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Authors
González Becerra, Iria
del Río Alcalá, Berta

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Lessons from a distanced stage: embedding a Zoom-mediated drama workshop in a language classroom

IRIA GONZÁLEZ BECERRA

Imperial College London
Email: i.gonzalez-becerra@imperial.ac.uk

BERTA DEL RÍO ALCALÁ

Email: delrioberta@gmail.com

This paper will share the design and implementation of a Zoom-mediated theatre workshop in an undergraduate advanced Spanish language course during the Covid-19 pandemic and explore how this type of activity can support the development of a range of learners' competences while generating virtual presence through playfulness and engagement. Our aim is twofold: first, to provide practitioners with a sample of a drama-based activity adapted for the distanced language classroom that can be adopted in any synchronous online environment, and, second, to reflect on how we believe this workshop and its related assessment enabled creative and critical forms of engagement with the original material through students' performance of their own dramatic transpositions. We will also discuss the role of technology, appraising the affordances it provided for creative multimodal interactions and online togetherness despite the pandemic-imposed separation between participants.

INTRODUCTION

Lo escénico está prohibido / Se puede en cambio escribir, / y hacer vídeos / y mirar vídeos. / Pero teatro no. / Porque no hay teatro si no estamos juntos.[1]
(Pablo Messiez, 2020)

Pablo Messiez (Argentinian playwright, actor and director), recently reflected in his social media on the impact of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic on the performative arts, arguing that the closing down of theatres had stolen the *physical presence* required for *theatre* to happen.

Without bodies acting and feeling together, without a social encounter, the potentiality that the staged play adds to the written drama was lost. The emptying of the language classrooms had a similar impact on our teaching practices; the interruption of togetherness with the alienation of individuals within the confines of their screens had eroded the social component of pedagogical practices.

Presence, until now, had been a characteristic of the collegial experience. Teachers accustomed to face-to-face formats hurriedly adapted their courses and practices to distanced learning. But practitioners also had to consider how to reclaim the lost *presence* to transform distanced classrooms into spaces – stages, perhaps – for (inter)action and creative possibility, and to convince learners to *be present* within the confines of a screen. The online classroom

needed to involve more than "*escribir /y hacer vídeos /y mirar vídeos*"[2] (Messiez, 2020) for its pedagogic potentiality to flourish.

Our aim with this reflexive paper is to share the experience of a distanced theatre workshop run by a language lecturer (González-Becerra) and a cultural researcher (del Río Alcalá) in an intermediate-advanced Spanish course at Princeton University during the Covid-19 pandemic. We will discuss how we believe the adaptation of a previously existing theatre-based activity to an online context enabled the construction of presence and supported the development of a range of learners' competences despite the lack of bodies.

We will first review how theatre enriches language teaching and then focus on two components of performative action (playfulness and presence) and how they need to be reappraised in distanced learning contexts. We will then situate our practice, discussing the impact of the pandemic in education and the arts, and present the course where this workshop was embedded. The second part of the paper will provide a rationale for the design process and present the workshop sequence and related assessment. We will then close with an overview of the running of the workshop, evidencing outcomes with an analysis of excerpts from learners' contributions.

THE PEDAGOGICAL POTENTIALITY OF THEATRE

In this section, we provide a review of the potentiality of theatre for language teaching, showing how it can foster the development of learners' communicative, intercultural and symbolic competences. It is this array of possible pedagogical outcomes, alongside the social-affective and interactive potentiality theatre provides, that convinced us to invest in developing this workshop. We will also propose how *presence* can be reconceptualized for online environments and argue that playfulness needs to permeate task design for presence to be achieved in virtual classrooms.

Communicative Skills: from Oral Expression to Intercultural Competence

The use of theatrical techniques in the foreign language classroom has been long recognized as a means of developing communicative skills (Boquete Martín, 2014). Role-plays and simulations contextualize language use within believable scenarios, allowing for the practice of prosody (stress, intonation, rhythm) and the exploration of non-vocal components of communication such as distance, movement or turn-taking (Surkamp, 2014), supporting the development of skills that are absent from textbooks or simply assumed as naturally emerging from communicative lessons. Depending on the level, learners may also apply sophisticated rhetorical and stylistic resources, working with humor, implied meanings or conveying emotions (Hidalgo Martín, 2016). These activities bring pragmatics into the classroom, highlighting cultural differences in communication strategies, proposing referential, sociocultural and relational understandings, and developing learners' intercultural competence as they navigate difference and ambiguity (Bellezza, 2020; Boquete Martín, 2014).

Originally proposed by Byram (Byram & Zarate, 1996), intercultural communicative competence (ICC), later intercultural citizenship (Back & Wagner, 2019), moved from representing learners' knowledge of how to navigate different cultures through language and action to a more identity-related construct. Thus, in ICC, the mediation skills and critical cultural awareness required to successfully interact in multicultural contexts are connected to personal attitudes such as openness, flexibility or tolerance, also developed through language learning (Back & Wagner, 2019; Byram et al., 2002).

In dealing physically with a text, learners mediate between cultures and experiences through their performance – inhabiting the space and actions of *the other*, engaging in empathetically understanding different worldviews. Where the tasks proposed take learners beyond transactional interactions, essentialized cultural representations, and univocal meanings, learners develop a more sophisticated relationship with language, understand the target cultures critically, and forgo the *tourist gaze* of narrow communicative approaches (Ros i Solé, 2013; Vinall & Heidenfeldt, 2017). The development of ICC through theatre-informed tasks is thus language mediated but also supported by how performances create notional spaces for cultural decentering (Liddicoat, 2014).

Symbolic Competence: Communication as Critical Engagement

Recent work (Bellezza, 2020; Étienne & Vanbaelen, 2017; Keneman, 2017), has also demonstrated how the integration of theatre in the language classroom fosters the development of learners' symbolic competence through reflexive, interpretive, and politically engaged pedagogies (Vinall & Heidenfeldt, 2017). When performing, learners manipulate language as symbolic system (Kramsch, 2006), an organic set of symbols that hold different meanings and provide different affordances depending on the context (Back & Wagner, 2019; Byram et al., 2002). The concept of symbolic competence proposed by Kramsch (2006) represents the situatedness of communication, how it is framed within social relations and tensions – and how it involves "social and political practice" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 416). Language learning provides learners with semiotic tools, resources for meaning-making that allow them to participate in different social environments; language is the social capital which allows learners to act within and manipulate their context (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008).

In theatrical performance, learners engage in negotiating and reframing discourse through the recreation of "personae, or styles of being"' (Eckert, 2002, p. 3); they apply creativity, imagination and criticality to the *reading* and *acting* of text and situation, grasping and questioning discursive power dynamics, using language strategically and incorporating their own understandings and experiences to the construction of their characters (Kramsch, 2006). This is especially true where performative tasks allow learners to reimagine and rewrite the meanings and actions proposed (Keneman, 2017), that is, when spaces are generated to *play* with meaning.

Performativity: The Role of Playfulness

Learner-centered dynamics, active learning, playfulness and creativity are the hallmark of performative pedagogies, as their focus lies on the process, in developing performativity (Bellezza, 2020; Boquete Martín, 2014). Drama-based activities foster experiential, social-relational and physically immersive pedagogical interactions where knowledge is developed through multimodal exploration, self-reflection, and collaboration (Byram et al., 2002; Harrison, 2018).

As such pedagogical frameworks require the willingness of learners to participate and perform (Horwitz, 1995), playfulness and the idea of playing should inform their design and execution. Play, face-to-face or online, can positively transform classroom interactions (Reinhardt & Sykes, 2014) and increase participation and motivation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Kessler, 2013), framing learners' affective reactions within the safe space of fiction and imagination, assuaging performance anxiety and inhibitions (Kessler, 2018).

The gamified nature of drama hinges on participants' agreement to inhabit a shared alternate reality (Pearce, 2006). The classroom, this co-created stage, becomes a sandbox where learners experiment with linguistic action and find their voice without fear of failure. Play also supports the generation of communities; it is highly participatory and provides new ways to collaborate (Kessler, 2013). In theatre, learners share different roles within the same fiction; switching from directors, to players, to audience, seeing and being seen, speaking and actively listening, and becoming *spect-actors*. Through performative play, their performative beings (Eckert, 2002), their physical presence (Bellezza, 2020), and the dispositions which enable empathic understanding of each other's experiences can flourish.

Co-constructing Presence: Being and Interacting without Bodies

Learning is embodied, social and relational (Hodkinson et al., 2008). As discussed, theatre-based activities are especially suited to engage these dimensions in the language classroom. However, the pedagogical interactions proposed in performative learning, much as with theatre itself, require a shared physical space and presence which needs to be replicated somehow in the online classroom. It is through effective technological mediation and a pedagogical design adapted to its affordances that notional spaces can be created to nurture social learning and virtual presence.

Virtual presence differs from our usual understanding of embodied presence. It is an attitudinal, social-interactional and performative construct, constituted by each individual's agreement to participate in the shared fiction of the virtual classroom. It can be perceived when participants play (or perform) their agreed-upon roles in unison – learners, teachers, peers – tacitly replicating behaviors from the face-to-face classroom in an intangible medium. In online pedagogical interactions *presence* can be reframed as *engagement*, that is, as learners' demonstration of a sustained interest in participating (Pearce, 2006) in the imagined classroom – engaging with the content, with peers and teachers. Lanier (2021) proposes a three-dimensional model for online presence based on learners' affective, interactive and cohesive engagement. Learners' presence in online environments in this model materializes in how participants communicate, responding verbally or in writing to conversations, asking questions, referring to peers or using the 'we' pronoun. It is also perceived in what they communicate, for example, humor, emotion, and self-disclosure (Lanier, 2021). As such, *being* in the online classroom eschews most physical requirements (only image and sound remain) and is demonstrated through communicative acts, mediated by technology, by learners' ability to use the same language, and by their willingness to participate.

Thus, by integrating a theatre workshop into our online language classroom we wanted to develop learner's communicative skills (orality, awareness of genre and style), and ICC, their intercultural competence (critically engaging with the literary text selected, reflecting on the context and processes presented, finding commonalities with their own experiences), alongside their symbolic competence (manipulating language and other communicative strategies to challenge and reframe their context of action). To these general aims, which can inform any drama-based pedagogical intervention, we had to add the following in order to succeed in a distance learning environment: generating presence (improving motivation and learners' willingness to participate), creating distanced communities of practice (generating a safe space that nurtured supportive interactions and laying out routines and expectations), and developing learner's technological competence (applying technology to support sophisticated meaning-making and to facilitate pedagogical interactions).

LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

Impact on Pedagogy

During the 2020-2021 Covid-19 pandemic, educational centers had to decide whether teaching could take place face to face. Princeton University, our institution at the time, was among the first to empty their campus for several terms and move to emergency remote teaching, that is, to an unplanned online provision forced by circumstances (Hodges et al., 2020). However, regardless of the ability of teachers to adapt, after the first months of online teaching, many still felt ill equipped to address the demotivation, isolation and technological burnout felt by an increasing number of students (Oerther & Peters, 2020).

While the remit of this paper does not allow for a deep analysis of course evaluations, it is worth understanding language learners' feelings at the time regarding the move to distance learning to set the scene. A cursory thematic review of the feedback received from students[3] indicated, as shown below, that we still needed to better promote participation, facilitate collaboration, and enhance motivation.

Perhaps surprisingly for a generation with a high level of technological acumen, most students would have preferred to return to face-to-face teaching much sooner (Ross, 2020). Some noted the impact of technological barriers (connectivity, access to tools) on the syllabus and their performance (pacing, time available – "virtual presentations were a bust"), or at the interactive and affective level ("it's harder to participate and collaborate using Zoom", "technology dampened my motivation"). Others commented on the loss of the social component of language learning – hinting at how in other subjects' physical *presence* may have not have mattered as much ("difficult to improve language skills from home", "technology reduced participation and made it difficult to run a discussion-based seminar", "Spanish classes need a real classroom"). The majority praised teachers' efforts, but even if a small number found that language learning "worked equally well online" and that "we rebounded gracefully", a quarter of students surveyed was critical of the virtual setting and a third described it in lukewarm terms ("generally tolerable", "went relatively well given the circumstances", "hit or miss"). By the second term of online tuition, Fall 2020, students were still reporting that distance learning using Zoom, the platform selected for teaching, made communication, class participation and group-work "challenging". Although a sense of community existed somewhat thanks to small group activities in breakout rooms[4] or to the discussion-based format of lessons, technology-mediation "definitely impeded" the development of personal connections.

While educators were trying to adapt their practices and pedagogies to the pandemic, the world of the arts was facing its own upheaval and rethinking how to reframe its interactions in order to survive. In Spain, the context of interest for this experience, pandemic-imposed restrictions were among the strictest in the world; all cultural events were cancelled for several months. Artistic interactions, as well as pedagogical ones, were now distanced and technology-mediated. Presence, performers' and audiences' bodies in context and in contact, became two-dimensional: home screens became theatres, and conversations morphed into videocalls as the whole country protected itself from the virus.

The limitations set by the pandemic, however, also generated creative responses as artists found new ways of engaging with audiences, of *being together*. Anna Albaladejo, in Valencia, serves as example of how artistic expression found new stages to connect with (Las Colektivas, 2021), as she transferred her puppet show to her balcony, offering creative respite to all the neighbors who, every day at the same time, came out to their windows to cheer for medical professionals in a routine of distanced togetherness.[5]

Thus, while students' feedback indicated that we had been somewhat successful at maintaining engagement with learning, transferring the content to be taught and some teacher-student interactions – our *teaching* and *cognitive* presences – to an online medium, further work was needed to develop pedagogical spaces that re-enacted our *social* presence and its affective, interactive and cohesive dimensions (Lanier, 2021). As such, we needed to find more creative instructional designs fostering social engagement (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014; Kern, 2006). The creative reactions to the pandemic from the world of the arts and the resourceful ways in which theatre practitioners reconceptualized audience interactions provided us with the inspiration for the pedagogical intervention we will discuss here.

Our Context of Practice

It is at this stage that the Spanish and Portuguese department at Princeton University supported the development of several technology-mediated performance workshops facilitated by a cultural researcher located in Spain.[6] These activities, which took place during Spring 2021, aimed at providing students with the opportunity to engage creatively with their subject outside of the classroom and to find a community in the distance.

One of these workshops was embedded in SPA207 *Studies in Spanish Language and Style*, an advanced level course which seeks to develop learners' written style and genre awareness through interaction with a range of cultural productions and the analysis of social trends in Spanish-speaking contexts.[7] This course had traditionally included a short theatre-based task before but, given the move to online teaching and the loss of physical interactions, it needed an overhaul. The thematic units that comprised SPA207 at the time focused on inequality and invisibility, the impact of colonialism, and on migratory movements. The syllabus for this course, in line with all Spanish courses at Princeton University, has been designed with a social justice stance in mind (Bilbao Terreros & Bono, 2019). Thus, source materials used reflect this interest in highlighting power inequalities and opening up spaces for critical reflection.[8]

During Spring 2021, SPA207 was attended by 23 students from a variety of humanities and non-humanities programs.[9] As a result of the pandemic, enrollments were lower than in previous years. To allow for more interactive and personalized online sessions, the course was divided into four small sections of 6-8 students each. Students attended the courses online from their university accommodation or from their own homes.

As mentioned earlier, SPA207 already included a short theatre-inspired task that ran for one or two sessions designed by the previous course coordinator, Dr. Mariana Bono. Here, students informally staged excerpts from *El delantal blanco*, by Chilean writer Sergio Vodanovic. The aim of this activity was to break up classroom routines during the first days of the term, to play with language, and to explore the role of space and physical movement in meaning-making. It also complemented the critical analysis of the play, framed within Bourdieu's theories of social and cultural capital (1986). During this activity learners performed selected excerpts from the play, taking into account verbal and physical considerations.

This short task was formative, focused on generating a sense of community, laying out the foundation for more participatory and student-centered interactions throughout the course. Furthermore, engaging with the source material with all the senses allowed for a deeper understanding of the literary text (Bellezza, 2020; Étienne & Vanbaelen, 2017). While we knew that the loss of physicality would impinge on the running of this same task online as Zoom-fatigued learners had settled into passive observer roles, we wanted to re-enact its *fun* and transgressive elements and to explore how distanced drama could contribute to a distanced language classroom.

DESIGNING THE WORKSHOP

The first steps in theatre workshop design involve establishing clear goals and assessment strategies (Bellezza, 2020). We embedded the workshop more formally in the curriculum, aligning it with a combination of existing and new learning outcomes (linguistic, performative, and interactional), designed summative assessment, and sequenced it across two weeks (four sessions in total) so that learners had time to work inside and outside of the classroom together.

A theory introduction, two discussion-based seminars led by the cultural researcher (*visiting* the class from Spain), was included to sensitize learners to the strategies of dramatic communication and the role of theatre in society, and as a means to situate our performative experiment within a larger context, including the experience of theatre in Spain during the pandemic. Pedagogical interactions were choreographed through multimodal class dynamics, ensuring learners played diverse roles – peers, screenwriters, actors, audience, critics – through different media.

In terms of the performance itself, we also changed its scope. A term before the pandemic, we had started asking SPA207students to include a twist that disrupted the original when they presented the play in person (a shift in the action, the language, or the context). This time, we decided to experiment with more radical *transpositions* (Whittesley, 2012), and instead of small optional changes, the briefing requested that students completely reframe the original play within a new medium (using Zoom tools) and context (*translating* the action into their own time and space). With this, we hoped to boost creativity and critical reflexivity. Learners had to explore how the tensions that the play lays bare also take place in their own surroundings, and find ways to communicate these through technology.

Finally, assessment needed to be meaningful. Thus, tasks that provided a natural extension to the different workshop stages were designed. These connected each step and supported the interactions and roles we had imagined for students, sustaining their engagement, their *presence*, while also reflecting their achievements.

In moving all of the above to a distanced medium, we had to find a way to recreate a stage in a disembodied, dislocated space, to design a simulacrum of the theatre we used to know that was suited to the dynamics imposed by the pandemic. The sequence we propose and develop next represents, in a way, our own pedagogic *transposition* from *theatre* to *distanced drama*.

The Source Text

When redesigning the dramatic activity to adapt it to an online context, the previously used play was kept as it provided a tried-and-tested source material, that provided great potential for transpositions, and because of its comedic nature. *El delantal blanco* emphasizes the role communication plays in framing class and power relations by highlighting through humor their arbitrary nature. Its action centers on a dialogue between a well-to-do lady and her maid during an afternoon at the beach. Hierarchies are established through linguistic choices such as the use of pronouns and through non-verbal communication, specifically kinesics (posture, gestures, physical interactions) and vestemics (clothes such as the white apron from which the play takes its title and which serves as peripeteian device to challenge social hierarchies with a humorous twist). While the play locates these tensions in a specific time and place through its culturemes (Luque Nadal, 2009) and behavioremes (Surkamp, 2014), symbolic artifacts, utterances, or behaviors with a culture-dependent meaning, its message and the means of conveying and questioning the arbitrary nature of privilege are universal. Its timeless and relatable nature made this an especially effective play to experiment with so that learners would

not struggle with obscure and difficult to transpose meanings. Its accessibility and light-heartedness would also allow for more relaxed interactions.

The Pedagogical Sequence

Task sequencing sought to guide learners through the content – understanding the role of theatre in society, how performative communication works (with or without bodies) – and scaffolded the creative process providing a narrative frame for pedagogical (inter)actions through the fiction of engaging together in a theatrical performance. This approach supported the development of the roles students inhabited throughout the workshop as they switched from traditional learner-teacher-peer interactions, to becoming screenwriters, active audiences, actors and imaginary critics. As these roles emerged, teachers faded into the background. They first provided instruction and guided groupwork and then became, at the end, part of the audience and hidden operators. Throughout, the available screen display modes (gallery view, focus on speaker) and permissions in Zoom (attendee, co-hosts) can be shifted to represent the progress toward a student-focused and student-led performance.

There was no explicitly taught grammar within this workshop; however, as learners had to produce a range of texts, annotated real-life examples of relevant genres were provided with each assessment to guide their writing. Finally, alongside comprehensive instructions for the assessed tasks, rubrics were published in advance in the virtual learning environment (VLE) to ensure objectives and expected outcomes were understood.

Below, an overview of the sequence is provided (Table 1). Design rationales, content, practicalities and outcomes will be expanded in subsequent sections.

Table 1
Workshop Sequence

	Synchronous activities	Homework / Asynchronous
Day 1	Whole class discussion (all sections together). Visiting moderator[10] leads interactions. Theory session: *theatre, playing, virtuality.* Dramatic experimentation: *emotions, communicating with your body.*	Read full play & complete glossary of technical theatre terminology. Assessment published on VLE.
Day 2	Whole class discussion (all sections together). Visiting moderator leads discussion. Breakout rooms groupwork (language teachers visit own students). Exploring *El delantal blanco*: group analysis. Dramatic strategies: character construction, building context. *Troupes* assigned: class divided into pairs, play segments distributed.	Pair work: students draft transposition (10 min. production). Programmes* are produced and shared (Google Drive).

Day 3	Return to individual sections with own teacher. Students take the stage (Zoom co-hosts). Teacher organises turns, hands out forms (Zoom chat) & presents awards. *Matinee: live* performances.* Audience completes anonymous ad-hoc feedback Google Form. *Tony awards ceremony* – live voting & results shared. Theatre critic roles and play allocated at random.	Students write theatre critique*, in VLE.
Day 4	Before the class: asynchronous online interaction (VLE discussion board: comments to colleagues' critiques). Debriefing / plenary in class.	

* Items marked with an asterisk are assessed.

Designing the Assessment

Assessment was informed by Task and Project Based Learning approaches that seek to create opportunities for learners to produce real-life content in a self-directed manner (EDLAB, n.d.), and, here, to also engage in technology-mediated collaboration (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014; Kessler, 2018). Participation and engagement took precedence over linguistic ability, although the latter was also present in the rubrics, as the aim of the assessed tasks was to generate *presence* and support interactions alongside the more traditional focus on developing communicative skills. In terms of technological competence, we hoped to provide learners with the opportunity to play with multimodality and explore how to best use available online tools for future assignments. Assessment sought thus to be *for* learning as well as interactive, authentic and highly practical.

The performance and the program

The performance of student-scripted transpositions represented a 5% of the final total grade for the course. As well as creating a transposition of their play excerpt for a 10-minute performance, *troupes* (student pairs) had to design a program which included an original title, a synopsis and a list of cast members. Programs were shared in Google Drive before the *matinee*, helping in the generation of a fictional theatrical experience and serving as reference for their *peers-critics*. As the focus was on performance and creativity, no other written material was requested at this stage.

Learners were provided with real samples (synopses from Spanish-speaking TV dramas) to prepare their program and also provided with a handout specifying the expected content and structure of a synopsis. This writing task was embedded in the analytic rubric designed for the performance (Appendix A), alongside other criteria which reflected our expectations in terms of groupwork, interactions and engagement.

Assessment criteria were task-specific to guide students' preparation. The rating scales for each criterion were simplified to ensure clarity and standardized marking among different teachers. A substantial amount of grades were allocated for group tasks – materials produced together, participation – reflecting how collaboration and creativity ranked above individual linguistic accuracy or performance for this activity.

The critique

The component assessed last focused on written communication and style awareness and served as a way for teachers to provide detailed individual feedback on composition as it was the first substantial text produced by students for the course. Learners had to write an

expositive-argumentative text, a theatre critique, from the perspective of an imaginary narrator, publish it in a conversation board in the VLE and respond to peers' critiques. This critique was the first out of a total of three conversation boards which accounted for 20% of the final grade for the course. A real annotated theatre critique was provided so that learners could follow genre conventions. Each student's critique was assessed holistically as other written texts would be later on in the course: a greater percentage of the grade (70%) was allocated to content, creativity, structure and style, and a smaller percentage (30%) to language use (grammar, lexical and syntactical accuracy and range).

In terms of its social and technological aims, the critique sought to guide and motivate learner's performative interactions in an asynchronous and even more disembodied medium; the discussion forum. This task also served to 'close' the workshop playfully. Learners became different characters and interacted as such while providing feedback to each other. While it had been conceptualized as a written exploration of narrative voice and character construction, the critique was also designed as a gamified exploration of social media interactions and online ways of being.

DEVELOPMENT AND OUTCOMES

Setting the Scene

The initial theory and groupwork sessions (Days 1-2, Table 1) were moderated by the cultural researcher. They aimed at situating learners in the conceptual and socio-cultural framework used (the arts, the pandemic, the situation in Spain), exploring concepts that would inform classroom practices (dramatic performativity, playfulness and virtuality) by eliciting reactions to real materials from the Escena Confinada project (Las Colektivas, 2021).

First, to introduce students into the Spanish context where *distanced drama* had emerged and eke out the role of theatre in society, the cultural researcher guided a group analysis of images by Spanish photographer Fernando Sánchez (Figures 1 and 2) depicting different views of a local theatre during the pandemic.

Figure 1. *Ghost light on an empty stage. Teatro del Barrio (Lavapiés, Madrid), February 2021.*[11]

Figure 2. *Preparing the auditorium to comply with regulations. Teatro del Barrio (Lavapiés, Madrid), February 2021.*

Seeking to generate cognitive dissonance, students were asked to hypothesize about the meaning of Figure 1, without background information, followed by Figure 2 once the connection with theatre was established. The cultural researcher then led a discussion on what could be seen, what could not, and how the images transgressed our expectations of theatrical encounters. Students provided literal and interpretive reactions and started demonstrating engagement (presence) by sharing their own experiences of *theatre* – and how these differed from the images – or making connections with content from previous courses – such as *Teatro Chicano* to exemplify the social impact of theatre.

Once the limitations for theatre – lack of bodies, of togetherness, (literal) red tape – had been laid out, the session moved on to exploring creative outlets that had emerged in response to the pandemic. In answer to the question of where theatre resides when theatres are closed, a student pointed that it could be found around us, in "*barrios*" or neighborhoods.[12] From the idea of narration and storytelling as social rituals and these, in turn, as dramatic performance – life as theatre – cementing communities, the discussion followed on to how the social-interactional component of performative action could be achieved online.

A miming activity closed the day with a practical, physical, and empathic task. Here, learners had to imagine the emotional state of well-known characters – choosing from a set of photographs – and represent it using facial expressions. Peers, using their collective knowledge, had to guess the character and their feelings (Britney Spears, elated, because of her freedom or Bernie Sanders, bored and freezing).[13]

The second day, still moderated by the cultural researcher, focused on exploring resources traditionally used in theatre to connect with audiences such as analyzing images from plays where meaning was conveyed through posture and dress, the storytelling strategies deployed by performers during the pandemic, and analyzing a performance by Anna Albaladejo (Figures 3 & 4).[14]

Figure 3. *Odet desde el balcón, puppet performance, Valencia, March 2020.*[15]

Figure 4. *Final moments of the performance, Valencia, March 2020.*

Learners discussed how sound, image and movement conveyed dramatic meaning in the distance, and explored contextual possibilities, that is, what the location signified, the message in the banners, the impact of this performance (meaning and context, community creation) and how it had creatively made the most of limited resources.

This theory session closed with a Bourdieuan analysis of *El delantal blanco* and with a discussion of the dramatic potentiality of the play: how characters are constructed, how symbolic devices establish implied and explicit meanings. While some theoretical concepts

were introduced by the cultural researcher,[16] the discussion hinged on students' own contributions as they proposed other manifestations of symbolic capital and symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) in their surroundings, exploring how hierarchies are established around them, finding commonality with the message of the play and situating their own knowledge in center stage.

At the end, theatrical *troupes* were created, play excerpts distributed and learners given time to work independently to draft their transposition ensuring the message and characters' voices were maintained but situating these within contemporary local discourses. Teachers visited breakout rooms to help students with technological possibilities or translation. Each group's approach was kept secret until the day of the show to generate anticipation.

Our expectations were met. Students' transpositions showed critical understanding of the source text and were context-sensitive and humorous. The target language and other communicative devices were used effectively to convey implicit meanings. Online presence was achieved through active participation in the tasks and roles proposed as well as through the playful exploration of technological affordances for distanced communication. Students made the play and its message *theirs,* casting a reflexive eye on their own context, challenging its practices through satire, reframing its meaning and enacting their symbolic competence. After these preparation sessions, students had acquired sufficient technical and creative tools to recreate a play in a new medium and, hopefully, the motivation or, at least, the curiosity, to engage in distanced dramatic games. As one student noted, the possibility of having fun together through creative play had piqued his interest and increased his willingness to participate: "*No soy un hombre teatral pero puede ser divertido. No me da vergüenza porque pienso que si tratamos de estar creativo será divertido.*"[17]

The Screen is your Stage

Sessions dedicated to Zoom performances were student-centered: teachers observed interactions, distributed feedback links or added vocabulary in the chat without disrupting performances, provided positive critiques to encourage the *troupes* and managed turn-taking during intervals.[18] Peer feedback, a Google Form link sent through the chat, served to secure the engagement of the audience with their peers' work.[19] Anonymous answers were gathered by teachers and shared with relevant *troupes* at a later stage, complementing teachers' own feedback and the grading rubric for the first piece of assessment.[20] As our aim was to create an intimate space that would facilitate more distended pedagogical interactions, sessions were recorded with the permission of students but not published on the VLE. Neither were research questionnaires distributed as the workshop was not designed as an experimental study but, rather, as an interactional experience. The current analysis is based on our personal annotations taken during the performances and in our reading of students' work (Appendix B).

Students' transpositions proposed a broad array of creative *reframings* with different levels of success. Instead of a white apron, culture-specific items such as a Canada Goose jacket (Appendix B.2), a pair of Versace slippers, or the latest edition of an imagined biology core textbook were used. Action was re-localised to a restaurant (reflecting client-staff interactions), a chess game (a dialogue between a tutor and a rich student), or a New York City bus stop where a construction worker waiting for the bus and a busy urbanite calling for a taxi engaged in conversation. The action was *brought home* as some troupes situated their transposition in the campus, using images of the colleges and the local library as backgrounds or reimagining their daily pedagogical interactions in a Zoom meta-call – a self-referential parody which showed a finely attuned critique of academic online interactions, of technology

fatigue and misuse, and of how Zoom had made social differences more apparent than before by bringing the classroom to students' rooms (Appendix B.1).

Culturemes were deployed to enrich the referentiality and locality of transpositions; these ranged from showing snapshots of social media platforms on screen, to using references to UberLux or reality TV (series such as *The Bachelor*), or were seen in a performance inspired by the Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit*.

Language was used to characterize the roles and their tense interactions. Some resorted to linguistic variations denoting social class – with conversational fillers such as "*o sea*" (translated as 'like') to indicate snobbery and higher socio-economic status.[21] Lexical work was sophisticated; some play titles used turns of phrase creatively, as *El peón de la señora* (The lady's pawn), where students played with polysemy (*peón* in Spanish means both pawn and worker); in the play a rich lady played against a poor chess tutor, her metaphorical pawn, who was dressed as a *peón*, a labourer. In *No juzgues un libro (de texto) por su portada* (Don't judge a *text*book by its cover), an English saying also recognized in Spanish was adapted to satirize student interactions (Appendix B.1). The play challenged and reframed the idea that expensive textbooks provide greater cultural and social capital by positing that library books with annotations from generations of students are the true source of academic capital.

Pragmatic strategies such as turn-taking were deployed when the more powerful character spoke over its counterpart, or where characters interrupted each other; using diminutives derogatively ("*Tú, hombrecito*"[22] to address the construction worker) and using gestures and voice modulation. Even proxemics (physical distance from the camera, gaze direction) were considered. Some of the more powerful characters spoke confrontationally, menacingly approaching their computers, while others moved further back from the camera, lowered their voices or looked down to denote subalternity.[23]

The most effective transpositions were those which involved multimodality and transgressive technology use in their staging. Most groups used Zoom backgrounds to situate the action in notional *macro* contexts (any bus stop, any mansion) and within more *micro* local contexts (their colleges, the library). Props were popular: clothing was selected to construct their personae (old jackets, fur coats, jewelry), small items were shown (mobile phones, chess sets – real or notional, as one student used plastic cups instead of chess pieces). Some embedded virtual items – Zoom filters and studio effects, including a virtual moustache for the construction worker. Finally, *No juzgues un libro (de texto) por su portada* was especially interesting in terms of how students had engaged in meta-critical work using educational technology to problematize technology-mediated education. They transferred the original characters and action into their current real lives as they *became* students interacting online during a distance learning situation. Their use of technology supported their staging: using the *mute* function to signify bad connectivity, asking imaginary roommates to be quiet, reproducing routine issues found in *real* distance teaching contexts. They even shared a fake Instagram profile on screen to parody how students are easily distracted by social media while online. Their narrative conveyed the same meaning as the play but they were emmeshing technology, and technological disruption, as part of their staging, narration, and characterization, satirizing their real synchronous distance learning experiences by using technology as symbolic device.

While all *troupes* succeeded in fulfilling performative aims, technological and theatrical tools were not always used to their full extent. Body movement was lacking in many performances as actors limited their range to the Zoom window, becoming talking heads. Sometimes they were unable to control the limits of the frame, their stage, and audiences could not see props. There was some exploration of off-camera movement when actors disappeared to fictionally exchange items,

but these were kept to a minimum. Cinematic devices such as fade-to-blacks could have been used as many forgot to consider how to indicate the end of their performance, leaving audiences waiting awkwardly for the signal to clap or resorting to an abrupt "*Fin"* (The end), breaking the dramatic bubble. Improvisation and ad-libs were avoided as *troupes* read scripts on their screens, denoting a fear of losing control of the target language, but also signaling how stifled online interactions can become when audiences lose meaningful cues given the lack of physical presence.

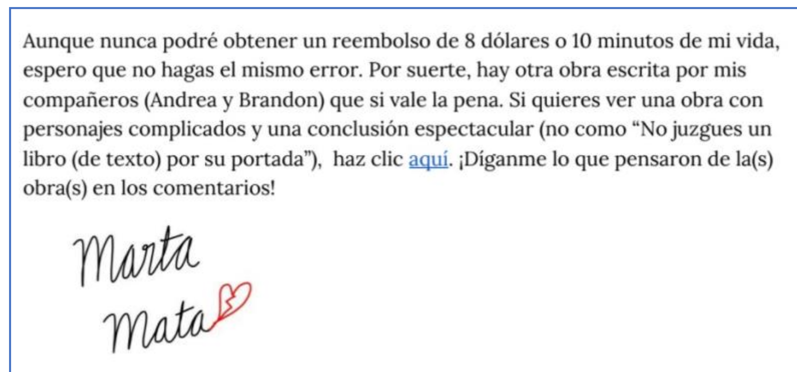
Learners immersed themselves in their spectating roles. No cameras were turned off during performances; the audience's facial expressions showed surprise, hilarity, puzzlement and there was unprompted clapping and *muted* guffawing during comedic moments. When plays finished emojis showed appreciation for each other's work. Unfortunately, these manifestations of their colleagues' engagement were limited by the medium as actors could not see or hear their audience (muted to avoid background noises). Thus, the instant feedback that energizes performance, as actors *feel* the audience *feeling* (laughing, clapping), was lost to the performers. However, participant interactions within our dramatic fiction worked seamlessly; learners took turns from actors to audience maintaining their engagement throughout, becoming *spect-actors*.

To materialize the unseen presence of the audience, sessions were closed with a Tony Awards ceremony.[24] Votes were gathered in a Google Form for best acting, best staging and best comedy. At the end of the class, ensuring the expectation was built up, winners were publicly announced. Awards were nonexistent, but this activity extended the intimate, supportive and engaged interactions that had developed throughout performances, and gave learners a space to *be* and feel together on a stage before the final distanced task: the critique.

From Dramatic Roles to Critical Personae

At the end of the *matinee*, students were randomly allocated a play to critique and a pseudonym – a critical *persona* – with a briefing on their character and predetermined opinions about the play (Appendix B.3). They became a feminist blogger who found the play lacking in terms of inclusivity, a mainstream critic obsessed with aesthetics, a luddite neo-Marxist writing for a unionized magazine or a mother discussing child-friendly productions. In their critiques, learners had to demonstrate they had engaged with their peers' work as audience (mentioning examples from each other's work) and to engage in yet a further performance as they tackled the narrative construction of their new character's voice. This was done textually (online posts) and dialogically (their responses to other posts, also written in character). This assessed exercise became a work of fiction, of creative writing and humorous communication with their colleagues in an asynchronous medium – the conversation board.

Learners took to the continuation of the game and constructed narrative voices with gusto, in many cases with an awareness of linguistic style and its function in characterizing the speaker's age, background or education. Narrative devices characteristic of social media were used in some of the posts: embedding links, presenting the argument as a ranking exercise ("*Dos razones para no ver…*")[25] with punchy headings and pithy paragraphs, requesting *likes* from their followers and advertising their imagined character's social media (Figure 5). Content was guided by the briefing given in secret to each student, but there was plenty of room for creativity. Many provided comments which reaffirmed their colleagues' performances based on the Tony awards, demonstrating engagement not just with the performances but with associated conversations and activities. There were also *fake* negative critiques – required by the briefing – addressing humorously colleagues' work, stirring the asynchronous online conversation as imaginary critics debated with each other, challenging their opinions with humorous results (Figure 5).


Aunque nunca podré obtener un reembolso de 8 dólares o 10 minutos de mi vida, espero que no hagas el mismo error. Por suerte, hay otra obra escrita por mis compañeros (Andrea y Brandon) que si vale la pena. Si quieres ver una obra con personajes complicados y una conclusión espectacular (no como "No juzgues un libro (de texto) por su portada"), haz clic aquí. ¡Díganme lo que pensaron de la(s) obra(s) en los comentarios!

Marta Mata

Figure 5. *Excerpt from Andrea's critique "Dos razones para no ver…" (material used with permission).* [26]

In this task learners engaged in communicative problem-solving as they expressed ideas diplomatically or humorously, defending biased positions that were, possibly, opposite to their own thoughts and beliefs, dealing with discomfort within a safe environment where all played at being someone else. Conversation board interactions (Appendix B.3) were an extension of the dramatic stage. This didn't stop, though, some learners from introducing disclaimers reminding colleagues that their words did not match their real thoughts ("*Fuera de carácter: quiero aclarar que en realidad no soy sexista*"),[27] or from advertising their own play ("*En vez de ver esta obra compre un boleto para La chaqueta Canada Goose*"),[28] critiquing their own work favorably and, overall, demonstrating their command of voice, style and characterization as they navigated multiple narrative personalities.

CONCLUSION

Integrating distanced drama in an online language classroom involved a leap of faith. We invested in an ephemeral experience borne from the pandemic with the hope that learners would be up for playing together and feel enthused by the creative possibilities distanced interactions could provide. Questionnaires were not sent out to gauge students' reactions at the time, but we believe the creativity deployed and learners' engagement show the spark *distanced drama* generated during a challenging time. Transposing a face-to-face activity to an online distanced environment forced us to rethink the management of social and technological interactions – sequencing carefully participants' role(s), designing a narrative flow for all components – as we had never done before.

The potentialities of theatre were realized. Learners' communicative competence was developed through the practice of aspects of orality previously absent from the syllabus, through their work with genres and narrative voice, and with the inclusion of multimodal strategies for meaning-making. Their intercultural competence was activated through the problematization of pandemic experiences, through the exploration of inequality and its representation through culturemes. Their symbolic competence was developed as they reframed meaning in the target language, casting a critical eye on the original text and their own context, making the message and the medium of communication theirs, embracing complexity as they experimented with communication strategies to overcome the distance. All debates were made more relevant as learners transposed them into local and personal experiences. Learners' understanding of the source material, their performances and characterizations, and even their interactions with peers demonstrated their ability to question and reframe their context of action through the manipulation of verbal, non-verbal and

technological symbolic systems. This was enabled by the construction of a safe notional space where learners could share and critique without fear, engaging playfully with each other, with the source materials and, even, with assessment, being present online by sharing humor, responding to peers, inhabiting different roles in a shared dramatic fiction. Technology-mediation was key for the play (and the playing) as an affordance for the development of learners' symbolic competence and the generation of presence in the distance.

The pandemic became our own pedagogic peripeteia, shaking us into considering more ambitious possibilities for theatre within the course, and into realizing the value of presence or the shapes it could take, something that, until the pandemic, we had taken for granted. In sharing our experience, we hope that colleagues can find an idea, or a design that can enrich their theatrical experiences with these lessons from a distanced stage.

NOTES

[1] Translation: "Stages have been closed down [banned]. / We can, however, write, / and make videos / and watch videos. / But no theatre. / Because theatre cannot be if we are not together."

[2] Translation: "Writing / and recording videos / and watching videos."

[3] Comments taken from the Spring 2019-2020 student course evaluation for SPA207 (22 responses out of 36 invited participants), in answer to a question on the technology use following the emergency move to virtual learning.

[4] One of the features of the Zoom platform for synchronous teaching whereby the classroom can be broken into smaller virtual rooms where groups of students work together independently. Teachers can visit each room or be called by students where needed. Learners reported that they enjoyed this more intimate space for peer interaction.

[5] Displays of appreciation for health workers coordinated through social media became a routine event in several European countries during the strictest lockdowns, see for example: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-51895386

[6] This initiative was proposed by Dr. Berta del Río Alcalá, co-author of this paper and former member of the languages teaching team, following the completion of a research project on the impact of the pandemic in Spanish theatre (https://escenaconfinada.es/). The fact that all courses were online at the time enabled the possibility of collaborating with her in the distance as she *visited* SPA207 (taught in the U.S.) from Spain.

[7] Spanish language courses at Princeton integrate language and content across the levels (Bilbao Terreros & Bono, 2019). SPA207 adopts a literacy-oriented perspective, focusing on the development of learner's discursive competence through the interaction with a varied range of written styles and genres (alongside other materials). Texts are not only used in class for their sociocultural relevance (content and context) but also as samples of situated language use and as linguistic resources for learners to then produce their own. This genre-informed pedagogical approach which considers genre as a 'socially recognized way of using language' (Hyland, 2007 p. 150) tries to systematize language use, raise awareness of cultural specificities, and provide students with the expressive tools to understand, manipulate, and challenge discursive structures within relevant contexts (Hyland, 2007). While the remit and length limitation of the current work does not permit further discussion on the overall didactic approach taken in SPA207 at the time the theatre workshop took place, it is worth noting the recent reflection on literacy-oriented perspectives and the issue of genre in the language classroom in the Teachers' Forum of this same journal (*L2 Journal*, Volume 13, Issue1, 2021).

[8] Language courses at Princeton are collaboratively designed. We would like to credit Dr. Mariana Bono, Associate Director of the Spanish Language Program and former SPA207 coordinator for the design of the original theatre task which had been used until then and for the selection of the play ('*El Delantal Blanco'* by Sergio Vodanovic). We would also like to acknowledge all previous language lecturers and teaching assistants who contributed to the teaching and design of this course in its previous iterations for their role in setting the framework from which our workshop was developed.

[9] Students attending this level had already completed the institutional languages requirement or had been placed at an advanced level to start with (equivalent to an AP5 or higher, B2+ CEFR). While a substantial number of participants took this course voluntarily, some had to fulfil an upper-level language requirement for their degrees.

[10] Within this sequence, the 'moderator' is the cultural researcher. There were other two language teachers (one different teacher per section and the coordinator – and workshop co-designer – leading two sections). As sections took place at different times of the day (two in the morning, two in the afternoon) the initial theory sessions led by the cultural researcher were repeated on the same day, whereas during Days 3 and 4 (the representations and final class discussion)

sections returned to their own *classroom* with their own teacher to maintain the intimacy of small group interactions. The cultural researcher attended (as audience) performances from sections taught by the workshop co-designer (the coordinator) but did not participate on Day 4 or on assessment, as this was the role of each class teacher.

[11] Images from "La Escena Confinada", https://escenaconfinada.es/es/home/ (Las Colektivas, 2021)

[12] It is worth adding here the insightful comment of the student: "*Tengo una idea sobre dónde está el teatro ahora; no sé si es correcto pero está en nuestras comunidades. En la familia, en el barrio, porque en COVID muchas personas necesitan quedarse en sus barrios y por eso pienso que el teatro puede estar en el barrio, entre las personas*". Translation: "I have an idea about where theatre is now; I don't know if it's correct, but it is in our communities. In the family, in the neighborhood, because during COVID a lot of people have to stay in their neighborhoods, so I think that's where theatre can be, in the neighborhood, among people".

[13] Images were taken from current affairs and social media, *fresh* and ephemeral events that would be easily recognized by students and provide a moment of shared knowledge and humorous interaction. As we wanted to work on physical and performative aspects, such as mimicry, the cultural closeness to the students was prioritized in our choice of examples. The examples mentioned were taken from the following news items: singer Britney Spears' fight over conservatorship (https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts- entertainment/2021/02/11/ britney-spears-court-documentary-reaction/), and a photograph taken of politician Bernie Sanders during the 2021 presidential inauguration which became a famous meme shared widely through social media at the time https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/bernie-sanders- photographer-1118174).

[14] We can only provide still images in this paper, but the full video was used in class and all its components were analyzed to convey the idea of multisensory meaning-making. Background sounds: clapping, overlapping voices, someone screaming "*Hola, hola vecina"*, people singing, cars beeping. Text from the banners: public health forever (Figures 3 and 4), after winter will always come spring (Figure 4).

[15] Materials from "La Escena Confinada" https://escenaconfinada.es/es/home/ (Las Colektivas, 2021).

[16] Students were briefly introduced to sensitizing concepts that would enable their critical reading and subsequent reinterpretations. These were the metaphors of cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), the resources, behaviors or artifacts which endow someone with symbolic power (class, distinction) and social recognition, and the concept of habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), the collective and individually internalized predispositions and habituated beliefs which frame action within society. In the play, the wealthy lady belittles her maid and establishes unsurmountable social differences based on arbitrary concepts such as clothing (owning a swimming costume, being appropriately dressed). Thus, wearing certain clothing is belonging to one class or another and a means to legitimatize someone's presence and behaviors in specific contexts: "*Mira. Yo con este traje de baño, con este blusón (…) estoy en "mi lugar", esto me pertenece…. En cambio tú, vestida como empleada sabes que la playa no es tu lugar*". Translation: "Look. Wearing this swimming costume, this blouse (…) I am in "my place", this belongs to me… Whilst you, dressed like a maid, you know the beach is not your place". Appendix B.2 shows a transposition from the same excerpt discussed here. The proposal of a Bordieuan analysis was already a feature of the theatre activity previously used in face-to-face sessions and we cannot take credit for it.

[17] Translation: "I am not a theatre person but it can be fun. I do not feel embarrassed either because if we all try to be creative it will be fun". Grammar has not been corrected in the original transcription.

[18] The cultural researcher, as mentioned earlier, remained in two of the sections during Day 3 and contributed as part of the audience, providing each troupe with a short critique on the theatrical elements that had worked the best. She also took notes during the performances which enabled the analysis which made this paper possible.

[19] Feedback forms were simplified and designed with a positive slant so that audiences could complete these, in Spanish, while watching their colleagues' performances. The three questions completed at the time were: 1. What was the best thing about this play?, 2. What was especially effective?, 3. What could be improved? Everyone in the audience participated.

[20] The audience praised work which had felt more relevant and connected to their own experiences as students: "*todos los chistes y como fue conectado con nuestra universidad*" (the use of jokes and how it was connected with our university); "*me encantaba el caso de la chaqueta abierta – es una manera de vivir*" (loved the reference to wearing an open jacket – it's a way of life). Audiences also assessed the use of technology and range of strategies applied: "*Me encanta la ropa y los objetos que trajeron*" (loved the clothes and items they brought), "*La actuación física, no solo el diálogo*" (the physicality of the representation, not just the dialogue), "*La manera en que alguien más pobre realmente podia hablar más alta*" (how someone poorer literally spoke louder), "*Cómo la escena de zoom y usa las "otras personas" en el cuarto*" (how they set the scene in Zoom and how they used [imaginary] other people in their rooms). The relatability of the transposition was highlighted alongside the physical and technological aspects: "*Como pasó la chaqueta por la pantalla*" (how they exchanged jackets from one screen to another), "*Las alusiones a Princeton*" (all the Princeton references)", "*Los ejemplos al principio fueron tan real (de aprendizaje a distancia)*" (all the examples they used in the beginning in reference to distanced learning were so real), "*El*

uso de Instagram me gusto mucho" (loved how they used Instagram), "*El uso de los telefonos, marcas, Uber y los conceptos modernos de Nueva York*" (the use of phones, brands, Uber and the contemporary references to New York). Advice was given on what to improve and how, involving both technical/theatrical aspects and language use: "*Pueden incluir música o algo así*" (could include music or something like that), "*Algo muy pequeño pero la concordancia de los pronombres*" (something small, pronoun agreement), "*Pueden usar más utilerías*" (could have used more props).
[21] This expression characterizes the speech of *pijos*, 'preppy' youngsters in Spain (Gallén, 2005).
[22] Translation: "Hey, little man".
[23] Examples taken from our annotations during live representations.
[24] Inspired by and adapted from an activity implemented in a different level (Spanish Language and Culture through Cinema) designed by our colleague Dr. Gorka Bilbao Terreros.
[25] Translation: "Two reasons to avoid watching…"
[26] Translation: Title: "Two reasons to avoid watching 'No juzgues…'" Main text: "Although I'll never be able to have my 8 dollars or 10 minutes of my life back, I hope that you will not make the same mistake. Thankfully, there's another play written by *my* colleagues (Andrea and Brandon) which is really worth it. If you want to watch a play with complex characters and a spectacular conclusion (unlike 'No juzgues un libro (de texto) por su portada'), click here [hyperlink to their own program]. Let me know what you thought about the play in the comments'" [signed Marta Mata – the fictional character allocated to the student].
[27] Translation: "Out of character: I want to clarify that I am actually not sexist!"
[28] Translation: "Instead of watching this play, buy a ticket for 'La chaqueta Canada Goose'".

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Appendix A

Rubric (performance)

Rubric designed for the performance task (including the program). Points for each criterion were allocated on a simplified scale of 4 or 2 points – depending on the weight of each criterion – ranging from 'outstanding' to 'incomplete'. The grade allocated was slightly different between members of the same *troupe* based on individually assessed criteria (indicated below).

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHT
Synopsis	The program is written accurately and demonstrating good style awareness	10%
Groupwork	Equal participation and effective interactions among members during the performance	5%
	Instructions and timings are adhered to	5%
Play adaptation	The transposition proposes a critical reading, demonstrating an understanding of themes explored in the original play and in the new context	10%
Communication	The adaptation shows awareness of the impact of linguistic and paralinguistic strategies. Text and subtext are conveyed effectively.	10%
Creativity	Technology is used creatively and effectively to support the performance	10%
Performance *(individual)*	Shows critical understanding of your character's experience and context	10%
	Verbal and non-verbal resources enrich the characterization	10%
	Attention is paid to voice, tone and rhythm throughout	10%
Use of language	Language is adapted successfully to the context and content proposed in the adaptation	10%
	Language is used accurately during the performance *(individual)*	10%

Appendix B

Excerpts from student work

The only written material students had to hand in were the programs (which included a synopsis and cast list) and their critiques. Some students forwarded a copy of their scripts, but these were not assessed (they were assessed on their performances and the program). The analysis we present in this paper is based on the notes we took throughout the plays and subsequent viewing of the recordings, and on the written materials handed in. A sample of each type of material (synopsis from a program, an excerpt from a play, samples from the discussion board) and relevant translations are provided here. Language has not been corrected in order to maintain the student voice.

1. The Synopsis

No juzgues un libro (*de texto*)* por su portada.

> *María, una estudiante inteligente de primer año, y Camila, una estudiante rica de tercer año, son compañeras de un proyecto de Biología. Durante su videollamada, un viejo libro de texto provoca un debate en la que las chicas terminan aprendiendo sobre algo más que el ciclo celular. ¿Qué importancia tienen la riqueza y la clase en la vida? ¿Estos determinan todo? ¿Son cualidades superficiales que simplemente no importan? Recuerda… no juzgues un libro (de texto) por su portada.*
> * Color was used in the original student submission

Translation: Don't judge a (text)book by its cover.

> Maria, an intelligent first year student, and Camila, a rich third year student, are working together on a Biology project. During their online call, an old textbook ignites a debate where both girls end up learning about more than just the cellular cycle. Do money and class really matter in life? Do they determine our existence? Are they just unimportant superficial qualities? Remember… Don't judge a (text)book by its cover.

2. The Play

Excerpts from *La Chaqueta Canada Goose* (The Canada Goose Jacket). Names of specific colleges (Club X, Y) have been removed as these are context specific references that may be sensitive. Students included stage directions in bold; these have been kept in the same format.

> ***EL MIEMBRO DEL CLUB X está leyendo un libro y tiene el fondo del club. Él está usando una chaqueta.***
>
> *EL MIEMBRO DEL CLUB X: Debe ser curioso... Mirar el mundo desde pantalones de chándal o el suéter de Club Y como el que usas tú... Algo parecido le debe suceder a la gente que está en clubs como X: somos elegidos para unirnos a un club prestigioso y comemos en comedores de lujo y debe ser diferente la forma como miramos a los demás, cómo nos sentimos nosotros mismos... Cuando yo me puse mi primera chaqueta Canada Goose, el mundo entero cambió para mí. (…) Dime... ¿Cómo se ve el mundo cuando se está vestida con una suéter normal, una suéter de Club Y?*

UNA ESTUDIANTE REGULAR está haciendo su tarea y tiene el fondo de pantalla de la biblioteca. Ella está usando un suéter de Club Y.

*UNA ESTUDIANTE REGULAR: (**Tímidamente**) Igual...El campus sigue siendo del mismo tamaño... las clases son iguales... los estudiantes son los mismos. Supongo.*

EL MIEMBRO DEL CLUB X: Pero no... Es diferente. Mira. Yo con esta chaqueta Canada Goose, con estos zapatos Louis Vitton, comiendo en el Club X, sé que estoy en "mi lugar," que esto me pertenece... En cambio tú, vestida como alguien que acaba de venir del gimnasio sabes que este no es tu lugar, que eres diferente... (…).

*UNA ESTUDIANTE REGULAR: (**Enojada**) No sé.*

EL MIEMBRO DEL CLUB X: Mira. Se me ha ocurrido algo. Ponte mi chaqueta Canada Goose.

*UNA ESTUDIANTE REGULAR: (**Enojada**) ¿Cómo? Tengo tareas que hacer. Tengo responsabilidades.*

UNA ESTUDIANTE REGULAR muestra la tarea que está haciendo. (…)

EL MIEMBRO DEL CLUB X se quita la chaqueta.

*UNA ESTUDIANTE REGULAR: (**Enojada**) Pero... ¿Para qué? ¡Esto es inútil y tonto! Tengo cosas que hacer. (…) No quiero estar aparte de tu experimento social estúpido.*

*EL MIEMBRO DEL CLUB X: (**Condescendiente**) Relájate. Quiero que veas cómo se ve el mundo, qué apariencia tiene la universidad cuando un Canada Goose te mantiene caliente. (…)*

UNA ESTUDIANTE REGULAR se levanta de su silla y se quita el suéter. Se pone la chaqueta fuera de cámara. Retorna con la chaqueta puesta y el zíper subido. Se sienta con delicadeza.

EL MIEMBRO DEL CLUB X: No. Con el zíper subido, no. Un miembro de Club X siempre anda con la chaqueta abierta para enseñar su ropa. (…)

Translation:

A MEMBER OF CLUB X is Reading a book against the (Zoom) background of their University Club. He is wearing a jacket.

A MEMBER OF CLUB X: It must be funny… To see the world in your sports clothes… Something like that must happen to people who are in clubs such as mine: we are chosen to be part of a prestigious club and eat in luxurious dining halls, and we possibly look at others differently, we feel different. The first time I wore a Canada Goose jacket, the whole world changed for me. (…) Tell me… How does the world look like when you are wearing a normal sweatshirt, like that one from Club Y?

A NORMAL STUDENT is doing her homework against the (Zoom) background of the library. She is wearing a Club Y sweatshirt.

A NORMAL STUDENT: (**Uneasily**) It's the same… The campus is of the same size… lessons are the same… students are the same. I guess.

A MEMBER OF CLUB X: But, no… It is different. Look at me, with this Canada Goose jacket, with these Louis Vuitton shoes, eating at Club X, I know I am in 'my place', that this belongs to me… Instead, (look at) you, dressed like someone who has just been to the gym, you know this is not your place, that you are different (…).

A NORMAL STUDENT: (**Angry**) I don't know.

A MEMBER OF CLUB X: Look, I've got an idea. Just put on my Canada Goose jacket.

A NORMAL STUDENT: (**Angry**) What do you mean? I've got homework to do, responsibilities.

A NORMAL STUDENT shows the homework she's trying to finish. (…)

A MEMBER OF CLUB X removes his jacket.

A NORMAL STUDENT: (**Angry**) But… What for? This is stupid and a waste of time! I've got things to do. (…) I don't want to be a part of your stupid social experiment.

A MEMBER OF CLUB X: (**Condescending**) Relax. I just want you to see the world, how does our university look like when a Canada Goose jacket is keeping you warm. (…)

A NORMAL STUDENT stands up and removes her sweatshirt. She puts a jacket on off camera. She returns with the jacket on and zipped up. She sits delicately.

A MEMBER OF CLUB X: No. Don't wear it closed. A member of Club X always wears their jacket open to show off their clothes. (…)

3. The Discussion Board

These excerpts show the interaction between Student A (allocated the Marta Mata profile) and Student B (allocated the Arkady Borroso profile). Profile briefings have also been included here with their relevant translation.

1. Samples of the profiles given to students as narrative voices for their critiques. These were designed as satirical archetypes with the intention of gamifying the feedback they provided and the interactions between the fake critics and the critiqued play directors/actors:

Perfil: ***Marta Mata****, una joven bloguera reivindicativa y feminista.*
Publicación/audiencia: un blog cultural para universitarios de una escuela de artes liberales.
Actitud: negativa, se ha sentido personalmente ofendida por la obra, por algún motivo (tú decides).

Perfil: ***Arkady Borroso****, un crítico interesado en encontrar (o destruir) a la nueva estrella del teatro.*
Publicación/audiencia: una revista de entretenimiento y arte para el público especializado.
Actitud: neutra, le interesa sobre todo la escenografía, intenta ofrecer pros y contras de la obra.

Translation:

Profile: **Marta Mata**, a young, woke feminist blogger.
Publication / audience: a culture blog for a liberal arts school student audience.
Attitude: negative, she feels personally offended by the play for some reason (you decide)

Profile: **Arkady Borroso,** a theatre critic who wants to find (or destroy) a theatre rising star.
Publication/audience: an entertainment and arts magazine for the more discerning audience.
Attitude: neutral, he's interested in stage and set design, he tries to offer pros and cons of the play.

2. Marta Mata's critique for 'Don't judge a (text)book by its cover':

Alerta de spoiler: Mi entusiasmo fue breve.
Pero primero debo explicar la sinopsis de la obra. "No juzgues un libro (de texto) por su portada" fue basado en "El delantal blanco" y se trata de lo que ocurre cuando dos estudiantes de clases sociales diferentes, Camila y María, tienen que trabajar juntas (…) ¿Te parece bien, no? A mí también me encantaba la idea de reflexionar sobre el prejuicio. Desafortunadamente, todo la obra fue simplemente una pelea entre dos mujeres.
Razón número 1: Camila es una villana demasiado simple.
Es 2021, los ricachones saben que no pueden juzgar a los demás por ser pobres. La protagonista Camila obviamente no ha aprendido a tener tacto. Cuando Camila empieza atacando a Mila, la amiga de María, por su apariencia pensé que era muy obvio. Si Camila era más sutil en sus insultos, tal vez ella tendría más profundidad.
Razón número 2: La conclusión no es satisfactoria.
Al final de la obra, María (…) explica que el dinero no es todo (y nos hace reír a la misma vez). El clímax de la trama es definitivamente cuando María muestra su nota perfecta. Pero la conclusión no está al nivel del clímax. Es muy abrupto (…).

Translation:

Spoiler alert: My enthusiasm was short-lived.
But first I should provide a summary of the play. "Don't judge a (text)book by its cover" was based on "El delantal blanco" and deals with what happens when two students belonging to different social classes, Camila and María, have to work together (…) Sounds fine, right? I am also enthused by the idea of reflecting on prejudice. Unfortunately, all the play was simply a fight between two women.
Reason number 1: Camila is too simplistic a villain.
We're in 2021, fat cats are fully aware that they can't judge other people for being poor. The main caracter, Camila, clearly lacks manners. Her criticism of Mila, Maria's friend, for her looks seemed quite simplistic to me. If Camila had been a bit more subtle in her insults, then she would have been a much more interesting character.
Reason number 2: An unsatisfactory ending.
At the end, Maria (…) explains that money is not what matters the most (and she makes us laugh at the same time). The play reaches its peak when Maria shows her perfect final grade. However, the ending is disappointing. It is too abrupt (…).

3. Arkady Borroso's reply to the above critique:

> *Hola Srta. Mata,*
> *Mientras entiendo de dónde viene Ud. con respecto a su reseña (y tengo problemas de la dramaturgia en algunas maneras), me parece que Ud. no les da suficiente mérito para su uso de la escenografía. Es verdad que Camila es demasiado simple. Por ser una villana tan simple, sin embargo, no hay un riesgo tan grave de reducir su complejidad: es solo no la mejor escritura. Además, mientras podían reescribir el fin, el hecho de que alguien en una posici6n tradicionalmente considerada "peor" puede ser seguro de sí mismo es aún un mensaje poderoso.*
> *Finalmente, aparte de la escritura, pienso que lo que podían hacer con los recursos mínimos del teatro remoto merece algún merito, por lo menos más que les ha dado Ud. a ellas.*
> *Un saludo cordial,*
> *Arkady Borroso*

Translation:

> Dear Miss Mata,
> While I understand where you are coming from in your critique (and I also have some issues with the staging of this play), I believe you are not giving the actresses enough credit. It is true that Camila's character is too simple. But, for such a simplistic villain, her complexity cannot be reduced: the only issue here is poor writing. Furthermore, while the ending could have been rewritten, the fact that someone traditionally seen as 'worse-off' could show such self-assurance, is a powerful message in its own right.
> Finally, aside from the issues with the writing, I do believe that what they achieved with the minimal resources that remote theatre provides should be acknowledged even more than what you have done here.
> Kind regards, Arkady Borroso

4. When reviews go wrong… A student's reply to a peer's critique upon finding that someone else had mistakenly used her allocated character (in this case, two Paco Franco characters appeared in the conversation board):

> *Me gustó mucho esta reseña de la obra "Sin título". Sé que soy muy popular entre los críticos de teatro, así que no me sorprende que algunas personas usen mi nombre como seudónimo. Como dicen, la imitación es la forma más grande de halago.*
> *El verdadero Paco Franco*

Translation:

> I really liked the above review of 'Sin título'. I am fully aware of my popularity among the world theatre criticism, so I am not surprised to see how some people are using my name as a pseudonym. As they say, imitation is the greatest form of flattery.
> The real Paco Franco