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What's art got to do with it? Contemplations on art, language, and embodiment

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This article focuses on the meaning of art in embodied language learning. It tackles questions about how art works, what art is good for or – as the heading states – What's art got to do with it? The connection between language and embodiment has been established, and the role of art in enhancing learning in various ways has been discussed widely. While this article acknowledges the claims on the educational power of art in existing literature, the guiding question of how art works – especially in educational situations related to language learning – is deliberately open regarding assessable (language) learning outcomes. The article begins by discussing the author's methodological approach that draws from the notions of sense, sensing, and seeing. This discussion is followed by sections on language, including (trans)languaging, art, and arts education. The author then moves towards practice and, within it, the notion of 'glowing' moments, in which she leans on her earlier work related to 'physical expressive space' and the methodological approach and theoretical concepts presented earlier. She takes a closer look at a videotaped excerpt from an art pedagogical project, in which she attends to its material, sensory, and affective elements. Through this inquiry, the author proposes that the notion of (trans)languaging is pivotal to understanding and articulating how art works in educational situations related to language learning and beyond. In closing the article, the author asserts that artistic practice is (trans)languaging and further, that arts education is language education.

Keywords: art, arts education, language, language learning, embodiment

1 Prologue

May 23, 2023. Walking performance "Minä, vesi: Jälkiä minusta kaupungissa". (Me, water: Traces of me in the city). Helsinki metropolitan area.

I walk behind a group of first graders who are participating in a walking performance created by community artists and older pupils of the same school. The weather is mild, quite sunny, and a bit breezy. The pupils walk nicely organized in pairs. Each pair has some kind of conversation going on, commenting on the surroundings, discussing their weekend activities, and so on.

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> The two boys in front of me are preoccupied with a dispute and fail to pay attention to some sections of the performance. Their focus, so to say, is wandering. I hear some murmuring and sense their impatience when asked to stop and watch parts of the performance.
>
> At some point, I hear them talking about how much screen time each has. They also refer to a third pupil, not present in this conversation, wondering how he has so much screen time. They conclude that he must be lying.

This event made me think that these two boys, while physically taking part in this walking performance by pupils of a preparatory class of a public school, prepared together with a team of artist-pedagogue-researchers as part of the ELLA research project[1], *see but fail to see more*. This thought led me to revisit some ideas that I encountered quite some time ago. One of such ideas is presented by Higgins (2007), who—leaning on the renowned American educational philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952)—notes that, "In moments of recognition our seeing stops short and we lose our chance to experience the uniqueness and complexity […] In seeing as, we fail to see more" (p. 390). In Dewey's (1934) words, "Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely" (p. 54). My initial plan was to focus mostly on more recent literature, especially new materialism, in this inquiry into the meaning of art in embodied language learning. However, some "older" ideas on sensing, perceiving, and aesthetic experience have become entangled in my attempt to tackle the questions of how art works, what art is good for (Bresler, 2011) or—as the heading states—*What's art got to do with it?* More specifically, I am focusing on how art works especially in educational situations related to language learning.

Interestingly, entanglements between fields of study embrace not only working between "old" and new literature but also between new and new literature. This transdisciplinary approach brings with it ontological tensions that stem from different views on human exceptionalism. While being critically aware of these tensions is crucial throughout this inquiry, I am curious about its productive force and the possibility of *seeing more* through applying different discourses in unraveling a specific problem. Here, it seems pertinent to note that two contemporary authors, MacLure (2013) and Noë (2015, 2023), being among my main sources, represent different scholarly fields but have a lot in common. Most importantly, both see the relationship between nature and culture as complex and relational. Noë (2023) points out that we, "[…] human beings are cultural by nature" (p. 20). He emphasizes the significance of art and philosophy in understanding life and discusses extensively how both fields are entangled with life and science. For MacLure (2013), "The new materialisms work across boundaries of science and the social, nature and culture. All, in their various ways, contest the notion of nature as merely the inert scenery against which the humanist adventures of culture are played out" (p. 659).

With this being said, I embark on this journey supported by a thought presented by Noë. For Noë (2023), "a problem is aesthetic when all its elements are there, before you, open to view, and yet you don't understand how they fit

[1]ELLA is an acronym for Embodied Language Learning through the Arts. The four year long research project (2021-2024) is coordinated by University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland and funded by Kone Foundation. (ELLA, 2024; see https://sites.uniarts.fi/web/ellaresearchproject).

together, and yet you can't really see how things hang together" (p. 192). While I acknowledge the claims on the educational power of art stated in existing literature, my aim is not to substantiate the claim that art enhances language learning or is a superior approach to learning, for example, a new language. My guiding question about *how art work*s, especially in educational situations related to language learning, is deliberately open regarding assessable (language) learning outcomes. I find myself amid this philosophical and aesthetic problem, perplexed by the complexity of the phenomenon I am studying. Yet, I somehow know—or sense—that there is sense, even logic, in the argument and that this sense is about to emerge or to reach the threshold of language.

2 On making sense, or methodology

Indeed, the notion of sense seems crucial in this endeavor. How can I *sense* in order to understand, to make sense? How is it possible to *make sense* without losing the complexity, or depth, of the phenomenon under scrutiny, that is, to keep sense alive and awake when making sense? In making sense of the notion of sense itself, I lean on both new materialism and art philosophy, especially on MacLure's (2013) and Noë's (2023) work. MacLure (2013) introduces the notion of sense-event that may lead to materially engaged research and language.

I am inclined to approach this inquiry through philosophical contemplations that merge with embodied and aesthetic apprehension. Through this approach, thinking, language, and senses blend with valuation. However, my awareness of us (humans), as part of nature, informs this inquiry and kindles my curiosity towards transdisciplinary understandings about, for example, language. Aesthetic consideration, for me, refers to an urge to connect diverse elements to generate 'a good fit'. Here, research comes close to artistic practice. Dewey (1934) explains that the relationship between perception, what is done, and what is undergone constitutes the work of intelligence. For Dewey (1934), "[…] the idea that the artist does not think as intently and penetratingly as a scientific inquirer is absurd […] To apprehend such relations is to think, and is one of the most exacting modes of thought" (p. 47).

When attempting to make sense of what sense has to do with doing research, the notion of felt sense, first coined by Gendlin in 1978, hovers somewhere in my consciousness. Indeed, this notion of sense has been around for quite some time. Felt sense, for Gendlin (1978), refers to a body sensation beyond linguistic reference that yet has meaning. Polanyi's (1967) theory of tacit knowledge is another approach to conceptualizing the phenomenon of inner or wordless knowing. Both notions bear a resemblance to more recent literatures on affect. According to Anderson (2006), these literatures, or affect theories, focus on "[…] more-than or less-than rational–including affect but also mood, passion, emotion, intensity, and feeling" (p. 734). Within these theories, affect is seen as a transpersonal capacity. That is, it does not reside in a subject or body but emerges as "[…] transitions that take place during spatially and temporally distributed encounters […]" that "[…] can be witnessed in the qualitative differences that energetically enhance or deplete the living of space–times" (Anderson, 2006, p. 735). I will return to this topic later (see section entitled On practice).

Affect is a key notion in MacLure's (2013) thoughts on doing research, influenced by Deleuzian philosophy (see especially Deleuze, 2004). MacLure (2013) writes that "Deleuze identified something wild in language: something that

exceeds propositional meaning and resists the laws of representation. Deleuze called it sense, this non-representing, unrepresentable, 'wild element' in language" (p. 658). According to MacLure, sense has a double-sided, material-linguistic status. Thus, it resonates in both the body and the brain as a shiver or a thrill, in other words, a brief moment of aesthetic or emotional excitement. Moreover, she (2013) writes that:

> […] data have their ways of making themselves intelligible to us. This can be seen, or rather felt, on occasions when one becomes especially 'interested' in a piece of data […] that makes you feel kind of peculiar […] On those occasions, agency feels distributed and undecidable, as if we have chosen something that has chosen us. (p. 660–661)

I understand this to mean that in doing research this kind of sensing happens in-between, as transpersonal or prepersonal affect, in which the researcher is more-than-rational, more-than-cultural, and entangled with material-discursive forces. Affect can first be grasped through the senses, through embodiment, and only then may language arise, if at all.

Noë's (2023) take on sense differs from MacLure's (2013) perspective in that he seems to give more emphasis to human agency. He connects sense to aesthetics, not only in a sense (!) of sensory experience but as an element of research and philosophy that are distinctively human endeavors. For Noë (2023), "Aesthetics names the effortful movement from seeing to seeing differently, or from not seeing to seeing, or from not making sense to making sense" (p. 100). Moreover, perception, seeing, and experience do not happen to us but are something we do and achieve through our involvement with the world. We achieve experience, or "[…] the showing of the world for us […]" (Noë, 2015, p. 98) with others. In other words, we enact, make, or do perception, seeing, and experience. We, thus, have a capacity to choose—more or less consciously—the way we attend to the world. How this capacity can be developed through education is a question that I will return to later.

I am interested in the movement between human and material agencies, a play with language, words, thoughts, things, senses, and the world. I wonder if it is possible to see beyond images of things—beyond words and language—to grasp the world in a non-representational way and connect seeing, sensing, and language more closely. Curiously, I sense again that the role of art in language learning has to do with this connection. In this inquiry, the approach to research is entangled with the aim of the research. Thus, seeing and sensing are part of the research methodology—an embodied, artistic, or aesthetic approach—and the pedagogical understanding I seek. Research, learning, and education all have to do with language; that much is clear. Where, if anywhere, does art fit in this picture? Is it the missing piece of the puzzle, that is, in understanding how language comes to be, or is it just an add-on? Before tackling these questions, I will look into language itself.

3 On language

It is difficult to see how words and language cannot be but representations, stand-ins, or proxies of things, events, and phenomena of the world. We humans have created and chosen certain words, or signs, to represent certain things, and this is how we so readily understand language as representational. This process has to

do with the invention of writing, that is, representing speech or utterances with letters that then form words. Words are stand-ins for things, much like pictures and images of things representing things to such an extent that we often mistake an image to be the thing itself (Noë, 2023). However, writing language also organizes and transforms language. This is easy to forget as we have come to think that language is always writable while not acknowledging that even today, many speakers are illiterate (Noë, 2023).

There are several theories of the origins of human language, constituting a field of dynamic study and discourse. Theories range from universal grammar presented by Chomsky in the 1980s, theories of animal language, myths of human origins, and various views on children's language development (Kauppinen, 2020). While the space here does not allow for even a brief overview of the range of theories, it seems important to highlight that the connection between language and embodiment has been firmly established. Many, or most, linguists now — including the Finnish scholar Kauppinen (2020) — take a critical stance towards Chomsky's account of sensorimotor and linguistic systems as separate, human linguistic abilities as innate, and language as an inner mental system that regulates linguistic thought (Kauppinen, 2020). Kauppinen, along with many others — including myself — have been influenced and inspired by the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1999), who have all but established that all concepts, and thus thinking and language, originate from our embodied experiences. Lakoff and Johnson are connected to the dynamically developing field of cognitive science. They have developed an interdisciplinary theory on human consciousness and, within it, language, where science and philosophy are indeed entangled. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), "The same neural and cognitive mechanisms that allow us to perceive and move around also create our conceptual systems and modes of reason" (p. 4). More specifically, they assert that the view of the mind as embodied "[…] radically undercuts the *per*ception/*con*ception distinction" (p. 37) and state that:

> In an embodied mind, it is conceivable that the same neural system engaged in *per*ception (or in bodily movement) plays a central role in *con*ception. That is, the very mechanisms responsible for perception, movements, and object manipulation could be responsible for conceptualization and reasoning. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 37–38)

It is clear that understanding and studying language requires attending to both nature and culture; that language is connected to our existence as both organic and cultural beings. It can be argued, for example, that the discovery of mirror neurons in humans — as well as in animals — has been a significant scientific breakthrough for understanding the origins of language as mirroring others' movements lays ground for intersubjectivity, reciprocity, and interaction that are crucial for language development (see e.g., Kauppinen, 2020).

The notion of (trans)languaging has expanded the conceptions of language. It refers to dynamic practices of meaning-making that transcend the boundaries of named languages (García, 2009). I will return to (trans)languaging later; for now, it seems pertinent to situate the origin of the term within a transdisciplinary field that connects cognitive science, biology, and philosophy — namely, the work of two Chilean scholars, biologist Humberto Maturana and philosopher Fransisco Varela (1987). For Maturana and Varela (1987), "Language is an ongoing process

that only exists as languaging, not as isolated items of behaviour" (pp. 210; see also Gurney & Demuro, 2022).

According to Noë (2023), speech and graphical activities, such as cave paintings and clothing, showed up in humans about 40.000–50.000 years ago. He contemplates that graphical activities, understood as 'leaving a mark', may even predate speech. He acknowledges that also animals leave marks and that we, like other species, have made paths and altered our environments throughout time, as "[…] we keep track of the ways our own actions alter the situations where we find ourselves" (Noë, 2023, p. 76). Language transformed our capacities for thought and experience—capacities that are grounded in our biology. This is how language and thought have become entangled and how thought has become something different (Noë, 2023). I understand this as a deep connection between the world, as both natural and cultural, and our capacity to be affected by and to affect the world. Thus, we are of the world, thoroughly entangled, and so is language—if we let it be so.

Again, leaning on Deleuze (2004), MacLure (2013) sees language as the 'metaphysical surface' on which the distinction between words and things is played out. Contemplating this further, MacLure (2013) writes that: "Words collide and connect with things on the same ontological level, and therefore language cannot achieve the distance and externality that would allow it to represent — i.e. to stand over, stand for and stand in for — the world" (p. 660).

MacLure (2013) encourages us—researchers, but I would also include educators—to engage with the materiality of language itself and to explore how "[…] language is in and of the body; always issuing from the body; being impeded by the body" (p. 663), and to see how language itself "[…] ought to be so fundamentally changed as to become almost unrecognisable" (p. 663). This does not mean that language always remains within the body. When language leaves the body, it becomes "[…] immaterial, ideational, representational, a striated, collective, cultural and symbolic resource" (MacLure, 2013, pp. 663–664). For me, MacLure's ideas suggest that language moves back and forth, towards and away from the body. In this process, education and different cultural influences must be significant. This is how language education is cultural education and reaches towards arts education. Or this is how language learning and learning in/through the arts may merge. What this might mean from the viewpoint of language is an increased emphasis on materially engaged language—language that "[…] would be non-representational, non-interpretive, a-signifying, a-subjective, paradoxical and embroiled with matter" (MacLure, 2013, p. 663). In this sense, language itself may become art.

4 On art

The question of art is an enormous one. Here, my intention is not to discuss the plethora of art theories. My focus is on the work of art, not as an object, but as *how art works*. This is a performative question: What does art do in the world, what does it do for us, and why does it matter (so much or so little)? Winner (2019) has reviewed evidence on how art affects us from psychological and social science viewpoints. Empirical evidence is mostly inconclusive and states the obvious. It cannot explain how, for example, music and visual art might differ in how the effects take place at the level of the brain. Winner (2019) did not find conclusive evidence on the question 'Does art make us—or children—smarter?' She states

that we have to look elsewhere for the value of arts education. This is exactly what this inquiry is about: looking elsewhere. I try not to see as, but to see more or see differently.

My urge to look elsewhere stems from my longtime attempts to unravel the problem of art in education (e.g., Anttila, 2003, 2008). In my view, the view of *Art*—that is, Art as a separate field of human excellence—is one reason art has not become a foundational educational force in Western educational systems. However, I contest the view that art in education is conceptually separate from art in other contexts, even if it is often so in practice.

In many non-Western cultures, the term art—let alone Art—does not exist, and artistic practices are closely connected, or merged, with rituals and artecraft (Freeland, 2003). Having been schooled in the Finnish education system and trained through Western dance pedagogies, I first encountered non-Western views on art in the late 1980s. At that time, I studied dance at University of California, Los Angeles, where awareness of and connection to, for example, Native American culture was existing. One of my coursebooks in choreography (Highwater, 1981) made a lasting impact on me. As a representative of Indigenous culture, Highwater (1981) asserts that conceptualizing art as something special has produced a wide separation between commonplace experience and specialized forms of expression in Western cultures. For Native Americans, art has to do with the question of existence and reality: "[…] everything that is perceived by the senses, thought of, felt, and dreamed of, truly exists […] as *inseparable* aspects of the real. An image is a visual counterpart of that reality" (Highwater, 1981, p. 56). This non-representational perspective supports my inquiry into the problem of representation in art and language. I will return to this topic shortly.

According to Highwater (1981), "Art is a way of seeing, and what we see in art helps to define what we understand by the word 'reality.' We do not all see the same things" (p. 58). For me, this view aligns closely with Deweyan (1934) art philosophy. At the beginning of this article, I referred to Dewey's legacy first through Higgins (2007), who crystallizes the problem of ordinary seeing succinctly: "In seeing as, we fail to see more" (p. 390). In Dewey's (1934) own words (I repeat), "Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely" (p. 54).

Before continuing, it must be noted that Dewey's (1934) work has greatly influenced Western art philosophy and arts education. In arts education, his legacy has been carried on by many, including the music education scholar Bresler (e.g., 2011). Very much in line with Dewey and Higgins, Bresler (2011) asserts that "Seeing 'anew' or seeing 'more' involves an active interaction with the object of our observation" (p. 176; my translation). For her, the educational power of the arts is based on this creative interaction or dialogue. Dewey's (e.g., 1934) influence is substantial also in Finnish arts education and research in the field (see, e.g., Westerlund & Väkevä, 2011). Without the possibility to discuss this further, it seems pertinent to note that Väkevä (2023), a Finnish music education scholar, published a book on Dewey's art philosophy at the time of writing this article.

I will now turn to the problem of representation in the context of Western contemporary dance where it has been tackled by choreographer, dance scholar Kirsi Monni (2008). She contemplates that when art is not considered as a representation of something previously disclosed or as imitating reality, "It is only in the artwork itself that what at the moment comes-to-present springs forth" (Monni, 2008, p. 38). Monni (2008) speaks for a new paradigm for dance where:

"[…] dance does not get signified only as a representation of something previously revealed, nor as a mere aesthetic experience. Rather it can be comprehended as *laying out a world* in its involvement with being" (p. 43).

With these thoughts, it is possible for me to grasp what non-representationalism, at least in art, entails. An image, or an object, is not a representation of something; instead, "It means what it is" as Highwater (1981, p. 64) puts it. I will discuss the possibility of understanding language as non-representational in the next section. Now, I will continue exploring the notion of seeing with the support of Noë's (2015, 2023) recent work. His ideas concerning language, philosophy, and art offer, for me, a possibility to look elsewhere when attempting to unravel the questions on how art works in education and how art's work might be connected to language learning.

Noë (2015) begins his second to most recent book, entitled *Strange Tools*, by asking, "[…] why do we see so little?" (p. xi), contemplating how "[…] our obsession with works of art has gotten in the way of understanding how art works *on* us" (front flap of the book). Noë (2015) returns to this idea later, affirming that,

> It isn't about the objects. And it isn't about the effect the object triggers in us. Dewey said: art is experience. We can explain it like this: it's about what we do with the art objects. In that sense it is about the *work* of art. (p. 133)

Noë (2015) goes on to argue that "Art isn't a phenomenon to be explained. It is, rather, a mode or activity of trying to explain" (p. 133). In this sense, art is akin to philosophy, a field of investigation, a research practice. Moreover, "Art is, really, *itself,* a critical practice." (Noë, 2015, p. 112). Through this critical research practice, it is possible to move from not seeing to seeing and to seeing differently as art invites us to "see me if you can", as Noë (2015, p. 102) wittily suggests. According to Noë (2015)—Dewey, along with his disciples, would concur— "We achieve this by thoughtful and attentive looking" (p. 102). In this way, "We enact art as much as we perceive it" (Noë, 2015, p. 137). Here, Noë acknowledges his connection to cognitive science and, more specifically, to enactivism—a subfield of embodied cognition. Enactivism underlines the idea that cognition, seeing, and perceiving are what we do and that we achieve rather than get experiences. Noë (2015) contemplates:

> We start out not seeing what is there. But by looking and interrogating and challenging, we come to see it. The work challenges us to reorganize our seeing, our expectations, and our thinking. The work of art, like that of philosophy, is the reorganization of ourselves. And this reorganization, this work, aims also at understanding. (p. 138)

This is how both art and philosophy aim for self-transformation and understanding. Art and philosophy are thus in the serious business of reorganizing us in so doing, connected to learning (Noë, 2015). This leads me to the question of art in education, which is too big to discuss in detail here. I take a different strategy and explore how this question could be approached from the viewpoint of language, with Noë's (2015, 2023) ideas leading the way.

5 Language, art, and education, entangled

Noë (2023), indeed, has a lot to say about education. In his recent book, entitled *The Entanglement: How Art and Philosophy Make Us What We Are*, he attests that:

> It is hard to think of any other technology the mastery of which is so universally and with such lockstep cultural uniformity imposed on the young, from the earliest age, and for the duration of their education. We positively drill writing and writing-oriented ways of thinking about what we do when we speak into our children. (p. 79)

According to Noë (2023), this educational convention to emphasize writing has resulted in the way our experience of speech is so bound up with, or limited by, writing to the extent that it becomes imperative to ask:

> […] whether it is even possible for us to step back from the writing orientation so that we might experience our own capacity for language, or our speaking and hearing, apart from the image of speaking and talking that writing supplies. (p. 80)

For Noë (2023), these questions are both ontological—concern the question of what language is—and existential: "Is it for us a live possibility to engage with speech, to talk and listen, apart from the entanglement of speech with writing?" (p. 80, italics in original). The ontological question takes us back to the problem of representation, if and when "[…] our understanding of language is entangled with the activity of representing that language in written form?" (Noë, 2023, p. 80). How can we conceive language as non-representational, as MacLure (2013)—leaning on Deleuze (2004)—suggests? Could art help in this? It may be easier to understand how an image, an artecraft, or a work of art "means what it is," as Highwater (1981, p. 64) suggests. Or, as Monni (2008) explains:

> […] an artwork could be seen as neither a plain aesthetic object nor a sheer initiator of aesthetic experience. Rather, it offers for the community of peoples a possibility to participate in the unconcealedness of being and disclosure of the world which is taking place in the artwork. (pp. 38-39)

How could art or artistic practice—drawing, dancing, singing, or acting—be understood as non-representational, connecting to the social and material world through the senses? In so doing, could it participate in resolving the existential question Noë (2023) posed above? That is, could art be the gateway through which we can get in touch with non-representational language, in other words, language beyond words as pre-existing proxies for things or prescribed semiotic signs? Furthermore, what would this kind of practice lead to, and what would it be worth (in terms of education)? Before attempting to disentangle these questions, there is another path to explore—the notion of (trans)languaging.

This notion challenges the ontology of language, that is, our understanding of language as an object. Languaging refers to practice, as in making or doing language. Gurney and Demuro (2023) discuss languaging from new materialist perspectives, seeing language not as a finished product but as becoming. Further,

they emphasize "[…] the need to take seriously the practices and performances of language […] through a deeper acknowledgment of language(s)/languaging ontologies as *practice* and *performance*" (Gurney & Demuro, 2023, p. 144). Outside this new materialist discourse, Li (2018), among others, has proposed translanguaging as a practical theory of language and as a pedagogical practice.

In bridging (trans)languaging to sensing and seeing and then to art, I wonder, might the notion of the linguistic body be of use? Citing Noë (2023) again, "As long as there have been human bodies, it seems, these bodies have been bearers of subjective and intersubjective significance" (p. 6). I understand this to refer to the body, with all its semiotic resources (for example, gestures, facial expressions, intonation) as a medium of communication, and, thus, as language. This process denotes seeing; indeed, seeing understood not only through vision but through all sensory channels—that is, sensing. Seeing, says Noë (2023), is embodied: "We bring the world into focus. We achieve access to it. We work to see and the seeing is the working itself" (p. 35). The linguistic body, then, may mean that we both see language and do language, or we practice and perform language through our bodies, through all possible semiotic resources. The linguistic body is then our connection to others and the world. The body is the means by which we become seen and the means by which we can see others and the world. The body is visible and exposed. It reveals you to me and me to you. The linguistic body connects nature and culture. It embodies consciousness in the presence of others. Thus:

> To be seen, to be open to the view of another, is to be active and activated; it is almost as if the presence of others sends a charge through the air and animates the very space in which you find yourself. (Noë, 2023, p. 123)

I will return to this idea of animated space shortly to connect it to the affect theory discussed earlier. Before closing this section, I will make one more detour and look at the notion of focus. Here, I refer to a study by Heath and Wolf (2005), that investigated the connection between language and art in learning. More specifically, they asked what happens to young children's learning when they work regularly with a professional visual artist in their school. Heath and Wolf (2005) found that "Key to the children's drawing, painting and talking was close focused attention on details of three-dimensional objects, portraits, still-life works and their own creations" (p. 38). They also observed how the artist, in his conversations with the children, included concepts and technical terms used in professional work of visual art. Through this extensive practice under the direct guidance of a professional who led the children to attention, focus, and deepened comprehension of terms integral to artistic practice, the children became able to combine "[…] manual and linguistic work that demands attention to detail, receptive understanding of complex terms and processes, and familiarity with the analytical and sequential thinking needed to identify and solve problems" (Heath & Wolf, 2005, p. 38). Moreover, Heath and Wolf (2005) detected an increased ability for cognitive strategies in following through from initial idea to project execution and emotional maturation. Again, Noë (2023) has something to say about this:

> My visual power consists of the fact that I have skillful, visual access, now, to more than is now strictly visible. This relation is sustained by what I can do, by my sensorimotor skills…but also by other forms of conceptual and practical understanding. (p. 126)

Perceiving also involves affective orientation—an orientation towards situations and things sensitively and responding to what matters to us (Noë, 2023, p. 98). Heath and Wolf (2005) assert that "[…] looking closely matters in learning; sustained visual focus goes along with holding attention" (p. 44). Interestingly, Winner (2019) makes a similar recommendation when concluding that there is no conclusive empirical evidence that would prove the instrumental claims regarding the benefits of the arts. Winner (2019) suggests studying an art form seriously. This involves, for example, learning to observe closely.

Heath and Wolf (2005) express concern about the frequency of change of frame in television, motion pictures, video games, and other moving image formats because when attending to these media, the focus has to stay on the move. Moreover, they point out that verbal interaction in attending to these media is very limited. It is fair to say that there is no indication that this concern has since eased, as was expressed by Dewey already in 1934. Dewey (1934) was critical about "[…] this hurried and impatient human environment in which we live, with experience of an almost incredible paucity, all on the surface" (p. 46). In such an environment:

> No one experience has a chance to complete itself because something else is entered upon so speedily […] An individual comes to seek, unconsciously even more than by deliberate choice, situations in which he can do the most things in the shortest time. (Dewey, 1934, p. 46)

Thus, there is a need for art. We should not wait for the need for art to emerge on its own or let it not emerge. Noë (2015) claims that "We can be brought to need it [art]. We can be educated in its importance" (p. 117). I agree. The problem remains: how to do this? How can I make this argument clear and complete the puzzle; how can I put the argument in words so that it *makes sense?*

6 On practice

Finally, I turn the page and dive into practice—dive in a sense that it seems a sudden move. Or maybe it is a dip in a sense that it is quite brief. By no means will it yield 'empirical findings' that can be generalized. My intention is to connect the philosophical and conceptual discussion I have been engaged in so far to a certain moment in space-time. In choosing this specific moment, I have entertained the notion of 'glowing' moments. For me, this notion has roots in my earlier work related to 'physical expressive space', which is an expression that a Danish colleague of mine, Anamet Magven, used as I interviewed her for my study on the embodiment of hope (Anttila, 2019). For her, this kind of space is about moving in expressive ways and interacting physically with one another. Within such a space, children may

> […] experience that you are more than you are in everyday life, so you can express yourself in so many different ways in dancing, or in moving, in space together with others that like […] There is this sense that there is more to life" (Magven, in Anttila, 2019, p. 68).

Magven also used the term attunement, which happens in a physical expressive space as something that can be felt or sensed and shared collectively. Attunement happens in

> […] the whole space, we can all feel it, everybody in the space can feel that there is something happening now and we can all describe it differently; we can all see it in each other's eyes that it is now. (Magven, in Anttila, 2019, p. 68)

I connect both 'physical expressive space' and 'attunement' to affect theories and the notion of a transpersonal sense of life discussed by Anderson (2006). These notions refer to a space in between that connects human beings and carries their movements, actions, and interactions through time and space. For Anderson (2006), as I noted earlier, affect refers to qualitative differences that energetically enhance or deplete the living of 'space–times'.

MacLure's (2013) thoughts on glow have influenced me further. For MacLure (2013), glow has to do with the emergence of sense in encounters with data; it invokes "[…] something abstract or intangible that exceeds propositional meaning, but also has a decidedly embodied aspect" (p. 661). The idea of sensory, embodied encounter with data relates with my experiences as an arts educator and researcher. A 'glowing moment' that I have chosen or that chose me took place sometime during spring 2023 in a public school in the metropolitan area of Finland where dance artist-pedagogues Riina Hannuksela and Angela Aldebs worked with pupils of a preparatory class as part of the ELLA research project. More specifically, they worked towards the walking performance that I mentioned in the very beginning of this article. For research purposes, most of their sessions with the pupils were documented by video. I personally only attended the school three times over the spring semester. However, I was able to access the process through the documentation. Instead of going through all of the material, I asked Angela to choose video clips for me based on my description of what I meant by glowing moments. From the video clips she had collected one moment stood out as if I had chosen something that had chosen me (see MacLure, 2013).

This moment took place in the pupils' regular classroom. Desks and chairs had been moved by the walls. Riina and Angela had spread a long, brown paper on the floor. There were crayons for pupils to use. The instructions were to work in pairs, in which one pupil places their hand(s) and feet or foot on the paper, and the other traces the hands and feet with crayon through the paper. There were six pupils participating, they worked in three pairs.

I posed the following questions to myself when approaching, attending to, and making notes on this moment: What do I see? What do I hear? What do I sense? What do I feel? The following is what came out of this experiment in the form of words or language. The first "raw" version presents the perceptions as mine — that is, from the perceiver's viewpoint, as organized according to the questions or sense modalities.

I see
pupils moving in ways that are energetic, vital, unconventional
Focusing on the drawing hand, the hand or foot or body part being drawn, the trace of the crayon on paper
Smiling, laughing, touching
Tapping the floor with the hand as if saying I am here come and draw my outlines
Fingers moving apart so that the crayon fits between them
Slippery woollen socks
Stepping fast to other end of the paper, accelerating, decelerating
Concentrated focus, slow careful drawing, attending to the other
A leap high up ending on the floor
A pupil rolling on the floor and laughing, giggling when another pupil lays down, flat onto the paper, on his stomach and his pair drawing his body outlines
A pupil moving his body wildly in dancelike movements, vocalizing simultaneously a bit
Different ways of touching the paper with different body parts

I hear
"Yksi väri" ["One color"]
A few words of instruction given in Finnish language
Encouragement time to time. "Hyvä!" ["Good!"]
Many languages
Pupils talking in different languages
"Davai"
Laughter

I sense
How the activity draws the pupils in
Peace
The floor, the gravity, sucking the bodies in and then releasing its grip towards light steps, hops, joyful upward movements
This laughter releasing energy
Freedom
Bending conventions
My body participating in the action, I feel like being in the room, almost smell the crayons

I feel
Warm
Smiling
Comfort

The next stage of my experimentation was to remove human subjects, including myself, and to separate phrases on different lines. In addition, I mixed the order of the phrases so that different senses appear in more random order. The following is what came out of this experiment:

Moving energetically
Focusing on the drawing hand
Focusing on the hand or foot or body part being drawn
Focusing on the trace of the crayon on paper
"Yksi väri" ["One color"]
Touching the paper in different ways with different body parts
Tapping the floor with the hand as if saying I am here come and draw my outlines
Moving fingers apart so that the crayon fits between them
A few words of instruction given in Finnish language
Encouragement time to time. "Hyvä!" ["Good!"]
Different languages
Many languages
"Davai"
Laughter
Smiling
Laughing
Touching
Concentrating
Drawing slowly, carefully
Attending to the other
Slippery woollen socks
Stepping fast to other end of the paper
Accelerating
Decelerating
Leaping high up ending on the floor
Laying down, flat onto the paper, on the stomach
Drawing body outlines
Rolling on the floor and laughing, giggling
The activity pulling towards itself
Peace
The floor, the gravity, sucking the bodies in and then releasing
its grip towards light steps, hops, joyful upward movements
Laughter releasing energy
Freedom
Bending conventions
Moving wildly in dancelike movements, vocalizing simultaneously a bit
Participating in the action like being in the room, almost smelling the crayons
Feeling warm
Feeling smiling
Feeling comforted

Afterthoughts

I have tried not to interpret these perceptions and sensations. I have tried not to see beyond what is there. It is not easy. Some words, for example, 'energetically', 'carefully', and 'conventions' refer to things, doings, or qualities that are beyond what I see, hear, sense, or feel. It is not easy to refrain from drawing conclusions and assigning meanings. They keep emerging. However, this experiment may still shed light on how materialities, actions, doings, energies, and affects travel in the space between human and non-human agencies and connect them in various ways. I see this event as a series of entanglements of human bodies, paper,

crayons, the floor beneath, the sound of paper, laughter, utterances, and giggles. For me, this is all about becoming, about language becoming, about the practice of language, performing language, or languaging. It may be about becoming visible, being seen, seeing others, and thus, becoming a linguistic body. Moreover, it may be about being with others in a physical, expressive space, an animated, transpersonal space, or a translanguaging space. (Li, 2018)

When I look at the words on paper (or on-screen), my wandering gaze keeps returning to the word 'focus'. I connect it with seeing, seeing more, and seeing differently. I wonder, what kinds of conditions might enable a sustained focus? This kind of focus entails attending to the space, to others, and to the activity and may foster the emergence of a transpersonal sense of life. In concluding this article, my intention is to put together the thoughts, ideas, or elements that have been there before me and open to view but not yet really 'hanging together' as in making a 'good fit' (Noë, 2023). It is time to see if such a fit is possible.

7 Epilogue

> *When participating in the walking performance "Minä, vesi: Jälkiä minusta kaupungissa"or "Me, water: Traces of me in the city" in May 2023, I was not aware of the "Traces" activity that had been part of the process. Now, the notion of traces starts to make all kinds of SENSE to me. We leave traces of us in our environment and in the world, and we read traces that others have left in order to understand the world—in order to grasp it, become part of it, and to connect to it. Animals leave traces and mark their territory as well. We, humans, build things, draw, and write. We also leave traces that harm the environment and other living beings in it. We exploit nature and alter it permanently. Could art, and art education be about learning to SENSE and SEE what kind of traces we make in the world, about seeing our traces as humankind or about mapping ourselves?*

Noë (2015) writes that "Art is like mapmaking […] people don't make maps just for the heck of it; no, they make maps because they get lost without them" (p. 30). This is very clear to me. Art is about investigating ourselves and the world around us. It is about making sense and understanding how things stand in relation to other things and how they can be seen otherwise or put together in new ways so that we can see more or differently. Art is about seeing beyond what is obvious. In this sense, art is research, akin to philosophy, and about 'writing ourselves' (Noë, 2015, p. 206). However, this writing and research is embodied and material. In Dewey's (1934) words: "Every art does something with some physical material, the body or something outside the body, with or without the use of intervening tools, and with a view to production of something visible, audible, or tangible" (pp. 48-49).

How then, would it be possible to connect art with language? The notion of (trans)languaging may be the missing piece of the puzzle. (Trans)languaging expands language towards sensing, seeing, about becoming visible to others, about becoming a linguistic body. Language becomes multimodal, material, and embodied. And so is art: "Art is the invention of seeing, and the invention of language" (Noë, 2023, p. 223). I see now that artistic practice *is* (trans)languaging.

If we accept that art and artistic practice are also about seeing more, then arts education could be conceived as being about learning to see more. Seeing more

and seeing differently needs guidance. It is not easy. It is the task of education to foster this kind of learning process and to guide learners to not only create art for the sake of tradition, entertainment, or developing creativity. There is more to seeing more; it requires practicing seeing, sensing, and attending as a holistic and embodied engagement that fosters connection to the social and material world through the senses and through non-representational language, with language beyond words as prescribed semiotic signs. What matters is the kind of education we promote and practice and how we understand perceiving, thinking, learning, and language as entangled—and entangled with the linguistic body. When approaching language as a materially engaged phenomenon, we can understand how language emerges from our engagements with the world. Then language—as speech and in its writable forms—comes along. It arises as we practice seeing, as we sense, and make sense. Thus, for me, arts education *is* language education.

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