



## Communication as Performance and the Performativity of Communication

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### Proceedings of the 2014 International Colloquium on Communication

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Proceedings of the 2014 International Colloquium on Communication

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# Contents

<b>Kevin M. Carragee and Annette Moennich</b>	1
Preface: Communication as Performance and the Performativity of Communication	
<i>Performance in the Arts</i>	
<b>Hans Martin Ritter</b>	5
Performativity and Performance – Thinking About Performativity in Performance	
<b>Franziska Krumwiede</b>	15
Aesthetic Resistance Against Antiziganism Using the Example of Roma Theatres	
<b>Michelle LaVigne</b>	28
Moving from Performance to Performativity: Reconsidering the Rhetoricity of Mimesis and Alvin Ailey's <i>Revelations</i>	
<i>Performance in the Media and Legal Arenas</i>	
<b>Martha Kuhnhen</b>	39
Performance in Mass Mediated Interaction	
<b>Per Fjelstad</b>	50
Collaborative Substantiation and Qualification of Expertise in Concurrent Court Testimony	
<i>Performance in Social Contexts</i>	
<b>Claudia Muller and Linda Stark</b>	58
Pretend Reading in Parent-Child Interaction: Interactive Mechanisms of Role Taking and Scaffolding	
<b>Margarete Imhof</b>	76
Listening is Easy!? Looking at Critical Factors for Listening Performance	
<b>Werner Pfab</b>	89
Verbal Art and Social Conflict	

# **Preface: Communication as Performance and the Performativity of Communication**

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The following essays derive from papers presented to the International Colloquium on Communication, which took place in Muenster, Germany from 27 July to 1 August 2014.

The colloquium in Muenster represented a continuation of scholarly exchanges between communication scholars from the United States and Europe. The International Colloquium on Communication is a consortium of American and European professors of communication or experts on communication. Founded more than forty years ago through the collaborative efforts of the Speech Communication Association in the United States and the Gesellschaft fur Sprechwissenschaft und Sprecherziehung (DGSS) in then West Germany, the International Colloquium on Communication fosters the exchange of ideas between American and European scholars. The colloquium meets biennially, most frequently alternating between Europe and the United States for conference locations. Recent meetings have been held in San Francisco, California (2012) and Vienna, Austria in 2010.

The International Colloquium on Communication dedicates each conference to a specific issue in communication studies. Papers represent many research perspectives and the colloquium emphasizes bringing together scholars from different areas of the discipline to share ideas on the common theme of the conference. In an effort to foster lively debate on the papers, the International Colloquium on Communication involves a small number of participants, frequently fewer than twenty-five.

The Muenster conference theme, "Communication as Performance and the Performativity of Communication," provided opportunities for examining communication as behavior, acting, and event. The conference theme, along with the broader performance turn in communication research, brings attention to the material aspects of doing communication, what is done in communication, and the difference it makes in our lives and institutions. This broad focus allowed participants to explore and debate communicative performance in diverse

contexts, including the arts, the political and legal arenas, the media and in social interaction.

The first three contributions to this collection focus on communicative performance in the arts. While Hans Martin Ritter, Franziska Krumwiede and Michelle LaVigne share a common concern with the performative character of communication in the arts, their studies differ in terms of their specific focus and the conceptual frameworks they employ.

Hans Martin Ritter examines performance in theater, with a specific focus on performance in post-dramatic theater. In so doing, Ritter examines how the concepts of performance and performativity take on different meanings in German and English. Using examples from a diverse set of theatrical productions, he explores multiple issues, including different types of acting and the shifting and complex relationship between performers and audiences. Ritter's study raises significant issues and questions relating to the referential character of contemporary theatrical performance.

Franziska Krumwiede, like Hans Martin Ritter, has an interest in theatrical performance. Her focus, however, centers on aesthetic resistance in theatrical productions. In particular, she explores performances that challenge damaging cultural and political stereotypes directed against Roma. Krumwiede, therefore, examines specific performances as a form of political critique, challenging longstanding forms of oppression and discrimination experienced by the Roma. Her contribution raises an enduring question or issue by exploring the relationship between art and political change. Krumwiede, by examining theatre groups in Slovakia and Germany, provides examples of performances that speak with and for a traditionally marginalized group, the Roma.

While maintaining an emphasis on performance in the arts, Michelle LaVigne shifts our focus to the performative character of dance, an art form frequently neglected by communication researchers. Using Alvin Ailey's seminal work, *Revelations*, she explores diverse issues, including the mimetic character of dance and the continuities and discontinuities in the reception of *Revelations* since its initial performance almost sixty years ago. Past research on *Revelations* in particular and dance in general as well as broader insights by Benjamin and Baudrillard inform her analysis. These multiple frameworks help LaVigne provide a complex definition of the rhetorical force of *Revelations*. Finally, her essay shares Krumwiede's concern with art as a form of resistance, situating Ailey's work in a broader struggle of African-Americans for equal rights in an oppressive society.

The papers by Martha Kuhnhehn and Per Fjelstad discuss performance in mediated interaction and in the legal arena, respectively.

Influenced by a variety of diverse perspectives, including insights derived from Noam Chomsky, Deborah Tannen and Erving Goffmann, Martha Kuhnhehn provides a detailed analysis of the performances of three German politicians on a radio interview program. She demonstrates how these politicians, representing the Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Union and the Green Party, construct particular political identities through their performances and conversational styles. Kuhnhehn highlights the complex character of these

performances given that the politicians interact with the program's host and with each other, while simultaneously seeking to persuade the dispersed listening audience.

For his part, Per Fjelstad provides an exploratory analysis of concurrent court testimony, a recent alternative to the traditional approach to expert testimony in the courts. Put simply, concurrent court testimony involves a discussion between experts that is organized by a judge in an effort to inform sound judicial decision-making. Fjelstad explores the performative qualities of concurrent testimony as a conversational interaction, while also examining how concurrent testimony assesses knowledge claims.

The final three contributions of this collection assess performance in diverse social contexts. Claudia Muller and Linda Stark analyze the performative character of parent-child interaction during pretend reading. Margarete Imhof explores listening as a form of performance, while Werner Pfab examines verbal conflict as performance.

By a close analysis of parent-child interaction during pretend reading, Muller and Stark provide insights into the performative nature of this interaction. They devote attention to multiple issues, including role taking in this interaction and how some parents either support or hinder pretend reading through interaction cues to their children. Their contribution takes on added significance given the relative lack of research on the nature and consequences of pretend reading. They conclude that their exploratory study indicates that pretend reading can assist in the development of children's language and literacy skills.

Margarete Imhof shifts our attention to listening performance, providing insights on the complexity of listening as a form of information processing. She stresses the importance of working memory and long-term memory in the listening process, while also devoting considerable attention to defining strengths and weaknesses in listening performance. Finally, Imhof highlights the need to understand listening as an interactive process, involving reciprocity between speakers and listeners.

Werner Pfab concludes this research collection by examining the performative aspects of social conflict in his essay, "Verbal Art and Social Conflict." Rejecting an information-centered conception of communication, Pfab highlights communication as a performance by social actors, relying on the insights, for example, of Kenneth Burke and Erving Goffman. Within this context, social conflict represents a particular form of performance. Pfab provides a detailed analysis of a specific social conflict involving the mediation of a neighborhood dispute. Through the application of multiple concepts to this dispute, including social aesthetics and artful ways of speaking, he provides insights on how participants in a dispute are enacting or performing the conflict. Pfab's analysis seeks to remain sensitive to the dynamic patterns of interaction that characterize social conflict.

As coordinators of the Muenster colloquium, we need to extend our thanks to multiple parties. Most significantly, we thank the participants in the colloquium for their role in sparking lively debates during our week together in Muenster/Westphalia, Germany. Kevin M. Carragee thanks Suffolk University for

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# Performativity and Performance – Thinking about Performativity in Performance

## Wandering through the Fields between Theater and Performance – Looking Backwards, Looking Sideways, Looking Forward

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### Abstract

Looking at current theater, in particular the so-called post-dramatic theater, sometimes we may ask, if this kind of theater is still capable or willing to tell us intelligible stories about social life and human relations, as they are arranged in traditional theater plays.

The value of those complete theater pieces sometimes seems dubious or to be questioned. In new productions, we often see only fragments of them or they are dissolved in a flowing process. The criteria of realistic and psychological or mimetic acting become blurred. New forms of acting arise or are challenged. Current theater approaches to the form of acting, we call “performance.” Also, oral performing of literature besides the theater (“Sprechkunst”) is influenced by these new forms of acting.

Terms that try to grasp these trends, are deconstruction and performativity or the contradictions between product and flowing process or the relation between performativity and referentiality. Moving above all in the fields *between* the old-style theater and performative or post-dramatic events or those we call *performances*, I focus on the meaning of these terms or their opposition and reflect on the treatment of the aesthetic material, the kind of acting and the contact with the audience.

*Wandering through the fields* is an essential part of my profession. My profession is a mixture of *actor training, music and drama in education, theater and speech science* and not least: *acting and performing literature and music*. The examples I will give – *looking backwards, sideways and looking forward* – will reflect my experiences in these various aesthetic fields, including my experience as a *spectator*. My paper is divided into three parts or fields of

thinking and a prelude at the beginning: *Turning to and from Terms and Phenomena*. The three fields of thinking concern the *exhibition of the first person*, the *post dramatic theater*, and the *dialectic relation of process and product*.

### **Prelude: Turning to and from Terms and Phenomena**

The conception or idea of *performance* in the German language is used more specifically than in English. In English, each kind of acting is a performance. In the German language, performance is to be understood as an aesthetic activity that *differs* from theater. But the term performance is even more complex:

- Any way of bringing communication to an execution or expression (for instance, speech or singing a song) is performance.
- In the language of science, performance is used in opposition to competence.
- Within the field of pop music, for example the European Song Contest, the term performance has a very simple meaning: it is the physical action while singing or the type of mediation to an audience. As one of the applicants said, I think I've sung well, but the performance was poor.

The diversity of the phenomena associated with the term performance, of course, is linked with the fact that performance today has become an *aesthetic fashion word* to decorate diverse forms of action.

I am mainly interested in the aesthetic fields *between* traditional theater and what we call a performance in an artistic meaning. Traditional theater is a dramatic action between clearly characterized persons: the characters on stage. Theater is a system of signs, which contains references to people, social situations and behavior, as we know. Theater requires an audience that can relate the dramatic action to situations of social life – as mythically, historically or culturally removed the events on the stage may be: an audience that *understands* the events. This applies also to the art of speech, the art to perform or mediate literature – that we call *Sprechkunst*.

What we – facing the stage – call a *performance*, usually presents no characters or social behavior and does not relate directly to social life and its situations. It is even missing a structure that is based on stories. The meaning of the performative process in a performance is not simply or necessarily to clarify by references or by a rational tangible message. Nevertheless, the performance *tells* us something. But, unlike the theater which reflects the social world, the performance tells us nothing except what *happens*. It refers (apparently) *to nothing but itself*.

Sometimes, we can still feel the origin of the performance derived from the *visual arts*, set in motion. A performance often consists of moving pictures, choreographed physical and vocal actions and is interspersed often by elements of dance, moving art, voice art or physical theater even if it relates to a topic or story. And when the actors of the performance use words or speech, they often use it by musical aspects: intonation of the voice changes into singing, words dissolve into sounds, into a whisper or are performed in compact rhythmic or

splintering choirs. These events, however, do not occur in a structure of coincidence. They are created by a leading active subject; they are *presented, produced, performed*.

In contrast to the opposition or conflict between the character and the formative subject in theater, we can understand the performance especially as a *first-person action*, by which the active subject occurs in public and performs himself or herself. And even if it is sometimes masked by action or costume, the performance points especially at this ego. It is the paradoxical result that the *first-person*, who acts, now becomes the *material* of his or her own performance. The exhibition of oneself, however, can always be carried out very differently.

### The Exhibition of the First Person

If one understands theater as a kind of *metaphor* by which two realities – the *event on stage* and the *social life* – recognizably relate to each other as mutual support, one could describe the performance as a metaphor without a *ground* or referential base. And the audience may be puzzled and try to seek the ground on which the metaphor rests. Helmut Hartwig (1999), a scientist of the arts, calls performance a “negative metaphor,” meaning an absent metaphor: a metaphor *in absente*. He calls it the “hare without hedgehog” (273). I think the fable *The Race of the Hare and the Hedgehog* is well known. The hare races until he is completely exhausted, but there is no hedgehog.

I even once called the performance an *open parable*, an allusion to Franz Kafka: “All these parables are only set out to say that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible” (Ritter 2009, 186f.). Nevertheless, the incomprehensible can be sometimes experienced in its own way. In fact, in most cases one can finally find such a “ground” or referential base of the metaphor. For instance in the radical physical action of the Dutch group *Schwalbel/Swallow* that Barbara Gronau (2014) describes:

- The performance *Op eigene Kracht/By own Power* presents eight actors – nearly naked – on exercise bikes, producing the light of their spotlights by only their leg strength – rigidly looking into the audience and fiercely kicking: that way they become visible – and disappear in the dark when their power gradually declines. The audience is faced with nothing but the expenditure of body strength. But the wide opened eyes are acting too, just as the nearly naked bodies – usually erotically provocative, now perhaps drenched in sweat. (12f.)

Here you can recognize that it requires some effort to bring light into a cause or to set ourselves into light. But when the physical strength weakens, it will get dark again. That may be a kind of a metaphor.

Another form of an exhibition of oneself is *The Beauty in the Well*, a scenic miniature within a performance in summer 1982 (Ritter 2009, 183):

- A beautiful young woman – naked – sits in a fountain bowl full of black muddy water and grabs, lost in thought, again and again into the black mud and lets it slide over her body and her bare breasts. The visitors in

several groups saw this and other apparitions or scenic miniatures – in the manner of a repetitive loop, wandering at night with torches through a vast dark garden – in a pouring rain.

I saw a similar performance – without rain – in a 1998 conference in Potsdam (182):

- On Pfingstberg overlooking the New Garden and the Havel lakes, people walk down a slope, scattered in conversations. And suddenly a young woman stands apart in a small valley above a man made pond. Again and again she throws a bucket held by a long rope into the water below her. Tirelessly she draws and pours the water away to the side, as if it was her job to empty the pond. When she looks up, she looks like being in a picture that she cannot leave. One could see through this *glance of fierce determination* into the landscape of an evil fairy tale.

These people do not tell us an intelligible story, but visitors might find *themselves* in a story by those actions, moreover, in their *own* stories searching for their *own* metaphor. This probably becomes intensified when the events do not happen on stage, but in a common outdoor space where we are acting too as spectators.

Another region within the transition zone between performance and traditional theater is opened by the actors themselves and their biographical background. Again, these are first-person actions too, but they become also stories about society by these biographical backgrounds.

- At the *Berlin Theater Meeting 2013*, you could see a performance of the Swiss theater *Hora* called: *Disabled Theater*, a dance theater of disabled young people. First they stepped forward on stage, separately and mutely, and the audience could look at them. Then they stepped again to the ramp one after the other, naming their disabilities: *learning disabilities*, *Down syndrome*, *trisomy* and so on, and called their profession: I'm an *actor* or I'm an *actress*. One said: She does not want to *represent* anything, she wants *to be herself*. Then each of them dances a solo. But there was not only the dance to look at, but also the gestures of the looking actors in the background and their mutual compassionate imitation of the protagonists and their action. This seemed to be an important additional part of their performance.
- The project, *Song and Scene* (1982), was created as a musical biography of the participants without spoken words, assembling songs that had been important in their lives – loved or hated, ranging from children's songs, the hits during their puberty up to current songs, including contrasting songs or parodies. All songs contain a gestural foundation: love and disappointment, abandonment or collective behavior etc. and create situations and relationships between the actors themselves and the audience (Ritter 1990).
- In April 2014, the German performance group *She She Pop* presented the performance *She She Pop and Their Mothers*. The real daughters and their real mothers – by film clips – were acting on stage (only one son was involved too). Topics were real experiences and social problems, for

- example, whether and how the fact of *motherhood* restricts the possibilities of a self-determined woman's life, and whether motherhood is perhaps a form of *virgin sacrifice*. An essential aesthetic element of this performance was the recording of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* (*Sacrifice of Spring*), stimulating dances of the aged mothers and their daughters. A theater metaphor was not recognized at first glance: the mothers and daughters were – like you and me: no metaphor embodying beings. They were only fixed on their social and historical roles and their respective deviations. But against the background of *Sacre du Printemps* a metaphor becomes evident behind these social roles: motherhood – to become or to be mother – may be a form of a *virgin victim*.
- The performance of *The Last Witnesses* by the Burgtheater from Vienna, shown in Berlin in May 2014, had a similar dramaturgy. It is an assembly of interviews and autobiographies of living witnesses of the Holocaust (82-100 years old). The autobiographical texts, however, were performed by actors, thus, bringing the "performance" into line with traditional theater. The very aged witnesses were sitting behind a curtain. While they were listening to their own stories and those of the other witnesses, their faces were projected onto the curtain. At the end they stepped forward to the ramp individually and formulated a statement.

### Postdramatic Theater

These and similar phenomena get more and more influence within traditional theater performances. The concept of "post-dramatic theater" as it is called by Hans-Thies Lehmann (2001) aims at such intermediate forms. Literary texts or theater plays often are used as a quarry, fragments are reassembled or interspersed with actual texts and pictures of society often by videos. We seldom find intelligible stories or psychologically motivated, dramatically enhancing conflicts between characters. The actors switch from fragments of a character to aspects of the person they are in everyday life. The majority of the performances of German-language drama school's theater meeting in 2013 could for instance be characterized in this way.

The performative elements of acting usually have a service function to the meaning. But in those forms of acting, one can say, they overgrow the connotations or the references to social life. The performative elements "jump in the queue" – sie "drängen sich vor" as Hans-Thies Lehmann (2001) formulates. Erika Fischer-Lichte (1999) calls it a "Performativierungsschub," intensifying the "performative function of theater" against the "referential" ( 20 ff.). Or: "The performance dominates the text" (2004, 45). And she noted, "Instead of creating art works artists often produce events, in which not only themselves but also the recipients, the viewers, listeners, spectators are involved" (29).

These developments of course have their predecessors, for example, the *Living Theater* that tried to mix kinds of living and forms of acting, most radically in the production *Paradise Now* (1968). Also the *Schaubühne* in Berlin has

provided impulses: the *prelude* of the *Antikenprojekt/ Schauspielerübungen* (1973) for instance presented *actor exercises*, comparing the start of acting and the origin of theater: Starting with basic exercises of breathing, voice and movement, elementary scenic events, choral dances up to the monologue, where thinking and feeling become voice and speech. In *Shakespeare's Memory* (1976), actors and spectators met in a wide hall. The spectators wandered looking around as in a marketplace. A key experience for actors and spectators was the direct confrontation on the same ground.

An early prophet who tried to reinforce the performative elements in theater is Antonin Artaud. His battle cry was: *No more masterpieces!* (Artaud 1969, 83). He demands: "It's not about the oppression of the word in the theater, but to change his destiny: mainly about the limitation of its position" (77). "It is important to break the subjection of the theater under the text and to rediscover the notion of a language between gesture and thought" (95). Julian Beck, the protagonist of the Living Theater, called him "That madman who inspires us all (...) and I think he is the philosopher, for those of us who work in theater (...)." (see Botting 1972, 18-19.) My own Artaud-Project (1984/85) used aspects of Artaud's biography, his diaries and letters, his poetry and his ideas of theater aesthetics, working with choreographic and musical structures, for example, in splintery and rhythmic choirs (Ritter 1990, 123ff.).

Another early model for the trends of post-dramatic theater, I used too, is Bertolt Brecht's *Learning Play*. One of his basic rules is "The shape of the learning plays is strict but only so that parts of own invention and current type can be inserted more easily" (Brecht 1967, 17, 1025). The result is the repeated interruption of plays and the assembly of fragments. Each member of the acting group (and the audience too) is authorized to stop the events. The identity of the actors and the characters is replaced by role change or breaks between the real person and the character. Acting presents characters only temporarily as fragmentary gestures. The play as a substrate of a story with clear references to social life turns into a theater of arguments, leaning on Brecht's model of the *Street Scene*, changing back and forth from the level of acting to the meta level of discussion and discourse. Hans-Thies Lehmann, therefore, calls the post-dramatic theater, a theater in a post-Brechtian space (Ritter 2010).

- The project *Shakespeare's fools* (University of the Arts Berlin in 1986/87) is connected with these ideas and with my own attempts to Brecht's *learning play* in the seventies: Fools from various Shakespeare plays meet on a *fool's island* or a *fool's hill* – even fools of plays in which – originally – no fools occur. The model of this meeting was old *fools' academies*. In a grotesque way, they reflect people and situations they have experienced or overheard and the places where they come from. All Shakespeare's characters could occur in this play of *scenic quotations*, but always in the distorting mirror of fools. The individual performances sometimes were interrupted and connected at the same time by songs and dances. And sometimes the meeting exploded in a ritual of *bullshit* and *mucking around* ("Verarschung") by mutual imitation and caricature of the behavior within the group of fools (Ritter 1990, 131ff.).

The varying performative phenomena, which can be found in the transition zone between theater and performance, in variable distances from traditional theater (and also from traditional forms of *oral* and *literary performances*) can be characterized as follows:

- There are types of acting, which blur the boundaries between the *individual person* and the *character* or reinforce them
- *Experts of social life* are acting or appear on different media levels, presenting experienced situations – possibly supported by actors
- Plays or texts will be deconstructed: fragmented, reassembled or interspersed with actual facts
- Body actions or vocal actions produce a new and different quality of sense even if they relate to texts or topics
- Acting encourages the audience to participate and create a common space of events and experiences.

### **Processes and Products and Their Dialectic Relation**

Barbara Gronau (2014), a scientist in theater at the University of Arts in Berlin, recognizes – in ways similar to Erika Fischer-Lichte – a current trend in theater today: productions tend to *projects*, the *product* withdraws “in the background.”. *Art works* are dissolved in *performative processes*. This appears, as described, on two levels:

- *Plays* become *deconstructed* : the *art work* is used as a quarry and reinvented in a process of performance. The continuity of stories becomes lost. “The performance dominates the text” (Erika Fischer-Lichte 2004, 45).
- The outlines of *characters* become blurred, characters are *fragmented* or not considered. Space structures get into flow by opening the space of acting, for instance, but not only by video clips: the frontal spectacle splinters in an open space.

The result may be an entangled flow of fragmented forms in free non-narrative sequences.

Performative processes, however, *always* contain product-like elements or shares. They belong to the core of acting generally. Sometimes it is difficult to detect them in an open focus of attention or in flowing spaces, and it is difficult to relate them to each other. Nevertheless, there is a kind of a *dialectical relationship* between *product* and *process*. For example, it is not the flowing processes that stay in one’s mind, but especially conspicuous points of awareness: tableau-like pictures, a surprising view, a moment of slowdown, a temporary stop or standstill, a sudden silence. That way the process of acting can be revealed in an impression or its emotional response. The *disruptive eye* gives them a *frame*. This applies to watching and vice versa to acting.

I provide two examples:

- Michael Chekhov (1979, 21ff.) describes a simple exercise. His instruction is to model the space by gestures like a sculptor. Your action is structured

by three steps: the approach or the impulse of breathing, the action itself and the break after acting: the fermata. By the impulse of breathing, I anticipate my action; during the “fermata.” I remember my action retrospectively. Both points of acting cause the consciousness of form or product in action. You can do it mutely, by sounds and voice, by words or by a scenic miniature.

- Bertolt Brecht (1967) suggests the actor send a glance into the audience before acting or after acting (9, 778) or to wait until an utterance and its meaning have reached the audience. This moment he calls “Nachschlag” (15, 407) – meaning: the *inner echo*.

This form of acting can be called *framing a process*. Walter Benjamin (1966) recognizes at this point the dialectical quality of gesture: “This rigid frame-like coherence of each element of an attitude – which as a whole is in a lively flow – is even one of the dialectical basic phenomena of gesture.” (26) This just means the coincidence of *process* and *product*. The product arises within the performative process or the form within the flow of events. At the same time, the *product* dissolves continuously into the flow of events and disappears in a *process* of new approaches and action impulses. In the moment of the temporary stop of Michael Tschechow's exercise, you can, for instance, feel the energy of the action you did turning into the new impulse of the action you will start. Actor and spectator experience as contradictory: *immersing* in flowing processes and at the same time *emphasizing* details of an action or *perceiving* them pointedly. This also applies to the performance.

According to their function, the *products* are the places of thinking and sense-association. They produce the moments of highest proximity between actor and spectator and their dialogue, while otherwise both of them tend to be more self-conscious in the processes of their own experiences. Tableau-like elements *stimulate* the spectator's search for meaning and the process of interpretation or the “vibration” between aesthetic and social realities because it stops or retards the flow of events. Even the minimal offer of shapes on stage corresponds to the longing for meaning and its attempts of construction by the audience. And the actors, in those moments, experience most clearly that they are above all acting for an audience.

Hans-Thies Lehmann (2001, 193) notes that emotions perhaps could mislead the thinking when the performative elements “jump in the queue”: “The perception does not stop to search for meaning and associations with realities.” And the spectator possibly attributes “subjectively-determined meanings” to the events. That is probably true and could lead to a process of mutual missing. But in aesthetics we have – always and rightly – to accept subjective realities or subjective “connections and associations to realities” (193). It is always the *own vibration* between aesthetic and social realities. Misunderstanding must not necessarily be thought the opposite of understanding, but rather its constituent part.

The more complex and fragile the performative event is the more complex and multi-layered the search for meaning – acting as watching. The reference to people appears in the smallest fragment of a character, each fragmentary

utterance or attitude will encourage the spectator to design a whole character. When the performative elements “jump in the queue,” the referentiality stays always behind them – like a shadow or like the pre-shine of a possible meaning. And even where actors pretend to be nothing but themselves, they are always a sign of something at the same time because they are acting, that is, *performing* and *producing* themselves.

Erika Fischer-Lichte (1999, 25) claims that *what* actors are doing in this kind of theater or performance gets less important than *how* they do it. But the *How* is an essential part of performing: the *how* is its *product*. In the *How* appears *what* they are doing. The *How* contains the referentiality that acting must produce, if it does not want to appear empty and automatic. The actor's meaning of his acting and the spectator's interpretation of his perception. Both assemble around this *How* – like the bees around the honey, longing for (or addicted to) the vibrations of meaning.

However, in each performance we have to find a new quality of the balance between the *How* of acting or performing and its referential answer. If the “metaphor” remains hidden or an answer is not given, a confused puzzle of interpretation may start – perhaps even up to *head shaking*. But, as Bertolt Brecht (1967) told us, just by shaking the head fruits may fall down, and we only have to pick them up (16, 843), Looking at *performativity* we fortunately cannot *exorcise referentiality*, because when *acting* or *performing* we are always *living*. The referentiality arises or nests within the performativity, and vice versa. That is the *dialectic* in this matter, even though we must sometimes accept that meanings remain enigmatic, iridescent and ambiguous or contradictory.

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# **Aesthetic Resistance against Antiziganism Using the Example of Roma Theatres**

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*“Ich glaube, dass Literatur und Kunst  
Humanisierungsmittel sind...”* (Heinrich Böll)

## **Aesthetic Resistance – Performance Art against Antiziganism**

“Antiziganism – what’s in a word?” was the title of a conference which took place in Uppsala, Sweden in October 2013. Three very intense days of discussion about the right terms or words to define discrimination against so-called Gypsies did not produce a general answer. The controversially discussed term antiziganism (ZIMMERMAN 2007) competed against terms like antigypsyismus, antiromanismus, and racism against Roma or even Romaphobia. Terms differ from context to context – socially, nationally, internationally, and culturally. – and most terms are not based on scientific research. This has to do with the fact that scientific research about the discrimination against “Sinti and Roma” is a rather new discipline. There are a few exceptions from the late 1960s and early 1970s, but broadly speaking systematic research was not introduced until the late 1980s. At that time, political, social and civil rights movements formed all over Europe, claiming equal rights for “Sinti and Roma.” Since then scientific research about the definition for the group of people who suffer from this certain kind of hostility has been published and the topic “Sinti and Roma” has replaced the pejorative term “Zigeuner” in Germany. There are variants in different languages like “Roma” in Eastern European states, “Gypsies” in American English, “Balkan-Egyptians” as a self-designated name of a small group, differing as well from the term “Zigeuner” as from “Sinti and Roma” or from Ashkali in Kosovo (MARUSHIAKOVA & POPOV 2001). These terms are based on the common view that the former use of the term “Zigeuner” was discriminatory and belonged to Nazi-jargon. The German concept “Sinti and Roma” has a long history connected, on the one hand, to linguistic research to find a politically correct term. On the other hand, the victims of World War II began to demand reparations for the Roma genocide. Reparations were refused because authorities denied the racist reasons for the

murder of more than 500,000 so called “Zigeuner” (GOSCHLER 2005, 194). Some relatives of victims from the group of “Sinti and Roma” are still waiting for reparations (STENDEL 2004). The chairman of the German Zentralrat deutscher “Sinti und Roma,” ROMANI ROSE says that the refusal of reparations for the surviving victims of the group “Sinti and Roma” by the German State prevented the formation of cultural and educational structures for genocide survivors (ROSE 1987, 83). This means that they face disadvantages as well concerning education and housing as well as in social life in general. Indeed, only a few “Sinti and Roma” could begin university studies (85). ROMANI ROSE is one of the leading figures of the “Sinti and Roma” civil rights movement. He belongs to the group of “Sinti.” The group of “Sinti” is said to be bigger than the group of “Roma” in Germany and, therefore, “Sinti” is put in first place in the discussion of “Sinti and Roma.” In my paper, I will use inverted commas to emphasize that “Sinti and Roma,” “Sinti,” “Roma” and any other umbrella terms are fictionally constructed (BOGDAL 2011, 15; EDER-JORDAN 1999, 51). Such terms can never suit everybody and have to be seen always in their respective contexts. It is the same with the word antiziganism, which has been disputed since it was first mentioned in the 1980s (ZIMMERMANN 2007). Despite this, I use it to examine performances against these racist atrocities.

What is the current state of play of antiziganism in Europe and Germany? Right-wing populist parties and their agenda dominate more and more public discussions and media coverage, both in Europe and elsewhere, for example, in the U.S. (WODAK & RICHARDSON 2013). Traditional values and norms are - sometimes unnoticed, often intended - changed; parties with fascist and a Nazi past reach into the mainstream. Security thinking legitimizes exclusion; the “Fortress Europe” also takes on material form, for example, by building new walls (as in Greece or Spain). Let’s have a look at some recent examples. Last year, MARKUS END published his report about current antiziganism in Germany: “Antiziganismus in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit.” He researches the influence of German media on the maintenance of antiziganistic practices. One interesting aspect of his study is that the stereotypes, prejudices and stigmas concerning the word “Zigeuner” are nowadays in Germany and other European countries completely substituted by the word Roma (2014, 16). He demonstrates that media coverage in general still use stereotypes in an undifferentiated kind of way to inspire certain feelings. This is especially the case in terms of the public debates about migrants who came to Germany from Rumania and Bulgaria due to the convention of free movement of workers which was established in Europe at the beginning of 2014. Media coverage affected the image of “Roma” who came to Germany to find work (117f.). He emphasizes that antiziganism is a big part of German society and it characterizes all social areas, ages and professions. According to his study, antiziganism belongs to daily life and a survey even confirmed this.

Denn wir leben in einer Gesellschaft, in der Antiziganismus weiterhin in allen Schichten, Altersgruppen und Professionen vorhanden ist, in der antiziganistische Darstellungen eher die

Regel und antiziganistische Wahrnehmungsmuster eher Konsens sind als Ausnahmerecheinungen, und in der verschiedenen Umfragen zufolge ca. die Hälfte der Bevölkerung offen antiziganistische Aussagen unterstützt (END 2014, 284).

Against this background, the central question that motivates this paper is: Can art change society? To discuss this question, I analyze whether art can be an effective political gesture outside the context of the art world using the example of art by “Sinti and Roma.” Can performance art be considered a tool that remains sensitive to the problematic of “Sinti and Roma” in social life? I illustrate these questions with two examples. First, I portray the artist-led initiative called “Romathan” that became engaged in responding to antiziganism in Europe. I chose the genre theater to analyze the effects of performance art by “Sinti and Roma” because “Sinti and Roma” theaters are up-to-date and are quite famous in Europe. Second, I show how far an affected community responded to atrocities by applying the tool of art using the example of Cologne’s Rom e.V. Using the example of Roma culture projects, I demonstrate the staging of an unbalanced interplay between external and self- attributions. First, I define the term aesthetic resistance, referring to linguistic and literary theories. I connect those with theses by GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK (2014) and HOMI K. BHABHA (2007,1994) to bring discussions about the current situation of “Sinti and Roma” into a postcolonial context.

### **Aesthetic Resistance – Performance Art against Antiziganism**

What we usually have in mind when we talk about aesthetic resistance (“ästhetischer Widerstand”) are artists or writers who worked against former colonial languages like artists in Francophone or Anglophone countries in Africa (OFUATEY-ALAZARD 2011). According to SCHMELING (2004), one medium in which to perform aesthetic resistance is the mixing of languages. However, to define mixing languages as a medium of aesthetic resistance in art does not mean that monolingualism is the norm (SCHMELING & SCHMITZ-EMANS 2002; SCHMELING 200). Monolingualism is more likely to be recognized in a time when English has become a dominant world language of commerce, scholarship and art. It is actually discussed whether monolingualism in art is a by-gone “paradigm” or not (YILDIZ 2012, 1). Yet colonial perspectives imply the conception of language as a possession of a nation. Though, how does this concept work concerning languages without a nation, which is also known as “the utopian promise of a “language without soil” (204)? This is why anti-colonial writers and writers of aesthetic resistance not only mix the colonial languages French and English, but also regional and local languages like Kurdish, Wolof, South African languages, and Hebrew etc. It is the same with the language of “Sinti and Roma,” the so-called Romanes. Romanes exists without a country or nation of “Sinti and Roma.”

Analyses dealing with multilingualism coincide with questions about the term Muttersprache or mother tongue as well as with the topic bilingualism (GÜNTHER

& GÜNTHER 2004). I follow SKUTNABB-KANGAS'S definition (1990) of mother tongue as a language which a person learns first through his/her parents. Mother tongues can change and can be measured at the level of command. In contrast stands the second language of bilingual speakers as the lingua franca of the community in which the speakers of another language live (BOURAS 2006). Multilingualism is, on the one hand, defined as language that is spoken at the level of the mother tongue. On the other hand, multilingualism is understood as the mastery of a foreign language. "Sinti and Roma" are supposed to speak at least two languages because they lack a community that can only speak Romanes. "Sinti and Roma" generally speak a variation of Romanes and the language of the country in which they live, which I call social language. A member of the group of "Sinti and Roma," who grows up in Germany, therefore, speaks at least German and Romanes, but it depends on the very individual situation whether the Romanes of the social language can be defined as a mother tongue. The focus of this paper is on how this relationship between Romanes and social language can be performed in art. Concerning literature, the following understanding of multilingualism can be useful for the general definition of multilingualism in art:

Sondern mein Verständnis von Multilingualität in der Literatur zielt auf Produktionen, die innerhalb der materiellen Grenzen eines abgeschlossenen Textes, sei es implizit oder explizit, zwei- und mehrsprachig sind. Implizit ist diese Mehrsprachigkeit dann, wenn eine bestimmte Vermittlungssprache lexikalisch durchgehend dominiert, jedoch Wirkungen sprachlicher Fremdbestimmtheit zumindest strukturell ablesbar sind (SCHMELING 2004, 222).

According to SCHMELING (2004, 222), multilingualism is defined as language switching that has effects on the whole text whereas a different language dominates the text. So this switching of languages has certain functions which have to do with the general individual, social, cognitive and emotional functions of language. In terms of art by "Sinti and Roma," the following question is relevant for further analysis: "What is the relationship between language and identity today?" (YILDIZ 2012, 203) YILDIZ contends that the relationship between a mother tongue and social language can be very ambivalent and that this ambivalence has effects on art:

The "mother tongue" can be a site of alienation and disjuncture, as German was for Kafka; it can be the medium of chauvinist expulsion from, and endogamous self-enclosure into, identity (Adorno); the "mother tongue" can be experienced as enforcing a limiting, suffocating inclusion (Tawada) as well as being a carrier of state violence (Özdamar) and social abjection (Zaimoğlu) (204).

More than 3.5 millions of people speak Romanes the so-called Romani Chib (MATRAS 2003, 231). Romanes is nowhere established as an official language and there is no nation of “Sinti and Roma.” Romanes is not a standard literary language and the language lacks a standard orthography. Teaching material and media in Romanes are rarities. It cannot be denied that some “Sinti and Roma” believe that *their* language has to be protected. The cultural and literary creativity of “Sinti and Roma” has either been marginalized or unappreciated for a long time (MALVINNI 2004). Indeed in terms of analyzing the connection between arts and antiziganism, we mostly talk about art by non-“Romani” artists, which, in turn, shaped the present social image of “Sinti and Roma” in Germany (MAPPE-S-NIEDIEK 2012). So why should speakers of the Romanes believe that it makes sense to be understood by speakers of another language in the communities in which they live? Several members of the “Sinti and Roma” civil right movement of the 1980’s tried to establish Romanes as a literary language to form a common symbol of identity (260). “Sinti and Roma” artists write and perform for a wider audience so it would not be useful to use a language which few people understand. The only way to refer to the “Sinti and Roma” identity, therefore, is the aesthetic mixing of languages in form of multilingual art. The ambivalent conflict, which the “Sinti and Roma” are challenging by writing, is the topic of the following quote:

Konkret bedeutet dies die Öffnung eines kulturellen Rückzugsraumes, der bis in die Gegenwart für Sinti und Roma überlebensnotwendig ist, weil er, eingedenk ihrer Erfahrungen, bislang als einziger Ort ihr kollektives Gedächtnis und ihre Geschichtlichkeit beheimatet hat (LAURÉ AL-SAMARAI 2008, 107).

This quote makes clear that the art of “Sinti and Roma” is in a constant struggle between creating and protecting one’s own culture and making this culture accessible to a broader audience. Therefore, we can analyze “Sinti and Roma” art against the background of postcolonial theories. LAURÉ AL SAMARAI (2008) turns our attention to the similarities between “Sinti and Roma” and “Black Germans” in Germany. She begins her essay with Germany’s expulsion of its colonial history and responsibility (89). Then, she includes the “Sinti and Roma” in Germany’s “Communities of *people of color*” and connects the present situation of “Black Germans” with current politics concerning “Sinti and Roma” (92). For her, one connection lies within the fact that both groups do not take part in debates about migration (“Migrationsdebatten,”93).

Admittedly, she writes that the “Sinti and Roma” have not been colonized in a traditional way and are not considered in postcolonial perspectives but she points out that for both groups a kind of non-relationship (“*Nicht-Beziehung*”, 93) with the German majority exists and is politically wanted. To strengthen her thesis, LAURÉ AL SAMARAI (2008) mentions that the Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma supported the protest movement against an exhibition with the title “*Besondere Kennzeichen: Neger. Schwarze im NS,*” which was located in Cologne in 2002. This exhibition was harshly criticized by members of the ISD (Initiative Schwarze

Menschen in Deutschland/ the Initiative of Black People in Germany) because it showed the history of black people in Germany in an offensive way from a white perspective (CLAUSSEN 2006). Indeed, this connection between the political and social movement of “Black Germans” and “Sinti and Roma” in Germany cannot be denied. As I pointed out previously, most of the works dealing with “Sinti and Roma” history and culture are produced by non-“Sinti and Roma.” In this context, SPIVAK’s (2014) question “Can the subaltern speak?” becomes relevant. Her text is so important in the context of “Sinti and Roma” literature because there are certain parallels between SPIVAK’s subalterns and the “Sinti and Roma.” SPIVAK asks several times for the voice of the subaltern (93). To expose her search, she gives the well-known example of the “widow sacrifice” which shows the system that lies beyond the speaking from all perspectives except the perspective of the subject, in this case the widow. On the one hand, colonial speakers interpret the abolition of the widow sacrifice as an act of rescue and, on the other hand, the “Indian nativist argument” sees an act of paternalism. There is no historical source that represents the “voice” of the concerned women. Here is the connection between SPIVAK’s theory and “Sinti and Roma” art and culture: Germany and even Europe lack sources that represent the voices of “Sinti and Roma.” Against the background of SPIVAK’s “Can the subaltern speak?,” one must admit that this lack is there because the subaltern are speechless due to the dominant Western system.

The application of SPIVAK’s theory to questions concerning art by “Sinti and Roma” becomes even more interesting when RANDJELOVIČ (2007) raises the term “Unsichtbarmachung” (making invisible) (266). The “Unsichtbarmachung” describes the prevention of using one’s voice as a passive act. Somebody or something makes the voices invisible. RANDJELOVIČ tries to find a way: “Wie wir die Geschichten von Menschen, die nie zu den offiziellen Geschichtsschreiber/-innen gehörten, sichtbar machen können“ (267). Written in SPIVAK’s terms, RANDJELOVIČ searches for ways to let the so called subalterns speak for themselves and not for others. By the way, RANDJELOVIČ is explicitly against a reconstruction of one “Roma”-identity. Aesthetic resistance, thus, can be seen as an effort to enter the “scene of power” (SPIVAK 1988, 71) and to make the voices of “Sinti and Roma” visible.

Now, I want to turn the attention to such efforts. In the following discussion, I show examples of “Sinti and Roma” arts using the previously discussed aesthetic forms and I devote attention to the question whether this art can influence society. First, I introduce the Slovakian theater Romathan. Second, I introduce the artist led association called Rom e.V., which is located in Cologne.

### **Romathan - Košice, Slovakia**

It is just by chance that RANDJELOVIČ begins her essay with the reminiscence of Panna Czinka who was a famous violin player in a region of 18<sup>th</sup> century’s Hungary, which is now Slovakia. She belonged to the group of “Roma” and included herself in that group. In contrast to Germany, she is relatively notable in Slovakia. The history of “Sinti and Roma” in Eastern Europe shows how long the

expulsion and suppression of “Sinti and Roma” culture and identity has taken place. As the Archduke of Austria and the Queen of Hungary, Maria Theresia implemented a policy of forced assimilation for the “Sinti and Roma” (BRIEL 1989, 14; PATRUT & UERLINGS 2007, 44). This policy is known as a first strike to settle the so called “Zigeuner” in a fixed residence, to forbid them to speak their own language, to follow their professions, to travel etc. Furthermore, their children were taken away to educate them in households of the dominant society (BRIEL 1989; RANDJELOVIČ 2007). It is now clear that Slovakia’s “Sinti and Roma” policy can be described as racist and segregating.

Let us now turn our attention to the present situation and focus on contemporary art by the “Sinti and Roma” in Slovakia, using the example of the professional theatre in Slovakia called “Romathan.” The current situation of the “Roma” in Slovakia can be described as follows. The Czech Republic has had the worst marginalization of Roma since the breakdown of communism (CROWE 2008). This is one reason for the mass migration of “Roma” to Slovakia. During a very short period of time from 1989 to 1993, the “Roma” population doubled in size in Slovakia. This migration led to several problems, which the “Roma” suffer from today in Slovakia. The first challenge the “Roma” had to overcome was housing. Several “Roma” families moved to Lunik (which means district) IX in former flats of senior members of the Slovakian communist party who had to leave their flats between 1989 and 1993. According to ZIMMERMAN (1996), entire “Roma” families moved into those relatively new apartments in Slovakia and this led to resentment by non-“Roma” residents. To get the “Roma” out of town, the “Roma” living in Kosice were resettled to Lunik IX. The non-“Roma,” who were still living in Lunik IX, left their flats due to this mass resettlement. What followed was that Lunik IX was no longer of interest to the city council; the “Roma” were forgotten as long as they stayed out of town. A process of ghettoisation began in which the “Roma” children were excluded from school and adults were refused access to work permits.

Romathan is Romanes for “Land of the Roma.” Its conception is unique because the actors, musicians and singers belong to the group of “Sinti and Roma” and they consider themselves part of this group. It is part of their concept to cast young “Roma” from ghettos to include them to their theater. “Romathan” was founded in 1992 and has produced more than 44 plays and revues since then (cf. <http://roma-und-sinti.kwikk.info>). The theatre has its own orchestra. It plays classical and modern pieces of Roma and non-Roma authors in Romanes and in the language of the country where the performance takes place. They also perform for children. What is special about the theatre is that they have their own building. The theatre house is in Kosice, which was the cultural capital of Europe in 2013. This honor led to a higher awareness level of and popularity for “Romathan.” The performances take place on the fifth floor of an old building, which is not accessible by the way. On the way upstairs, one can look at an exhibition that shows the theatre’s history. I mention this staircase because it brought BHABHA’s metaphor of the staircase to my mind:

The stairwell as luminal space, in-between the designators of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (1994, 4).

This means that art as aesthetic resistance has to be seen against the background of the differences between the performers of this art and the political and social hierarchies surrounding the scene. In the metaphor of the “stairwell,” the hierarchic differences are visible and, therefore, people moving on this staircase are aware of these differences. The awareness of hierarchies, which might connect to certain “privilege[s]” in the sense of SPIVAK (1988, 91), is one possibility to “unlearn” these “privileges” and to create room for equality. “Romathan” travels through Europe and enters different political and social settings. Unfortunately, there is no European country in which the “Sinti and Roma” are full accepted. All the different European countries have a common sense attitude against the “Roma.” The central question then becomes: how might “Romathan” affect social and political actions against antiziganism? The answer is ambivalent because “Romathan” shows that there is an unbalanced interplay between self-attribution and the fictive image of “Gypsies.” In this context, I use the word “Gypsies” because this term is more likely to be imagined in the context of typical attributes like beautiful, wild or exotic women, travelling, horses, wide skirts etc. The female and male actors of “Romathan” appear in this typical dress. The women wear beautiful patchwork dresses with skirts that seem to fly when they are dancing. One can see a lot of the skin of the dancing women, who wear a lot of jewelry and other decorations on their bodies. The men wear traditional clothes and communicate a folklore style. They all have bronzed skin, which is extensively painted on their bodies. All this stereotypical appearance leads to the fact that one can say that “Romathan” theatre performs a cliché and, therefore, denigrates equal opportunity for “Sinti and Roma.” Broadly speaking, I disagree with this view because one has to discriminate between a stereotypical performance by non-“Sinti and Roma” and by artists who call themselves “Sinti and Roma.” The performance of “Romathan” can be interpreted as a metaphor for the “Öffnung eines kulturellen Rückzugsraumes“ (opening a closed room, where one’s own culture is protected) (LAURÉ AL-SAMARAI 2008, 107). “Romathan” performs without special stage designs. They dance either on stage or directly in the audience. Depending on the audience’s motivation, they dance with the audience and include the spectators in their dance. The audience has to first learn the dance. Everybody knows the awkward feeling when an actor picks one out of the audience to involve him or her in the play. The actors of “Romathan” are experts in that interactive play. They open their folklore-like performance to teach others how to dance their dance and are

on par with the spectators. One can say that this mirrors the lack of inclusion of “Sinti and Roma” art works into the respective “Leitkultur.” Furthermore, I am very much inclined to endorse the assumption that “Romathan” can be seen as a performance against antiziganism because “Romathan” tries to stay at the level of performance. They do not say that they perform the one and only “Roma” culture and there is no effort to bring about a sense of identity of a common “Roma” culture. In their dancing and their singing, they broach the issue of expulsion, suppression and genocide in aesthetic ways.

### **Rom e.V. Cologne**

Since 1986, Rome e.V. works for the human and civil rights of “Sinti and Roma.” Their office is in Cologne where a youth centre, a school for “Sinti and Roma” and a multifunction room are situated. The foundation of Rom e.V. took place when hundreds of “Roma” refugees from Yugoslavia sought refuge in Cologne. Since then, many Cologners have joined “Roma” activists to build an organization and they work every day there with fellow citizens, authorities and volunteers. Their common purpose is to make “Sinti and Roma” topics visible and to have their voices heard (<https://www.romev.de/>). If you explore the documentation center, which hosts an archive and a library at Rom e.V., you will find several shelves with works including the voices of “Sinti and Roma.” The collection contains handwritten texts across all formats in different European languages as well as printed books by “Sinti and Roma” and unpublished manuscripts. Most impressive to me are the handwritten poems. Some of them deal directly with the problems of the “in-between” and some raise completely different contexts. Most of the poems are anonymous, but some of them are signed with a name, like the following which is signed by FRANCESCA:

Spiel, Zigeuner, spiel ein Lied! Spiel mit etwas vor!  
Lass der süßen Töne Zauber träufeln in mein Ohr!  
Erzähle mir mit deiner Geige von der weiten Welt!  
Erzähle mir auf deine Weis' von Liebe, Macht und Geld!

Spiel, Zigeuner, spiel ein Lied von deinen vielen Reisen!  
Du, der du gekostet hast so viel vom Trank der Weisen.  
Erzähle mir vom grünen Wald, von Tälern und von Flüssen!  
Beschreibe mir dein innigst Trieb vom Weiterziehen müssen!

Hey, Zigeuner, was sagst du, was man dir angetan?  
Dass man immer dich verfolgt und dir ganz Kinder nahm?  
Hey, Zigeuner, hör doch auf, das hat's nie gegeben!  
Auf unsrer schönen, weiten Welt dürfen alle leben.

Sag, Zigeuner, regst dich auf? – Sei einfach wie die andern!  
Musst auch was Gscheit' res tun als ständig rumzuwandern!  
Du solltest leben so wie wir! Nur WIR machen es richtig!

Wir wissen alles ganz genau, sind unermesslich wichtig!

Hey, Zigeuner, wo bist du? Ich kann dich nicht mehr sehen!  
Wie schlecht erzogen sind sie doch, so einfach fortzugehen!  
Ja, Undank ist der Welten Lohn! Das kommt vom Helfenwollen!  
Was kümmern mich Zigeuner schon, hätt' sie verzeigen<sup>1</sup> sollen  
(WENGER 1996, 11).

The poem can be found in the archive in form of a copy of a handwritten paper. It has been published together with other copies in the volume "Pro Jenische" in 1996. Rom e.V. works together with actors who include themselves in the group of "Sinti and Roma" such as Nedjo Osman. In cooperation with Nedjo Osman, Rom e.V. performed the life of light heavyweight world champion Johann Willhelm "Rukeli" Trollmann. His championship title was revoked by the Nazis in 1933 eight days after he had won the match (WIEGHAUS 2012). Rukeli was murdered in a Nazi concentration camp. The play was performed in March 2015 during Munich's theater days. Rom e.V. serves as educational tool, informing people about the exclusion of and genocide directed against the "Sinti and Roma." Rom e.V. offers advice concerning questions focusing on Roma social life, housing, etc. Germans, as well as people who call themselves "Sinti and Roma," belong to the staff. They can offer help with translations in several languages and are a contact point for refugees and migrants. Rom e.V.'s efforts are highly affected by an educational mandate. After the Cologne Council decided to establish an educational option for "Roma" refugee children in Cologne in 2004, Rom e.V. developed a school model "Amaro Kher" (Our House). The intentions of Rom e.V. are based on the idea of empowerment: well-trained "Roma" work together with well-trained Germans. "Roma," who recently come to Germany, appreciate that they can find a contact person at Rom e.V. who understands their needs and speaks the same language in linguistic and institutional ways. Within the school model, a network of social services, educational authorities and cooperation with regular schools, youth facilities and refugee organizations was built. Teachers and social workers at Amaro Kher work hand-in-hand with the parents of the children and try to organize an adequate school education for children from refugee camps, considering their difficult living conditions ([www.romev.de/amaro-kher-unser-haus-familienzentrum-und-schulprojekt-fuer-roma-kinder/](http://www.romev.de/amaro-kher-unser-haus-familienzentrum-und-schulprojekt-fuer-roma-kinder/)).

One of Rom e.V.'s leading figures is Jovan Nikolić, who is a writer from Serbia who came to Germany after the NATO bombardements. He is the author of several novels. He writes in Serbian and Romanes and joins in the translation process. His efforts and works are part of my dissertation project in which I analyze literature of the "Sinti and Roma."

These examples prove that the "Sinti and Roma" are taking actions against antiziganism. Both Romathan theatre and Rom e.V. point to their history and make their voices heard. The two examples are similar in the way that they do not allow others to speak for them. Furthermore, both do not speak for others. I

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<sup>1</sup> anzeigen: to bring charge into so.

recognized several events in Rom e.V. where scientists, politicians, artist etc., who do not belong to the group of “Sinti and Roma,” were invited and tried to make Rom e.V. speak for them. Every time I was there, “Roma” (mainly women) stopped this misunderstanding about working together. All this points to the fact that both examples support a view that the arts can be used against antiziganism. Understanding one’s own privilege in the sense of SPIVAK (1988) can help reveal that “Sinti and Roma” initiatives or artists challenge the position that one has to speak louder than the rest to be heard. Art against antiziganism by the “Sinti and Roma” can make a great contribution to abolishing antiziganism. This way of aesthetic resistance shows how important the equality of art works is in achieving political equality.

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# **Moving from Performance to Performativity: Reconsidering the Rhetoricity of Mimesis and Alvin Ailey's *Revelations***

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Dance is often overlooked in communication research as a valuable analytical tool. The mimetic movement of dance provides another way of seeing how the rhetoricity of performance can represent worlds, construct ideas, challenge truths, or alter attitudes. This paper investigates the communicative potential of performance and its patterns of public susasiveness by using dance as a concept and object of movement. Specifically, this paper explores the potential for persuasion that attends performance as a mimetic movement between an idea and its representation, an original and its copy, a reality and its imitation, which can offer opportunities for social understanding, ontological reflection, and political inquiry. This paper first proposes an understanding of mimesis as an embodied form of movement that allows for alterity or otherness by making contact with or referring to something different or differently. This “dance” of referents is mimetically processed during performance *and* moved into performativity. In part two of this paper, I examine this double sense of mimesis as a socio-rhetorical process by exploring how Alvin Ailey's seminal dance piece, *Revelations*, mimetically moves referents in performance. The dance's sixty years of repetition—its performativity—provide an opening to investigate the mimetic and rhetorical force of a performance over time. Finally, this paper argues that the rhetorical import of *Revelations* has to do with how its embodied mimetic action fosters persuasive potential in “sensuous moment[s] of knowing” that strive for change, difference, and even revelation (Taussig 1993, 45).

## **Mimesis and Dance: Moving from Performance to Performativity**

Walter Benjamin posits that dance is one of the oldest forms of the mimetic faculty. In cultic societies, the mimetic faculty of dance “was really a life-determining force for the ancients” (Benjamin 1999, 721). To be able to dance like others, to be in common through movement, is a natural behavior and central to the discovery of meaning and experiencing the world. This suggests that mimesis is a way of knowing that affirms human ways of living by repeating experiences, lessons, rituals, etc. It is not a static activity but an active learning that recalls, produces, and communicates similarities. Mimesis is a concept that has ancient origins (Plato and Aristotle). It has been studied extensively in books by Auerbach (2003), Gebauer and Wulf (1992), Halliwell (2002) Potolsky (2006); considered by scholars in communication, performance, anthropology, and

dance; and questioned by postmodern theorists such as Baudrillard (1994) and Deluze (1999). Building on these efforts with a dance-oriented perspective, I aim to direct attention to mimesis as a kind of movement that in performance has potential for rhetorical alterity or otherness.

First, the definition of mimesis as imitation suggests a movement with creative potential. To imitate, copy, or mimic implies the transfer of an original to a reproduction. This mimetic work was once valued as an educational tool (i.e. the imitating of role models) in oratory training, literary production, and poetic practices “between the height of the Roman empire and the end of the eighteenth century” (Potolsky 2006, 50). While this work depends on an original, imitation can result in generating something new with a form of intertextuality that moves between established forms and “other” models, narratives, images, ideas, etc. With such movement, something else is revealed, opened up, or created, which is a kind of rhetorical making. Take, for example, parody. Parody is a form of imitation that modifies and mutates its original in order to create an alternative image of that original. Robert Hariman maintains that the imitative work of parody places language beside itself, thereby showing the original as other: “As the act of replication replicates, everything is potentially both where it is and beside itself” (2008, 254). This movement is rhetorical in that it recasts images and arguments for public reconsideration; it puts on display something different or other.<sup>2</sup> This kind of making functions by imitating differently. Hence, imitation can be understood as a way to make otherness, a creative act of turning something old into something different (without letting go of its referent).

Second, when understood in terms of representation, mimesis functions as a social practice. The practice of representation is an act or action of symbolic expression. This interpersonal activity makes symbolic worlds (Gebauer & Wulf 1992). The representation of worlds, persons, and actions is a primary function of theatrical performance. When viewed from this orientation (as representation), mimesis relates to a particular kind of social action or doing. Whether on a stage or in a courtroom, representation depends on the participation of an audience. In this way, mimesis is “a representation *for* someone, and not only a representation *of* something else” (Potolsky 2006, 74). It is a dynamic action that plays with and moves between symbolic meaning and physical representation. The symbolic is given physical shape and material form. In this way, mimesis transverses between performed happenings and spectators, a movement of

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to Hariman’s essay on parody, several other rhetorical analyses of imitation are worth noting. In his essay about imitative power after the Emancipation Proclamation, “The Radical Politics of Imitation in the Nineteenth Century,” Kirt Wilson explains how throughout the nineteenth century African Americans used mimesis to “obtain literacy, assimilate social norms, and pursue personal ambitions” (93). In these ways, mimesis was a mode of transformation: “imitation was to be the engine that drove social change” (99). In “*The West Wing’s* Prime-Time Presidency: Mimesis and Catharsis in a Postmodern Romance,” Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles focus on how the mimetic representation of the U.S. presidency in *The West Wing* “frequently offer[s] audiences new visions of this political institution or revised biographies of the nation’s chief executives” (212). Such mimetic work fosters a “freedom from tradition and an activation of difference” (212). All three of these essays suggest that imitation as a rhetorical strategy functions to change, create or transform; it is an active movement.

symbolic meaning. In her book on the politics of performance, Peggy Phelan claims that representation produces “ruptures and gaps: it fails to reproduce the real exactly” (2004, 2). As such, the movement of mimesis as representation offers the possibility for political change and, I suggest, an opening for rhetorical exchange. Because a representation is not “real,” the seeing or experiencing of a representation opens up ontological possibilities of the social and political by not relying on established metaphors or referents (Phelan 2004). My point here is that mimesis as representation contains the potential for rhetorical effort in a movement that creates an opening to not only see but also experience other, whether that other has something to do with political/social identity or knowledge (by creating distance from its referent).

As imitation and representation, mimesis comes into view as a faculty of thought that relates to the making and performing of ideas, images, and experiences that are and are not like their originals. This mimetic movement generates opportunities for change, variation, and transformation by resonating with something that has recognizable form, value, weight, purpose, etc. Such reverberations can let go of or stay connected to their referents. In this way, mimesis “speaks to our desire for universality, coherence, unity, tradition, and on the other [hand], it unravels that unity through improvisations, embodied rhythm...” (Diamond 1997, v). Mimesis moves between what is known and toward what could be known. Thus, it corresponds to the dynamic nature of human communication, which is sustained by regularity and modified by innovation. The rhetorical features of mimesis - the persuasive potential of the copy not in terms of truth, but in terms of possibility - appear within this movement.

As the movement of dance is fundamentally mimetic, it can assist in bringing the potential for rhetorical otherness or alterity into closer view. The movement of dance is special in that it relies on a memory of technique (sequencing and timing of steps or positions), while at the same time “forgetting” such technique to activate or release an emotion or idea; it strives for something beyond its referents by navigating between the known and unknown. In acts of performance, dancers embody this movement or choreography - a kind of copying - a form of mimetic action. This copying, however, is not exact; all bodies are different and therefore move differently. Even when movement is repeated, it can't be repeated exactly the same way each time. Hence, the movement of dance can be understood as a mimetic process of figuring how to move. When put on display (made public) in performance, the movement of dance has the rhetorical potential to move thought - make ideas, challenge truths, or alter attitudes.

Consider that dance can be understood as a kind of utterance, an act of speech. Dance scholar Thomas DeFrantz argues that “dance movements contain speech like qualities that contain meaning beyond the formal, aesthetic shapes and sequences of movement detailed by the body in motion” (2004b, 66). Dance is a system of communication, a “corporeal orature,” that contains “performative gestures that cite contexts beyond the dance” (67). Whether performativity is understood through J.L. Austin's or Judith Butler's theories, it

refers to the expression of an embodied action in public. As put by Elin Diamond, when a performance gives way to performativity, “we have access to cultural meanings and critique” (1996, 5). In other words, the moving from the thing embodied (performance) to the thing done (performativity) is what enables its potential for rhetorical alterity or otherness. The first level of mimetic action is in how the body speaks by copying, echoing, mirroring or emulating in the dancing of choreography (i.e. performance). The second level of mimetic action has to do with the presence and participation of an audience that is pulled “this way and that,” registering the sense of both “sameness and difference, of being like, and being other” (Taussig 1993, 129). This double mimetic action provides a way of reading the rhetorical force of Ailey’s *Revelations* in its performance and performativity.

### **The (Rhetorical) Dancing of *Revelations***

*Revelations* premiered in 1960 at the Kaufmann Concert Hall, 92<sup>nd</sup> Street YM-YWCA in New York City. It has consistently been on stage since, and has become “the single most-performed work in the annals of modern dance and African-American dance theatre” (Manning 2004b, 211). This note appeared in the program at the 1960 premiere:

This suite explores motivations and emotions of black religious music, which, like its heir the blues, takes many forms – true spirituals with their sustained melodies, song-sermons, gospel and holy blue – songs of trouble, of love, of deliverance. (Manning 2004b, 213)

Such orientation to the dance is also on the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AADT) website where *Revelations* is first associated with “African-American spirituals, song-sermons, gospel songs and holy blues” (*Revelations*). It is only after this mention that the dance is described as a tribute to African-American cultural heritage: “sometimes sorrowful, sometimes jubilant, but always hopeful” (*Revelations*). Hence, the mimetic action between the music and choreography of *Revelations* is important to how the dance communicates. This is the first level of mimetic activity, bodies moving to the music that embody not only the words, but also the worlds the lyrics reference. The second level of mimetic activity occurs as *Revelations* is danced over time. This double mimetic action happens during the dancing in performance and in its repeated performances over the last 54 years. I argue that by reading *Revelations* through this double mimetic action - the movement between performance and performativity - its rhetorical potential contributes to its status as a great work of modern dance. Its capacity to move between particular referents of African American struggles and universal references to the human condition speaks to the endurance of the human life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Scholars in dance and communication studies have mostly studied *Revelations*. Two authors are worth mentioning because their work correlates and transverses with many themes and ideas in this essay. Thomas DeFrantz’s book, *Dancing Revelations*, underscores the importance of the

To verbally capture performance, dance or otherwise, is a struggle. To account for the liveliness that happens on a stage - the nuance of timing and expression; the subtle gestures of a face, arm, hip; the visceral rhythms of a moving body - is an arduous, seemingly impossible task. Ideally, this paper would come with a performance of *Revelations*, which you would watch right now (a thirty-minute pause). I cannot account for “the whole” of *Revelations*, and my goal is not to do so. My purpose is to demonstrate how the double mimetic movement of *Revelations* moves from performance to performativity, from a referent to an otherwise. I begin with the music because its rhythms and words are vital to the mimetic action in the dance. They are the site of contact that is set in motion by the choreography and dancers. The songs are the referents and, as such, the music is a vital partner in the communicative efficacy of its double mimetic action.

“*Revelations* began with the music” (Ailey 1995, 97). Ailey chose the music for *Revelations* carefully and described the dance as “a gigantic suite of spirituals” (99). He chose the songs because “they are poetic, and the rhythm that grows out of them is black rhythm. They are a truthful and real coming together of music and ideas through dance” (101). In his book that charts the development of Ailey’s career through *Revelations*, Thomas DeFrantz (2004a) notes that the original version included sixteen musical selections and a live chorus, and ran for over an hour. Today, *Revelations* has three sections (“Pilgrim of Sorrow,” “Take Me to the Water,” and “Move, Members, Move!”), each with a different set of spirituals, and runs about thirty minutes.<sup>4</sup> The spirituals in *Revelations* are a conduit for the dancers to embody particular kinds of human struggles and experiences, which serve as the first level of mimetic activity. According to Susan Foster (1986), this kind of mimetic effort is a syntactic principle that “gives internal coherence to [a] dance, one that complements and resonates against [a] dance’s [reference] to the world” (93). The bodies that move with and through the music reverberate with the words of the spirituals, and also the *worlds* those lyrics signify. The rhythms of the spirituals amplify these *worlds* by making them visual, aural, and kinetic as the dancers move. At the first level of mimetic action, the embodied movement between bodies, words, and rhythms reverberate between particular and universal referents that produce opportunities for thinking differently.

Due to constraints of space, I provide only one example from the opening scene of the first section “Pilgrim of Sorrow.” This scene, titled “I’ve been

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dance to Ailey’s choreographic career as well as the presence of African American dancers and culture to the history of modern dance. Susan Manning’s essay, “Danced Spirituals,” places the dance in context with other dances set to African American spirituals to argue that they not only address “shifting images of whiteness and blackness” but also shifting definitions of masculinity, femininity, and nationality (83). Manning’s ideas are explored in more complete detail in her book *Modern Dance, Negro Dance*. While this essay borrows from both these scholars, it instead uses *Revelations* as a way to think about the rhetorical potential that is possible in cultural repetition (i.e. mimetic action). *Revelations* is indeed an important historical artifact, but my position here is not contributing to that conversation directly.

<sup>4</sup> In *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey’s Embodiment of African American Culture*, Thomas DeFrantz charts the choreographic changes made to *Revelations* over the years to highlight the dance’s relationship to the politics of dance and society from the 1960’s onward.

Buked,” is accompanied by an African American spiritual of the same name. Its lyrics make reference to the need for spiritual deliverance and guidance.<sup>5</sup> The dance begins when the curtains rise with a group of dancers standing motionless in a wedge formation, while the chorus hums slowly, a cappella. Once the chorus begins to sing, “I’ve been buked, and I’ve been scorned,” the dancers in unison roll their heads to their sides, while bending their knees and leaning their torsos also to the side. One arm follows the torso, reaching out past the bent leg (fingers fully extended), and the other arm moves to hold the back, as if in pain. The movement from the opening stance to the side bend embodies the slow, contemplative tempo of the song as well as referencing the action of “being” scorned. Once the tempo quickens with the words “there is trouble all over this world,” the dancers disperse separately all over the stage; they move their scorned bodies out into the world they share. Whether the dancers leap in the air, undulate on the ground, or transverse the stage, they continue to embody the lyrics, which signify a world that struggles and strives. The bodies on stage move not with abandon, but with restraint, as if being tugged in different directions. At the end of the scene, they repeat the opening group wedge formation and movement: “The repetition suggests that no matter how far away the dancers travel, they must come together physically, as pieces of a larger sculptured mosaic, to complete the communal expression of spirituality” (DeFrantz 2004a, 6). Their last movement, accompanied by the lyric “sho’s you’ born,” is one of simple, communal devotion, arms, heads, and eyes looking up toward the sky, heaven, God; one by one, they each lower their arms down to their sides in sharp, percussive accents, while still keeping their faces lifted. It is “as if” they could be (re)born, made different or other. The embodied mimetic effort of “I’ve Been Buked” in performance puts on display a movement between communal struggle, individual devotion, God, man, Heaven and Earth. The otherness generated by the movement of these referents suggests that even in struggle, sorrow or scorn, there is the potential for human movement. This mimetic movement references an experience of human suffering that is striving toward a different world.

The first level of mimetic action in *Revelations* – the performance of movement to African-American spirituals – is an active embodiment of songs and rhythms that make contact with two different referents. First, the spirituals reference a past of inhumane suffering. According to Ailey, the spirituals reflect his own “feelings about being pressed into the ground of Texas” where he grew up (1995, 101). His childhood experiences in Texas, “a charter member of the racist South,” involved not only racism and poverty, but also church and song (1995,

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<sup>5</sup> I’ve been ‘buked an’ I’ve been scorned, Yes, I’ve been ‘buked an’ I’ve been scorned, Children I’ve been ‘buked an’ I’ve been scorned, I’ve been talked about sho’s you’ born. Dere is trouble all over dis worl’, Yes, Dere is trouble all over dis worl’, Children. Dere is trouble all over dis worl’ Dere is trouble all over dis worl’ Ain’ gwine lay my ‘ligion down, No, Ain’ gwine lay my ‘ligion down, Children. Ain’ gwine lay my ‘ligion down, Ain’ gwine lay my ‘ligion down. I’ve been ‘buked I’ve been scorned, Yes I’ve been ‘buked I’ve been scorned, Children. I’ve been ‘buked I’ve been scorned. I’ve been talked about sho’s you’ born (“Study Guide”).

19). Ailey heard many of the spirituals chosen for *Revelations* during his time in Texas. Second, the bodily presence of African Americans on stage in 1960 referred to a future wish, a hope that the world could be different. When *Revelations* first premiered in 1960, the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. was well underway, and it is no surprise that the presence of African-American dancers on concert stages during Ailey's time was rather limited and bleak. Although some could find work in dances with ethnic themes, many classically trained dancers left New York to perform in Europe (Dunning 1996). In her book about American modern dance, Julia Foulkes (2002) suggests that the lack of opportunity for African-American dancers was a key reason why Ailey started to choreograph. With *Revelations*, Ailey put African-American bodies on stage and in motion. DeFrantz notes that performances of *Revelations* after its premiere "trumped derisive speculation about the possibilities of African American concert dance" (2004a, 15). Manning maintains that this success has to do with how the dance blurs the boundaries between modern dance and Negro dance (2004b, 211). Hence, music and bodies make reference to particular past experiences, which demonstrate the *human* struggle in the efforts of African Americans for rights and recognition politically, socially, and artistically. My reading of *Revelations* has sought to highlight how the dance mimetically and rhetorically moves difference or otherness as it shifts from performance to performativity.

This argument becomes clearer as the dance is examined at the second level of embodied mimesis, the repetition of *Revelations* over time. Shortly after the success of *Revelations*, AAADT became a resident company of the 51<sup>st</sup> Street YWCA's Clark Center for the Performing Arts. Essentially, *Revelations* paved the way for an accessible venue for African-American dance: "Ailey did identify a community of black dancers and allowed his work to address a black audience and, through this increased visibility, set in motion increased opportunities – social and political power – for African diaspora dance artists" (DeFrantz 2004a, 21). In 1962, the U.S. State Department chose AAADT for its Southeast Asia Tour. Ailey (1995) believed that the popularity of *Revelations* was the primary reason for this choice. The tour was part of President John F. Kennedy's "President's Special International Program for Cultural Presentations." These tours were designed to "correct and humanize the image of the American people held by other peoples" (Martin 1998, 91). *Revelations* received rave reviews throughout the tour and several that pointed toward an embodiment of universality in its audiences. In Sydney, Australia, one reviewer remarked that after *Revelations*, "[he] was not the only one who felt the urge to rush up on stage and join in the hand-clapping, singing and dancing" (Dunning 1996, 151). In Japan, Ailey's choreography was hailed for its "stupendous sensitivity," humanity, and imagination (163). Upon his return, Ailey (1995) suggested that most of what Asians knew about African Americans was generally negative, but felt that his work, *Revelations* in particular, enabled Asians to identify with the African-American struggle as they too had been involved in similar struggles. The rhetorical import of *Revelations* has something to do with its performative movement, as the dance is repeated. Performances of *Revelations* facilitated a social process of human understanding about particular and common struggles

of living as well as embodying the potential for change, for something other. Hence, the persuasive qualities of early performances of *Revelations* (its performativity) pointed beyond its referents.

AAADT's website describes *Revelations* as a cultural treasure, beloved by generations of fans: "The dance is positioned as "an enduring classic," a tribute to one of America's richest treasures, the African-American cultural heritage – "sometimes sorrowful, sometimes jubilant, but always hopeful." *Revelations* is still understood and presented as a dance articulating (and performing) a humanizing message embodied by spiritual songs by referring to past African American experiences. Recent dance reviews of *Revelations* testify to this claim. Carol Cling (2012), writing for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, notes that *Revelations* burst forth with a "heightened energy" that gathered the cheering, clapping, and singing along in "an outpouring of infectious kinetic joy." In reference to a Moscow performance of the dance, Kathy Lally (2011) concludes that "the performance was powerful, the dancers beautiful, elegant, and intelligent, and the Russian audience felt it, clapping and clapping and clapping again." Recalling dancing *Revelations* for AAADT, Renee Robinson comments "[a]udiences know that dance ... The electricity that comes from the audience and that we give back to them, that happens every time. Who could get tired of that kind of vibration?" (quoted in Seibert 2012). It seems that the mimetic action in *Revelations*, its repetitions of otherness, still speak fifty-five years after its premiere.

### **Between Rhetoric and Performance**

One might ask, then, what separates *Revelations* from other "classic" dance performances? There is something different (or "other") about *Revelations* that is not like *Swan Lake* or *The Nutcracker*. *Swan Lake* is a powerful demonstration of the technical skill of the ballet form. Generally, audiences are drawn to the ballet not for its message, but for the quality of its dancing. Dance companies both big and small perform *The Nutcracker* all over the U.S. It has become a holiday tradition; for many, it is the only dance performance seen on a regular basis. *Revelations* seems different, which might have to do with its mimetic action(s). *Revelations* demonstrates the capacity of dance to foster a "sensuous moment of knowing" and the rhetorical force of the performative (Taussig 1993, 45). In this way, *Revelations* is indeed a masterpiece. Its multiple levels of embodied mimetic actions foster the potential for otherness that holds over time because they communicate in a manner that maintains contact with past particular struggles, emotions, or institutions that make reference to basic, universal human experiences. In other words, the referents at play in *Revelations* speak to something different, something beyond their points of contact.

I maintain that this mimetic movement in *Revelations* has rhetorical form. This is not a movement that results in a public display of persuasive speech, but a movement that fosters what Thomas Farrell calls social knowledge. Farrell argues, "the over-arching function of social knowledge is to transform the society

into a community” (1976, 11). In particular situations, new social knowledge can be generated that reflects the social and political changes for particular groups by “providing pertinence, form, and context to the data of our experiences” (12). Thus, social knowledge contributes to how communities understand events, imagine alternatives, and change directions. As *Revelations* demonstrates, the mimetic faculty is one way social knowledge can be produced. Consider that the early performances of *Revelations* functioned to bring about positive images of African-American culture with the aim of altering perceptions about African Americans during a time of social discord. Ailey noted that his aim with *Revelations* was to show the coming, growth, and reach of African-American culture and to project a “proper” African-American image (Ailey 1995, 98). Such rhetorical action suggests that the mimetic function of dance “is a corrective one” that “yields a better version of life [and] imitative of the ideal and not the actuality” (Martin 2004, 51). In addition, as DeFrantz has noted, the dance also made “black bodies visible, if not dominant in the discourse of modernist American dance” (2004a, 21). In this way, the rhetorical production of social knowledge in early performances of *Revelations* spoke to the potential for change, difference, or otherness. Can the same be true today? *Revelations* does not change (choreography, costumes, music), but the world around it continues to shift. Even so, *Revelations* still moves rhetorically by maintaining contact with its past while repeating the possibility that life could and should be other, made better or different. It refuses to give up.

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# Performance in Mass Mediated Interaction

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## 1. Abstract

This article focuses on the question how communicators build up a specific and distinguishable identity within mass mediated interaction. Or in other words: How do speakers *perform* by means of language within face-to-face conversation that is mediated to a dispersed audience? Besides the performance, “conversational style” plays a crucial role for building up one’s identity *by means of language*. The link between both terms will be presented and exemplified with the findings of a study on the conversational styles of three German politicians within a radio discussion. But first of all, the relevant terms have to be outlined.

## 2. Understanding and Outlining the Concept of Performance

The term “performance” is common and relevant in different disciplines. This article examines the linguistic perspective on and conceptualizations of performance. However, to start with, I will draw attention to a non-linguistic field, namely theatrical studies. The reason for this is quite basically understanding the given term in that field and its possible use for a linguistic conceptualization. Fischer-Lichte (2000) understands performance as the process of a representation by means of body and voice in front of a present audience.

Moving forward to the linguistic perspective, one has to notice the different definitions of the given term within the various linguistic subdisciplines. One of them is connected to the speech act theory of John Langshaw Austin and his student John Searle. Austin differentiates between constative and performative utterances. Briefly summarized, speakers may state “true” or “false” assertions with constatives; performatives are the kind of utterances with which speakers actually *act*, for instance, asking for a favor or a promise are performatives.

A different understanding of “performance” derives from Noam Chomsky. In the context of his theory on a Universal Grammar, he defines “performance” as the “actual observed use of language” (Chomsky 2000, 102). He furthermore states that:

Performance involves many other factors as well. We do not interpret what is said in our presence simply by application of an utterance. Extralinguistic beliefs concerning the speaker and the situation play a

fundamental role in determining how speech is produced, identified, and understood (2000, 102).

All three of these perspectives on performance are relevant for the analysis of performance in (mass mediated) interaction. In order to do so, the actual focus on communication and interaction has to be strengthened; for this purpose. I will add Erving Goffman's insights to my framework.

When describing and analyzing natural interaction (that means non-fictional interaction), Goffman (1959) makes use of a broad range of terms originally derived from the world of the theatre. Thus, he compares individuals in ordinary work situations with actors in dramaturgical scenes – both act in a certain way in order to impress an audience. Since Goffman explicitly studies individuals and their behavior in face-to-face interaction, his definition of “performance” is closely linked to that type of interaction and, furthermore, fruitful for this article:

A ‘performance’ may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants (Goffman 1959, 15).

With regard to interaction, he states: “interaction (that is, face-to-face interaction) may be roughly defined as the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical presence” (1959, 15).

Following his comparison of ordinary interaction to theatrical drama, Goffman differentiates between the front region (or front stage) and the back region (or back stage). Front stage is the region where individuals act according to their specific role in a situation. In other words, this is the region where individuals *perform* in front of an audience, in front of observers. While performing, individuals follow certain standards and act in a specific manner. Manner refers to “those stimuli which function at the time to warn us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation” (1959, 24).

### **3. Performance and Conversational Style**

This article will discuss performance in mass mediated interaction from a linguistic point of view. Consequently, the speaker’s language and communicative characteristics are of central interest. Concerning the analysis of such verbal, non- and paraverbal features within talk, the term “conversational style” is relevant. Deborah Tannen (1987, 251) provided an initial and broad definition: “Conversational style is a semantic process; it is the way meaning is encoded in and derived from speech.” Possible features of a person’s conversational style are: topic (e.g. whether a speaker shifts easily to a new topic or insists on a certain topic); genre; pace (rate of speech, rate of turn taking etc.) and expressive paralinguistics (e.g. pitch, strategic pauses) (Tannen 1987). However, there is neither a fixed set of certain features which are obligatory for a conversational style in general terms nor does one person have only one specific

conversational style forever and in any given context. Conversational styles are rather formed anew in every conversation and the relevant features for a specific conversational style can only be derived from empirical data.

Going back to Fischer-Lichte's very basic definition of "performance," the notion of "process" is important. A communicator's performance is a process of representation. Goffman emphasizes an actor's activity on a given occasion in order to (try to) influence others. With regard to the topic of "performance within (mass mediated) interaction," the following features seem crucial to me:

- i. Performance is a process; hence, in interaction performance becomes an interactive process.
- ii. Performance takes place on a given (and certain) occasion; hence, an actor may perform in totally different ways and manners on different occasions.
- iii. Performance may be a means to influence others.
- iv. Performance in interaction consists of different communicative characteristics; the same is true for an actor's conversational style.

In the following paper, I will exemplify this theoretical framework with empirical data.

#### **4. Questions/Assumptions**

The central question of this article is how speakers build up a distinguishable identity in a mass mediated interaction. I assume that in almost every conversation speakers seek to stand out as remarkable, distinguishable speakers. For this general purpose, the two concepts "performance" and "conversational style" seem to be relevant. Both terms emphasize a process and both concepts are aware of the fact that various communicative aspects constitute the performance and conversational style. Finally, the audience, or more generally speaking at least one observer, plays a crucial role in both concepts: performance takes place in order to influence others (Goffman 1959); a conversational style is connected with a recipient's encoding (Tannen 1987).

Since a remarkable and distinguishable conversational style seems especially relevant for political actors – for instance in order to stand out against other politicians – I will analyze the interaction between as well as the conversational style of three German politicians. They were guests in a discussion, which was broadcast by German public radio. Thus, the situation is a special one. The interlocutors communicate, on one hand, with each other, with the host and with another guest in the discussion. On the other hand, they communicate in front of a dispersed audience. As Harald Burger (2001) notices, there are two circles of participants in interaction that are mediated by the mass media: one inner circle – consisting of the actual interlocutors – and an outer circle, which includes also the dispersed audience. Both "audiences" are important in the following study. The participants of the inner circle may influence with their own contributions, questions, paraverbal gestures (such as laughter) and nonverbal gestures (such

as gaze) the way an actor performs and realizes his conversational style. The participants of the outer circle may influence an actor's performance as well. Just imagine a political actor wants to impress the audience, or he wants to influence their voting intentions (these are very likely intentions for a politician). In order to enhance his success for both aims, he might anticipate what the audience would like to hear and consequently performs in the presumably valued way.

With respect to this special communicative constellation, however, Fischer-Lichte's observation about the "present audience" has to be modified; in the radio interview examined in this study, the dispersed audience was obviously not present.

## **5. The Study**

The study I will present in this paper was originally conducted for my doctoral thesis. In my thesis, the focus lies on the role conversational style plays in defining a person's credibility. However, within the study three very distinctive conversational styles became evident. Before analyzing and decoding the conversational style, the relevant discussion and relevant communicators have to be introduced.

The discussion is titled "The people's new power" (German: "Die neue Macht der Bürger") and was broadcast on March 31, 2011 by the public channel WDR 5 (series "Funkhausgespräche," see references). The whole episode lasts 54.50 minutes and the speakers are:

1. Judith Schulte-Loh (host); (JS),
2. Reinhard Schlinkert (manager of the opinion polling institute "infratest dimap"); (RS),
3. Bärbel Höhn (a German politician from the Green Party); (BH),
4. Armin Laschet (a German politician from the Christian Democratic Union/CDU); (AL),
5. Jochen Ott (a German politician from the Social Democratic Party/SPD); (JO).

The whole episode has been transcribed according to the conventions of GAT 2 (Selting et al 2009) and the conversational analysis follows the concept and steps that Selting (2008) suggest for such an analysis.

## **6. Analysis of the Conversational Styles**

In this essay, one representative example of each conversational style will be analyzed for the three politicians named above. When I claim a "representative" example, I understand this with regard to the given interaction and explicitly only for that very discussion. Though the examples in this paper are very short sequences of the whole transcript, the manner in which each communicator

interacts in the example can be used for generalizations on their conversational style in the named discussion (I considered the whole analysis in Kuhnhen 2014).

Originally, the analysis has been carried out on the German transcript. In this article, I will focus on the main characteristics of each conversational style, aiming for a tight comparison and abstraction.

### 6.1 Analysis of Bärbel Höhn's Conversational Style

The first analysis regards Bärbel Höhn from the Green Party. In the sequence, Bärbel Höhn describes her political engagement on different political levels and, thus, argues for her competence.

#### EXAMPLE 1: Bärbel Höhn's conversational style

##### German (original) transcript

1581 BH: ich bin 'ja (.) auf 'ALLen ebenen ^tätiçh `gewesen-  
1582 ich hab ^angefangen in der kommu'nA:lpoli'ti:k;  
1583 dann `in der `landesebene und ich bin jetzt auf `BUNDESebene;

##### English translation

1581 BH: i have been (.) active on ALL levels-  
1582 i have ^started in the local government politics;  
1583 then on the state level and now i am on the NATIONAL level;

The politician refers to her own person, her broad experiences and her competencies. She refers explicitly and repeatedly to herself with the pronoun "I" (l. 1581, 1582, 1583). She then begins her argumentation with the information that she has been active on "ALL" levels, she emphasizes the universal quantifier by placing a focus accent on it. Thus, the word itself plus the paraverbal (in this case, an accent) feature strengthen the importance and the likely intended impressive message; namely, she is an experienced politician. Subsequently, Bärbel Höhn explains the precise levels on which she has been active. Within her statement, she states the different levels in an increasing way from the local to national level. The latter is emphasized with a focus accent ("NATIONAL", l. 1583) and, consequently, seems a kind of evidence for her competence.

To generalize, Bärbel Höhn presents herself primarily as an experienced and competent politician. In order to do so, she refers explicitly to her own person. With regard to her performance and her possible intended influence on the audience, I differentiate between the influence on her interlocutors and on the dispersed audience. The dispersed audience seems to be the more relevant part of the audience, since Bärbel Höhn may try to convince some members of this audience to vote for her at the next election. If this is her main focus, she clearly tries to convince the audience by stating her experience. With regard to her interlocutors as audience, one possible reason for her performance could be the

aim to impress and maybe to outmatch the other two political actors with regard to their experiences. With her “three-step-argumentation” and amplification about the political levels on which she has been active (local, state, national level), she makes it hard for the others to argue in a way that they could keep up with her experience.

Finally, paraverbal elements (in this case accent) strengthen the argumentation and, therefore, are an important element not only in her conversational style, but also for her performance as an experienced politician.

## 6.2 Analysis of Armin Laschet’s Conversational Style

Next, I will analyze Armin Laschet’s (Christian Democratic Union) conversational style. In the sequence, the host (JS) stated the fairly provocative observation that in recent years politicians – especially from the CDU– have left the political sphere and have gained high positions in the economic sector. In l. 1145, Armin Laschet responds to this statement:

### EXAMPLE 2: Armin Laschet’s conversational style

#### German (original) transcript

- 1145 AL: [ja ´aber is ´das ˘schlIMM? ich mein; ja aber das ham wir  
doch nun- ]  
1146 (-) ja aber das ham\_wa' äh' ich ˘wUnder mich immer das man  
das `so:  
1147 (.) äh ˘näga`tiv beschrEIBT?  
1148 das hat man eigentlich ˘JAHRE`lang ge`fordert,

#### English translation

- 1145 AL: [yes but is this bAD? i mean; yes but well we have-]  
1146 (-) yeah but this we\_have err' i always wONder that one  
describes this in a bad way?  
1147 actually one has been claimed this for YEARS,

First, the politician responds with his own opinion (l. 1145 “i mean”), but soon switches onto a general point of view, which he indicates with the pronoun “we” (l. 1145, 1146) and, finally, with the indefinite pronoun “one” (l. 1146, 1147), increasing that supposedly general level. He neither defines the “we,” nor does he make clear whom he means by “one.” So, when he argues that “actually one has been claimed this for YEARS” (l. 1147), the listener will not know who precisely has claimed a certain fact (in this case the claim that politicians should not only work as politicians, but also be active in the economy). Similar to Bärbel Höhn, Armin Laschet uses focus accents in order to emphasize central messages and evaluations. In l. 1145, he accentuates the adjective “bad,” which he questions in the relevant context; in l. 1146, he emphasizes the verb (to) “wonder”, also in order to strengthen his point of view, which presents a different opinion than the host’s provocation suggested. Finally, in l. 1147, he places a strong focus accent on the substantive “YEARS” in order to show the demand

that seems to exist for years. Although, at first sight, Armin Laschet seems to argue in a definite way, his performance somehow seems not so definite. How come? Looking a second time at the features of his conversational style in this short sequence, the answer is that he performs rather in a vague way. First of all, he switches rapidly from his personal point of view to a general point of view, but without defining to whom he precisely refers, who is meant by the personal pronoun “we” and who is meant by the indefinite pronoun “one,” the indefinite pronoun especially seems to weaken his argumentation. Second, the hedge “actually” (German: “eigentlich,” the translation suggest more certainty than the German original) strengthens the vagueness as well. Finally, the fact that he formulates questions and raises his voice also may support the (intuitive) impression that he does not argue in such a forceful way as Bärbel Höhn does.

To sum up, Armin Laschet formulations and argumentations are far more vague and less personal, especially in comparison to Bärbel Höhn in this interaction. This might be interpreted as a professional way of speaking in politics. By not being too fixed about a certain issue, a politician leaves room for flexibility without potentially contradicting past statements.

### 6.3 Analysis of Jochen Ott’s Conversational Style

The final analysis focuses on Jochen Ott’s conversational style (he is politician in the Social Democratic Party):

#### EXAMPLE 3: Jochen Ott’s conversational style German (original) transcript

0505 JO: =darf ich n ^BEIspiel ´sagen?  
 0506 JS: bltte;=  
 0507 JO: =ganz ´kONkret,  
 0508 wir hatten vor wenigen mOna`ten;  
 0509 (.) eine ^große demonstration vor dem ^rathaus mit  
 ^zweitausend leu´ten aus dem stadtteil (.) in `RIEL.  
 0510 ´das is am [köllner ZO:-]  
 0511 (JS): [mh; ]  
 0512 JO: der ^eine oder andere von den hörern ´kennt ´DEN,

#### English translation

0505 JO: =may i say n EXAmple?  
 0506 JS: please;=  
 0507 JO: =really cONcrete,  
 0508 we had a few mOnths ago;  
 0509 (.) a ^big demonstration in front of the town hall with  
 two thousand people from the district in RIEL.  
 0510 that is at the ZOO: of cologne  
 0511 (JS): [mh;]  
 0512 JO: one or the other of the listeners knows IT,

Before starting his turn, Jochen Ott asks the host whether he may take the floor and state an “example” (l. 0505). After her permission to do so, he first adds the insertion “really cONcrete” and then begins to employ the example of a demonstration in Cologne. He formulates the example as a narration: he sets the time (“a few mOnths ago”, l. 0508), the actors (“two thousand people”, l. 0509) and the place (“RIEL”, l. 0509, “cologne”, l. 0510). As he indicated at the beginning of his turn, the example is a quite concrete one and he emphasizes the concreteness with adjectives (“*big* demonstration”, l. 0509) and precise descriptions of the place (“in front of the town hall”, l. 0509; “at the zoo”, l. 0510). Consequently, the example not only seems to be precise but also vivid – the listener (or the audience) may understand and follow the speaker easily and build up a picture of the unfolding situation in Riel. The formulation (in short, a detailed narration) as well as the example (a demonstration with a lot of people) represent one central feature of Jochen Ott’s conversational style, namely his orientation to the audience. In this case, the orientation to the dispersed audience is obvious. Jochen Ott states an example, which many listeners may know from their life world. In addition, he refers explicitly to the listeners (“one or the other of the listener knows IT,” l. 0512). As well as in the two examples regarding Bärbel Höhn and Armin Laschet, the variety of linguistic elements, which constitute a conversational style, become evident. Jochen Ott also uses focus accent in order to emphasize the meaning of message plus (in his case) in order to establish the narration paraverbal: “EXAmple”, l. 0505; “cONcrete”, l. 0507; “RIEL”, l. 0509; “ZOO:”, l. 0510. The modal verb “may” (l.0505) and the fact that he asks for the floor establish a picture of a respectful and polite communicator.

The comparison of the use of pronouns in the three examples seems relevant. With regard to Bärbel Höhn, her frequent use of the personal pronoun “I” is one element that establishes the impression of an assertive and self-centered/self-confident speaker. Armin Laschet, on the other hand, switches soon from his own point of view to a general level: he first uses the personal pronoun “we” (although he does not make clear to whom he precisely refers) and again emphasizes the general level with the indefinite pronoun “one”. Jochen Ott also makes use of the personal pronoun “we,” but since he states an example of a demonstration in Cologne the “we” could be understood as a reference and context cue ( Gumperz 1982) to the people in Cologne.

In the next section, the three conversational styles will be generalized and contrasted with respect to the speaker’s different performances.

## 7. Findings

Bärbel Höhn, Armin Laschet and Jochen Ott realize very distinctive conversational styles and, consequently, their performances as politicians in a broadcast discussion differ from one another. In general, Bärbel Höhn (example 1) presents herself as a very experienced, competent and also self-confident (or even self-important?) politician. She focuses on her experiences in the political sphere. Armin Laschet (example 2), on the other hand, does not perform as assertively and self-confidently as Bärbel Höhn. He does not define his very own

experiences and opinions, but formulates and argues in a rather vague and general way. Thus, he maintains flexibility and acts as a professional politician. Jochen Ott (example 3), finally, presents himself as a respectful speaker and a politician who is oriented to the people.

Although the three politicians realize distinctive conversational styles and their performances as politicians differ from one another, the analysis indicates common aspects when it comes to performance and conversational style. It became evident that various elements constitute a conversational style: the use of pronouns, modal verbs, patterns of formulation (argumentation, amplification, narration) and focus accent are relevant elements in the examples. Second, with regard to politicians interacting in front of a dispersed audience, the different conversational styles go along with different ways of trying to impress the audience (and possible voters). A politician might act very assertively and stress her experience (as Bärbel Höhn does), he might be sure to maintain flexibility (as Armin Laschet), or he might perform as a politician who is close to the people (as Jochen Ott does).

In summary, to realize a distinguishable conversational style and to perform in a characteristic way are necessary in order to establish a distinguishable identity.

It goes without saying that the actor's party has to be considered. Jochen Ott, for example, is member of the Social Democratic Party. Thus, his performance as such a people-oriented politician is plausible and expected.

## **8. Conclusion**

When it comes to performance in interaction, the context has to be considered. An observer who encodes and interprets a speaker's performance (automatically) considers extralinguistic beliefs concerning the speaker and the situation (Chomsky 2006). The context of the interaction analyzed in this paper was a broadcast radio discussion with three German politicians from three different parties. Concerning Goffman's differentiation between front stage and back stage behavior, the context of the analyzed interaction is clearly the front stage and the actors make this explicit by means of context cues, such as referring to the listeners.

The politician's conversational styles in the interaction are very different from one another. Thus, by means of their interactional performance, the three politicians establish a distinguishable identity.

The link between the analysis of a conversational style in order to reach conclusions on an actor's performance seems fruitful to me and, as Goffman (1980, 319) declares, style is a fundamental issue and question concerning identification. Conversational style is crucial for speakers in order to perform as a distinguishable person. With regard to politicians, they might even use a conversational style as a specific rhetorical strategy: "Knowing what makes for a successful rhetorical strategy can tell us a great deal about the conditions for successful political action" (Jerit 2008, 17).

Although the three conversational styles differ from one another, there are common features when looking from a more theoretical point of view. In all three

conversational styles, potential strategies to influence the audience (in this case the dispersed audience) became evident. Thus, Goffman's definition of performance has to be modified for the specific context:

"A 'performance' may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman 1959, 15). With regard to mass mediated discussions, I would suggest adding the following: "[... other participant] or the audience which might not be present but perceive the activity of a given participant."

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# Collaborative Substantiation and Qualification of Expertise in Concurrent Court Testimony

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In 2002, Father Paul Shanley was accused of sexual abuse by an adult man, who recounted experiences while he was a child in Shanley's parish and under Shanley's care. The accuser claimed to have recovered memories of abuse after having heard in the news another accusation against the priest and having talked about his memories with a therapist. Once convicted, Shanley appealed the decision and asked a higher court to rule that the trial court had erred in allowing the testimony of an expert to validate that type of recovered memory. In this case, the court upheld the trial court's admission of that evidence (*Commonwealth v. Shanley* 2010). Decisions to allow such testimony, nonetheless, remain a matter of situational discretion. For example, an appellate court in North Carolina upheld the opposite decision by a judge in a similar case (*State v. King* 2012).

Expert testimony in cases like this can be pivotal, especially in a jury trial, since there is considerable scientific controversy about the validity of recovered memories (Loftus & Ketcham 1996), and research has shown jurors often draw on such opinion and explanation when evaluating these kinds of claims (Alison, Almond, Christiansen, Waring, Power, & Villejoubert 2012). Yet, regardless of the validity of the research, and, by extension, the relevance of such testimony, both of which the appeals courts acknowledged, the North Carolina court insisted on yet another consideration: that performances of conflicting testimony could be potentially disruptive and confusing for jurors (*State v. King* 2012, 14). In a sense, the court conducted a balancing test to see if the likely probative value of the evidence outweighed the simultaneously possible introduction of irrelevant or biased opinion. In the end, the North Carolina court decided against allowing the expert to testify, largely out of fear that an ensuing "duel of experts" would create more heat than light.

But what if there were another way in which experts could testify at a trial? For example, might there be a different format or procedure that could tip the balance and allow insights, even of disagreeing experts, to be of greater interpretive value than the drama of disagreement could pose as a potential distraction or detraction? Despite the grave caution, affirmed in the North Carolina case, that courts be wary of turning over their truth-finding authority to outside experts (who can be arcane, difficult to understand, and at odds with one another), there also is a move afoot to change the way in which experts, this time in the plural, might present knowledge that not only is relevant, but also decorous

and succinct. The practice is “concurrent testimony,” also known widely and informally as “hot-tubbing.” In this essay, I explain how this experiment in concurrent testimony began, how the process works, and some of the performative characteristics that contribute to its rather contrarian popularity.

### **Origin, Process, and Participant Observations**

The method used to coordinate and present concurrent testimony was developed in a highly specialized court in Australia, the Land and Environment Court in New South Wales. Judge Peter McClellan experimented with the process there mainly because of the amount and variety of opinion he heard in public policy cases. The court’s mission was explicitly to serve community interests, and it had few formal requirements on the nature of allowable evidence. In a 2009 interview, McClellan described concurrent testimony as “a discussion between [sworn] experts,” chaired by the judge, and designed to help the judge “understand the perspective of each expert . . . and ultimately resolve the issue that the experts have given testimony about” (Carrick 2009; see also McClellan 2011, 3-4). He suggested concurrent testimony improved the judicial process in expertise-based decisions primarily because of efficiencies it provided in the use of court time, as well changes in the tone and quality of the testimony itself.

The actual process is more elaborate than McClellan’s simplification of it for that interview. Experts selected by the parties participate in subject-specific testimony, in groups as small as two and as large as fourteen. The experts meet on their own first, without lawyers. In that meeting, they respond to questions provided by the judge and produce a list of their own, later shown to the judge, of areas of agreement and disagreement in their responses to the judge’s questions. Later, in the actual hearing or trial, the group as a whole is invited to present their testimony at a non-partisan point of time, that is, either before or after individual parties present their own evidence. The judge opens the testimony session, identifies the issues that need to be decided, and sets up an initial speaking order for that purpose. A microphone is used to improve audibility and to designate who at any time is the speaker. After initial presentations, the judge, attorneys, and witnesses all may seek the floor, offer comments, and ask one another questions (Judicial Commission 2006).

Following McClellan’s model, this form of testimony has been used in a variety of cases. In Australia, it has been used in cases about intellectual property (Wardell 2012), property development compensation (Rares 2013), and the boundaries of wine-growing regions (Administrative Appeals Tribunal [AAT] 2001). In Great Britain, it has been used to evaluate liability for damaged cargo and responsibilities in vehicle delivery contracts (Hazel 2012). In the United States, where the prevalence of jury trials limits its applicability, a Tennessee judge has employed it in pre-trial hearings to inform decisions on matters of medical malpractice in order to admit expert testimony at trial (Judge Thomas 2005).

Despite growing interest in concurrent testimony as a method for the presentation of evidence, however, there are no comprehensive studies of the method's effectiveness or how its form or practice contributes to the various effects attributed to it. Dame Hazel Genn (2012) summarized survey results from participants in a pilot study in Manchester, noting high levels of satisfaction by witnesses and judges, while acknowledging skepticism by some attorneys about the rigor of cross-examinations in the format. Similarly, an evaluation of the process conducted by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT 2005) in Australia used a survey to conclude that 95% of the judges who had used the method were "satisfied" with it. Eighty-eight percent thought conflicting testimony could be compared more easily, 73% found it improved objectivity, 67% noted higher quality evidence, and 88% found concurrent testimony enhanced the decision-making process. Despite these various analyses of participants' perceptions, however, there remains relatively little analysis of the discourse itself to explain how it creates value for decision makers. This may be because researchers had other concerns. The two survey studies, for example, were more concerned with usability perceptions than with the dynamics of communicative or rhetorical functionality.

A separate barrier to research on the subject is accessibility to discourse samples. While transcripts of testimony can be obtained, for example of cases that were part of the pilot study in Manchester, they only can be seen in person at the courthouse. Other jurisdictions may have more lenient access policies, but there is not yet a clear context, place, or published collection where this kind of data can be compared and analyzed. The only widely accessible illustration of how concurrent testimony sounds and works is the DVD reenactment of excerpts from a case transcript (Judicial Commission 2006).

Given the present difficulty in obtaining and comparing the communication performed in concurrent testimony, this analysis uses excerpts from the educational DVD, anecdotal references by judges writing about the process, and published opinions that contain descriptions of the testimony. While these sources focus attention on particular moments and exchanges very possibly characteristic of this kind of testimony, what they fail to provide, of course, is rich interpretive context. Even so, as the remainder of this essay shows, this initial evidence suggests that concurrent evidence presentation allows competing experts to make coordinated knowledge contributions that compensate for the possible bifurcation and disorientation often associated with dueling experts.

### **Allowance for Conversational Dynamic**

According to many participants, concurrent testimony serves judicial decision-making well because of its conversational dynamic. When asked to describe the process, its early pioneer McClellan recounts that what happens "is a discussion, which is managed by the judge or commissioner, so that topics requiring oral examination are ventilated" (McClellan 2004, 17). The process, McClellan explains, naturally reduces cross-examination, so much that it "rarely occurs" (18). Instead, "the parties, experts and the advocates engage in a

discussion with the Court, which is managed to crystallise the matters that require resolution” (18). These observations clarify that the conversation is never free-flowing or entirely self-regulating. Instead, the presiding judge managed it. Even so, McClellan repeatedly characterizes the communication as a discussion, rather than more formally as evidence presentation or an examination of witnesses. Additionally, several court opinions use the term “hot tub” to refer to the practice (e.g., AAT 2001 sect. 28), implying a somewhat easygoing quality to the interactions and relationships. So, while the precise nature and distinguishing qualities of these discussions surely warrant further examination, McClellan clearly recognizes that the performative norms of conversation are central to the function and value of the testimony.

Others have noted this quality as well. Steven Rares, a judge at the Australian Federal Court, attributes the tendency in such testimony to focus on relevant points of disagreement to an awareness that others simultaneously on the stand can and will step in to debunk an obfuscating answer or red herring. “Because each expert knows that his or her colleague can expose any inappropriate answer immediately, and can also reinforce an appropriate one, the evidence generally proceeds directly to the critical, and genuinely held, points of difference” (Rares 2013, 3). The process, reinforced by the presence of other similarly knowledgeable interlocutors, draws on a conversational dynamic and economy to focus on, as Hans-Georg Gadamer (1991, 367) and Hellmut Geissner (1982, 102-104) might put it, “die Sache,” or the “matter of interest.” In other words, a relational responsibility motivates the experts to hone in on the relevant issues in a timely and responsive manner.

There is an aspect to this that is messy, especially when compared to an attorney-controlled sequence of questions in a conventional direct or cross-examination. As Rares (2013) describes the process, there are times when experts, who up until that moment had been listeners, are free both to comment on and ask questions about testimony that just had been presented by another expert. There is no pre-set order according to which other experts are permitted to join in the conversation. The only limiting factors seem to be the restriction within the jury box to one microphone, so that only person can speak at a time, and the implied convention that a new speaker must wait until an ongoing interchange has ended or the new speaker is given the nod to join in by the current witness or interlocutor (cf., *Concurrent Testimony*, 8m40s). In other words, the rules governing turn-taking are very much like those that emerge in ordinary conversation.

### **Qualification of Relative Knowledge Claims**

A further reason courts sometimes fear the dynamics of a duel of experts and consider them to carry high risks for decision makers is that differences of opinion, even amongst experts, can devolve into irreconcilable he said/she said standoffs. Decision-makers might come to believe that an expert can be found to say anything, that opposing experts cancel each other out, and that all a decision maker is left with is his or her personal intuition and experience (Gooday 2008,

Kaplan & Miller 1978, Slobodzian 2010). Although it is not a universal or logically necessary correlation, ordinary experience suggests that absolutist or unqualified knowledge claims may increase perceptions that opposing experts are at loggerheads or otherwise incompatible with one another (e.g., Andrews 1991, White 2002). As the following analysis shows, the practice of concurrent expert testimony encourages consciously and explicitly qualified knowledge claims, providing background information about assumptions, as well as acknowledging limitations that may apply to the conclusions presented.

In one case, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT 2001) in Australia was asked to decide whether a determination of an appointed committee, the Geographical Indicators Committee (GIC), was consistent with a law that governed, among other things, the process for region-specific labeling of wine. The GIC explained that it had used a two-step test in identifying regions: the degree to which relevant characteristics within a region were both internally homogenous and discrete or distinct when compared with neighboring or other regions (sect. 25). The intellectual question thus raised concerned the best way to demarcate a wine-growing region that was both consistent and distinctive.

The applicants in this case contended the committee had violated the law by insufficiently considering criteria required by the law when it refused a proposed expansion of the Coonawarra wine-growing area. In the course of the trial, the judge heard testimony from many experts grouped by the criteria under consideration. The topics most expansively discussed were horticulture, viticulture, soil science, climate, geography, and history (sect. 19-20).

While the court heard expert testimony on a wide range of factors, it also acknowledged that the opinions about which there were critical differences were largely about “soil and viticultural prospects” in selected localities (sect. 48). To illustrate how that testimony informed the final decision, the published opinion provided summaries of three instances of concurrent testimony devoted to those subjects. These substantive knowledge claims were presented and evaluated in ways that qualified and differentiated invoked perspectives.

Much of that summarized opinion was additive. In other words, the experts provided details and perspectives that were not in conflict with, but rather confirmed other opinions, extended them, or added attention to details or dimensions others had not addressed. In relation to one particular issue, however, the report on the testimony evaluated a disagreement between two of the witnesses, both of whom participated in two separate hot tubs on the characteristics of the soil and its implications for grape production.

At issue, in part, was whether the analysis identified “islands” of terra-rossa-like soil formations in the area south of a proposed border or whether the area as a whole could be seen as a homogenous extension of the Coonawarra region. Mr. Maschmedt, a soil scientist from the Department of Primary Industries and Regions for South Australia (PIRSA), argued that a limestone ridge extending six kilometers south of the initially proposed border shared sufficient characteristics with the reddish “terra rossa” soil of the original and oldest Coonawarra vineyards that it could sensibly be counted a part of an expanded Coonawarra wine region (sect. 66). Dr. Cass, an “International Consultant Soil

Scientist,” questioned methods used in that analysis and critiqued the maps of the region that it yielded.

While reports on the two separate “hot tubs” acknowledged different mappings, data used, and explanatory concepts used by the two opposing experts, the second in particular provides a glimpse at the interactional dynamics that led the court to its conclusion that Mr. Maschmedt’s analysis was more relevant to the legal decision. On the one hand, the report noted that Dr. Cass suggested that the terms “heterogeneity,” “homogenous,” and “proximate” were ill-suited for describing variations in soils. On the other hand, Dr. Cass had invoked those same criteria while defending a different boundary designation based on concentrated deposits of terra rossa soil in parts of the original identified region. In other words, in the course of the discussion, he conceded an inconsistency in his own perspective. Under questioning from other experts, Dr. Cass also acknowledged that he selectively had neglected available data in criticizing PIRSA maps and that he had made errors of scale and context in criticizing characterizations of soil types presented by Mr. Maschmedt and other experts.

After this relatively meticulous summary of the experts’ positions, arguments, and points of disagreement, the report then stepped back and announced three related conclusions: (1) no criterion alone could be considered a decisive factor in demarcating the wine region (not climate, soil type, watershed limits, etc.), (2) the limestone ridge south of Penola could reasonably be considered a contiguous and relatively homogenous extension of the expanded Coonawarra region previously identified by the Geographical Indicators Committee, and (3) none of the possible extensions could be determined without reference to historical usage of the name Coonawarra, which then became the next topic for consideration and analysis in the report. In other words, the decision called for a holistic or balanced judgment, not driven by a single master criterion. Instead, the decision had to make sense from multiple perspectives at once.

Striking in this particular account of expert testimony is the care it showed in delineating fields of knowledge from one another, relating those knowledge claims to one another, and in filtering extant disagreements for concessions, inconsistencies, and relevance regarding the underlying legal question. Despite a sprawling law that insisted on multiple competing criteria and a bank of experts with wide-ranging specializations and allegiances, both the eventual ruling and the account of those testimonies reflect a delicate and achieved consensus on central issues. This outcome is achieved in this case by balancing and relating to one another competing considerations, and this, in turn, is achieved by the willingness of witnesses to qualify and limit the scope of their respective areas of knowledge.

## Conclusion

Concurrent testimony in trials appears to be a new and widely welcomed way for expertise to be presented and performed. Although very little data are publicly available for researchers to assess how this form of communication functions in and especially across cases, anecdotal accounts and a transcript-based dramatization illustrate some of the features of the communication that participants have prized. Some of the performative qualities associated with participants' appreciation for the form are allowances for development of a conversational dynamic, the range and distribution of speech roles, and a highly conscious hedging of certainty in qualifications offered for knowledge claims.

These preliminary observations certainly are speculative, based as they are on selected anecdotes and reenactments. To judge either the pervasiveness of these qualities or the productive interpretive value they provide for decision makers, further research should conduct more systematic analysis of complete transcripts and recordings. Even so, the performative qualities identified here suggest that concurrent testimony does help courts circumvent the possible dangers of a distracting and confusing duel of experts and replace that with a performance of expertise that simultaneously is collaborative, qualified, and informative.

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# **Pretend Reading in Parent-Child-Interaction: Interactive Mechanisms of Role Taking and Scaffolding**

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Shared reading is a specific communication context in which early literacy learning emerges (Becker & Müller in press). The same applies for role play (Andresen 2011) and narrating (Müller 2012, Becker & Wieler 2013). However, very few studies exist that highlight the meaning of pretend reading for literacy learning. Pretend reading often is seen as an expression of early literacy (Bredel, Fuhrhop & Noack 2011). By the age of 3, children start to imitate reading, for example, by reproducing the text of a picturebook which is familiar to them (Bredel et al. 2011, 75). By doing this, children operate with language productively and immerse themselves into literate language use (Maas 2008). In this paper, we focus on interactive processes during pretend reading from an exploratory perspective. To assess the potential of pretend reading for literacy learning, we use an integrative approach. Our research design consists of a parent-child shared reading session organized in a phase of parent-child book reading and a phase in which the child takes over the role of the reader by “reading” (pretending to read) the story to the parent. In this study, 17 parents (12 mothers, 5 fathers) and 20 children (10 boys, 10 girls) (3 to 6 years) participated. This paper presents the first results of our analysis. We discuss in particular how the role taking is established in interaction and how the “reading process” (pretend reading) of the child is supported by the parents interactively. Section 1 outlines the theoretical background of our study and refers particularly to the relevance of role play, shared reading and pretend reading in literacy acquisition. Sections 2 and 3 highlight methods and empirical results by presenting two cases in our corpus. Section 4 summarizes our research results and draws conclusions for language promotion in kindergarten.

## 1. Theoretical Background

In our study, we focus on an interactive learning format which brings three crucial language learning contexts together: role play, dialogic reading and pretend reading. In the following, we will show the relevance and similarities these interaction contexts have in language learning.

### 1.1 Role Play

Role play is a fictional peer interaction frequently observable in children between 3 and 5 (Andresen 1997). In essence, role play exhibits three distinct components: (i) immersion into a fictional world, (ii) cooperation between the interactive partners, (iii) meta-communication (Andresen 2011). In the fictional play, children deal with subjects such as a doctor's visit, school or themes stemming from book series (Andresen 1997). In order to initiate role play, children have to agree on roles and objects which are integrated in the play. In doing so, they negotiate on a semantic level. For example, if a child wants to include a telephone in the play, all children have to agree on which object is representing the telephone. This defining process acquires a high degree of interactive negotiation and cooperation. All interactive partners must follow the same interpretation, otherwise the play dissolves and fiction cannot be created. But in role play, interaction partners do not only have to find an agreement on the meaning of objects which are integrated in the play, they also have to determine roles and the course of the play. The consensus finding is often expressed on a verbal meta-level. Besides this, gestures and non-verbal elements guide the process of negotiation and conformity (Andresen 2011).

For literacy learning, role play is highly relevant. Boundaries between reality and fiction vanish. Children not only realize actions that exceed their current abilities and potentials, they also experiment with objects and roles which are not yet part of their real lives and fulfil actions which are for them not yet achievable. Vygotskij (2002, 348) calls this acting in the "zone of proximal development." Role play is mainly based on affections and children's voluntariness and spontaneity (Andresen 1997). Furthermore, the interactive process of reinterpretation induces a shift from the overall context of action to a fictional context and the reinterpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic signs. Within this process of decontextualization, the interaction partners abstract from the here-and-now and generate shared fictive interpretations. Situational thinking, which is typical for the cognitive development of small children, approaches abstract thinking; contextualized language use advances to decontextualized language use. Therefore, role play builds a bridge between two states of cognition (Andresen 1997) and provides a crucial incentive for literacy learning, the development of a theory of the mind (Lillard et al. 2013) and abstract thinking (Andresen 1997).

In Germany, research on role play is dominated by the works of Andresen. In one of her studies, Andresen (2005) assessed the language behaviour of small children while engaged in fictional play. She investigated role play interactions of 48 children from the ages of 3 to 6 in kindergarten. Children were free to play without external instruction. Peer interaction was classified as role play when role taking was actually happening. "As criteria for identifying role play there served explicit role taking, for example *Pretend I am the father*, or addressing each other with the role of name, such as *Here, mother - What's the matter, child?* (Andresen 2005, 398). In contrast, pretend play was regarded as a reinterpretation process of objects without role taking. Results show that role playing younger children stick to the real meaning of objects without carrying out a fictional transfer. In the further course of development, children start to modify the meaning of objects and generate fictional reinterpretations (Andresen 2005). Role taking involving persons occurs when children had reached the final state of preschool age. At this time, children's behaviour turns out to be more characterized by meta-communication and reflections on interpretations. Andresen's results confirm findings of international research reconstructing a similar progression of development (Andresen 2005).

More applied studies indicate that role play can be combined with shared reading situations and narratives in order to promote speech production. Müller (2012) asked preschool children to narrate on the basis of a picturebook. After narrating, children were requested to dictate their story to an adult. In a study by Merklinger (2011), preschool, non-literal children dictated their story to literal school children. Both studies focused on the extent children adapt their language use to the literal conditions of dictating and how they fulfil the role of a dictating person linguistically. Both studies showed that children, when taking the role of a dictating, literal person, are more likely to use literate language forms, such as narrative markers, tense shifts and modifiers.

## 1.2 Dialogic reading

Story reading contributes to early literacy in several aspects: vocabulary, morpho-syntactic knowledge, print awareness and narrative skills (Becker & Müller in press, Müller 2012). Particularly in terms of reading competences, story reading is essential. If children participate regularly in story reading from an early age, there is a high probability that they will become competent readers and writers (Stiftung Lesen 2014). Story reading facilitates language growth and reading competencies. By participating in story reading, children also adapt practices and routines which are part of the culture and social milieu in which they live. "[A]s children are socialized to particular literacy practices, they are simultaneously socialized into discourses that position them ideologically within the larger social milieu" (Razfar & Gutiérrez 2003, 35). This process of language socialization is steered by sociocultural factors. "[I]n contrast to conceptions of literacy as the acquisition of discrete skills, a sociocultural view of literacy argues that literacy learning cannot be abstracted from the cultural practices in which it is nested" (Razfar & Gutiérrez 2003, 34). For example, sociocultural factors affect

the interactive quality of book reading (Müller 2013) by determining if parents practice a rather monologic or dialogic structuring of the reading process (Wieler 1997). In turn, interactive differences have implications for children's language development as the child's activity during book reading is crucial for language acquisition and speech production (for a meta-analysis see Fletcher & Reese 2005).

In view of these social differences, several didactic concepts suggest various interactive strategies to increase the child's self-activity and his/her number of utterances, either in a family or in an elementary and primary school. Among these concepts "dialogic reading" (Whitehurst & Lonigan 1998) is the most popular one.<sup>1</sup> Dialogic reading is mainly based on empirical findings from Whitehurst et al. (1988) which provided evidence for the language promoting effects of dialogic shared reading in families. The focus of this concept highlights several interactive strategies applied by the adult reader for activating the child:

- produce extratextual talk (e.g. supplementary explanations, decontextualizations,...),
- ask questions to the child (about illustrations, figures' feelings, expected actions,...),
- answer the child's questions (about vocabulary, illustrations,...),
- follow the child's interests and attention (expand the child's utterances),
- note: communication is dialogic (not monologic).

With this interactive assistance of the adult which comprises challenging but not burdensome questions and activities (also called "scaffolding", Bruner 1977), the child manages to act in the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotskij 2002, 348) exceeding his/her current state of development.

Whereas dialogic reading can be considered as an overall language promoting strategy initiated by adults, related concepts highlight the scope of early literacy. Ezell and Justice (2005), for example, concentrate on early literacy skills. Spinner (2004) and Preußner and Merklinger (2014) suggest how to use dialogic strategies in story reading to provide opportunities for literary learning. Mempel (2013) shows how to implement dialogic reading strategies in contexts of bi- and multilingual learning settings which are conducted in preschool and kindergarten. Despite positive effects on language learning, a number of authors assume that dialogic strategies lead to interruptions of the reading process. Lowe (2011), Ezell and Justice (2005) and Spinner (2004) argue that these interruptions can compromise the understanding of the story as a whole (Lowe 2011), reduce children's enjoyment of the story (Ezell & Justice 2005) and prevent immersion into the story being read (Spinner 2004). Thus, Müller and Stark (2015) proposed a story reading concept which accentuates "language didactic stimuli" in picturebooks. By exposing textual and illustrative features contained in the book itself, Müller and Stark (2015) demonstrate how adult readers can increase the communicative activity of the child without neglecting the aesthetic value of children's literature and, thus, without compromising literary learning. Furthermore, they link textual and illustrative stimuli with particular domains of language acquisition. For example, according to Müller and Stark (2015), the picturebook *Greta Gans* (Horáček 2007) is suitable to practice

subordinate clauses, in particular conditional sentences. The protagonist, the goose Greta, doubts her existences as a goose. She wishes she could be someone else and reflects what she could do in the form of a different animal. The textual stimulus consists of a conditional clause and a subjunctive II (“if I were a ... I could ...”), which is underlined with a suitable image. When reading the book, parents can use this stimulus systematically in order to encourage children to produce subjunctive forms and conditional sentences by adding different animals (Müller & Stark 2015).

### **1.3 Pretending to read**

When exploring written language, children start to imitate literal practices of adults or older children, e.g. pretending to read (Bredel et al. 2011) or scribbling (Barkow 2013). At that time, children do not know how to read or write exactly. They are neither able to capture textual contents nor to establish phoneme-grapheme-correspondences. Nevertheless, they discover the symbolic function of written language by gradually realizing that written language is reproducible and symbolic (Bredel et al. 2011). Günther (1986) refers to this early literacy learning as a “preliterate-symbolic phase”. According to his reading model, which goes back to the works of Frith (1985), the “preliterate-symbolic phase” is followed by a phase in which the child recognizes words and graphemes on the basis of memorization and the development of “logographic skills” (Frith 1985). In the further course of literacy acquisition, the child detects phoneme-grapheme correspondences and links spoken language with written language. At that time, children spell words according to the way they hear them, primarily without textual understanding (“alphabetic skills”, Frith 1985). Finally, children acquire orthography by considering orthographic principles and patterns (“orthographic skills”, Frith 1985). Günther (1986) assumes that this final process of acquisition results in automated procedures of reading and writing.

Although the reading models of Frith (1985) and Günther (1986) have influenced German research and school practice extensively, several authors criticize these models. Scheerer-Neumann (2003) argues that the single phases of both models cannot be clearly differentiated because each phase is characterized by continual changes. Bredel et al. (2011) point out that not every developmental stage is passed by every child in the same progression. Röber (2011) argues that many spelling tests, which are based on this model, do not take into account the quality of teaching which steers the various stages of reading acquisition (see also Schründer-Lenzen 2013). Nevertheless, the model of Frith (1985) and Günther (1986) is frequently referred to in German research and highlights pretend reading as a crucial element of literacy acquisition.

Although in the German research literature the relevance of pretend reading is frequently highlighted (see, for example, in Rau 1979), no specific studies to our knowledge have been carried out to assess the scope of pretend reading. In international research, Curenton, Craig and Flanigan (2008) investigated pretend reading in story reading sessions. In this exploratory study, a researcher read a storybook to pre-school children (n=33). After reading, three

interaction settings were designed: first, the child was requested to pretend to read the book to the mother; second, the mother read a story to the child; third, the mother told a self-experienced childhood episode to the child. Despite the fact that the children were not able to read yet, they took over the role of the reader in the first parent-child-interaction condition. Besides this, as Curenton et al. (2008) showed, children produced more decontextualized discourse during the first setting than when listening to the story told or read by their mothers. For example, they used more conjunctions, adverbs and simple elaborated noun phrases. In view of these data, we conclude that as well as the dictating situation or role play (see sections 1.1 and 1.2) pretending to read is “an opportunity for children to practice using complex talk” (Curenton et al. 2008, 182). “When children are permitted to use their creative energy, they are actually able to express themselves in a sophisticated manner” (182). Furthermore, it can be assumed that children, when taking the role of the reader, act in the “zone of proximal development” (Vygotskij 2002) as they realize actions which are not achievable yet in their real lives.

## **2. Research Question and Methodology**

In our study, we investigated the potential of pretend reading in picturebook reading sessions from an exploratory perspective. Seventeen parents (12 mothers, 5 fathers) and 20 children (10 boys, 10 girls) from 3 to 6 years participated in the study. First, parents were requested to read the story “Der Prinz mit der Trompete” (“The prince with the trumpet”, Janisch & Antoni 2011) to their children. This book was chosen because

- none of the adult test persons knew the book
- the language used in the book is literate in many aspects (e.g. tense use, narrative markers)
- the plot resembles traditional fairy tales
- the protagonists (prince, dragon, princess, king, queen) are classic narrative figures of fairy tales which are familiar to young children.

After reading, parents were prompted to request that the child takes over the role of the reader. Therefore, parents obtained an instruction to initiate the process of role taking. Story reading and role taking were conducted in the family. Parents were free to choose the timeline of the recording; cameras and audiotapes were provided. Particular emphasis was placed on creating a private atmosphere. Audio files (in total 105 min) were transcribed according to the transcription convention GAT2 (Selting et al. 2009). Furthermore, background information of the parents was collected by the use of a short interview conducted several days after the reading situations.

For analyzing the data, we referred to a model of Hausendorf and Quasthoff (2005) which we adapted in previous works (Müller 2012). Originally, the model was developed for analyzing narrative discourse units. The model consists of 5 globally embedded interactive tasks (“jobs”) which have to be

carried out by two or more communication partners to accomplish interaction (Hausendorf & Quasthoff 2005, 127 ff.; Quasthoff 1997):

- “display of referential/formal relevance”: priming of the narrative discourse unit within the turn-by-turn talk
- “topicalization”: initial point of the narrative discourse unit based on “conditional relevance” (Quasthoff 1997); moves in interaction which make a certain behaviour very likely to occur ; for example, *tell me, what has happened in the story*
- “elaboration”: phase of performance. Within this phase, the representation of narrated events has to be accomplished.
- “closing”: finalization of the narrative discourse unit
- “transition”: transition point back to turn-by-turn talk.

In order to gain insights into the interactive strategies the parents pursue to initiate role taking and support the “reading” of the child, we analyzed our data according to this model and the qualitative methodology of conversational analysis. We assume that the elaboration phase of pretend reading shows similarities to narrating as it is grounded on narrative text material which has been read to the child. As it has been shown for the dictating method (see section 1.1), we assume that by role taking within a pretend reading session, the child is activated for literate speech production and the elaboration of a narrative discourse unit.

In the following, we will present two examples of our data which differ widely in terms of the interactive strategies used by the parents. We will focus on how the interactive behaviour of the adult influences the child’s literate language production within the pretend reading setting. We will show that in these case examples the language production of the child highly depends on the interactive behaviour of the adult.

### 3. Data

As we have discussed above, Hausendorf and Quasthoff (1996) suggest 5 jobs which have to be accomplished in a narrative discourse by the interactive partners. In our setting, the first two jobs (“display of referential/formal relevance and topicalization”) are realized by the adult, whereas the main job of elaboration (pretend reading) has to be carried out by the child. The following examples display the different interactive jobs of the reading child and the listening adult.

#### 3.1 Example 1

In this example, a father and daughter are sitting on a couch, and the father is holding the book<sup>2</sup>. After having read the book, the father requests the child (75 months) to take over the role of the reader. In the first sequence, the father establishes “conditional relevance” (Quasthoff 1997) by requesting the child to read out the text (line 002-003). First, the child (C) is ashamed (line 004), shy and refuses to read. But the father (F) enhances conditional relevance by

encouraging the child to read. In addition, the father gives the child assistance to start the elaboration process: “Yes, but look, perhaps you can do it out of the pictures” (line 005-006).

001	C:	((Quietschgeräusche)) und JETZT, was muss ich JETZT machen? ((spielt Lufttrompete)) ((squeaking)) and now, what am I supposed to do now? ((pretends playing the trumpet))
002 003	F:	ne (-) JETZT möchte ich gerne dass DU mir das buch mal vorliest <i>now, I want you to read the book to me</i>
004	C:	<<beschämt> (-) ich kann gar nicht LE [sen]> ((ashamed)) (-) I cannot read ((schaut zum Vater auf)) ((looks at his father))
005 006	F:	[JA]: aber GUCK mal, vielleicht kannst du es ja aus den BILdern machen. <i>yes, but look, perhaps you can do it out of the pictures.</i>
007	C:	(2.2) <<pp> okay.> (1.0) (11.2 (Geräusche)) ((schlägt das Buch auf und blättert darin; legt die Hand an den Mund)) ((low)) okay. ((noise)) ((opens the book and flicks through it; puts its hand on its mouth))

After a preparatory phase (line 008-012), the child concentrates and starts elaborating (from line 013 on).

008	C:	(6.2) <<pp> (was sind) diese prinzessin> (.) ((low)) (what are) this princess
009 010		ich hoff=ich wollte grad sagen es war einmal ein Ritter (mit= ner schwarzen Mütze auf sein -) <i>I hope, I just wanted to say once upon a time there was a knight (with a black cap on his-)</i>
011		aber da ist ja kein - <i>but there is no</i> ((zeigt auf das Bild)) ((points at the picture))
012	F:	(0.7) nee. <i>no.</i>
013 014	C:	(1.7) es WAR einMAL(1.1) ein (0.7) verTIEF(-)ter (1.6) wo Königssohn, ((hat beim Reden den kleinen Finger im Mund (bis 019); schaut fragend zum Vater auf)) <i>once upon a time (1.1) an (0.7) immersed (1.6) prince</i> ((while speaking, the child puts his fingers in his mouth; looks questioningly up to his father))
015	F:	hehe <i>hehe</i>
016	C:	hehehe <i>hehehe</i>
017	F:	stimmt. <i>that`s right.</i>
018		das ist ein PRINZ. (0.7) <i>this is a prince.</i>

019 erzähl WEIter.  
*keep telling.*

022 C: <<stockend> DER hatte auf sein Hof ganz gan ganz ganz oft  
023 (0.9) kinder oder ritter oder>  
*((stumbling)) on his royal court he had very very very very often children or  
knights or*

024 °h (1.4) wa w:er auch alles °h sonst noch °h der °h musik  
025 zuhören °h wollte.  
*who else wanted to listen to the music.*

026 auf jeden fall konnte der Königssohn der PRINzen also °h ähm  
027 ah (1.8) ha konnte der WUNdergu, WUNderschön un °h (0.8) GANZ  
028 gut (0.5) tromPEte spielen.  
*however, the king`s son the prince he played the trumpet  
wondergoo, wonderfully, quite good.*

029 F: ich find du liest (s) !WUN!derbar vor;  
*I think, you read great*

030 da kann man !HERR!lich bei gucken.  
*at the same time, one can look perfectly  
((lächelt))  
((smiles))*

As shown in the example, the child takes over the role of the reader by pretending to read. In turn, the father takes over the role of an active listener. He refrains from steering the interaction and interrupting the elaboration phase of the child by questioning or producing extratextual talk. Instead, he respects the speaking right of the child and enhances the child`s role of the reader by praising the “reading” (bold, line 073). Furthermore, the father makes it explicit that he is paying attention (line 072) when the child reaffirms his attention (line 070-071). Role taking and role adoption is interactively implemented.

066 (5.2) und da: hat einer trompetet auf einmal.  
*and there, suddenly somebody played the trumpet*

067 (0.9) <<tiefe/raue Stimme> ich werd=den drachen nicht °h> (1.2)  
*((harsh, deep voice)) I will not*

068 ich werd` den drachen NICHT besiegen (.) ich hab kein !SCHWERT!.  
*I will not defeat the dragon, I have no sword*

069 ich mach mich aus dem !S:TAUB!.  
*I make off*  
*((schaut freudig zum Vater auf;))  
((looks up to this father happily))*

070 (2.6) papa?  
*dad?*

071 F: hm\_hm.  
*hm\_hm*

072 ich HÖR dir zu.  
*I am listening to you*

073 (0.6 (mit Geräusch)) **ich find du liest WUNderbar vor.**  
*((noise)) I think you read lovely.*

In order to underline his modified role as an active listener, the father imitates falling asleep. By doing this, he first displays the conventional distribution

of roles in shared reading situations: an adult reads out a text, the child listens and finally falls asleep; second, he highlights the reversed roles and preserves his role of the picturebook listener.

127 C: (1.6) sie hatten freien weg denn denn an drachen wollte NIEMand  
*they had free access because because dragons nobody wanted to be*  
 128 nah dran kommen.  
*near of.*  
 ((schaut zum Vater auf, der vorgibt zu schlafen))  
 ((looks up to his dad, who is pretending to sleep))  
 129 °h (1.1) das war KLAR.  
*that was clear.*

The child, on the other hand, fulfils her role as the reader. She meets the obligation to elaborate the discourse unit by pretending to read. According to the text material, the child's pretend reading is shaped by narrative structures and literate language forms. As the following transcript shows, this is apparent from the use of German *Präteritum*, the provision of an orientation at the beginning of the narrative ("It was beautiful, the sun was shining", line 046-047) and the dramatic integration of an unexpected moment as a specific feature of narratives (line 097, see also Müller 2012). Furthermore, it is evident that the child imitates reading: first, the child applies interactive strategies such as pointing (lines 050, 055); second, the child refers to the surface of the book (lines 045, 046) and underlines her performance by using gestures (lines 091-093). Thus, the child applies interactive strategies which are normally used by adults in shared reading situations (Rau 2013).

045 C: ((nimmt das Buch nun ganz allein in die Hand))  
 ((takes the book independently))  
 046 es war wunder (-) sch (-) schön.  
 ((streicht mit dem Finger über das Bild))  
*it was beautiful.*  
 ((touches the pictures))  
 047 die Sonne SCHEINte (.) er war an manchen ländern am STRAND,  
*the sun was shining, in some countries he was at the beach*  
 048 °h in manchen ländern in der STADT,  
*in some countries in the city*  
 049 °h in manchen LÄNdern an ganz vielen KIRCHtürmen,  
*in some countries at many many church towers*  
 050 (0.6) er musste über eine (3.0) °h brücke gehen,  
 ((zeigt auf das entsprechende Bild))  
*he had to cross a bridge*  
 ((points at the respective picture))  
 051 °h z vom einen schloss zum andern (0.6) SCHLOSS,  
*from one castle to the other*  
 052 (2.3) er ist durch den WALD geGANgen,  
*he passed a forest*  
 053 (3.8 (Seite wird umgeblättert)) da: traf er (1.9) eine  
 ((turning the page)) *there he met a*  
 054 !WUN!derv:'schöne prinzessin(-)  
*a beautiful princess*  
 055 und UNten (.) standen viele ritter.

((zeigt auf den unteren Bildrand))  
*and below there were many knights*  
((points at the image border below))

- 090 C: °h (-) dann (0.9) hatte °h ER m' mit °h ein STOCK auf die  
091 SCHUPpen (0.5) gehauen. (2.2)  
*and then he banged with a stick on the dragon`s skeleton*  
((haut mit der Hand auf den abgebildeten Drachen))  
((bangs with the hand on the illustrated dragon))  
092 dann erst 'nen kleinen stein auf ihn geworfen,  
*then first a small stone thrown on him*  
((haut mit der Fausrückseite auf die Seite))  
((bangs with the fist on the page))  
093 dann einen GROßten stein auf ihn geworfen.  
*then a big stone thrown on him*  
((holt weiter aus und haut mit der Hand auf die Seite))  
((swings back and bangs with the hand on the page))  
094 (0.5) dann immer noch nich.  
*then still not*  
095 er überlegte und überlegte und überlegte und überlegte und  
*he thought about it and thought about it and thought about it and thought about it*  
*and*  
((wiegt sich dabei vor und zurück))  
((moves forwards and backwards))  
096 überlegte und überlegte °h und über' °h legte  
*thought about it and thought about it and thought about it*  
097 schließlich fällt's fällt's ihm ein=°h seine (1.0) tromPEte.  
*suddenly it came into his mind (.) his trumpet.*

The closing of the discourse unit (the fourth job) is realized by the child marked with the lexical unit "I am done, Dad" and its reference to the backside of the book followed by the father's praise (line 155), which leads back to the turn-by-turn talk (the fifth job).

- 152 C: fertig papa.  
*I am done, dad.*  
((schaut freudig zum Vater hoch))  
((looks up happily to his dad))  
153 F: e:cht?  
*really?*  
154 C: ja. (.) (guck doch mal) da war ich.  
*yes, look. there I was.*  
((zeigt dem Vater die Rückseite des Buches))  
((shows his dad the backside of the book))  
155 F: **SEHR gut hasse das gemacht.**  
*very well done.*

This first example shows how far the role taking of the child, and, thus, the realization of the elaboration phase is affected by the interactive behaviour of the adult. The father scaffolds the pretend reading process of the child by

maintaining his role as an active listener. Due to this interactive reticence, the child is free to elaborate the story and to make use of decontextualized language.

### 3.2 Example 2

In this example, a mother and her son (62 months) are sitting together on a couch. The mother (M) holds her arm around the son (C) and the book in front of them. As the transcript shows, the phase of initiating does not run smoothly as the child refuses to “read” the text. “Topicalization” is characterized by a negotiation without role taking. In contrast to the first example, conditional relevance is established more instructively by the use of the German modal verb *sollen*: “jetzt sollst du mir das buch bitte vorlesen” (“Now you are supposed to read the book to me, please”). No further assistance to take over the role of the reader is given.

001	M:	ja: schätzchen, <i>yes, dear</i>
002		jetzt sollst DU mir das buch bitte vorlesen. <i>now you are supposed to read the book to me, please.</i>
003	C:	o:h [oh].
004	M:	[o:h]
005		hehe <<lachend> wie HEIßT denn das buch?> <i>((laughing)) what's the book's name?</i>
006	C:	(2.4) will schlafen. <i>want to sleep.</i>
007	M:	<<lachend> du willst SLAfen?>(0.2) <i>((laughing)) you want to sleep?</i>
008		hehe_°h
009		is dir das jetzt ein bisschen PEINlich? (0.4) <i>hehe. do you feel a little bit ashamed now because of this?</i>
010		hm (.) soll ich die KAMera ausmachen? (.) <i>shall I turn off the camera?</i>
011		liest du es mir DANN vor? <i>do you read it then to me?</i>
012	C:	[JA], <i>yes.</i>
013	M:	[oder] JA:? <i>or yes?</i>
014	C:	nein. <i>no.</i>

In line 017, the child starts to elaborate. The elaboration gets immediately interrupted by a corrective question of the mother (line 019: “are you talking like a baby now?”). The elaboration phase dissolves and role taking has to be re-established.

017	C:	der PRINZ mit der trompete. <i>the prince with the trumpet.</i>
018	M:	!OKAY! (0.7 ((Buchseite wird umgeblättert)) <i>okay. ((turning the page))</i>
019		sprichst du jetzt wie ein BAby?

- 020 C: *are you talking like a baby now?*  
 (2.0 ((es wird weiter im Buch geblättert))  
 ((again turning the pages))
- 021 gägä bubu gägäi ((lacht))  
 ((pretends babbling like a baby, laughs))

In order to re-establish role taking, the mother steers the child back to elaboration in line 025-027 by giving structural assistance such as reminding the child of typical patterns for opening a fairy tale story (line 027).

- 025 M: SAG mal, wie FÄNGTS denn an?  
*tell me, how does it begin?*
- 026 C: ich WEIß nich [mehr] (1.8)  
*I don't know any more*
- 027 M: [WIE] fangen denn normalerweise märchen an?  
*how do fairy tales usually begin?*
- 028 C: es war EINmal.  
*once upon a time.*
- 029 M: es WAR einmal. (0.7)  
*once upon a time.*

In the further course of interaction, the mother continues structuring the process of elaboration for the child. A question-answer-play emerges.

- 030 M: und WAS war einmal?  
*and there was what once a time*
- 031 C: (0.7) EIN prinz.  
*a prince*
- 032 (-)
- 033 M: EINFach irgendein prinz?  
*only any prince?*
- 034 C: (1.0) nein.  
*no.*
- 035 M: (.) sondern?  
*but?*
- 036 C: mit Elner trompEte.  
*with a trumpet.*
- 037 M: aha.  
*aha.*

The interaction between child and mother is dominated by questioning and displaying of knowledge. When the child cannot remember the further course of the story, the question-answer-play comes to an end.

- 063 C: (1.9) und jetzt? (4.0 (es wird im Buch geblättert))  
*and now? ((pages are getting turned))*
- 064 wie geht's weiter? (0.8)  
*how does it go on?*
- 065 <<etwas beschämt> weiß auch nichts nix mehr> (0.5) ((schnief))  
 ((ashamed)) *I don't know nothing more ((sniff))*
- 066 M: (3.5) magst du nicht mehr WElter erzählen?  
*do you not want to tell anymore?*
- 067 C: (0.7) ja jetzt DAS. ((zeigt auf ein anderes Buch))  
*yes, now this ((pointing to another book))*

068 M: jetzt DAS.  
now this.

As the transcript shows, pretend reading does not occur in the second example. Both interaction partners do not stay in their roles. The child does not do his interactive job of elaborating. The mother does not fulfil her role as an active listener. Instead the mother scaffolds the elaboration phase of the child by questioning and structuring the narrative process in a very dominant manner. Because of this, the child's speech production is restricted and limited to orate instead of literate language use. The child has no sufficient interactive space to unfold a narrative by the use of decontextualized language.

#### 4. Discussion

Despite its reputation as "ideal" form of shared reading, in this paper we assumed that in dialogic reading children's speech production is limited as it is reduced to extratextual discourse sections evoking orate language use (Becker & Müller in press, Stark in preparation). In literacy learning, however, it is essential that children not only receive literate texts orally, but also practice literate language productively, for example, by narrating (Müller 2012).

In German research, pretend reading is classified as an equally meaningful literal practice as narrating in early childhood, although there is no extensive evidence that validates the impact of pretend reading for children's literacy development. Thus, in this paper, we have highlighted pretend reading as a literal learning context focusing on three main questions:

- (i) How can pretend reading be integrated in parent-child-reading sessions?
- (ii) How do the interaction partners (parent and child) behave interactively in a pretend-reading-setting in order to establish the unfamiliar interactive roles?
- (iii) How do parents interactively affect the "reading" and the language use of the child?

In order to investigate these questions, we designed a research setting in which a parent first read a story to the child and then requested the child to take over the reader's role. Of course, as we use a qualitative approach with a small number of cases, assumptions drawn from our analysis are preliminary and have to be tested with larger samples. Nevertheless, a closer look at our data provides several insights:

(1) The data yield in this study provides exploratory indicators that when pretend reading is embedded in adult-child-interaction the interactive behaviour of the adult determines whether the child is able to unfold his/her literal potential by using decontextualized language forms while pretend reading. A key point seems to rest in the role awareness of the parent. By establishing role taking sufficiently in interaction and playing the role of an active listener, the adult scaffolds the child's performance as reader.

(2) As shown in international research, in children's first narrative attempts (Hausendorf & Quasthoff 2005) and shared reading situations (dialogic reading, see section 1.2), adults apply scaffolding-mechanisms in order to support the

language production of the child. It seems interesting that these scaffolding-processes in children's pretend reading appear to be counterproductive as they interrupt the elaboration phase and the speech production of the child. Pretend reading seems to bear resemblance to role play which is characterized by a high degree of self-determination and self-fulfilment (Lillard et al. 2013).

(3) As it accounts for role play or dictating, the data suggest that by taking the role of the reader there is also a shift from the current potential of the child to a higher point of development (Vygotskij 2002) as the child explores a linguistic register which exceeds his/her language experiences in family and everyday interactions. This requires that the adult gives the child sufficient interactive space for elaboration.

(4) Furthermore, the results of this study are not only relevant with respect to parental interactive strategies in order to increase children's literate speech production. They also can be applied for interactive strategies of preschool-teachers in order to implement pretend reading in language promotion systematically. By implementing pretend reading in kindergarten as part of language promotion, we assume that particular attention has to be drawn towards the role-awareness of the preschool-teachers mediated by teacher training programs.

Particularly in Germany, there is an urgent need for alternative forms of language promotion as only since the execution of international large-scale studies such as PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment) have preschools and kindergartens been considered to provide the first and most important step in children's educational careers. This adds even more weight to the argument, "[f]uture research should examine what questioning and comment techniques parents and teachers can use to scaffold children's use of decontextualized language" in order to contribute to children's language development successfully (Currenton et al. 2008, 183).

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### **Notes:**

1. Also in Germany, this concept is widely known and approved – especially in kindergartens  
(c.f. [http://www.foermig-berlin.de/materialien/Dialogisches\\_Vorlesen.pdf](http://www.foermig-berlin.de/materialien/Dialogisches_Vorlesen.pdf)  
[http://www.fb12.uni-bremen.de/fileadmin/Arbeitsgebiete/deutsch/Werke/alt\\_dialogisches\\_lesen.pdf](http://www.fb12.uni-bremen.de/fileadmin/Arbeitsgebiete/deutsch/Werke/alt_dialogisches_lesen.pdf),  
[http://www.bezreg-arnsberg.nrw.de/themen/b/buero\\_sprache/weiterfueh\\_infos/literatur\\_medien/aufsaetze/010\\_dialogisches\\_lesen.pdf](http://www.bezreg-arnsberg.nrw.de/themen/b/buero_sprache/weiterfueh_infos/literatur_medien/aufsaetze/010_dialogisches_lesen.pdf),  
[http://www.weiterbildungsinitiative.de/fileadmin/download/WW\\_Fruehe\\_Bildung\\_Arbeitsblaetter/Arbeitsblatt\\_3\\_Die\\_Techniken\\_des\\_Dialogischen\\_Lesens.pdf](http://www.weiterbildungsinitiative.de/fileadmin/download/WW_Fruehe_Bildung_Arbeitsblaetter/Arbeitsblatt_3_Die_Techniken_des_Dialogischen_Lesens.pdf); all websites checked on 27.05.2015).

2. Total record time: 10 minutes, 30 seconds.

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# Listening Is Easy!?

## Looking at Critical Factors for Listening Performance

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### 1. Listening as Information Processing

Consistent with the model of cognitive information processing (Mayer 2014), listening is defined as the intentional selection, organization, and integration of verbal and nonverbal aspects of an acoustic message. Listening is basically a constructive process (Burluson 2011). The listener (re-) constructs the message and (re-)creates the meaning which a speaker had shared. To draw a precise distinction between hearing and listening, the element of intentionality needs to complement the definition of listening. Listening does not take place incidentally and requires both allotment of attentional capacity to a signal and the active investment of decoding skills. In the same way in which reading is different from seeing, listening can be conceptualized as different from hearing. Taken together, listening is modelled as a four-step process (see Figure 1) in extension of the S-O-I model of information processing (Imhof 2010).

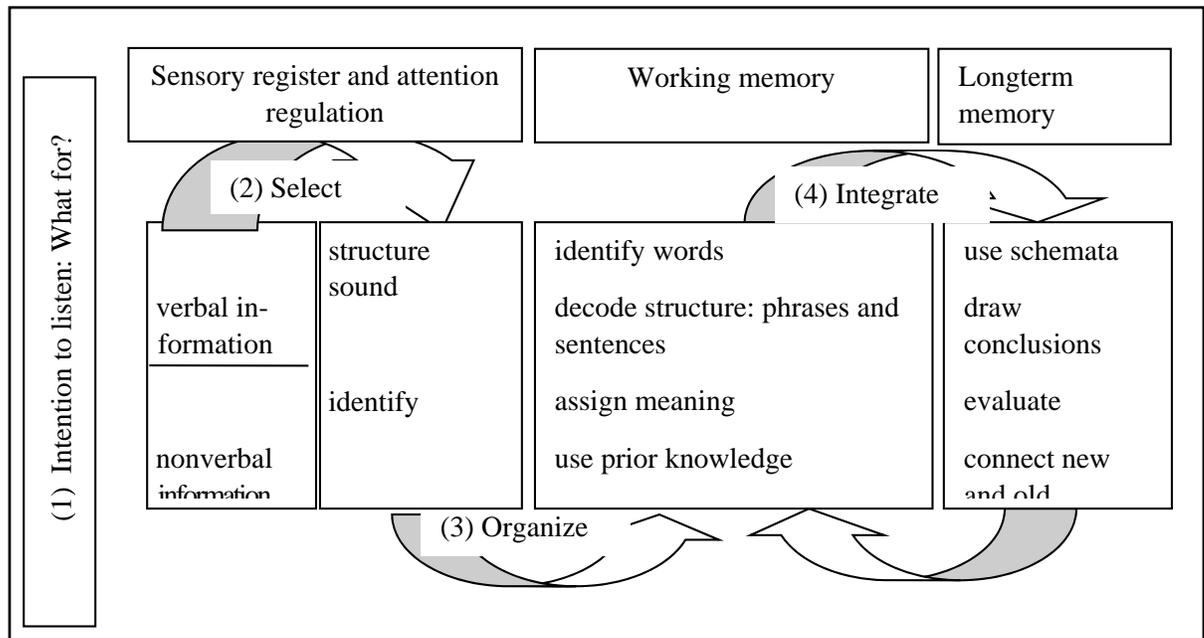


Figure 1: Listening as a four-step process of information processing

This model of listening provides a heuristic for identifying critical factors for listening performance. First of all, there is no listening performance if there is no listening intention. Listening is an active and necessarily self-regulated process. The listener initiates, monitors and manipulates the listening process by coordinating both mental processes and external behavior. As such, listening takes an investment of effort and self-regulation on all levels (Boekaerts 1999) from cognitive competence to identify and process content, metacognitive competence to monitor information processing from diverse sources for an extended period of time, and resource management to secure a balanced return on investment for listening.

It is crucial for listening to take place that a listener forms an intention concerning what to listen for. Depending on how this intention is formed, the listener will apply specific selection criteria and, therefore, define which “bricks” he or she will use to (re-)construct the message. The choice can be made from a variety of sources, e.g., from verbal information and/or from nonverbal information, from peripheral information, e.g., the context and the situation. To give an example: A trained speaker announces the weather advisory for the day. As a listener who plans to take a trip in the car, you carefully listen for the content, if there will be snow or ice on the roads or other unpleasant conditions which might influence your decision. However, if you listen as the trainer of this speaker, you do not care about what he says but how he speaks and you attend to enunciation, speech rate, emotionality or lack thereof. The sensory register typically takes in a myriad of information at any given moment. However, information decay is fast and placing attention on relevant pieces of information just in time is crucial. Depending on where a listener directs his or her attention, the extracted information will differ; at the same time, any information, which has not been attended to, will be deleted and remain irretrievable.

Those pieces of information which the listener selected are forwarded to working memory for further use. The next step is to organize the information and to create a representation of the message (Imhof 2010; Kintsch 1998). This is done by activating linguistic competence (what is the difference in meaning between *snow flurry* and *blizzard*), by referring to content from prior knowledge and world knowledge (how fast has the reaction of the local snow plows been in the past?), and by using complex thinking and problem-solving skills (how long does it take me to get to my destination and will I get there before the snow front?). Thus, the original information is enriched by previously stored information. This includes both explicit knowledge (facts, figures, evidence) and implicit knowledge, including relevant emotional content (fear, defiance, disappointment). At this step of organizing information, a listener will mix and blend new information and old information to create his or her own representation of what is – supposedly – being meant.

The final step of listening is the integration of information. The listener uses his or her judgment to finally figure out what the situation means for his or her behavior. What needs to be done? The listener creates a situational model (Kintsch 1998), which includes the evaluation of the message and an assignment

of meaning (What do I take as the intention of the speaker to tell me?), including some kind of response and behavioral reaction (e.g., to decide against driving the car).

In sum, listening is conceptualized as an active and self-regulated process which involves investment of intentional effort, attention, and coordination and integration of various functions of the cognitive system. Listening has a clear product which is represented by the meaning which the listeners eventually assign to the message and the conclusions which they draw, including the behavioral responses. The structure and content of the assigned meaning vary depending on individual differences. The following sections will discuss empirical and theoretical findings about some of the critical factors which have an impact on listening performance. The selection of the aspects is guided by the contributions of cognitive psychology. Different aspects might appear when research in linguistics and grammar (Harley 2012; Hilpert 2014; Jay 2002), neurolinguistics (Friederici 2011), developmental psychology (Imhof 2014) or other areas of expertise (Berwick, Friederici, Chomsky & Bolhuis 2013) would have been chosen. So, this text will certainly leave the reader with some open questions.

## **2. The Critical Role of Working Memory**

One bottleneck for incoming information is the structure which researchers call working memory (WM). It represents an information processing unit in which a person holds transitory information active in the mind to evaluate and manipulate it according to situational needs and interests (Baddeley 1986, 1998; Cowan 1995, 2010). According to Gathercole and Alloway (2008, 2), it refers “to the ability ... to hold and manipulate information in the mind over short periods of time. It provides the mental workspace ... that is used to store important information ...” Through WM, the listener’s mind selects, coordinates and monitors the information and creates and assigns meaning to a message. WM is critical when the listener allocates attention to specific sources and guides the selection of information by defining relevant stimuli. WM is also instrumental in retrieving content from prior knowledge which is used to assess the consistency, the logic and the value of incoming information. The listener relies on WM to incorporate incoming information from simultaneous sources, e.g., verbal and nonverbal information which may or may not be in line with each other. However, the complexity of the task on the one hand and the structure of WM on the other hand seem to be somewhat contradictory. A large body of experimental research has shown that working memory capacity is both limited and flexible within constraints (Kahneman 1973). Baddeley and colleagues (1998) modelled WM as a system with (at least) three subsystems which comprise special processing units for visual and acoustic information and the central executive as a coordinative function. In particular, cognitive load theory (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga 2011) has posited that there are limits to how much information WM can take in and process at a time and that an overload of information may cause information processing breakdown and failure. In particular, the transitory nature

of orally transmitted information challenges the information processing components of the cognitive system (Kalyuga 2012). Relevant experimental research has revealed which factors specifically create cognitive load and which strategies serve to relieve cognitive load. In accordance with Kahneman's (1973) theory of limited attentional capacity, Glonek and King (2014) found that there are limits as to how fast a person can take in information by listening.

The processing of acoustic information as in listening requires particular investment of effort, because both the linguistic (semantics, syntax) and the paralinguistic characteristics of a message (pronunciation, speech rate, tone of voice) contain information which a listener needs to take into account as he or she (re)constructs the meaning of a message. Experimental research has shown that cognitive load on a listener is created by both content-related aspects of a message (e.g., text difficulty) and voice characteristics (Imhof, Välikoski, Laukkanen & Orlob 2014). Listeners retain less information when they listen to a distorted voice, they find the content harder to digest, feel that they need to invest more mental effort, and perceive the speaker as less attractive and agreeable. Acoustic information, relevant or irrelevant, affects WM and, as a consequence, notably interferes with information processing. In particular, younger participants (8-9 years old), who were instructed to ignore background noise, still make more errors in a visual categorization task and use longer reaction times to find the correct solution (Meinhardt-Injac, Schlittmeier, Klatte, Otto, Persike & Imhof 2015).

In sum, it is safe to say that listening performance as interpreted from a constructivist perspective depends on the functioning of WM as the critical unit for information processing. Considerable individual differences may be expected as to what listeners choose to attend to, to select and to retain.

### **3. The Critical Role of Listener Characteristics and Competencies**

Listening performance is clearly a function of listener specifics, including both state and trait characteristics. Watson, Barker, and Weaver (1995) proposed the concept of listening styles and suggested that individual listeners differ in terms of how they habitually behave in listening situations. They argue that listeners have typical orientations which may be toward people, action, content, and time (Barker & Watson 2000). According to the authors, each preference implies strengths and weaknesses which affect the communication in a given situation. Table 1 provides an overview of the relevant patterns of behavior (cf. also Worthington & Fitch-Hauser 2012).

Table 1

*Strengths and weaknesses in the patterns of behavior pertaining to four listening styles (adapted from Barker & Watson 2000, 25-29)*

Listening style preference	Strengths	Weaknesses
People-oriented listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cares and is concerned about others</li> <li>• is nonjudgmental</li> <li>• provides clear verbal and nonverbal feedback signals</li> <li>• identifies emotional states of others</li> <li>• interested in building relationships</li> <li>• notices moods in others quickly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• becomes overinvolved with the feelings of others</li> <li>• avoids seeing faults in others</li> <li>• internalizes / adopts emotional states of others</li> <li>• is intrusive to others</li> <li>• is overly expressive when giving feedback</li> <li>• is nondiscriminating in building relationships</li> </ul>
Action-oriented listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gets to the heart of the matter quickly</li> <li>• gives clear feedback concerning expectations</li> <li>• concentrates energy on understanding task at hand</li> <li>• helps others focus on what is important</li> <li>• encourages others to be organized and concise</li> <li>• identifies inconsistencies in messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tends to be impatient with rambling speakers</li> <li>• jumps ahead and moves to conclusions quickly</li> <li>• gets distracted easily by unorganized speakers</li> <li>• asks blunt questions of others</li> <li>• appears overly critical</li> <li>• minimizes emotional issues and concerns</li> </ul>
Content-oriented listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• values technical information</li> <li>• tests for clarity and understanding</li> <li>• encourages others to provide support for their ideas</li> <li>• welcomes complex and challenging information</li> <li>• looks at all sides of an issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is overly detail-oriented</li> <li>• may intimidate others by asking pointed questions</li> <li>• minimizes the value of nontechnical information</li> <li>• devalues information from unknown individuals</li> <li>• takes a long time to make decisions</li> </ul>
Time-oriented listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manages and saves time effectively</li> <li>• lets others know listening time requirements</li> <li>• sets time guidelines for meetings and conversations</li> <li>• discourages wordy speakers from wasting time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tends to be impatient with time wasters</li> <li>• interrupts others, putting strain on relationships</li> <li>• lets time affect the ability to concentrate</li> <li>• rushes speakers by frequently looking at watches/clocks</li> </ul>

- 
- gives cues to others when time is being wasted
  - limits creativity in others by imposing time pressure
- 

While typically individual listeners have a consistent and habitual preference for one listening orientation, the authors concede that there are also listeners with multiple preferences. In addition, there is evidence which suggest that listening style preferences are highly adaptable according to situational demands as, for example, different areas of life and varying hierarchical implications between speaker and listener. Imhof (2004) found that listening style preferences of the same person are different when interpersonal communication takes place in a business context or in an educational or personal context; similarly, listeners adjust their preferred listening styles to the perceived quality of the interpersonal relationship. Listening is viewed differently when the speaker is perceived as a person of authority, as an equal, or as a subordinate. Bodie and Worthington (2010) and Bodie, Worthington, and Gearhart (2013) published research on an instrument which can be used to measure listening style preferences with some validity. They revised the original instrument proposed by Watson and Barker and updated the scales based on a factor analytical analysis.

In a similar vein, personality traits were investigated for their impact on listening behavior. There is some plausibility in the assumption that the general temperament and psychological needs of a person finds expression in how this person is able and willing to listen (Bommelje, Houston, & Smither 2003; Villaume & Bodie 2007; Worthington 2003, 2008). Castro, Cohen, Gilad and Kluger (2013) showed that developmental experience, such as attachment style, play a moderating role in listening ability and listening needs.

In addition to listener characteristics, listener skills and competences need to be taken into account in the analysis of listening performance. Listening products are a function of how a listener perceives the demands of a communication situation both in terms of overt behavior (what type of behavior is expected in a given situation?) and in terms of cognitive activity (how relevant are different parts of the information?). Depending on the evaluation of the situation, a listener will gauge the amount of effort that he or she is ready to invest in a communication episode (for example: I can listen to my grandmother's story of her first day at school almost effortlessly because I have heard the story umpteen times and because it is not relevant for me to retain the details).

Decoding skills, both verbal and nonverbal, are obviously critical for listening performance (Joyce 2013; Young, Guthrie & Faux 2013). Verbal decoding skills are closely related to the quality of the mental lexicon and to linguistic competencies. Listeners need to structure and organize the acoustic input to identify words, their semantics in general and specifically in the given situation. The scope of the receptive vocabulary and the versatility with which a person can access the different layers of linguistic knowledge affects both the listening process and product. Anyone who has tried listening in a second language (which may, by the way, according to Rost (2014) be either a so-called foreign language or a specific vernacular within one's own first language) will remember

how challenging listening becomes when the linguistic knowledge base (in terms of lexicon, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics) is suddenly limited.

Beyond verbal decoding skills, listeners need nonverbal decoding skills for a full listening performance. Individual differences are to be expected concerning how sensitive individuals are to perceiving nonverbal information and to assigning meaning into the relationship between nonverbal and verbal meaning (Aron 1996; Gearhart 2014).

In any case, research tells us that listening performance can be expected to be a function of higher order thinking skills, in particular of memory capacity, the awareness of different perspectives, of the familiarity between the communicators, and motivational resources, e.g., willingness to invest effort, vigilance, activation and attention, and the content and structure of the knowledge base (Imhof 2003, 2010). Evidence from past research also suggests that the ability to decode both verbal and nonverbal information has a developmental trajectory, which means that listening performance might vary considerably across the life span (Abrams & Farell 2010; Halone, Wolvin, & Coakley 1997; Imhof 2002).

#### **4. The Critical Role of Context and Presentation Mode**

In addition to listener characteristics, listening performance is also a function of the situation, context and presentation mode. The message which a listener distills from oral communication is systematically influenced by how, where, and when a message is being delivered or, as Harley (2010, 143) puts it: "Language is grounded to the world." In general, oral communication takes place in a specific setting which is determined by a common ground (Clark 1996, 93): "Two people's common ground is, in effect, the sum of their mutual, common or joint knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions." The degree of overlap and shared context shapes oral communication, in particular, in interpersonal settings. If two individuals communicate in a standardized situation and everyone knows what to say when and, vice versa, what the other says and when, understanding may be reached more easily than in an open situation with a large number of degrees of freedom. An example of highly standardized communication would be a religious service with preset calls and responses; a somewhat less standardized but still normative and certainly not open situation might be teacher-student classroom interaction. As long as students in class interpret a situation as "instruction," their oral interaction is more formal, e.g., in terms of word choice and sentence structure than in the next moment when a teacher adjourns formal class time and permits them to talk about their extracurricular activities (Turgay 2015).

Presentation mode and text type have an impact on how listeners process what they hear and what they make of a message. Glonek and King (2014) experimentally showed that the type of presentation affects how well listeners retain information from orally presented messages. When a message was presented in the form of a narrative, subjects retained more information than when the message was presented as an expository instructional text. The critical difference between the two texts in this experiment was the way in which the text

was organized. The narrative text had a storyline: introduction, conflict, and resolution, while the expository text presented an introduction of the topic followed by three main points (Glonek & King 2014). Jeglitzka (2014) investigated listening performance as a function of text coherence and redundancy. Results suggest that text coherence facilitates comprehension and retention in particular in “older” listeners (which in the case of this study means participants older than 25). Redundancy in oral messages increased comprehension in younger participants (younger than 25), while older participants (older than 25) did not benefit from redundancy; quite the contrary, older participants found that they had to invest more effort into processing messages which contained redundant information.

In sum, it is safe to say that both the situated and contextual embedding of oral communication and text characteristics from a general genre to organization of the relevant information have systematic implications for the listening product. This could be relevant for both speech production (What can a speaker take into account in order to deliver a message which is “listenable”?) and for speech reception (What can a listener do to (re-)construct a rich and comprehensive mental model of the message?), e.g., when training schemes for speaking and listening skills are developed.

## **5. Conclusion: How to Juggle the Critical Factors for Listening Performance**

To fully understand the process and product of listening, it is important to take into account the reciprocity of communication. Listening is not only a form of taking in information, but also a form of backchanneling information to the speaker. As Floyd recognizes (2014, 6), listening behavior is critical for relationship building and can “qualify as an affectionate gesture” when “listening behavior demonstrates immediacy” and the speaker acknowledges the “investment of time and energy” expended by the listener. So, the listener’s behavior is an expression of affection and reveals to the speaker the manner in which and how much a listener cares for him or her. Rost (2014, 138) points out that communication, and, in particular, face-to-face interaction is a “mutual task” in which the bottom line is the “need to coordinate on several levels of cognition, affect, and behavior.” Itzchakov, Kluger, Emanuel-Tor and Gizbar (2014) found a substantial relationship between personality characteristics and listening style preferences. Their data suggest that the degree of adjustment of a person is positively correlated with a person-oriented listening style. It seems that listening behavior is not per se appropriate or dysfunctional, but that its effects develop in the interaction with the speaker’s needs and psychological traits on the one hand and the listener’s goals and skills on the other hand (Keaton, Keteyian, & Bodie 2014).

In conclusion, I am presenting a set of skills which are critical for listening performance. As can be drawn from the listening model, listening is a heterogeneous set of skills which can be mapped to the different phases of the

listening process on the one hand and to levels of self-regulation (Boekaerts 1999) on the other hand (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Listening is driven by skills: Suggested set of listening skills required in the four phases of listening on the three levels of self-regulation*

<b>Level of self-regulation</b>	<b>Intention</b>	<b>Selection</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Integration</b>
<b>Cognitive</b>	Define goals and objectives	Focus attention, Activate prior knowledge, Use linguistic skills, activate word recognition	Categorize information, Summarize input, Identify structure, Detect units of meaning	Connect with prior knowledge, Visualize information, Rehearse, Review, Attach meaning
<b>Metacognitive</b>	Anticipate and control communication difficulties and barriers	Monitor and control input, Consider, compare and contrast various sources of information	Consider different perspectives, Identify missing information, Check for credibility and consistency	Evaluate, consider/add / subtract emotions, Separate attitudes and information
<b>Self-Regulation and Resource Management</b>	Decide what you want to do: Listen to whom, when, for how long? Prepare for effort investment	Take notes, Use memory strategies, Define type and scope of notes	Monitor comprehension, channels and interaction, Give and receive feedback	Switch and combine sources, Create, test, and complete situation model Develop deep understanding

This list of component skills which make the “good” listener may not be exhaustive. It is also an open question what the relationships between these subskills are, if they are all necessary or even sufficient for successful listening, if strengths in one aspect can compensate for weaker skills in another. I would not be surprised if research found that there is not one fixed set of listening skills which guarantee listening efficiency, but that it is scope of the repertoire and the ability to adjust the usage of a variety of listening skills to the specific demands of

a communication situation which would be the best indicator of good listening. Thus, even though we have empirical evidence for the validity of the idea that listening performance is driven by specific skills and that metacognitive skills improve listening performance substantially (Bozorgian 2014; Imhof 2001; Janusik & Keaton 2011; Ramihirad & Shams 2014; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari 2010), it is safe to say that the field of listening needs more research, too. To date, we know little as to when and how these skills develop and whether this is through learning and training or through talent and maturation. In fact, the most interesting question remains how to become a competent listener, what changes good listening performance could make in various fields of public and personal life, and what one can do to acquire and to teach the appropriate skills (Janusik 2002). With this said, I can only conclude with the notion that listening is a broad field wide open for further research.

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# Verbal Art and Social Conflict

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## 1. The Problem and Its Cultural Matrix

The title, “Verbal Art and Social Conflict,” might suggest an opposition because we are used to thinking about social conflict in terms of interests, forces and other “serious” matters. On the other hand, we are used to thinking about verbal art in terms of play, entertainment, fun, and other “light” matters. But sometimes we notice some rift in this stable cultural-cognitive matrix of understanding life. We are trapped by artful bluff in the course of a negotiation, we are stunned by cases of ready wit in the course of a dispute. Could it be that our common way of thinking about conflict and artfulness requires critical reconsideration? The opposition indeed works only on the basis of peculiar, historically contingent assumptions sketched in what some scholars call a “Kantian aesthetics” (Baumann & Briggs 1990), which makes a sharp distinction between day-to-day life and art. The relation between them has been seen otherwise in different times and places. In the Baroque court, war and play were essentially interconnected – war was play and play was war (Geitner 1992).

The distinction we have to cope with nowadays is the result of a conception of communication or a “meta-pragmatics” (Lucy 1992) which is associated with the social rise of the bourgeois class and an accompanying ideology, the philosophy of enlightenment. This conception made written arguments the prototype of communication, degrading playful ways of speaking to social irrelevant spheres: entertainment and children’s talk. If ways of speaking in the public sphere show up which used non-argumentative elements, they were branded as “unmanierliche Polemik” or unmannerly polemics (Oesterle 1986).

## 2. Performativity as a Not So New Perspective on Communication

### 2.1. A Conceptual Reorientation to Language and Communication

It was at the beginning of the 20th century that in some disciplines and societal spheres concerned with language that scholars advocated for a change of perspective:

- The German literary scholar Max Herrmann argued with regard to theatrical play that it is not the text of the play which is crucial but the performance (“Aufführung”). He regarded theater to be a “social play,” with actors and audience as well as relevant participants. Long before a concept like “embodiment” attracted prominence, Herrmann stressed “that

the decisive moment in theater play is the co-experience of the real bodies and the real space” (“das theatralisch Entscheidende [ist] das Miterleben der wirklichen Körper und des wirklichen Raumes”) (Fischer-Lichte 2012, 20).

- The Russian theater manager Nicolai Evreinov developed the concept of “theatricality.” He saw cultural moments as being performed for other members of the culture. He found such moments not only in aesthetic segments of society, but in all areas of public life and institutions such as church, law systems, military and advertising. Evreinov regarded theatricality to be the central principal of socio-cultural development.
- The British theologian William Smith and after him anthropologist James Frazer reversed the perspective on myth and ritual, arguing that myth and religion have been developed from ritual. This reversal was quite irritating for the self-description of Western culture according to which culture was formed on complex systems of belief, whereas rituals were seen to belong to “primitive” societies.

It was in anthropology and sociology that those ideas of performativity remained fruitful.

In sociology, Kenneth Burke developed the concept of “social drama” as a central analytical concept to understand all phenomena of social life – social interaction as well as aesthetic productions. The concept of social drama and its related terminology enabled him to make aesthetic categories fruitful for the analysis of social interaction.

Erving Goffman and his seminal “presentation of self in everyday life” used the metaphorical field of theatre to describe social situations and the interactions therein. He could refer to the idea and cultural attitude of “world theatre,” which had an enormous impact on culture and behavior in the European 17th century.

In contrast to the information-centered conception of communication, Goffman was very clear:

All in all, then, I am suggesting that often what talkers undertake to do is not to provide information to a recipient but to present dramas to an audience. Indeed it seems that we spend most of our time not engaged in giving information but in giving shows. And observe this theatricality is not based on mere displays of feelings or faked exhibition of spontaneity or anything else by way of the huffing and puffing we might derogate by calling theatrical. The parallel between stage and conversation is much, much deeper than that. The point is that ordinarily when an individual says something, he is not saying it as a bald statement of fact on his own behalf. He is recounting. He is running through a strip of already determined events for the engagement of his listeners (Goffman 1974, 508).

It must be stressed that the scientific disciplines, which claim to have language and communication as their subjects, had no affinities to such concepts for a long time. Regarding linguistics, this is due to its meaning-centered approach, in

particular, to the dominance of the concept of information in communication science. So nowadays the concept of theatricality (or performativity) penetrates these disciplines from “outside.”

## 2.2. The Methodological Challenge

This reorientation has at least one methodological challenge: if communication is not regarded as text and as production of meaning or interpretation but as performance, then, communication must be conceived on the basis of experience instead of meaning.

As anthropologist Edward Schieffelin writes:

Symbols are effective less because they communicate meaning (...) than because, through performance, meanings are formulated in a social rather than cognitive space, and the participants are engaged with the symbols in the interactional creation of a performance reality, rather than merely being informed by them as knowers” (1985, 707).

Brenneis (1985, 707) stresses that “a focus on the intellectual, sense-making role of symbols – on their meanings – can obscure how symbols and the rituals of which they are a part can speak so forcefully” (236).

Bauman sees the peculiar quality of performances in the “enhancement of experience, through the present appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself” (1986, 133).

This methodological challenge is a crucial one for every scientific discipline because it touches the relationship between the nature of the object of investigation and the medium of scientific representation – written language. As long as the nature of the object – meaning – is regarded to be grasped by conceptually (cognitive) based uses of language (analytical discourse) there is a correspondence between the – assumed – nature of the object of study and the way to represent it. But if the object has the quality of experience or imagination, an analytical use of language fails to get the essence of the object of study. Experience and imagination back out of an analytical use of language. Their representation demands another use of language, a use to be developed.

View of communication	Focus on	Basic concept
text	fixation of meaning (Geertz)	interpretation
performance	co-experience of events enhancement of experience	impression imagination

## **2.3. The Conceptual Challenge**

Efforts to link ‘social conflict’ together with “verbal art” are impeded by cognitive patterns which are deeply rooted in the ‘cosmology’ of modern Western civilization. For implications of this cosmology for communication studies see Nothdurft (2014). Binary opposing schemata like “reality – play,” “sense – nonsense,” and “rationality – irrationality” are powerful devices in understanding social reality – so powerful that they obstruct a proper understanding of phenomena which can be characterized as hybrids (see Latour 1995). They seem to belong to both sides or better they demand alternative ways of description and understanding.

If communication is regarded as performance, then, the question is not if there is a connection between social conflict and verbal art but how this connection is adequately understood and properly grasped.

## **3. Suggestions for Understanding the Relationship between Social Conflict and Verbal Art**

In this section, I present some conceptions that might be helpful for understanding the relationship between social conflict and verbal art. They were developed in different fields of study such as anthropology, conversational analysis, psychotherapy and theater studies. Correspondingly, they stress different aspects of the relationship between social conflict and verbal art.

These concepts are:

- Schechner's loop
- social aesthetics
- making music together
- performance of conflict

### **3.1. Schechner's Loop**

Richard Schechner, a theater director and scholar, developed a conceptual schema relating social and political action with theatrical techniques. Schechner uses the concept of “social drama” by anthropologist Victor Turner. It received its most prominent representation in what Schechner himself calls the “infinity loop” (Schechner 2003, Fig. 6.2). The central assumption is that theatrical techniques are the hidden blueprints of political and other social processes, and that theatrical processes are influenced by social processes. So instead of working with the difference between social “reality” and aesthetic “play,” this model tries to detect the relationships between these two “ideologically” divided realms of reality.

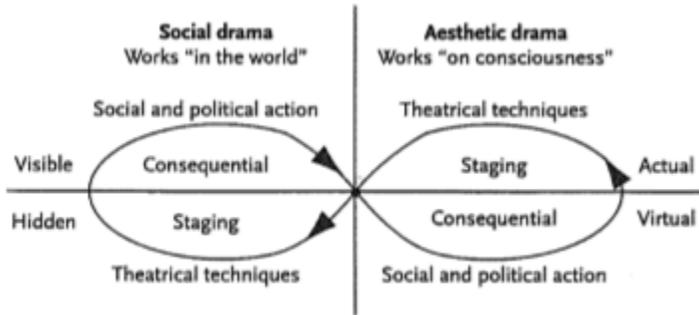


Figure 6.2

Turner (1985, 300), who used this schema in his own work, stresses: "... the protagonists of the social drama, a 'drama of living,' have been equipped by aesthetic drama with some of their most salient opinions, imageries, hopes and ideological perspectives."

### 3.2 Social Aesthetics

Anthropologist Donald Brenneis (1987) introduced the concept of social aesthetics. The concept is designed to relate performances in a social community to social structures in this peculiar community. This concept fuses:

- sense making activity with
- local aesthetic criteria for coherence and beauty with
- ethnopsychological notions of personhood, emotion, expression and experience.

Social aesthetics is the medium through which participants conceptualize and articulate their experiences.

Brenneis stresses the importance of the *local* character of such a social aesthetics; in the case of a Fiji community he investigated, he found ethnopsychological categories inseparable from aesthetics, so that emotional experience is located in the events themselves.

Brenneis shows this fusion by using an example of a dispute resolution procedure.

There is a procedure of dispute management, called *pancayat*, which does not focus on the matter of dispute itself, but which provides an opportunity for the participants to share in experience culturally relevant feelings and moods.

Through *pancayat* testimony an official and definitive account of events crucial to the development of a dispute is publicly constructed. ... the public narrative is constructed through the propositions collaboratively stated by questioner and witness. The committee is not presenting an account of its own but is contributing to its composition (242).

A publicly accomplished account is provided, and interested villagers are left to draw their own conclusions and interpretations. Everyone's autonomy is maintained (242).

The *pancayat* is considered by Fiji Indians to be a powerful and satisfactory occasion for social mending, for repairing damaged interpersonal relations and enacting “amity” (243).

I presume that there are evaluative standards by which artful, witty, expressive, and puzzling ways of dealing with accusations are very highly evaluated. These are standards that work – so to say – “beneath” the official social values of rational disputing behavior, but nevertheless guide our experiences and sentiments of everyday communicative behavior.

### **3.3. Making Music Together**

“Making music together” is a concept that Johannes Schwitalla and I developed some years ago to deal with what we observed to be artful ways of speaking in youth groups. We used this concept (or metaphor) to focus on the orchestration of simultaneous speaking, the synchronization of rhythm, the repetition and variation of phrases and words, the improvisation and the playful use of sounds. These obviously are elements of play, but in the field we studied this play matters because it is just by this play that the social identities of the teens in their respective peer-group and their feelings about “being in the world” are enacted and established. Axel Schmidt (2004) made similar observations in studying what in German is called “dissen” in peer groups.

I would like to demonstrate the fruitfulness of this concept for the study of social conflicts by showing the artful way of speaking in a segment of mediation talk. The data are from a research project on mediation talk (Nothdurft 1995), especially on mediation in neighborhood disputes, so called “Schiedsmann-Gespräche.” The presented segment is from such a mediation between residents of an apartment house. Resident A has a lot of complains against a couple, B1 and B2, who are the opponents in this case. C is the mediator (who does not show up in this segment). The segment starts after a passage in which A accuses B1 of having been rude and having called A names.

A:

B1: when did I say that (...) had I there been drunk again when I climbed up the stairs

A: of course you had been drunk every evening

B1: on all all all fours every evening

B2:

A: of course you blamed us and shouted at us

B1: o god did I do that

B2:

A: oh yes always always 'cause we were renovating my flat

B1: every evening

B2:

A: if you would to that of course you always had

B1: I had been drunk every evening and I did eh

B2:

A: been drunk

B1: no for heaven's sake than I must not drive as a tanklorry

B2:

A:

B1: you know why just think about when I drive the tanklorry

B2:

A: that doesn't matter the issue is that you

B1: I'll drink all the gas

The opponent uses the question, which he puts to himself, to introduce a scenario of his behavior which plays with itself and which gets a remarkably glittering status. It is obvious that this turn does not have the status of a “recollection of former behavior” as it would have as a sequentially expected reaction to the question. Instead of that, this expectation is used playfully and a different game is played. The opponent acts as if the applicant would speak. But the description of his behavior is so overdone that it caricatures the real scene and deprecates the real speaker, that is, the applicant. This caricature is carried out in remarkable way even in formulaic aspects of the utterance. See that by the stuttering “on all all all fours,” the typical babbling of a drunken person is exposed, at least, in German. The applicant picks up his scenario indeed and confirms it “you had been drunk every evening” and falls into the trap. From now on her contributions become subjects of his wit. The opponent takes up her confirmation: “every evening o god.” This comment as well as his further remarks are functional in a double way.

First, they are attacks against the assertion of her confirmation; these attacks could be reformulated as: “How in the world can you say something like that?”. They aim at undermining the credibility of the applicant.

Second, on the propositional level, the remarks create a context in which the defendant can refer later on in a surprising turn “then I must not drive a tank/lorry.”

For the establishment of this context, repetitions of already introduced phrases play an important role. Note that in oral speech repetition is an important means to create coherence and continuity, so to say, against time and volatility (Tannen 1989). By the speech-figure of “petrol-tank,” the opponent retrospectively performs the whole sequence as part of a process of growing insight from a phase of skeptical wonder to a phase of clear appreciation, but he does it in a modality of non-literal, playful speaking and simulated wonder.

The context of speech has changed meanwhile to that of a merry guessing-game. This guessing-game becomes obvious when the opponent asks the applicant “you know why?”. The opponent cannot seriously expect that the applicant will play this game so he answers his question himself: “I’ll drink all the gas.”

I regard this segment and its analysis as an example how intricate verbal interaction in disputes is and how in creating the vitality of disputes features of speech work together which haven been separated conceptually and methodologically or even neglected by a text-oriented linguistic analysis of everyday talk.

### **3.4. The Performance of Conflict**

In this approach, the concept of “performance” is used in a strict and narrow sense. The idea is that dispute participants in talking about their dispute are enacting or performing this very dispute. I (Nothdurft 1997, 117f) made respective observations in studies of mediation talk. Similar observations have

been made in coaching and psychotherapeutic processes in which the topics of these talks were reproduced in the interaction patterns in which the participants dealt with their topic – the topic was performed.

In the way of speaking about their dispute and the dynamics of negotiation, the disputing parties reproduce structural elements of the debated dispute. Dynamic patterns, for example, “to turn round and round,” “to go back and forth,” and “to stick obstinately in another,” can be seen as performances of core features of the respective dispute: a problem of interpunctuation, a reciprocal exchange of offers and rejections, and highly emotional involvement.

In the context of Gestalt-Therapy, such phenomena are even crucial for the therapeutic process. They call them “here-and-now-correspondence” (Yalom 2002). Psychoanalytical “transference” is a related concept of course.

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