

TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH DRAMA

Aaqibkhan Lohani

Student (B.Ed)
H.M Patel Institute of English
Training and Research
Vallabh Vidyanagar

Abstract

It is a preconceived notion that for learning a language one requires a continuous input and practice of grammatical aspect of language. Using grammar books to teach language has been the age old practice of teaching language in many conventional classrooms. However it has been felt and observed that literature can also be one way for the effective way of teaching a language. It is observed that if language is taught through literature, it leads to the better understanding not only of structural pattern of language but also the richness with which literature is stuffed in form of themes, motifs, metaphor, symbols, imagery etc. More importantly it holds the interest of the students in learning a language. Therefore the present paper focuses on how literature more particularly the drama form can be used for teaching language.

Introduction

Literature is considered to be the reflection of society and the world around us. It is stuffed with values, culture, way of life of a particular time and more importantly the history. These all aspects are presented to the readers through the creative use of language. Literary genres like novel, short stories, poems, drama, and epic can become an important and interesting source for learning a language. Teaching through literature can cater to the various needs of the students where on one hand students find it interesting in knowing a new story and on the other through the story learn a language. But the success of this endeavour hinges largely on what the teacher selects for teaching. The best way considered to learn a language is through drama as it actively involves the students and the task of role play that the students get an opportunity to perform makes the learning more interesting.

Teaching language through drama

Drama as a genre can be very effective in making students learn a language. This is because while using drama as a teaching aid the teacher can make the students perform and participate. When students are asked to do role play, it becomes interesting for the students to participate and understand. Role plays, dialogue delivery, gestures, body language while enacting can enhance students' communication skills especially the speaking skills. Punctuation marks, stresses, intonation etc can be effectively taught through the language used in drama.

If the drama form is selected for teaching of English language and the students are asked to act the play it should be borne in mind that the major aim of the activity of role play is not preparing the students as actors and actresses. Therefore initially it has to be made clear that they

should learn to speak through the role play. However for this, firstly warm up session plays a vital role. The teacher can first brief students about the story of the drama before the students actually enter into the script of the drama and focuses on the language functions. The teacher in the warm up session can also talk about how creatively language is used in different contexts with different meaning. Secondly, the teacher acting as a stimulus should explain the key vocabulary words in the drama and motivate the students to find other colloquial words that fit into the situation. Here the teacher can take help of teaching aids to explain the words or vocabulary. Worksheets can be provided to the students to match the word with the picture that closely resembles it. Different pictures that tell the story should be selected and given randomly to the students in groups. The students should be asked to arrange the picture in the sequence of the events occurring in the story. Sequencing the pictures according to the flow of story becomes an effective and interesting activity for the students. Thirdly, assigning the students their role and giving them the freedom to edit the script according to their conveniences without changing the story in script. Here students would be able to generate language with which they are more comfortable. Fourthly, when it comes to the role play of a particular character or a particular scene the teacher can demonstrate the action or speech first to show the students the ideal way of dialogue delivery. At what pace should one speak, which accent should be used, what should be the pitch of voice delivery and most importantly the intonations used. To make this activity more interesting, one group should be asked to judge the performances of the group that acts or the individual who performs a particular role but the group that judges should be instructed to judge the performance in good spirit without having any grudges for the other group. The fifth stage towards language teaching is asking questions based on the roles and the scenes the students have performed. Here the teacher frames questions like 1) What is the name of the main character in the novel? 2) Who all are the other characters in the drama? 3) Which character did you like the most and why? 4) What does the drama talk about? 5) What are the things that can be changed to bring a different twist in the story? etc . Many other questions from the play regarding the setting, beginning of the play, end of the play can be asked to instil in students the ability to think and answer. Answering the questions posed by the teacher helps the students to open up in front of the class and develop confidence in answering.

Evaluation and assessment of the learning is also an important aspect in teaching and learning process. To do the assessment it would be ideal for the teacher to sit with the group of students and know about their feedback for the activity. Questions like : (1) Was the activity useful to you? (2) Did you find the activity interesting? (3) Which session of the activity was interesting and which was not? (4) Did the activity help you in communicating or collaborating? (5) Do you want that such sort of sessions where language is taught to you using drama or any other form of literature?

The above mentioned questions can be used for evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of using drama in language teaching and learning. And the reflections by the students can be useful for the teacher to ponder upon the success of the technique and also improvement needed to make it more effective.

However one thing to be kept in mind is that the activity becomes successful only when there is active participation from students' side. If they are not it is the role of the teacher to motivate the students to actively get involved in the entire process. Secondly, the drama that is to be selected by the teacher should be easy for the students to understand. For example, if the teacher selects Shakespeare play like *Tempest* or *Hamlet* the language is difficult to understand. In Indian classroom the ideal thing is to select the drama from Indian writing in English for

example, *Tara* by Mahesh Dattani and *Bali: The Sacrifice* by Girish Karnad. The language in the play is easy enough for the student to understand.

Thus to conclude it can be asserted that not only drama form but also poetry, short stories, excerpt from novels etc can be used to teach language to the students. But most effective is the drama form as it captures the interest of the students as it involves role play, narrations, speech acts etc.

Workcited

Hamdoun, Qareeballah, Hussain, Syed. Teaching Language through Literature: A diagnostic study on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language. [repository.ksu.edu.sa/jspui/bitstream](http://repository.ksu.edu.sa/jspui/bitstream/Schejbal, David. Teaching Language through drama. repository.ksu.edu.sa/.../Teaching%20Language%20through%20Literatu..)