

Can drama enhance the acquisition of a foreign language and EFL? This question has led to research on literature regarding the various ways using drama in the classroom impacts second language acquisition and ESL. In this literature review, seven journal articles address this topic. Collectively, these articles reflect the different contributions drama plays in language learning. In particular, drama encourages students to communicate, enhances skills for teachers, and promotes cultural awareness of the foreign language being acquired.

### **Drama's Impact on Communication in the EFL/Foreign Language Classroom**

The article, "Moving into Imaginary Worlds: Drama Pedagogy for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning" by Even, (2008) reveals how drama pedagogy can open up a different world to learners of a foreign language while encouraging negotiation for meaning, interaction, and output. Even (2008) explains how the fictional context of drama situations serves as a safety zone where learners can enjoy the freedom of expressing themselves in a foreign language while acting. These fictitious situations require

learners to use their body language along with their emotional and intellectual understanding while practicing the foreign language. Drama provides for these kinesthetic, social and emotional learning moments which make for intensive and lasting experiences associated with the foreign language being acquired, (Even, 2008). As a result, the output of these learners creates opportunities to promote practice of the foreign language and its linguistic structures.

Another example of how drama promotes communication in the foreign language classroom is the practice of “toning” in a classroom. The article, “Acting Out: Using Drama with English Learners” by Bernal (2007) reflects on how using drama related activities, such as toning in a English Language Development, class decreases inhibition and as a result promotes communication. Toning involves taking two key lines of dialogue from a play or story and each student is assigned different tones for the lines. Bernal (2007) indicates toning encourages the student to speak and helps to bring out a students personality, which is often masked when acquiring a foreign language. Bernal describes a transformation in her students’ attitude towards speaking English in her words, “Watching them suddenly come to life

in their second language was thrilling (Bernal, 2007)". As a result, drama encourages students to let go of their inhibitions and take the risk of communicating in a foreign language.

In addition to drama increasing communication with the practice of fictional content and toning, drama based role play also encourages participation in a foreign language classroom. The article, "Shedding the ego:drama-based role-play and identity in distance language tuition" by Brash and Warnecke (2009) explore how drama based role play help to facilitate innovative learning experiences which allow identity formation in second language acquisition. Role plays can be simulated situations, in which students play roles they sometimes have in real life. Role-plays can also encompass pretending to be someone else through roles that you would not play in real life (Brash and Warnecke, 2009). Students learning another language through role play are comfortable expressing themselves in a foreign language as they are identifying with another character (the fictitious character) to speak the language.

The article, "Dramatic Performance in Teaching Drama in EFL Contexts" by Gorijan, Moosavinia and Japribour (2010) supports Brash and Warnecke's theory. By focusing on

the meaning of a foreign language by acting, the student is liberated from a stressful condition and fully engaged in learning (Gorijan et. al, 2010). Gorijan et. al (2010) indicate action through performing makes classroom activities an enjoyable experience. As a result students are willing to participate and the focus is more on dramatic performance rather than on anxiety of reading a text in a foreign language itself.

### **Drama's Impact on Professional Development for Teachers of Foreign Languages**

In addition to benefitting students' communication, drama also benefits the teachers of a foreign language. The article, "Fostering Nonverbal Immediacy and Teacher Identity through an Acting Course in English Teacher Education", by Kemal Sinan Ozman (2010) focuses on integrating acting theories in pre-service English teacher education. The studies reveal incorporating acting literature into teacher education allows for certain teacher competences, such as nonverbal behavior, to foster by benefitting from acting theories and practices (Ozman, 2010).

In addition, “The Art of Foreign Language Teaching: Improvization and Drama in Teacher Development and Language Learning”, by Peter Lutzker (2007) provides further support on how drama can benefit the teacher in a foreign language classroom. Lutzker (2007) discusses the use of clowning for teacher development. He makes a vivid point which parallels the art of clowning with the art of teaching, “Learning the art of clowning requires continually listening, waiting, being acutely receptive to everything that is occurring, both outside and within, in order to respond fluidly and creatively. Learning the art of teaching requires the same (Lutzker, 2007).” As the teacher becomes more playful through clowning, the classroom environment becomes more comfortable and conducive towards learning a foreign language

### **Drama’s Impact on Cultural Awareness**

In addition to fostering communication, and encouraging professional development, using drama in the classroom provides other benefits such as promoting intercultural awareness. The content of drama related material introduced in a foreign language classroom demands sensitivity and cultural awareness. It prepares students

for real life in the target country and the unpredictability of what they might experience in linguistic terms (Brash and Warnecke, 2009). In addition, drama can instigate the intercultural inquiry process, as it gives learners the opportunity to distance themselves from their own cultural perceptions (Brash and Warneck, 2009). This theory is also supported in the article, "Process drama and intercultural language learning: an experience of contemporary Italy (Piazzoli, 2010)." Piazzoli observes co-participants engaged in a process of intercultural enquiry to explore some contemporary Italian social-cultural issues. Different drama strategies assisted participants to engage in a pattern of 1)decentering from cultural codes 2)experiencing otherness and 3) enhancing intercultural awareness, (Piazzoli, 2009). The study confirms drama is a significant approach to support intercultural awareness highlights the link between process drama and intercultural language-learning pedagogies.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Upon review of the theories and conclusions in the research described, the studies reveal drama does prove to be an important and effective variable in the area of ESL

and foreign language acquisition. It is evident drama can increase the learner's desire to communicate in the foreign language and gain a better perspective on the culture related to the foreign language being acquired. In addition, drama benefits teachers' skills when teaching in an EFL or foreign language setting.

The more immersed one is in drama, the more enjoyment he/she derives from it. This most likely leads to increased levels of positive emotions in the learner and more favorable conditions for language learning and teaching.

Overall, the above studies reinforce learning is optimal when conditions for both emotional arousal (provoked through drama) and linguistic functions are fulfilled. Therefore, learning a foreign language, especially in the first learning phase wherein one needs to segment new words, may benefit from the motivational and structuring aspects of drama.

In terms of attitude towards learning a foreign language or English as a second language, a classroom, which is, intensively drama based appears to be highly effective in the teaching of English and a second language. However, as revealed in the articles, what is critical is

the approach in which drama is incorporated into the lesson plan. Without careful consideration to this factor, the acquisition of a foreign language may not be as effective.

In conclusion, the articles reveal drama plays a tremendous impact on ESL and foreign language acquisition. The variety of ways which drama is conducive towards enhancing communication, cultural awareness, and teaching methods reveal how the application of drama in the classroom can be beneficial.



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