

## USING DRAMA IN TEACHING

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Educational theater is meant to promote the theatrical activities in educational associations. It aims at teaching and training pupils on the various techniques of theater art in addition to developing their talents. Moreover, it is known as the theatrical syllabus. Part of the theoretical syllabus-for instance, learning the Arabic language-is put in the form of a simple play that is relevant to the topic and aims of the lesson, the play rehearsal depends on the positive participation of pupils in a classroom setting or in the traditional theaters. It also helps in the creative development of preschool children through drama activities in cultural centers and nurseries.

Many studies have dealt with the influence of drama and theater in developing the capacities of thinking and absorbing the multiple aims of an educational syllabus. But there remains a great gap between comprehending the value of using drama in teaching and the conviction of students and teachers in positively applying such a trend in schools and universities.<sup>(1)</sup>

- 1- Using drama as a means of teaching and developing the educational syllabus confronts the problem of science teachers' lack of knowledge in utilizing creative drama, improvisation drama, information drama, and educational theater in their approach to education.
- 2- Despite the presence of the theatrical syllabus in some of the theoretical subjects such as Arabic and foreign language education, it is not applied in teaching. Moreover, teachers often consider it an unnecessary waste of time and therefore do not implement it in classrooms. Educators who care for this creative component of the syllabus ask their pupils to practice it at home. Those instructions, of course, are not followed and no benefit is realized.
- 3- Consequently, because the educational syllabuses do not incorporate drama or theatrical scripts except language instruction, educators are not accustomed to simplifying their course materials into activities that their students may benefit from. They may not care to communicate the goals of their lessons and their educational purposes to their students, instead relying on private lessons, which are considered in Egypt as one of the most problematic items of the educational system.
- 4- Teachers often believe that their students would not take their course materials seriously if drama as a method of teaching is used. At present, their fear is augmented by the quality of

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1. Furman. "In a support of Drama in Early Childhood Education, Again," Early childhood Education Journal. 27 (3), 2000, pp. 173-178.

the students in the various stages of education and the social and ethical influences they are exposed to through media.

The present study tackles the subject of using drama as an effective method of teaching, if it is implemented seriously and its dramatic activities put into effect throughout the curriculum. It begins with the nursery stage and takes a theoretical overview of its effects on learning into adulthood.

According to experiences in different countries, using drama in education is correlated with pedagogy more than the theatrical studies, scripts and texts. But teachers of the different subjects are not convinced. Thus, the various terms such as creative theater, educational theater, improvisation, and informative drama are used interchangeably in both theater and education. Educators

who deal with theater and drama argue that writing for class is similar to writing for the theater, although there are great differences between both of them, in applying drama in class the concentration is on teaching. In other words, the teacher would achieve the aims of the lesson by facilitating the absorption of information through the use of drama activities.

There is no doubt that using drama in the early stages of the child - the nursery and elementary education stage - is one of the main methods not only in developing a good upbringing but also teaching. Kirof states that the use of drama in teaching is essential in enabling educators to teach their pupils reading is essential in enabling educators to teach their pupils reading and writing. Education scholars reveal that the mental requirements for understanding drama resemble those of reading. For instance, the meaning of a written text is absorbed through contact between the reader and the text. Similarly, the drama process enhances the educational method, allowing pupils to use their imagination, create scenes and improvisation. Thus, understanding the meaning is achieved through the interaction between the teacher and his students.<sup>(2)</sup> one of the main targets of the reading syllabus is to introduce students to the environments around them. Using drama in teaching is the link between the real life of students and what they are given in their lessons. Teachers have the option of developing student writing through drama - by having them think of the right choice of words and self-expression. Through the creative use of drama, students may also be encouraged to think of solutions to the current issues that affect their community and nation. Each of these exercises is specific to the ages of the children<sup>(3)</sup>.

### Using drama to teach children

In the nursery and elementary school stage, it is not obligatory that the teacher have experience in theatrical performance to implement various dramatic activities. There is no defined syllabus to be used at this early stage. It is left for each individual teacher to use the concept of dramatic activities, and not specific exercises applied in the educational syllabus. The researcher may develop a child's vocabulary by using drama activities in their teaching development using drama activities in their teaching and development learning vocabulary is one of the main obstacles in foreign language teaching. Foil illustrates how educators can teach new vocabulary effectively by using drama techniques in reading passages to their students. He suggests various ways: the teacher may improvise a scene that incorporates new words and describes their

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<sup>(2)</sup> J. Schneider and S.A.W. Jackson. 2000. "process drama: A special space and place for writing. | The reading teacher, 54 (1), 38-51. (E) 614497.

<sup>(3)</sup> M.J. Mc Naughton. "Drama and Children writing" A study of the influence of Drama on the imaginative writing of primary school children, " research in drama education, 2(1), 1997, pp. 55-86.

meanings. In the next step, the instructor asks his pupils to recognize the stated words and place the new word in the incorrect letter code. This can be realized either on the blackboard of one pieces of papers with pictures or drawings. This method of teaching not only involves the interaction between the teacher and his students but also among students in a group. One of them draws the word in a card and acts to its meaning the other students have to guess the word<sup>(4)</sup>.

Other techniques include telling stories that have the meaning of new vocabulary in the reading passage and acting a comic drama that includes the new words. the preferable methods in developing language by using drama is to read stories for them, then let students write similar stories that contain the new words. In addition teachers may give pupils the new words and explain their meanings, then let them write stories that express their meaning. There are many dramatic techniques that help students acquire new vocabulary without facing the common challenges of memorizing them. Moreover, they may begin to use those words unconsciously in their everyday lives.

Acquiring new vocabulary and understanding their meanings is considered to be one of the most difficult linguistic skills that confront students and people of all ages who are learning a new language. The traditional methods of learning leave the responsibility of learning new vocabulary to students. But if dramatic activities are used, students will more readily remember the vocabulary they have learned. Moreover, they will understand the various levels of meaning and how they are used in the different conversational situations. In the following part, the researcher tackles how the teacher would use dramatic activities to teach students of various ages. But before we address this point, the personality of teachers and students is accessed. Teaching English as a second language is used as an example on how these educational theories are applied.

### **Using Drama in Adult Education**

According to smith, both students of language and actors have the same objective - communicating certain message to their audience. To achieve their aim language students and actors express how effectively they are in getting their message across. In addition, they need to make it simple so that their audience understands it. Moreover, smith adds that language instructors and directors are alike. The language teacher creates a dramatic situation that achieves the goal of the lesson. In this regard one of the main aims of the teacher is to orient his students to the fact that their principal purpose is to effectively communicate with others<sup>(5)</sup>.

On the other hand, one of the methods of teaching is acting. This would take place through experience, trial and error, and training. Drama, in this respect, is one of the integrated means and techniques between body, mind, emotions, and motives that allow the students to use their personalities and experiences in learning languages and expressing themselves<sup>(6)</sup>. In acting, the person is the main medium for expressing the character he plays on stage. Thus it is a new dimension in introducing new words or sentence sequences. Drama obliges students to utilize their inner power through acting. They interact with the character they are playing in order to give their best performance. Subsequently, students count on meaning (semantics) more than form. That is to say, drama compels them to begin with their life experience and express various levels of meaning in the words they use.

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<sup>(4)</sup> S. R. Alber and Carolyn R. foil. " drama activities that promote and extend your students, vocabulary proficiency, "Interupntion in school and clinic, 39 (1), pp. 22-29

<sup>(5)</sup> Stephen M. Smith. The Arts and the Teaching of the second Language. (Reading: Addison Wessley, 1984).

<sup>(6)</sup> Allan Maley and Alan Duff. Drama Techniques in Language Leaming (New York: Cambridge University press, 1984).

Acting and learning a new language share the same characteristic: expressing oneself effectively. A language student or actor needs to forget his inner doubts. Accordingly, the language teacher, like the director, has a principal role in creating self-confidence and mutual cooperation. As for the vocabulary, for example, the teacher may begin with warm-up exercise that takes the form of a game. The game technique is preferable in teaching vocabulary because it helps students overcome their fears. Adult students may find this and especially useful way of learning a foreign language.

Smith in this particular point states that using the game method in teaching language wisely assists adult learners to express themselves freely as they did in childhood. He adds that by using different types of group games with the adult learners, they would know each other's standard in the language. <sup>(7)</sup> subsequently, self-confidence and mutual cooperation is created among the group, to the extent that helps raise the standard and performance of the entire group.

In the case of teaching English as a foreign language, the teacher begins with a warm-up game that gets students to speak in English. This game would teach them new vocabulary, various word usages and their correct pronunciation. The teacher would have students sit in a circle, choose the new words, cite one of them and pick a student or two randomly. The students have to recall the word in sequence. If one of them could not remember the word, another student would remind him. But, if both of them could not select the new one, the audience or the group would remind them with the new vocabulary. Learning languages, as in acting, involves the body and mind. For example, to teach correct pronunciation of foreign language alphabets requires training the ears of students to discriminate between the sounds of their mother tongue and the foreign language. They should have the ability to use their lips, teeth, tongues and throat with a different way than the one they are accustomed to. The warm-up exercises, which are done by actors and singers in warming - up the vocal system and applied by languages tutor in teaching pronunciation, have two benefits. the first is to teach pronunciation. The second is to train students in rhythm, breath and pacing. Thus, the teacher does this in four steps. the first trains students to recite by heart the alphabets in a loud voice. The second, reciting the alphabet in one time or in one breath. The third recalls them in sentences consisting of three to ten letters. The fourth recites five letters of the alphabets at a time, constituting one word pattern.

Similarly, one of the useful techniques that is used by actors and is applied by the language tutors is pantomime acting-the teacher would let his students communicate without speaking or articulation. That is to say that he selects an artistic work from conversations, pictures, stories and poems, displays these items, then lets students act them out the teacher can do this by himself or divide the class into two sections: one group acts and the other solve the quiz, comprises gestures, facial expressions, and body positions. Warm-up exercises that are used by actors in relaxation and eliminating tension can also be used in assisting students of foreign languages to relax and concentrate in absorbing information. Among the drills that the teacher is able to use in teaching English as a second language is reading a tale or a short play with a slow and quiet rhythm. <sup>(8)</sup> Meanwhile, the students engage in body exercises, during which the teacher gives instructions in the foreign language <sup>(9)</sup>. This method eliminates or removes the

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<sup>(7)</sup> smith, p. 77.

<sup>(8)</sup> Marion MacDonald and sue rogers-Gordon. Action plan: 80 student-centered language Activities. (Cambridge, MA: Newbury House, 1984).

<sup>(9)</sup> Maley, p. 60-61

tension; it gives them the opportunity to acquire the skill of Listening and paying attention to the difference in sounds between the mother tongue and foreign language.

Among the privileges of using drama in teaching is the development and improvement of students in learning a foreign language. Moreover they acquire improved language skills through training on constituting correct structure of sentences or using the suitable vocabulary in the situations that are related to their everyday lives. At last, students reach the level where they can express themselves freely and unconsciously in the foreign language.

Using drama in TEFL is used in the different levels of learning a foreign language. For instance, beginners' level acting help the student to communicate the meaning and increases his interest in learning, particularly when he shares in the various activities mentally and physically. In the early stages of teaching a foreign language pantomime is used students may also act the various rehearsals at first, using pantomime according to their teacher's instructions. Then these rehearsals develop through action and articulation. Finally, they act complete scenes, such as at the restaurant and at the bus stop in this case the teacher writes the scene of the blackboard then lets this students act it. In the next step the students write the scene and their teacher acts it finally, the students act it out themselves. In each stage the semantic and grammatical mistakes are corrected.

The method of Richard Ted listen and talk TEFL is taken from the techniques of actors when they begin to rehearse a new play<sup>(10)</sup>. they usually cite their roles without listening to each other But they are taught to listen to the roles of other the same should be applied to a student of a foreign language particularly at the beginners' level. The teacher, in this stage, writes dialogues for two students or a group of three or four students. These dialogues have missing parts. In this case the student is obliged to listen to his partners. In addition, each one tries to remember what his colleagues said, understand the conversation, and know the information and aim of the dialogue there are other means to apply this method among them the reordering of the dialogue so that it makes sense. The teacher may divide the class into groups, gives each group a situation and ask them to reorder the dialogue and roles so that it forms a comprehensible scene.

In the intermediate level students practice these dramatic activities more freely the teacher hands over the role of writing the dialogues to the students the teacher's role in this stage is to monitor these activities because the students want to acquire the self-confidence to move up to the upper level in between two persons, and at last the scenes in the intermediate level students are capable of talking about themselves their daily activities and interests thus it is natural at this stage that the topics students want to tackle are ones that they have a desire to talk about.

Presentations are another preferable technique teachers allow students to choose the topic they would like to talk about and have them give a presentation on it a student would present his topic and his colleagues and the teacher would write down errors in language usage. After the presentation is over, the teacher would comment on all the errors and correct them.

One of the useful activities that teachers may apply is giving oral and written assignments oral assignments improve the standard of the student in self-expression while written assignments develop his ability to comprehend ideas and tackle them correctly. Moreover it gives the teacher the chance to assess the improvement of students. Among the useful assignments is the monologue, for example, "Who am I?" the teacher would take a prominent

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<sup>(10)</sup> Patricia s Dickson. Acting French" Drama techniques n the second language classroom, the French review vol. 63, no. 2, December 1989

figure in the civilization of the student or the foreign language, perform it to his students and ask them to guess who it is. Thus, the student would not only learn the various skills of the foreign language but also have an idea about its civilization and history. Accordingly, the language teacher should not only have a command of his subject but also the civilization and history of the language taught, in addition to the differences in the culture of both languages the mother tongue and the foreign language.

The steps mentioned earlier are to be taken once more students would write dialogues in the form of interviews or talk shows this can be applied in many ways for example students write the dialogue and a report about the group members who helped in preparing and assisted in performing students can ask the instructor about the questions they do not know in the foreign language or write dialogues taken from stories or plays they know. The tutor may also give his students some examples of personalities to write about, such as television presenters Hala Sarhan or Mufeed Fawzi.

This method can be applied in the various stages. At the preschool stage, the teacher can have his pupils imagine a multi-dialogue according to the aim of the lesson, and train them in reading and pronunciation. To urge their sense of creation, the teacher may give his students an assignment to write similar conversations to the ones they practiced together teachers may also request students to improvise dialogues and scenes during class.

To give an example, in training course the teacher may choose the topic of the scene such as, "at the Airport." The teacher may give his students new vocabulary- such as visa, currency, abroad, country – and ask them to use those words in the scene that they perform.

In the next step, the teacher gives his students part of the dialogue, and asks them to write what is going to happen next. Then a group of students are chosen to perform the scene. They would repeat this scene more than once until they know it by heart. After that, the instructor would divide the class into groups and have them perform similar situations. Each time the teacher corrects the faults and evaluates student performance. The evaluations would be based on the various skills of language, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and writing. Smith supports this method in teaching foreign languages. Improvising scenes is an effective means of teaching English as a foreign language, but the teacher also needs to pay attention to the individual improvements of students and the general standard of the class.

### **The Importance of using drama in teaching**

A Chinese proverb says, "I hear, I listen, I forget. I remember", "I do , I understand." Action and incident are the keys to comprehension. Then drama is an incident or action. In this regard we can say that using real-life experience in teaching is important, since teachers often correlate between life and learning. To achieve this aim, teachers use drama as a means of teaching. In teaching drama, students not only analyze the characters but also dive into the various dimensions of the character physically, psychologically and socially. In the process, they are taught not only language but also values and traditions.

Students usually ignore the written material in their lesson. They see it as words on paper that do not reflect their real life or values. They look at it lightly in comparison with the other parts of the lesson. Consequently, the teacher exerts a lot of effort to communicate the information. But in using drama as a means of teaching the lesson lets students appreciate the dramatic part of the lesson and that this work is a part of their life, the characters which they deal with are real people, and the issues that are raised by the literary work is a part of their real lives in other words, the students acts their roles in the dramatic part of the lesson with the same

feelings and emotions, movements and pronunciation that occur in the real life, therefore understanding their lessons better. Thus using drama as a means of teaching is an effective method to having a deep vision of the lesson's aims and better comprehension either in the language, value and culture.

In this concern, the researcher can say there is a contradiction between drama and language, and issues are raised on the reason of using drama in teaching language or other subjects. The answer is that it facilitates in learning languages simply. In other words, the learning of language is a means of communication and comprehension of the target language; they should have an idea about culture, vocabulary, proverbs and idioms of the target language. The difference in meaning between the source language and the target language may vary in both languages. Accordingly, nothing but the drama can be used to teach values and tradition besides language. Drama is a treasure of stories, plays and poems that includes the scientific and ethical values as well as traditions and customs.

In other words the student can conclude that both language and drama is a means of learning and achieving educational proficiency. By using both drama and language as a means of teaching it would include a method of comprehending the culture of the target language and assist the student to understand the culture of the language as well as its history and current affairs. The student should understand the culture of the language he learns in order to learn its vocabulary, the difference in meaning between the various words and their usage in both the source and target language. This is important especially if there are obvious distinctions between both environments, for example the Arab culture and the forging one, thus, using drama in teaching is one of the simplest ways to convey the information to students. As mentioned, plays, stories, and poems reflect the traditions, customs and values of the different classes and categories of the society the teacher teaches. Moreover, the teacher of language, in which the case the researcher chooses, is the most capable literature in teaching. The rough teaching literature educators can give the student the multi levels, patterns and forms of language through the multi sounds of literal phonetics and the development of language.

### **Using theatrical performance in teaching**

Virtually no language learning text can meet the quality requirements of a good play of accuracy and naturalness of dialogue, cultural variety, sequential logic, and dramatic interest. The absence of orderly presentation of simple- to- complex structures would appear to be no major disadvantage-and even in the best of texts this is not always achieved, limited vocabulary is a natural function of the play's length and (if the play has been appropriately selected) will tend to emphasize high-frequency items.

It is true that, theoretically, all kinds of drama can be applied in teaching foreign languages, but it is recommended that contemporary or modern plays would be used in the classroom. Thus, the store of vocabulary provided by that text should be plentiful and realistic in reflecting everyday speech teachers should avoid the texts that are full of pedantic and archaic words. Gestures and movements should be diminished for they lessen the importance of language as a primary target. Dialogues that involve interpersonal exchange should make up the majority of the work because they involve the verbal interaction that reflects real life situations and genuine communication.

The plot of the play must be simple for two reasons; first, we must keep in mind that foreign language students are learning many tasks while involved in the drama project. For instance students speak and listen in a language they do not command and they must also

perform their roles in that language. While students should be challenged both intellectually and creativity, they should not be discouraged from the start. The second reason is that if a performance is going to be produced, it must be relatively simple. That is to say that the time spent working on creating a set and extravagant costume production is better devoted to language learning skills. Accordingly, props, stings, and costumes must be kept to a minimum.

The text should reflect real life and avoid the abstract. This will prevent students from getting side tracked into abstruse metaphysical issues focused instead on the language learning task. Through such a verisimilar portrait of the target culture, students will be given a tangible starting point for their linguistic and should desirably reveal cultural elements, which lead to a deeper understanding of the target culture. Both the plot and the theme must be culturally sensitive, so as not to offend the sensibilities of either the target language population or of the learning community.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers need be aware that being fun, interesting and entertaining is only one dimension of drama and theater, which provides children with strong incentives to learn and to teaching method, since it supports every aspect of literacy development. From developing their decoding knowledge, fluency, vocabulary, meta- cognitive knowledge to comprehension of extend texts, drama in many ways educates children as a whole, offering them a more free and flexible space in which to grow and learn.

As for the goal in teaching languages is to produce students who can not only use the language in a more holistic life or situations but also behave appropriately in the foreign culture, it is clear that our approach must include teaching behavior as well as language. The foreign language students must become actors who can both play their roles and speak their lines convincingly if they are to communicate effectively. Drama puts the emphasis on doing and speaking, providing students with a more holistic experience in sing the foreign language for communication. Drama techniques have the potential to teach students of communicate with the whole body, to draw on their own imaginations, experiences and personalities, to promote the development of language proficiency by giving students opportunities to improvise speech on their own, and to integrate language and culture by helping students develop empathy for speaker of the foreign language.

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