

Dramatization as a Method of Developing Spoken English Skill

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Abstract

This paper is on how instruction can be arranged to bring about low-level students' success with a communicative, meaningful role play task? After applying this dramatization activity on a group of students, it was noticed that students had enjoyed the class. They also did not find it too challenging. The research showed that progression from simple, more guided activities to more advanced, less supported can be an effective approach to teaching a communicative task in a low level classroom. My students will get the benefits of having classes taught that allows them to practice the new language in a way that mirrors real life communication. Among the recent innovations in the field of second language teaching, task-based language teaching is probably the most promising and productive one, the one which has drawn much attention from both second language teaching profession and second language researchers. Task is "...an activity which involves the use of language but in which the focus is on the outcome of the activity rather than on the language used to achieve that outcome."

Keywords: Dramatization, task-based language teaching, effective approach

Introduction

Many a times the teaching of English language falls short of fulfilling its goals. Even after years of English teaching, the learners do not gain the confidence of using the language in and outside the class. Real communication involves ideas, emotions, feelings, appropriateness and adaptability. The conventional English class hardly gives the learners an opportunity to use language in this manner and develop fluency in it. Thus, the main purpose of the language teaching course, i.e., developing skills in communication, is unfortunately, neglected.

Teacher's aim in practicing oral English is to develop student's ability to communicate freely and spontaneously. To achieve this aim, teachers need to organize activities in pairs and groups, to give students the opportunity to use language in face-to-face interactions. They need to create a situation to teach language in an active and interesting manner because using conventional methods cannot create enough motivation and interest in EFL learners.

Dramatization is an excellent activity for learning oral skills in a safe environment of the classroom. In this way, students are given particular roles. It gives them the chance to practice the target language before they do conversation in real environment. It provides a realistic environment for language practice that learners are free to take turns, ask questions, and change topics in small groups or pairs. One small action is more powerful than reading hundred of course books.

Drama makes learning process more enjoyable. Changing a classroom structure from a traditional order can be a positive factor which will relax students and thus will change their achievement and perception of the class. Inserting drama activities to English classes can help students to learn while having fun, which in the most cases means learning without the hard work and frustration. It introduces problem situation dramatically; it provides opportunity for learners to assume roles of others and thus appreciate another point of view. It allows for exploration of situations and provides opportunity to practice skills.

What is Dramatization?

According to Savela (2009) drama activities help students to use their language skills and learn of life through these real life activities.

As Demircioglu (2010) believes, in this method the learner is both participant and observer, playing a role while interacting with others in role. What is most important is that students are practically engaged in creating drama. Peregoy and Boyle (2008) state “drama activities provide students with a variety of contextualized and scaffold activities that gradually involve more participation and more oral language proficiency, they are also non-threatening and have a lot of fun”.

As Wilga Rivers (1983) states, “the drama approach enables learners to use what they are learning with pragmatic intent, something that is most difficult to learn through explanation”.

Drama is an ideal way to bring skills of grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening and pronunciation together in a course where the focus is not on form but rather fluency and meaning (Dodson, 2000).

Theoretically, this study is expected to give contribution to the development of teaching strategy in improving student’s oral proficiency. On the other hand, this research can be the source of information for teachers or other researchers who wish to conduct further research on related topic.

Statement of the Problem

Since English is the common means of communication around the world, it is essential that students possess knowledge of English. It would complicate their ability to interact beyond their country borders. Thus, they need to be aware of the importance of knowing this language.

Rahimy and Asaei (2012) believe that a large percentage of the world’s language learners study English to develop proficiency in speaking, because speech is the most basic means of human communication, perhaps the most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is almost always accompanied via interaction with at least one other speaker.

Learning languages is becoming increasingly more difficult because research suggests that foreign language teachers tend to not use the target language exclusively in the classroom (Kraemer, 2006). According to Rahimy and Asaei (2012), the problems of speaking a second language are not limited to a specific group of learners, or it is not restricted to a geographical area; rather, investigations have indicated that different learner groups encounter problems in improving their speaking ability.

Unfortunately, although individuals obtain English training for many years in schools, they are not fluent enough to communicate. Some of them are not able to produce even some simple sentences. They are not able to describe experiences and events and give explanations for opinions and plans whilst travelling in the area where the language is spoken. Thus extended activities in the form of drama, game, role play and simulation are vital in developing the communicative ability and oral skills of learners. According to O’Neil and Lambert (Aydeniz and Ozcelik, 2012), as students find more opportunities for using the language in foreign language classes where drama activities are conducted compared to conventional language classes their verbal skills such as expression, recognition, explanation, reasoning, convincing, planning, anticipation and decision making are more developed. It gives a context for listening and meaningful language production, forcing the learners to use their language resources and, thus, enhancing their linguistic abilities.

Research Questions

Based on the problems stated, the current study aimed to find answers to the following question:

Q1. Does using dramatization in teaching English have any significant effect on the learner’s oral proficiency?

Review of Literature

The use of drama as a method for teaching is not new. Historically, both drama and theatre have long been recognized as potent means of education. The difference is that they are used in different ways now.

Drama and theatre arts have been around since ancient times. Initially plays were dramatized inside the church, but as time passed they came out of the walls of church. As Moore (2004) believes, drama provides a fun means of learning.

It brings the affective back into the classroom, an institute where emotions and learning are categorically divided. Recent brain research proves that emotions are linked with learning. When students connect to the concept emotionally, they will have a better understanding of it. When the teachers teach using the arts they are linking prior experiences with new stimuli. Teaching using drama brings emotion and teaches together (Moore, 2004).

According to Dodson (Dunar, 2012) drama has played small but consistent role in language teaching in Britain and The United States since 1970's. As Dunar (2012) mentions, the early, most well known advocates of drama in the L1 classroom were Bolton. He used drama in classes for all subjects and made it "the center of the curriculum". Later on, L2 practitioners adapted drama in their practices and drama gained popularity in foreign language teaching.

As Dewey (1921) states drama is a form of "learning by doing". Dewey also stressed the importance of the imagination. He called imagination the "gateway through which meanings are derived from past experiences that are carried into the present".

In this study using dramatization in teaching English and its effect on learner's oral proficiency has been investigated.

Learning Objective: At the end of this task, the learner should be able to understand the delicate use of language in communication process and the barriers to effective communication. They should be able to use speech acts or formulaic expressions in familiar and unfamiliar situations.

- ❖ To make language learning an active, motivating experience
- ❖ To help learners gain the confidence and self-esteem needed to use the language spontaneously
- ❖ To focus on the basic communication skills required for students
- ❖ To emphasize on the language of professional discourse
- ❖ To provide a useful strategy for self-learning and improvement
- ❖ To tune up the learners for a learner centric practice; guidance should be given for self-study, emphasizing on learning from mistakes.
- ❖ To enable them to learn better pronunciation through stress on word accent, intonation, and rhythm.
- ❖ To acquire better linguistic and communicative competence through accuracy in Grammar and Vocabulary.
- ❖ To enrich the discourse competence, to prepare the learner to be able to produce and contextualize written text and speech.
- ❖ Overall objective of this course is to develop the communicative competence of the learner.
- ❖ To help the students cope with real-life situations, commonly used expressions, forcing them to think "on their feet".
- ❖ To help students work together as a team or group, and communicate in order to understand each other.

1. Methodology

- ❖ Mention that communication involves some factors, like sender, receiver, feedback, purpose, etc. It also involves appropriate use of language to make it effective.
- ❖ Show them some videos on effective and ineffective communication. Point out and explain the barriers.
- ❖ Gives them a list of formulaic expressions/Speech Acts to be used for different language functions and asks the learners in groups (as per the demand of situation) to implement those through Role Plays.

For the Learners

Speech Acts/ Formulaic Expressions

1. Expressing an opinion

- a. I think....
- b. In my opinion/ view...
- c. I would like to say that...
- d. I must say....

2. Expressing agreement

- a. I agree....
- b. I quite agree...
- c. You are quite right!
- d. That's what I think too!

- 3. 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.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Expressing pleasure**
 - a. I'm so happy!
 - b. I am delighted that...
 - c. That's really wonderful!
- 6. 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...
- 7. 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!
- 8. Expressing wonder**
 - a. That's amazing / incredible!
 - b. Fantastic / Incredible!
- 9. Expressing disappointment**
 - a. What a pity!
 - b. Oh, how sad!
- 10. 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!
- 11. 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...
- 12. Accepting a request**
 - a. I'll be glad to...
 - b. Certainly!
 - c. By all means!
 - d. No problem!
- 13. Refusing (declining) a request**
 - a. I am sorry, but...
 - b. I am afraid that's not possible
- 14. Expressing gratitude**
 - a. Thank you so much
 - b. I don't know how to thank you!
 - c. I am most grateful...
- 15. Responding to an expression of gratitude**

- a. You are welcome!
 - b. Not at all!
 - c. Oh, that's nothing!
- 16. Asking for directions**
- a. Could you please tell me how to...?
- 17. Giving directions**
- a. This is what you have to do.
- 18. Asking for permission**
- a. May I/ Could I...?
 - b. Will you please allow me to....?
 - c. Do I have your permission to...
- 19. Refusing permission**
- a. Sorry!
 - b. I am afraid that's not possible!
 - c. No, you can't!
- 20. Granting permission**
- a. Certainly!
 - b. By all means!
 - c. Of course!
- 21. 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!
- 22. 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....?
- 23. 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...
- 24. Persuading**
- a. I really think you should...
 - b. It would be in your best interest to...
 - c. You should really consider...
- 25. Dissuading**
- a. It would be unwise of you to...
 - b. I don't think you should...
 - c. You mustn't think of...
- 26. Praising / complimenting**
- a. You've done a splendid job!
 - b. That was really good of you!
- 27. 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.
- 28. Expressing sympathy (condolence etc.)**
- a. I am very sorry to hear that...
 - b. It's really unfortunate that...

- c. This is most unfortunate...
- d. This is truly a great loss for you.

29. Complaining

- a. I am sorry to say that...
- b. I am afraid I must tell you that...
- c. There's something I must tell you.
- d. I have a complaint to make.

30. Criticizing/ reprimanding

- a. I must point out that...
- b. I am afraid I have to tell you that...
- c. What you did was wrong!
- d. That was a terrible mistake on your part.
- e. You deserve to be taken to task for that.

Role Play Situation(using appropriate speech acts)**SET - 1****Conversations with a friend over Telephone****Situation 1:**

Vineet is a student of the BA 1st year. Danish, one of his classmates, has recently got a job in Inspol Limited, an insurance company. Vineet calls Danish to find out about job openings in the company. Danish is busy.

Situation 2:

Rishabh is in the middle of a conversation with his parents about his career, when he receives a call from a friend. His friend, Saurabh, is planning a party over the weekend, and has called to invite Rishabh. Rishabh is not able to talk to him, so he promises to talk later.

Situation 3:

Prof. Raju Rao has been awarded a prestigious prize from Sahitya Academy for his outstanding contribution to literature. Prof. C.R. Mohanty, his friend, calls up on the telephone to congratulate him. Prof. Rao accepts the congratulation and acknowledges the encouragement and help he has received from his friend, Prof. Mohanty.

Class Activity 1:

Imagine that you are Ashima/ Ashish and are at the venue for Admission into B.Tech programme at CUTM. Now write down what you would say in the following scenarios:

1. Tell the Receptionist that you have come for admission.
2. When asked to produce a photocopy of your educational certificates, apologize and state that you are not carrying any, but could bring them over the next day.
3. Ask for water / thank the person serving the water.
4. Ask for directions to the restroom.
5. Ask the receptionist how long the admission process could take as you have to catch return train.

Class Activity 2:

A group of students of your university meets the principal to seek permission to invite a rather controversial but well known writer like Tasleema Nasreen as the chief guest on the annual day function. The principal tries to dissuade them but finally agrees.

Class Activity 3:

Mr. and Mrs. Mishra go to Mr. Mishra's colleague, Mr. Pattnaik's residence to invite them to their son's thread ceremony. The Pattnaik's accept the invitation and offer to help them with the arrangements for the ceremony. Their offer is gratefully accepted.

Role Play Situations

SET - 2

Using speech acts

- **At The Chemist's**

(CLUE : You are a customer. You have gone to a chemist with a prescription as your sister/brother is sick with stomach ache. The chemist is busy and asks you to wait. After sometime, he looks at your prescription and informs that drug no. 3 is not available. It has been out of stock. He asks you whether he can give you another drug with same formulae. You deny saying that you cannot take this without the doctor's recommendation. You ring up the doctor and he says to go ahead with the new drug. You inform this to the chemist, take the drug, thank the chemist for his idea and also for letting you use his telephone.)

- **At the Railway Station**

(You go to the railway station to enquire about the time for Andhra Express. The clerk says the schedule time and informs that it is running late. You are surprised that you did not hear any announcement. The clerk says probably it was made before you arrived. You suggest that the announcement should be made more frequently. To this the clerk says that he does not have answer to that. You ask what is the exact arrival time. The clerk says it is 5.10 p.m. He adds that this is the position at the moment, but it may be delayed further. As soon as they receive any message, they are going to announce. To this you say, it is going to bring a lot of inconvenience to people. The clerk says that he is helpless.)

- **An Interview**

- **At The Hotel**

(A tourist goes to a hotel to enquire about whether the hotel has two vacant room. He/she wants to give advance to the receptionist to book two rooms on the ground floor. The tourist enquires about the check out time. The receptionist says it is 12 noon. The time then is 11.20 a.m. in the tourist's watch. The receptionist requests the tourist to wait in the waiting hall till two rooms get vacated. The tourist would like to know about the facilities provided in the room. The receptionist gives him the brochure and informs that on page no. 10, he would find all information about the room. The tourists thanks.)

- Before admission in B.Tech course you four friends wanted to know the information from different reputed institutions imparting B.Tech course. After browsing internet you feel that it's necessary to visit the offices of the institutions physically. **Frame dialogues to interact with the officials. (4 characters)**

- You are strolling in a department store. Walking around, you see a person who seems familiar, but you're not sure. On a whim, you decide to stop the person and find out if she knows you. It turns out, after some questioning, that the two of you went to the same high school, but in the mean time the other person has put on 25 kilos more. That's why you couldn't recognize him/her. (2characters)

2. Methodology: Imitation of a movie scene or any real life/imaginary situation through stage performance of a small skit.

- ❖ Divide the class into groups of 6-8 (as per the role play situations) students.
- ❖ Give them the outline of the skit and 15-20 minutes preparation time.
- ❖ Ask the learners to use appropriate formulaic expressions wherever necessary.
- ❖ The learners can either imitate any movie scene or use their creative imagination and prepare the dialogues.
- ❖ The learners perform through a small skit.

Role Play Situations

SET 1

Instructions

Work with your partner(s), using the information below:

Meeting: Two friends meeting after a long time at the theatre.

Agree or Disagree: Tests are a poor method of assessing learners' acquired knowledge.

Meeting: One partner has recently moved to a new neighborhood and is meeting his/her door neighbor for the first time.

Convince: At a movie you can't stand the violence. Try to convince your partner to leave the movie because you don't like it.

Dislike: In English class the facilitator is lecturing about grammar. Tell your partner, after the class, why you dislike lectures on grammar.

Giving Directions: You are standing at the gate of your college. New entrants are searching for the following places in your university i.e., MDC/Administrative Block/Hostel/Central Library. Help them by giving directions.

Dislike: You are at a restaurant and the food is terrible. You are eating a hamburger, French fries, and chocolate ice cream. The waiter comes by and asks how the food is. Tell him/her why you dislike it.

Information over Telephone: The caller is requesting information for admissions. The admission coordinator provides the necessary information.

Complimenting: Complimenting your partner for an oral presentation in the class.

Expressing Opinions: Using cell phones while driving/ the movie Titanic/Euthanasia (mercy killings).

Invitation: Invite a friend to your birthday party.

Wrong number: The caller is calling his best friend but dials a wrong number.

Small Talk: Initiate discussion with a stranger during a train journey.

Welcome: Imagine that an important visitor is coming to your university. Deliver a welcome address and invite the Guest of Honor to speak a few words/

Complain: Two days ago you had purchased a garment. You go home and find out that the sales person has packed the wrong one for you. You go to the shop and want to exchange it but the same sales person misbehaves with you. You go and meet the manager of the shop and complain about the matter.

Refusal: Your friend requests you to borrow your note for tomorrow's test. You want to prepare for tomorrow but can't avoid the situation as he/she is your best friend. Refuse politely.

Request: Request the Bank Manager for study loan.

Problems in Role Playing

The major drawback in role playing

- The insecurity of class members
- Some may react negatively to participate in a situation which will be discussed and possibly criticized by other members of the class
- Dramatization takes time
- If the group has people of different status, they may be reluctant to become involved in dramatization

However, these difficulties with the method are formidable, but they are not insurmountable. Nor are they so extensive that they should prohibit us from experimenting with role playing. The potential benefits of the method quickly overbalance the difficulties which seem so apparent in the initial preparation stages.

Learning Outcome

- ❖ The use of typical language patterns to perform different language functions.
- ❖ Reflection of creative imagination through words and expressions.
- ❖ Improve speaking and listening skills.
- ❖ Demonstrating a clear understanding of the rhetorical situation, including purpose, context, audience and genre.
- ❖ Students will be able to exchange information and ideas clearly and effectively.
- ❖ Develop active listening skill.

- ❖ Students will be able to gather confidence in speaking in the target language.
- ❖ Will be able to use appropriate expressions for specific situation and audience.
- ❖ It will reduce students' inhibitions.
- ❖ Will be able to speak effectively in public.
- ❖ Building confidence.
- ❖ Engage independently in the highest levels of creative thinking.
- ❖ Students will speak to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.
- ❖ Demonstrate competency in skills of inference, analysis and evaluation.
- ❖ Confident approach and active participation.
- ❖ Communication skills
- ❖ Clarity on topic
- ❖ Ability to work in a team
- ❖ Assertiveness
- ❖ Patience

Evaluation

- Language Diction
- Confidence level
- Communication Skills (speak clearly, use proper expressions)
- Body Language
- Interpersonal skill
- Useful language and vocabulary
- Useful expression
- Understanding of the situation and creative thinking
- Summarizing techniques
- Analysis of plot and character
- Checking non-verbal aspects
- Team Work
- Audience Control

Conclusion

By using drama techniques to teach English, the monotony of a conventional English class can be broken and the syllabus can be transformed into one which prepares learners to face their immediate world better as competent users of the English language because they get an opportunity to use the language in operation. Using drama techniques also fulfills socio-affective requirements of the learners. Moreover, this learner centered approach makes the syllabus personally fulfilling.

Role-playing can boost self-esteem, increase classroom morale, encourage participation and create confidence. Children who engage in creative learning learn faster, retain more of what they learn, and are more prone to apply their learning outside the classroom. The techniques of role playing afford another approach to involving students in their own learning process toward the clarification of self concepts, evaluation of behavior, and aligning of that behavior with reality.

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