

### **Drama an useful method for teaching English Language to a large number of students.**

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#### **Abstract:**

*This paper emphasizes the meaningful interaction among individuals as the greatest motivating force in human development and learning. In this article drama is focused as one of the most interactive task in teaching English Language. It is essential for teachers to use an appropriate strategy to promote learning in an authentic context ( Anderson, 2004) so that students acquire knowledge about a language. According to Landy, 1982 & Zafeiraidou, 2009, drama is one of the oldest known activities. In olden times drama occurred for ceremonial purpose and it includes various elements like dancing chanting or storytelling. According to Landy, " Its elements - imitation, imagination, roleplaying, and interpretations accounts for much of a child's learning of language, movement and social behaviour". Therefore, it is said that drama is a valuable means for developing language skills, cooperation, collaboration, encouraging social interactions and enhancing students' listening and communication skills. " It is a multi-sensory tool, which combines listening, speaking, thinking, exploration, and use of immediate environment and the development of physical control". ( Thompson & Evans, 2005, p.14). A real communication which involves emotions, ideas, appropriateness, feelings and adaptability takes place while using drama to teach English Language. Using drama as a technique gives a wider options to students so as to enrich their efficiency as it is a learner-centeted activity. The conventional class hardly gives the student an opportunity to use the language and to develop fluency but drama is an attractive alternative for not only producing meaningful language and enhancing listening skills but also it forces the learners to use their vocabulary resource and henceforth enriches their linguistic skills.*

**Keywords:** Drama, English Language Teaching

#### **Introduction**

English is almost a must for us in today's world. It has become a part of our day-to-day life. The knowledge of this foreign language, i.e, English gives us an advantage in communicating with someone abroad or in cracking a job interview. Every English teacher look for new ideas and activities to use in their classes so as to motivate the students and make them comfortable while learning a foreign language. Drama is an excellent means where students can explore multiple

boundaries like pronunciation, speaking, and listening. According to Wilga Rivers (1983), drama is an approach that enables learners to use what they are learning with pragmatic intent, something that is most difficult to learn through explanation. The monotony of a conventional classroom can be broken and it prepares the learners to face the real world as they use the language practically. To quote Gavin Bolton (in Dougill J. 1987), "drama is a unique tool, vital for language development" as it nurtures self-expression. A teacher should take into consideration many things before going to put up a play. A teacher has to keep in mind to complete the syllabus within a stipulated time period and several constraints like lack of space, skepticism of colleagues, funds and disinterest of management. So a teacher should coach oneself and ask some questions to oneself like would the drama create a number of institutional problems, or will the traditional timetable be at stake or will it really improve and impact the learners. Henceforth, keeping in mind all these a teacher can keep one-off and stand alone drama activity which takes hardly five minutes. Human beings is a combination of mental, physical and psychological entity and while encouraging our students to learn English we need to satisfy their entire being and needs. A drama liberates a student from the confinement of conventional classroom and it draws out their natural abilities, eventually they can learn and discover together. They feel safe, take risks, grow in confidence, make decision and allows their character to voice truths and opinion which they might not do in a traditional class atmosphere. Therefore the main purpose to introduce drama in a language learning class is to provide a stimulating, funny, creative and active environment. Learners are given scope to explore the language through their imaginations and express their creativity through other forms of communication, which include role-play, dance, action, movement, etc. Hence as long as you know your class and share a good relation with your pupils, drama creates an atmosphere where both the teacher and the class feel relaxed and secure in imparting knowledge and in sharing ideas and they enjoy & learn from the activity. Drama should be well prepared like all language class activities. Drama in an English Language classroom is an absolute essential as it gives learners a scope to use their own personality and helps them in tackling the world outside the classroom. After years of teaching, I realized that many times the conventional teaching falls short to fulfill the goals of language learning. The student don't gain confidence to use the language outside the class circumference, their output is limited. They can write correct grammatical sentence or can produce long answers for literature chapters but whatever they are doing is for the sake of getting grade. As I have mentioned in the beginning to sell ourselves in the global job market real communication is needed and not isolated sentences. The main objective of a language teaching course is to develop communication skills and is most often neglected in conventional class because teachers are focused in completing their syllabus in a stipulated time period and learners are much more concerned about their marks and grade but the real problem is faced by them when they go for an interview or communicate in actual with outside world, instead of the cozy, comfortable zone of their classroom, where marks and grades matter least. So to summarize, a teacher must make

each and every student aware that a student should not learn English just because it is a part of their syllabus, but because it is important to succeed in future. Here in this paper, I am going to discuss about why we use drama, about some simple drama techniques, some drama activities for beginners, some speech acts or formulaic expressions for learners and some activities for large English classrooms. According to Dewey (1921), imagination is the gateway through which meanings are derived from past experience that are carried into the present. It is obvious that one small action is more powerful than reading hundred of textbooks, so to energize and motivate our students to learn, drama is the best. Let us give them a chance to have fun, to commit mistakes, to enjoy and to move forward and this helps students of all groups to stand out and display their ability. So, let's give them a chance.

### **Why Drama is used as a strategy?**

According to Fleming(2006), drama approach is learner-centered, so learners are active participants in teaching and learning process. Even learners with limited vocabulary ( Aldavero, 2008) or low proficiency and confidence ( Moghadaas & Ghafariniae, 2012) can benefit from it since they can communicate in a foreign language using drama activities ( Aldavero, 2008).

An American applied linguist, widely recognized in the 80s came with a theory about " two independent system of second language performance: 'the acquired system' and 'the learned system'. The acquired system is the subconscious process of acquisition which a child undergoes when they pick up first language. It is a natural communication where a speaker is not concerned about the forms and grammar of the language whereas the second system comprises of formal instructions and conscious knowledge. Therefore teachers should take into consideration anxiety-free acquisition for which the right kind of exposure to language is needed. That's why Harmer suggests " a rich classroom environment should not only expose students to language, but also give them opportunities to activate their language knowledge and to study language and the way it works". (Harmer, 2007:48). So, if we delve deep into Harmer's quotation we realize that he is trying to say that drama in education helps students to interact and help them with the opportunity to activate the knowledge of the language. I teach in college and deal with young minds, so I realized that they learn chiefly by imagination through exploring the world, and the imaginations give them the power to understand the language. It also develops empathy and tolerance, promotes active learning, gives the opportunity to work and learn together. But sometimes, less experienced and younger teacher might lose control of the class and confusion may arise, so this must be taken care of. And sometimes syllabus is too huge that there is not enough time to fit everything. So, no matter the age of the learners, drama and humans are still a great combination.

### **Four techniques to make your class fun-filled**

All teachers want their students to excel in all fields but sometimes conventional academic techniques might not fulfil a teacher's dream. Therefore to introduce some drama into our English Language classes the following techniques might be effective.

Technique 1: Improvisation

Technique 2: Games

Technique 3: Slideshow

Technique 4: Theatre

#### **Improvisation**

This technique is incredibly popular in corporate world which improves group work or brainstorming. The basic idea is very simple, suppose we take story telling or brainstorming. One student gives an idea and the second respond positively but build on his/her own idea. This is "Yes, and...!" approach and an opposite to "No, but..." approach. This help the learners to feel as if their ideas are heard and understood by their fellow mates and it encourages them rather than to be laughed at and also help them to come out of their cocoon.

#### **Games**

The "Yes, and..." approach can be taken a little further. We can play two types of games, they are:

1) The Hitchhiker

2) The Strange neighbour

The first game is a car game, where the students imagine as if they are sitting in a car and a new person gets into the car and they engage in conversation. This can be quite funny. The second game is to form two circle, an inner circle facing outward and an inner circle facing inward, so each student faces a partner, as if they are new neighbour and they can engage into communication.

#### **Slideshow**

This technique is where a story is assigned to individual students, they will pick three character from the story according to their wish and will show a slideshow of the character and the narrator will describe the characters.

### **Thratre**

Before beginning a story we can give a brief summary of it, ask the learners to enact the play and then once they start reading the story, they will be interested to know more as they have enacted the roles in the play.

### **Activities to encourage your students**

Here, I am going to describe some one-off and stand-alone exercise which might be helpful for students to express them freely. The activities are:

- 1) Hot seating
- 2) Telephonic conversation
- 3) Thought Tracking

### **Hot seating**

In this activity, two students are involved, one assumes the role of a newspaper reporter who is interviewing an eminent personality and the other seating in the hotseat to answer all the questions. Now after the interview is over, both can together prepare a newspaper report.

### **Telephonic Conversation**

Here two students are engaged where the ability to react quickly is enhanced. This also enhances the speaking and listening skills of the students.

### **Thought Tracking**

A character is suggested to individual student and they get into the skin of the character, which enable them to think from the character's perspective. Now they are asked to express what the character is feeling at an important point of time in their life. It could be describing the character's struggle, success, failure, loss, rejection, etc., when the character is speaking to oneself or a monologue.

### **Simple formula for Speech Acts or expressions**

Here, I suggest some expression which can be implemented in a roleplay.

1. Expressing disagreement

a. I am afraid I don't/ can't agree.

b. That's not what I think!

c. I have a different view.

2. Contradicting / refuting an argument

a. I am sorry to contradict you, but...

b. I totally disagree. I think...

c. I am afraid I have to contradict you.

3. Expressing pleasure

a. I'm so happy!

b. I am delighted that...

c. That's really wonderful!

4. Expressing sorrow/ regret

a. How sad!

b. How terrible!

c. I am really sorry to hear that...

d. I can't tell you how sorry I am to hear that...

#### 5. Expressing surprise

a. Really?

b. Amazing!

c. That's most unexpected!

d. You don't say!

e. I can't believe it!

f. What a surprise!

#### 6. Expressing wonder

a. That's amazing / incredible!

b. Fantastic / Incredible!

#### 7. Expressing disappointment

a. What a pity!

b. Oh, how sad!

8. Ordering/ directing someone to do something

a. This is/ Here's what you have to do.

b. This is what I want you to do.

c. Do as I tell you!

d. Listen carefully!

9. Making a request/ asking for help

a. Could you please...?

b. Please...

c. Can I request you to....

d. I have a request to make. Could you please...

e. I would be very grateful if you...

10. Accepting a request



a. I'll be glad to...

b. Certainly!

c. By all means!

d. No problem!

11. Refusing (declining) a request

a. I am sorry, but...

b. I am afraid that's not possible

12. Expressing gratitude

a. Thank you so much

b. I don't know how to thank you!

c. I am most grateful...

13. Asking for directions

a. Could you please tell me how to...?

14. Giving directions

a. This is what you have to do.

15. Asking for permission

- a. May I/ Could I...?
- b. Will you please allow me to....?
- c. Do I have your permission to...

16. Refusing permission

- a. Sorry!
- b. I am afraid that's not possible!
- c. No, you can't!

17. Granting permission

- a. Certainly!
- b. By all means!
- c. Of course!

18. Prohibiting someone from doing something

- a. I am sorry, but I don't think you should do that!

b. You shouldn't do that!

c. Should you be doing that?

d. Don't do that!

19. Suggesting/ proposing

a. I think we should...

b. Why don't you / we...?

c. Perhaps we should...

d. I suggest us...

e. Let's....

f. How about....?

20. Advising

a. In my opinion, you should...

b. It would be better/ best if you...

c. It would be advisable for you to...

d. I would advise you to...

21. Persuading

a. I really think you should...

b. It would be in your best interest to...

c. You should really consider...

22. Dissuading

a. It would be unwise of you to...

b. I don't think you should...

c. You mustn't think of...

23. Praising / complimenting

a. You've done a splendid job!

b. That was really good of you!

24. Felicitating

a. My heartiest congratulations to you!

b. We are all proud of your achievement!

c. This is a great day for all of us.

25. Expressing sympathy (condolence etc.)

a. I am very sorry to hear that...

b. It's really unfortunate that...

### **Tools of motivation and dramatic technique**

We as teachers know that to teach an unmotivated learner is like hitting one's head against a stone wall, but do we ever analyzed why a student gets de-motivated. A student's experience of success or failure has a significant effect. If they repeatedly fail, despite putting a great deal of effort, obviously they get demotivated. Drama can be challenging but achievable for each learner and keep them motivated. They experience language in a stimulated reality, and obviously fun is always motivating. Another factor related to motivation is self-confidence. Drama comes naturally to ever human and this enables them to shed shyness and inhibitions. Some motivating techniques are:

1) Mime

2) Roleplay

3) Simulation

4) Puppet Theatre

#### **Mime**

This enhances the student's power of observation and imagination. Though no language is used, mime can generate language in course of the activity.

#### **Roleplay**

Here participants play a role in a given situation. This enables the flow of language and teaches what kind of language to be used outside the classroom.

### **Simulation**

This is a technique where a student assumes the role of someone else or their ownself and describes a situation the character is going through at present. This technique helps to assert oneself, express one's opinion and analyze situation, etc.

### **Puppet Theatre**

This is a special technique for nervous and shy students as it gives them the idea of getting involved. In this technique finger play activity is used to teach preposition, adjectives or dramatise a dialogue. It is also an excellent equipment to encourage our class.

### **Conclusion**

Henceforth as a teacher, I feel the following techniques can involve both active and nervous students to enjoy the subject. Language for them becomes fun and they acquire it without any pressure or restriction. A teacher, especially a language trainer must sometimes break the norms or the schedule of the conventional class, for the benefit of their own pupil. I hope at the end of this article readers can realize why drama is necessary to enhance the ability to learn a language. The techniques, activities and strategies ad stated above might help all of us to make our classes much more interesting and motivating.

### **Limitations**

The following techniques as discussed have their own limitations. I hereby discuss some problems and their solutions, may be readers might face some other limitations which they might be able to solve according to their own expertise. Teachers who work in traditional environment are often afraid to break the norms as they might think that this will make the class noisy and finally the teacher might lose control of the class. But in reality it don't happen, if the class is organized carefully and set up well. Yet, some problems occur like:

- 1) Learners don't participate
- 2) Learners make lots of errors
- 3) Shy student
- 4) Dominant student

## 5) Chaos

Though there are several problems, some solutions might help. They are:

Explanation - Prior to the activity, the teacher must clearly explain the reason for carrying out such activities.

Preparation by students - The activity can't be abrupt. Students must be given some time to organize themselves or they must feel unprepared and lacking in confidence.

Clear instruction - Rules and norms like tone of language, limitations, timings should be previously discussed by the teacher to avoid unwanted situations.

Group formation - Care should be taken by the teacher while forming the group which should be balanced by both strong and weak students.

Feedback - This is a process to praise the learners performance and to highlight their progress so as to ensure that all students should leave the class with a smiling face.

Therefore, a few drama activities can fill your classroom with life, joy and fun and in disguise enhance the goal of language learning.

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