

THE WAYS OF PROMOTING LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH GAMES IN TEACHING DRAMA IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Annotation: Drama is one of the most effective methods for young learners in English Language Teaching. Dramatic Arts education is an important means of stimulating creativity in problem solving. It can challenge students' perceptions about their world and about themselves. Dramatic exploration can provide students with an outlet for emotions, thoughts, and dreams that they might not otherwise have means to express.

Key words: Drama games, teaching, language skills.

Drama games play an important role in teaching English to very young learners. They suspend norms of time, place and identity. Drama games are social and communal; they are governed by rules and conventions. Drama activities engage various intelligences, which mean it develops many skills in general. Children have quite a big capacity for playing. They can both revise and enlarge vocabulary, they are involved into the story, and it arouses interest attention and curiosity.

With groups that respond well to drama activities, putting on one scene or a short play can be both enjoyable and rewarding. Many students, especially adolescents love planning costumes, sets, props and so on. When full-scale staging is not realistic, a prepared reading or staging of a scene in front of the class and with a few props can also be motivating and rewarding. Not ignoring that good play reading is not an easy task even in young learners the aim should be working through a whole play in such ways that deepen students' understanding of the text and the dramatic situation. [1]

Modern texts are usually easier to explore in the adolescent context for the opportunities they offer both of useful language transfer and of insights into contemporary, social, political and cultural aspects. Whatever the choice of a play, the underlying teaching principle should be that there are no "wrong" answers -through pretending, animals can talk, kids can travel to outer space or the jungle, and the sky can be green while the grass is blue. Students should be free to explore and experience the texts in ways that foster their creative thinking and personal growth)

In an effort to supplement lesson plans in the EFL classroom, teachers often turn to games. The justification for using games in the classroom has been well demonstrated as benefiting students in a variety of ways. These benefits range from cognitive aspects of language learning to more co-operative group dynamics. One way of reaching these children is through drama. By giving roles to your pupils they can 'hide' behind the character and lose some of their inhibitions. Before actually performing though there are several processes you can go through with the children to create a theatrical environment.[2]

Here are a few suggestions on using a range of drama games and creating supporting tools like masks and theatres that will help you play with the language with your pupils and have lots of fun at the same time .Firstly teacher should present these suggestions aims

- To put the learners at ease
- To focus their attention on the lesson
- To personalize the language that they use when acting out a scene
- To introduce craft-making instruction

The importance of warm up games should never be overlooked.

Drama games can be used as learning activities, reinforcing new knowledge or expanding emerging knowledge and skills. They are an experiential activity used with effectiveness in classrooms at all levels of education in a variety of subject areas.[3]

For very young learners teacher can simply smile and ask them to copy you. Then teacher should show them a sad face and again ask them to copy you. Pretend to laugh, cry, sing and hide your face and each time ask them to copy you. This is a quick and effective way to focus the children on the lesson, get them calm and introduce them to pretending to be different people.

For slightly older children take any sort of object like a ball, book, paper clip or pen and pretend it's something else. So pretend Teacher should to brush her/his hair with the book and then pass it on and ask the next person to pretend it's something else and so on. [4] If the class knows the word in English they can guess what the object is meant to be.

Making puppets and theatres

Children from all cultures love the imaginative play to which puppets are so easily modified. Because of this, puppets can serve as an excellent source of language achievement in the EFL classroom.

"Puppets are natural as a delightful means for encouraging verbal interaction and communication with and among children. Insecure and shy students gain confidence when a friendly puppet helps them with oral communication, and they can feel more mature and self-confident when the puppet needs their special assistance. Anxieties about sharing ideas and feelings are reduced, and if the puppet makes a mistake, says something can silly, or has ideas that are in conflict with others, it is the puppet speaking. [5] Puppets do and say things the child may be afraid to try and allow a safe way for children to do considerable trying out.

For example, once class has their own box theatre teacher can use it with pupils all the time to act out new language at the end of the lesson or to introduce new language at the start.

Teacher should take a shoe box and remove the lid. The lid can be used underneath to stabilize the theatre if need be. Cut out the bottom side of the box leaving a few centimeters around the edges. Then cut out both ends of the box (the shorter ends) again leaving a few centimeters around the edge. These ends will act as the wings from which the characters will make their entrances. [6]

The children can decorate the box theatre themselves with card, paper, pens, glitter, etc. Due to the size of the box it's easier if each child decorates a separate piece of card to then be stuck onto the box. Out of the back of the box going away from the audience you should stick two long sticks or straws coming out horizontally.

For the scene changes in groups they can design backdrops that can be attached to a long stick which in turn can be placed onto the protruding sticks coming out of the back of the box theatre.

Making masks and costumes

Teachers don't need to make elaborate costumes for children to feel like a different character. A symbolic paper crown can make someone a king, or a magic wand made out of card can transform someone into a witch. Concentrate on keeping it simple as the objective is to eventually perform a scene, practice some English, learn English instructions, arouse interest in drama and English alike, but not to spend three weeks making a spectacular Elizabethan costume.

Paper plates are great for making masks. For the really young learners you may need to help them with cutting out circles for eyes. For the rest of the face they can decorate with pens or sticking on card. Pre-prepare lengths of string or elastic with knots at one end. Tie a knot on the other end once the child has finished the mask. Then staple both ends of the string to the paper plate. An alternative is sticking a piece of thick card (15x3 cm) onto the plate for the child to hold so the mask looks like a large lollipop.

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