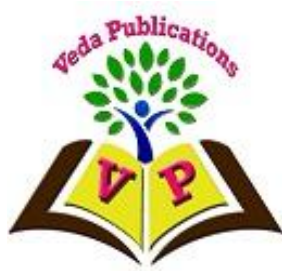




DRAMA AS A TEACHING TOOL FOR THE INTEGRATION OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

Bonala Kondal

(Research Scholar, School of ELE, EFL University, Hyderabad)



ABSTRACT

Language classroom instruction is mostly focussed on writing and reading skills overlooking the other skills such as speaking and listening. The teachers of English perhaps do not integrate language skills in the classroom due to large class size, heterogeneous students and the duration of the period. Hence, the language instruction demands various techniques for integration of language teaching that makes learning more interesting. This paper attempts to offer the techniques of drama in the teaching of language skills at undergraduate level. In general, it exhibits that how dramatic techniques can be integrated in teaching of language skills. In teaching context, the drama involves and stimulates the feelings and visualisation of the learners, providing them various stimuli and elevating their learning knowledge on the subterranean level. Scrivener's (1994) techniques of drama are adopted in language instruction to examine the effectiveness of the learners' language development. The paper is categorised into two parts – theoretical features of drama and practical methods used in the context of ESL teaching. Furthermore, it also presents a general picture of language teaching and learning procedure to integrate language teaching and learning by using the techniques of drama. Finally, it is recommended that all the language teachers should explore the variety of teaching techniques in the classroom in order to integrate language teaching and to enhance all the language skills among learners.

Keywords: *Drama, Teaching through drama, Integrated language teaching, Techniques of drama play.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of any language is incredibly perplexing to the learners especially if they have inadequate exposure to the target language. The learners are unable to practice language in a reliable context. The teachers encounter major difficulties in the classroom such as the learners' lack of confidence and unable to communicate in the target language because of stage fright. However, most of the language classroom instruction is focussed more on productive skills such as writing and reading skills ignoring receptive skills such as speaking and listening. The teachers of English face challenges in integrating the language skills in the classroom due to large class size, heterogeneous students and the duration of the short period of forty five or fifty minutes. Hence, language classroom instruction requires various teaching techniques such as drama techniques for the integration of language teaching to make learning more interesting and fun filled.

According to Culham (2002), the process of using drama to teach languages has only increased with the popularity of communicative approach, where students use language for a purpose to convey real meaning and solve real problems (p.162). The dramatic techniques are used in the classroom in order to build self-confidence in the learners and to formulate learning more entertaining and fun filling so that which may provide motivation among the learners. The technique of drama provides a variety of opportunities for learners in language learning in practical circumstances. Drama is also considered to be one of the best techniques to be practiced for the development of language skills. The techniques of drama can be assisted to avoid boredom in the classroom. In other words, learners find it more fascinating and motivating to learn language skills through drama in a day to day communication that involving opinions, ideas, values, suitability and compliance. This technique also provides a wider preference to learner-cantered activities for teachers to select the best task/activity for the efficient classroom instruction.

The purpose of the drama is to involve and stimulate the feelings and visualisation of the learners, giving them various stimuli and elevating

their learning knowledge on the subterranean level. However, this technique enhances the learners' language skills such as listening, speaking and writing and also create interest towards subject and consequently to improve their language skills. According to Fleming (2006) drama is a learner-centered that is done through active cooperation among the learners. It is therefore a social activity and thus embodies much of the theory that has accentuated the social and communal, as opposed to the purely individual, aspects of learning.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF DRAMA

Today's professional development is based on the Cognitive learning theory (Eggen, 1992). However, it concentrates on the internal and mental process that the learners use to make sense of their surroundings. In the language teaching context, the drama does not refer to a classical or theatre performance, but it includes the elements of a play with a number of other aspects that make learning more interesting and motivating in the classroom. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, drama is a state, situation or series of events involving or intense conflict of forces. According to Baldwin & Fleming (2003), drama performs as a medium for developing personal, social and emotional development; communication and language development (p.10).

As part of the techniques of drama, improvisation and mime provide a lot of language practice to the learners in a real life context. Drama assists to develop the language in different traits such as for building self-confidence, creativity, spontaneity, improvisation and involving feelings of the learners. In addition to that it motivates the natural use of language according to its situation.

Inadequate time for preparation of speaking in real life situations, when the learners get enough time to practice in the class, they would find speaking more comfortable. They would adapt and react very quickly according the roles assigned to them. However, mime and body language can play a major role in stimulating and enriching the learning experience. By using drama in the context of classroom would contribute a solid foundation to



become competent and confident learners of the language.

3. DRAMA AS A TEACHING TOOL IN THE LANGUAGE TEACHING

According Scrivener (1994) the drama activities commonly found in the English language teaching classroom are:

Role play: it enables students to step outside themselves to accept and modify into a different character. Either the students improvise or create their own role or they are assigned role cards. In both the cases, it has a stimulating effect and students found it easy to engage themselves in the learning.

Simulation: in the initial stages of learning, students are familiar with different roles from simple to complex ones such as day to day incidents to problem solving and plays etc.

Drama games: these games make learners to involve in action, exercise the imagination which engage both learning and acquisition and allow various emotional expressions such as ice-breakers, warm-ups, fillers, and concentration games so on so forth.

Guided improvisation: in the initial stages of an activity, the students are guided by the teacher. Once, the students start participating then they become part of the activity, and use their imagination and improvisation, till then, the teacher role is significant.

Acting play scripts: acting play scripts provide every learner a space to utilise their talents and bring personal aspects into the learning context. Scripts are given to students to perform language activities in the class. All the stages of preparation, practice, performance, analysis and evaluation act as effective tools in learning and reinforcing the use of language.

Prepared improvised drama: real life situations and enacting a story are performed by the learners in a number of times in the classroom. The learners take responsibility and perform given roles effectively. The learners' obligation towards their work motivates in order to be successful in their activities. The complete class take part in smaller

groups to performing in more complex drama effectively.

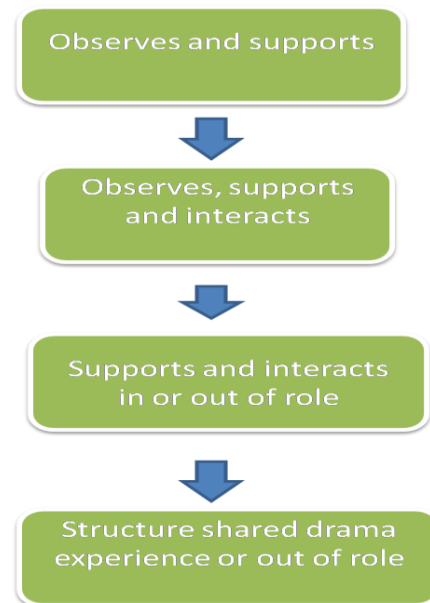


Figure 1. Opportunities in a dramatic play (Baldwin, P. & Fleming, K., 2003)

The figure 1 shows that the drama provides learners with the opportunity to experiment with creative ideas, thoughts from the real world in an imaginary context.

Intelligence	Means by which it might be used and developed
Linguistic intelligence	Use of text, teacher in role, role play, thought-tracking, improvisation
Logical/mathematical intelligence	Structuring movement activities and presenting logical image sequences
Bodily and kinesthetic intelligence	Movement, dance-drama, improvisation, enactment, mime
Musical intelligence	Using and linking music and emotion within the drama context, creating soundtracks, sound collages



Interpersonal intelligence	Teacher in role, improvisation, group playmaking, tableau, performance
Intrapersonal intelligence	Empathizing and reflecting whilst working in role

Figure 2 using and developing different intelligences through drama (adopted from Baldwin, P. & Fleming, K., 2003)

Baldwin, P. & Fleming, K. (2003) state that the drama acts as a teaching and learning tool that is used for developing wide range of intelligences (p.16).

4. BENEFITS OF DRAMA TECHNIQUES IN ESL CLASSROOM

There are assortments of advantages by using drama in the teaching of an ESL classroom. It acts as an accelerator in the learning process. Drama is a commanding tool in the connection of students with learning and content (Kaaland-Wells, 1994). Katz (2000) also mentions that a learner by involving and practicing in assorted drama activities, one will exercise copious thinking skills such as invention, generation, speculation, assimilation, clarification, inducing, deducing, analyzing, accommodating, selecting, refining, sequencing and judging (p.2).

The following elements provide valuable insights that exhibit the potential use of drama.

- Meaningful situations: language should be used/introduced in a meaningful situation/context. It provides an opportunity for students to practice language in a mutual co-operating atmosphere and it also stimulates them to discharge their creative prospective and their artistic talents among the individuals. Students are motivated with their achievement and it reinforces their learning.
- Reinforcement of the language: with the practice of drama, the teacher gets many opportunities in language classroom that become a powerful means of reinforcement in the use of language.
- Enjoyable learning: learning and teaching can be more pleasurable, stimulating and

fun filling with the blend of drama techniques. It helps learners to overcome the stage fear and to build up self confidence.

- Mixed level classes: with the help of drama activities the problem of heterogeneous capability is condensed. It assists to overcome difficulties in conducting class room activities effectively. Learners can choose roles depending on their interest and can perform actively in learning situation and all would benefit from the same context.
- Deeper experience of learning: the use of techniques of drama kindles students to take a dynamic part in the learning context. It also stimulates learners to involve in taking an active role in the learning situation. The context involves the active role of their intuition is part of the personality.

5. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The teacher should be active and confident enough to pioneer drama strategies in the language classroom so that it brings expected benefits among the students. This may slow down or may have a negative effect on students. If the teacher does not discharge his/her responsibility properly, it may result as a success or failure of the complete learning procedure.

The teacher should encourage and explain the purpose of using drama techniques in the classroom to the students so that they may participate actively in various tasks and feel more comfortable.

Generally, teachers may come across certain challenges while using drama in the classroom. Due to certain reasons such as their involvement in the play, learners may switch into their mother tongue whenever they do not obtain thoughts that may affect the primary purpose of achieving command over the target language.

Teachers may find overwhelmed and unprepared to connect themselves in between the content areas and the performing arts. Some of the teachers lack confidence and expertise to plan and implement drama activities in the classroom, due to the lack of

professional training and restricted opportunities in innovative approaches.

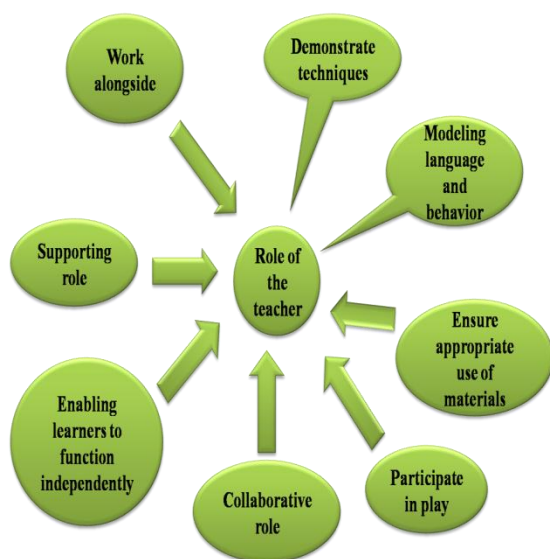


Figure 3. the role of teacher in the use of drama (adopted from Bennett, N, Wood, L. & Rogers, S., 2001)

The majority of teachers express that most valuable thing of learner centric activity is in enabling learners to make use of their own learning (see figure 3).

6. INTEGRATED TEACHING OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

The drama techniques can be focussed to master the language skills successfully such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary (lexis), grammar (rules), and phonology (phonetics) (Scrivener, 1994, p.20). According to Dwyer (1990) the technique of drama brightens the language learning pleasurable and academically beneficial experiences to the learners and the teachers. (p.9)

However, the techniques of drama provide framework to integrate four language skills. While participating in different activities the learners express their thoughts, listen to others' views, read the texts, and write projects on the given topics. Assuming various roles in different situations learners are motivated to speak/write and listen/read. These can facilitate learners' cognitive development such as creative thinking, problem solving, questioning, and negotiating (Vygotsky, 1978).

6.1 TEACHING LISTENING

Scrivener (1994) states that listening skills are divided into the following two areas

1. Extensive listening (listening for gist): it is focussed on entire information to get an overall understanding of the given topic.
2. Intensive listening (listening for details): it concentrates on a small portion of given information in a great detail. (p.151).

Listening skills entail a lot of patience. The learners find understanding a topic difficult. The teacher must provide the authentic listening material that reflects real life experience. While participating in drama activities, the learners are required to pay attention to the listening so that they can react according to the situation.

The activities of drama that are used in the classroom are listening to music, news, TV programmes, movies, telephone calls, small talks, announcements etc. All these are easily linked with drama activities. If the learners are provided more listening practice in a meaningful context, they are equipped to become better, competent and confident in listening variety of real life situations.

6.2 TEACHING SPEAKING

To become a competent speaker of a language one may require for development of speaking skills in a number of contexts such as to send/receive messages and be able to employ in a consequential communication. The techniques of drama are an ultimate tool to arouse and keep on various speaking tasks such as fluency, pronunciation, stress, intonation etc. Hence, it provides adequate rehearsal to the students in acquiring this skill. The learners who practice language in meaningful context which is similar to the practical contexts find it easy in the real life context.

As Harmer (1991) states that in one to one interaction the speaker could use a variety of facial expressions, gestures and common body language to communicate the message (p.53). These traits are part and parcel of drama and they should be incorporated in the learning procedure. The learners articulate their feelings through facial expressions



which is a result of provided commands and recommendations which stimulate reactions and remarks.

As part of role play learners practise telephone conversation in different roles in many number of ways. During these activities the learners not only speak, but also dictate or write down an important dialogues/ a piece of information.

Drama activity performs as a tool also for the development of learners' pronunciation, rhythm and intonation. In addition to that, the other things such as tongue twisters, poems and songs can be practiced with body movements and emotions in a natural context.

6.3 TEACHING READING

Reading can be taught effectively with the help of drama in teaching learning context. Teacher can adopt texts from a large pool of literary texts such as news papers, magazines, cartoons, pamphlets and advertisements for the development of reading skill. Learners are encouraged to read the script aloud as if an actor reads; it is a technique to practice reading skill. According to Cox (1989) there is a natural relation between reading and drama. Drama and reading would encourage learners to learn language skills actively and also motivates them to read.

According to Scrivener (1994) there are two approaches to reading a text in order to develop one's reading skill.

1. Extensive/fluent/gist reading: in order to obtain overall comprehension of a longer text.
2. Intensive/accurate reading: it used with short sentences, sections when one needs to comprehend the information/language use in detail (p.152-153).

Where the drama techniques can be implemented such a way that it assists to inculcate both the approaches. But drama encourages the development of intensive reading skill extracting a grammar structure, function, vocabulary use etc.

6.4 TEACHING WRITING

Drama can be used to improve writing activities such as writing poetry, a story, a narrative, a play, a scene, a song, an advertisement, types of letters and postcards so on and so forth which involving the use of imagination and creativity.

Especially, writing activity as part of drama often involves wider and more complex activity. Through drama, learners grow deeper comprehension of writing as a skill and a variety of situations where writing is essential and inevitable. The range of writing activities comprises writing instructions, cooking, giving directions, script writing can be produced and dramatized.

Creative guided writing activity: in this task, more advanced learners draft a script that will be used for dramatization in the later stage. It is a choice for the less advanced learners in rewriting and performing dialogues or situations. It can be explained lucidly in the figure 4.

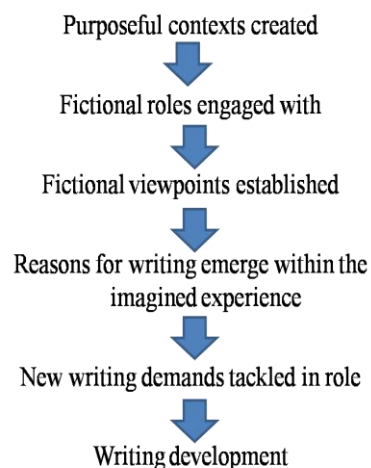


Figure 4 Writing through drama (adopted from Baldwin, P. & Fleming, K., 2003)

6.5 TEACHING VOCABULARY

With the help of dramatization one would enhance vocabulary in an average classroom. It can become a stimulation to develop vocabulary such as a bus station, an airport, a train station, a restaurant, a police station etc. Each of these topics may provide the situation with a wide range of vocabulary to practice in various real life situations in the language learning. Transforming language classroom into a real life simulation provides a wide choice of



opportunities to practice a stock of diction in a variety of situations.

6.6 TEACHING GRAMMAR

By using the techniques of drama in teaching grammar rules will make language learning more effective and interesting. According to Scrivener (1994/2003) that effective way of learning grammar required to be exposed to a lot of language, focussing their attention on specific items to understand what they mean, how they are formed and when and where they are used (p.3). The learners will engage in the situation and produce more grammatically correct sentences in their speaking and/or writing.

The techniques of drama provide a wide variety of opportunities to the learners for practicing grammar in an encouraging atmosphere. By practicing other drama tasks/activities such as role plays, dialogues, and imaginary situations can be used to elicit and practice grammar.

7. LIMITATIONS

There are some common limitations which may affect the learning in different ways. The learners are not motivated to participate in activities due to stage fright and other aspects which play major role in learning a language. The large class size also mitigates the learning. It is also important that inappropriate resources, space where they learn. Lack of trained teachers is also a constraint to teach language skills through play.

8. CONCLUSION

The paper discusses the techniques of drama as a teaching tool in the integrated language teaching context and also exhibits how drama can be contributed to the development of all the language skills. Drama in the context of language learning focused more on the learners by providing with deeper experience of learning the language. And also it provides a choice to develop their second language in a natural and motivating way by assisting them to enhance language skills to become competent users of the language. However, the teacher of English plays a major role in the implementation of drama in the ESL classroom. Furthermore, the teacher acts as a facilitator among the learners to overcome their

stage fear and for building their confidence level. The purpose of drama activities is to stimulate and support the implementation of language skills in an effective and innovative way among the learners without any inhibition. Language learning is realized through drama in a natural way among the learners. The learners are interested in participation of various activities enthusiastically.

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