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## **SOME ASPECTS OF DRAMA IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

**Розглянуто драму як частину комунікативної методології у вивчення англійської мови як іноземної.**

*Ключові слова:* драма, комунікативний підхід, рольова гра, інтерактивні заняття, автентичні матеріали, соціодрама, нариси, драматизація оповідання, макет інтерв'ю, бізнес-зустрічі, пародії, шаради, пантоміми, дебати.

**Рассмотрена драма как часть коммуникативной методологии в изучении английского языка в качестве иностранного.**

*Ключевые слова:* драма, коммуникативный подход, ролевая игра, интерактивные занятия, автентичные материалы, социодрама, очерки, драматизация рассказа, макет интервью, бизнес-встречи, пародии, шарады, пантомимы, дебаты.

**The article deals with drama as part of the communicative classroom methodology in teaching English as a Foreign Language.**

*Key words:* drama, communicative approach, role-play, interactive activities, authentic materials, socio-drama, sketches, story dramatization, mock interviews, business meetings, skits, charades, pantomimes, debates.

In recent years much emphasis has been put on the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language using the «Communicative approach». The learner is now seen as an active participant in the process of language learning in the classroom. Teachers who advocate the Communicative Approach are expected to come up with activities that would promote self-learning, group interaction in authentic situations and peer teaching. It is a task not easy for the teacher.

The purpose of the given article is to relate drama to the Communicative Approach in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and to discuss how role-play as a dramatic technique can be used in the language classroom.

Communicative activities refer to the techniques which are employed in the communicative method in language teaching. Examples of such activities are games, exercises, practices and projects which make use of the Target language. The activities involve doing things with language: e.g. making choices, evaluating and bridging the information gap. The language-using activities for communication are not restricted to conversation and may involve listening, speaking, reading, writing or an integration of two or more skills. Communicative activities have the following characteristic features: firstly, they are purposeful. They are beyond strictly practising particular structures. Secondly, they are interactive. The activities are often conducted with others and

often involve some form of discussion. Thirdly, authentic materials are used. The situations in which the learners have to use language should be as realistic as possible. The language models given should be authentic. And, fourthly, they are based on the information gap principle.

Susan Holden [2] defines drama as any activity which asks the participant to portray himself in an imaginary situation; or to portray another person in an imaginary situation. Drama is thus concerned with the world of 'let's pretend'. It provides an opportunity for a person to express himself through verbal expressions and gestures using his imagination and memory. In this paper, drama refers more to informal drama (creative dramatics) as it is used in the language classroom and not on stage. The participants in the drama activities are thus learners and not actors.

Tapping into this natural interest in drama play can give educators a way of providing students of any age with an enjoyable learning experience through which they not only gain knowledge but develop many life skills:

- For example, drama play provides the opportunity to hone the skill of cooperation. Learning to cope with the inevitable differences in opinions and working styles (not to mention everyone's emotional foibles) is of utmost importance if a project is to be successful.

- As the playwright or story teller a student synthesizes the ideas, facts, attitudes. Drama needs organized thinking and planning. Students hone their ability to visualize events, characters and settings which takes creative thinking and problem solving.

- Even when no person is given the responsibility of being the «director» of a group drama play, inevitably someone will emerge as the leader of the production. This person often has firm ideas about how the task should be done and imprints his or her interpretation on the presentation. This is a skill to be encouraged, but sometimes it is necessary to officially assign this role to someone who may not be bold enough to speak up and take the opportunity for leadership. In this role, the skills of interpretation, decision-making and communication come to the fore.

- Putting oneself «in the other person's shoes» helps to develop empathy. Acting out a different set of life circumstances can lead to an understanding that there is another point of view that may have validity.

- For many of us, learning to be comfortable speaking or performing in front of an audience is a trial! Starting early with informal drama play in the classroom setting can help to ease students into oral presentation. As students become accustomed to performing, they can be encouraged to memorize scripts or express a range of emotions through voice, facial expressions, and body language and even develop their own characters.

- Whether a tiny classroom drama play or a large staged musical, there are always items that need to be made or found for props, costumes or scenery. Students working to prepare these items, contribute their time and creativity, but also learn to be responsible to the group. One of the best lessons taught by drama is that everyone is necessary for the success of the venture. Those responsible for the «behind the scenes» jobs are just as important as the actors «up front».

Perhaps the value of drama can be summed up by Susan Stern [6] who looked into drama in second language learning from a psycholinguistic point of view. She stated that drama heightened self-esteem, motivation, spontaneity, increased capacity for empathy, and lowered sensitivity to rejection. All these facilitate communication and provide an appropriate psycholinguistic climate for language learning.

Drama can be used in the teaching of English as a Foreign language for a variety of purposes:

- Drama contextualises the language in real or imagined situations in and out of the classroom. Language in the class that uses drama activities is explored, tried out and practised in meaningful situations.

– Drama activities can be used as a means of reinforcement of language learnt (Mordecai [4]; Fernandez and Coll [1]). It helps to extend, retain and reinforce vocabulary and sentence structure through role-play and communication games.

– Drama improves oral communication. As a form of communication methodology, drama provides the opportunity for the student to use language meaningfully and appropriately. Maley and Duff [3] state that drama puts back some of the forgotten emotional content into language. Appropriacy and meaning are more important than form or structure of the language. Drama can help restore the totality of the situation by reversing the learning process, beginning with meaning and moving towards language form. This makes language learning more meaningful and attempts to prepare the student for real-life situations.

– Learning a second language can be enjoyable, stimulating and meaningful when combined with drama activities (Mordecai [4]).

– The problem of mixed ability is reduced when drama activities are used. Students who are more fluent can take the main roles which require more oral communication, while the weaker students compensate for their lack of linguistic ability by paralinguistic communication: e.g. body language and general acting ability (miming).

– Language learning must appeal to the creative intuitive aspect of personality as well as the conscious and rational part. Drama activities can be used to provide opportunities for the student to be involved actively. The activities involve the student's whole personality and not merely his mental process. Effective learning takes place as the student involves himself in the tasks and is motivated to use the target language.

The above are just some of the uses of drama in teaching. The list is not exhaustive. Generally it can be said that the use of drama and drama activities in TEFL do adhere to the principles of the Communicative Approach. One of the aims (as it is in the Communicative Approach) is for the learner to achieve communicative competence. It is the hope of the advocators of the dramatic techniques, that the learner will become more imaginative, creative and sensitive as he becomes more self-confident in the process of learning English as a Foreign Language.

Role-play is one of the types of drama activities. However, many teachers and students in an EFL class are afraid of the word «role-play». Even though there is little consensus on the terms used in role-playing literature. Just a few of the terms which are used, often interchangeably, are «simulation,» «game,» «role-play,» «simulation-game,» «role-play simulation,» and «role-playing game». In this paper the term «role-play» is used. Role-play is an activity which requires a person to take on a role that is real or imaginary. It involves spontaneous interaction of participants as they attempt to complete a task. There is a whole range of role-play activities. It ranges from the simple to the complex, from the structured to the unstructured. Some examples of the types of role-plays are socio-drama, sketches, story dramatization, mock interviews, business meetings, skits, charades, pantomimes and even debates. In my classes on home-reading I often use story dramatization and have worked out some tips for preparation and performance.

A full play is a major concern. You may well decide to go down this route but if this is the first time you and your class are getting into play production, it can be quite daunting and can also lead to many problems. The issues with taking a play and presenting it are:

- Plays can mean students having to learn a lot of dialogue.
- There are generally only a few actors in a play which means much of the class does not participate.
- Long plays, badly acted, are boring for the audience.
- The subject of a play may not be of interest to the whole class.
- Instead, a useful alternative, especially for novices, is preparing and performing short skits. This has the advantage of:

- Allowing all the class to participate; different groups can prepare and perform different skits.
- If one skit is not working or is perhaps a little dull, after a few minutes the audience know that another skit will be along soon!
- Students have to learn less lines off by heart.
- Students can create skits with themes which interest them.

Before asking students to perform a role-play it is advisable to pre-learn the vocabulary first. It may be used in songs, on flash-cards, in games, you may also chant the words, stamp out the syllables, act them out individually – this is really fun when using words describing emotions and actions. Once the students are familiar with the separate words it is reasonable to let them start practicing the lines in the play. This, too, can be done as a game. The idea is not to have individual students word-perfect in their own roles but to let the whole class experience using the vocabulary in context. Only when all the students know the key words and lines of the play you should put together all the elements – words, expression and movement. Allow the students to use their own creativity in setting the scene, deciding on props, costumes etc. Remember that, as far as the last two are concerned, these should be kept very simple, using the ‘less is more’ principle, and they only need to be included in the final rehearsal. You as the teacher can take one of the roles if you need to. It is necessary to avoid making corrections until the role play is finished. You may keep a note pad to remind yourself of anything that crops up, but be discreet – scribbling away furiously might put the students off. Don’t let things get out of hand. If the role-play descends into a slanging match, it might be entertaining, but you really should intervene. Recording or videoing role plays can be a very useful tool for giving feedback, but only if the students are comfortable with this.

There are pros and cons of the use of role-play in the classroom. One of the disadvantages of using role-play is, according to Richards[5], that this activity is artificial. It may also cause incorrect forms since the teacher is not encouraged to correct mistakes immediately so as not to discourage students. This provides opportunities for learners to produce and practise grammatically wrong and inappropriate forms. The advantages are the following: role-play stimulates authentic conversations; it allows the learner to use language freely and creatively; it creates sensitivity, empathy and a sense of awareness; it increases motivation and it is a great break from routine.

Thus, the use of role-play as drama activity in Teaching English as a Foreign Language can be used as an innovative technique in language teaching. Using drama to teach English results in real communication involving ideas, emotions, feelings and adaptability; in other words an opportunity to use language in operation which is absent in conventional language class.

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