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Process Drama as a Possible Solution to Foreign Language Anxiety

Relatrice

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“Like before when I try to speak, they’d be laughing at me, that I’m not correct. But I’ll keep on pushing, no matter what, I’ll keep on trying.”
(J.)

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Introduction

Even just hearing the language assistant saying to me “Скажите пожалуйста...” [Would you please tell me...] could make my blood run cold, and freeze me. At first, I reacted to this overwhelming fear by studying more, so that I could answer to all the questions starting with those two words. But after a few months – without visible improvement – I started to skip lessons, and, finally, I totally avoided them. I kept on studying Russian on my own, but nothing could convince me to speak it in front of others and to face the risk of making a bad impression. I felt as if I was wasting my time by studying something I had not a talent for, a language I would never speak. It was frustrating.

That is why, when I run into the concept of foreign language anxiety, I felt as if I had found a reason for the fear that stopped me from speaking Russian. Therefore, I decided to explore this aspect of language learning from the outside, in order to understand its possible causes, consequences and solutions. In parallel with that, there was an idea I wanted to investigate and verify, namely how drama-based activities and, in particular, Process Drama – practices that I had the chance to explore during the University years both from the point of view of the language learner and from that of the teacher – could be used in the language classroom to help students to overcome foreign language anxiety when it is present. This is the aim of this dissertation, which is made up of three chapters, organized as described below.

Chapter one will focus on the concept of foreign language anxiety, describing how it may influence the learning process of students, and how it may be influenced by several factors. Although it is difficult to mark the boundary of such a fluid phenomenon, in *Section 1.1* this kind of apprehension will be described, by collecting some authors’ ideas about its causes – which may be both internal and/or external to the student – and its consequences, first in learning in general and then focusing on the learning process of a second language student. Indeed, foreign language anxiety has been described as a specific kind of apprehension that an individual may feel when approaching a foreign/second language, both within and outside the language classroom. As will be described, anxiety is a multifaceted and intangible matter, not only because its causes and

consequences often merge in a vicious circle, but also because it cannot be considered completely facilitating or debilitating with regard to the learning process. However, the dissertation will mostly draw attention to the detrimental aspect of anxiety, and the section will finally deal with some devices that could be used to lower affective barriers in the classroom. *Section 1.2* will then explore why it may be dangerous to underestimate the role of foreign language anxiety. Indeed, it will explain why understanding input and producing output are necessary steps to learn a language, clarifying why debilitating affective barriers should be lowered, since they often hamper these two phases of language learning. Among the factors that influences language learning in parallel with anxiety, motivation is often mentioned, and therefore discussed in *Section 1.3*. Indeed, the anxious student may get demotivated throughout his/her learning process, and it is important to understand what can keep motivation high. This section will deal with some motivational factors, such as achievement, how a student explains it, learners' internal reasons to study a language, and stimuli deriving from the classroom environment and the teacher – who should not only propose activities based on students' needs and interests, but also enable them to become autonomous and active learners, and intercultural speakers.

Chapter two will then introduce the use of drama-based activities – and in particular of Process Drama – in the language classroom, focusing on how they could help learners in overcoming foreign language anxiety. *Section 2.1* aims at presenting the ingredients of Process Drama. First, it will deal with how drama moved from theatre to the classroom, and then with the role that students and teachers have in this approach – since authority and decisional power are no longer exclusively in the hands of the teacher. This method enables – and requires – students to be more autonomous and active learners, and also answers many other needs of language learners, as will be described at the end of this section. *Section 2.2* will then introduce how drama-based activities can be used to lower affective barriers during language lessons. It will be argued that this approach, by leading students to become used both to moving, speaking and expressing themselves in front of other people step by step, enables them to be more self-confident when required to speak a foreign language. The section will describe both why and how a safe place within the classroom can be created, so that students can feel comfortable with the teacher, the peers and themselves. The role of the group and of collaboration, and the

importance of creating a community atmosphere will be underlined, since the student needs to trust the other members of the group in order to carry out both the dramatic and the linguistic tasks. Finally, *Section 2.3* will deal with one of the devices often used in drama-based lessons, that of creating fictional worlds within the classroom, and asking the students to take on fictional roles. The section will first describe role-play – an activity that has long been used within the language classroom, since it enables students to practice the linguistic items they may need in the real world – and then how Process Drama enriches the role-play with the dynamism that derives from facilitators’ and students’ creativity and contributions. After describing some strategies to help students in becoming accustomed to using their imagination, the section will explain how working from within a fictional world enables the students both to practice the foreign language without the anxiety of running real risks, and to express themselves as if the fictional roles were masks. Moreover, the section will explain how the drama could keep in check foreign language anxiety, since the pretence created within the classroom could be so involving and stimulating as to lead students to desire to speak the foreign language, no matter how afraid they are of making mistakes.

In *Chapter three* two case studies will be described, in order to explore how drama-based activities can be introduced in a foreign/second language workshop. *Section 3.1* and *Section 3.2* will provide two examples of course of workshops where drama-based activities were used to facilitate students’ learning of Italian, and will report on both the advantages and difficulties of using this kind of approach, focusing in particular on the role of foreign language anxiety. As the reader will notice, the two cases differ from each other under many aspects. The first course took place at the University of Warwick (Coventry, UK), and was mainly addressed to English-speaking university students who had already studied Italian for at least one year, while in the second case the group of learners was composed by refugees, asylum seekers, international students and economic migrants who had recently immigrated to Padova (Italy) and with varying levels of Italian. Therefore, the members of the two groups had different reasons to learn the language, different opportunities, and different levels of foreign language anxiety.

Chapter one

Anxiety and second language learning¹

Among the endless number of factors that can influence a student, such as, interest in a subject, the relation with teacher and peers, intelligence, attitude, determination and so on, there is one element that can be considered as influencing – and influenced, as well – by not only all those that have just been mentioned but also by many others: namely, anxiety. Although not easy to define, many people would claim to have felt anxiety at least once in their lives, and many would probably link it with the learning experience. This chapter will focus in particular on the latter: indeed, the aim is to analyse how anxiety can influence – both positively and negatively – the learning path of a student, and in particular that of a second language learner. Since through the analysis the terms “cause” and “effect” will be often employed, it may be useful to premise that an exact causal order between affective factors and learning achievement would be almost impossible to describe: in fact, as one can easily notice, throughout the chapter it will happen that what is described as a causal element in one paragraph, may become a consequence – even of its own previously-described effect – in the following one.

However illogical the above may sound, this view is in line with the concept of language learning as a non-linear process, which has been upheld by several authors: Van Lier (2004: 5), in defining “ecological linguistics”, describes language acquisition as something that emerges from the influence of many different elements, and underlines that the process at issue does not follow a predictable nor a linear path; similarly, De Bot,

¹ In dealing with language learning, many authors distinguish between foreign and second language: the former is defined as “learning a non-native language in one’s own country with few immediate opportunities to use the language”, and the latter “learning it within the culture of that language or within one’s own native culture where the second language is an accepted lingua franca” (Brown 1987: 136). Both the labels refer to a language that is learned, but usually the second language is that spoken by the majority group living where the individual is studying (Sevinç, Dewaele 2018: 160). In this work the two terms are often used interchangeably, with most of the scenarios to be described being noticeable in both context.

Lowie and Verspoor (2005: 14-16; Lowie 2012: 25-26) include languages within the category of “dynamic systems”, which are characterized by an uninterrupted and apparently chaotic mutual influence between their variables, which constantly reorganize the superior system without following a predictable order. Therefore, all the elements that will be mentioned in the following sections – anxiety, interaction and motivation – should be seen as variables irregularly influencing the dynamic system of language, but at the same time as systems that mutually influence each other and that are influenced by other factors.

The chapter is divided into three major sections. The first part deals with the concept of anxiety, providing a definition of it as a “subjective feeling of tension” (Spielberger 1983, in Horwitz et al. 1986: 125). After dealing in brief with anxiety as a general unpleasant sensation, the focus will move to its role in learning, and in particular to the experience of second language learners: indeed, some authors isolate the anxiety felt by some people when coming to contact with a second language – which can be both inside and outside the classroom – and call it foreign language anxiety². This concept will be not only defined, but also analysed considering the possible causes and consequences – always being prudent in talking about the cause-effect order. It will be underlined that anxiety has many different sides, and that it can both facilitate the student in his/her learning path by stimulating him/her to make greater effort, or hamper acquisition, since anxiety often seems to raise a barrier between the student and the learning experiences. The last part focuses in particular on the latter kind of anxiety, which is considered as damaging for the learners who feel it: although studies have not shown definitely the link between foreign language anxiety and poor results in the learning – in fact, some students could just have problems in expressing their competence (Horwitz 2001: 121) – when working in a relaxed environment students appear to be more prone to creativity and less cautious in elaborating discourse in the foreign language (Steinberg, Horwitz 1986, in Horwitz 2001: 115); therefore, some strategies to lower anxiety will be described, to show that both students and teachers have the instruments to deal with this problematic feeling.

² This type of anxiety refers to both foreign and second language learning contexts, but it will be labelled “foreign language anxiety” in keeping with the definitions given by most of the authors (for example Horwitz et al. 1986 and Foss, Reitzel 1988).

As will be described in the first section, debilitating anxiety may prevent the student not only from understanding input, but also from producing output. The second section of the chapter focuses on this problem, by analysing why these two processes are so central in the development of language competence. Most authors agree not only on the student's need to listen to and read discourse in the second language, but also on the necessity of providing him/her with appropriate input. A final point that will be analysed about the role of input is the question of students' involvement in elaborating it: indeed, while some authors claim that receiving second language items automatically leads to language development, others support a more active and conscious role of the student. Passing through the discussion of the necessity of producing output to learn a language – a topic on which the authors do not concur – the section finally deals with interaction and negotiation of meaning, that is when input and output merge. Indeed, language exchanges both between students and the teacher or between the students themselves have been described as essential in language learning, because they provide the opportunity not only to practice the second language, but also to discuss doubts. The description of the facilitating role of input, output and interaction aims at making the negative consequences of debilitating anxiety clear, and at showing the learning experiences that this kind of apprehension may deprive the students of.

The last section of the chapter deals with a topic that is rarely absent in discussions about second language learning: motivation. In particular, here it will be analysed because of its power to involve the student and spur him/her towards the desire to keep on studying and practicing the second language, an attitude that may help even anxious learners. More than on the definition of motivation – which is difficult to describe clearly, like many other concepts that will be mentioned in the chapter – attention will be drawn to how this affective factor can influence second language learning, and to its relationship with achievement. After dealing with the mutual advantageous exchange between the above-mentioned elements, some of the possible sources of motivation will be described, in a route that starts from the inner reasons an individual may have to learn a second language, through the motivational factors s/he may find within the classroom, and ending up with a discussion of how bringing culture into the language classroom may arouse curiosity, interest and motivation within the second language learner.

1.1 Foreign language anxiety

Anxiety – which has been defined as a “subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Spielberger 1983, in Horwitz et al. 1986: 125) – may be provoked by different factors, and influence people’s lives in several ways. By focusing on how anxiety can affect students and their learning experiences, this work will deal particularly with the effects of this kind of unpleasant feeling on the learning of a foreign language. As will be described in this chapter, the difficulties a language learner may experience could influence his/her attitude towards the subject at issue, both hampering or facilitating the learning process. Since anxiety is totally subjective, its causes and consequences cannot be easily described or separated; in fact, the factors that may arouse anxiety are sometimes also aroused by it. It is the fluidity of foreign language anxiety that makes it necessary to deal with it by considering different viewpoints – which are at times conflicting – in an attempt to define it and its effects, so as to deal effectively with this kind of apprehension.

This section will first illustrate the concept of foreign language anxiety, and then describe some of the possible causes – both internal and external to the student – which may or may not be objectively and reasonably viewed by the learner (see for example Horwitz et al. 1986; Hashemi 2011; Sevinç, Dewaele 2018). After dealing with some of the numerous causes, the section will then draw the attention to the different consequences anxiety may have: indeed, if on the one hand it may hamper or even block the learning process, on the other hand it may facilitate students, by encouraging them to do their best (see for example Scovel 1978; MacIntyre, Gardner 1994; Krashen 1982; Terrel 1982; Foss, Reitzel 1988). The section will then describe some stratagems that can be used within the classroom both to make the learning activities less anxiety provoking, or to enable students to properly deal with this problem (see for example Ellis, Shintani 2014; Vande Berg 1993; Athimoolam 2013; Long 2007; Ellis 2004; Şimşek, Dörnyei 2017).

1.1.1 Looking for a definition

While a person may be generally anxious, and therefore be anxious during a language classroom as well, some individuals are affected by this unpleasant feeling just on occasion of the learning moment; that is why foreign language anxiety has been included in the “category of specific anxiety reactions” (Horwitz et al. 1986: 125). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope go on to claim that the learning of an L2 may pose a threat to the learner’s competence as a communicator, and therefore “lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic” (128). Mostly associated with the act of speaking, this kind of nervousness can be due both to inner factors of the student’s – such as self-perception – or to external elements – for example the social status of the interlocutor (Hashemi 2011: 1812-1813). As described in the following sections, there are several different elements that can lead the learner to feel anxious during the language classroom, and sometimes these factors trigger a vicious circle, up to the point that it may be hard to determine whether the anxiety is the cause or the effect of the student’s problems (Horwitz 2001: 118).

One of the personal characteristics that can influence the individual’s feelings during a foreign language classroom is communication apprehension (Horwitz et al. 1986: 127-130), described as “shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people”, which may emerge not only when one is required to speak but also when one is asked to listen to someone speaking the foreign language and understand what is being said – “It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language”. The latter feature of communication apprehension is often linked with some students’ belief that one should understand all the words of an utterance delivered in the foreign language to get the message; as a consequence, although it is normal (and human) to have comprehension difficulties during the first stages of a new language learning, when the learner fails to understand some words, s/he may become even more anxious because of the fear of missing what the interlocutor is saying.

A further step in the analysis of communication apprehension – and the consequent foreign language anxiety – consists in focusing on the self-perception of the anxious individual. Communication competence – which refers to the combination of skills enabling the individual to carry out successful and effective interactions (Bostrom

1984, in Foss, Reitzel 1988: 437-438) – and the above-mentioned communication apprehension were analysed by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984, in Foss, Reitzel 1988: 441-442) through what they called relational model of communication competence. The two authors argue that competence is the result of (self)impression, which lead to a particular (self)perception of the abilities that the communicator has, perception that may change on the basis of the situation; in a nutshell, Spitzberg and Cupach claim that competence is not objective, and that a person is a competent communicator when perceived as so – not only by the others but also by him/herself. Foss and Reitzel (1988: 439) use this model – created at first to explain native speakers’ reticence in communication – to analyse the role of self-perception in second language learning, since the student not only has to learn the new language, but also to expose his/her skills through communication. This kind of apprehension presupposes low self-esteem, which leads apprehensive students to perceive their performance as less successful than that of their peers. Moreover, while sometimes their evaluation corresponds to that of the teacher, in other cases their opinion is distorted, not objective, and may lead them to underestimate their actual capabilities (Foss and Reitzel 1988: 440).

While the apprehensive student can keep on deeming him/herself to be a non-competent communicator (in his/her native or in the foreign language) regardless of others’ positive judgements, external negative evaluations seem to have much more power on influencing one’s self-perception. According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986: 127-128), some individuals can be sensitive to the evaluation not only of the teachers, but also of their peers, fearing that they could be evaluated negatively on their performance during the language classroom. In this case, anxiety implies: first, the fear of making mistakes and being corrected – “I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make” (Horwitz et al. 1986: 130); second, the apprehension due to tests, when the anxious student is usually excessively concerned about his/her performance, and the fear of failure emerges. Furthermore, while written exams enable to avoid the threats which are conveyed by the act of speaking the foreign language, oral exams may stimulate not only test but also communication anxiety.

Stepping away from the classroom, language anxiety can also be analysed as a phenomenon influencing the life of many migrants³. Upon arriving in a new country, they may experience feelings of stress when interacting with the members of the majority community, who often have a higher knowledge of the language and the instruments to judge the newcomers' output. Indeed, migrants may feel vulnerable to criticism even when just heard by an expert speaker of the target language while speaking it. Moreover, when becoming part of a community which uses a different language, migrants may feel anxious not only towards the new language, but also towards that of their previous country: depending on which of the two languages s/he practices more and feels more self-confident with, the migrant may find it uncomfortable to speak both with the expert speaker of the target language, or with the members of his/her own minority group (Sevinç, Dewaele 2018: 162-163; Sevinç 2018: 733-734).

As already stated, anxiety being part of the affective sphere of human beings, its causes may change from individual to individual, and what has been described so far is just a slice of the possible situations that may cause apprehension during foreign language learning. Moreover, communication apprehension, distorted self-perception and the fear of others' evaluation not only can influence each other, but – as we will see in the following section – can also lead the students to different reactions, depending on their character and on how they react to anxiety-inducing situations.

1.1.2 Facilitating and debilitating anxiety

Who did not experience the fear – and sometimes even the terror – of being asked a difficult question at school, and of making a bad impression in front of the teacher and the whole class? And how many times has this feeling of apprehension led some students

³ The term “migrant” may refer to individuals who live different situations – one could think for example about the differences between an international student and a refugee – which imply different reactions to the necessity of learning a new language, and also different kinds of language anxiety. This aspect of foreign language anxiety will not be dealt with in depth in this chapter – since it would require the analysis of a huge amount of different case studies – but some examples of how different kinds of migrant might express foreign language anxiety will be provided in *Section 3.2*.

to increase their efforts to avoid awkward situations, and others to freeze and even hate a specific school subject? Indeed, foreign language anxiety, can have both positive and negative consequences on the student's learning experience, some of which will be described in the following sections.

Scovel (1978: 129-137) invites us to reflect upon the vastness of the affective sphere, the difficulty of defining and understanding anxiety, and on the consequent inconsistency of claiming that anxiety is the actual cause of and only lead to poor performances in foreign language learning. The author sustains his statements through Kleinmann's (1977) clarification of the difference between facilitating and debilitating anxiety. The former is positive in the sense that it motivates the student to overcome the learning obstacle and carry out the set tasks; learners who are moved by this kind of feeling seem to be more willing to risk making mistakes, for example by using structures that are peculiar to the foreign language and not to their own mother tongue – "Nervousness while using English helps me do better" (Scovel 1978: 133). Debilitating anxiety has the opposite effect: as investigated in the following sections, the anxious student who is not able to channel the apprehension towards a positive result may end up in an unsuccessful experience with the foreign language learning. Furthermore, the influence of anxiety on the students seems to depend not only on the individual's inner characteristics, but also on external factors. For example, anxiety appears to hamper the student's learning at the start, but to support his/her performance during the advanced phases of a particular learning activity (Beeman, Martin, Meyers 1972, in Scovel 1978: 136); moreover, the facilitating power of this feeling seems to be inversely proportional to the difficulty of the task.

According to the above-mentioned theory about the double power of foreign language anxiety, the ideal situation for a student would be to be worried enough to be spurred on to do his/her best, without reaching that apprehension that may block the learning process (Scovel 1978: 138). However, that is easier said than done: in fact, no matter how motivated they are to learn and practice the foreign language, some students cannot control nor overcome the debilitating anxiety, which makes them not only worried about the language class, but also unfocused and unproductive (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126). In the following sections these and other unfavourable responses to anxiety will be presented by taking cue from Tobias' model (1986, in MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 286),

which describes them on the basis of the stages of learning they influence, namely input, processing and output.

The first stage of language learning consists in receiving input, through which the learners have the chance to meet foreign language items – for example lexicon, structures, prosodic patterns, and so on – and successively to record them in their memory. If something interferes with this initial step, the following stages of language learning will also be affected (Tobias 1986, in MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 286). As described in this section, Tobias does not only warn about the role of anxiety as a possible obstacle at this first stage. The emotional block some students feel while approaching a foreign language has been pointed out by Krashen as a central factor in one of the hypotheses about second language acquisition: the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen 1982, 30-32). The well-known hypothesis claims that affective variables could prevent the input from “reach[ing] that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition” (Krashen 1982, 31), and therefore the teacher needs to lower this barrier – the affective filter – to enable the students to successfully exploit the input they receive. Terrell (1982: 123-125) also stresses the need to lower this barrier, since it could make the input incomprehensible to the student, and therefore impossible to acquire. Indeed, when listening to the foreign language, apprehensive students often complain about their poor understanding skills, claiming to have difficulties even in distinguishing between sounds, words and structures (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126). These difficulties and the “excessively negative expectations” that follow not only demotivate the learners, but also activate the affective filter once more, blocking subsequent input (Onwuegbuzie et al. 1999: 228-229) and triggering a vicious circle.

Moving on to the processing stage of learning, that is when the input is elaborated through cognitive processes, anxiety seems to affect those activities that are labelled as more difficult (Tobias 1986, in MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 286). The level of difficulty of a task seems to be directly proportional to the amount of memory that is required to complete it, and inversely proportional to how well it is organized: the more memory-requiring and the less-organized a task, the more time is required to complete it. For example, the apprehensive learner may have difficulties and be slower than his/her peers in calling to mind not only already-learned lexicon, but also grammar rules or structures (Horwitz et al. 1986: 128-130; MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 298). The

interference of anxiety in the cognitive processes, and in particular in holding items in the short term memory, can also be seen as a cause of the already-mentioned problem of understanding input, since the longer a sentence, the more is required of the student in terms of memory effort, as s/he needs to keep in mind all the items of an utterance up to its end to grasp the whole meaning (MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 296). Recognizing their difficulties and interpreting them as the result of insufficient preparation, some students tackle the problem by increasing the time they devote to study; however, this strategy is not always successful, and the anxious learners may get even more frustrated if their performances and grades do not improve, despite the increased efforts (Horwitz et al. 1986: 127; MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 297). The failure at this stage can be explained by the fact that anxious students often set themselves unattainable goals (Horwitz et al. 1986: 127), which prove impossible to complete, and lead the student to low self-esteem, apprehension or even fear, affective factors that may thwart the over-studying (Foss, Reitzel 1988: 443).

The last stage of learning consists in producing language on the basis of what has been acquired through the two previous steps (Tobias 1986, in MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 286). When the anxious learner is required to produce output speaking the foreign language, s/he can often be recognised, since s/he would probably freeze, blush or start getting nervous (Şimşek, Dörnyei 2017: 53). At this point of the process, anxiety seems to influence the communication strategies chosen by the learner: if s/he is anxious, s/he may not try to compose complex or personal utterances in the foreign language (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126), and will probably produce shorter texts than his/her peers (Daly 1977, in Horwitz et al. 1986: 126), even if the task is to describe themselves (MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 300). The poor performances of anxious students can also be associated with the excessive apprehension of producing perfect utterances. The incompleteness of a sentence, or of a translation, can be due to the learners' unwillingness to guess the meaning of a word, its pronunciation, or to attempt grammar structures, if they are not absolutely sure about their correctness (MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 297). Indeed, those students who may be classified as perfectionists – namely those who are more concerned about mistakes and/or about maintaining high learning standards, and, therefore, who have more doubts when producing output – often turn out to be those with higher level of foreign language anxiety (Dewaele 2017: 86-87).

The fear of making mistakes – which often overwhelms students during a test, leading them to give the wrong answer although they know the right one – could in turn be due to the fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126-128), described as “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Watson, Friend 1969, in Horwitz et al. 1986: 128). One can avoid the risk of making mistakes, and therefore of being negatively valued both by the teacher and his/her peers, not only by confining one’s utterances to the foreign language items one is sure about – as mentioned before – but also avoiding completely the evaluative situation, for example skipping classes to keep away from the self-consciousness aroused by being asked to speak, and also from the sensation of being less competent than the other peers, a typical feeling of the anxious student (Horwitz et al. 1986: 129-130; Şimşek, Dörnyei 2017: 62). Yet acts of avoidance can even mean deciding not to study or do homework, since even these private activities can cause anxiety (Horwitz et al. 1986: 127). One can easily see how dangerous these kinds of reactions may be: the students who prefers not to communicate in the foreign language because s/he does not judge him/herself able to do it, avoids not only negative, but also positive evaluation, which could help him/her in overcoming the fear of speaking due to low self-esteem. Moreover, avoiding studying and showing what s/he knows, s/he has little chance of improving or being corrected by the teacher (Foss, Reitzel 1988: 442).

As already mentioned, it is difficult to claim that affective factors influence language learning, since anxiety seems to be both the cause, and the consequence of poor performances in foreign language (Horwitz 2001: 118): for example, Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999: 229) conducted a study showing that students with higher “perceived scholastic competence”, better marks and higher self-esteem are less anxious than those with lower “perceived intellectual ability”, presenting a case in which anxiety appears to be the consequence more than the cause. On the other hand, students who seem to perform poorly because of anxiety at the early stages of learning, could see their apprehension reinforced by the following failures (MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 294), finding themselves trapped in a vicious circle where anxiety is both the cause and the consequence of poor results in language learning. This kind of situation should be avoided, since in this cases anxiety becomes debilitating and blocks the learning process. It is up to the teacher to understand the needs of the student, and if s/he should be helped

in overcoming his/her apprehension; if so, during the foreign language lessons the teacher may need to apply anxiety-lowering stratagems, some of which will be described in the following section of the chapter.

1.1.3 How to lower affective barriers

While some students can channel their anxiety into positive dedication, although sometimes needing more time than their peers to achieve the set learning goals, others cannot but excessively worry about the risk of failure and about possible consequent negative evaluation, a state of apprehension that makes them less focused on the task to complete, and therefore less efficient (Eyseck 1979, in MacIntyre, Gardner 1994: 285). In the latter case, lowering the level of anxiety could help the student, and the teacher has mainly two ways to do it (Horwitz et al. 1986: 131): first, s/he can try to make the learning activity less anxiety-provoking, for example, paying attention to how errors are corrected, involving the reticent students, creating smaller work groups – stratagems that will be presented in the following sections; second, the teacher can decide to act in the opposite direction, that is leading the students through a path to understand and cope with anxiety.

The correction of errors is an aspect of foreign language teaching that is as necessary as it is dangerous, since it may “damage learners’ receptivity to learning” (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 250). On the one hand, avoiding it may lead to the fossilization of incorrect structures, which would penalize the student’s competence in communicating by using the foreign language (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 29). On the other hand, the act of correcting may raise the affective filter (Terrell 1982: 128). Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the way in which s/he corrects the students (Hashemi 2011: 1812), and should create a relaxed, non-threatening environment within the classroom, so that even the anxious students will not feel damaged by the correction (Ur 1996, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 250). First, it could be useful to help the student in understanding that making mistakes is an unavoidable part of learning a new language, and that they are not all of the same nature: some of them, which have been called errors, are the result of “gaps in the learner’s knowledge”, that is when s/he lacks a word or a structure of the foreign language (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 17), and tries to compensate, for example, transferring a structure of

his/her L1 – which is a risky attempt, but not always unsuccessful (51). In other cases, the student may have the knowledge of the right rule/form, but may fail in producing it, for example when there is little time to plan the discourse (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 27). Second, according to Terrell (1982: 127-128), direct correction does not help the student in improving his/her skills, but only creates affective barriers; therefore, the teacher should suggest the correct form in a roundabout way instead of pointing at the student's mistake, for example by repeating what has been said as a question, but using the proper structures/words. Finally, some authors (Harmer 1983, Scrivener 2005, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 250) suggest that communicative and fluency activities should not be interrupted to correct students' mistakes, and that they should be noted down by the teacher and discussed at the end. Similarly, Long (2007: 76-77) underlines the importance of maintaining the natural fluency of the discourse, which would be interrupted by a direct correction: the author encourages the teacher to recast the learner's utterance correcting implicitly the erroneous items, a strategy that also gives new useful input to the learner. On the other hand, as suggested by Ellis (2004: 257), students should be encouraged to recognize their own errors and to make explicit comments on them: this process makes it possible both to avoid ambiguity – since clarifies which the erroneous part is – and to create links between the grammar knowledge of the students and their production skills; but, while on the one hand this strategy may encourage the act of noticing, on the other it may raise the affective filter, and therefore it may be unsuitable for anxious learners.

Restrained by the fear of negative evaluation, anxious students often prefer sheltering in their silence to taking part in classroom activities, which leads to that situation in which only the apparently brighter students actively participate and have the chance to improve their skills (Tsui 1996, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 198). In this case, the teacher, who has the power and the duty to influence the dynamics of the classroom, should involve the less-confident students, for example repeating the question using different words to make it clearer, giving the learners the time they need to think about it and formulate the answer, or giving them the chance to discuss it with the other students before answering (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 199). Sometimes the reticence in participating is due to the student's troubles in fully understanding the teacher's instructions about the tasks to be carried out; in this case the teacher can lower the anxiety aroused by the inability to comprehend the input, by using the L1 to make the task clearer. Moreover,

the student might feel less anxious, if s/he were invited to use his/her mother tongue when lacking the knowledge of the L2, instead of not speaking (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 235). Another strategy to avoid the raising of the affective filter is to choose carefully which kinds of activities to propose to involve apprehensive students, for example: comprehension-based tasks could make them feel safe, since they are not asked to express themselves, but can react to the input if they desire to do so (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 116). Moreover, this kind of activity would appear to develop not only comprehension but also speaking skills, and to improve motivation (Asher 1977, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 118). Having the chance to plan the discourse in advance also proves less anxiety-inducing than being asked to improvise (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126). Finally, involvement is ensured when the activities meet with the students' interests and goals, making them willing to communicate with their peers and the teacher (Terrell 1982: 124), so that they naturally focus on the necessity and desire of expressing feelings and opinions, instead of worrying about the correctness of their utterances (Steinberg, Horwitz 1986, in Horwitz 2001: 115).

It can be easier for the apprehensive student to take part actively in the activities if this happens first within a small group, and just later including the whole class. Working in a small group seems to be a useful device for several reasons: students are more inclined to ask for explanations – both their peers and the teacher – to use the foreign language and to give their opinions, since just a few people are listening. Furthermore, when the class is divided into groups, each of them can organize themselves differently to complete the task, both in terms of members' roles and of organization of time (Vande Berg 1993: 27, 29; Aubrey 2011, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 199). When students feel at ease within the group of learners the learning process is enhanced, first because that can help them in casting aside the shyness that may overshadow their actual capabilities (Athimoolam 2013: 35), and second because doubts, questions and observations can be expressed by the individual and solved through a dialectic discussion among all the students, or through the knowledge of the more experienced (Brown 1994: 7).

While the previous sections describe some stratagems through which the teacher can make the lesson less threatening, this last section aims to suggest how the student can be led to deal with and control his/her own anxiety. Foss and Reitzel (1988: 445-451) propose the “rational emotive therapy”: it consists in a number of activities aimed at helping the anxious learners to rationally reflect upon the apprehension s/he feels when

asked to speak in the foreign language. Indeed, according to these two authors, students' anxiety often has its foundation on irrational beliefs and non-objective thoughts, which obstruct learners' motivation. Therefore, the teacher should invite them to evaluate themselves objectively and to manifest their thoughts about the learning process. In order to do this, students should be encouraged to write journal entries about their own experience with the foreign language, their goals, fears, failures and victories; they should also be invited to express their thoughts about the learning process out loud in the classroom, an activity that can help the anxious students in understanding that their worries are often felt by the rest of the class. Finally, students may also need help in setting themselves realistic goals: the irrational thoughts of anxious learners often lead them to overestimate the amount of study they need to improve, or the knowledge of the language they should reach, exaggerated expectations that cause demotivation and arouse anxiety when the student does not fulfil his/her aim. Some students may decide to become "fighters" (Şimşek, Dörnyei 2017: 61) on their own, first becoming aware of their apprehension and then recognising that they can approach anxiety by reacting to it, instead of by surrendering.

To sum up, in this first section it has been argued that second language anxiety – defined as that feeling of apprehension that surfaces on the occasion of the learning moment – can be influenced by several affective factors, such as, communication apprehension, distorted self-perception, or fear of negative external evaluation. However, no matter how unpleasant this feeling can be, sometimes the learner becomes motivated and is spurred to do his/her best thanks to anxiety, which in this particular case is called "facilitating anxiety"; on the other hand, "debilitating anxiety" obstructs the learning process, and triggers a vicious circle where the anxious state is both the cause and the consequence of the second language student's poor results. Focusing on the latter kind of apprehension and on its dangerous implications, the concluding section of this chapter describes some strategies – for example, indirect error correction, less-confident students' involvement, small-group work or reflection on one's fears – which the teacher can apply to his/her lessons both to make them less anxiety-provoking, and to help the students in managing this multifaceted affective factor. The next section will take a step forward. As already mentioned, debilitating anxiety can damage the learning process since it may prevent the students from understanding input or producing output, but it could also foster

demotivation or induce them to avoid the learning experience. Therefore, we will see some authors' opinions on the role of interaction and motivation, which have often been described as necessary factors to have success in language learning. The thread running through these two first parts of the dissertation is that the learning experience gains from a low-anxiety environment, and the following sections focus on some of the ensuing advantages.

1.2 When anxiety gives way to interaction

In the previous section it has been mentioned that debilitating anxiety can negatively affect second language learning, because it may prevent the student both from understanding input and from producing output. Indeed, both these stages are important – and according to some both necessary – for the development of the learner’s interlanguage, and if some affective barriers obstruct it, the teacher should intervene. It may be useful to the following discussion to introduce in brief the concept of interlanguage: it has been described as a linguistic system that emerges in the learner’s mind as a result of the merging of his/her own native language and the target one; this ensemble of rules is fluid and constantly modified by the learning experience, but its development seems to stop at a certain point, that is why it is almost impossible to gain a native-speaker knowledge of a foreign language (Ellis 1997: 33-34).

The following section of the dissertation aims at collecting some authors’ viewpoints about the role not only of input and output in language learning, but also about the importance of interaction. The first part will deal with the characteristics that the ideal input should have to enable the student to use it for the improvement of his/her interlanguage: in particular, the facilitating power of teacher-talk and the importance of tailor-made input will be described (see for example Swain 1995; Krashen 1982; Pica 1991; Van Lier 1996; Fleming 1995; Schmidt 1990). Subsequently, input will be still the heart of the matter, but the second section aims to explore how it has been associated with the process of foreign language learning, that is how some authors have explained its role in the process of learning/acquisition (see for example Ellis, Shintani 2014; Lightbown, Spada 2006; Ellis 2002; Leow 2000). In the third section the focus will be shifted to the role played by output, which, unlike input, has been considered necessary in the learning process at issue only by some authors (Krashen 1982; Swain 1985, 1993, 1995). Finally, the circle will be closed by exploring the role of teacher-student but also student-student interaction and negotiation, which have been described as mutual exchanges that enable the learner to improve his/her linguistic and communicative competence (see for example Long 1983; Pica et al. 1989; Swain, Lapkin 2001). The point of this overview is to

understand why input, output and negotiation are considered key processes, and, therefore, why they should be facilitated during the foreign language lessons, for example, by lowering that kind of anxiety that could prevent the student from taking advantage from them.

1.2.1 Which kind of input?

The concept of input has already been briefly introduced in the previous section as the first step of the second language learning process. Indeed, when the learner reads or listens to new discourse in the target language, s/he may receive input that will influence his/her interlanguage – for example learning new words, or creating links with already-stored information, which can be corrected or replaced, if necessary (Pica 1991: 7). But not the whole amount of language which s/he is exposed to can be absorbed as input: to become employable input, the discourse at issue needs to be accessible, and the learner often needs the teacher's aid to deal with it (Van Lier 1996: 44; Krashen 1982: 63). Access to the input is influenced by several factors – for example, by the individual's feelings towards the language, as described in the previous chapter – and there are many different opinions on how the student is supposed to process the input – a question that will be discussed in the next section. But before dealing with that, it may be of some help to focus on the characteristics that the input should have in order to make it easier for the learner to elaborate it.

Although one can grab clues about what the interlocutor is going to say both from the context and the preliminary remarks (Clark, Clark 1977, in Swain 1995: 127), when the learner faces someone speaking the language s/he is studying, s/he will probably also be helped by the interlocutor, since that is what usually happens when expert speakers talk to non-experts people, enabling the latter to better understand the message (Long 1985, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 384). When that takes place within the classroom's wall, and the person who adapts his/her discourse on the basis of the interlocutor's needs is the teacher it is called the “teacher-talk”, which is in many contexts the main source of foreign language for the students (Nuan 1991, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 168). There are many ways in which the input can be made more accessible, for example: by adjusting morphology

and syntax on the basis of what the student already knows – such as using less marked structures or shorter sentences; by choosing to speak more loudly, more slowly and even articulating each sound when necessary; or by choosing words that are already part of the student’s vocabulary (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 181), avoiding slang or idioms (Hatch 1979, in Krashen 1982: 64). Furthermore, the teacher can also decide not to change his/her discourse, but to develop it by repeating relevant concepts, by adding synonyms for the obscure words, or by using descriptions and examples to make the initial discourse clearer (Pica 1991: 9).

The use of teacher-talk makes the message comprehensible without seeking the help of the student’s native language (Wong, Fillmore 1985, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 180), since a concept can be recast as much as it is required – there is no point in delivering discourse full of subordinate clauses to a learner who cannot even get where a word finishes and the following one starts (Van Lier 1996: 45). On the other hand, there is no need for the student to understand the whole input, which is particularly difficult during the early stages of foreign language learning, but the comprehension of part of it can be sufficient to develop his/her interlanguage (Van Lier 1996: 45). Moreover, oversimplified input may actually hinder the learning process, since, the message being completely clear, the student does not even need to focus on it – for example by analysing its form to get the meaning – and does not have the chance to apply strategies to fill the linguistic gaps, for example by using what s/he understands to infer the whole discourse (Ellis, Shintani 2014: 185).

Finally, the input should suit the students not only on the basis of their language level, but also as for their learning needs and interests. First, it may also be useful to give input through different kinds of channel. For example, Fleming (1995: 308-309) describes four different modes in which information can be presented to students, arguing that people may have preferences and better understand concepts when presented in a particular way: some prefer to listen to the teacher, sometimes not even needing to take notes; others need a written page to focalize information; another group of learners may prefer visual methods, such as maps, graphs and symbols; and a fourth group have the best learning experience when they can applicate the theory, using their senses, watching experiments, being active during the lesson. Second, the input should meet the students’ interests and goals, which would lead them to desire to know about the topic, so much so

as to forget about the difficulty of receiving it in the foreign language (Krashen 1982: 67). Third, when the input itself does not attract the student's attention, it is up to the teacher – again – to stimulate curiosity (Van Lier 1996: 48): s/he can do it, for example, by bringing in class objects, images, videos or any other extra-linguistic material that could be of some help (Krashen 1982: 65), by adding surprising elements to the learning moment, or focussing the students' attention on interesting aspects of the language through challenging task demands (Schmidt 1990: 143).

1.2.2 From comprehensible to comprehended input

Although many authors have explained the role of L2 input in foreign language learning by formulating several and conflicting theories, what appears clear is that input is mostly considered central for the students' success: without reading or listening to the discourse delivered in the second language, the student would not have the chance to receive the necessary material to produce, as a consequence, any kind of output. In order to have a general overview of the opinions on the role of input in foreign language learning, some of the theories about its role in the building of interlanguage will be briefly described, not only by analysing why the authors claimed for the necessity of input, but also by comparing the opinions about the role of consciousness in receiving it.

It seems quite logical to start with Krashen's hypothesis (1982) about the role of input, not to say that his theory is the definite one, but because by receiving not only praise but also criticism, it has stimulated discussion about this issue. First, it may be useful to recall that the author makes a distinction between acquiring a language and learning it: the former is an implicit, informal, subconscious process, similar to the natural way 'used' by children to absorb their mother tongue, that is without being aware of it; on the contrary, through the latter the individual not only comes to know consciously the language, but becomes also able to describe its rules, that is what usually happens during language classrooms (Krashen 1982: 10-11). Moving on to the actual input hypothesis, according to Krashen, acquisition – not learning – takes place as a consequence of understanding "language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence (*i+1*)" (Krashen 1982: 21), which happens thanks to the individual's ability

to use also the context and extra-linguistic elements to decode the message. Moreover, *i+1* is provided automatically when there is enough of comprehensible input, and the speaking fluency simply emerges when the acquirer is ready, only as a consequence of listening and reading (Krashen 1982: 22).

It is not just Krashen who linked directly acquisition and access to input: the frequency hypothesis (Hatch, Wagner-Gough 1976, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 175) claims that the amount both of grammar rules and lexicon that is acquired by the foreign language learner is in direct proportion to the frequency with which s/he receives them as input. Similarly, connectionism describes learning – both of first and second language – as a consequence of receiving abundant examples of the target language, which lead to one creating connections between the linguistic features that occur repeatedly together, but also between the context and the linguistic items that are used, and between new and previously learned rules or forms; the more some elements appear together, the more links between them will be created in the learner’s mind (Lightbown, Spada 2006: 41; Ellis 2002: 166-167).

Having said that input is indispensable to foreign language learning, this section will introduce other authors who agree with that point but focus on the role of consciousness in the input-receiving stage of learning. On the one hand, some (Krashen 1985, Seliger 1983, in Schmidt 1990; Carr, Curran 1994; Marcel 1983, Nissen, Bullemer, in Leow 2000: 559) uphold the incidental learning hypothesis, which states that even if the learner is not focused on the input and receive it without being aware of it, the acquisition of linguistic features takes place “seemingly without effort”, although there is not the intention to add them to memory (Hulstijn 2013: 1). Dealing with syntactic processes of input, some authors (Krashen 1981, Munsell, Carr 1981, in Carr, Curran 1994: 215) even claim that consciousness interferes with learning: according to them, the unconscious analysis of syntax is far better than the conscious one, which is not only slower but also less precise, and would only obstruct the actual learning. Similarly, Reber (1967, in Carr, Curran 1994: 216) maintain that the unconscious processing of a foreign language leads to the creation of “an abstract set of rules corresponding rather directly to the grammar”.

On the other hand, several authors claim that intentional learning – which implies being aware of and paying attention to the input with the aim of adding new linguistic

items or structures to memory (Hulstijn 2013: 1) – facilitates the learning process. The terms that have been used to describe learning – such as implicit-explicit, incidental-intentional, conscious-unconscious, aware-unaware – have taken several shades of meanings in literature (Hulstijn 2013: 2); concerning this brief overview about that topic, intentional learning will refer to the student’s active reflection on the input, and on his/her own knowledge of the language as a result of receiving it. For example, Gass (1988: 204-205) answers Krashen’s assertion about the need of comprehensibility of the input, objecting with the notion of comprehended input: her point of view implies an active control on the input by the learner, and a scale of comprehensibility – instead of Krashen’s clear-cut opposition between comprehensible and non-comprehensible input. One of the result of the process that Gass calls “integration” is the possible adjustment of the individual’s hypothesis about the foreign language’s mechanism, which takes place when the learner realizes that the input somehow differs from what s/he expected or from his/her interlanguage (Gass 1988: 207). Other authors (Færch, Kasper 1986, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 176; Schmidt, Frota 1986: 311-312) also underline the essential role of consciously recognizing a gap in one’s knowledge of the target language to make a comprehensible input useful for acquisition.

Schmidt (1990) can also be associated with this current of thought – although he does not deny the involvement of unconscious processes in foreign language learning, for example, when the learner is focused on one aspect of the input but record information also about unfocused items, such as noticing the spelling of a word when the task requires one to pay attention to semantics or syntax (Schmidt 1994: 17). Considering three successive levels of awareness – perceiving, which is not necessarily conscious; noticing, which involves paying attention to a particular item; and understanding, which is the result of reflecting and comprehending something that has been noticed (Schmidt 1990: 132) – Schmidt (1990: 139-141) argues in his hypothesis that noticing is the essential first step the learner needs to do to acquire a language feature, which means that not the whole comprehensible input becomes intake, but just what attracts the attention of the listener/reader. Indeed, reflecting on his own experience, the author recorded a direct proportion between the foreign structures and words he had used in his output and those he had noticed in previous input; however, as Schmidt underlines, noticing a feature does not automatically lead to the capability of using it correctly. It has also been shown that

incidental learning leads to good performances during receptive tests (Hulstijn 2013: 2), while awareness helps the student in reproducing the processed items (Leow 2000: 568). Finally, while at first a huge amount of attention seems to be necessary to master a new element of the foreign language, practice will lead the student to pay less and less attention to it, up to the point in which it will be employed automatically in his/her output (Ellis 2002, in Ellis, Shintani 2014: 179; Segalowitz 2003, in Lightbown, Spada 2006: 39). However, no matter how many different kinds of experiment have been conducted to answer this question, Leow (2000: 558-559) highlights the difficulty of gaining a definite answer, for example, because of the obstacle of knowing exactly whether the individual is aware or not during the tests.

1.2.3 The central role of output

So far it has been described how some authors have dealt with the role of input in second language learning, and in the last part of the previous section output has also been mentioned. Since it has been claimed that affective barriers should be lowered if they prevent students from producing output, this section aims to explain why that could be a problem, and why learners should be encouraged to speak and write in the target language.

Again, it seems useful to enter into the question about the role of output starting with Krashen's opinion: while the author firmly asserts the indispensability of comprehensible input to become a fluent second language speaker, he relegates output to the role of input-facilitator, even claiming that "it is theoretically possible to acquire a language without ever talking" (Krashen 1982: 60-61). He also clarifies the specific and different roles of learned and acquired information in the process that culminates in second language output (monitor hypothesis): while acquisition provides fluency and the material to begin the speech, learning only works as a monitor that comes in later and edits the form. The second language speaker, or writer, can use the monitor to different degrees: some over-check their utterances, others do it moderately, others prefer not to focus on the errors at all (Krashen 1982: 15-20). However, several authors assign greater usefulness to output in language learning: they claim that it is reductive to see output just

as a source of further input, or only as the result of a filtering process in which the individual applies what s/he has already learnt; in fact, they assert that output improves the individual's interlanguage in many other ways.

The output hypothesis (Swain 1985, 1993, 1995) is one of replies to Krashen's proposal that is most reported in literature. Swain points to three functions of output in second language learning: noticing, hypothesis testing, and the metalinguistic function (Swain 1995: 126). First, she claims that, by speaking or writing in the foreign language, learners have the chance to face their actual knowledge of the target language: since they are bound to compare what they intend to say and what they are able to say, through the producing of output they can notice and become aware of possible gaps in their linguistic knowledge. Consequently, the student can then act to fill the total or partial gap, both by modifying his/her interlanguage or adding new information to it (Swain 1995: 126, 129). Second, Swain draws attention to the hypothesis testing function of output: since the learner does not have the opportunity to come across or intake all the structures of the target language, s/he often needs to proceed by trial and error – for example by using generalization (McLaughlin 1978: 322) – and producing output can help him/her in understanding which hypotheses about both contents and form are correct, on the basis of the consequent feedback (Swain 1995: 126, 131). Indeed, linguistic errors could be the consequence of erroneous suppositions (Selinker 1972, Corder 1981, in Swain 1995: 126), and when the interlocutor makes the learner notice what is wrong in the output, sometimes only part of it is corrected, which is that part the learner is making hypothesis about (Swain 1995: 131). The third role of output recognized by Swain is its metalinguistic function: indeed, the learner can use the target language not only to communicate something, but also to reflect upon the linguistic items s//he comes off, to discuss the doubts they may arise, and also to process new linguistic knowledge (Swain 1995: 126, 132).

Moreover, output becomes relevant when input is not enough. The theory about the sufficiency of input as a trigger of fluency (Krashen 1982: 61), does not seem to work in practice – “I understand everything anyone says to me, and I can hear in my head how I should sound when I talk, but it never comes out that way” (Swain 1985: 248). In fact, students not only need to collect linguistic material, but also to practice what they have stored by listening to or reading input; the teacher should encourage them to exploit their

linguistic knowledge to express themselves in extended discourse, so that they have the chance to put their competence to the test, and to understand which gaps limit their communicative capability in the foreign language (Swain 1993: 162; Swain 1995: 127). Indeed, the comprehension of input does not require the understanding of all its part, and the reader/listener could even just focus on the semantic meaning, ignoring the elements that may not be necessary to get the message, for example the syntactic elements (Gary, Gary 1981, in Swain 1993: 159); that means that in receiving input the learner does not process all the linguistic elements, and s/he could even pretend to understand them while s/he actually does not (Hawkins 1985, in Swain 1995: 127). On the contrary, producing output forces the individual to focus both on the semantic and syntactic aspect of the target language, and to explicitly recognize his/her skills: the teacher should not only push the students to express themselves comprehensibly, but also to do it by using the correct form, the appropriate register, and accurate grammar structures (Swain 1993: 159-161; Swain 1985: 248).

1.2.4 Closing the circle with negotiation

In the previous section it has been argued that producing output enables the second language learner to receive feedback from the interlocutor, responses which can lead him/her to focus on what has been said or written, to become aware of his/her errors, and to correct possible gaps in the knowledge of the language – for example, by deciding to pay more attention to future input in an attempt to gain the missing linguistic elements (Swain 1993: 159). This stage of the learning process closes the circle, since output and input are no longer distinct, but merge, resulting in the interaction between learners and interlocutors. This last section draws the attention to this mutual exchange, and to how different authors have dealt with it as a part of the second language learning process.

When the acquirer produces output, s/he will probably receive an answer from the interlocutor which has been adjusted on the basis of his/her interlanguage; as has already been argued, through this kind of mutual negotiation, comprehension is facilitated (Krashen 1982: 61). The advantage of adjusting the discourse on the basis of the second language learner's output consists in enabling mutual comprehension, which is necessary

for the success of communication, and for keeping up a conversation: for example, the negotiation of meaning not only facilitates comprehension for the learner, but it also gives the expert interlocutor the chance to keep checking his/her own comprehension of the learner's discourse; indeed, the learner's interlanguage being different from the target language, misunderstanding lurks around every corner (Long 1983: 137). Moreover, when the lexical meaning has been negotiated and, therefore, understood by the learner, s/he is free to focus on the other aspects of the utterance, for example on grammar (Swain 1985: 248). Indeed, also according to ecological linguistics – which deals with language by considering it as the instrument that enables people to relate as the organisms of a system (Van Lier 2004: 4) – input becomes beneficial to the learner only when also “meaningful interaction” takes place, that is when the student is involved in active tasks that train both production and comprehension; from the repetition of this kind of experience, proficiency and accuracy should then emerge (Van Lier 2004: 141).

Starting from Swain's treatment of the contribution of output to the learner's effort to produce not only comprehensible but also correct and appropriate discourse in reply to the interlocutor's feedback, Pica et al. (1989: 64) focuses on the role of negotiation in language learning. Defined as “exchanges between learners and their interlocutors as they attempt to resolve communication breakdowns and to work toward mutual comprehension” (Pica et al. 1989: 65), negotiation is described as the stage of language learning in which the student has the chance to experiment creatively with the linguistic items, and to take a step forward in his/her knowledge of the language thanks to the corrections of the initial output (Pica 1991: 3). However, negotiation works if some requirements are fulfilled: first, both the interlocutors need to feel free to point out if there is something unclear that obstructs communication (Pica 1991: 2); second, the correction of the error should be explicit, so that the learner does not think that the form provided by the interlocutor is just an alternative to what has been previously said – for example, to check comprehension – but also to avoid the opposite situation, in which the learner may take the interlocutor's answer as a correction when it is not (Schmidt, Frota 1986: 294-296). Regarding the teacher's correction of the learners' discourse, Pica et. al (1989: 83-84) show that the learner is more likely to modify his/her initial output when the interlocutor explicitly asks for clarification, while when the correction is proposed by the

expert speaker, the student usually does not produce other output, but record the new input as a model.

Negotiation contributes to language learning not only when it takes place between the teacher and the learners, but also between students with the same or similar knowledge of the target language (Van Lier 2004: 157). Indeed, through collaboration with their peers, the learners can not only become aware of their linguistic limits when negotiating meaning with the other students, but also solve doubts about the language which are raised during the interaction through “dialogic exchanges” (Swain, Lapkin 2001: 99). The teacher can encourage this kind of experience by proposing tasks that require collaboration and negotiation of meaning to be completed – for example, the jigsaw activities, which imply that each student, or group, has only part of the needed information, and that they exchange what they know with the others (Pica et al 1993, in Swain, Lapkin 2001: 100). In their article Swain and Lapkin (2001: 110-111) describe how students can collaborate not only to negotiate meaning, but also to check their hypotheses about the linguistic structures, and to use their “joint linguistic resources” in the discussion to fill possible gaps. The advantages of small-group work and collaboration between peers have already been proposed in the previous chapter as useful strategies to lower debilitating affective barriers. Regarding negotiation, it has been argued (Long, Porter 1985, Varonis, Gass, 1985, in Swain 1993: 162) that when the activity requires the students to collaborate with each other, the result is a greater amount both of output and negotiation than in teacher-student interaction. Pica and Doughty (1985: 131-132) also maintain that group activities enable the students to have more chances to test their interlanguage than during teacher-fronted lessons, adding also that the former put to the test not only students’ linguistic skills but also their communicative competence, since they are asked to communicate with other non-expert speakers.

Recapitulating what has been explored in this section, both input, output and interaction often facilitate the improvement of language skills. Once input has been adapted to the student’s language level, to his/her interests and learning needs, it becomes comprehensible, and therefore usable for language acquisition. There are many different opinions about the following stages of the learning process: some claim that receiving copious and frequent input satisfies all the student’s needs, while others maintain that the learner also needs to notice, pay attention and reflect upon the language items s/he comes

across to understand and subsequently use them. The next step is producing output: while there is agreement in literature about the centrality of input in foreign language learning, only some authors have described output as important per se, claiming that it is useful not only to trigger input, but also to enable the learner to test, reflect upon and improve his/her linguistic knowledge. At this point there is no more clear-cut differentiation, since input and output merge in interaction: indeed, when the student says or writes something in the foreign language, s/he will probably receive feedback from the teacher or from the other students. During interaction negotiation of meaning takes place, which not only enables the learner to better understand the message, but also pushes him/her to better express him/herself. Therefore, since all these steps seem to improve interlanguage, the teacher should not allow anxiety to hinder the student: indeed, in an anxiety-free environment, affective barriers should not block the intake of input, and the student will feel free to test his/her language skills without the fear of making mistakes, but also to unveil his/her doubts and discuss them both with the teacher and peers. After focusing in this section on what anxiety may prevent, in the following one motivation will be brought to the reader's notice, since it can be employed both by the student and the teacher to avoid the disadvantages of anxiety.

1.3 Fostering motivation to eclipse anxiety

So far, it has been discussed that students' feelings towards what they are learning and the way they are doing it have a pivotal role in the learning process; however, although the scholars continue trying to measure objectively how the several affective factors influence language learning, it seems almost impossible to observe them separately, since anxiety, self-esteem, attitude, motivation and so on not only continually influence each other, but are also similar in many aspects (Lightbown, Spada 2006: 54-55). In the two previous sections attention has been drawn to the role played by foreign language anxiety in second language learning, and in particular to the emotional filter that this feeling of apprehension can raise between the student and the learning experience, which can prevent interaction and, therefore, language acquisition. Some strategies to lower this barrier have already been discussed, but this final section will focus on motivation. Indeed, motivation has been described not only as "what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action" (Ushioda 2008: 19), but also as the force that can spur the learner on towards the target language and community, no matter how worried s/he is about speaking, nor how inferior s/he feels towards target language speakers (Pierce 1995: 21).

Motivation will be examined from various points of view. First, after reporting some of the numerous definitions of motivation (Ushioda 1996; Gardner, ManIntyre 1993; Ames 1986), its relationship with achievement in second language learning will be analysed. In particular, the section aims at showing how in some cases motivation is considered the cause of success in language learning, while in others it is seen as the consequence. I will thus examine how some authors recognise their mutual influence (see for example Skehan 1989; Gardner, Lambert 1972; Lightbown, Spada 2006). Second, the focus will move to some factors that may influence motivation: namely, the role played by the way in which students explain their success (see for example Weiner 1984; Greene 1985; Ushioda 1996), and the deep reasons that may lead someone to study a second language, which would determine if s/he has an integrative or an instrumental attitude (see for example Gardner, Lambert 1972; Meisel 1980; Strong 1984). The third section

is slightly different from the previous, since it deals with the motivational factors that – within the classroom – can influence students from the outside, and with the necessity to include their needs, interests and identity in the second language lessons (see for example Dörnyei 1994; Chang 2011; Little 1989; Pierce 1995). Furthermore, this section proposes a tool – namely the European Language Portfolio (ELP) – which can be used within the classroom to help students in finding motivation by recording and reflecting upon their learning process (Little 2011; Dalziel et al. 2016; Schärer 2011; Han 2011). Finally, the third section of the chapter will deal with the role of culture in language learning as a motivational factor: first, it will be described how culture influence one’s customs, beliefs, and worldviews, and its mutual dependence on the language; second, the role of culture in language learning will be drawn to attention; third, after dealing with a teaching approach that aims at enabling students to understand and absorb the target culture, the section will describe the concept of the intercultural speaker, and why students could benefit from becoming mediators of different languages, cultures and identities (see for example Kramsch 1998a; Byram, Fleming 1998; Dörnyei, Csizér 1998).

1.3.1 Motivation and achievement: a virtuous cycle

Even just by leafing through the contents of many books and journals about foreign language learning, one can notice the central role that authors have ascribed to motivation. This concept has been defined in several ways: for example, motivation has generally been “conceptualized as an affective variable implicated in language learning achievement, that is defined in terms of feelings and attitudes” (Ushioda 1996: 6); or as the result of a student’s desire to achieve a result, the mighty effort s/he throws into it, and the satisfaction resulting from the achievement of the goal (Gardner 1985, in Gardner, MacIntyre 1993: 2). Others have explained it in terms of students’ actual and visible behaviour and activity but considering also their thoughts about the task and their performance itself (Ames 1986: 236); or again in terms of what spurs students to action (Ushioda 1996: 7, 12). However, rather than focusing on a precise definition of motivation, these sections will consider two contrasting viewpoints about its role in the process of language learning: indeed, some authors claim that motivation is the source,

while some others maintain that it is the consequence of achieving success in the acquisition process. The following sections will briefly describe not only these two points of view, but also the virtuous circle that may result from the combination of motivation and success.

In comparing first and second language acquisition, Corder (1967: 164) claims that while children are moved by a predisposition to learning their mother tongue, second language learners need to be driven by another kind of “force” – namely motivation – which can help them to transform input into second language acquisition. Many other authors have described motivation as a factor influencing the learner’s success in foreign language learning: for example, high motivation has been considered, along with low affective barriers, as a decisive element to approach the target language successfully (McLaughlin 1978: 313-314; Gardner 1985, in Skehan 1989: 58), and also as a factor that positively influences the learners’ attitude towards the target language and lead them to persevere in their studies (Bartley 1969: 7-8; Clement et al. 1978: 690, 692). Moreover, motivation has been thought to be not only central in the language learning process, but also independent from ability and aptitude for languages (Gardner, Lambert, 1972: 135), implying that if a student is characterized by low levels of these two factors, s/he can depend on motivation for success. This current of thought has been supported by some experiments, which showed, for example, that motivated students are more likely not only to volunteer in the classroom, but also to answer correctly and, therefore, to receive more positive feedback (Gliksman 1976, Naiman et al 1978, in Skehan 1989: 57); in some cases, the motivation of students is also reflected in their good grades (Gardner, Lambert 1972: 133), especially in case of oral communication tasks (Lightbown, Spada 2006: 55).

On the other hand, some assert that the reverse order is possible, as well, claiming that motivation is often the consequence of the learning success instead of its source: a student will be more or less motivated depending on the level of his/her success (Burstall 1975: 16-17; Strong 1984: 11-12; Brooks 1968: 207), and the positive results – which are unstable, unlike some motivational factors that will be described later – may be projected onto positive attitude towards not only the target language but also the target community (Hermann 1980: 248-249). Indeed, according to the resultative hypothesis, “the learners who do well experience reward, and are encouraged to try harder, those who do not do so well are discouraged by the lack of success” (Skehan 1989: 49). Motivation

as a consequence can be witnessed, for example, when communication takes place: when a foreign language learner succeeds in exchanging messages using the target language – which means both uttering and understanding them – his/her positive self-perception as a second language speaker is strengthened and this leads him/her to be more motivated in interacting through the target language (Ushioda 1996: 32).

However, as has already been asserted in dealing with anxiety, it is difficult to measure objectively subjective factors such as motivation and to demonstrate their cause-effect relationship with the students' levels – for example, while it has been shown that motivated learners have better results in communicative tasks, when assessment deals with grammar there is not a clear gap between motivated and unmotivated students (Lightbown, Spada 2006: 55-56). Moreover, it is difficult to understand exactly whether it is motivation that positively influences academic achievement and improvement in using the foreign language also outside the classroom, or whether students gain motivation from achieving good results; therefore, it would be advisable to claim that these factors continually influence each other (Ames 1986: 235; Lightbown, Spada 2006: 63). In a nutshell, describing motivation only as the ensemble of the elements encouraging students, or as the actual action they perform in their attempt to learn a language would be an over-simplification; motivation should not be confined to the role of cause or effect of success in language learning, since, on the contrary, the relationship between these two factors, language experiences and reinforcement is cyclical, dynamic and evolving (Gardner, MacIntyre 1993: 8-9; Ushioda 1996: 37-38).

1.3.2 What influences motivation?

After understanding that motivational factors are somehow involved in second language learning, in the following section the causes of (de)motivation will be brought under the spotlight. Indeed, although some claim that “the source of the motivating impetus is relatively unimportant provided that motivation is aroused” (Gardner 1985, in Van Lier 1996: 101), understanding what influences this affectional factor may help the second language learner – who could in this way examine his/her own experience – and the language teacher – who could both understand his/her students' feelings and help them

in case of demotivation. As all students have different previous experiences, and the contexts in which a second language is learned are uncountable, it would be impossible to describe all the elements that can affect motivation. Therefore, in the following section only some of these will be considered and discussed. Since motivation can be influenced both by the student's inner feelings, and by external variables (Skehan 1989: 50), the following investigation will explore: first, how (lack of) success actually influences the individual on the basis of his/her own interpretation of events; second, which kinds of reasons may lead him/her to study a second language.

As already mentioned, success and achievement in second language learning are stimulating factors for students, who may derive motivation from noticing that they are becoming increasingly able to use the target language. However, according to attribution theory, success does not influence all individuals in the same way, but leads them to different kinds of reactions depending on the causes they attribute to (un)successful events (Brown 1986, in Skehan 1989: 51-52). This behaviour is moved both by the individual's need to give an explanation to events – in particular when they are unexpected, unpleasant or unsatisfying – and by the instrumental function of understanding causes, that is avoiding future failures (Weiner 1984: 18-19). People may explain success as the result of an endless number of factors depending on their own character and previous experiences – that is, for example, depending on the amount of control the individual thinks s/he has on the causes, on their contingency or stability (Greene 1985: 66; Weiner 1984: 21-22) – but regarding second language learning, only some of these have repeatedly been taken into consideration and put under the spotlight: in particular, ability, amount of effort, the difficulty of the task and luck; these causes have then been divided into internal/external – ability, effort/difficulty, luck – and stable/unstable – ability, task difficulty/effort, luck (Ushioda 1996: 15; Skehan 1989: 51). As one can easily notice, the labels intersect as seen in Table 1:

	<i>INTERNAL</i>	<i>EXTERNAL</i>
<i>STABLE</i>	Ability	Task difficulty
<i>UNSTABLE</i>	Effort	Luck

Table 1 – Based on Skehan 1989: 51.

In the case at hand, this theory can be applied to second language learners, and to their interpretation of the results they achieve during the learning experience; indeed, the way in which one explains a successful event – experienced both by the individual at issue or by someone close to him/her – will influence his/her expectations of similar future situations (Weiner 1984: 23-24). In a nutshell, if positive outcomes are interpreted as the fruits of stable internal factors, namely one's ability, the individual will expect to have success also in future similar events. Moreover, the student will be encouraged to try again, if s/he explains failures as the result of unstable factors, such as little effort or bad luck (Ushioda 1996: 15-16). On the other hand, when poor performances are associated with stable causes the individual is unlikely to be confident in future positive outcomes and, as a consequence, will feel less motivated to persist (Brown 1986, in Skehan 1989: 52). To sum up, the ideal situation that would lead to constant motivation is that in which effort and luck are seen as the factors influencing the performance most, since one can redouble one's effort or hope to have better luck in future. However, the human mind seems to be inclined to attach more importance to stable factors – ability, aptitude, task difficulty – both in case of success and failure (Greene 1985: 75; Weiner 1984: 27).

However, before – and in the process of – achieving good results in language learning, students' motivation is influenced also by their own reasons for acquiring the target language. Gardner and Lambert (1972: 12-15), in exploring why some people turn out to be more suitable for second language learning, draw a distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation. The former refers to the individual's desire to obtain some advantages from mastering the target language, which may include the opportunity of having access to a wider job offer or to useful materials in the foreign language, but also of acquiring social prestige and economic advantages, or even the chance – or need – of exploiting the community speaking that language. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991, in Gardner, MacIntyre 1993: 3) performed some experiments showing that people with high instrumental motivation could learn vocabulary items faster. These motives, which have been described as self-oriented, are opposed to those that have been grouped under the label of an integrative outlook: indeed, some people decide to study a foreign language not to gain profit from it, but to come closer to the respective community and culture, moved, for example, by the curiosity about their present and past. In the latter case, the student is motivated by the desire to associate with, or even join, the target

ethnolinguistic group and its both linguistic and behavioural habits, a positive attitude that seems to ensure long-term motivation (Gardner, Lambert 1972: 12, 14). Since they approach the subject spontaneously, those who are urged to study it for its own sake are more motivated because the reward lies in the learning experience itself, not in some external recompense that they may or may not receive. Moreover, when motivation comes from within, the learning process seems to have qualitatively better results (Ushioda 2008: 21).

It may also be interesting to mention Meisel's proposal (1980: 35-36) of linking the student's attitude towards the target community to his/her actual linguistic production. The author compares segregative orientation to integrative orientation: while the former describes the individual who desires to keep a distance from the target ethnolinguistic group, the latter characterizes the opposite attitude – Gardner and Lambert (1972: 15) even speak about “resentment” in describing what the members of a minority group may feel towards the target community when forced to learn their language for necessity. Meisel (1980: 35-36) claims that the student who does not feel the desire to come closer to the target community is more inclined to simplify his/her discourse in the target language, and to reflect the linguistic structures of his/her mother tongue; on the contrary, the integrative-oriented learners are willing to risk by testing their hypotheses about the target language grammar, and to bring their own linguistic system into play, which is, according to the author, far more advantageous to second language learning. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to claim that only one of the two above-mentioned kinds of attitudes influences a learner, and also to maintain that they are totally distinct; in fact, not only can the same individual be moved both by integrative and instrumental motivation, but also the motivational factors – which have been described as opposing – can mutually influence and even merge (Ushioda 1996: 42). Moreover, some even claim that the negative attitude towards the target community could actually be the consequence of poor results in the process of language learning instead of its cause (Hermann 1980: 253), and that integrative orientation does not always lead to more productive language learning, but, instead, that the desire to join the target community is the consequence of high proficiency (Strong 1984: 11).

1.3.3 Into the classroom

So far, this third section of the chapter has dealt with what Dörnyei (1994: 279) calls the “language level” of his L2 motivational construct, namely the ensemble of motivational factors strictly related to the usefulness and appeal of the target language and culture from the learner’s point of view. While the “learner level” (Dörnyei 1994: 279) – which includes the affective factors that may influence the student’s motivation – has already been discussed, this section will deal with what the author labels as the “learning situation level” (Dörnyei 1994: 280), which groups those elements regarding both the course, the teacher and the group of learners that may foster or lower the motivation of the student. Indeed, the learner’s attitude towards the target language, and therefore the motivation to study it, is often influenced by the experience within the classroom, which includes the attitude toward the activities, the textbook, but also towards the teacher, who can, moreover, influence the student’s attitude towards the target language speakers (Gardner, MacIntyre 1993: 2; Skehan 1989: 49).

One of the aspects the teacher should not underestimate is boredom (Brown 1994: 6). So far it has been pointed out that sometimes students do not interact using the foreign language because of emotional blocks, but in other cases the reason is that they do not think to have something meaningful to say, or that they are not involved in the activity. During some language lessons students may sit listening to the teacher and answering just when asked, feeling that that situation is not real and therefore they do not believe it necessary to speak (Chang 2011: 7). Keeping the students involved by including their personal interests in the lessons is a strategy to avoid passivity and demotivation, but also a necessary move when the learners lack instrumental motivation (Little 1989: 25). Other techniques that can be used for this purpose are: announcing in advance the how the lesson will develop, so that the students do not feel lost; varying materials and activities, since routine could be boring, despite being reassuring; alternating individual and group tasks (Lightbown, Spada 2006: 65).

Some authors (Ushioda 1996: 25-26; Hermann 1980: 250) also underline also the benefit a student can derive from completing short-term goals: they enable him/her to experience immediate success, and to feel in control of his/her learning process. Indeed, while the learner who is motivated by a long-term goal can find in it the boost to complete

the intermediate steps of the learning process (Raynor 1978, in Ushioda 1996: 16), the student whose long-term motivation is weaker needs to be spurred on through his/her learning path by satisfying experiences (Ushioda 1996: 19). For example, any kind of examination not only gives the teacher a picture of students' progress, but also represents a short-term goal for the learners, who may gain encouragement and gratification from positive results, which lead them to apply themselves still further (Bandura, Schunk 1981, in Dörnyei 1994: 27). That is why teachers should provide students with goals that are challenging but suited to their levels of knowledge, and also give them detailed feedback, which can be used to reflect upon their learning path (Oxford, Shearin 1994, in Dörnyei 1994: 27).

On the other hand, in dealing with the role of motivation in classroom, Van Lier (1996: 113-116) notices through his observations that intrinsic motivational factors – such as the desire of exploring a new language and culture “for its own self-sustaining pleasurable rewards of enjoyment, interest, challenge, or skill and knowledge development” (Ushioda 2008: 21) – are often weaker than extrinsic motivation – namely, external rewards – which can prevail over personal interest and even eclipse them. However, what seems to make a motivational factor powerful is its source: indeed, what counts is not whether motivation is intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental or integrative, but whether it comes from within the student or is imposed by some external sources, such as society, the curriculum, teachers or parents (Deci, Ryan 1985, in Dörnyei 1994: 276; Ushioda 2008: 22). Therefore, learners' motivational factors should always be the pivot of classroom activities, in order to promote “learner-regulated motivation rather than teacher-regulated motivation” (Ushioda 2008: 27), since the latter encourages students' involvement only in short-term goals (Deci, Flaste 1996, in Ushioda 2008: 22).

Although it sounds like a utilitarian view of learning, it would be wrong to deny the power of external rewards, which may or not be material: indeed, while some students are motivated by the goal of broadening their knowledge for their own gratification (Dörnyei 1994: 277), others desire to show their abilities and to be better than their peers, thus deriving their motivation from the others' poor performances (Nicholls 1981, Clinkenbeard 1983, in Ames 1986: 236, 245). However, competition within the classroom does not seem to be a positive incentive for students: in fact, Burstall (1975: 12-13) shows that cooperation – which has been seen to lower competitiveness in small

classes – not only leads to better results in the students’ learning process, but also enables the individual to achieve success without needing to surpass his/her peers. To avoid competitiveness, students’ attention could be driven from competition to improvement, for example, by evaluating not only results but also efforts, or by helping the learner to focus on his/her own goals, to determine their feasibility, and to work to realize them (Covington 1984, deCharms 1984, in Ames 1986: 248). In fact, cooperation among learners should be encouraged: group activities enable students to place competition aside and to combine efforts for a common goal, which leads them to share the responsibility for the result. This grants them motivation both as a group and as individuals, because the level of the dedication that each of them employs influences the success of the group (Ushioda 2008: 28).

A final, but essential, factor that keeps high the motivation of students within the classroom is the sensation that what they are studying is somehow linked with the real external world. In working with immigrants who had just arrived in Canada, Pierce (1995) deduced that people invest in second language learning because they expect to have access to (non)material resources that would otherwise be inaccessible. Moreover, they expect the obtained result to be proportional to the investment. This concept, which may recall that of instrumental motivation, is of relevance because it considers the learner as an individual whose needs and personality keep changing, since different situations ask him/her to adapt in different ways. In this view, neither the learner nor what motivates him/her are fixed, and the act of language is seen as a constant reorganization of the speaker’s social role (Pierce 1995: 17-20). According to Pierce, the relations of power influence motivation, and when the social difference between the learner and the target language speaker scares the former, it is investment that comes into play. In this view, the student should be encouraged by the teacher to “claim the right to speak outside the classroom” (Pierce 1995: 26): in practical terms, students should be encouraged to actively interact with the real situations in which language is used as an instrument, and to observe how it works and influences social contexts. The teacher could, for example, ask them to take notes about the relations of power that language creates, or about the difficulties or misunderstandings they happen to experience in practicing the language with target language speakers; this approach may lead the learner to see the previously-fearful act of speaking the target language as an occasion to notice and learn, and,

therefore, s/he could feel more motivated to look for occasions to practice (Pierce 1995: 26-28).

A tool that can be used within – and outside – the classroom to answer to some of the above-mentioned questions is the European Language Portfolio (ELP). It is made up of three parts, which are characterized by different aims: the Language Passport, which includes the learner's self-assessment, and a record of his/her experiences both of using the foreign language and of the target culture; examples of how s/he has dealt with the language are collected in the Dossier, the second part of the ELP; and finally, the Language Biography, where learners are encouraged to reflect upon the stages they have reached, in term of learning and using the language (Little 2011: 15). The ELP can help learners to find motivation and to keep on studying a foreign language in several ways. First, it bridges the classroom and real-life, both by: including not only what a student learns within the classroom but also “informal” linguistic, and non-linguistic experiences, according to the principle “all learning counts” (Schärer 2011: 144, 153); providing the chance to objectively compare one's skills with the CEFR's proficiency levels, which are internationally valid (Little 2011: 15); encouraging the students to include within the dossier activities that are in line with their own interests, learning needs and rhythms (Schärer 2011: 144, 153). Second, the ELP enables the learner to see learning in a lifelong prospective, but, at the same time, guides him/her through short-term tasks: as already mentioned, students may need to see the in-between results of their own efforts to keep on being motivated, and by recording short-term successes through the ELP they can both feel rewarded for their efforts, and realize that these kinds of tasks are part of a lifelong learning path (Schärer 2011: 150,153). Moreover, the CEFR – which the ELP mediates to learners – can be exploited by students to realize which language level and skills a formal course aims at, and, keeping in mind the final goal, they are asked to use the ELP to set the intermediate steps (Dalziel et al. 2016: 398). This latter consideration leads to a third advantage of introducing the ELP, that is to encourage learning autonomy and metacognition, through the experiences of self-assessment, of planning one's own learning path, and of reflecting upon one's achievements (Schärer 2011: 144; Dalziel 2011: 183). In compiling the Language Passport and the Dossier the student faces self-assessment, since s/he is not only asked to value his/her own skills, but also to decide which learning outcomes better represent them (Dalziel 2011: 181). One of the practical

applications of the ELP within the classroom is the learner log or diary, where students regularly comment on learning activities, both by reporting them, assessing their own achievement with regards to the tasks at issue, and reflecting upon which should be the following steps in their own learning (Dalziel et al. 2016: 398-399). It may be difficult for students to become accustomed to this kind of active reflection, but some simple questions – such as, “What have I been learning?”, “How well have I learnt this?”, “What can I do to improve?” – may guide them in learning how to track and plan their own growth (Han 2011: 198). Group work may also help students in approaching these tasks more easily, since they can discuss their language skills and future goals with their peers, becoming aware of their actual level and of the reasonableness of their target (Dalziel 2011: 188). A final important aspect of the ELP is that learners are enabled to compare their plans with their actual achievement, so as to understand whether the learning path they had chosen worked or not, giving them a view of learning which is not limited to the single task or exam (Han 2011: 201, 203).

1.3.4 From language learner to intercultural speaker

One of the ways of defining culture is to set it up against nature: while the former refers to “what has been grown and groomed”, the latter is “what is born and grows organically” (Kramersch 1998a: 4). This means that culture includes, for example, the traditions linked with holidays, weddings or birthdays, the concepts of family, private property, time, education, authority, or gender role division (Brooks 1968: 211, 213); but also, the language, literature, music and visual art that characterize a group of people. Yet culture is also an ensemble of “patterns of behaviour and interaction”, which lead the members of a community to expect other members to behave respecting the same norms (Jin, Cortazzi 1998: 98). For example, when receiving a present, a person knows how to behave, and expects others to behave in the same way in that particular context. However, these kinds of norms – which one may consider natural and obvious – are the result of growing within one particular culture (Kramersch 1998a: 26). Indeed, culture can be described as a filter, through which the individual approaches reality and reacts to it, as a

stable screen that stands in front of one's eyes and obliges one to see not only the outside world, but also oneself through it (Brown 1987: 123).

The language of a community is closely linked with its culture both because it is a trait of its identity, and because it is the instrument through which relationships are built (Dörnyei 1994: 274). Indeed, culture is not only what explains the denotative meanings of language, and the several norms to use it depending on the context (Kramersch 1998a: 5-6), but also what makes language a tool to construct and keep one's social role – for example, through the use of a particular register or tone during a conversation (Kramersch 1998a: 32-35). Moreover, sharing the same language leads individuals to recognise themselves as part of a particular group, since they share, for example, the knowledge of the numerous meanings that hide behind the first connotation of words and expressions (Byram, Fleming 1998: 2); this is part of what distinguishes the members of a community from the “outsiders”, who may have not only a different language, but also a different system of values and beliefs (Kramersch 1998a: 6-8). This is what “language reflects but also constitutes culture” (Jin, Cortazzi 1998: 100) means, since culture comes to the surface through words and at the same time is negotiated through interaction.

Being part of a particular sociocultural group, as already mentioned, leads the individual to see the world through a filter, which sometimes also determines whether the individual will have a positive or negative attitude towards the target country, community, culture and – as a consequence – language (Kramersch 1998a: 67). This could be a double-edged weapon, since while a positive attitude arouses curiosity and interest, a negative attitude leads the learner to demotivation and rejection (Brown 1987: 126-127; Gardner 1985, in Dörnyei, Csizér 1998: 218). The latter constitutes a problem especially when the individual needs to adapt to the target community – for example, after moving to the new country – but s/he cannot avoid judging it through the above-mentioned filter, which could lead to misunderstandings, disorientation and other unpleasant experiences (Brown 1987: 128-129). This latter consideration leads to the core of this section, that is to understand how bringing culture to the language classroom can foster the learner's motivation.

There are many other motivational factors besides what has been described so far, such as the encouragement of parents, the learner's desire to identify with his/her language teachers (Gardner, Lambert 1972: 133), his/her interest for the target language,

its sounds, or its country (Ushioda 1996: 34). However, one of the most powerful elements that can arouse motivation in the second language learner is the desire to interact with – or even join – the target community and culture (Gardner, Lambert 1972: 12, 14). Furthermore, since interaction with the target-language speakers and involvement in the target community seem to be of great help to the foreign language learner (Ushioda 2008: 25-26), possible cultural impediments should be overcome, or at least understood, in order to foster the dialogue between different cultures. Indeed, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998: 215-218), in analysing which are the most useful strategies that teachers can employ to motivate language learners, underline the importance of providing them not only with a relaxed and stimulating environment, proper models of behaviour, and appropriate and interesting tasks, but also with the instruments to become more self-confident, autonomous and, finally, to familiarize themselves with the community speaking the target language and with its culture.

What has been described as culture is effortlessly absorbed by the members of the community who share it, while the foreign language learner needs to approach it from outside, often needing help to understand and absorb it (Jaramillo 1973: 52; McLeod 1976: 212). Some authors (Jaramillo 1973; McLeod 1976) claim that, within the classroom, the teacher should encourage the comparison between the native and the target communities' customs – which students may notice both in real life but also in films or books (Jaramillo 1973: 54) – and make the students feel like asking questions about whatever they find puzzling or strange, even about social taboos, since the classroom may be the only safe place where this kind of doubts can be solved (McLeod 1976: 212-213). According to Jaramillo (1973: 51) the teacher him/herself has to be receptive to and interested in understanding students' culture, so that s/he can plan lessons avoiding cultural conflicts; moreover, s/he should encourage the learners to observe the cultural aspects of the target community, to report and discuss them, by asking them questions about the differences about what they see and the customs of their own culture (Jaramillo 1973: 53). Looking closely at the new culture and at its oddities is not only a way to demolish stereotypes and to stimulate a positive attitude within the student, but also a strategy to deliver involving lessons: for example, when asked to compare their own culture with the customs of the target one, the students can concentrate their efforts on editing correctly the discourse, whether the content has already been stored in their mind

by being in contact with the two communities (Rothmell 1971, in McLeod 1976: 214). Moreover, the explicit study of culture may motivate and encourage learner because it often discloses hidden meanings of words and expressions in the target language, which not only arouse curiosity but also lead the students to better know and master it (Brooks 1968: 206).

However, while the above-mentioned approach aims at introducing the target culture to the second language learner as something to understand and learn, since the 1990s second language teachers have opted for intercultural learning, which implies cultural awareness both of the target and of one's own culture (Jin, Cortazzi 1998: 98; Byram, Fleming 1998: 4). This means that the goal of learning shifted from understanding and assimilating the target language speaker's language and culture, to becoming an intercultural speaker (Kramsch 1998b: 27), which implies that the student would deal both with the target culture and his/her own (Jin, Cortazzi 1998: 99). Indeed, "translingual and transcultural competence" enables the learner not only to move among several languages and cultures by understanding worldviews that differ from his/her own, but also to reflect upon his/her own culture and on the resulting structures from a different point of view (MLA 2007, in Byram, Kramsch 2008: 20). In contrast with the previous approaches, intercultural learning takes into consideration not only the culture of target language speakers, but also that of the learners, who are encouraged to appropriate a foreign culture "by adopting and adapting it to their own need and interests" (Kramsch 1998a: 81). In dealing with the differences between two cultures – not only the "native" and the target culture, but also that of students and that of the teacher – Jin (1992, in Jin, Cortazzi 1998: 114-115) proposes the "cultural synergy model" as the key to successfully cope with differences: it implies "mutual congruence", namely interest and willingness to explore and understand the other culture from both sides, but also "identity maintenance", since the model encourages the idea that the individual can approach, understand and even behave according to another culture without losing his/her own cultural identity – which means that none of the culture at issue prevails over the other (Jin, Cortazzi 1998: 116-117). Finally, besides encouraging mutual dialogue between different cultures and societies, "intercultural communication" takes into account also the fact that the individual wears different social identities depending on the context and on the interlocutors' characteristics (Byram, Fleming 1998: 6-7). Therefore, it is important

for the intercultural speaker to understand which of the interlocutor's identities comes into play in a particular moment, and which beliefs and practices it brings within the communication, so that s/he will be ready to deal with possible cultural differences (Byram, Fleming 1998: 8).

There are many strategies through which language teachers can introduce the importance of cultural awareness within the classroom to help students to become intercultural speakers. For example, it may be useful to introduce authentic materials belonging to the sociocultural environment where the target language is spoken, such as films, music and texts, which may genuinely interest the students and lead them to intervene actively during the lesson (Dörnyei 1994: 281; Fenner 2001, in Byram, Feng 2004: 160). One can also promote meetings with members of the target community, with whom the students could discuss about differences and similarities between the cultures by using the target language as medium (Dörnyei 1994: 281; Kramersch 1998b: 27). Contact with people embodying a different culture, with their stories and perspectives, trains language learners to appreciate both what they have in common and what distinguishes them, and gives them the chance to discuss about customs and beliefs (DES 1990, in Byram, Fleming 1998: 4-5). Byram and Feng (2004: 157) stand for an active approach, and propose that students should be encouraged to practice their ethnographic skills, such as observing and interviewing others' behaviour: coming into contact with members of the target language community and exploring their lives can benefit not only the learning process, but also the student's positive attitude towards the target culture (Nocon 1996, in Byram, Feng 2004: 157).

Such contact can occur in different ways, for example by using social networks or other platforms on the Internet, or by taking part in tandem, school trips and exchange programs (Byram, Feng 2004: 152-153). However, before students leave their own country to spend a period of time living in the target language community, the teacher should deal with the problem of stereotypes, in order to enable students to understand their causes and to avoid the cultural shock when arriving in the new country (Coleman 1998: 59). Indeed, Coleman (1998: 59) reports on a survey conducted in 1993 and 1994 showing that living within the target community often strengthens the visitor's stereotypes. The teacher could help students, for example, by explaining: that the idea one has of another country may be the result of a particular use of linguistic categories,

which could hide cultural values and beliefs behind the first connotation. It can also be pointed out that stereotypes may be the result of what is considered belonging to a particular culture, for example brands, events, but even idiomatic expressions, which influence the view of a particular community (Byram, Kramersch 2008: 31-32).

Stereotypes often create a contrast between the “insiders” and “outsiders” of a community, and to avoid this kind of comparison, the teacher should encourage a deeper analysis both of cultural elements and of stereotypes themselves. It may be useful for language learners to understand that different contexts lead to different behavioural models, which may seem inappropriate if superficially compared with what is considered familiar and proper in the one’s culture (Barro et al. 1998: 77-81). Indeed, “the taken-for-granted nature” of one’s culture is something that language learner should challenge (Byram, Fleming 1998: 6). For example, in order to help the student in understanding that his/her view on a particular topic is influenced by his/her own previous experiences and culture, Kramersch (1996, in Kramersch 1998b: 28) asked the students to write a brief summary of a story that had been read before, and then compared their texts, showing how different they were although the initial story was the same. In addition, through the comparison of historical images of propaganda, Byram (Byram, Kramersch 2008: 28-30) lead some students to understand that the perspective on historical events given by some texts was not impartial, and that the students’ view was influence by sociocultural circumstances. Byram’s aim was to enable students to understand how language can be used to influence culture, and that often it is difficult to recognize that from within it. Therefore, besides learning how to approach different cultures’ values, students need to practise observing critically also their own culture’s features (Byram, Kramersch 2008: 31).

To sum up, becoming an intercultural speaker does not mean putting aside one’s culture when approaching a foreign language in order to embrace the target language culture, but one needs to “accept that our horizons might be displaced as we attempt to understand the other” (Kramersch 1998a: 83). This kind of approach may be difficult to adopt not only for language learners, but also for language teachers. Indeed, it is up to the teacher to lead the students through the exploration both of the target and their own culture, which means, for example, to mediate between different cultures of learning and ideas about how lessons should be (Byram, Kramersch 2008: 23; Jin, Cortazzi 1998: 98). Kramersch (1993: 256-257) describes the task of the language teacher as a difficult one,

since s/he is required not only to convey the target language and culture to students, but also to help them in exploring their own “third place” – described by the author as a space that “grows in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to” (Kramsch 1993: 236), and characterized by the “third culture”, which is composed, for example, by the stories of those who experienced a form of conversion in meeting, studying or living within a different culture (Kramsch 1993: 234-235). Moreover, the teacher need to play the role of the ethnographer, historian, sociologist, to develop sensibility towards many different cultural issues, and to be informed about them, so as to lead students to do the same (Byram, Feng 2004: 156; Byram, Kramsch 2008: 21, 33).

In conclusion, despite the difficulty of univocally defining motivation, it seems clear that most authors recognize that it plays a crucial role in second language learning: some of them describe it as the result of students’ achievement, while others maintain that it is motivation that determines success in second language learning, and others underline the mutual influence between the two. Since motivation seems to affect the learning process, both internal and external motivational factors have been analysed in this section, underling the central role that language lessons and teachers play in helping students in finding and maintaining motivation. In particular, motivation has been discussed in depth because it may help the anxious student, who can find in it the force to put his/her worries and apprehension aside, allowing room for curiosity and interest. The incitement of motivation is then – along with the other strategies described in the first section of the chapter – one of the possible solutions to the problem of debilitating anxiety. In the following chapter another possible answer to the question will be described, that is the introduction of Process Drama in the second language classroom. Therefore, the following sections will first describe these kinds of activities and, second, explain how they can be used to face some of the obstacles to language learning that have been discussed so far.

Chapter two

Drama and foreign language anxiety

When a high level of foreign language anxiety and low motivation combine within the same student, his/her learning path may be hampered or even blocked. As described in the previous chapter, this unpleasant situation can be avoided – or at least restrained – through some strategies: for example, the teacher should correct learners' errors in an indirect and implicit way, and give them instructions clearly by repeating them if necessary; s/he should also plan lessons on the basis of students' interests, and needs, so that they perceive what they do within the classroom as meaningful for their outside life; then, students usually feel less anxious when asked to work in small groups, and gain motivation when they realize they can actually complete tasks by using the foreign language. As will be described throughout this chapter, there are some drama-based activities – inclusive of Process Drama – that can be used to deal with the above-mentioned necessities of students. Indeed, this kind of activity may prove to be useful not only to give students the chance to practice the foreign language and become more self-confident in speaking it, but also to stimulate students' self-esteem, motivation, spontaneity, and willingness to take risks (Stern 1980: 77-78). The final aim of this chapter is to provide examples of activities and evidence given by Process Drama practitioners to show how this approach can actually benefit students who suffer from foreign language anxiety.

The first section will introduce Process Drama by briefly describing how it has been used not only within the language classroom, but also in many other spheres of education, since this approach enables the teacher to use many different activities that can adapt the lesson to students' different needs, interests, and competences. *Section 2.1* will then provide an explanation of the label "Process Drama": first, it will be described which parts of the theatrical activity – and in particular of what happens during the preparatory phase of a play – is brought into the classroom; second, the section will analyse the difference between process- and result- oriented drama-based activities. In introducing this teaching/learning method, it is also important to underline that teachers and students

are asked to leave behind their traditional roles, and to take on the challenge to continually negotiate authority: indeed, students are given the chance to be more active and autonomous in their learning, which may happen only if teachers agree to step a little back and to give up the control over lessons, so that students can contribute to them with their ideas and skills. Finally, the attention will be drawn to the second language classroom. It will be described how drama-based activities can be used to meet many student needs – such as authenticity of the tasks, actual and meaningful use of language, and display of topics through different channels – some of which have been underlined by the Council of Europe and reported in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001).

After this general part, the chapter goes on to focus on the introduction of Process Drama into the classroom. *Section 2.2* seems to present a contradiction: it will be argued that drama-based activities – which require students to “expose” themselves and use the foreign language in front of others – should indeed be used to help those anxious learners who avoid the interaction because they fear negative evaluation of their skills from the teacher or the peers. However, Process Drama may enable students to get gradually used to “exposure” and interaction, both of which are necessary for language learning as described in *Section 1.2*, and to understand that the classroom is a safe place where errors do not have threatening consequences. Therefore, the section will also deal with the importance of warm-up exercises and tasks that do not require acting skills, which involve students’ competences – the use of language, body movement, facial expression, use of prosodic features – one at a time, and at first without requiring learners to be creative, but only to react to stimuli and orders. These activities enable the anxious students to understand that success in communication does not depend only on linguistic knowledge, and that they have many other communicative tools to understand the intentions of the interlocutor. Besides involving speaking and moving in front of other people, Process Drama also requires that students work as a group, and therefore, it is necessary to introduce into the classroom activities that enable participants to get to know each other and to create a relationships of trust, so that all the members of the group can be at their ease in working together. That is why the section will conclude with a description of some drama-based activities that can be used to create a community atmosphere, which is

necessary to prepare students for tasks that require a higher level of cohesion, mutual understanding, and collaboration.

The chapter will finally present one of the devices that are often used in Process Drama sessions: taking on a role. As will be described, foreign language lessons have often implied role-plays – namely when students are asked to assume roles and to create dialogues depending on the assigned situation – which enable them to develop their communicative competence, and to test linguistic structures, without the risks that actions and words may have in real life. However, when drama is used to bring into the classroom contexts that usually do not belong to it, the activity proves to be highly enriched. Indeed, the pretence introduced through Process Drama is more dynamic and unpredictable, because it results not only from the given roles and situation, but also from participants' creativity and contributions. However, it will be also explained that students may find it difficult to think, behave and speak as if they were someone else, or even to suspend their disbelief. Therefore, the section will describe some strategies – such as the pre-text, the teacher-in-role and some tasks – that can be used to invite the student to enter and co-create the fictional world. Finally, some of the advantages of bringing fictional worlds and fictional characters into the language classroom will be displayed: on the one hand, it lowers foreign language anxiety by providing students with a safe space where they can practice the language they would need in real life without running risks, and by providing them with a mask – that is the fictional role – they can use to express themselves without feeling too much exposed; on the other hand, the situation evoked in the class may interest, involve and emotionally move the student up to the point of leading him/her to forget about the risks of speaking the foreign language, and to express him/herself because of the wish to take part in the dramatic event.

2.1 Process Drama: its character and characters

The teacher who decides to make use of Process Drama within his/her lessons should know that many consider it an unconventional method – not only because of the unusual roles of teachers and students, but also for the unusual way in which the subject to study is approached (O’Toole 2008: 16). Moreover, there are no precise boundaries signalling which activities are included under the term “Process Drama”: it is a method that developed from DIE (Drama in Education), and that found its own path in the 1990s (Piazzoli: 2018: 33). It can be considered a possible realization of what Schewe (2013: 9, 16) calls Performative Language Didactics, which consists in exploiting multisensory experiences in teaching – and therefore in learning – by using within the classroom all the tools that theatre, music, visual arts, literature or dance offer, in order to enable students to involve in their learning not only their brains, but also their bodies and voices. Process Drama is an approach that – as will be discussed – requires for negotiation, not only between its practitioners, but also about their roles, that of the text (Haseman 1991: 19), and even about the boundaries between real and fictional, and about the concept of learning.

The first part of this chapter aims at introducing Process Drama and how it has been adopted in education and, in particular, in second language learning. The first section, after dealing with some of the advantages of using drama activities in education (Piazzoli 2018; O’Neill 1995, 2015; Wilburn 1992; Winston 2011; Chang 2011), provides an explanation of the label “Process Drama”: first, it focuses on which elements of theatrical activities have been used in this approach (see for example Davies 1990; Maley, Duff 1978; Owens, Barber 2001; Haseman 1991; Howell, Heap 2013); second, the section draws attention to the importance attached to the process (see for example Schewe 2013; Fonio 2012; Winston 2011; Stinson, Freebody 2006). The second and the third sections deal with the characters of Process Drama, namely the learners and the teachers: it will discuss how students have a central and active role, which enables them not only to influence activities, but also to become more autonomous in their learning (O’Neill, Lambert 1982; Haseman 1991; O’Neill 1995); the focus then shifts to the role of the

teacher, who is required to waive part of the control over the learning process of students, and to become a facilitator instead of a provider of knowledge (see for example Heathcote 1978, 2010; Little 1991, 1993; Davies 1990). Finally, the fourth section provides some examples of how Process Drama can be used in second language teaching, discussing why it could be considered the answer to many learner needs, such as: the presence of tasks to complete during the lessons, the practice of language as a means to communicate without neglecting the focus on form, or the presentation of topics and linguistic items through different channels (see for example Fonio, Genicot 2011; Carson 2012; Liu 2002; Beug, Schewe 1997; Griffiths 2008). By sketching the characteristics of Process Drama and the advantages of using it within the classroom, this first part of the chapter serves as a preface to the second part, which will focus on the use of drama activities as a tool to lower foreign language anxiety and to foster students' motivation.

2.1.1 What do *Drama* and *Process* mean here?

From the 1970s, the advantages of using drama in education have emerged to a large extent thanks to the constant dedication of Dorothy Heathcote (Piazzoli 2018: 33): aware of the importance of students' active role, creativity, and self-expression, and of the negotiation and co-operation between them and the teacher, Heathcote treasured her experiences and observations, and, spreading them, deeply influenced what is today called Process Drama (O'Neill 2015: 1-3). Year after year many other authors recognised how theatrical activities may improve learning: for example, the memorization of items seems to be easier when they are included in fictional scenes created within the classroom (O'Neill 1995: 45); reflection upon and understanding of the input are also facilitated (Wilburn 1992: 68). Moreover, the umbrella term Process Drama includes a potentially countless number of activities – or versions of the same activity – which makes sessions various and suited for students' needs and ideas (Winston 2011: 4), and also for what Gardner calls “frames of mind” (1993: 8). Indeed, the author criticizes the grading of people as “smart, bright, clever, or intelligent” (Gardner 1993: 6) depending on what tests reveal about their IQ; in fact, he argues for the existence of several intelligences, which usually are not taken into consideration, and which cannot be tested by a single method

(Gardner 1993: 4, 8). Gardner's definition of intelligence(s) and his selection of competences falling within this concept will not be discussed here, but it may be useful to recall his theory since the existence of different intelligences implies corresponding "means of acquiring information" (Gardner 1993: 334). Therefore, if a student appears to have a facility for a particular method of learning, it should be exploited in as many contexts as possible. Process Drama could provide an answer to this need, since it gives the chance to explore the same concept through different channels and codes – visual, verbal, kinaesthetic, or affective (Chang 2011: 7) – which stimulate different kinds of intelligences. Many of the opinions that have just been mentioned will be analysed in the following sections of the chapter, but first it seems necessary to understand which roles drama and process play in this teaching and learning approach.

Since Process Drama is described as an approach based on elements of drama – as the label itself suggests – to better understand the nature of this multifaceted teaching and learning strategy it may be useful to focus on what it has in common with the theatrical activity. Among the numerous definitions, Process Drama has also been described as any kind of activity that "asks the learners to project themselves outside the classroom, or into the skin and persona of another person" (Holden 1982, in Davies 1990: 87). This definition may look too broad and not so useful in understanding exactly which theatrical activities can be labelled Process Drama, but it can be considered a good starting point for this analysis. Indeed, both actors on the stage and students who are introduced to Process Drama are asked to use their ability to imitate the behaviours they experience in real life through their voice, their body, and the use of gesture (Maley, Duff 1978: 1), but also to bring into play their own memories, imagination and emotions (Piazzoli 2018: 33). This is because such activities – deriving inspiration from different forms of artistic expression (Owens, Barber 2001: 20) – aim at involving the students by arousing "an artistic response" (Haseman 1991: 19). Another feature of theatre that is exploited by Process Drama is the chance to access fictional times, places, roles, and situations (O'Neill 1995: xvi): as will be described in the following sections, the opportunity to move from the never-changing reality of the classroom to a fictional elsewhere gives many learning opportunities to the students, but it can only happen if they agree to suspend their rational thinking to fully plunge into an illusion, and to accept the make-

believe – just as the actors on the stage and the audience who watch the show are asked to (O’Neill 1995: 45).

However, while in most cases actors are likely to follow a script – which is read through again and again to learn it by heart – Process Drama activities are mainly based on improvisation, and it is through the interaction and negotiation between the participants that the actions emerge (O’Neill 1995: xiii; Howell, Heap 2013: 6). The word “improvisation” may frighten both students and teachers who are not used to this kind of activity, but, thankfully, the practitioners of Process Drama borrowed from the theatrical world not only this practice, but also less demanding exercises that can be used to structure time and space, and to explore roles, situations, feelings and thoughts – both of the fictional characters and of the real participants – so as to create an appropriate and organized result (Owens, Barber 2001: 20). Process Drama includes a huge number of activities which have drawn inspiration from actors’ practice – such as mime, role-play, story-telling, dramatization, narration, hot seating, still images, interviews, thought-tracking, simulations, tunnel of decision (Davies 1990: 88; Owens, Barber 2001: 20-26) – some of which will be analysed in the following sections in order to understand their potential within the classroom.

After dealing with the influence of theatrical activities over the approach at issue, it may be useful now to draw attention to the focus that is given to process. Process Drama is included in the group of small-scale drama-based activities, namely those that are developed and concluded within a short period of time, such as one or few meetings (Schewe 2013: 12). While this kind of activity is usually process-oriented – which means that the theatrical exercises are exploited with the aim of practicing the foreign language (Moody 2002, in Fonio 2012: 19) – there are other forms of drama-activities, which are large-scale and production-oriented: they may require months to be completed, and need high motivation on behalf of the students, since they imply constant dedication (Schewe 2013: 12). Moreover, unlike Process Drama, in the latter case meetings are not complete per se, but constitute the intermediate steps whose aim is to create a final performance meant for an external audience (Moody 2002, in Fonio 2012: 19). On the one hand, product-oriented workshops, such as the staging of a play by using the foreign language, many prove useful to maintain students’ involvement throughout the meetings, both because of the need to respect time scheduling and because they perceive each session

and their contribution as part of a larger project, which keeps them motivated; on the other hand, process-oriented activities are very pliable and free, since there is not a precise product to build (Fonio 2012: 19-20). This brief description of the different kinds of drama-based activities that can be used within the language classroom does not aim at establishing which is the preferable one, but at suggesting the large variety of activities that can be labelled as drama-based.

To sum up, Process Drama does not aim at producing a visible result, namely at creating a final performance, but at enabling the learners to have many different experiences through a learning path based on interaction within the group (Winston 2011: 2; Howell, Heap 2013: 6). This focus on the process should not be read merely as a lack of interest in results: in fact, not only can each activity be considered a completed task in itself (Saccuti 2018: 77), but can also be expanded to create other potentially-numberless exercises (O'Neill 1995: xvi), which makes it necessary to reach a conclusion activity after activity. Therefore, although Process Drama exercises do not lack a final aim, "their value is not in what they lead up to but in what they are, in what they bring out right now" (Maley, Duff 1978: 1), and even if a performance in front of an external audience is planned, it is still the learning process behind it that counts (Hsu 1975: 7). However, the unpredictable and unrepeatable (Stinson, Freebody 2006: 29) results of Process Drama activities do not remain unexpressed, partly because some students may feel the necessity to perform, and their desire should be fulfilled (Maley, Duff 1978: 1). That is, in describing Process Drama, why many authors (O'Neill 1995: xvi, 118; Howell, Heap 2013: 6) claim that it does not aim at showing something to an external audience, but requires the presence of an internal one: this means that students are now actors and now active spectators, whose duty it is to reflect upon what they witness. This latter consideration leads to the topic of the following section, which aims at describing the role that the learner plays within the Process Drama approach.

2.1.2 The active learner

Process Drama leads to unpredictable learning because of the active role of the students in moulding the lessons, and the consequent power they take: although the teacher

establishes the starting point giving the students some input – and keeps leading them throughout the lesson, as will be described in the following section – Process Drama asks the learner to actively react to the input they receive bringing their knowledge, skills and experiences into play (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 20). Students are given some instructions, but the development of the activities depend on how they contribute to them, on how they decide to use the resources of the group (Maley, Duff 1978: 8). Therefore, an essential point of Process Drama is the constant negotiation of purposes, since whenever a new element is added the participants need to reconsider their position in the fictional world they are creating (O’Toole 1990, in Haseman 1991: 19). Reacting on the basis of his/her own previous experiences, each member of the group brings something different to the exercise, and the negotiation aims at creating a coherent ensemble, which not only requires negotiation, but also makes it possible to create an experience that is suited on the students’ lives and personalities instead of using ready-made activities (Stinson, Freebody 2006: 29). While in theatre the negotiation takes place between the actors who know what will happen and the audience who need to understand step by step what is happening, the students during Process Drama need to negotiate meaning while experiencing it (O’Neill 1995: 118-119). In a nutshell, as the sessions are the result of all participants’ contribution and of the negotiation not only between learners but also between them and the teacher, the activities are no longer dominated by one person, but are built through the constant involvement of all the members of the group, who need to actively contribute to the development of drama (Kao, O’Neill 1998, in Stinson, Freebody 2006: 29).

As already mentioned, although Process Drama does not aim at making the students perform in front of an external audience, the feature of the internal audience is often exploited; indeed, the whole group – which includes both learners and the teacher – is involved all the time, now as actors, now as directors, and now as audience watching the other students (O’Neill 1995: xvi; Stinson, Freebody 2006: 29). This implies different levels of participation in the tasks, but a constant involvement of the entire group, sometimes with the class divided into smaller groups (Saccuti 2018: 77). Contributing with their own ideas, creativity and imagination, students become active not only in the drama activity, but also in their own learning: they extricate themselves from the role of passive learners, becoming actual participants and sometimes even teachers (Boudreault

2010: 2). Process Drama requires – but also enables – learners to create a community of practice in which they actively contribute to their own learning, where they are led by a teacher whose role is no longer to simply pass an information (Van Lier 2004: 8; 133); the students acquire not only authorship but also responsibility for their own learning experience, and when the whole class actively contributes to the activity, the result is an energized learning moment (Van Lier: 2008: 163, 169). Moreover, when negotiation and interaction between all the members of the class are encouraged, the student has the chance to critically reflect upon his/her learning path, to make suggestions and decisions about its contents, and even to evaluate his/her progress, which means becoming a more autonomous learner (Little, 1991: 4, 48, 52).

Nevertheless, students who are accustomed to teacher-centred lessons may need help not only to understand the importance of being active learner, but also in learning how to participate, and in understanding autonomously what their needs are (Carson 2010: 153-154). In the context of Process Drama, “re-negotiating agency in student/teacher hierarchy” (Piazzoli 2018: 37) is necessary, but students may resist the invitation to share and accept ideas, in particular if the members of the group do not know each other. Moreover, during Process Drama activities students are often asked to pretend to be someone and somewhere else, and they may need help becoming accustomed not only to the make-believe, but also bringing their own emotions and thoughts into play, and sharing them with others (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 12, 139). In the following section the role of the teacher in Process Drama will be described, focusing also on how s/he can help students approach this method; however, not only the teacher’s attitude, but also the kind of drama activity that is proposed to the learners can influence their attitude towards the subject and the method itself, as will be discussed in the second part of the chapter.

2.1.3 From teacher to facilitator

In dealing with the role of teachers, Heathcote (2010: 31) claims that their control over the learning process is limited: indeed, the author explains that teachers “make nothing tangible”, and that they can only carry on activities within the classroom in the hope of enabling the students to understand concepts and ideas, which may – or may not – lead

them to further knowledge. This is the consequence of, but also the prerequisite for, moving the focus from teaching to learning, that is from teachers to students: to enable the individual to become active and autonomous in his/her learning process, the teacher is asked to take a step back, to waive the role of custodian and distributor of knowledge, and to become a “facilitator of learning” (Little 1989: 28).

Similarly, promoting the active contribution of students, Process Drama requires the teachers to put aside their role of incontestable judges of correctness, and to become “animateur(s)”: this means that they should give students a context and the instructions to carry out the activity, but then step aside to let the learners make their own contribution to the learning process (Maley, Duff 1978: 17). For example, in describing a typical session of Process Drama Piazzoli (Saccuti 2018: 82) claims that the teacher has a possible scenario in his/her mind, but after giving input of some kind to the students, the power of decision is shared among all the members of the group: indeed, the teacher leads the students throughout the activities using hot seating, questions, tableaux and so on, but s/he cannot predict how students will react. However, although the unpredictability of outcomes causes unpredictable learning, the teacher who aims at enabling students to be autonomous and responsible for their own learning will not fear losing some control (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 20-21); in fact, the teacher should not refuse students’ unexpected contributions, but strategically exploit them as support for new activities (Wilburn 1992: 82). Accepting this constant negotiation with the students, the teacher also agrees to share with them the right to stop an activity if it does not work, and has the duty to discuss with them its problematic points, and to modify – or even completely change – the activity (Owens, Barber 2001: 5).

Nevertheless, slackening the control on students’ learning path does not mean leaving them alone. First, the teacher still has the duty to help the students: for example, by choosing the activities and planning the lessons on the basis of their needs and skills (Byrne 1976: 1) – which the learners are not always able to understand (Little 1991: 49). Second, since Process Drama involves the learners emotionally, the facilitator often has to cope with their anxiety, disappointment, and demoralization (O’Neill 1995: 65). Third, the teacher who adopts Process Drama only apparently leaves the control over the sessions to the students: indeed, the facilitator has many different tools to manipulate the development of the activities, although they are influenced by the learners’ reactions and

participation (Wilburn 1992: 67), and his/her constant intervention as “director” is necessary to guarantee a significant learning experience (O’Neill 1995: 64). For example, since a drama-based activities may deal with different issues and offer several cues to the students, if each learner followed his/her own path the lesson would prove chaotic; therefore, it is important that the facilitator both understands which focus will lead to the more fruitful learning experience, and manages to direct the whole group towards that issue (Owens, Barber 2001: 18).

This continual swinging between keeping and giving up control is sometimes difficult to manage, and teachers may be sceptical about giving way to the students for several reasons. On the one hand, encouraging participation may lead not only to excessive noise, movement, and confusion within the classroom, but also – as already mentioned – to the inability of scheduling the exact development of activities and learning on behalf of the teacher (Ashton-Hay 2005: 2; Royka 2002). Yet the accurate planning of activities, a clear definition of rules and limits, and the inclusion of some activities that entail little movement or the involvement of only some of the students – for example, tableaux – may help the teacher in maintaining an environment where participation facilitates learning instead of damaging it (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 148-149). On the other hand, it may be difficult for teachers to step back and encourage the students to be active in their own learning. Indeed, it is up to the facilitator to lay down the necessary conditions for learning and to stimulate students – for example, by clearly presenting a pre-text⁴ and leading them through the activity by questions and focusing exercises – but s/he should not be tempted to interfere too much with students’ reactions, for example when they seem to take too long to answer, because the development of learners’ autonomy and agency could be hindered (Owens, Barber 2001: 8; Maley, Duff 1978: 17).

In brief, in a Process Drama approach, the teacher has not only to adjust the activities on the basis of students’ needs and interests, but also to change his/her plan during its execution to enrich the session with the students’ contribution, which means abandoning the certainty of achieving a precise learning goal. However, s/he also has to maintain control over topics and over the development of the learning session, to guarantee the students the best possible learning experience (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 21),

⁴ The pre-text is a tool of Process Drama which will be described in *Section 2.3.2*.

for example by taking into considerations and avoiding the possible cultural taboos that may upset the activity and prevent some students from taking part in the lesson and, therefore, from learning and also enjoying (Davies 1990: 88). To adjust his/her activities on the basis of students' necessities and learning preferences, the teacher needs to observe and reflect upon the students' questions, ideas and behaviours, and to strategically plan the following lessons on the basis of his/her deductions (Edmiston, Wilhelm 1996: 85). When applying this pattern, teachers become "reflective practitioners" (Schön 1987, in Edmiston, Wilhelm 1996: 87) and can experiment through: open exploration, which means that they do not expect a particular reaction to the questions they ask or the input they provide; hypothesis testing, when the practitioner plans an activity with the intention of corroborating an assumption; move testing, namely when the teacher has in mind the result s/he wants to obtain and explore the steps through which obtain it (Schön 1987, in Edmiston, Wilhelm 1996: 87-88). The result is a circular examination of one's activities, which implies a continuous observation and modification of one's teaching strategy (Edmiston, Wilhelm 1996: 94)

Another problem that many teachers claim to face when approaching Process Drama is the employment of the theatrical activity itself. Some are worried about their own preparation, and are afraid of using drama because they would not define themselves as artists: indeed, some teachers may think that without any experience as actors they would not be able to lead a lesson by using Process Drama, even though they read how to develop theatrical exercises in books (Piazzoli 2018: 10; Royka 2002). However, practitioners and advocates of Process Drama do not place experience as actors in the fore: in fact, what is mostly necessary for teachers who wish to introduce Process Drama in their lessons is curiosity towards this method and confidence in its success (Saccuti 2018: 76), since the teacher needs to be enthusiastic about both the content and the form of the activities s/he brings into the classroom, otherwise s/he will not be able to get the students involved (Heathcote 2010: 31; Owens, Barber 2001: 7-8).

Furthermore, s/he has to be willing to become involved in something new and different, to listen to students, and to constantly reflect upon the act of teaching/learning and to change his/her convictions about that (Saccuti 2018: 76). Nevertheless, the introduction of Process Drama is often blocked by the fear of losing face: some teachers fear to be judged unprofessional when using theatrical activities instead of the more usual

methods of teaching – a fear that is easily dispelled when students achieve good learning results (Royka 2002). The teacher who feels uncomfortable using Process Drama can decide to introduce this kind of activity gradually in standard lessons, a strategy that could also help the students to become used to them (Maley, Duff 1978: 11; Royka 2002). On finding some kind of rejection it may be of some help to remember that “it’s really our ideas that are being rejected”, not the person who proposes them (Heathcote 1978: 12).

2.1.4 Focusing on second language learning

In exploring the usefulness of using drama as a tool to teach languages, Walker (1977: 141) suggests important starting points for a discussion, such as what limitations this method has or how much its use can be extended. Some important questions – for example what Process Drama is, and which roles teachers and students play in this approach – have already been discussed, and the focus can now be drawn to the reasons that have led several second language teachers to adopt this kind approach. As already discussed, when a teacher decides to use Process Drama s/he agrees having limited control over students’ learning progress. However, while so far it has been described as a failing of the approach, in language learning this kind of control may not be necessary, nor even possible: since – according to the Dynamic System Theory of language development (Lowie 2012: 27) – each student organises the input s/he receives through “a highly individual and autonomous process”. Thus, it may be a waste of time for teachers to plan the language lessons with the aim of achieving precise learning goals, and they would better use their energy to create opportunities of learning. Process Drama can be of great help in this sense, because it can be useful not only to present language items through different channels and to practice them in a safe place, but also because it can create conditions for freely experimenting with the language (Maley, Duff 1978: 11) – as will be deeply describe in the second section of the chapter.

The usefulness of these activities in second language teaching can also be noticed by analysing the description of the action-oriented approach, which is promoted in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2018: 27). This approach implies tasks to be performed by the students “strategically

using their own specific competences to achieve a given result” (CEFR 2001, in Fonio, Genicot 2011: 79); in dealing with the ideal characters of the tasks to assign, the importance of authenticity, the consideration of students’ interests, the focus both on meaning and on the outcome have particularly been underlined (Ellis 2003, Skehan 1998, in Carson 2012: 50). Drama-based activities meet the criteria of the CEFR by asking the students to bring to an end tasks and exercises that have been planned around their actual interests and communicative needs (Carson 2012: 51). This is true both in the case of product-oriented workshop – where the task to complete is not only the final performance but also the intermediate steps to create it (Fonio 2012: 19) – and in case of process-oriented activities, since they are composed by series of tasks that the students are asked to complete, although there is not a final performance to prepare. Moreover, since most drama-based tasks require group work, they encourage collaboration and interaction both between the participants themselves and with the facilitator, another aspect of learning that is promoted by the CEFR (Council of Europe 2018: 27).

Furthermore, the CEFR encourages us to look at language as an instrument for communication, not as a subject to study; indeed, students are considered “language users and social agents” (Council of Europe 2018: 27), and teachers should aim at helping them to gain a good command of the foreign language and their communicative competences, in order to use them effectively in real life (Piazzoli 2018: 40) – which is considered the main aim of language lessons also by the advocates of communicative approach (Paul 2015: 116). Students’ actual communicative needs and the focus on language as a means of communication instead of a subject to study are also at the basis of the Focus on Form teaching approach, described as an alternative to two more traditional approaches: Focus on FormS and Focus on Meaning. The former implies explicit presentation of linguistic individual items – such as forms of verbs or ready-made dialogues – which students are asked to repeat and learn out of context; it implies also explicit negative feedback in case of error, and little meaningful use of the language as communicative tool (Liu 2002: 2; Doughty, Williams 1998: 3; Long, Robinson 1998: 15, 17). On the other hand, when teachers plan their lessons according to a Focus on Meaning approach, the learner and his/her needs are brought to the fore and taken into consideration in choosing the learning contents. The focus is on the use of language in communication, and the learning of

grammar rules is supposed to happen implicitly through the experience of communication (Liu 2002: 2; Long, Robinson 1998: 18-19).

However, both of these approaches have their problems: focused-on-forms lessons are detached from students' interests and learning needs and, as a consequence, may prove boring and lead to demotivation (Liu 2002: 2-3); instead the Focus on Meaning approach might risk students' attention not being sufficiently drawn to the formal aspects of language, which remain underdeveloped in the learner (Liu 2002: 3; Long, Robinson 1998: 20; Doughty, Williams 1998: 2). Therefore, Focus on Form has been proposed as more complete alternative, since it "overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long 1991, in Doughty, Williams 1998: 2). In approach, tasks are planned so that students have the chance to use language in meaningful way – which means in contexts that have been chosen on the basis of their needs. The main focus is still on meaning, but the explicit presentation of grammar rules and other linguistic elements is present as well, and introduced whenever the students or the teacher notice a knowledge gap stopping comprehension, production, or communication, which implies that the focus on linguistic elements is not an end in itself (Long, Robinson 1998: 23; Liu 2002: 3; Doughty, Williams 1998: 2).

Process Drama and other drama-based activities are a possible answer to the above-mentioned students' needs. In describing how Focus on Form can be applied to second language lessons, Long and Robinson (1998: 21-25) mention negotiation of meaning between teachers and learners, problem-solving tasks, comprehension and production exercises that give the students the chance of noticing new linguistic elements and possible gaps in their knowledge of the language. These practices can be recognised as part of what has been described so far as Process Drama, which not only implies the use of language in a meaningful way, but also promotes students' involvement in planning lessons and in reflecting upon their own learning (Liu 2002: 4). Indeed, the use of make-believe, one of the central features of Process Drama, can be useful in many different school subjects, since it enables teachers and students to breathe life into what they usually read in books, and to approach it in a stimulating way (Schewe 2013: 7). In particular, it could be exploited in foreign language lessons because it makes it possible to simulate authentic real-life situations, that is to perform and see in action the linguistic

and non-linguistic communicative competences – such as movements, gesture, paralinguistic features (Davies 1990: 87; Chang 2011: 11) – that students may need outside the classroom not only to deliver contents, but also to exchange and support their opinions and ideas (Davies 1990: 96; Piazzoli 2018: 40; Fonio, Genicot 2011: 79).

Besides fostering learners' autonomy and agency, and enabling them to explore the language by using it instead of merely studying its features, Process Drama is widely appreciated as a teaching/learning method because it employs activities of different kinds. Indeed, many authors agree about the correlation between the use of various strategies in language learning and students' success: besides practicing the foreign language both by speaking, reading, writing and listening to it (Lizasoain, Ortiz de Zárate 2009: 2), according to Griffiths (2008: 91-92), using the teacher as a resource, interacting with others, studying grammar, using visual resources, and reflecting upon one's own learning seem to be the activities mostly used by those that the author calls the "good language learners" – namely the students who achieve better results in second language learning. Moreover, as already mentioned, drama activities can stimulate at the same time several learning preferences and, therefore, be used to adapt the lessons to the different needs of students (Winston 2011: 4; Chang 2011: 7). Indeed, it may include: both visual and aural stimuli, such as written texts, pictures, music, videos or recordings; intrapersonal and interpersonal reflections, since drama induces the participants to deal with the emotive sphere of the fictional characters, and consequently with their own feelings, emotions, and needs, and those of the other members of the group; but also the use of one's body and voice and the exploration of the environment (Ashton-Hay 2005: 3).

In addition, Process Drama has been used by several teachers to explore many different aspects of foreign languages. Schewe (2013: 9-11), through his own and other teachers' research, shows how drama activities can be used not only to improve speaking skills, but also to convey grammar rules through their actual realization (Even 2003, in Schewe 2013: 10), and to make tangible experience of foreign literatures. Moreover, Chang (2011: 8) promotes the use of drama activities as tools to develop literacy, which is defined as "the capacity for manipulating language and utilising modes of discourse for a specific purpose and audience, but also for producing and interpreting texts in a given context" (Chang 2011: 9). In particular, the author claims that through this kind of activity the comprehension of a written text can be facilitated because of the use of paralinguistic

features: for example, through drama activities students have the chance to give voice to literary characters and also to listen to them through the voices of their peers, which not only makes the text clearer, since it is enriched by those elements – such as the tone and the rhythm of voice – that in everyday interactions make the intention of the interlocutors clearer, but also enables students to experience the fictional characters and worlds from close to (Chang 2011: 10). Writing skills can be improved through Process Drama, as well. Indeed, through hot seating, tableaux and other exercises that slow down the activity, the students have the chance to better focus on a situation and the characters at issue, and to observe them from different points of view. This leads the students to spend more time on details; asking them to deal with them through different channels – and literary genres – can help them in writing their texts with “vividness and an authentic voice” (Steele 2003, in Chang 2011: 11). Moreover, by creating unusual contexts and situations, drama activities can be used as a tool to “irritate” students by pulling them out of their comfort zone, a feeling that may spur them on to express this irritation through creative work, for example, a text (Beug, Schewe 1997: 420).

Regarding spoken language and its practice, the advantages of Process Drama are quite evident. For example, thanks to the interaction between both the peers and the teacher that drama activities promote, students are given the chance to stand up and practice the grammar structures and the vocabulary items they have previously learnt in realistic situations (Florea 2011: 48), realizing how language can be used not only to convey contents but also to develop relationships (Chang 2011: 8-9). They also have the chance to explore those aspects of oral communication that might not be conveyed by textbooks (Stinson, Freebody 2006: 30, 32): first, they experience how the features of speech such as the tone, the rhythm, and the volume of voice may influence interaction and mutual comprehension; second, students are also given the possibility to learn how to deal with misunderstandings, interruptions and other inaccuracies that characterize real-life dialogues, which they are used to facing when speaking their mother tongue. Furthermore, requiring the constant production of output and negotiation of meaning, which are necessary for language learning, as has already been discussed, drama activities continually put the students’ knowledge of the language to the test, forcing them to exploit all their resources to communicate (Schewe 2013: 12). Again, the suspension of disbelief and the opportunity to pretend to be somewhere and someone else is of great help: through

these tools, Process Drama enables students and teachers to “escape from the familiar patterns of interaction” and their usual roles (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 18), which means to have the chance of exploring several genres, registers, styles, social manners and so on (O’Toole 2008: 16; Winston 2011: 4; Wilburn 1992: 68; Fonio, Genicot 2011: 86-87). These are only some of the advantages of using Process Drama in second language lessons; others will be discussed in the following section, which focuses on how drama activities can help the learner to feel less anxious and more motivated in approaching the study of the second language.

2.2 *Creating a safe place*

Foreign language anxiety has been described as a feeling that could damage or even block the learning process of a second language student, and it has also been analysed how this kind of debilitating anxiety can be reduced within the classroom (see *Section 1.1*). This section of the chapter aims at setting out how drama-based activities – and in particular Process Drama – may be a useful tool to help the students in facing the learning of a foreign language without debilitating apprehension. Indeed, as it has been argued in the previous section, drama activities prove useful within the language classroom not only by involving students through the completion of tasks that require the actual use of language as an instrument of communication, but also by encouraging them to be active and autonomous learners. However, to enable students to take advantage of such an opportunity, they need to feel that they are in a safe place where they can explore creatively the foreign language and test their competences without fearing negative consequences in the case of mistakes (Mugglestone 1977: 14). Indeed, since, according to Spolin (1999: 3-4), learning is a consequence of experiencing, students need a space where they feel safe enough to take risks (Piazzoli 2011: 562; Carson 2012: 55).

This section will describe how the Process Drama approach may help learners in overcoming foreign language anxiety step by step. First, it will be described why it is necessary for students to become used to “exposure” (Stengel 1979; Schumann 1975) – which for example implies overcoming the uneasiness of letting other people know about one’s linguistic and communicative competences, but also the possible embarrassment of unveiling personal feelings and ideas – a necessary precondition both to practice and learn a foreign language, and to take part in and enjoy drama-based activities. It is a gradual process starting with warm-up exercises, which enable students to understand that communication works through linguistic and non-linguistic features – such as the body and the voice – and that they do not need a perfect knowledge of the foreign language to understand or speak it (see for example Ntelioglou 2011; Schewe, Woodhouse 2018; Dalziel, Piazzoli forthcoming). Second, since students to successfully benefit from Process Drama and the foreign language lesson not only need to “expose” themselves but

also to work with their peers as a team, the section will also deal with how drama-based activities can be used to make the learners within a classroom feel like a unique group. Indeed, it is important to create within the language classroom a community atmosphere of trust, by promoting cooperation among all the students and avoiding competition, so that students can feel free to express themselves (see for example Nicholson 2002; Swale 2009; Carson 2012). Again, it will be described how the Process Drama approach can supply students with tasks that enable them to get to know each other, to develop trust – in their peers, in the facilitator and in the method – to become a team, and that involve them in discussion, which proves to be a multipurpose activity (see for example O’Neill 1995; Maley, Duff 1978; Davies 1990; Heathcote 1984).

2.2.1 Becoming used to “exposure”

Many authors agree about the power of drama activities in helping students to overcome inhibition, self-consciousness, and the sensation of being inadequate they may feel within the language classroom, feelings that may block students’ learning paths by stopping them from producing even the simplest utterances in the foreign language (Carson 2012: 55; Piazzoli 2011: 566). Indeed, Process Drama seems to create a safe, non-threatening space where learners can practice, put themselves to the test and develop their linguistic knowledge without feeling in danger (Piazzoli 2011: 569).

However, one could ask how it is possible that drama activities, which imply speaking and moving in front of someone else, may help those students whose anxiety is, indeed, due to exposure to the peers or the teacher, who may negatively evaluate the individual’s performance (see *Section 1.1.2*). At this point, it may be useful to introduce Stengel’s (1939: 477-478) metaphor to explain the fear of speaking a foreign language: the author likens the discomfort due to the imperfect command of a language with the discomfort one may feel in wearing a “fancy-dress”, since an individual may feel ridiculous in both cases. However, the author goes on to explain that being “exposed” in such a way may even be pleasant. Therefore, foreign language learners may need to get accustomed to “exposure”, in an attempt both to lower language anxiety and to enjoy the learning process (Schumann 1975: 212). Although it may seem contradictory, Process

Drama may help students to overcome the fear of being under the spotlight – which is unavoidable in communication, since it is necessary to be listened to and sometimes also watched carefully by one’s interlocutor(s) – by putting them under the spotlight.

This does not imply a shock treatment, but a progressive path, which aim not only at enabling students to become used to this kind of active and performative learning, but also at providing them with affordable tasks. Indeed, since self-esteem plays an important role in students’ motivation, they may get frustrated in seeing that their efforts in studying a foreign language do not bear fruits – namely that they are not actually able to speak it (Hsu 1975: 3); Process Drama includes a huge variety of activities, which range from basic tasks that can be completed even by total beginners, to more elaborate exercises – such as role-play, simulations or improvisation – whose accomplishment may give confidence to the learners (Hubbard et al. 1983: 317). Under the facilitator’s direction, within the Process Drama classroom, students have the chance to realize how they can actually use the target language (Stern 1980: 80), a chance they do not have when the foreign language lesson does not imply their active participation (Athimoolam 2013: 34), or when the task is too difficult to be completed for their level of language. However, while some students may be reluctant to take part in drama-based activities because they feel that they do not have the necessary linguistic competence, others may only be shy (Scarcella 1978: 45). Yet the simple warming-up activities that will be described below can help students in both cases.

Process Drama practitioners agree upon the necessity of introducing this kind of activity into the language classroom in small doses, if the students are not accustomed to it, which means both alternating drama-based activities with more traditional lessons, and using warm-up exercises at the beginning of Process Drama sessions (Maley, Duff 1977: 18; Royka 2002). Indeed, there are games that requires little both in terms of time and in students’ use of linguistic knowledge and movements, which are useful to come the students closer to the method both mentally and physically (Dundar 2013: 1425). Although language games do not seem to be often used by students with higher levels of foreign language levels (Griffiths 2008: 93), they may be extremely useful to make students feel in a safe place, where hesitations or mistakes will not constitute something to be blamed for (Al-Saadat, Afifi 1997: 43). For example, the facilitator could ask the learners to form a circle and to say first their own names, and then – according to a precise

rule – to repeat the others’ participants names, or to line up according to their age or to their birthday’s month or day. These simple games create energy within the group, and enable the participants to get to know each other (Paul 2015: 120; Ntelioglou 2011: 82). Simple activities that do not require students to speak but simply reacting to simple instructions involve them even if their language level is low, since they do not need to retain a huge amount of information delivered in the foreign language (Byrne 1976: 13, 16).

This kind of preparatory exercise should also aim at helping the students in getting used to moving throughout the space and using their voice (Ntelioglou 2011: 82), two skills that may seem obvious but that are often little practiced within the foreign language classroom, in spite of the fact that voice and movements contribute to communication as well as language does (Chang 2011: 12). In her book, Swale (2009) – whose aim is to describe a series of drama-activities that can be used both in a theatrical context or within a school classroom (Swale 2009: xxi-xxii) – describes a several warm-up exercises that are not very demanding in terms of language and creativity, and therefore suitable for inexperienced groups of students, both as regards of linguistic and theatrical skills. In the first section (Swale 2009: 4-14) she gives some advice on how to warm up the body, such as moving – namely, jumping, shaking parts of the body and so on – in reaction to specific orders, or miming what other participants do. These activities not only break the ice among the students, but also stimulate concentration, observation and improve the physical confidence that may be necessary for more demanding tasks. The author gives importance also to facial expressions, and describes some activities that aim at setting in motion the facial muscles, for example “Pass the face” (Swale 2009: 16), where the participants are asked to express an emotion only through the expression of their face and to pass it to the next person in the circle, who has to receive (imitate) it and then to pass another expression to the following person. Before moving to the description of more demanding activities, the author concludes the section about warming-up with the description of simple exercises implying the repetition of sounds, tongue-twisters or simple sentences to invite the participants to warm up their voice and become used to listening not only to the teacher’s voice, but also to that of their peers and their own (Swale 2009: 22-32). Moreover, focusing on the context of second language teaching/learning, the repetition of simple sentences on the bases of the facilitator’s model

may help students to improve pronunciation and intonation, and to become more confident about their phonetic skills (Ntelioglou 2011: 82; Fonio, Genicot 2011: 85).

The introduction of activities involving the use of voice and body in the second language classroom is something that authors have believed necessary for a long time. Some criticise the common practice of focusing on the intellectual aspects of learning a language and forgetting about the physical ones (Maley, Duff 1978: 2). In fact, students seem to be more motivated when activities involve them both intellectually and physically. By asking them to bring into play not only grammar and vocabulary but also intonation, volume of the voice, facial and body expressions when communicating may help them understand the mutual influence between form and content (Schewe, Woodhouse 2018: 55). Process Drama, and other drama-based activities, attempt to reconnect the body and the intellect first making the students aware of the communicative power both of language and body, and then by enriching lessons with physical activities, which are often playful and stimulating (Winston 2011: 4). Moreover, the students themselves seem to recognise that the use of the body as a second language learning strategy can be as effective as the more traditional approaches, such as writing (Dalziel, Piazzoli forthcoming: 16) – for example, words and sentences seem to be more easily recalled when associated with movements (Culham 2002, in Chang 2011: 12). Therefore, after using warm up exercises – which demand little in terms of language and movement – it is important to supply students with activities that enable them to experience the expressive power of paralinguistic features, which enrich linguistic messages “adding mood, personality and atmosphere” (Chang 2011: 12) in real life as on the stage. What follows is the description of some activities that aim to enable students to explore the communicative potential of non-verbal language and of prosodic features, and that should be used after the warm up session, as they are slightly more demanding in terms of involvement and interpretation of the input on behalf of the students.

In the descriptions of Process Drama workshops, it is common to find the use of activities such as still images and mime. The building of still images – or tableaux – consists in the arrangement in small groups of a motionless and silent scene on the basis of an input given by the facilitator, such as a theme, a text or a picture. Students are asked to work on the role of each member, and to adopt a precise position and facial expression, which should be the result of group discussion about the input (Maley, Duff 1978: 46;

Schewe, Woodhouse 2018: 57). This exercise gives all participants the chance to take part in the scene, even those students who may lack acting or linguistic skills, since the meaning is delivered by non-verbal features (Schewe, Woodhouse 2018: 59). Since the task usually ends with the display of the scene in front of the other peers – who can ask questions to guess what the scene is about – the facilitator may decide to make the groups perform their scenes simultaneously in order to spare the shyest students the performance anxiety, which would be lower as the facilitator alone makes up the audience. However, if there are groups willing to perform in front of the others, that could demonstrate that “exposure” is non-threatening and also convince the reluctant students to show their scenes (Athimoolam 2013: 26-27). The double role of students in tableaux, who are asked both to perform and to observe the scene of their peers, enables them to explore non-verbal communication from two different points of view (Chang 2011: 12).

Another exercise that helps students in focusing on non-verbal communication, and in becoming used to the nature of Process Drama is mime, which requires the students to exploit the expressive power of movements and facial expressions to communicate, since they cannot use language – which is what makes the activity undemanding also for linguistically weaker students (Davies 1990: 90). In the simplest version of this activity – which can be carried out both by an individual or a group, assuring in this way the anxious students of a shield – learners are asked to mime the use of an object, for example, when they are given the word “paintbrush”, they may decide to evoke it by imitating a person who is painting. It becomes more demanding when the completion of the task implies that the learners who are miming employ creativity to find the best possible way to mime something that can be communicated in different ways, for example an everyday action or a problem to be solved (Maley, Duff 1978: 39-41, 47-50). Moreover, the mime implies meaningful interaction both in the preparatory and in the performing phase: when working in groups students need to interpret together the input they are given to create the scene, and to discuss how to shape their ideas to make the message clear, which implies the reaching of a compromise, since not all their ideas can be included in the performance; then, when the audience is asked to guess what the scene is about, they are given the chance to practice phrases of “confirming understanding” such as “You might be...” (Nfor 2018: 16, 23-24). Although this kind of activity seems to mainly aim at developing non-verbal communicative skills, Nfor (2018: 19) underlines the benefit it

brings in those contexts where students are little accustomed to speaking in class because of cultural reticence. Learners can thus be led to become more and more accustomed to asking questions and interacting with their peers by the playfulness of the activity, which also lowers the fear of taking risks (Chang 2011: 7).

Before moving on and dealing with those activities that lead the students to focus on their voice, it would be interesting to introduce an exercise that is in an in-between position. Again, this activity encourages students to express themselves without using language, and to convey feelings or physical conditions – such as being tired, excited, sad and so on – only through their breath, while the audience is asked to observe and listen to the “breather” to guess what his/her breath aims at communicating (Maley, Duff 1978: 32). Like many others, it is a dual-purpose exercise, since it enables students both to realize they can even use breath to communicate something about themselves to the interlocutor, and to practice observation, since without context, words and movements it may be challenging to guess what one is trying to communicate through breathing (Maley, Duff 1978: 33).

Drama techniques are considered a beneficial tool within the language classroom also because it enables students to practice several linguistic skills, which means that through this kind of activity students have not only the chance to receive input and produce output, but also to experience the use of the prosodic features of the foreign language – such as intonation, speed of speaking, silence, pauses, which often add meanings to the bare words (Boudreault 2010; Ashton-Hay 2005: 6). There are some activities that aim at unveiling how prosodic features can influence a message, and at inviting students to exploit and play with them. For example, the facilitator may ask to the learners to think about a word in the foreign language; once the meaning have been explained, and the students have repeated the word a few time to have the pronunciation clear, they are asked to say it by conveying through the use of their voice an emotion – such as anger, sadness, excitement and so on (Piazzoli 2018: 31). A slightly freer – and therefore more demanding – exercise consists in writing a sentence so that all the learners can read it, and ask them to imagine on their own a context in which that sentence could be used; students are then asked to walk around the room while saying that sentence as they imagined it, and also to listen to their peers and the different intonations that can be used by saying the same words (Maley, Duff 1978: 56). Prosodic features are also the

elements that make reading a story different from telling it, since they make words vivid (Ntelioglou 2011: 87); when students recognize the facilitating role of prosody, they learn to exploit it, for example by asking the facilitator to read a text aloud, so that they can grasp its meaning by paying attention not only to words, but also to all the communicative elements the facilitator uses – intonation, pauses, speed, facial expressions and so on (Haught, McCafferty 2008: 152).

Through this kind of activity, students' language anxiety may be lowered because they are led to recognise that communicative competence does not depend only on language, and that they can adopt non-linguistic ways to express themselves (Liu 2002: 12-13). The CEFR also promotes “physical mutual intelligibility”, since the foreign language learner needs not only to study and practice the target language, but also to understand how gestures, facial expressions and prosody work in the target community (Fonio, Genicot 2011: 81-82; Haught, McCafferty 2008: 139). Drama activities help students in understanding the importance of non-linguistic communication also when working on texts: indeed, when the facilitator presents a text by adopting gestures, expressions, and intonation to accompany what s/he is displaying, students appear to understand it better, and may also be spurred on to improve their non-linguistic skills (Haught, McCafferty 2008: 154-155). Finally, the above-described activities are useful to lower the anxiety a student may feel when s/he does not understand word by word the utterance s/he hears in the foreign language (see *Section 1.1.1*), since s/he is provided with real evidence that comprehension does not imply understanding clearly all the words of a message, as there are other communicative elements that can help the learner in decoding it.

Most of the above-described activities protect the anxious students from one of the problems that often prevent them from producing output in the foreign language: the fear of making a fool of themselves because they do not know the foreign language words they need (see *Section 1.1.1*; Haught, McCafferty 2008: 150). For example, the students performing during mime or tableaux do not need to speak, and during the activities intended to practice the prosodic features the sentences to use are often provided by the facilitator. However, one can easily notice that even in these activities students may lack the vocabulary items they need, and feel under pressure and anxious because of the gap in their knowledge, for example when during the mime students are supposed to guess

what their peers are performing. Therefore, it would be useful to lower foreign language anxiety by introducing the vocabulary items and the structures students may need during an activity before asking them to speak, or to use the activities to put into practice already-studied topics (Kerr 1977: 6-7; Paul 2015: 117; Maley, Duff 1978: 12-14). For example, after dealing with the names of clothes, the facilitator may ask students to walk around the room and to observe their peers; after a few minutes the facilitator stops them, asks them to stand back to back with the closest person and, in turn, to describe each other's clothes without peeping (Maley, Duff 1978: 30-31). A similar activity consists in asking them to observe the room and then to answer simple questions like "Is the window open?" with their eyes closed (Maley, Duff 1978: 29). Although simple, these exercises may motivate students to speak: indeed, when they will check the clothes of their peers or open their eyes, they will instinctively discuss their previous suppositions (Maley, Duff 1978: 31).

This section has described some tasks that assure that students are not completely "exposed" – in some cases because the activity saves them the trouble of speaking, in some that of moving, and in others the anxiety of having no idea of what to say – so that even the weakest or shiest students can get accustomed to being under the spotlight and active, instead of being shielded behind their desk or their silence. Indeed, without getting used to speaking up in the classroom, students cannot practice what they learn, which prevents them from becoming confident with the foreign language (Florea 2011: 46-47). Moreover, using body, face, vocal features, and language to communicate is something people do daily, but students may not be used to using these features within the second language classroom, and that is why they may need help to accept that they will be asked to practice them. Since many of these activities can be used in different situations that require a group of people to feel comfortable and ready to collaborate, the participants may already know some warm-up games, as well. Therefore, the facilitator could ask them to propose activities, so that students may perceive themselves as active builders of the lesson, and overcome the possible fear of exposing their ideas (Flemings 1998: 150).

2.2.2 Becoming a group

A Process Drama – like other drama-based tasks – is a dialogic group activity, it is necessary for participants to be at their ease not only with the teaching/learning approach, but also with the other members of the group, including of the teacher (Chang 2011: 7; Nicholson 2002: 82). Indeed – as already mentioned in *Section 1.1.2* – fearing negative evaluation and disapproval, students may be worried about speaking the foreign language in front of others, which means that they refrain from doing so if they do not feel they are in a safe environment (Stern 1980: 80; Spolin 1999: 7, 9). However, if the group manages to keep hierarchy and deconstructive judgements outside the classroom, students will be more willing to risk (Paul 2015: 118). Therefore, at the beginning of Process Drama workshops or sessions, some time should be spent on building up confidence among all the participants, for example by enabling every member to work with someone different each time (Swale 2009: xvii; Athiemoolam 2013: 25). Moreover, the facilitator will notice that if the group works harmoniously, it is much easier both to involve all the students and to organize the activity (Royka 2002). Feeling in a safe place is both a necessary precondition to practice drama-activities and a consequence of their use within the classroom: indeed, students who experienced this approach claim that it provided the relaxed, friendly and collaborative environment they needed to feel confident enough to bring into play their linguistic skills, and to share with strangers their feelings and experiences (Ntelioglou 2011: 90).

In *Section 1.3.3* it has been argued that within the classroom competition should be discouraged and collaboration promoted, so that students learn to consider themselves as a group. Capra (2015: 92) underlines the importance of leading students to understand that the success and efforts of the individual influence those of the other participants and also of the entire group, and Process Drama can be useful in this sense. Indeed, many activities that are grouped under this label require students to practice “social competence” (Wilburn 1982: 67), that is to learn how to work with and respect others, so that they can cooperate to reach a common goal, which will foster energy and lead even the shiest students to overcome their inhibition, moved by a sense of community (Wilburn 1982: 82; O’Neill 1995: 9; Winston 2011: 5). As a consequence, exhaustive competition is eclipsed by the necessity of all individuals’ success to complete the common task, and

therefore students are induced to help their peers, instead of focusing on their own success only or, even, on their peers' failure (Hsu 1975: 4-5; Spolin 1999: 11). It is also true that working in group could make the individual anxious because of the responsibility for him/herself and others, but the atmosphere of mutual help and cooperation should defeat the negative pressure (O'Neill, Lambert 1982: 13), up to the point of creating a "history of shared accomplishments" that turns the group into a community (Edmiston 2003: 224).

To successfully complete a task as a group, it is necessary that all participants collaborate actively, but without prevailing on others: both the clever, the shy, the self-confident, and the weaker student should be given the chance to take part in the activity and to bring his/her contribution to the final result. Indeed, when one or few students predominate, the other participants may not only get bored, but also have the impression that they are not good enough to contribute to the task, or that their ideas have been pushed into the background (Spolin 1999: 9-10; Ntelioglou 2011: 88). Furthermore, since the good quality of group work depends on the collaboration and contribution of all its members – who bring to the task their different talents and skills – a few members have the power both to benefit from an activity if they are enthusiastic about it, or to spoil the result of the whole group and prevent their peers from enjoying the activity if they appear to be not interested or involved (Carson 2012: 55-56; Ntelioglou 2011: 88).

Finally, Process Drama activities can be successfully and safely delivered only if the participants are adequately trustful, that is if they trust not only the leader, their peers, and the approach, but also – and particularly – “the responses of other participants, their membership and status within the group, the appropriateness of their own responses, their own image and perception of themselves, and disclosure of the private self in the public sphere” (Piazzoli 2011: 563). This is a necessary precondition to enable students to feel safe enough to speak the foreign language in public without being afraid of making mistakes, of being negatively judged, of exposing one's “private self” (Piazzoli 2011: 563-565). When taking part in drama-based activities, learners are inevitably in close contact with each other's feelings, actions, and ideas, and at the same time they are asked to bring into play theirs. Therefore, if someone decides not to collaborate in the creation of an environment where the “social health of the group” is guaranteed, the drama activity could lack effectiveness (Owens, Barber 2001: 33). Moreover, since trust can be defined as necessary in case of a risk that an individual wants or needs to take because of possible

consequential advantages (Luthmann 1988, in Nicholson 2002: 84), it can be said that trust can be created within a group only if its members have the motivation to go out of their comfort zone and become vulnerable (Nicholson 2002: 88), which is what language learners are asked to do when speaking a foreign language. Finally, participants can trust the other members of the group – and the facilitator – only if they feel that there is going to be mutual respect, in terms of “physical, emotional and intellectual well-being” (Nicholson 2002: 83), since drama involves at the same time body, emotion and mind. However, it may not be easy to create such an environment of collaboration and trust, as both these concepts are linked with and influenced by the culture not only of the participants – who may belong to different sociocultural communities – but also of the place where the activity is taking place (Nicholson 2002: 84). Moreover, trust could be difficult to establish because within a previously existing group participants may already play precise roles, and that may make it necessary to re-negotiate them to create a trust-promoting environment (Nicholson 2002: 90) – one may think for example about what has already been argued about the relationship between teacher and students that Process Drama requires (see *Sections 2.1.2, 2.1.3*). This necessity of enabling students to feel part of a group and to introduce them to collaboration, mutual support, trust and respect should lead the facilitator to adopt some activities aiming at creating the above-described atmosphere at the beginning of Process Drama sessions.

First, to become a team, the participants need to know who their team-mates are and trust them. In order to enable that, the facilitator may start the session with activities in couples or small groups; as already mentioned in *Section 1.1.3*, while working with a small group of people the anxious students feel less afraid about taking risks, because only one or few people would notice possible mistakes (Dundar 2013: 1426). Moreover, this kind of activity enable student to get to know personally the other members of the group – which would be difficult to do through activities involving the whole class – and to change many different partners in little time. Paul (2015: 117-118) underlines the importance of separating already existing couples or groups, so that participants are encouraged to work with everyone, and no one would feel excluded.

An example of activity in pairs, which can be used to arouse trust among the participants, is “Friendly follower” (Swale 2009: 92): one student of each couple is asked to close his/her eyes, and to let the other one lead him/her; the leader will first do it by

holding the hand or the shoulders of the partner, then just by touching his/her finger, and finally giving direction with the voice and without touching him/her – the latter demand of this activity requires not only trust towards the partner, but also the knowledge of the linguistic items to give directions, which the facilitator should provide before the beginning of the activity. While “Friendly following” can be used to encourage mutual trust, other exercises – such as “Leap of faith” or “Falling trees”, which imply that one student drops and lets him/herself fall into the other participants’ arms (Swale 2009: 94-96) – require that students already trust each other to feel safe in completing them (Swale 2009: xvii); it is facilitator’s duty to understand when it is the suitable time to introduce more trust-demanding exercises.

The activities that have been described above as warm up are useful not only to make the anxious student feel comfortable with Process Drama approach, but also to get to know the other members of the group and to start collaborating with them, even if they belong to a different culture and speak a different language, since a common language is not always necessary to complete simple tasks (Swale 2009: xiii, xxi; Dundar 2013: 1425). For example, games that involve the students’ names, their hobbies, and experiences – such as asking them to group on the basis of their favourite book or movie (Swale 2009: 34) – enable them to know each other and to discover what they have in common. Another activity that could arouse familiarity among the participants by enabling them to tell something about themselves consists in asking them to bring into the classroom an object that has a particular meaning for them, and to tell their peers – using few sentences in the foreign language – why that object is important for them (Ntelioglou 2011: 87).

Second, it is important to introduce activities that make students work as a team, which create a community atmosphere by involving even the shiest and most uncertain students in a common experience of discovery (Swale 2009: xxii). For example, besides giving students the chance to stand in front of their peers without worrying about speaking the foreign language (Athimoolam 2013: 31), the already-described tableaux – and also the mime when it is built by a group of learners – unites the members of the performing group because of the common aim of successfully communicating a message, and those of the audience because they are asked to observe the scene as a group, not as individuals, to discuss their hypotheses and to consider each other’s suggestions to complete the task

of guessing (O'Neill 1995: 126). There are, then, other activities that make students feel part of an ensemble. In "Making a machine" (Maley, Duff 1978: 73) they are asked to create a real or fictional machine, in which each student will be a precise part of the mechanism; this requires students not only to speak in order to choose or invent their machine, but also to decide what their roles and movements as part of the machine will be. Students can also be asked to create a melody as a group with each of them adding a simple sound produced with his/her voice, hands or feet, or to create a scene. In the latter someone goes to the centre of the room claiming what s/he is going to become, for example a tree, and the other students join by becoming something related to what is already on the scene (Paul 2015: 120-121). Similar, but slightly more demanding since it implies a wider use of the foreign language, is the "Story game" (Walker 1977: 142-143), through which students create a plot by adding one by one an action, or a new character to develop it.

Another activity that should be encouraged within the language classroom is discussion, since it accustoms students to speak up in front of others (Holden 1982, in Davies 1990: 90). Indeed, it not only provides students with the chance of practicing the foreign language both by receiving a huge amount of input and producing output (Little 1989: 28-29), but also adapts the dynamics of the group to the above-mentioned requirements of Process Drama approach – such as trust, collaboration, and self-confidence in exposing one's ideas. In this last part of the section, the several uses and advantages of discussion within the Process Drama session will be described.

Many group drama-based activities require students to discuss things and take decisions as a team: for example, they could be given input – such as a picture (Maley, Duff 1978: 78-79, 90-93) – from which they need to deduce a context, some characters, and their stories, which could become the basis for following activities such as a tableaux, a mime, a storytelling or a role-play. Students are spurred on to discuss the prompt and negotiate meaning even when the information that is necessary to complete a task is distributed among the participants, and they need to share knowledge to reach the common goal (Kerr 1977: 7). During the discussion students may propose different solutions to the same question, and have different opinions about the same point; to reach a final and single decision as a group is not an easy task, but students can be facilitated if the teacher clearly explains what the point and the aim of the discussion is (Heathcote

1984: 21). Moreover, when students are asked to plan a scene, they are given some time to tackle the other members of the group about dialogues or movements, which enables them to feel less anxious about performing in front of an audience (Liu 2002: 7). Using activities that imply discussion and decision making also gives students the chance to practice “how to influence others; how to marshal effective arguments” (O’Neil, Lambert 1982: 13), and to see that their ideas and suggestions actually influence what happens within the classroom. This not only involves them in the activity, but also encourages future contributions (Heathcote 1984: 21).

What has been described so far is the discussion that takes place among the students, while now attention will be drawn to the students-facilitator dialogue. While in the collective imagination, when a teacher asks a question the student is supposed to give the right answer (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 141), in the context of Process Drama approach the facilitator’s questioning is dialectic, instead of being didactic (Wilburn 1992: 74), and can be exploited in many different situations. For example, through questions the facilitator can lead students to the creation of a context, and even indirectly influence the result by giving suggestions through his/her own questions (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 142). In fact, in order to maintain a relaxed atmosphere of trust, the facilitator should not reject students’ ideas, but to use discussion to encourage them to reflect upon their suggestions and properly modify them (O’Neil, Lambert 1982: 20; Kao, O’Neill 1998, in Liu 2002: 13). When creating a fictional context there are no wrong answers – they are at worst not very appropriate – and students may get used to expressing their ideas without the risk of making mistakes.

The ensuing discussion can also be used to focus students’ attention and promote reflection upon particular aspects of the activity that has just be done (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 142; Owens, Barber 2001: 30), which fosters their involvement, appreciation and understanding of the activity (Kao, O’Neill 1998, in Liu 2002: 13). Indeed, when students cannot keep up with the activity because they do not have the skills that are necessary to complete it, or when do not understand its aim, they could get frustrated, demotivated, or even non-cooperative (O’Neil, Lambert 1982: 149). The facilitator can use discussion to understand if students are feeling at ease with the task and if they appreciate it (Walker 1977: 143), and to help them in analysing the possible intricate aspects of the task. For example, “linguistic reflection” (Liu 2002: 14) can be useful to focus on complex

grammar structures or idiomatic expressions that the students do not know or have doubts about, and that the facilitator needs to explain (Saccuti 2018: 82; Walker 1977: 145), while “experience reflection” (Liu 2002: 14) enables the student to understand his/her own feelings towards and reactions to the activity at issue, for example by analysing why it results in anxiety-inducing or little interesting. Moreover, the facilitator can give rise to sociological or intercultural reflection drawing inspiration from the activity (Saccuti 2018: 82), and involve the students in the discussion by asking them to analyse what has happened during the activity – for example a mime – why the fictional characters or their peers behaved in that precise way, and what they would have done instead (Bird 1979: 295). All these kinds of analysis can encourage students to reflect upon the activity and, as a consequence, to better understand it, without providing them with heavy external explanations, which would make the lesson less motivating since they would deprive students of the pleasure of personal discovery (O’Neill and Lambert 1982: 143).

Finally, the phase of discussion is useful to give students feedback on their work. On the one hand, positive feedback fosters students’ self-confidence and motivation (Ntelioglou 2011: 85; Al-Saadat, Afifi 1997: 43); on the other hand, since during the activities and performances it is preferable not to stop the students correcting their mistakes not to inhibit them or obstacle fluency (Carson, Murphy 2011: 129), the post-activity discussion gives to the facilitator the chance to focus students’ attention on possible grammar mistakes, vocabulary inaccuracies or cases of mispronunciation (Al-Saadat, Afifi 1997). The same students should be encouraged to express their doubts about the language that has been used during the activity, such as asking questions about the meanings of words or explanations of structures they do not know (Walker 1977: 143). Once students have learnt to receive negative feedback as constructive suggestions, they should be more willing to speak up, since possible mistakes would be pointed out in a respectful way and without blaming the learner, a way of giving feedback that the students should also be invited to apply when asked to comment their peers’ work (Ntelioglou 2011: 85).

These two sections of the chapter aim at demonstrating why and how Process Drama – and also other drama-based activities – have been considered by many authors a useful tool to employ within the foreign language classroom also with students whose linguistic skills are little developed (Stern 1980: 83; Walker 1977: 145), or with those

who may have the necessary knowledge of the language but lacking the will – or even the courage – to take the risk of “exposing” themselves in front of others (Piazzoli 2011: 569). Indeed, it has been argued that Process Drama, through the gradual exposure of the students’ linguistic skills, and the involvement and promotion of all their communicative means – such as the body and the voice – may lead even the shiest or more anxious students to get involved in the activities. In the following section another multifaceted activity promoted by Process Drama will be analysed: taking a role.

2.3 The last step: taking on a role

When entering a theatre, the spectator knows that what s/he will see on stage will be a pretence, but s/he is willing to suspend the disbelief to be involved in the fiction and to enjoy the performance. Similarly, when a fictional world is introduced into the language classroom through drama-based activities, students are asked to co-create, enter and trust the pretence in order to benefit from its advantages. Indeed, this kind of activity enables students to become someone else for a while, and to experience situations that they would not have the chance to experience otherwise, enriching them with not only a deeper understanding of topics and language specific uses, but also with the opportunity of expressing themselves (Schewe 1998: 220). This can be considered a practice to invite language learners to loosen their “self-boundaries” (Schumann 1975: 220), whose reduction – which is facilitated by activities that lower students’ anxiety – may enable them to be less inhibited during the language classroom and, therefore, to better practice and learn the foreign language (Schumann 1975: 226-227). However, as already mentioned, students may need help to become accustomed to the Process Drama approach, and many practitioners (Athimoolam 2013: 30-31; Ntelioglou 2011: 88) report that it is often necessary to provide students first with intermediate and less exposure-requiring activities – some of which have been described in the previous section – and that only later does it become possible to involve them in more involving tasks requiring them to show not only linguistic but also their acting and creative skills.

The last section of the chapter will deal with the advantages and difficulties of taking on a fictional role on behalf of the students. First, I will introduce role-play, a practice that is often introduced into the language classroom, since it enables students to practice those linguistic items and structures they may need in real life situations, which makes the language lesson appear more meaningful (see for example Davies 1990; Chang 2011; O’Neill, Lambert 1982; Early 1977; Hsu 1975). The section will then analyse why elements of Process Drama could be considered an evolution of role-play, since they still recreate realistic situations in the classroom but also require students to bring into play their creativity, ideas, selves and emotions, which greatly enrich the activity (see for

example Edmiston 2003; Smith 2017; Carson 2012; Fonio, Genicot 2011; Schewe 2012). However, as already mentioned, putting oneself in someone else's shoes can be difficult for many different reasons, and students may need help both in agreeing to enter the fictional world, and also in using their imagination to create and animate it. Therefore, the second part of this section will describe some strategies – namely pre-text, teacher-in-role and exercises to stimulate creativity – that can be used to make such an unusual practice more appealing and acceptable to students (see for example Carson, Murphy 2011; Dalziel, Piazzoli forthcoming; O'Toole 2008; O'Neill 1995; Heathcote 1984). Finally, the section will display how the dramatic situation can help anxious students in overcoming debilitating apprehension. First, they can learn to use it both as a training ground where they can test out their communicative skills before applying them in real life, or as a mask, which they can wear to express themselves in front of others without feeling threatened (see for example Chang 2011; Stinson, Freebody 2006; Davies 1990; Ntelioglou 2011). Second, drama appears to be such an involving and stimulating tool to use within the language classroom because it moves students through emotions – such as tension, enthusiasm, enjoyment, sympathy, and aesthetic engagement – which lead them to leave aside foreign language anxiety and speak up because of the necessity of exposing their feelings, personalities and ideas (see for example Walker 1977; Liu 220; Pheasant 2015; Schewe, Woodhouse 2018; Paul 2015; Owens, Barber 2001).

2.3.1 The evolution of role-play in Process Drama

One of the problems that many language teachers underline is the lack of exposure of language learners to the spoken language they study, and the distance students may feel between the language handled within the classroom and its actual use (Chang 2011: 6). As a consequence, students may not be involved in the language lesson (Lizasoain, Ortiz de Zárat 2009: 5). Therefore, many teachers enrich language lessons with role-play. It can be described as an activity which “involves students playing imaginary people in an imaginary situation”, and creating simple scenes – based on partial dialogues, instructions about the characters, or information about the fictional circumstances – that simulate

“realistic everyday situations, such as a scene in a restaurant or café” (Davies 1990: 92-93).

When role-play is introduced to language learners, they appear to become more involved, since it enables them to practice the actual language they need in the real world – not only to communicate but also to build up and maintain relationships – and to realize how what is dealt with within the classroom could be actually exploited in everyday life (Chang 2011: 6; Lizasoain, Ortiz de Zárat 2009: 7-9; O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 11, 18; Mugglestone 1977: 14). Role-play may fill the gap between what students need and what they practice within the classroom by enabling them not only to come across the linguistic structures they may require in particular situations to give and receive information – for example, the set phrases that could be used to ask for directions – but also to explore the “social niceties” (Davies 1990: 91) to adopt in different contexts and with different interlocutors, and how to use the language as a member of the community (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 141; Carson 2012: 52). It is an implementation of the theory, which claims that it is necessary to perform skills – in this case requiring linguistic and communicative competence – both to learn and consolidate them, by simulating in a risk-free environment the real situation involving the skills at issue (Early 1977: 34-35; Stern 1980: 79).

Moreover, through the role-play, it becomes possible to explore the foreign language by going beyond what is offered by the textbook. Indeed, language teachers may choose to introduce drama-based activities to introduce topics that are suited to students’ interests and necessities, which may be different from the themes offered by the textbook (Hsu 1975: 2-3). Furthermore, ready-made written dialogues often lack many of the features that characterize real interactions: for example, the conversation between a dentist and a patient would change depending on countless variables – such as the patient’s age, or his/her attitude – that cannot be all included within the book. However, through the role-play, the dialogue can be acted and re-acted slightly changing the variables each time to explore different possible situations and uses of the language (Maley, Duff 1978: 5-7). By bringing in dialogues outside the book, they are also enriched by the “unpredictability in language use” (Dougill 1987, in Carson 2012: 50) that characterizes real spoken language, which includes both obstacles to interactions – such as the impossibility to predict the answer to a question, interruptions, external noises, immoderate speed of the voice, or low volume – and also the prosodic elements that help

the listener to understand the intention of the interlocutor, or his/her physical and psychological status – for example, through the tone of voice one could understand whether the interlocutor is tired (Dougill 1987, in Carson 2012: 50-51; Maley, Duff 1978: 2; Fonio, Genicot 2011: 87).

The Process Drama approach also includes activities in which students are asked to pretend to be someone and/or somewhere else in order to experience different situations. However, when Process Drama is introduced into a language classroom, it requires learners – and teachers – to be more involved in the pretence they create than the role-play does. Indeed, as described in *Section 2.1.1*, this approach invites students not only to take on a role that can differ from the one they usually play, but also to bring their own selves into play, that is by letting their memories, previous experiences, values and ideas influence the fictional worlds and characters (Piazzoli 2018: 33). Indeed, the roles that teachers and students play during Process Drama activities are the result not only of imagination and creativity, but also of the socio-cultural roles and identities they have in real life. When the fictional world recreated in class encapsulates some aspects of students' real life, it enables them to take part in more meaningful activities, whose link with real life makes them tools to explore it (Edmiston 2003: 222-223). Therefore, what results from this kind of activity is for the most part unpredictable, because it emerges not only from the negotiation and collaboration between all the members of the group, but also from their contributions as individuals, their creativity and emotional involvement, as will be described in the following pages.

In order to allow the external reality to penetrate that of the classroom, it is necessary to “suspend the real power and status relationships” between the members of the class (O’Toole 2008: 16), which is an essential precondition to enabling learners to explore situations that differ from that of the classroom in terms of relationships, duties and authority. For example, in this kind of drama students are often asked to wear the “mantle of the expert”. It is a device that gives power to the student, since s/he can – through the role of someone who has the necessary information to solve a problem – take on the role that in everyday life is usually played by the teacher, who becomes the person needing information or help during the drama (O’Toole 2008: 26). The reversal of the usual teacher-student relationship creates also a situation in which students are asked to take responsibility for the learning activity (Stinson, Freebody 2006: 32). However, the

facilitator is always in control of the situation, so as to prevent possible conflicts both in the real and in the fictional world: s/he can, for example, bring the group out of the make-belief if something that could cast negativity on the real group is happening, and to lead the students to reflect upon that lucidly from the outside (Edmiston 2003: 225-226). This is an example of how the real life that the drama brings into the classroom is just a “real-ish” version of it, but it should not be considered a fault of this practice (Fleming 1998: 148). Indeed, while in real life interactions many of interlocutors’ intentions are unspoken and may not be understood, the scene recreated in class can be stopped, dissected, re-acted, and its parts analysed to have a better comprehension of what is happening between the characters on “stage”. Moreover, students are often asked to go in and out of role, so that they can observe characters, decisions, and ideas both from within and from the outside. For example, frozen images can be used to focus on a particular point of the action and to discuss characters’ body language. Alternatively, audience-students could be asked to imagine which thoughts determine the words of the fictional characters, by “learning a foreign language in a way which focuses on the richness and complexity of human behaviour” (Fleming 1998: 149).

The drama also gives students the chance to become phenomenologists, that is to analyse the life experiences of an individual – which could even be one of the members of the group – by exploring it from different point of views, or ethnographers, namely analysing social and cultural realities. For example, it may be difficult for students to visit the country of their target language, and the drama has the power to bring a fictional native into the classroom, so that students can meet and interview him/her (Edmiston, Wilhelm 1996: 90-93). Being in someone else’s shoes also implies trying to think with someone else’s mind, which gives the student the chance to observe from a new point of view not only language, but also cultural and social contexts (Tschurtschenthaler 2013, in Piazzoli 2018: 67). As described in *Section 1.3.4*, cultural awareness should be fostered in the language classroom just like linguistic knowledge, and the meeting between different cultural and social backgrounds should be promoted (CEFR 2001, in Fonio, Genicot 2011: 77). Through drama students can come closer, explore, understand and learn to respect both the culture of their peers’, who may belong to a different background, and those of people living in different countries (Fonio, Genicot 2011: 77; Stern 1980: 79). For instance, it could be possible to re-create situations that are common in different

societies – one may think about a wedding ceremony – but that differ in their details, so that students can focus and reflect on the similarities and differences between cultures (Davies 1990: 96; Schewe 2012: 10).

Dealing with students' objective and realistic view of the target country, Piazzoli (2018: 67, 69) reports that, through Process Drama, Australian students studying Italian had the chance to review their idea of Italy: the drama brought into the classroom a more realistic picture of Italy, by demystifying it through the exploration of not only its "beautiful architecture", but also social and cultural problems. In practice, the facilitator could for example use the teacher-in-role – a Process Drama tool that will be analysed below – to become a tourist who has just come back from the target country, and who had a negative experience, and students are invited to ask questions to understand what went wrong, and to comment upon the tourist's experience; during this first part of the activity students may even give voice to stereotypes and prejudices towards the foreign country and its inhabitants (Fleming 1998: 152). As already mentioned, fictional situations can also be explored by twisting them: in a later stage students could be asked to become those people the tourist met, and to explain from a different point of view the situation, so as to justify the strangers' attitude towards the tourist, which could unveil cultural misunderstandings (Fleming 1998: 153, 157).

However, although it has been argued that the drama can benefit the language learners in many different ways – such as enabling them to influence the activities with their personalities, feelings, ideas and previous experiences, and to explore different familiar and unfamiliar situations and the language they would need in such occasions (Davies 1990: 94-95; Carson, Murphy 2009: 130) – students may not be accustomed to this kind of activity, and if they are shy or lacking self-confidence, they may also be hostile to it. Therefore, the following sections will deal with some strategies that may be exploited within the classroom to make students aware of the advantages and safety of entering a fictional world.

2.3.2 Step by step into the role

In *Section 2.1* it has been argued that students may need help in becoming accustomed to “exposing” themselves and to work as a group. Similarly, they may feel a sense of unease when asked to enter the fictional world and to become fictional characters (Carson, Murphy 2011: 129). Some practitioners would suggest reducing the shiest students’ anxiety by setting them undemanding tasks, such as passive roles (Scarcella 1978: 45). Others claim that students need to be led through a path which enables them first to experiment with both language and topics that are provided by the facilitator, and step by step to become more autonomous in the selection both of what to say and how to say it, so that they can feel safe speaking up even while pretending to be someone else (Hui 1997: 39-40). This section aims at describing some features – namely pre-text, teacher-in-role and some activities to stimulate creativity – which can be used during Process Drama sessions to help students to enter the fictional world and enjoy the fact of becoming someone else.

In Process Drama the fictional situation that serves as the setting of the activity is usually introduced by the teacher through a pre-text, which is not simply presented to students, but negotiated with them and modified according to their suggestions (Dalziel, Piazzoli forthcoming: 6). However, the pre-text not only creates a context for the following activity/ies – by giving details about the time, the place, the atmosphere and the possible roles of students – but also makes the fiction credible in the learners’ eyes, who will be more involved the more they consider the situation to be realistic, and the more they are willing to take part in the creation and keeping of the make-believe (O’Toole 2008: 17; O’Neill 1995: 20, 22). This Process Drama tool is highly exploited because it can introduce a topic within the language classroom in a dramatic and tension-arousing way – the central role of tension will be deepened below – stimulating both students’ interest and creativity (O’Neill 1995: 43). As already mentioned in the previous section, to enable students not to feel anxious about a language activity, they should be provided with all the necessary knowledge that the task requires to be completed before doing it. Therefore, it may be necessary to somehow introduce the necessary linguistic items to enable students to understand and work on the pre-text (Piazzoli 2011: 558), for example through the warm-up and simple exercises that have been described in the previous section.

Moreover, in order to help students to better understand and enter into the fictional situation, it may be useful to approach the pre-text using several activities – such as questioning or tableaux – which enable them to explore it from different points of view (O’Neill 1995: 3). Finally, the facilitator should also carefully choose the pre-text and if necessary modify it, so that it is suitable for all the students – in terms of language level and interests – and on the basis of the aim of the activity (O’Neill 1995: 39). The pre-text will work better when dealing with an idea or theme that unites the students, which enables them to perceive themselves as a group, and it could even be inspired by a participant’s personal story (Piazzoli 2018: 83, 86).

Another strategy that can be used within the language classroom to encourage the student to enter the fictional world is the “teacher-in-role”, which implies that the facilitator becomes a fictional character (O’Neill 1995: 61; Saccuti 2018: 74). Many Process Drama practitioners use this tool because of its several advantages. Like the pre-text, the teacher-in-role makes the unreal context closer to students, and seeing it embodied by the facilitator they are more directly involved in the dramatic activity (Pheasant 2015). Then, through this strategy, learners are given a model to follow – in particular they learn how to use not only the language and voice, but also props and expressions to become someone else (Pheasant 2015; O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 138). Through the negotiation and discussion that take place while in role, students are given the chance to feel that the dramatic scene and its creation coexist, and the possibility to explore their characters from within the simulation, for example when the facilitator becomes someone who needs or wants to know something about the students’ fictional characters (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 143-144). Moreover, in front of the teacher in role, students become a unique group in the act of following what s/he says or does, but also in trying to guess what the point of the his/her performance is, and in the consequential co-creation of the fictional world (Liu 2002: 11; O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 138). From within his/her new role, the facilitator can also clarify possible misunderstandings without interrupting the suspension of disbelief (Wilburn 1992: 75), which may, in fact, encourage students to point out their doubts more freely, as long as they are able to pretend they are not in front of the teacher.

This strategy both enables students to be active and influence the activity and the facilitator to control it. On the one hand, students are given the chance to outline the

details of the situation through the interaction with the teacher in role (Pheasant 2015); they are encouraged to take part in the activity and speak up by the fact that the facilitator usually takes a lower status role than that played by students – such as that of someone needing help – which lowers possible affective barriers (Dalziel, Piazzoli forthcoming: 6; Edmiston 2003: 227). On the other hand, although s/he should genuinely include the students' suggestions in the creation of the fictional world (O'Neill 1995: 61), the facilitator is also supposed to guarantee the achievement of a coherent result (Liu 2002: 11) – O'Neill (1995: 61) underlines that the more learners group together, the more their suggestions result coherent. Indeed, the facilitator is never totally in role, and, even if s/he keeps the fictional character's appearance, s/he can influence students' suggestions through targeted questions, or adjust the result of negotiation by emphasizing the ideas s/he considers more suitable (Edmiston 2003: 225-226). Heathcote (1984: 23) even claims that “the most secure authority has always been from within the drama situation”, since the teacher only by leaving the usual role is entitled to use any kind of register, and to express also tough opinions and requests, which could be useful to challenge students, to deeply involve them, and to urge them to speak up (O'Toole 2008: 26; Liu 2002: 13). For example, Piazzoli (2011: 568) reports on a Process Drama session in which she played the role of a racist headmaster, whose disrespectful speech was so overwhelming that even the shiest and most taciturn student felt the necessity to claim her dislike for the teacher-in-role's words.

Both the pre-text and the teacher-in-role aim at helping the students to suspend the disbelief and enter the fictional world by giving some information about it. However, as already discussed, Process Drama approach implies collaboration between students and the facilitator, and co-creation of activities. Indeed, learners are often invited to express themselves through the dramatic channel, and to bring into the classroom their personalities, interests, and abilities (Davies 1990: 97), and to exploit them in the creation of the fictional world and characters. This not only enables students to express themselves and to be active participants in their own learning process, but also helps the facilitator to enter their minds and to understand what they are interested in and what their abilities are (Heathcote 1984: 21). Nevertheless, entering a fictional world – and even more taking part in its creation or playing a fictional role – requires creativity, which not all the students may have been encouraged to use in class before (Maley, Duff 1978: 39).

Therefore, it is important first to reassure learners, explaining them that the focus of the activity is not on their acting or creative skills, and that they are only instruments that can be exploited to explore the foreign language in a more dynamic way (Swale 2009: xv; Piazzoli 2018: 36). Also, it could be of some help to point out to students who are worried about their acting skills that playing a role is not something strange or unusual, and that they daily do it – perhaps without being aware of that – since in everyday life the same person takes different social roles on the basis of the context (Walker 1977: 145). Finally, in order not to make students think they are required to show off to be talented actors, when being role the facilitator should keep in mind that his/her performance does not aim at displaying how good s/he is as an actor, but at involving and facilitating students (O’Toole 2008: 14).

There are, then, some activities that can be used to stimulate students’ creativity, and to involve them step by step in the creation of fictional characters and contexts. For example, the facilitator may place in front of students a common object – such as a chair – and ask them to make up a different use for it. It can be useful to let learners speak when they have an idea, without pointing at one of them, and to help them by turning the object or miming something by using it if they do not come up with suggestions (Maley, Duff 1978: 39). Creativity can also be stimulated through activities that require students to fill gaps: for example, they could be asked to complete partial dialogues or to imagine the missing part of a phone call, exercises that enable learners to practice imagination by giving them a track to follow (Al-Saadat, Afifi 1997: 44; Maley, Duff 1978: 57-60). Regarding the exploration and creation of fictional characters, pictures of people can be used: after creating some groups and giving all of them the same picture, the facilitator may ask them to speculate about the person in the picture, and to imagine how old s/he is, what is his/her name or job and so on; through this activity students would not only practice creativity and speaking – since they have to negotiate information with the other members of the group – but also be moved by the curiosity of knowing what the other groups have done, which would make them willing to listen to their peers’ versions (Maley, Duff 1978: 62-63). Similarly, also when students are asked to create tableaux or mime they need to discuss about and outline the characters of the scene in group. Alternatively, it could be the facilitator – both from within or outside the role – who guides the exploration of students’ fictional roles; s/he could lead the students through a

deep analysis of the imaginary context by asking them precise questions, which not only help the learners in case of little creative skills but also enable the facilitator to tacitly influence the activity – for example, by introducing a theme s/he would lead the students to discuss about (Pheasant 2015).

Creativity may stimulate students and involve them in an activity up to the point of enabling them to overcome their language anxiety and concern about producing correct language, since their wish to express themselves leads them to use the communicative skills they have without worrying too much about possible faux pas (Bird 1979: 291). This is an example of how foreign language anxiety can be defeated by the students' necessity to communicate, which can be aroused within the Process Drama session not only by creativity, but also by other features that will be analysed in the following section of the chapter.

2.3.3 Use the shelter, then get out of it

At the beginning of this dissertation, I described how emotions, feelings and other affective factors can influence the foreign language student's participation within the classroom, sometimes even by preventing him/her from practicing the language and, therefore, from learning it. In this section of the chapter I will analyse how the drama can give students both a shelter to feel safe and a reason for coming out into the open.

Speaking the foreign language in the real world can be really threatening, because words have real power and lead to consequences, and students may refuse to speak to avoid risks. In such a situation, the drama can be really useful, since it can be used to re-create situations that resemble real life contexts in which the students may need to speak the foreign language, by giving them the chance to attempt to use vocabulary and linguistic structures without negative consequences (Chang 2011: 6; Early 1977: 34; Stinson, Freebody 2006: 30). Without the risks of real interaction, students are more willing to speak up not only within the classroom, but afterwards, once they have practiced the necessary linguistic features and acquired self-confidence by recognising what they can actually say in the foreign language, also outside, since one needs to entertain hopes of success to take a risk (Stern 1980: 85; Davies 1990: 97; Smith 2017:

2). Moreover, students have the chance to practice in a safe environment “strategies for social interaction” (Scarcella 1978: 43), for example to keep the attention of the interlocutor, to change topic, to develop relationships. In this way, also their confidence in speaking in front of others – both using the mother tongue or the second language – increases (Ntelioglou 2011: 87), partly because the drama evokes situations that students recognise as familiar, and they do not need to force themselves to find something to say (Kao, O’Neill 1998, in Stinson, Freebody 2006: 32).

However, in some cases it may even be the socio-cultural context that leads students to be silent and passive: Al-Saadat and Afifi (1997: 43) report on a group of Saudi Arabian students who were reluctant to take part in discussions and make decisions not because of foreign language anxiety or shyness, but because they were accustomed to following the instructions of the authority, in this case the teacher. However, negotiation and interaction in the foreign language are necessary to learn it, and the drama proved to be a successful instrument to induce them to put aside their usual roles and become active students.

This drama-based device provides not only a safe training ground where learners can practice before facing real life situations, but also a mask that students can use to protect themselves within the classroom. Indeed, when drama-based activities are used within the language classroom they expose students to risks requiring them both to use a language they are still learning, and to explore feelings and emotions, which they may also be asked to share with the other members of the group (Swale 2009: xvii). Students may therefore fear both making mistakes regarding the language, and losing face in front of their peers and the teacher because of what they think or feel. This often prevents them from saying even just few words in the foreign language, since without talking they can avoid saying silly things (Hashemi 2011: 1814). However, the fictional character the learner plays during drama is often worn as a mask, which makes the student feel safe (Piazzoli 2011: 569). Putting on this mask they feel more comfortable not only in using the foreign language (Stinson, Freebody 2006: 29; Carson 2012: 57), but also in expressing feelings, emotions and ideas, and in exploring parts of their identity that are usually kept silent (Saccuti 2018: 80). Indeed, students can leave aside the role they usually play in real life and, by losing the “tyranny of identity” (Winston 2011: 3), explore different selves they usually do not express. Thanks to this mask, they are enabled to take

risks without fearing the consequences, since possible negative evaluation or criticism would fall on the fictional character, not on the student (Stern 1980: 80; Stinson, Freebody 2006: 30).

So far it has been described how students can be led step by step into the fictional world, and that they can exploit it as a shelter. However, the drama may induce learners to take part in the language activity also by pushing them through urgency to express themselves. For example, an exploitation-worthy aspect of drama, which may solve the problem of students' little involvement in the language classroom is tension (Walker 1977: 144). It has been described as "mental excitement [...] intellectual and emotional engagement" (Morgan, Saxton 1987, in Liu 2002: 12), which enables not only the student to be interested, curious and willing to take part in what is happening within the classroom (O'Toole 2008: 17), but also the facilitator, who may feel excited first in the moment of creating tension, and then in witnessing the students' reactions to it (Pheasant 2015). Moreover, once tension has been released, students appear to be spurred to speak about it with their peers to share what they have felt, producing meaningful interaction in the foreign language (Maley, Duff 1977: 24). However, if on the one hand tension seems to be necessary to create engaging activities – Piazzoli (2018: 83-84) describes it as "the motor that powers good storytelling" – on the other hand if a task is too tension-arousing students may feel unsafe taking part in it (Pheasant 2015).

Tension can have many different sources. It may be aroused by a gap in the participants' knowledge about the event on which the drama activity is based, which provokes curiosity and leads the students to spring into action in order to gain the lacking information or solve mysteries (Liu 2002: 12; Davies 1990: 89; O'Toole 2008: 17). Also, unpredictable and surprising elements or facts gives vitality to the lesson (O'Neill, Lambert 1982: 137; Pheasant 2015), as also the simple turning of "a familiar situation into an unfamiliar one" (Maley, Duff 1977: 24). Another powerful tool to enrich a task with tension – but also to force students to focus on the aim – is giving them little time to complete it: a simple countdown would energize the group, and, putting students under strain, lead them to focus on the completion of the activity (Pheasant 2015). Having little time to plan the language – for example during an improvisation – students are forced to speak spontaneously, without worrying too much about linguistic correctness, and they also seem to recall vocabulary items better (Bird 1979: 291). Little time, lacking

information, unpredictable events and problems to solve – both in the real or in the fictional context – arouse emotional excitement because students are required to deal with an obstacle that is not easy to overcome (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 137; O’Toole 2008: 17; Piazzoli 2018: 83).

Finally, tension also results from the unavoidable clash between the real and the fictional world (O’Toole 1992, in Piazzoli 2018: 85), which is naturally brought into the classroom when drama-activities are adopted. The contrast between the fictional role and the real person playing is called *metaxis* (O’Toole 1992, Boal 2000, in Pheasant 2015). Indeed, when an individual pretends to be someone else, s/he cannot completely forget about his/her real self, experiences, emotions, values, which could contrast with those of the fictional character at issue, creating tension and agitation within the individual, who may also be perturbed by the necessity of pretending that the fictional is real (O’Neill 1995: 4; Saccuti 2018: 80). The contrast between the two worlds may emerge: through the actual relationships between the members of the group, and how their dynamics necessarily change when people are in role (Pheasant 2015); because of the struggle students feel when speaking the foreign language in role, since they need – simultaneously – to keep monitoring the structures and the words they use as if they were observing the fictional scene from outside (Anderson 2002, Flavell et al. 2000, in Pheasant 2015; Haseman 1991: 19-20).

Many of the already discussed activities can be used to arouse tension within the Process Drama session. Even familiar activities such as describing a peer’s clothes or a picture can become challenging if students are provided with an obstacle: for example, they could be asked to observe a picture and to recall to mind its details, in teams and without looking at it; the difficulty of completing the task and the wish to be more precise than the other teams lead students to use the foreign language to share as much knowledge as possible (Maley, Duff 1977: 24; Maley, Duff 1978: 51-54). Mime and tableaux also create tension by limiting the tools students can use to complete the tasks of communicating and understanding a message. Moreover, some students may feel embarrassed to stand still in front of people who keep staring at them, and once they have been eased of the obligation of staying still and silent, they might react by expressing their uneasiness, and also by explaining to the other members of the group possible

misunderstandings that have emerged during the activity (Schewe, Woodhouse 2018: 59), a case of meaningful use of the foreign language.

Finally, the pre-text and the teacher-in-role can also be used to present a dramatic situation asking students to solve a problem or to unveil mysteries (Liu 2002: 12). When the teacher takes on a role, students may be surprised by this practice – at least the first time they see it – and also perturbed by the contrast between the real self of the teacher and the character s/he plays (O’Neill, Lambert 1982: 139; O’Toole 2008: 26). To sum up, tension – which can be aroused during a Process Drama session through the above-mentioned and other activities – can be the element that urges students to put aside foreign language anxiety in order to express themselves, even though that implies running the risk of making mistakes (Somers 1994, in Chang 2011: 8).

Another important aspect that should not be neglected during second language lessons is enthusiasm, which is largely influenced by the facilitator’s attitude. Indeed, Smith (2017: 4) reports how the energy of a facilitator within the class can involve even the shy students and move them to take on a fictional role, even when they are reluctant to do so. The author compares the attitude of two facilitators: while the first guided the group from the outside, detached from the activity, and failed to involve the students, the facilitator of the second group managed to involve even the most reluctant student in the acting activity by using gestures, paralinguistic features, body language and objects to make the storytelling more involving. As a consequence, while the students of the first group limited themselves to repeating the sentences suggested by the facilitator without really getting involved in the story and being relieved when the activity stopped, those of the second group had the chance to imitate the gestures and the enthusiasm of their facilitator, giving vitality to their fictional characters. In the latter case, the facilitator and the student shared the responsibility for the creation of the character and the scene, so that the learners did not feel anxious but could enjoy the playfulness of drama (Smith 2017: 5). Furthermore, students’ comprehension of the scene was helped by the gestures of the facilitator, and their self-confidence aroused because they did not need a translation in the mother tongue to gain the meaning (Smith 2017: 6, 8). Therefore, thanks to the involving behaviour of the facilitator, students could forget about their poor dramatic or linguistic skills, and take delight in the completion of the performance (Smith 2017: 9-10; Hsu 1975: 4).

Moreover, the drama can lead students to reflect upon cultural topics or language through playfulness and fun, which enable learners to lower affective barriers and to benefit from the activity in terms of enjoyment and learning (Piazzoli 2018: 35; Boudreault 2010: 1-2) – although students should be informed that humour and laughs are instruments, not the aim, so that they would not feel bound to be funny (Paul 2015: 118). But students can be involved emotionally by the intercultural exchanges and the experience of remote places that can be aroused (Carson 2012: 56), or by the “feeling of sympathy” (Owens, Barber 2001: 31) towards the fictional characters. Indeed, through the drama the student can get closer and closer to the role s/he play, even identify with him/her, a connection that makes the activity more involving, authentic and meaningful (Athimoolam 2013: 34; Smith 2017: 9). For example, Schewe (1998: 217) reports how he used Process Drama to deal with the history of a Jewish girl during Nazism in Germany: a student was asked to play the role of the young Jewish girl, who needed to keep her identity secret, while the facilitator became an insistent landlord trying to understand the truth about her. At the end of the activity – when the make-belief can be stopped to enable learners to reflect upon the scene from the outside (O’Toole 2008: 17) – the student-in-role explained how she felt overwhelmed by anxiety and a sense of helplessness during the activity, although she knew it was just pretence. This can be considered a case of aesthetic engagement: students have the chance to look at something they already know in a different way, noticing and understanding something more about a topic or an experience because of the involvement of both cognition, senses, imagination and emotional absorption (Bundy 2003: 172; Cupchik 2011: 8; Wilburn 1992: 67; Piazzoli 2018: 65; Beug, Schewe 1997: 418).

In a nutshell, the drama proves to be useful not only as shelter for shy students or as training ground for possible real-life situations, but also because it can be used to arouse tension, enthusiasm, enjoyment, sympathy and other emotions that can meaningfully involve students in the learning activity, and foster them to put aside foreign language anxiety and to speak up. Indeed, many different authors recognise the importance of dealing with language learning by involving not only students’ intellectual faculties but also their emotions (Maley, Duff 1977: 17), and Process Drama seems to successfully answer to this need in many different ways: it can evoke aesthetic responses that deepen students’ understanding (Schewe 1998: 218), free them from the shyness and

the anxiety that prevent them from expressing themselves in class (Phaesant 2015), and lead them to give utterance to their creativity and spontaneity (Stern 1980: 85-86). Furthermore, when students are absorbed in the fictional world, fear of negative evaluation, shyness, stress and concern about linguistic correctness fade into the background, while the completion of the task, the necessity to communicate and to keep the drama up would encourage them to exploit all their communicative skills – second language included – almost forgetting about their foreign language anxiety (Ntelioglou 2011: 89-90; Schewe, Woodhouse 2018: 62; Carson 2012: 55; Early 1977: 34; Winston 2011: 3).

Chapter three

Two case studies

The final chapter of this work will provide two examples of how drama-based activities and Process Drama can be introduced into a foreign language workshop, in particular in two contexts where Italian is the language to be learnt. These two cases will show both the advantages of using this approach – such as enabling learners to deal with the foreign language in a more dynamic way or helping them in overcoming foreign language anxiety – and the difficulties of introducing it into the classroom – for example, the necessity of creating a community atmosphere, or of involving all the participants.

The first course of workshops that will be described was organized at the University of Warwick (Coventry, UK) by Dr. Alessandra De Martino – Associate Research Fellow – with my collaboration. It was mainly addressed to English-speaker students of the above-mentioned University, but Italian students were also invited to collaborate. The second case study will report on a series of meetings that was organized in Padova (Italy) by the association *Razzismo Stop*: the activities were planned and carried out by Professor Fiona Dalziel – associate professor at the University of Padova – with my collaboration, and addressed to women who had recently immigrated to Padova and who needed to learn or practice Italian.

As will emerge from the following pages, these two cases are different in many aspects: the kind of participants, their motivation, the context, the activities that had been proposed, and the level of anxiety of the learners. For example, while the group attending the workshop in Warwick was composed both of Italians and of English people who had studied Italian through University modules – and some of them also during their secondary school years – those who took part in the workshop in Padova were mostly women who had never studied Italian regularly and who had attended only courses of few months. The two groups might also have different motivations to attend the workshops. First, while the students of Warwick may have chosen to study Italian for reasons of integrative motivation – such as interest in the country or the culture – the women of the workshop in Padova needed to learn Italian so that they could get a job, or even to obtain

a residence permit. Second, at the University of Warwick students had many other opportunities to learn and practice Italian – not only University modules, but also societies and intercultural events – while for many of the women of the second case the workshop was the only chance not only to learn and practice Italian, but also to get in touch with expert speakers of Italian.

This different composition of the two groups had consequences on the workshops in many respects. First, it led to a dissimilar use of Italian during the meetings. In the first case it was widely used because all the participants – apart from one, who was helped with some translations – could understand also elaborate instructions given in Italian. On the contrary, the vast majority of the women attending the course in Padova needed constant translation into English – which was often used as a *lingua franca* – of the instructions to complete the activity, and into Italian of the words and expression they needed to use. Second, the previous learning experiences of the participants and their needs probably influenced their level of foreign language anxiety. As will be described, in the first case only a few students showed signs of foreign language anxiety and, however, all of them tried to overcome it actively. On the other hand, regarding the workshops in Padova, the reverse scenario would occur: the majority of the participants showed a high level of foreign language anxiety, and needed to be led step by step throughout the learning path to encourage them to overcome fear and speak.

The two courses also differed with respect to the activities that had been proposed, which were different in part because of the different needs of the groups. The meetings held in Warwick aimed to dramatize a short story, so as to obtain a script and to use it for a dramatized reading; therefore, all the meetings were connected, and the participants took part in the project from the beginning to the end – although a few of them joined the group after the first meeting. In the second case, since the participants could change every time, each meeting was complete in itself, and included a welcome phase – to enable the new participants to know each other – a warm-up phase – to introduce them the drama-based approach – and a Process Drama one – asking both students and the facilitators to take on fictional roles.

The following pages will describe these two case studies separately, focusing both on how the drama-based activities benefited the learners, and on the obstacles that participants and facilitators came up against throughout the meetings. The participants

will be mentioned using the first letter of their names, and their linguistic competence and country of origin will be reported only when meaningful for the topic at issue. The considerations that follow derived from the observations I noted down in a journal after each meeting, from the comments of the two main facilitators – Professor Dalziel and Dr. De Martino – about the respective courses, and from the participants’ feedback.

3.1 From Warwick to Roma Termini

This first section will deal with a workshop organized by Dr. Alessandra De Martino – Associate Research Fellow at the University of Warwick – and my collaboration⁵. The aim of the workshop was to enable English-speaking students who were studying Italian not only to approach the learning of the foreign language through a different channel – namely drama-based activities – but also to promote exchanges with Italian native speakers. The workshop took place at the University of Warwick between January and February 2018, and both English and Italian students had been invited to take part in it.

As will be described, the course was composed of two phases. During the first six meetings the participants and I met to read together and dramatize *Vigile*⁶ a short story by the Italian author Gianrico Carofiglio (Bari, 1961)⁷ suggested by Dr. De Martino as starting point for the workshop. Then, during other three meetings the whole group met together, and we exercised pronunciation, revised the script, and, finally, performed the final version of it under the supervision of Dr. De Martino – as will be described, it was a dramatised reading of the script, not an actual performance of a play. The attendance at the workshop was not compulsory, and in totality seven students took part in the project: three of them were Italian Erasmus students, one an Italian girl who was studying there, and three English students – one beginner and two advanced.

The following analysis will particularly focus on the English-speaking participants, so as to understand how the drama activities might have helped them in the Italian learning process, and if this kind of approach lowered – when present – foreign language anxiety.

⁵ I was studying at the University of Warwick as an Erasmus student.

⁶ *Vigilie* is part of the book “Non esiste saggezza” (2010), a collection of ten short stories that portray everyday life situations and people, who are sometimes mysterious, symbolic and evanescent.

⁷ <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gianrico-carofiglio/>

3.1.1 Phase one: the creation of the script

While some of the participants had already had the chance to read the short story *Vigilie* during a University module tutored by Dr. De Martino, most of them had not; therefore, during the first meetings, part of the time was devoted to reading through it together. Moreover, since it was difficult to find moments when all the students were available, the script was mostly written by small groups, which I could join most of the time.

During the first meeting of the writing phase, after reading together the first part of the story, the participants were divided into pairs, so that they could discuss the story and think about some new characters; indeed, the story portrays one main character – Maresciallo Bovio – and in order to have enough roles for all the participants it would be necessary to extend through imagination those characters that in the story have smaller roles, or even to invent some. I paired up with V., who represents a good case: since her parents are Italian, she described herself as an English-Italian bilingual, but during the first few meetings she only spoke English. While we were working together, we decided to introduce two comical pickpockets in the story, and to characterize them with a coarse language; the introduction of rude words created tension because of our doubts about how many of them we could actually use in the script and made the writing somehow more exciting. Although she kept speaking English and only suggested some lines in Italian for the script, V. was very involved in the activity, and kept on suggesting ideas on how to perform the scene. V., as also most of the other participants, showed from the very beginning to be creative, and to be willing to take part in the creation of the fictional world.

During the following meetings, V. started to speak a little more Italian, and when she had doubts about some words, she appeared to be completely at her ease in asking the Italian students for help. Similarly, E. – another English girl with an advanced level of Italian – took part with enthusiasm in the writing of the script and, since most of the time the language used was Italian, she interacted by using Italian, asking explicitly the translation of what she did not know. During the third meeting, when most of the participants were present, it emerged that they wished to create an actual play, not just a dramatised reading; when I raised the doubt that for the English students it might be difficult to learn many lines in Italian by heart, E. replied that they knew Italian enough

to do it, an answer that led me to understand that she was highly self-confident, a characteristic that probably enabled her to speak Italian without fearing making mistakes (see *Section 1.1.1*).

During the fifth meeting, L. – an English student with a beginner level of Italian – took part to the workshop for the first time. After reading through the story together, since L. had never read it, we split up into couples, and I worked with the newcomer. She had just started studying Italian and was willing to learn as much as possible; however, she only spoke English, and often did not express it clearly if she had problems in understanding the Italian utterances that we often used during the workshop. Indeed, while working on a scene regarding Christmas and food, she noticed that I wrote “tavolo” [table] as a necessary stage prop, but “tavola” in the stage directions “*Moglie porta un piatto a tavola*” [*Wife brings a dish to the table*]; her observation led us and the other two participants – V. and I. (Italian native speaker) – to reflect on the difference between the male and the female words, both referring to the table. At the end of this writing session, I noticed that all the participants, L. included, wanted to read aloud what they had written, regardless of their level of Italian.

During the last writing session, the group had also the chance to introduce to the script some elements to underline through the lines of the characters and of an off-screen voice that it was set in Rome: indeed, F. (an Italian student who had studied in Rome for one year) proposed some Roman idioms – for example, “Chi nasce tonno nun po’ mori’ quadro” [Those who were born round, cannot die square] – and also some simple poems by the poet, Trilussa (Rome, 1871-1950)⁸, which were translated and explained to the English students. This gave us the chance to compare Italian and English idioms and to have a brief discussion about the Italian dialects, since both the poems and the idioms were in Roman dialect. The English students already knew about the existence of different dialects in Italy, and were curious to know more about that, and to listen to the different words belonging to the different cities – indeed, while F. could give some example about Rome, I provided some words in the dialect of Verona/Vicenza, and I. in that of Brescia. Moreover, since the story was set in the Roma Termini railway station, we decided to introduce the recorded information one can usually hear in stations in Italy – such as,

⁸ <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/trilussa/>

“Treno in transito al binario tre. Allontanarsi dalla linea gialla” [The train is approaching platform three. Stay behind the yellow line.] – both as a line to be read and as background sounds. This element led the group not only to compare the words of the Italian announcements with the English ones, for example those of the London Tube, but also the similar tone they are uttered with. The English students appeared very interested in these practical aspects of everyday life in Italy, and keen to witness them in person when they would come to Italy – a kind of curiosity about the target language and culture that could lead the student to become an intercultural speaker (see *Section 1.3.4*). During this meeting, I noticed that all the students were highly involved, they asked questions and gave contributions, both in Italian and in English, and also L. – although her level of Italian was lower than that of the other participants – took part actively to the discussion, since all the others were willing to help her in understanding the Italian utterances and the script.

Through the writing phase we created a first draft of the script, that would then be adjusted under the supervision of Dr. De Martino, on the basis both of students’ linguistic level and of the actual time we had to complete the project. The script turned out to be very dynamic, with many dialogues derived from the students’ reflections about social topics that are dealt with in the original short story, such as the loneliness many people would particularly feel on Christmas Eve, or prejudice and stereotypes. But the script was also full of irony and vitality, thanks to lighter scenes, such as the one about a young business woman speaking English – but with an Italian accent – on the phone: since an English student played this role, the scene was particularly enjoyable and involving, because she needed to reflect upon how to convey a stereotypically Italian accent, although she was English.

3.1.2 Phase two: speaking and standing up

The following workshop – supervised by Dr. De Martino – addressed three areas in particular: the first was getting to know each other and being comfortable within the group; the second was pronunciation; and the third was becoming physically at ease in front of an audience – processes that aimed at creating the safe environment described in *Section 2.2*. At the beginning of the meetings, the participants had the chance to become

more comfortable in speaking in front of someone else, but also to know something more about the other students. At first the activities were little demanding, and the students were asked to speak about themselves to a single partner for three minutes; in this phase both the students who already knew each other and those who had met only a few times seemed involved, because in that space of time one has the time to say much about oneself, not only the usual superficial information. “È quasi come parlare allo specchio” (P.) [It is like speaking to yourself in the mirror]. The following activities were similar, but a little more demanding: the first task implied that the partner pretended not to listen, the second that s/he repeated all the words of the person speaking, and the third that s/he interrupted him/her continually. During these activities P. and I. who were already friends tried to challenge each other, although sometimes I. looked more embarrassed by the insistence of P. in interrupting her, while L. and F., who met only a few times, tried to be mild with the partner, and actually used those moments to know more about the other’s life.

The second part of the workshop aimed to help the English students above all. It focused on drawing students’ attention to the different pronunciations of the Italian vowels – such as the difference between [é] and [è] – first by asking the participants to read some words according to the pronunciation that the Italian dictionary provided, and then asking the Italian participants how those words were pronounced in the variety of Italian of the cities where they had lived – namely, Rome, Milan, Brescia, Naples and Verona. This phase was particularly interesting for the English speakers: partly because it helped them with the difficulties they have both in perceiving and producing the differences between the vowels, and partly because their attention was attracted by the differences between the varieties of Italian. Finally, the students were asked to complete some activities that gave them the chance to “expose” themselves in front of the others as if they were the audience. The most involving one was that requiring students to write something about themselves on paper and then to stand in front of the others for one minute showing them the writing, while no one would speak: after the activity, some of the participants said that at first they were willing to show the other what they had written, but then, once they had started standing in front of people who were staring at them without saying anything they felt embarrassed.

After this workshop – which aimed to give students exposure to both letting them know each other and to come to know what the effect of standing in front of an audience was – regarding the building up to the main dramatised reading, the group met a total of two times, during which the participants focused on the performability of the script. Indeed, given that the first draft was created to be learnt off by heart and to be performed, it was necessary to refine and condense it, namely by reducing the movements and adding lines to make the plot clearer. It was also necessary to adjust some lines, or even delete part of them, to make it easier for the English students both to read and interpret them. Moreover, during these meetings, under the supervision of Dr. De Martino not only the pronunciation, but also the intonation of the lines was practiced: indeed, thanks to some suggestions from the supervisor and F., who had lived in Rome, L. (an English speaker) managed to colour her character giving it a credible Roman accent, and the intonation also helped her in understanding the meaning of some lines, as she herself claimed.

The final meeting included a short rehearsal and the public reading. However, there were only three people in the audience – all English students studying Italian – and I noticed that the participants in the workshop were a little disappointed about this, but, on the other hand, it reduced possible anxiety. In the end, the performance itself became a lesson, giving an example of what was described in *Section 2.1.1* as focus on the process. Following the first reading, Dr. De Martino involved the audience by holding a question and answer session: she asked them if they had understood the concepts behind the performance, since it might not have been evident at first glance. For instance, the scene was divided into two parts representing the past and present realities of the protagonist – Maresciallo Bovio – and it was through this final discussion that the audience came to better understand the plot and the role of each character. Finally, since a new spectator arrived, Dr. De Martino proposed to repeat the dramatized reading, and all the students agreed: this second performance enabled the audience to listen to it with new knowledge, which gave them the chance to enjoy the reading more.

3.1.3 Feedback and conclusions

The participants' comments about the course of workshops offer some interesting starting points for some reflections. Many students underlined the benefit deriving from the multiculturalism of the group: they particularly appreciated the chance of comparing different varieties of Italian, and the different idioms and puns that are used in the different cities, and also the chance of comparing them with the English ones. This is an example of how the comparisons between the languages and cultural aspects of the native and the target country may involve students (see *Section 1.3.4*). F. and E. particularly appreciated the creative work of writing a script, and claimed to have found it stimulating to reflect upon nuances of meaning, musicality and readability of a script, but also upon the different language that a short story and a play require. The English-speaker students appreciated the chance to interact with – or even just listen to – Italian native speakers, also claiming that this collaboration enabled them to write a better script in terms of language and cultural references. E. particularly appreciated the opportunity to reflect upon socio-cultural stereotypes both through the characters of the short story and those made up throughout the writing of the script. Moreover, A. (Italian native speaker) claimed that the contact with English people who were studying Italian led her to focus on her own language, and on the difficulties of learning it, something she had never thought about before.

However, almost all the participants declared that they would have liked to perform the script as an actual play with movements, props, and a larger audience, so as to practice how to move on a stage, but also how to speak in front of many people. The comment of V. about this aspect is particularly interesting:

V.: Perhaps we could have done more stage practice and recited to the people around us for practice. I am aware this would have been an uncomfortable experience at the time but a great thing for public speaking skills.

This shows that while some other students – for example, E. and F. – expressed the desire to perform the script as a play because they wanted to bring their acting skills into play, V. was looking for an experience to become more comfortable in speaking in front of other people, both in Italian and English, and she recognised the difficulties that this kind

of “exposure” might have implied (see *Section 2.2.1*). Nevertheless, all the participants understood the difficulties of preparing for and performing an actual play, and accepted the dramatized reading as a happy medium.

The whole project, from the first meeting to the final performance, lasted three weeks. Since it involved creating a script to work on, the group had little time to create the safe place and relaxed atmosphere that has been described in *Section 2.2*. This emerged, for example, from the fact that A. and L., who came just twice during the writing phase, barely took part in the following discussions about the adaptations to do to the script and the movements. Moreover, while L. could have had problems with the language – during the meetings Italian was mostly used – A. being an Italian native speaker was more probably impeded by the little familiarity she had with the other members of the group. Nevertheless, during the two final meetings – which were devoted to rehearsing all together – the group proved to be more united, and the members to work well together: anyone who might have needed help with the language or with the dynamics of the script could easily receive suggestions from the other participants. It was probably by seeing how well the group could work that E. wrote in her final feedback that she would have preferred more meetings with the whole group, instead of meeting in groups of three or four students to write the script, and also to have more students because “more striking comparisons and observations could have been made as a result”.

However, despite the little time we had to complete the project, both the English and the Italian students had the chance to measure themselves against the writing of a script, speaking in public, or taking decisions as a group; moreover, those who might have been anxious about speaking Italian could practice it both in small groups during the writing phase, and with the whole group when rehearsing and performing the script.

3.2 From here and there to Padova

This section will describe a course of workshops that took place in Padova in October and November 2018, promoted by the association *Razzismo Stop*, and organized by Professor Fiona Dalziel – associate professor at the University of Padova – with my collaboration. The group met once a week for six weeks, and each meeting lasted about three hours. It was meant only for women: indeed, the purpose was to create a safe environment where women with little knowledge of Italian could practice and learn it without feeling embarrassed, which would be encouraged also by the approach that would be adopted: the Process Drama approach.

Since no limits on language knowledge had been set, and since the activity had been promoted through leaflets, posters but also through the social networks, it was difficult to predict both who and how many people would come. Moreover, after the first few meetings, it became clear that the group would not be always the same, first because – the course not being compulsory – some women just came once, and second because some came to know about the course only after a few weeks after the first meeting. Due to this continual change of participants, it was necessary to create a series of workshops that could be completed within the three hours of each meeting, and most of the tasks planned to be completed during one meeting were not linked one another, so that even those women who arrived later could take part in what the group was doing. Therefore, the activities were planned by taking into consideration that they would possibly need to be modified during the execution of the workshop itself, depending on the number of participants and their linguistic level.

Throughout the six meetings 17 different women took part in the activities, from a minimum of three to a maximum of seven people per day; most of them were from Nigeria, the others from Ghana, Morocco, Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Brazil, Slovenia, and Moldova. The group was composed of different kind of migrants, some of whom were refugees or asylum seekers, while others were international students or economic migrants. English was often used as a lingua franca, both to better explain the activities to the participants, and also among the participants when they needed to discuss and create little scenes; however, not all the women spoke English, which sometimes created

problems as will be described. Since there were often new people, most meetings started with a series of exercises aimed at giving the participants the chance to know each other and to create a group atmosphere, and with undemanding activities that could help the facilitator in understanding the women's level of language, and the women in getting accustomed to the unconventional learning approach – to this end drama-based activities requiring movements and creativity were often alternated with moments of reflection, discussion or explanation where the participants were seated.

The section will not display step by step what happened during the workshops, nor it will describe all the activities – such as warm-up exercises, games to express emotions, tableaux, mimes, hot seating, semi-improvisation and so on – but will report on some events that can be useful to reflect upon the effect foreign language anxiety can have on the individual, and on how Process Drama activities may be used to make the anxious learner feel in a safe environment. What follows is the result of the observations Professor Dalziel and I made upon the behaviour of the participants during their workshop, of the comments and doubts the participants raised during the activities, and of the final focus group interview the participants took part in during the last meeting.

3.2.1 Anxiety: a matter of smiles and bags

From the very start of the first meeting it became clear that the participants had different levels of Italian. When Professor Dalziel asked “Cosa trovate difficile dell’italiano?” – then translating it also into English – V. (a woman from Moldova with an intermediate level of Italian, who wishes to study at the University in Italy) answered that she had problems with the choice of preposition, which suggests that she not only knew the language, but had also studied its grammar. On the other hand, the other four women of the first meeting said – or nodded in assent – that they simply found difficult to understand when Italians speak. However, within this second group it is possible to create a distinction between P. (a woman from Slovenia who had arrived in Italy two weeks before the beginning of the workshop) and J. and B. (from Nigeria) and M. (from Pakistan): indeed, all of them had a little knowledge of Italian, but while the former did not fear taking the risk of making mistakes, the others preferred not to say a word, demonstrating

a high level of debilitating foreign language anxiety (see *Section 1.1.2*). It could be interesting to notice that P. had an Italian flatmate and the chance to listen to and practice the second language⁹, while J., during an informal chat with Professor Dalziel and me, complained about the lack of interaction with Italians in her everyday life. The absence of contacts with the Italian community and its culture emerged also during a role-play set within a restaurant: although many of the participants had been in Italy for years, they could not name Italian dishes, apart from “pasta” and “pizza”.

Therefore, even by meeting those women once, it was possible to understand if their learning process was hampered by foreign language anxiety or not. For example, although their levels of Italian were very different, P. and V. – as also S. (from Syria), Js. and A. (two women from Iran), M. (from Brazil), and I. (from Nigeria) – had the same attitude towards the learning process from the first time they came to the workshop: they exploited every chance they had to test structures and words through output, and tried to say what they were thinking by using circumlocutions if they did not know all the words, asking for the Italian translation of words they needed by saying them in English, or even asking clarification about grammar. Some of them could say very few words in Italian, but they showed a great involvement in the activities both in terms of language and creativity.

On the other hand, there are those women with such a small knowledge of language that even when asked to say their name feel under pressure, which they often try to mask with a smile. For example, M. (from Pakistan) and F. (from Morocco) did not speak English, and had a beginner’s level Italian, which made it difficult both to explain them the activities and to build mutual trust. However, on few occasions these women showed that the affective barrier can be overcome. In the first meeting, during an activity to get to know each other, the participants were asked to say their names by making a gesture, so that the other members of the group could repeat both the name and the gesture. When it came M.’s turn, she just smiled and after a few seconds of complete silence opened her arms as a sign of surrender since she had not understood what to do; however, the rest of the group took that as her gesture, and repeated it saying her name, a reaction that led her to smile – sincerely this time – probably because she understood she

⁹ It is difficult to classify Italian as second or foreign language here, since for most of the participants the second language is English, since they have just started to learn Italian.

had completed the task although she had not understood the instructions. Also, during a semi-improvisation, when it seemed impossible to involve her because of the lack of a lingua franca, the use of a piece of cloth led her to say the word “sarta” [dressmaker], which enabled to adjust the scene so that to include a dressmaker and make her feel involved.

That of F. is a very similar case: at that time, she had been in Italy for only two weeks, and she could not say a single word, and, therefore, she was really anxious about showing her little competence in front of other people. She also turned out to be very shy: indeed, although some of the other participants tried to involve her by speaking Arabic, she was reluctant to take on active part in the activities. Her anxiety was observable during the simple activities of saying the vowels – she said them in a whisper – and unveiled by the constant smile she wore when not following the instructions to the activities. However, giving her a simple task to complete proved to enhance her self-confidence: during a preparatory activity, she was asked to mime the word “occhi” [eyes]; as I could not explain that to her using words, I showed her what to do. First, she did not understand and just stoop up in front of the others, but the I showed to her again what to do and she completed the task. The second time I asked her to mime “sorriso” [smile]: this time she already knew what to do, and when she saw she could complete the activity, a genuine smile of satisfaction substituted the fictional one. This serves as an example of how simple, short-term goals may arouse motivation (see *Section 1.3.3*). It would have been interesting to observe if her self-confidence would have increased through Process Drama activities, but both F. and M. just came once, maybe because of the obstacle constituted by the lack of a lingua franca.

A common characteristic shared by most of the women who were reluctant to “expose” themselves was that of keeping their bag close to them, as if to protect it from an external threat. The fact was observed the first time by Professor Dalziel when F. arrived and sit down by holding tight her bag for the whole first part of the meeting; this curious event had been observed several times during the workshops, and the women keeping the bags tighter and longer – or keeping on the jacket – turned out to be those less willing to “expose” themselves. It might seem a consideration of little account, but it became very meaningful during the fourth meeting: when I arrived, I saw that the group was composed by all new participants, and that all of them but one – M. from Brazil –

kept their bags tight. It is worth noting that M. proved to be the participant who was most involved in the activities, and who was more willing to practice Italian and test her hypothesis, while all the others had been little collaborative up to the end of the day – I particularly remember K. (from Nigeria) who had her hands in her pockets for the whole time, and who used to laugh out of embarrassment when asked to speak Italian. However, it was possible to observe that thanks to the warm-up activities the participants were able to relax, and to lower their guard over the bags. Although I had the impression that during that meeting trust and comradeship had been really difficult to build, I noticed two moments when fun and curiosity led most of the participants to lower defence: fun arose during a game where they were asked to repeat the name of the person next to them, when the fact of forgetting some names led them to laugh and help each other; curiosity emerged during the collection of the words used in different languages to say “fuoco” [fire], which seemed to animate and involve the participants who were asked to say it in their own language. Indeed, by collecting the words used in different languages to refer to fire, they had the chance not only to feel that their native culture and language had the same value as the target one, but also to actively contribute to the activity, and to get curious about other languages – which made the task more involving (see *Section 1.3.4*).

3.2.2 B. and J.: emerging from laughs and whispers

Although the above-mentioned women just came once, and it was not possible to observe the potential process of gradual involvement and lowering of anxiety, the case of two other women – J. and B. from Nigeria, who knew each other and came together to the first workshop – can be displayed as an example of how Process Drama may be useful to lead reluctant learners to actively take part in the language activities. B. came at three meetings out of six, and J. at five.

Focusing first on B., it is interesting to notice how her constant defensive laughing and reluctance to take part in the activities gave space to genuine involvement meeting after meeting. Indeed, during the very first day, B. seemed to be little trustful towards the method, and whenever she was asked to do or to say something she reacted by showing – or saying – she did not understand the instruction; furthermore, when the

task was clear – for example when the participants were asked to say their names in turn – she said hers, but while nervously laughing and glancing at J., maybe in search of complicity since she was clearly embarrassed. In this case it was not only the low level of Italian that influenced B.’s performance, since it was not required to use the language but only to say one’s name. She was probably mostly influenced by her own shyness and by the fear of failure, which are factors that often hamper communication (see Section 1.1.1). The same behaviour recurred for the whole warm-up phase, apart from the “emotional walk”: after listing together some emotions, the participants were asked to start walking and to adapt their steps on the basis of a particular emotion; I expected to see B. simply walking and smiling, while, on the contrary I saw that she was properly accomplishing the task, expressing the emotion at issue both through the walking and facial expressions. This fact led me to think that she might feel the necessity to defend herself only when she was at the centre of the attention, which made her feel too exposed. Indeed, again, during the presentation of a brief scene that had been prepared in advanced n group, B. starts laughing and glancing at J. instead of saying her lines, and the other members of her group – V. and P. who were absorbed in the fictional world and wanted to complete the performance – looked a little disappointed by her behaviour. However, her reluctance to speak Italian slightly faded during one of the last activities of the day, requiring the participants to say in Italian some jobs: although she understood the instruction only after some jobs had been listed by the others, B. started to whisper the jobs she knew, and after receiving the facilitators’ confirmation she showed to be willing to say others, because she knew the Italian words.

During the second meeting it became clearer that B.’s reserve was mostly due to the presence of people she did not know, and to the exposure of her little knowledge of Italian in front of them. This speculation results from witnessing her active participation and numerous attempts to use Italian words throughout most of the activities of the second meeting, where only two other participants – S. and J., who seems to be a close friend of B. – were present. Indeed, it was still possible to notice a difference: she forgot about embarrassment and laughs during the activities requiring them to practice family and body lexicon, even if that required little movements and to speak Italian; but when hot seating was introduced and she was asked to answer some simple questions in Italian by pretending to be someone else, she appeared to be very anxious and started

laughing again, although both questions and answers had been prepared in advance – an example of how learners may feel threatened by “exposure” (see *Section 2.2.1*). However, after overcoming panic, she found the courage to run the risk, and successfully completed the task, this time without glancing at J., but at me, as if she had been looking for confirmation about the language instead of for complicity.

For the following three meetings B. did not come, but she attended the last workshop. One of the warm-up exercises implied to revise the parts of the body, and in order to do that we used the poster of a stylized person, which the participants needed to compose as a jigsaw puzzle. Since we had already done this activity, B. did not hesitate for a moment, and started immediately to set in order the pieces, also by reading aloud the parts of the body written on it. During the second phase of this activity – involving using one’s parts of the body to mime an action by carrying out the orders of the facilitator – B. seemed relaxed and absorbed in the task, as well. Even during an activity in pair – where participants were asked to stand back-to-back, and to repeat the partner’s sentence by imitating also the emotion she conveyed – B. kept control over her anxious laughs and focused on repeating the Italian words correctly. This marked a turning point: B. was getting accustomed to “exposure”, both in doing movements and in speaking Italian in front of other people. However, as soon as the activities became more demanding, B. went back to laughs and detachment from the activity: in an attempt to create a pre-text for a frozen image, Professor Dalziel asked me and the participants to say something about our names: at B.’s turn she started laughing again, and when Professor Dalziel tried to help her through questions like “Ti piace il tuo nome?” [Do you like your name?] or “Molte ragazze hanno il tuo nome?” [Do many women have your name?] she simply answered “Sì”, perhaps not even understanding the questions. From that moment on, when the activities started to be slightly more demanding in terms of language, movements, and creativity, she stopped being involved, but she would give other starting points for observations during the final interview – which will be described at the end of this section.

J. showed her anxiety about speaking Italian in a different way: from the first meeting she appeared willing to practice the foreign language, but at the same time to be little self-confident about her linguistic competence. Indeed, whenever she tried to say a word or a short sentence – for example during the task of guessing what the other group

was miming – she said half of it and in a low voice, and completed it only when receiving confirmation by the facilitators. Also, when working in small groups, where she had more time to answer the questions and to think about the words to use she appeared more active: for example, during the planning of a small scene, she proposed autonomously to say “Mi piace” [I like it]. Her desire to speak Italian particularly emerged during at the beginning of the second meeting: in a moment of informal chat before the arrival of other participants, she explicitly complained with Professor Dalziel and me about the few occasions she had to speak Italian, due to the lack of contacts with people outside the Nigerian community. Her wish to practice emerged also from her involvement in the activities aimed at enabling the participants to learn new words – for example, about family, emotions or the body – and also from her efforts to complete hot seating by answering correctly to the facilitator’s questions.

Focusing on J.’s case it is also possible to have an example of how feeling at one’s ease within a group is a necessary precondition to take risks (see *Section 2.2.2*). For example, the group of the third meeting was composed of seven new women and J., and the level of Italian of most of the new participants was higher than that of J.. While during the warm-up phase she was involved as usual, when the activities became more language and creativity demanding she went more silent: for instance, during the teacher-in-role, the participants were asked to solve the mystery of a silent girl – speculating about her family and characters, and understanding why she could not speak – but J., like the other women with a lower knowledge of Italian, seemed eclipsed by those who could answer the questions faster and more creatively. J.’s need for more time to think about emerged also during the fifth meeting, when only J., A., and Js. were present: again, J. found herself with people who better know Italian, but the group being smaller it was easier for the facilitator to include J., and to drive the activity so that she could have the time to think about what to say: for example, while planning some questions for an interview, she proposed several questions regarding job – sometimes just by saying a word and creating as a group the complete question; moreover, it also emerged that it was useful to address questions explicitly to J. to encourage her to speak, and not to let the others to answer before she could do it. Both during the mutual interview with Js. and the warm-up exercise requiring to describe the partner’s cloths, I noticed that J. started to look at the gaps in her knowledge of Italian as something she could ask help for, no more as a reason for shame;

indeed, she seemed more willing to test her hypothesis about the language, and less afraid of asking for translation of the words she did not know. However, again, when the role-play was introduced, her involvement diminished, maybe because she was tired or because, again, the other participants were more active.

However, during the sixth and final meeting, when the group was still small but a little more homogeneous because of the presence of B., G. (a young woman from Ghana whose level of Italian was not that clear, since she used to say a few but often sophisticated words) and A. – who was this time the only one who could overwhelm the others because of a higher knowledge of the language – J. appeared to be involved and active not only in the undemanding warm-up exercises, but also in the following phases of the workshop. For instance, during the highly demanding task of telling something about one's name, J. was only able to say "My name is J.", but when Professor Dalziel pressed her with specific questions, J. reacted by carefully listening to them and answering by using the facilitator's question as a basis to create a complete sentence, although she could have simply answered yes or no, as B. did. While before she would speak Italian when only the facilitators were present, she became not only more willing to interact in group discussion – although saying few words and not completely following what the others were saying – but also more involved in the role-play. Indeed, when planning a little scene to recapitulate what had happened in the fictional world – created throughout that day through the teacher-in-role, frozen images and mimes – J. was given the role of a witch who curses a prince: the J. of the first meetings would probably have been little involved, and would have only followed the others' actions without being an active participant; however, this time she not only came to me to ask confirmation about the line she would say during the performance, but she also gave colour to her fictional character by imitating the unsteady walk with which I characterized the witch during a previous scene.

3.2.3 Observing creativity and tension in action

As mentioned in *Section 2.3.2*, since most of Process Drama activities imply the creation and learners' diving into a fictional world, participants' and facilitators' creativity and a balanced atmosphere of tension may be crucial for the success of activities. During the

six-workshop course, it was possible to collect some considerations about these aspects. For example, it emerged that not all the participants were accustomed to being creative and to inventing fictional characters or situations, and some of them not even to think about a simple movement or word: for example, at the beginning of the first meeting, participants were asked to say their name and to add a movement, but most of them – namely J., M., and B. – simply imitated what Professor Dalziel had done as an example. Similarly, during the palette of emotions – when participants were asked to say a simple sentence by suggesting an emotion through the voice and the facial expression – those who had more difficulties with the language needed to focus to remember and say correctly the words, and could only give little attention to the expression of emotions. Moreover, some participants showed difficulties in using imagination to go beyond obviousness, or to move away from their actual life. For example, when invited to play with pieces of cloths and to pretend they were something else, J. and M. could only use them as a mantle or a dress, without being able to imagine something actually different; similarly, when asked to create fictional characters by completing cards with simple information – such as name, age, characters and job – B. had difficulties in making up the characters and job, J. needed a lot of time just to think about a name. On the one hand, in some cases this attachment to reality simply led the role-play to deal with the actual necessities of the participants – such as practicing what to say during a job interview – without compromising involvement and interest. On the other hand, in particular during the fourth meeting, some participants were not interested at all in entering or creating the fictional world, and during the performance of a scene most of them did not even move, nor speak.

Nevertheless, other participants brought great inventiveness into play, often enabling the whole group to complete activities thanks to their ideas. Indeed, V. and P.'s creativity emerged from the very beginning of the first meeting, when they added to their presentation original movements – such as miming to take off a hat – and, especially, when they used the piece of cloth as a ball, a glass, a gun, and a mantle, and created a complete scene with beginning, development and end. Similarly, when during the third meeting all the participants were asked to take part in a frozen image, by adapting their role to the “bride” who was already standing in the middle of the room, A., Js. and I. proved to be able to think about a precise character who was doing a precise action – such

as a friend taking a picture of the bride – while all the others were just standing without knowing exactly what they were doing.

Since the participants who were able to use their imagination to enter the fictional world seemed not only to be more involved in the activities, but also to enjoy themselves more, it may be useful to understand what may block creativity. The participants who were more creative were also those with a higher level of Italian: this could be considered the consequence of the fact that they could not only better understand the instructions given by the facilitators, but also better express themselves since they knew more words. However, it could be possible to observe that also some participants with little Italian language skills managed to be involved in the fictional world through non-verbal elements: for example, during hot seating Gi. (another woman from Nigeria with little knowledge of Italian but apparently self-confident) only answered yes or no to the facilitator's questions, but managed to be in role through the use of voice and the facial expression. Another possible explanation for some of the participants' little exploitation of creativity, and their detachment from the fictional world, may be their need to learn Italian for instrumental reasons (see *Section 1.3.2*) – such as finding a job – and the consequent little interest in what did not seem to be meaningful for their everyday lives.

Therefore, it was important for the facilitators to maintain the tension high during the activities, so that even the less creative participants could feel involved in them (see *Section 2.3.3*). Even simple stratagems and games turn out to be useful in this sense: for example, when the activity required participants to stand in a circle and say something, it was helpful to alternate people with a higher level of language and self-confidence with weaker participants, so that not to lose energy while the sound, the word or the sentence ran along the circle. Tension was also positively aroused when they were asked to complete tasks requiring a memory effort – for example, when they A., Js. and J. had to walk reacting with specific body movements to the facilitator's order, which required to focus to remember the instructions. However, in order to create tension among the learners, the proposed activity has to be clear and suitable for the participants' linguistic level. This emerged during an activity of the third meeting aimed at giving the women the chance to know each other, and also to practice the linguistic structures to introduce oneself: it consisted in walking around, introducing oneself to the first person one met,

acquiring her identity, and introducing again to someone else by using the new identity. This activity could have aroused tension through the challenge of remembering others' names and the excitement of pretending to be someone else, but since it was too demanding for most of the participants – who had difficulties both in understanding the dynamics of the activity and in keeping in mind what to say – it was necessary to stop it and to introduce a less demanding task.

On the one hand, tension was successfully aroused through the use of pre-texts that invited participants to solve mysteries – for example, discovering what had made a girl voiceless or a king sad – and the device of the teacher-in-role. The latter created tension both through the surprise of seeing Professor Dalziel who, for example, wore a chef's hat and became a restaurant manager, or carried a toy seal and became an immigrant Icelander, and through the reversal of roles, since during most of the teacher-in-role moments it was the facilitator who needed the participants' help. In particular, pretending to be an immigrant who had just arrived in Padova and needed some information that the participants could give, the facilitator gave them the chance to feel as part of the community up to the point of being able to help someone else to integrate.

On the other hand, once it became necessary to stem the excessive flow of tension. Indeed, during the third meeting, a group of participants decided to create a scene in which a jealous girl wanted to spoil the wedding party of her sister with the help of her friends. I had the impression that some kind of tension could be perceived also outside the fictional world during that meeting, as if the group were actually split in two. However, while the group at issue was planning the scene, Professor Dalziel noticed that there was probably too much energy in it, and told me to be ready to become Rita – the voiceless girl who inspired the role-play – and to interrupt the scene when necessary. The facilitator's plan worked: at the end of their scene, the “evil sister and friends” started to shout, kick chairs and create chaos, but when I shouted “Basta!” [Stop!], letting them understand I was Rita again, and that thanks to their suggestions – which had been part of a previous activity – I had had my voice back, and that we could all sing together. Furthermore, Professor Dalziel suggested concluding the workshop with the tunnel of thoughts: I was still Rita, while all the other participants were asked to stand by my side and to say what Rita could have been thinking just before singing at the wedding, and when I arrived at the end of the tunnel, we all sang together part of the song we had

previously learned. This enabled the participants to feel once again like a single group, to definitely extinguish the negative tension, and to re-establish a trustful atmosphere (see *Section 2.2.2*).

3.2.4 Final focus group and conclusions

At the close of the last meeting, we organised a brief focus group interview with the participants who were there, which enabled us to have a clearer view about their attitude toward their learning process. Some of their answers confirmed many of the hypotheses Professor Dalziel and I had formulated during the course about the participants' self-confidence or anxiety in speaking Italian:

Facilitator: Did you ever feel anxious when you had to speak Italian, afraid to speak sometimes, even if you know what to say have you ever thought "Oh God, I don't know if it's correct, if to say that"?

A.: No, I felt free to ask, so it was very comfortable for me. No an anxiety.

J.: Like before when I try to speak, they'd be laughing at me, that I'm not correct, but I'll keep on pushing (?), no matter what, I'll keep on trying.

B.: Yeah, for me it's sometimes difficult, even when I know what to say, it's just like [...] somehow difficult for me, [...] to reply is somehow difficult.

Indeed, these answers reflect perfectly what has been described above. A., who again is the first who speaks, claimed that she had not been anxious during the workshop, which was clear from her willingness and readiness to give voice to her suggestions to create the fictional worlds and characters, and also from her desire to play fictional roles when required. On the other hand, J. and B.'s answers showed that it was more difficult for them to speak up, that they were worried about making mistakes. However, from their utterances even the difference between J. and B. became explicit: while the former claimed that she wanted to try although her fear, the latter only claimed how difficult it often was.

Facilitator: Did you feel forced to speak here or did sometime happen so that you were like “ok I want to speak in this environment, like I feel free to speak” I mean, was it somehow difficult (different) from other classes you had before?

B.: Yes, because we [...] laughing, because you [...] us free, when I don't know something to say you have to help [me to speak] [...]. Yes, because it is more easier, more easier [...]

The quickness of B. in answering this question surprised me: indeed, during the workshops she often seemed to be bored, tired, not willing to take part in the activities, and sometimes it was very difficult to involve them, but then she went on:

Facilitator: Something you didn't like? Something you, I don't know, that was boring or...

B.: [...] never we did was boring, it was all...well...

Facilitator: Be sincere! I want to know...

B.: I AM sincere because when I go to all that schools, some are boring, but here [...] you have to listen...

But if B.'s attitude towards the Process Drama approach turn out to be surprisingly positive, that of G. did not seem as trusting. She never spoke during the final interview, apart from answering “Yes” when Professor Dalziel tried to involve them by saying that she seemed to know a lot of Italian words but needed the courage to speak. Indeed, also when they were asked if they would like to do some other workshops in the future, all of them answered with enthusiasm, apart from G., and B. even asked to meet more frequently:

Facilitator: After Christmas, would you come again?

J.: Yes, of course!

B.: Of course I will come! I will come! 'Cause I need you guys! [...] Can't we estend it to two times a week, is more better.

During the interview it was also possible to ask the participants what they thought about having only women at the workshops, and while at the beginning B. and A. answered that having also men would be nice and “more comparative” (A.), then A. mentioned that perhaps they would have felt shier and less comfortable when speaking Italian, if there had been also men, all the participants agreed, and speaking about future meetings all agreed about still having only women.

From the interview what also emerged was the actual need they have to learn Italian, and the difficulties they often had in their everyday lives because they cannot say what they need, and because they often meet people who only speak Italian. However, the activities we conducted during the workshop seemed to help them also in a practical way:

Facilitator: E c'è qualcuna delle attività che abbiamo fatto [then turning to language so that everyone could understand] some of the activities we have done, something in particular you liked, something that you think helped you somehow?

J.: Last time I went for... to submit curriculum. Most of the things, you know, we studied here I used them. When I went for they asked me questions I want to submit my curriculum cause I'm looking for job, so [I knew] how to present it, how to say it, so I learnt a lot.

Through this final interview, it was possible to confirm many of the hypotheses that had been formulated by observing the participants; however, there are still many questions unsolved. For example, it may be interesting to understand why many participants just came once and decided not to come the following meeting. Probably some of them thought that their level of Italian was higher than that of the other participants, and maybe they even found some of the activities little involving and too simple to help them in improving Italian. On the contrary, some others might have thought that their knowledge of language was too low: in particular, I had the impression that the lack of a common language that could be used as lingua franca with all the participants often hampered the activities, since those women who did not speak English had difficulties not only in understanding the instructions of the tasks, but also in getting involved in them, and in feeling part of the group. Another point that remained unexplored is what it would have happened if the group had been the same from the beginning to the end of the course: indeed, since those who came more frequently appeared less anxious to speak Italian meeting after meeting, maybe also those who felt less comfortable both with the language and the approach – such as M. and F. – might have get accustomed to both.

However, it is difficult to have a single answer to all these questions, since, as already discussed, foreign language anxiety emerges in several ways depending on the characteristics of the learner, those of the teacher, those of the environment, and even

those of the method. Therefore, though this workshop it was possible to observe only some of the consequences of this kind of apprehension, and to make hypotheses on how Process Drama can actually be used to help the learner to feel free to experiment with the foreign language.

Conclusion

The questions at the root of this dissertation were essentially two: “Why may approaching a foreign language be frightening?” and “How can students cope with this kind of fear?”. However, throughout the dissertation it emerged that neither of these questions is easy to answer.

First of all, this kind of apprehension – namely foreign language anxiety – appears to be multifaceted, and closely related to the personal character of students, to their previous learning experiences, and to their opinion about themselves and about their own learning process. The vastness and fluidity of this kind of apprehension justifies the various and varied repercussions on the individual’s learning process – which are not always negative, contrary to what one might expect. After mentioning some cases in which anxiety may even help the student, the dissertation focused on the circumstances in which it poses a problem, and on some possible measures that can be adopted within the language classroom to lower the affective barriers often created by anxiety.

Among the numerous devices and stratagems that could be used to create an anxiety-free environment within the language classroom, drama-based activities – and in particular Process Drama – were taken into consideration, described and analysed. What emerged from the study is that: on the one hand, the drama-based approach enables students to be more involved, active and autonomous in their learning, to explore the foreign language from different points of views and channels, and also to give voice to their opinions, ideas and different selves; on the other hand, since the drama itself implies “exposure”, there are some intermediate steps to take in order to become accustomed to speaking, moving, and expressing themselves in front of others.

In conclusion – as emerged in particular from the drama-based workshops – although some students may consider this approach too demanding and ill-fitted to them, in most cases it does appear to be useful: to arouse curiosity and interest towards both the target language and culture; to involve students by giving them the chance to bring into play and test their linguistic and communicative skills; and also to overcome the fear of making mistakes. The latter may be true because the anxiety-free environment created

through drama-based activities can lead learners to take risks and speak up without too much apprehension, and also to ask for clarifications about possible doubts, without worrying about negative evaluation.

As already mentioned, the boundaries of foreign language anxiety are fluid, and its causes and consequences even more difficult to describe exhaustively, since they change according to the individual at issue. Therefore, also the stratagems to cope with it are potentially countless, and what has been proposed in this work – namely the Process Drama approach – is only one of them. Moreover, while this work described through the case studies only two contexts in which drama-based activities were used, further studies could be conducted to explore other contexts with different kinds of learners, so as to obtain a wider view on how foreign language anxiety may be lowered through drama-based language courses.

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Summary in Italian

Durante il mio percorso come studentessa di lingue, mi è spesso capitato di provare una sensazione di ansia – e a volte addirittura di paura – nel momento in cui mi venisse richiesto di parlare una particolare lingua straniera in pubblico. Infatti, nonostante io abbia studiato russo per anni, appena mi si presenta l’occasione di praticare la lingua, che sia di fronte a parlanti esperti o anche solo a compagni di corso con il mio stesso livello, non posso evitare di bloccarmi per la paura di non essere all’altezza della situazione.

Per questo motivo, quando mi sono imbattuta nel concetto di *foreign language anxiety* ho deciso di approfondirne lo studio, dato che l’argomento sembrava spiegare quella terribile sensazione di inadeguatezza provata per anni. In primo luogo, ho affrontato lo studio di questo particolare tipo di ansia, cercando di capirne le cause, le conseguenze e le possibili soluzioni. Successivamente, ho riflettuto su come attività che prendono spunto dal contesto teatrale, e in particolare il *Process Drama* – strumenti che vengono spesso utilizzati all’interno di corsi di lingua straniera – possano facilitare lo studente nel caso in cui si trovi a dover affrontare la *foreign language anxiety*.

Lo studio si snoda in tre capitoli: il primo verterà sulla *foreign language anxiety*, fornendone la definizione, descrivendone i possibili effetti, e proponendo alcune misure per ridurla quando necessario; il secondo capitolo, invece, introdurrà il *Process Drama*, descrivendolo sia come strumento utilizzabile per rendere l’apprendimento della lingua straniera meno stressante, sia per permettere allo studente di esprimere se stesso; il terzo capitolo, infine, si propone di mostrare attraverso due esempi come i principi descritti nelle due sezioni precedenti siano stati riscontrati – o meno – durante lo svolgimento di due laboratori di lingua italiana molto differenti tra loro.

Come trattato nel primo capitolo, per quanto l’ansia non sia un concetto facile da definire, molti affermano di aver provato questa sensazione nel corso della loro vita. In particolare, la *foreign language anxiety* è stata descritta come un’ansia specifica, che si manifesta al momento dell’apprendimento di una lingua straniera¹⁰, e che può portare lo

¹⁰ Molti autori distinguono “lingua straniera” da “lingua seconda” in base al contesto in cui viene studiata e/o appresa. In questo lavoro i due termini sono stati per lo più utilizzati in modo intercambiabile, dato che

studente a provare sensazioni di paura, imbarazzo, o addirittura panico (Horwitz et al. 1986).

Non è facile stabilirne precisamente le cause: in primis, essendo una sensazione soggettiva, uno studente può trovare ansiogena una situazione che per un altro individuo può non esserlo; in secondo luogo, spesso cause e conseguenze dell'ansia – e l'ansia stessa – danno vita ad un circolo vizioso di cui risulta difficile, se non impossibile, distinguere le fasi (Horwitz 2001). È comunque possibile riscontrare come alcune caratteristiche dell'individuo – ad esempio, bassa autostima o eccessivo perfezionismo – possano renderlo più propenso all'ansia, e come alcune situazioni risultino particolarmente ansiogene – ad esempio, trovarsi di fronte ad un parlante esperto della lingua target e non riuscire a comprendere tutte le parole dell'interlocutore (si vedano per altri casi Horwitz 2001; Foss, Reitzel 1988; Sevinç 2018; MacIntyre, Gardner 1994).

Tuttavia, l'apprensione suscitata da questi ed altri fattori non rappresenta sempre un ostacolo per il percorso di apprendimento: in alcuni casi, infatti, l'ansia può addirittura motivare lo studente e spronarlo a superare le difficoltà attraverso maggior impegno (Scovel 1978). Questo lavoro si concentra, però, su quei casi in cui l'ansia debilita l'individuo, rendendolo debolmente concentrato, poco motivato e quindi limitatamente produttivo (Horwitz et al. 1986).

In questo secondo scenario, la *foreign language anxiety* può avere conseguenze negative sull'apprendimento della lingua straniera: può bloccare la comprensione e l'elaborazione dell'input ricevuto, ostacolare la memorizzazione di parole e strutture, e impedire la produzione di discorsi articolati sia dal punto di vista della forma che del contenuto (MacIntyre, Gardner 1994; Krashen 1982; Terrell 1982; Horwitz et al. 1986). In questo caso è opportuno che l'ansia venga ridotta, e ciò può avvenire rendendo meno ansiogeno l'ambiente in cui avviene l'apprendimento della lingua (Ellis, Shintani 2014; Terrell 1982; Hashemi 2011; Long 2007) – ad esempio, correggendo gli errori degli studenti in modo indiretto, oppure organizzando le attività dividendo la classe in piccoli

molti degli scenari descritti sono riscontrabili in entrambi i casi. Inoltre, il termine *foreign language anxiety*, nonostante venga qui utilizzato facendo riferimento sia a situazioni di lingua seconda che di lingua straniera, è stato mantenuto tale in linea con le definizioni date da molti autori citati (si vedano ad esempio Horwitz et al. 1986, e Foss, Reitzel 1988).

gruppi – ma anche portando lo studente a riflettere sul proprio stato di apprensione (Foss, Reitzel 1988).

Nel contesto dell'apprendimento di una lingua straniera risulta indispensabile che lo studente trovi il modo per superare la *foreign language anxiety* quando debilitante, dato che essa può ostacolare sia la ricezione di input che la produzione di output, come già accennato. Molti autori, infatti, hanno sottolineato come entrambe queste fasi siano indispensabili per apprendere una lingua straniera. Attraverso l'assimilazione di input – che dev'essere adeguato al livello di lingua dell'ascoltatore – l'individuo è in grado non solo di ampliare, ma anche di correggere la propria interlingua in base a quanto legge o sente (Pica 1991; Ellis, Shintani 2014; Krashen 1982; Schmidt 1990). In seguito, per mezzo della formazione di output, lo studente può sia paragonare quanto ha intenzione di dire con quanto è effettivamente in grado di produrre, sia testare le proprie ipotesi sulle strutture linguistiche, così da poter avere una visione oggettiva sulla propria competenza linguistica (Swain 1985, 1993, 1995). Infine, input e output si fondono nella negoziazione di significato, che vede gli interlocutori collaborare per chiarire incomprensioni e ottenere comprensione reciproca (Krashen 1982; Pica et al. 1989).

Il capitolo chiude introducendo il concetto di motivazione, spiegandone il ruolo nell'apprendimento delle lingue straniere e il legame con l'ansia. Definita sia come ciò che spinge l'individuo ad agire, sia come lo sforzo che questi impiega nel portare a compimento un compito (Ushioda 2008; Gardner, MacIntyre 1993), la motivazione può infatti spingere lo studente a superare la propria ansia. Di nuovo, la linea di confine tra cause e conseguenze non è ben marcata, e molti di quelli che vengono definiti fattori motivanti – come ad esempio ottenere buoni risultati – possono spesso venir considerati gli effetti della motivazione stessa (Skehan 1989; Gardner, Lambert 1972; Lightbown, Spada 2006; Strong 1984).

Alcuni studenti si avvicinano allo studio di una lingua straniera già con motivazioni forti – chi per ragioni più pratiche, come ad esempio il lavoro, chi per interesse personale (Gardner, Lambert 1972) – altri, invece, potrebbero aver bisogno di essere stimolati per trovare la giusta motivazione. L'insegnante, nel pianificare le lezioni, dovrebbe dunque tener conto degli interessi e dei bisogni degli studenti, cosicché essi possano sentirsi coinvolti (Little 1989); inoltre, stimolare la collaborazione, assegnare obiettivi a breve termine, e promuovere l'autonomia e l'intervento attivo degli studenti

durante le lezioni risultano essere strategie vincenti (Ushioda 1996; Hermann 1980; Burstall 1975; Schärer 2011; Dalziel et al. 2016). Infine, un buon modo per coinvolgere e motivare lo studente di lingue sembra essere incoraggiarlo – e guidarlo – a diventare un *intercultural speaker*, ossia a esplorare e capire non solo la lingua ma anche la cultura, sia del proprio paese che di quello target, attraverso il proprio e altri punti di vista (Jin, Cortazzi 1998; Byram, Fleming 1998).

Il secondo capitolo si propone di descrivere come le attività teatrali, incluso il *Process Drama*, possano venir utilizzate per rispondere ad alcune delle necessità dello studente di lingue finora descritte, tra cui il bisogno di abbassare l'eventuale *foreign language anxiety*. Dagli anni 70 del ventesimo secolo, l'aspetto educativo dell'attività teatrale è stato messo sotto i riflettori da Dorothy Heathcote, la quale ne sottolineava la capacità di mettere al centro del processo educativo lo studente, al quale viene data l'opportunità di esprimersi (Piazzoli 2018; O'Neill 2015). *Drama* si riferisce al coinvolgimento dell'immaginazione, ma allo stesso tempo all'impiego di esperienze precedenti, ricordi ed emozioni per ricreare contesti simili a quelli della vita vera all'interno della classe, ma anche all'utilizzo di esercizi ed attività spesso utilizzate dagli attori per esplorare personaggi e situazioni immaginari (Davies 1990; Maley, Duff 1978; Piazzoli 2018; Owens, Barber 2001). *Process* si riferisce alla particolare importanza data durante questo tipo di attività a quanto succede durante la fase di svolgimento, e alla visione del risultato ottenuto non come obiettivo ma come mezzo (Schewe 2013; Winston 2011; Howell, Heap 2013).

Il *Process Drama*, come molte altre attività di stampo teatrale, richiede che studenti e insegnanti siano disposti ad uscire dai loro ruoli tradizionali. Allo studente viene concesso potere sul proprio processo di apprendimento, e anche l'opportunità di contribuire attivamente alle attività proposte in classe (Maley, Duff 1978; Haseman 1991). Al momento dell'attività teatrale qui presa in considerazione, lo studente non è attivo solo quando gli viene chiesto di essere "attore" e di contribuire con la sua creatività ed immaginazione, ma anche quando gli viene chiesto di essere "pubblico", in quanto molti degli esercizi prevedono che vi sia una discussione su quanto succede "in scena" (O'Neill 1995; Stinson, Freebody 2006). Per quanto riguarda l'insegnante, il *Process Drama* prevede l'accettazione di avere un controllo minore sia su quanto avviene in classe, sia sul processo di apprendimento degli studenti (Heathcote 2010), e di passare

dal ruolo di detentore di conoscenza a quello di *facilitator of learning* (Little 1989). Facendo un passo indietro, l'insegnante lascia quindi allo studente lo spazio per diventare autonomo e attivo nel proprio percorso, continuando, però, a guidare la lezione in modo che risponda alle necessità sia didattiche che emotive – si pensi ad esempio al ruolo dell'ansia e della motivazione – degli studenti (O'Neill 1995; Little 1991).

Entrando nello specifico, all'interno dell'insegnamento delle lingue straniere le attività qui trattate tornano utili per vari aspetti. Rispondono, ad esempio, all'approccio *task-oriented* promosso dal quadro comune europeo di riferimento per la conoscenza delle lingue, che incentiva l'utilizzo della lingua come strumento di comunicazione anche in classe (Council of Europe 2018). Inoltre, essendo l'attività teatrale malleabile, essa è adattabile non solo alle esigenze degli studenti, ma anche ai diversi aspetti dell'apprendimento delle lingue straniere: si può ad esempio utilizzare per affrontare lo studio di regole grammaticali, per migliorare le competenze nel parlato e nello scritto, ma anche per approcciare la letteratura ed interpretare testi (Carson 2012; Schewe 2013; Chang 2011).

Riportando il focus sui possibili metodi per alleviare la *foreign language anxiety*, il capitolo prosegue con la trattazione di come l'attività teatrale e il *Process Drama* possano essere utili anche in questo senso. Molti autori concordano sul fatto che attraverso questo approccio sia possibile trasformare la classe in un luogo sicuro, dove lo studente si sente libero di mettere da parte sia le proprie inibizioni sia la sensazione di inadeguatezza, che spesso bloccano la produzione anche di semplici frasi (Carson 2012; Piazzoli 2011). Infatti, per quanto possa sembrare contraddittorio, l'attività teatrale può aiutare lo studente a superare la propria paura di stare al centro dell'attenzione – posizione in cui è più suscettibile di giudizio – proprio chiedendogli di mettersi sotto i riflettori e di “esporsi”.

È tuttavia necessario abituare lo studente a tale “esposizione” cominciando le sessioni di *Process Drama* con attività di warm-up, che siano poco impegnative sia dal punto di vista linguistico che creativo, ma che mettano in moto sia il corpo che la voce (Dundar 2013; Swale 2009). Queste attività aiutano gli studenti a mettersi in gioco e anche a capire il potenziale comunicativo delle espressioni facciali, del linguaggio del corpo e degli elementi non linguistici della voce, dato che si chiede loro di comunicare senza però parlare – si pensi ad esempio al mimo (Maley, Duff 1978; Davies 1990). Questo aiuta

anche a combattere l'ansia nel momento dell'interazione in lingua straniera, dato che allo studente viene dimostrato che la comunicazione può avvenire anche se non si capiscono tutte le parole di un discorso, e che vi sono altri elementi da cui dedurre le intenzioni dell'interlocutore (Liu 2002).

Oltre "all'esposizione", il *Process Drama* richiede anche – e allo stesso tempo prepara al – lavoro di gruppo, e perché ciò avvenga con successo è necessario che tutti i membri della classe si sentano a proprio agio in presenza degli altri (Chang 2011; Nicholson 2002). Infatti, quando lo studente non ritiene l'ambiente sereno e sicuro, difficilmente corre il rischio di commettere errori e di venir giudicato, mentre per imparare la lingua straniera è necessario produrre output (Stern 1980; Spolin 1999). Per creare un'atmosfera che permetta agli studenti di esplorare la lingua straniera senza troppi timori, è importante che conoscano i propri compagni di lavoro e che si fidino di loro – come anche dell'insegnante – e che all'interno della classe venga promossa la collaborazione e non la competizione (Swale 2009; Athiemoolam 2013; Piazzoli 2011). Tutto questo si può ottenere con attività a coppie o a piccoli gruppi per creare fiducia, attività con l'intero gruppo in cui condividere esperienze e interessi, e attività che richiedano collaborazione e il raggiungimento di un obiettivo comune (Dundar 2013; Swale 2009). Anche la discussione, necessaria ad esempio quando agli studenti è richiesto di prendere decisioni di gruppo, porta gli individui di una classe ad agire all'unisono (Maley, Duff 1978; Bird 1979).

Dopo questa fase di warm-up, lo studente può venir introdotto al vero e proprio *Process Drama*. Uno dei problemi più sottolineati dagli insegnanti di lingua è la mancanza di contatto degli studenti con la lingua parlata (Chang 2011); per questo, molto spesso viene impiegato il role-play, che consiste nel chiedere agli studenti di interpretare dei ruoli di fantasia in una situazione ipotetica, simulando situazioni reali – ad esempio ricreando il dialogo che potrebbe avvenire tra un barista ed un cliente (Davies 1990). Questo permette agli studenti di esplorare la lingua di cui potrebbero avere bisogno al di fuori della classe (Maley, Duff 1978).

Nel *Process Drama*, i ruoli che gli studenti assumono e le situazioni vengono arricchite dalla creatività dei partecipanti, dal loro passato e dai loro interessi, coinvolgendoli maggiormente nell'attività (Piazzoli 2018). Inoltre, grazie alla sospensione della realtà, gli studenti possono ricoprire e sperimentare ruoli che

solitamente spettano all'insegnante, come ad esempio il ruolo dell'esperto (O'Toole 2008). Creare questo tipo di realtà all'interno della classe permette di guardare a situazioni e personaggi da più punti di vista, e di esplorare realtà che altrimenti sarebbero remote e impossibili da raggiungere da parte degli studenti (Fleming 1998; Edmiston, Wilhelm 1996).

Di nuovo però, nonostante i vantaggi portati in classe dal mondo creato attraverso il *Process Drama*, lo studente a volte risulta restio a collaborare a questa finzione, e ha quindi bisogno di essere guidato (Carson, Murphy 2011). Il *pre-text*, ad esempio – che può essere costituito da un testo o da una fotografia – viene utilizzato per dare allo studente alcuni indizi sulla situazione che verrà introdotta, ma implica anche che sia lo studente stesso a contribuire alla definizione di personaggi, atmosfera ed avvenimenti; inoltre, il *pre-text* serve a coinvolgere e a suscitare nello studente la voglia di prendere parte all'attività (Dalziel, Piazzoli forthcoming; O'Toole 2008; O'Neill 1995). Allo stesso modo, con il *teacher-in-role* – che vede lo stesso insegnante vestire i panni di un personaggio immaginario – viene trasmessa agli studenti la sensazione di trovarsi già all'interno della finzione, stimolando la loro fantasia e creatività (O'Neill 1995; Saccuti 2018; Liu 2002).

La situazione creata nella classe attraverso quanto detto finora, permette allo studente di esplorare la lingua straniera di cui potrebbe aver bisogno nel mondo reale, senza correre i rischi, e sentendosi quindi libero di sperimentare (Chang 2011; Early 1977; Stinson, Freebody 2006). Ma il personaggio fittizio può fungere anche da maschera, e permettere agli studenti di dar voce a parti della loro identità, a idee ed emozioni che nella vita di tutti i giorni restano nascoste (Piazzoli 2011; Stinson, Freebody 2006; Carson 2012). Infine, attraverso il *Process Drama* è possibile arricchire la lezione di tensione – suscitata ad esempio dal contrasto tra il mondo reale e quello fittizio, oppure dall'effetto sorpresa del *teacher-in-role* – e di emozioni, che portano lo studente a mettere da parte, o addirittura dimenticare, la *foreign language anxiety* per il desiderio di dar voce ai suoi pensieri e sentimenti (Walker 1977; O'Toole 2008; Pheasant 2015; Piazzoli 2018).

Nel terzo capitolo verranno, infine, presentati due workshop di lingua italiana per stranieri nei quali sono state utilizzate attività d'impronta teatrale e il *Process Drama*, mostrando sia i vantaggi che le difficoltà convogliate da questo approccio.

Il primo workshop descritto si è tenuto all'Università di Warwick (Coventry, UK), ed è stato organizzato dalla Dottoressa Alessandra De Martino – ricercatore associato – con la mia collaborazione. L'attività era principalmente indirizzata a studenti universitari inglesi che avessero studiato italiano per almeno un anno, ma sono stati invitati a collaborare anche studenti italiani. Nel secondo caso, invece il workshop si è tenuto a Padova (Italia), ed è stato promosso dall'associazione *Razzismo Stop* e organizzato dalla Professoressa Fiona Dalziel – Professore associato dell'Università di Padova – con la mia collaborazione; in questo caso le partecipanti erano donne immigrate di recente a Padova, tra cui rifugiate, studentesse internazionali e lavoratrici con svariati livelli di italiano.

I due workshop risultano differenti sotto molti aspetti: il tipo di partecipanti, le loro motivazioni per partecipare all'attività e per imparare la lingua, e l'effettiva conoscenza dell'italiano. Per esempio, nel caso del workshop tenutosi presso l'Università di Warwick, l'italiano veniva spesso utilizzato da parte degli studenti anche se la loro conoscenza della lingua non era perfetta, mentre nel workshop tenutosi a Padova il più delle volte si è reso necessario utilizzare l'inglese come lingua franca per riuscire a comunicare con tutte le partecipanti. Anche le attività proposte ai due gruppi erano differenti: nel workshop con studenti inglesi è stato drammatizzato un racconto e ne è stata fatta una lettura interpretata, ed ogni incontro era collegato al successivo; nel secondo caso, invece, dato che le partecipanti non erano sempre le stesse, ogni incontro era completo in sé.

Anche per quanto riguarda la *foreign language anxiety* i due workshop hanno dato esiti diversi. Nel primo caso gli studenti mostravano dei livelli molto bassi di ansia, e quando presente erano in grado di riconoscerla e di affrontarla così da poter comunque dar voce alla propria creatività e contribuire all'attività di gruppo. Nel caso delle donne da poco immigrate a Padova, invece, i casi erano vari: alcune di loro, in particolare quelle con un buon livello di italiano, riuscivano ad esprimere i propri dubbi sulla lingua liberamente, come anche a partecipare alle attività in modo creativo; altre invece, mostravano un livello di *foreign language anxiety* tale da non riuscire a prendere parte nemmeno agli esercizi di warm-up più semplici. Tuttavia, soprattutto grazie al secondo workshop, è stato possibile osservare come l'attività teatrale, attraverso la creazione di un ambiente rilassato e privo di ansia, abbia reso possibile coinvolgere anche quelle

partecipanti che sembravano più diffidenti nei confronti del metodo e più restie a parlare italiano.

In conclusione, nonostante il *Process Drama* stesso richieda una fase di preparazione per abituare lo studente ad “esporsi”, esso sembra rappresentare un metodo valido per aiutare quegli individui che hanno più difficoltà a parlare la lingua straniera, e che si sentono bloccati da apprensione e paura di sbagliare.