Drama in the ELT Classroom

Practical techniques in using process drama, improvisation and Theatresports in the ELT classroom.

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Workshop Objectives

By the end of this workshop you will:

- have greater awareness of what constitutes drama activities and how these relate to teaching English as a second language

- have greater awareness of the benefits of using these activities in the ESL classroom

- have an appreciation of how to introduce drama into the ESL classroom

- work with some specific examples to use in the ESL classroom
Reflective Task

› What kind of activities could be classified as drama?
› Why use them in the classroom?
› When can you use them?
› Who can use them? (what kind of learners and what kind of teachers would be suited to drama activities?)
› Can you foresee any problems with using drama in the ELT classroom?
Context at the Centre for English Teaching

Flipped Classroom

Drama Techniques

Reading to Learn

Mixed Methodology
Benefits of Drama in TESOL

› New contexts
› Different roles, attitudes and perspectives
› Democratic classroom relationships
› Range of learning opportunities
› Access to current cultural aspects
What is Drama in TESOL?

Scripted Role-play

Language Games

Simulations

Improvisational role-play

Process Drama

Open, facilitated, active, connected
What is Process Drama?

› A dramatic “elsewhere”
› Theme, situation or pre-text that challenges and interests participants
› Series of episodes, improvised, composed and rehearsed
› Time span that allows elaboration
› Whole group in same enterprise
› No external audience – participants as audience
› Elements of drama – focus, tension, space, mood, contrast, symbol and role

An example of a Process Drama


Planning Process Drama

- Workshop 1: Victorian London in 1869, first hearing about the Gold Rush in Australia and making a decision to go on the journey
- Workshop 2: On board the “Ballengeich”, a storm at sea tosses a little boy overboard
- Workshop 3: Sydney, Australia, finding gold
The Cornerstones of Process Drama

PLAY
the innate predisposition of children to learn through dramatic playing

LEARNING IN CONTEXT
a recognition that learning takes place most effectively when it is contextualised

PROCESS DRAMA

OWNING THE LEARNING
learners with a sense of ownership about their learning have a greater commitment to it and gain more as a result

SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCE
humans use drama to symbolically represent life experiences and make comment on them

Principles of Planning Process Drama

1. Theme or Topic
   'With which area of human experience do I wish the pupils to engage and on which specific aspect of this do I want to focus their learning?'

2. Context
   'Which particular circumstances will be created by the drama to explore the theme?'

Drama which leads to Learning

3. Roles
   'Who are the pupils and the teacher going to be in the drama?'

4. Frame
   'Which viewpoint will the roles have in order to create tension in the drama? How distanced will the roles need to be?'

5. Sign
   'What artefacts, personal items, sounds, images and so on will I need to bring significance to the events of the drama?'

6. Strategies
   'Which ways of working will I use? In which combination? For what purpose?'

Some Process Drama Conventions

- Teacher in Role
- Mantle of the Expert
- Freeze Frames / Tableau
- Soundscape
- Improvisation

Adapted from “Drama Process Conventions”
EVO 2011 Susan Hillyard, Fernanda Molla
Teacher in Role

› Provide dramatic context in role in order to excite interest, control action, invite involvement, create tension, challenge thinking or develop narrative

› Use prop or special chair to denote when teacher is in role
Mantle of the Expert

› Students assume role of expert in the drama to solve problem
› Teacher guides drama and provides encouragement to experts
Students use their body to make an image or a tableau, capturing a theme

Students and teacher extract meaning through questions
› One member of the group acts as ‘conductor’, the rest as ‘orchestra’

› Using voices and body percussion, the group paints a soundscape of theme, mood or place
Improvisation

- Spontaneous invention and development of drama from within the role
- Students act an unrehearsed scene co-written with partners without a script

Planning Process Drama

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12 adult international students studying ESL programs

Three x 2hr workshops with experienced facilitator in May 2012

Phenomenological case study of four participants in three specific moments

360 degree audio and video, in-role reflective writing, reflective journals and surveys

In-depth interviews and video recall of key experiences post-workshop
Framework for Aesthetic Engagement in TESOL

Art Form

Role

Tension

Narrative

Pedagogy
Aesthetic Inputs: Narrative x Role x Tension Matrix

Group Narrative
- Internal & external scripts

Individual Narrative
- Internal & external scripts

Dramatic Narrative
- Internal & external scripts

Narrative x Role x Tension

Actor

Teacher

Director

Learner

Audience

Conflict

Surprise

Task

Relationship

Dilemma

Mystery

Intimacy

Culture
Communication Outputs: Verbal Interaction, Proxemics, Kinesics

Language and language devices

- Active Listening
- Spiral of (mis)understanding
- Narrative tangents
- Role language
- Task language

Cycles of interaction

Fig 1

Fig 2
The 3 M’s: Catalysts for Transformation

- Metacognition (Logic)
- Narrative
- Role
- Meta-emotion (Emotion)
- Tension
- Metaxis (Drama)
A Rubric for Metaxis

› Makes meaning of form and content
› Manages outflow and inflow
› Understands and utilises multiple tensions between multiple roles
› Demonstrates theatrical logic and emotions
› Can unself
› Understand and utilises metaphors
› Respects sacred aesthetic world
› Creates inner and outer scripts
› Interacts with aesthetic forms
› Manages interplay between “What is” versus “What if”
› Exhibits powerful agency
A Rubric for Metacognition

› Is present socially, emotionally and cognitively
› Demonstrates understanding of teaching, task based learning and critical thinking
› Self-regulates emotion, language, communication, process
› Shares learner agency and self-efficacy
› Manages distance and group dynamics
› Generates inferences, questions and explanations
› Reflects in-action and on-action on success, content and form
› Is sensitive to experiences, feedback
› Is curious with regards to personal development
A Rubric for Meta-emotion

› Relates to content as well as form
› Problem solves, sets goals, regulates
› Experiences two or more emotions at a time
› Manipulates distance
› Interested and curious in emotions
› Confidence in success and failure
› Intrinsically motivated, deeper insight for meaning and purpose in life
› Group dynamics - communicates, facilitates, affiliates
› Catharsis, social sharing, vicarious release

“I think that it was like with - if you break with something, and in the two first [workshops], it was like something give us - don't let us express ourselves. But finally, in the last one, I think that something was broken, and me and the rest of the men, really, we were free to express ourselves.” (Manu, VREC1)
5 Great Practical Reads
Questions