Using Drama Activities in ELT

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Abstract: This paper aims to how is important using drama in ELT and to show drama is a valuable tool in Education that can be used in the language. It can foster language skills such as, reading, writing, listing and speaking by giving a suitable atmosphere for their levels. Drama makes students become more confident in their use of English by experiencing the language in operation. Using different role plays or other drama activities which has been linked to levels of attainment in ESL learners, looks past old educational models that include rote memorization of textbook knowledge.

Keywords – Drama, Improvisations, Mime, Performance Poetry, Dry-Run, “Hide-Behind” Character

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA ACTIVITY

The importance of language learning strategies is increasing in the last years with the increasing importance of language learnings all over the world. Using different role plays or other drama activities which has been linked to levels of attainment in ESL learners, looks past old educational models that include rote memorization of textbook knowledge and instead can be defined as teaching that focuses on student-centered, interaction-based, and open-ended elements that are more relevant to the challenges English language learners face today and also engages them holistically

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Drama activity is already a natural part of most children’s lives before they start school in the form of make-believe play, enabling them to make sense of their own identity by exploring meaningful fictional situations that have parallels in the real world. This can be utilised at school through structured play and drama to encourage pupils to learn actively and interactively throughout the primary years and across the curriculum.

Drama is an activity involving pupils in a social context. It requires the oral communication and other forms of communication, such as use of gesture, body movement and intonation. It is defined that drama is a kind of activity, in which students portray themselves in an imaginary situation.

The term comes from a Greek word meaning “action”, which is derived from “to do”

Children like to move and to interact with others. In drama we ask them to do exactly this. Rather than sitting still and listening they are encouraged to move, speak and respond to one another. Students who are challenged by reading and writing (including those with English as a second language) often respond more positively to the imaginative and multi-sensory learning offered by drama. This in turn helps them develop such skills as creativity, enquiry, communication, empathy, self-confidence, cooperation, leadership and negotiation. Most importantly, drama activities are fun – making learning both enjoyable and memorable.

Drama is ideal for cross-curricular learning and is a valuable tool for use in many subject areas. This is explored
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further in Drama across the Curriculum and through the use of Drama Strategies. In particular, drama develops literacy skills – supporting speaking and listening, extending vocabulary and encouraging pupils to understand and express different points of view. Dramatic activity motivates children to write for a range of purposes.

Drama gives children opportunities to explore, discuss and deal with difficult issues and express their emotions in a supportive environment. It enables them to explore their own cultural values and those of others, past and present. It encourages them to think and act creatively, thus developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills that can be applied in all areas of learning.

II. METHODS

Through drama, children are encouraged to take responsible roles and make choices – to participate in and guide their own learning. Teachers can take a more open-ended approach, concentrating on the process of learning at least as much as – if not more than – the product. By taking a role, students can escape from their everyday identity and “hide behind” another character. When you give students special roles, it encourages them to be that character and abandon their shyness.

Drama games and activity ideas are sure to bring hours of fun and laughter to the drama team or department. These games can be used as warm-ups, team building games, or just activities to have fun.

Types of Drama

- **Improvisation**
  - Let’s pretend
- **Role plays**
- **Mime**
- **Masked Drama**
- **Puppet Plays**
- **Performance Poetry**

**Improvisation**

*Improvisations can be introduced very briefly with a ‘warm up’*

It is used by giving roles, situations and asking to react immediately.

*Improvisations* encourage students to
- use the language as having available to communicate;
- gain confidence in coping with the unexpected situations;
- get practice in instigating communication from nothing;

- focus on getting the message across rather than on repeating dialogues parrot fashion;
- use their imagination;
- be creative with language.

- **Role –play**

Role play is any speaking activity which is produced by acting a scene from a textbook, story, novel, or even real life. Role-play is a well-known strategy that helps students to familiarize themselves with new social environments. Role-play is a strategy in which students are required to act specific roles through saying, doing and sharing. It develops communication skills and students are encouraged to master and enrich vocabulary learning through conversational activities.

- **Mime**

Mime is an activity which is used by acting without words, pantomime.

A great way to make your classes more interesting, especially to lower level ESL classes is by using mime in the ESL classroom. John Dougill (1987) defines mime as "a non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement and expression". Mime and gestures will be able to facilitate communication, understanding and participation. Additionally, mime and gesture will make teachers appear to be a more charismatic teacher. Putting yourself out there, fearlessly, demonstrates confidence.

- **Puppet plays**

Puppet plays are one of the most interesting types of drama. Young learners can be encouraged to learn foreign languages by playing puppets or showing puppet shows. Puppets as a teaching tool provides teachers with one of the most inexpensive aids in the classroom. Allow children to escape into an imaginary world. They are able to use puppets to work out their own emotional problems. Children learn to co-operate when working in a small group to produce their own puppet play.

- **Performance poetry**

Performance poetry is used to perform for an audience. The poetry can be written in advance, or it can be composed while the performance is in progress. It is different than just reading poetry aloud. The poet’s use of gestures or doing some acts while performing the poem is also important.

It is not a secret that everything has its merits and demerits. Drama activities also have their benefits and drawbacks.
Advantages of Drama Activities

Whilst learners are playing drama activities they feel self-confidence, improve their imagination, feel empathy, learn working cooperatively, and have fun and the ability of adaptability. In additionally, their creativeness will improve and of course, pupils try to avoid monotony and can learn universality.

Disadvantages of using Drama Activities

On the other hand there are some disadvantages of using drama activities in classes. The biggest problem is time consuming. It demands a pretty much time both teachers to prepare for the activities and also pupils to prepare and act out the activities. And it is hard to control the class while they are acting some actions. Else, spontaneity may be lost, activities may not be for all levels and sometimes they can be cause embarrassment. At the same time drama activities are not suitable for very crowded classrooms.

III. RESULTS

Using drama to teach English results in real communication, involving ideas, emotions, feelings, appropriateness and adaptability. (Barbu, 2007). Teaching English may not fulfill its goals. Even after years of English teaching, the students do not gain the confidence of using the language in and outside the class. The conventional English class hardly gives the students an opportunity to use language in this manner and develop fluency in it, and this is because students lack the adequate exposure to spoken English outside the class as well as the lack of exposure to native speakers who can communicate with the students on authentic matters. So an alternative to this is teaching English through drama because it gives a context for listening and meaningful language production, leading the students or forcing them to use their own language resources, and thus, enhancing their linguistic abilities. Using drama in teaching English also provides situations for reading and writing.

IV. CONCLUSION

It is true that when planning a lesson using drama techniques, it is important that the learners’ proficiency, needs, attitude, motivation, experience, abilities, personalities, age and interests be considered. Drama makes students become more confident in their use of English by experiencing the language in operation. It makes communication more effective, clearer and richer, creates a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom. It allows the students to be creative, puts language into context, and by giving learners experience of success in real-life situations it should arm them with confidence for tackling the world outside the classroom.

REFERENCES:


