Jutta Rymarczyk (ed.)

Foreign Language Learning Outside School
Places to See, Learn and Enjoy
Introduction: Foreign Language Learning outside School

This volume has its origin in the conference “New Dynamics of Language Learning: Spaces and Places – Intentions and Opportunities”, which was held on 6-9 June 2011 in Jyväskylä, Finland. The title of the conference immediately led to the conclusion that this was the perfect venue to discuss foreign language learning at locations outside school; consequently, the proposal for the symposium “TEFL goes visual – places to see, learn and enjoy outside school” was submitted. The symposium was based on the experience that places beyond the classroom are often much appreciated by students because they promise a change from their daily school routine. Students also feel the dynamics of these places and the opportunities to gain new and interesting insight.

The fact that the use of Internet no longer provides such a change from daily school routine is one of the reasons this volume includes only brick and mortar places outside school and excludes virtual places. The more important reason for this restriction, however, is that the value of locations, such as fine arts museums, cinemas, and theatres, which display or perform works of art, is based on the immediate experience of the spaces, sounds, and atmospheres of these places and the artwork, films, or plays themselves. This cannot be replaced by two-dimensional images on the small screen of a personal computer. Furthermore, the web presence of the Tate Gallery, for example, is considered to be as different from a place outside school as a novel is. It is considered a medium that can be used in different places – in- and outside school. Therefore, the distinction between real and virtual spaces cannot be dismissed, although ideas and projects described in this volume might include both the real place and its web presence (for a different line of reasoning cf. Grau & Legutke 2013).

The symposium in Jyväskylä dealt with three different locations, all of which are very special places: the cinema, the museum, and the theatre. They are “places of seriousness, but also of wonder”, taking up Nicholas Serota’s (2009) characterisation of the museum and expanding it to the theatre and the cinema. “Places of seriousness, but also of wonder” – I think this characterisation very nicely captures the particularity of the places. As Serota put it, they can be found “between entertainment and the exam room, between home and school” (ibid.) – and this is merely one reason why they are so special.

To specify these three locations somewhat further, the model of experience-based approaches to learning, by Nahrstedt, Brinkmann, Theile, & Röcken (2002), proves useful (cf. Figure 1). All three locations can be placed on the horizontal axis between reflecting and doing, with emotion at its centre. The emotional level is actually very important in the context of reflecting and doing.
Films, plays, and artwork touch the recipient personally, and we react individually. Because of this, educational principles like learner orientation and autonomy can come into play. We also find authenticity in the student reactions and, of course, in the media, which enhances the foreign language learning process.

Cinemas, theatres, and museums can also be located between the poles of understanding and expressing (ibid.). Understanding the films, plays, or exhibits is challenging on the one hand because students have to deal with linguistically authentic and unabridged texts. On the other hand, these texts support foreign language learning because they are visual and multi-layered, and the places that host these texts are rich visual learning environments. Visual literacy, which has become a prominent educational goal, is actually the major common denominator of the cinema, theatre, and fine arts museum as places to learn outside of school. The broad definition of visual literacy, by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)/Metiri Group, underlines its support of cognitive operations including language: „The ability to interpret, use, appreciate, and create images and video using both conventional and 21st century media in ways that advance thinking, decision making, communication, and learning” (NCREL/Metiri Group 2003: 15).

Three papers (by Christiane Lütge, Carola Surkamp and Jutta Rymarczyk) originally discussed these various aspects in 2011. The readiness with which further authors agreed to contribute to the volume, to ensure a greater diversity of perspectives, provides ample evidence that the topic of locations to learn at outside school is of current relevance. Fortunately, the chapters on museums, cinemas, and theatres now comprise two papers each.

New perspectives were, however, not only added in the contexts of museums, cinemas, and theatres. The scope of locations as such was enlarged.

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**Figure 1: Model of experience-based approaches to learning (adopted from Nahrstedt et al. (2002))**

- **artistic worlds**
- **understanding** ← **expressing**
- **reflecting** ← **emotion** ← **doing**
- **experience**
- **natural worlds**
Work places and stays abroad now complete the picture. These locations add new dimensions to our topic as they are neither genuine places to learn at, like the museum, nor are they places which entertain, like cinemas and theatres. They provide students with realistic impressions of everyday (work) life as it can be experienced in intercultural encounters and/or in their future work contexts. The specific value of these locations lies in the opportunity for the students to use the foreign language to communicate with native speakers in non-school surroundings and contexts. In cinemas and theatres, language is mostly used in a receptive way. Communication is often limited to the group of students, their teachers, and a cinema- or theatre educator. With stays abroad and work practice, the students leave the familiar space of their own (speech) community and put their language competence to real use, which might be more linguistically challenging. There is, among other particularities, a higher possibility of direct intercultural negotiation of meaning, with characteristic challenges like, for example, using avoidance strategies in conversations to be able to express oneself, finding some common ground with interlocutors, and avoiding and/or resolving misunderstandings. By the same token, the students might experience much support from unknown interlocutors who appreciate their attempts to use a foreign language to interact with them.

A classification employed in educational literature (Burk, Rauterberg & Schönknecht 2008) allows us to integrate all different locations in one scheme. Burk et al. distinguish between so-called “natural” (or “primary”) places of learning (e.g. schools) and “special” (or “secondary”) places where learning can take place but is not the predominant function of the location. Cinemas and theatres, but also work places, foreign countries (in the context of stays abroad), and schools, when these are not the space for primary learning but used for school placements of students in teacher training courses, are among these places. As far as this category of special or secondary places is concerned, ways to exploit the learning potential of these places have to be found, and learning material which provides the language learner with sheltered access to the authentic environments not made for learning has to be developed.

Museums can be positioned between these two categories. They are neither a natural learning location like schools nor an institution which does not pursue clear educational goals. Because of this, I propose to open up a third group for places like museums and to call them “hybrid” (or “tertiary”) places of learning.

Comparing special and hybrid places, we see that there are visits of single performances as far as the special places theatre and cinema are concerned but explorations of hybrid places like museums, zoos, or planetaria. This distinction is important for language learning and the teachers’ work. Are the students faced with a fixed focus of foreign language learning, for example, listening comprehension – at least with most learner groups attending film or theatre performances – or is there rather an open platform for self-directed learning?
Are the students faced with the need to interact with colleagues, their students, and strangers, for example, in work/school placements and during stays abroad for which they find support from these very interlocutors, or is there rather the situation of the more solitary learner or learner group who explore hybrid places on their own without hardly any language support when it comes to language production?

It is obvious that any model of foreign language learning at places outside school will have to take these differences into account. Incidental learning has to be supplemented by intentional learning to support the learners in free choice learning scenarios. It has to be noted that, while the opportunity for free choice learning is considered the major advantage for places outside school in first language contexts (Falk, Storksdieck & Dierking 2007), using these places with languages other than one’s first language might prove to be a very challenging endeavour for many students (and their teachers). Well-thought through task design and a careful choice of student activities help avoid damaging the special attraction of places to learn at outside school.

This and many more valuable issues are raised in the individual papers of this volume. The papers are arranged in five chapters, each of which contains two texts: I. Work experience, II. Stays abroad, III. Cinemas, IV. Theatres and V. Museums.

The first chapter on work experiences begins with Markus Kötter’s paper on “Work experience as an opportunity for language learning”. This paper is the perfect beginning for our volume as different meanings of the concept “work experience” have been discerned looking at various definitions and technical terminology, and strengthening our understanding of the subject matter. Discussing work experience in one’s own country and abroad, the author’s conclusion readily emphasises the benefit of being able to spend some time at a work placement in a foreign country. Project examples and ideas for the preparation and follow-up of these periods of time abroad provide whole new vistas on putting work experience abroad in a bigger context.

In the second paper, “Starting with practice – workplace related second language learning in and out of school”, Karin Sandwall applies an empirical lens to practical work placement and second language learning. Her research into the Swedish context examines how adult immigrants take part in a combination of basic language programmes and curricular work placement, which aims at an effective integration and education of the learners. Here, however, we quickly learn to respect the regulative power of empirical control: the analysis of the students’ cases reveals that being immersed in the rich learning environment of workplaces and working side-by-side with colleagues who are not trained in second language teaching does not lead to the results hoped for.
The contributions of the second chapter “Stays abroad” offer examples of how far one can go beyond the school or rather university gates. Bärbel Diehr, in her paper “Go out. Get involved. Gain experience. Teacher development in school placements abroad”, points to the crucial role that practical experience abroad can play for future teachers of English as a Foreign Language when embedded in the larger context of “Bilingual Studies”. The benefits of combining first steps into the teaching profession with language learning and cultural learning are much appreciated by the university students – as the high and still increasing numbers of students who opt for the PrimA programme (“Praktika im Ausland”) testify (oral communication with the author). To illustrate this, the evaluation of the programme by means of the “European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages” (EPOSTL) rounds up this contribution.

Lotta König, with the second paper in this group, opens up perspectives for yet another kind of experience abroad. Her article “Learning to teach English beyond the classroom – combining theory and practice in teacher training by preparing and accompanying a class trip” traces the experiences of a team of novice teachers as they work with eighth graders, first in the foreign language classroom and then during their trip in England. The author traces innovative elements in the collaboration of teacher students and school students, as their work is connected to a seminar on learning foreign languages in places outside school and to a research-oriented internship (Forschungspraktikum) which focuses on teacher action research to familiarise the students with the idea of teachers as reflected practitioners.

Beginning the chapter on cinemas as places to learn at outside school, Christiane Lütge discusses the relevance of cinematographic experience in her contribution “Exploring cinema worlds – perspectives for and beyond the English as a Foreign Language classroom”. It is argued that we must be cautious not to “over-analyse” scenes but yet foster audiovisual receptive skills. A substantial change of teaching methodologies is not merely requested by the author but presented in form of a model comprising three different kinds of tasks: general media comparison tasks, global observation and understanding tasks, and contrastive reception tasks. Since all three categories can be linked with pre- and post-tasks, this model promises to have considerable impact on the field.

In their paper “‘Lean back and learn’ – a Teaching English as a Foreign Language unit in the cinema on ‘This is England’”, Isabella Sabo and Dennis Haack depict an encouraging endeavour which is the result of a film seminar at Heidelberg University of Education. They place the emphasis on how non-structured, free-choice learning opportunities can be offered to students in the cinema. After all, our efforts to maintain the motivational atmosphere of the cinema – which is so highly cherished by the students – are inevitably limited by
the demands of the foreign language learning context. However, the authors accomplished their task. Their methodological approach illustrated by a unit on “This is England” proves strong enough to convince the reader.

As the articles dealing with work experience, the following contributions on theatres as places to learn languages outside school address both foreign and second language learning. How and when to provide second language learners with explicit language training (in the sense of special needs language tuition, Sprachförderung) is a recurring theme among teachers of German. Ralph Olsen deals comprehensively with this issue in his paper “Micro-scaffolding in theatre-oriented post-performance communication”. He makes a strong case for a drama-education based approach. Contrary to usual custom, however, one that is not linked to the students’ play but to their reception of drama. Ready-for-use examples of communicative exercises are suggested and illustrated by means of transcripts which show how children with migrant backgrounds discuss a theatre performance.

Carola Surkamp’s article “Experiencing plays as performances: the theatre as a place to learn outside of school” is best brought into the picture as an engaged plea to include going to the theatre more often when working with plays in the foreign language classroom. She offers an exhaustive list of didactical reasons which revolve – among other notions – around the pluri-medial form of representation, the learners’ communicative skills, including visual literacy, the performative dimension of language, and the so-called “text of the performance”. This last characteristic of the theatre, which refers to the singularity of each performance, especially adds an interesting facet to our discussion. It is here we find a clear distinction between theatre and film performances, which might be used to remind students of the here and now as a notable contrast to our otherwise highly mediatized world.

After the chapters on special or secondary places, museums, as hybrid or tertiary places of learning, are turned to, beginning with Heike Rohmann’s paper “Historical museums as learning sites in foreign language education and cultural studies”. Her work presents a detailed examination of the ways in which historical exhibitions can facilitate access to another culture. She elucidates that important goals of the foreign language classroom, with its main aim being intercultural communication, are met when students encounter cultural memory as it can be found in concrete exhibits (objects and symbols) and sometimes the exhibition places themselves. Illustrative examples from a German as a Foreign Language seminar on “War and Peace in German History” allow the reader to accompany the students in their (historical) meaning making.

In the closing chapter, “Foreign language learning with new technologies in the context of museum education”, Jutta Rymarczyk highlights the current state of affairs of foreign language learning in museums with a special emphasis on fine arts museums. It is her primary aim to find methodological ways to
reinforce students’ enjoyment of free choice learning in museums without over taxing them by depriving them of the sheltered learning environments which many learners need when dealing with a foreign language. Therefore, an avenue yet to be explored is introduced: the use of innovative information technology to support learners in the museum. Mobile devices are, for example, suggested to connect places outside school and the classroom, by carrying results back into school which can then be put to further use.

As can be concluded from this overview of the papers in our volume, whether learning takes place at special or hybrid places, it can be taken for granted that there is much visual or interactional support and often also aesthetic enjoyment. We should try to make students aware of places like theatres, cinemas, and museums as leisure time venues for life long learning. The value of work placement in general, but especially abroad, as the enrichment inherent in all stays abroad, should be brought to their attention. Resources would then be better used, and students might benefit in terms of motivation, cultural awareness, and increased foreign language competence.

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Markus Kötter

Work experience as an opportunity for language learning

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to a better understanding of work experience as a facilitator of language learning. I will begin with a few thoughts on the general logic behind asking people to leave their familiar environment in order to broaden their horizons by means of temporary work in another country. I will discuss definitions of some of the terms which have been used to describe “work experience” to deconstruct the terminological Babel that has evolved over time in this respect. I will provide an outline of the situation in Germany and present some noteworthy projects to sharpen our notion of a best practice in organizing and evaluating “non-holiday” spells abroad, paying particular attention to the language learning side of these ventures. The chapter ends with my ideas about how best to prepare candidates for their time in another country.

1. Introduction

“You are quite shell-shocked, aren’t you?” This is how I was greeted by the head of languages at “De Aston School” in Market Rasen when we met for the first time in the local staff room in September 1992. Having just completed my undergraduate studies in English and German, I had been fortunate enough to be allowed to go to Britain as a foreign language assistant in Lincolnshire. Fortunate, because at odds of around 4:1, not every German student who applied was accepted for the exchange programme administered by the “Pädagogischer Austauschdienst” (PAD) which helped future teachers to spend one school year abroad during their studies.

I had arrived in England four days earlier and had therefore already had a few days to settle in. But this teacher had hit the nail on the head fairly and squarely! In the 1990s, Market Rasen was a rather small town with its approximately 3.500 inhabitants (and it still is). Apart from fellow teachers, any German-speaking people I could socialize with lived at least some 15 miles away in Lincoln, the next big town. Up to this point I had never spent more than three weeks abroad in one go. Now I was due to spend nine and a half months in Small Town England. Of course, I had some teaching experience. But this was going to be different – and it was to happen on a daily basis. So yes, I was shell-shocked even if I did not even know what the term meant at the time. But I