



Drama Classes

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Section 1: Presentation

Drama is a teaching method which allows learners to explore the curriculum using several of Gardner's multiple intelligences. It can be a fantastic technique to engage students in active learning and interactive pedagogy which encourages them to engage in dialogue which uses subject specific language in highly appropriate contexts. Students are immersed into the subject. Their bodies, minds, and emotions are extremely active when they become engrossed in the drama.

Drama is a powerful means of stimulating creativity in problem solving. It can challenge students' perceptions about their world and about themselves. Dramatic exploration can provide students with an outlet for emotions, thoughts, and dreams that they might not otherwise have means to express. A student can, if only for a few moments, become another, explore a new role, try out and experiment with various personal choices and solutions to very real problems - problems from their own life, or problems faced by characters in literature or historical figures. This can happen in a safe atmosphere, where actions and consequences can be examined, discussed, and in a very real sense experienced without the dangers and pitfalls that such experimentation would obviously lead to in the "real" world. This is perhaps the most important reason for applying Drama Classes in schools especially with students who have different cultural backgrounds.

Drama is a teaching tool that allows students to participate, demonstrate, and observe in a "controlled," or non-threatening, environment. In other words, it provides another "non-traditional" opportunity for students to learn and to demonstrate learning. At the same time, drama helps students get in touch with their creativity and spontaneity as well as to develop confidence in the expression of their ideas. Finally, it teaches self-discipline, acceptance of and positive response to criticism, and cooperation with others.

Drama and language teaching

Drama activities have long formed part of the language teacher's toolkit and have been incorporated into classroom materials.

In pedagogical terms, it is widely believed that to make language learning more meaningful and memorable, we should be providing our students with a multi-sensorial experience, engaging them physically and emotionally. Drama as a tool in communicative language teaching not only deals with spoken utterances but also examines the wider aspects of communication and is a whole-person approach: it encompasses and develops the kinesics features of communication (gestures, movement and facial expression), self-expressiveness, creativity and imagination, spontaneity, social and cultural awareness as well as prosodic features (pronunciation, intonation, pitch, pace, volume and tone of voice). Drama provides learners with a realistic need for communicating and attempts to bridge the gap between the kind of carefully controlled language work that is often done in the classroom (grammar, vocabulary and skills work) and the complexity of unpredictable language and behaviour we are confronted with outside of the classroom.

Additional benefits:

- In order to make the learning process more meaningful and memorable, we not only need to engage our learners cognitively, but we should also attempt to engage them physically and emotionally.
- Drama emphasises the importance of cohesive group work and therefore builds trust between learners, thereby reducing stress and building confidence. It also encourages students to take pride in any kind of performance work as learners have to rely on each other to produce something of value and quality. As a result their self-esteem and motivation are increased through their achievements.
- Drama sensitises us to other people's thoughts, feelings and behaviour because it often requires us to put ourselves in somebody else's shoes and see the world from their perspective ie. it develops empathy.
- Drama is fun, unconventional and an oft-needed physical release. It frequently generates laughter and a relaxed atmosphere, promoting an ideal learning climate.
- Drama provides opportunities to engage in authentic language use in a given situation so learners are not practising lexical and grammatical items in isolation but are rather putting them in an active context.
- Drama caters well for mixed-ability groups as less challenging roles and responsibilities can be given to less able learners and more able learners can be used to demonstrate an activity or take leadership responsibility within a small group. In fact, giving this kind of responsibility to less-motivated and boisterous students can also be effective.

• **Tips for success:**

- Always allow time for a short warm-up and focus: this could be a physical/trust exercise or simply a discussion of the context and learners' possible previous experiences of it
- Allow students time to consider in detail the scene and characters they are to play in a role play or improvisation. Give them time to rehearse. This is crucial.
- If students are going to tell a story or dramatise a text or a scene, emphasise the importance of experimenting with volume, pace, pitch, tone, gesture and facial expression to develop their character.
- Exploit learners' previous life experiences whenever appropriate to inform their work.

Section 2: Resources

To implement this good practice, you will need:

- An interesting story, corresponding to the age group, which can be easily dramatized.
- A room to rehearse. The school corridor (as is the case of the video) can be used to perform the play.
- Stage costumes, these could be designed and developed by the students.
- Stage set / sets.
- A professional director or a teacher who is artistic and has directing skills.
- Students, teachers, parents willing to be the audience.

Section 3: Duration

The preparation could take a month and perform in front of small school audience or it could be scheduled throughout the school year and plan the performance for the end of year event/gig/concert. Short sketches can be used as part of lesson plans.

Section 4: Expected results

The benefits of using creative play as a teaching method coincides with the established goals of education. These include:

- developing the imagination and creativity;

- fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- exploring and evaluating ideas;
- discovering positive ways of dealing with conflict;
- expressing feelings and interpreting the feelings of others;
- enhancing communication skills;
- improving literacy skills.

Section 5: Evaluation

How can we adapt this good practice to our context?

What competences should the teachers have to implement drama?

Do teachers in the school need to be trained? If yes, who can do that? Do we have the resources for that?

Do we have the space needed (rooms, stage)? If not, where we can find this space?

Do we find the professionals needed (a director, a sound operator)? If not, who will do this?

Will our local students help migrants with the preparation, rehearsing and learning the lines?

How can we include this good practice in the school plan of activities, in our lesson plans?