of practical *competence* and *performance* in a given arrangement or form of life, such as our classroom.

Both *conceived/abstract space* and *perceived space* symbiotically intermesh with *lived space*; namely with the practico-sensory and bodily experience of individuals in the everyday. But bodily experiences are not limited to physiological functions. Lived activity entails experiencing the practices in which we are through the medium of the body: namely, through the senses, sight, hearing, smells, tastes and touch, through recalling and desiring, but also through encoded and non-encoded symbolic representations, shared in a particular social formation and through taken-for-granted abstract space. Spaces are also traversed by time, the natural and cyclic times specific of nature: night/day, months, seasons, mortality, and the socially produced, such as the clock and the calendar. Those often constrain our natural and idiosyncratic bodily rhythms and disable our expected professional performances (Adam, 1995; Lefebvre, 1992/2004). Those bodily experiences might be tiredness and illness, but also the emotional burden suffered for not abiding by the abstract representations inhabiting the classroom, such as the 'good performer': the 'good student' and the 'good teacher', and 'the good researcher'. It is in those instances that *life* itself pierces through and clashes against the linearity of our classroom "scripts".

Understanding pedagogies as being multiscalar time-space brings then even more into relief the epistemological, the ontological and the axiological challenges mentioned earlier. Social practices

have an epistemological dimension since they deal with knowledge. However, practitioner-research represents a challenge to a certain kind of knowledge embodied in the classroom. Examples of this are the above-mentioned theories of language acquisition, for example. They can be viewed as abstract representations in the *conceived/abstract space* of a classroom. They are mostly taken-for-granted in the *perceived practices* of our classroom, as are most of our conventional language classroom teaching and learning techniques; or, classroom “scripts”. Thus, the instantiation of puzzling within a practitioner-research enquiry, as the *sensing* of tensions and discomfort, gives practitioners different affordances. Puzzling is an embodied and lived experience in which the *conceived/abstract* cannot be any longer taken for granted. Through their enquiry, practitioners crash against abstract space and time.

Pedagogies have also an ontological dimension, as they traverse and become entangled with the way we are in the world, and how we deal with our and others’ sayings, doings, and relatings. Furthermore, the way we are in the world cannot elude our idiosyncratic times while we juggle in and live through our entanglements with cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements.

This takes me back to a further layer of the meaning for my puzzling as a practitioner-researcher. While my puzzle was initiated as a result of my inability to see my students’ struggles with our classroom multiple spatio-temporalities, this was also mirrored by my own struggle in accepting any disruption to those very spatio-temporalities. Hence, although those tensions are brought about and limited by the abstract space of a classroom, they, in fact, index *life*, surfacing and trespassing the boundaries of a classroom. Furthermore, as pedagogies are entangled with forms of life, they cannot eschew axiological consideration. By engaging learners collectively, and valuing connectivity, pedagogies cannot elude their inextricable bond with moral responsibility towards ourselves and others, and, importantly, towards future states. What emerges in the present of our classroom dynamics will affect our possible futures (Adam, 2008).

4. Challenging the Technocratic Model of Language Education

The implementation of a renewed view of education with an “indissoluble moral, political and historical dimension” (Kemmis et al. p. 25), along with practices that allow *life* to spill into the classroom, entails an idea of care for the becoming of an individual against the open possibilities offered by our cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political world. I touched upon this earlier while considering the traditional and current scope of pedagogy, which tends to be fully identified with day-to-day practices such teaching methods, technique, curriculum design and implementation and assessment.

4.1. The Two-Level Fragmentation of Classroom Practices

Considerations on the purposes of education are stringently relevant to our everyday language classroom and teaching practices, as they highlight levels of fragmentation of our practices and capabilities as well as concerns with a *technical view* of learning and teaching. They call for an understanding of the extent to which educational processes have been informed and shaped by what it has been termed as “the production of things—the production of people of a certain kind, for example, or the production of ‘learning outcomes’” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 25). As previously hinted, this is a productivistic and linear view of human action. By favouring “the production of things”, teachers are understood as “[...] technicians who are responsible for producing such learning outcomes in the knowledge, skills and values of the students they teach.” (p. 25). Similarly, a technical view of learning inures us to view a learner as either a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate that needs to be written upon by the teacher *alone*, or as an individual understood as a container of psychological processes, which are there for the teacher to be deciphered, aided by sound evidence-based research. Practices, both learning and teaching, become “disembodied, structured, cognitive activity” (Cunliffe, 2004, p. 409). Learning occurs “[...] inside the head as an intellectual activity in which mind and body, intellect and emotions, thinking and acting are separate” (p. 409). This is what Freire (1968/1996) names as the *banking approach* to learning and teaching.

What illustrated above represents a first degree of fragmentation. Practitioners of learning, practitioners’ activity and capabilities become atomised, that is objectified, in order to produce attainment of specific learning outcomes; namely, clearly identifiable performances. Those approaches to teaching and learning establish habitualizations and expectations that are difficult to break in educational practices. Certainly, a strong habituation is what Candlin and Crichton (2011) describe as “a deficit discourse”. By this, the authors understand a discursive construct that implies loss of attributes or lack of capabilities “which diminish in various way the life chances of persons” (p. 4), and therefore conducive to failure. We can think of opposite constructs such as those mentioned earlier. ‘The good teacher’ and ‘the good students’ are often referred to emphasise performative attitudes that convey the exact opposite meaning. As Candlin and Crichton argue, ‘deficit’ is metaphorically deployed “to describe and categorise what might be called a measurable insufficiency” (p. 4). Deficit categorisation and the value judgement associated with it, normally is drawn from expert knowledge – a piece of research or expertise of some sort. What is always associated to it is a call for *repair*. In other words, it entails a technical view that identifies problems and calls for either learners or teachers for solutions.

These considerations might look like oversimplifications from the vantage point of the ‘conventional’ researcher, accustomed to the intricate variety and sophistry of methodological and epistemologies approaches. Nevertheless, those very oversimplifications are what becomes filtered by and injected into classroom practice, vested as either academic-based theory or findings or management protocols. In their Initial Teacher Education pre-service teachers are exposed to learning and teaching theories (see also Skela, this volume), but, once in their practicum, they are to rely on their practical knowledge, that is, distillations of theories, discrete pieces of knowledge that are held together in the forms of teaching techniques, strategies, assumptions on learning processes and their (teaching) common sense, with the sole purpose of managing a learning environment. For in-service teachers, those distillations often acquire an even further layer of taken-for-grantedness, as expertise and further competencies are developed along the way. This is what I previously referred to as the everyday life of *perceived space*, which in turn feeds on *abstract/conceived* one.

Thus, along with the first level of fragmentation, in which practitioners are viewed as producers of ‘things’, such replicable “learning outcomes”, while being themselves objectified, a further level of atomisation can be identified. Theories and findings on learning and teaching are often useful for classroom management and for understanding its dynamics. However, those findings, filtered through classroom activity, become equally abstract and objectified. This is particularly true as they become institutionalised in protocols of class management such as classroom observations. Those are deployed not as ‘best practices’ or models for professional learning, but rather as a set of standardised criteria that, while ticking compliance boxes, pre-determine classroom dynamics. Research findings become also institutionalised in the metrics relating to the expected results in credit-bearing courses, which affect the way teachers deliver their assessment activities. At both levels of fragmentation, at work are economic and social political conditions. They affect the atomisation of capabilities and curricula, while lending themselves to meet market criteria of quality assurance standards, entrenched in the principles of efficiency, calculability and predictability (Gray & Block, 2012). As a technocratic view acquiesces in market principles, concurrently it severs the bonds that educational actors have with their world. Abstract representations from policies, theories and rules not only overrun the lived and living space of embedded practices, but they also restrain any possibility they might entail and bear. They nullify the possibility for educational practices to prompt ‘*possible, probable and preferred futures*’ (Adam, 2008, p. 114, original emphasis)

A view of teaching and learning understood as discrete ‘learning outcomes’ and performances feeding league tables and commodification purposes needs to concede to one that reconnects practitioners to their practices in an ecological manner, namely as embodied *lived and “living practices* (moment-by-moment social interactions)” (Edwards-Groves et al., 2010, p. 44).

Furthermore, a view of academic-based research that has the last word on ‘teaching scripts’ needs to hand over one that is taken in as a canvas enabling both teachers and learners to reflect on their embodied practices against the backdrop of the broader scope of *life*. Both levels of educational fragmentation call for reinstating the original bond to the world and *life* resources. They call for a pedagogy to help people “to live well in a world worth living”.

4.2. Towards Recomposing the Language Classroom as a *Lived and Living Practice*

As seen earlier, a two-level fragmentation of classroom practices means, on the one hand, the disembodiment of practitioner, learner and teacher, actions and capabilities; and, on the other hand, the atomisation of representations such as theories (of learning and teaching) and policies. In relation to the latter, in language education, *the state of affairs* highlighted earlier has been addressed in the method and post-method debate. As Slimani-Rolls and Kiely (2018) point out, both teaching methods and the subsequent focus on an eclectic pool of techniques have served several purposes in language education. They have provided teachers with guidelines and ideas to design schemes of work, plan single lessons and facilitate the implementation of institutional programmes. In language teaching, the focus has historically moved from teachers relying on a single method to teachers adopting more eclectic and less prescriptive approaches that accommodate different learning styles (see Skela, this volume). Furthermore, the overcoming of the one-method-only and its prescriptivism together with the advent of new pedagogical orientations seem to have opened greater agency for teachers. Yet, despite this opening, it is clear that practitioners are faced with issues that are similar to those highlighted by the post-method advocates. As language teachers operate in increasingly bureaucratised educational environments that are oriented towards measurable and successful outcomes, it becomes increasingly difficult to eschew a productivistic logic. As seen above, this logic is bound to flatten idiosyncrasies, engendering unbalance between the multiple classroom spaces and times. Reliance on educational tools to reach specific ends, in already contrived space-time frames, allows only for some of the multiple spaces and time to success to the detriment of others.

The picture of a language classroom here portrayed has raised more questions than answers. As capabilities and educational activity become atomised, and theories and policies are abstracted from the life of a classroom, teacher’s and learners’ bond with cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political world resources is severed. Nevertheless, this state of affairs is not a dead-end. Pedagogical practices that work towards an understanding of classroom complexity can open possible working paths to recompose the two levels of fragmentation.

Teachers and students, as practitioners of learning, learn by coming to know how to go on with things (Cunliffe, 2004; Schatzki, 2001; Wittgenstein, 1953/1958); by becoming “stirred into” (Kemmis et al., 2014) the multiple spaces and times of their sayings, doings and relating. Practitioners learn by bodily experiencing classroom occurrences. In those instances, the abstract and the taken-for-granted becomes *lived* and *experienced* as conflict and tension, but also as desire and enjoyment. The possibility of experiencing such conflicts, but also aspirations, is tantamount to tapping into the complexity of what I previously referred as practical, ethical, affective and cognitive ecologies. A practitioner-enquiry is one possible way to tap into those ecologies. By imbuing the life of the classroom with new nuances of meaning, it reconstructs times and spaces.

5. Understanding everyday practices: Quality over Quantity

In this chapter, I have sought to retrieve lines of practice, thought and theory that might have converged into an understanding of my practice, as a language educator and an Exploratory Practice practitioner-researcher. As mentioned at the outset, and reiterated throughout the chapter, an understanding of what grounds my educational action and theory is something difficult to pin down. Part of what I have written here is the result of conceptualisations that took shape while reflecting on my practitioner-enquiry. Some of what I wrote has already taken a new turn and nuances of meaning, as I sought to outline all possible lines of mutual influence. Understanding is emergent and emerging in the sense advanced in Section 1: as a state changing into something radically qualitative. Thus, the synthesis between the different remits of my practice, which I set out to achieve in Section 1, is still at an attempt stage.

However, I have a clear sense of how the synergies springing from juggling different professional roles have enriched my professional identity. This would never have happened if I had not reflected upon, investigated and experienced the epistemological, the ontological and the ethical dimensions of my practice, both practically and theoretically. As I have hinted hitherto, practitioner-enquiry, in particular, *Exploratory Practice*, has been pivotal in reframing my pedagogical everyday practice but also in shedding light on the difficulty of challenging classroom routine and performativity. From an epistemological perspective, practitioner-research has originated understandings that theory alone was not been able to provide, because the educational constraints that I sought to explore theoretically were to be experienced first-hand. Through puzzling about my practice, and *sensing* the tensions generated by the many clashing spatio-temporalities inhabiting my classroom, I was to confront the boundaries between classroom and *life*. This has allowed me to discover, re-discover and further investigate the many ecologies underpinning my classroom: the affective, the cognitive and, importantly, the ethical. This was made possible by engaging dialogically with my students so

that they could create new space and time to express their capabilities and self-develop, rather than just reaching out the finishing line of their exams. Finally, from an ontological perspective, practitioner-research has been a thrust toward seeking to understand the multi-scalar dimensions of a classroom which through the present stretch out to the past, as traditions, and to possible futures.

As I am unable to say which strand of practice or theoretical orientation has had a greater impact on the other, I am also uncertain whether I have left a technical view of teaching and learning completely behind me. However, my work as a practitioner-researcher continues to feed my understanding of classroom pedagogy as an open-ended epistemological, ontological and axiological enterprise.

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