

# REFLECTION ON ACTION TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT AND EMANCIPATE IT FROM INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS. LANGUAGES AND DRAMA HAVE MUCH IN COMMON DESIGN ACTIVITIES

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## **Abstract**

This action research delves into the incorporation of drama as a teaching method for English as a foreign language. It involves a systematic inquiry into instructional approach through a cyclical process that encompasses planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The utilization of drama in language classrooms yields numerous advantages, with the most noticeable outcome being the acquisition and application of new vocabulary and grammatical structures. By engaging in communicative activities within authentic contexts, students not only lower their affective filter but also enhance their language proficiency through practical application, thus aiming at: "The effective use of drama elements in teaching English Language to FL students".

A range of drama activities can be utilized, including pantomime, role play, simulations, improvisation, reading plays, watching or listening to plays, staging plays, and writing plays. These activities actively engage participants both physically and emotionally, requiring them to take actions in order to advance the dramatic action. Among these activities, "dramatic playing" stands out as a prime example of deep participation. It aims to create an illusion, at the very least, of complete transformation, with the intention that participants will undergo personal growth through the experience. Participants are encouraged to exhibit responses and behaviours that align with this "illusion of transformation," and they are rewarded for doing so.

Integrated skills can be acquired during drama classes. The various language skills should not be taught separately, for it is rare to employ grammar or only speaking or only writing. Drama is an ideal way to bring the skills of grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening and pronunciation together in a course where the focus is not on form but rather fluency and meaning. It has been experimented that drama students could interpret and analyse on-act plays, explore improvisation activities, write their reactions and ideas in their journal, learn new vocabulary, practice pronunciation, and gain fluency and confidence. Through the activities it may appear that drama provides myriad ways for students to learn and appreciate language in meaningful, communicative contexts.

**Keywords:** Reflection on action, educational context, dramatic action, illusion of transformation, fluency and meaning.

## **Introduction**

This action research delves into a subject that holds great personal significance and aligns with my expertise. It investigates the theoretical and practical underpinnings of utilizing drama and theatre as a pedagogical approach for teaching foreign languages, specifically English as a foreign language to Albanian students enrolled in the English branch of Tirana University. This research aims to explore the foundations and implications of employing drama and theatre techniques in language instruction within this specific context. The analysis of major traditional foreign language learning theories and teaching methodologies, shows many parallels and common principles with drama and theatre methods.

The examination of certain linguistic, cultural, psychological, sociological, physical, and neuro-psychological aspects of language learning with regard to drama and theatre demonstrates the positive effect of the method on the language learning process and the development of the emotional and social development of the learner. It explores practical applications of drama and theatre in the foreign language classroom. First, some basic theatrical techniques, such as pantomime, role-playing, improvisation, statues, etc. are examined. These are followed by many suggestions and ideas on how these techniques could be instrumental in developing, practicing, and applying foreign language skills and foster holistic learning.

The exercises aimed to be used in the class were created and compiled specifically for the warm-up and language application phase which primarily benefit oral communication skills and the creation of a supportive and relaxed learning environment. Teachers can use them without any previous theatrical training. The research activity included participant-observation as well as interviews/ongoing discussions with my two colleagues, reflecting upon, and evaluating my teaching methodology. The action research became a way to create a culture of inquiry through my reflection on action with my students and collaboration with two university lecturers. As Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) have described, this research involved a systematic learning process in which a language instructor would act deliberately to improve the educational context and emancipate oneself from institutional constraints.

Participating colleagues were challenged and therefore found dimensions of knowledge production and action that make meeting the demands of the new curriculum possible (Implementation of Bologna process). Current research has found that participation in meaningful, conversations in the drama classroom helps students develop their conceptual understandings of the subject matter. These learning outcomes and findings are often shown through descriptions of design interventions that have taken place in ordinary classrooms. In this research, attention has been paid to the use of drama as a method and diverse experiences of individual students within drama and what they take away from participation in such discourses.

Role-playing is one of the techniques explored in my drama classes and carefully managed with my students of English Language at the University. When people play roles consciously, they begin to sharpen their skills of noticing and managing their own thoughts. They are both in role and also a little apart from it, and this kind of reflective thinking can be cultivated and leads to learning (see appendix. 1). Reading about or even watching a drama lesson is not the same as participating in one.

And similarly, participation is not the same as teaching. Teachers benefit from teaching, presenting their work, receiving feedback and also by viewing how their colleagues navigate the unpredictable waters of drama. Here the process can be analysed while peers encourage, applaud and offer additional suggestions within a supportive and non-threatening environment. A Drama classroom remains a strong venue for learning to work in role and confirming its value in the practical sense. The teacher's role is defined as: helping students to form their ideas; helping students to test their ideas; helping students to communicate their ideas; and helping them to respond to different real-life situations. Teachers can use these skills for specific learning objectives by stepping into the fictional work of the students through using drama strategies, in particular, teacher in role.

Consistently, there are numerous reports of unprecedented improvement in students' writing and speaking skills as a result of the use of drama structures. In the course of practicum work, the intention was to become a field researcher, where students can speak with authority (and offer hard data) about what really works for student learning. It is more essential than ever for teachers to take up the role of being researchers, not only for evaluative purposes but so to expand and explore the complex learning available in the aesthetic moment. Calling us to focus on "knowing-in-action" Taylor (2000) draws our attention to drama teaching as an artistic process of meaning-making. He proposes that "to ignore reflective practitioner design is to remain ignorant to the kind of artistic processes which are the lifeblood of our work". (p. 27).

Returning to the question of value, drama, perhaps more pointedly than in any other subject area, cannot hide that, as a subject discipline and teaching methodology, it is not merely value-laden but value-saturated. Heathcote once again focuses the role of drama in education. "She sees drama as the means of rooting all the school curriculum back in a human context where it sprang from, so that knowledge is not an abstract, isolated subject-based discipline, but is based in human action, interaction, commitment and responsibility" (Bolton, 1998:177).

## **Overview**

The primary aim of this qualitative research is to use drama as a method in the classroom to teach English as a foreign language and to use it as an emancipating praxis. What do I mean by 'emancipating praxes? By using a well-selected drama, students not only acquire language skills but also grow and evolve as social human beings through drama practice and rehearsal. The purpose is to examine the impact that the teaching practices have on the personal and artistic development of students while they work on integrated drama in the instructional process (language, writing and acting to involve the whole class). This is written from the perspective of a reflective practitioner researcher using reflection-in- action to guide ongoing research. The work demonstrates how reflections informed the practice in Drama in Education.

Drama in Education contributes evidence of students' potential to change, analyse and improve whilst role-playing a certain piece of drama. Drama is used to improve their ability to speak and learn English. Drama is an artistic form of expression. Combs (1992) upholds that classroom drama is not learning about drama but learning through drama..... Through exploring drama, students will develop an understanding of themselves and others, and will learn about the lives of people in different times, places, and cultures.

They will develop practical, artistic skills, as well as critical-thinking skills and a variety of communication skills in English language. Bernadette Falletta, College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY (April 1999) shows that “Role-playing is a key component of drama. Pretending to be someone else involves an act of the imagination that is of central importance in the development of the ability to understand others. As students "live through" experiences of others, they learn to understand a variety of points of view and motives, and to empathise with others. They also learn to clarify their own point of view and develop their ability to think carefully – this may be the essence to get the students to think in English? Or even dream in English?” In first and second years, students will draw upon a variety of sources - such as literature, historical and current events, and topics and themes from other subject areas, particularly the other arts - in order to create presentations in which they communicate their interpretation of situations and the motives of various characters”.

The vehicle of drama for the teaching of a foreign language is a creative method of redistributing power and re-defining roles among students. Freire (1998) points out that working "in role" and critically reflecting on practice often uncovers "surprising" findings when practitioners are able to systematically "Think their practice" and create possibilities for learners to challenge previous assumptions about classroom achievement. The approach taken in this study fostered democratic principles in classroom teaching and learning (as an emancipating praxis), and the subsequent representation of classroom-based inquiry.

The group’s well-established social order was contested when drama became a new way to succeed for the classroom’s most academically challenged students. This action research examines some of the ways in which students approach drama experience, ways in which they respond. Most senior Drama or Theatre Studies students (I call them drama students for I teach drama to them) are required to attend and then discuss, analyse or evaluate a range of performances.

At this level there is an expectation that they will have acquired a language in which to do so, but this is not always the case. At all levels, students sometimes struggle to respond to theatre or drama performances even though they may have a strong reaction: “I really liked that “. “I really thought that it was not that interesting”. They often need the tools to broaden their response. That is why, I would say, that teachers who use drama as a tool in their classroom can often cite "Epiphanic moments" in which their understanding of their students and students’ understanding of themselves and each other is radically altered. These moments that story-telling teachers share are key to our understanding of drama’s special ability to shake up the social order of classrooms, redistribute power, and re-define the rules of the game.

In drama, the wearing of new identities in fictional worlds is the *modus operandi*.

Students are invited to engage in the building of these worlds through analogy or simulation (Johnson and O’Neill, 1984), to role-play (Booth, 1994) to devise scenes (Neelands, 1990; O’Neill, 1995) and create alternate realities. What I have observed in my recent action research collaboration with my students is that new roles/identities beyond the drama worlds - within the actual classroom - often become possible for those students marked most "at risk" for failure. Further, that these new roles or identities help to uncover ways of being for students that encourage participation at their fullest potential.

In short, drama has both intrinsic and extrinsic value for the most alienated learners in classroom settings. That is, it is research with an often immediate and ultimately practical application. As Maxine Greene (1996) has reminded us, new voices, responsive to the talk of reflective practitioner, are becoming audible in education research and novel modes of participant observation in actual classrooms are asking practitioners to think about their own thinking. In essence, this means that teachers can begin to explore beyond their own pedagogical boundaries by being creative at the same time.

This research addresses specific issues related to drama as a teaching methodology. In short, it not only investigated reality in order to change it but, as Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) suggest, it has changed reality in order to investigate it. A university teacher-educator may change her approach to her own teaching style and the learning outcomes of her students. Drama as a method has been used not only during literature classes but also whilst teaching other subjects such as rhetoric, business English, ESP or Foreign Language Teaching in Tirana. While being struck by the power inherent in working in role - how it engages emotionally, stimulates cognitively and creates a climate for greater understanding, drama could be particularly useful in promoting the creative abilities of students.

Traditionally and formerly, a greater attention was paid to theory and little dedication was given to practical activities, role-playing, rehearsal or dramatisation of a situation or script or a poem to achieve the required level of language acquisition as well as aesthetic values in the classroom. Drama is a powerful way of fostering the use of creative methods and building capacities in the classroom. Therefore, the change taking place among my students at the University was very real. My students reflected about their change in attitude towards social problems such as 'migration' which show the efficacy of using drama as a creative method in the classroom to foster learning and increase the students' awareness on different social issues. Conclusions are drawn in the end about the need to use drama as a method in solving problems, real life situations or difficult circumstances.

## **Literature Review**

Literature plays a key role in providing a framework within which important questions are asked in carrying out any research. By actively doing research and challenging the validity of the literature, the teacher needs to be engaged in a critical analysis of this material, and question whether this literature is applicable to the related practice and environment. This research reviews existing action research and other research into drama methods.

The literature review will focus on creative teaching methods, interactive teaching, problem - solving or problem – based learning, or active learning techniques by incorporating the best practices. It will focus on the performance and video-taping (based on the role playing and responses/comments of Efl students) of the "Migrant's experience", findings, analysis of findings, conclusions). The Literature review analyses some real practical activities. The use of Drama methods is fundamental to meeting these objectives. It explores drama as a method in Foreign Language teaching and learning, in live performances, in which the potential always exists for the processes to be influenced either way.

The Findings of the activities below will be used as evidence. Thus, the effect of learning through creative drama methods is bigger in solving a problem, different life situations or difficult circumstances. Ideas for research which emerge from this hands-on experience become the basis for case studies, research papers, and special projects. Mock (20006) states that “Drama is useful in foreign language teaching and as a subject in itself because it illustrates how art can be used as a tool for interpretation of experiences.”

The communicative method of teaching languages requires the learner to be put in a situation that ensures that the communication is as close to reality as possible, necessitating and enabling improvisation to take place; a drama device. In the communicative approach to language teaching, students use language for a purpose – to convey real meaning and to solve real problems. Drama is a communicative language-learning technique because is student-centered and meaning-based. With drama activities, students use language in a genuine way in a context that engages them. The idea of “Drama in the language classroom” encompasses everything from improvisation and role-play activities that encourage fluency, to reading and discussing plays as literature, to producing plays that require careful attention to language and pronunciation while developing problem-solving skills at the same time.

The students are learning the language because they are practising it with communicative activities in a real context. Whiteson, a champion of drama in ESL, explains that “by introducing students to English drama and real literature, we pay them the compliment that they are capable of enjoying the best that English has to offer” (1996, p. 9). However, I feel that the intensive work with language that ensues is very valuable, as is the pride that it instils in the student. O’Toole and Dunn (2002), describe dramatic play as ‘one of the central ways in which students learn about the world, about themselves and about human nature’ and how and why human beings behave in the way they do. According to O’Toole and Dunn (2002): Drama in the classroom does not require a stage, costumes, props or script. The vital component is imagination and the creation and investigation of imaginary worlds. There are three phases of drama, the initiation phase, the experiential phase and the reflective phase. Of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits teachers and students to give credence to alternative realities.

Critical thinking and questioning are the essential processes of teaching and meaningful learning in the drama classroom. Baldwin, (2004), in her book aims both to help drama practitioners understand more about the brain, thinking and learning, and to help those who are interested in these to understand more about drama as a learning tool and methodology. According to Baldwin, (2004, p. 24):

- Teachers are urged to create complex shared, imagined and sustainable worlds in which whole classes of students contract to enter alongside their teacher who is also an active participant within the dramatic story being constructed.
- Within these shared, imagined worlds students may have a play agenda and the teacher may have a learning agenda which can become synonymous in practice.
- Teachers who understand not just students and learning, but also how drama works, can make imagined experiences not only cognitively compelling and challenging, but aesthetically powerful and vivid.

Innes, Moss and Smigiel, (2001), describe how drama can support and transform students' understandings. My own professional practise has taught me that within drama students not only have the capacity to understand and discuss their own learning, but also are able to provide insights into how their learning took place. Taylor, (2000), identifies ten principles of drama praxis to help teachers and students to 'manipulate the elements of drama in the classroom. He gives the reasons for drama praxis as the insights to be made and the revelations to be had. He identifies the ten principles of drama praxis as: Driven by inquiry; teacher as co-artist; promotes a yearning for understanding; is well researched; generates rather than transmits knowledge; tightly balanced yet flexible structure; pursues engagement and detachment; powered by risk-taking; logically sequenced; rich in artistry. According to Taylor (2000):

The audience in the drama classroom are the teacher and the students working alongside each other as participants within the drama being created and explored. Teachers and students need to be able to understand how drama can be manipulated in the classroom and why it works in relation to students' understanding and learning, so that students can appreciate and be transformed through the drama.

Mitchell & Cooney (2004), use Taylor's ten praxis principles to describe the research they undertook together whilst working in different educational contexts in Scotland; Mitchell, a university-based teacher and Cooney both sought to discover within their collaborative study, whether existing standards actively exploited the creative power and possibility of imagination within the classroom, what are the boundaries which prevent students from creating and engaging in fictional worlds, the vital power and potential of story in teaching and learning in drama.

David Phin, MLPS tutor, Dumfries and Galloway, and Alison Hurrell, University of Aberdeen support this: "Improvisation is necessary because when we use realistic situations in our teaching the learner has to enter fully into what is happening, to imagine what he or she needs to communicate in such a situation and how to respond to what is said by others. Improvisation is enabled because the reality of the imagined situation stimulates the learners participating to use their imaginations, and to respond to one another's contributions to the dialogue? thereby releasing more active participation in the learning process". (p.37).

Improvisation is effective in the teaching of languages from the very beginning stages of the learning process. With a very small range of vocabulary students can improvise most unexpected dialogues, using as a matter of course proper intonation, gestures, posture. The students become aware of language as a truly living commodity: the foreign language is not just a component of their timetable. Step by step they become confident in using the language, realizing that communication is very important in the world in which they are growing up". This method has often worked efficiently in the drama classroom.

The literature in the field on Drama and communicative competence, English as a Second Language, Teaching Methods in Journal Articles (080), Reports, Descriptive speeches (141), Meeting Papers (150, research Article by Dodson Sarah L. on "Learning Languages through Drama", (2000, p. 129 – 141), (Besides software programmes, film clips, radio shows on audio files, research possibilities on the web and much more) were oriented towards the integration of language skills in order to achieve true communicative competences (grammar, reading, writing, acting skills, etc).

There is some drama-related English as a Second Language computer assisted language learning software available. (Contains 37 references.). According to Dodson Sarah L. “Although Drama has played a role in language classrooms for more than three decades, drama techniques have not been fully taken advantage of for learning second and foreign languages”. Through creativity, which can be central to a two-way process of communication with the teacher in drama classes, students are empowered within the classroom. In this research, it is evident that drama provides meaningful contexts through which learners can actively participate in a wide range of learning experiences. It is evident that learning should take place in drama: each separate discipline has its own knowledge and skills base.

But learning takes place through drama because of the high level of active engagement and enjoyment experienced during good drama lessons, learners gain a sense of achievement and increased self-esteem and learners are offered a very wide and varied range of experiences, enabling them to communicate in a number of ways, for example, orally, visually, through body language and through music. The collaborative nature of many drama activities enable learners to develop skills in working cooperatively with others, often in problem-solving, creative situations. Overall, all these techniques require that students communicate in English to succeed. At the same time, they are internalising the language, improving intonation and pronunciation, and having fun. What’s more, these activities can serve as a spring-board to writing and to the other skills.

## **Background**

Collecting data and devising a strategy for improvement, expected outcomes in action research (as a cycle). Drama is particularly helpful in teaching English as a Foreign Language because: From the very short dialogues in the introductory part of the lesson (greeting, homework checks, etc) to the more complex dialogues generated by the new aspects of the language introduced by the teacher, various drama techniques can enhance the learning process. Group work can involve students participating in:

- improvisation
- framing pictures (still images made by the students as in a freeze-frame in a film), mime
- hot seating (interrogation of a student in the role of their character by the other students) or debate in order to re-construct the story, establish the different perspectives of the characters, involve the students in negotiating their ideas and deciding how to take their work forward. These techniques are often used during the foreign language lesson.

It is worth trying to start from listening to or reading a story. This could be a piece of literature (short story/ poem /extract from a novel or play text) or a newspaper article (news story /interview), film/television (drama/documentary) or even from reading just a picture or photograph. The stimulus makes the imagination work hard? and the 50 minutes of the lesson passes unexpectedly, usefully and effectively.

The whole arsenal of drama methods serves to enhance the learning of the foreign language, as I have discovered during the last two years when developing the Creative Drama Approaches to Language Learning (when I started preparing my dissertation theses). Apart from benefiting the students’ learning of English, drama develops other useful educational outcomes: (these are some of the expected outcomes in classroom drama)



- self-confidence, personal response, freedom of expression
- social interaction and empathy
- creativity and imagination
- willingness to explore and research new ideas and methods.

This is how Neeland and O'Neill practiced the use of drama as a method with teachers of English as a second language when I participated in a drama workshop in Switzerland, 1996. It was expected to use drama as a creative method in the classroom.

*The means by which the outcomes are achieved and demonstrated*

This is an illustration of one of a series of experimental classes well-crafted to use drama as a method in teaching English as a foreign language. The teacher tells the class a story of a situation and explains new/difficult vocabulary and grammatical points. In groups the students share their views about the situation presented in the story and imagine how they would feel if they had been involved in the story.

They imagine 3 or 4 characters, a scene and their ideas about the situation. Then one group starts asking questions about their characters, how they feel about the situation (maybe assisted by the teacher asking an introductory question to establish the spirit of the enquiry). Then it is the turn of the group who have to ask questions of the characters in the other group (see appendix. 1). Each group improvises the story, choosing the methods of presentation they wish to use. One group may improvise a sequence of freeze-frames, another group may present a mime, another group may use words and movement.

For the spoken version of the improvisation, the whole class may contribute: if a student in the performing group runs out of words or ideas, any other student in the classroom can assume the role. No-one therefore is excluded or frightened of getting involved, and the whole class contributes. Meanwhile they may take notes of what they liked or disliked and at the end express their non-judgemental opinions. An extension to this process is to ask the students to listen to an audio-cassette recording of a scene once or twice with pre-listening questions to focus their listening (e.g Lady Windermere's fan).

Knowing the scene in detail they can then write a summary of the action, and can characterise the people involved in the story. Then the scene can be extended, again using freeze-frames to imagine what may have happened or could happen before/afterwards, adding or substituting new ideas and vocabulary. At this stage the students will want to learn their scripts, which will be very easy. The students will also want to write their own versions of the story or situation. Using a photograph or poem as the starting-point is more advanced, as this implies inference and visual literacy? these skills need to be developed first.

Drama can work together with students' creative writing and visual art as long as I observed during my classes. Further explanation of the data collected whilst using drama in the class. To begin with, the students wrote their own comments on the theme of 'trafficking in human beings'. The students were shown a set of images on the theme and then made images for their dramatised scene. It meant:

- Letting pupils take risks.
- Drawing on the imagination.
- Raising levels of interest and motivation.

Developing skills which are common to both areas—listening, focus and concentration, use intonation and body language in communication, physical control. Language cannot be taught without reference to the emotional element which is present in every word uttered as “real” language. Drama is used to put some of this forgotten emotional content back and, in turn, the insertion of emotional content brings with it the need for particular strategies. A. S, one of my students could quote one friend who said “I’ve been learning it for two years and I’m still speaking a two year old’s language”. K. and D? who pioneered the use of drama techniques in the use of English as a Foreign Language stated that “beginners” language should make as much sense as the language of advanced students”. The question to be asked, however, is how we can achieve this in a classroom situation when students have not yet attained an advanced level of language competence. Two things can be done:

Students can be introduced to communication strategies which can be practised within any dialogue situation – these include stalling, playing for time, reacting. Students may also be asked to consider the context in which the language takes place. In drama terms, they are asked to consider the key words in improvisation – “who” “what” “where”. It is needed to consider the difference between the sentence “Is this a box?” which may take place in a language lesson, and the line in MacBeth “Is this a dagger which I see before me?” In the drama/languages pilot simple dialogues with fixed content were given a huge variety of meaning through the imposition of different contexts. Students did this through use of body language, pitch, pace, tone, the use of silence. Drama has not been previously considered as a useful method of teaching at the University of Tirana. It has been taught lately only as a subject like other subjects to students who study English as a foreign language.

During a discussion with colleagues E. S and L. V, who both teach Drama to first and second-year students, they expressed their interest in accessing related resource materials. We engaged in an enthusiastic conversation about the positive effects of utilizing drama as a teaching method, not only in the context of language instruction but also in other subjects taught in English. We have a history of actively participating in each other’s drama classes and engaging in reflective discussions as practitioners. An example of incorporated drama as a valuable method in business English classes was when students took on the roles of bank deposit officers and customers. However, some challenges were encountered with one particular group.

One of the students was unable to answer his friend’s questions while portraying the credit officer role. It became evident that he had not adequately prepared the loan contract terms provided to them in advance, and he struggled to articulate arguments supporting the fulfilment of financial support criteria. Drama needs sufficient knowledge about the topic and a certain level of language to cope with and use it successfully. The staging of a play in a foreign language offers a variety of opportunities for language acquisition. Drama has always been used as a method in foreign language teaching. Drama and languages have much in common. As curricular areas, both need their learners to be active, expressive and communicative participants. Using our strategies to teach the four skills of language helps learners to learn the mechanics, but using drama helps them to experience the language.

## **Research Methodology**

This is a participatory action research and deals with the study of practise. It is practise-based research. It was driven by the needs to solve practical problems. Data and evidence were collected through ‘direct observation’, records and notes/reports from my own students. Qualitative data was gathered via participation and involvement of all students during the drama session. Journal keeping, peer observation, teaching portfolios are some other methods which were used to collect data and evidence. Journal keeping involves making reflections explicit through writing and thereby making them available to inform action. The recent trend of requiring students to use journals (Ballantyne and Packer, 1995) means that journals are being used for teaching tools as well as for reflection on teaching.

Journals are used both as an occasional tool for reflection and on a regular basis. Those used on a regular basis sometimes serve as one of the methods for data collection within review and development projects and programs (eg. Bell, 1996 and McDrury, 1996). Journal keeping was necessary in my study for I used my students’ and my own ones to explain how I explored the use of drama method in the classes and turn to them time and again whilst writing about my experience.

Peer observation occurs when colleagues undertake to observe each other teach and follow up with constructive discussion about what was observed as it was practiced with colleagues who teach drama at the same Faculty in Tirana. We used to enjoy discussing after the classes about introducing creative methods and often share our experiences on drama. We share joint interests in motivating our students and developing their potentials. Our cooperation is useful in terms of ideas and different practical ways of drama application. Teaching portfolios are a collection of evidence of development in teaching expertise.

They can contain an unlimited variety of materials including lists of courses taught, teaching innovations, personal teaching philosophy, evidence of successes, evidence of engaging in professional development in teaching. Evidence collected during my classes and attempts to use drama methods creatively may lead to substantial improvement to practise. I refer to my notes time and again. The analysis of findings during the experimental classes and qualitative nature of data gathered in the form of ‘understandings and ‘meanings’ were particularly useful but needed to be interpreted carefully.

The University of New South Wales’ Postgraduate Program in Higher Education, the Australian University Teaching and Learning course at the University of Western Australia; and the Graduate Diploma in Tertiary and Adult Education at Murdoch University incorporates a reflective practise approach. However, they all contain an inherent connection between reflection and action on a range of relevant aspects of teaching. Two recent examples are the Reflective Teaching Practise for Staff Developers workshop by Mar Siksna (University of Queensland) held at the University of New England, 1996 and the Reflective Teaching workshop for academic staff by Anne Jasman at Murdoch University, 1996.

## **Teaching philosophy and problem-based learning methodology**

This research tries to explain that qualitative teacher research may be considered valid when it promotes transformation in practise which is evidence of learning. This occurs when teacher researchers are actively involved in learning while researching.

The method involves the teacher setting the classroom activities so that students are engaged in a problem-based learning methodology. This methodology then becomes both “a teaching strategy and a foundation for research.” This research studies professional growth whilst directly engaged in practise-based inquiry. Concurrently, it represents the contributions that drama teachers, as insiders in the field, can make to using drama as learning method through systematic research that informs practise. Formerly a drama teacher and Head of Drama at QUT, Brad’s current research investigates practise-led methodologies for researching the arts and creative practises, and evaluating the role of Drama and the arts in educating ‘the creative workforce’.

Betty Jane Wagner summarizes recent research on drama in education and creative drama, featuring studies that show drama’s effect on thinking, oral language, reading, and writing. Most of the studies answer the broad question, "Does classroom drama actually teach anything?" Wagner presents the best studies in both the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. According to Wagner “Process Drama and Multiple Literacies takes you inside classrooms where process drama successfully taps students’ multiple literacies, integrates content from across the curricular areas, and develops students’ social and critical awareness. These classrooms span a wide range of ages, and their stories will show you how this technique allows students to view the world from multiple perspectives by involving them in situations where they must make informed decisions. And far from simple classroom plays, process dramas are conceived and enacted by students in response to the issues and questions raised by content in the classroom”.

The image-based study uses photographs to prompt reflection, interpretation and analysis. During the classes it was observed that the use of the digital camera as a data collection medium was positive in many ways and opened the possibility of allowing the participants to be actively involved in the research process, in addition the images prompted reflections on practise, and provided a way for teachers to dialogue with students about their values about drama in education. Linthwaite, Lewis, Staton (2006) support that “Qualitative researchers try to be more useful, wanting to engage with the complexity of practise by developing a range of ‘practise-based research’ strategies such as action research, grounded theory and reflective practice”.

According to Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988 “Action research has been defined variously and there are many forms, arising from different epistemological bases. What the definitions have in common is that action research (like the one I am trying to introduce in this piece of work) involves inquiring into one’s own practice through a cyclical process which involves planning, acting, observing and reflecting”. Major action research projects in tertiary teaching have been undertaken in several universities and include: the CUTL action research projects at the University of South Australia (Smith, 1994).

Drama and role play is often used in a similar way as storytelling and for a similar purpose. The interview schedule centred around three basic phases. The pre-study interview invited the three of us to describe our teaching methodologies and our philosophy of drama teaching (How have we taught drama in the past? What kind of evaluation tools have we traditionally used? What has our students’ interest been?). The selected colleagues were interviewed and asked to paint a vivid picture of themselves and their working environment (What do you like about your teaching environment? What do you find challenging? What has changed for you over your career?)

During these initial conversations, the aim was to understand the teacher's goals for the teaching of drama. They were very enthusiastic in participating in practice-based research and offered new ideas. Their availability was respected and they were invited to contribute with their opinions (ethics has been highly respected and applied). After the demonstration lesson in the classroom, we reflected on what we observed about drama as a teaching strategy and what effects we believe it may have had on the students.

My colleagues' notes and journal entries recorded the observations they made of the participating students as they worked through dramatic role-play with the "guest teacher" (What was it like watching your own students? Did anything happen that surprised you? What did you see that pleased you/disappointed you? •) In this discussion, the intention was to bring their assumptions to light about the students, and teaching in order that we might explore together how these assumptions can be challenged by drama methodologies.

Next, we met after the class was designed and implemented using drama strategies. It was planned to also observe my colleagues during their teaching after I had previously taken their approval and consent and our interview following the lesson began to uncover the changes (both anticipated and unanticipated) already experienced in the teacher in role as well as the limitations of the methodology (questioned often asked were: How would you describe the rhythm of the lesson? What did you find difficult/interesting? How would you describe the nature of your students' engagement with the work? What would you do differently next time and why?) It was the ongoing reflection on practice, long-term observation, hours of videotaped drama work, students' writing-in-role, reflective writing, formal and informal feedback, and test results that provided us with triangulation of data and clear emergent categories of analysis in our research.

It was found that You could become a learner not only in your own eyes but also in the eyes of others. And as a learner, these students had a glimpse again at their own potential, essentially connecting them to what Freire (1998) has called their "unfinishedness". This action method involves the teacher setting the classroom activities so that students could be engaged in a problem-based learning situation. It then becomes both "a teaching strategy and a foundation for research." entity. It is a viable approach to inquiry where teacher researchers are actively involved in learning while researching.

The issue was being explored through practice and explained that qualitative teacher research may be considered valid when it promotes transformation in practice which is evidence of learning. Care was taken to make students feel comfortable during live-performances/drama classes and enjoy their role playing at the same time. As soon as the opportunity of role-playing the characters were mentioned, the students would start deciding the roles and come up with new ideas how to make it look like a 'real drama' played on scene.

### **Putting the strategy into practice**

This is an empirical activity based on observations, practical drama activities undertaken with the students on the 10th of December after making several previous attempts as well as reflections on practice. This part is about the content of the research. It looks at an important social issue, which is about the migrant workers' experiences of finding a job in one of the EU countries, the life of migrants and the sufferings of their family members because of migration.

Most of the Albanian families are feeling the consequences of migration nowadays, daughters living without their fathers or sisters and brothers.... This self-study examined issues of ethics and power. The students of drama class participated voluntarily in it and their rights and feelings were highly respected) – ethics taken into account in every step (whilst examining issues of ethics and power). One of the lessons learned was that teacher researchers should strive to be ethical by seeking safety for all involved, allowing for free and equal voice and minimizing power inequities. The colleagues were happy to see how democratic our practice was and they congratulated the performance success in turn. The students had never before been asked or taken their opinion in organizing activities of this kind.

## **Activities**

### **Collection of data about the process of change**

This will involve a Section on “Activities used with the students during the drama class” (recording of the activity in the class and notes taken by the performing students themselves after the class). The story tells us about the feelings of a young girl named Lejla whose father migrates to UK. It is further explained what was done and learned through the related experience. Throughout the session it is considered the use of drama as a method and how students can develop ways of responding and making meaning from drama and theatre performance, and create the building blocks for a more intense critical analysis at tertiary study.

Students are required to attend and then discuss, analyse or evaluate the related drama performance. At this level there is an expectation that they will have acquired a language in which to do so but this is not always the case. Data collection will be the focus of this chapter (the use of drama was practiced even with another group a week later). During this phase, a 2.5-hour drama was led with the target students. During the pre-study discussions, the colleagues were informed about the performance of some students, reflecting on the "difficult ones" and describing previous efforts already made to encourage their participation and success. There was a constructive hypothecation about the different ways that drama education invites participation and evidence was found about greater new and unusual interest among some of the students.

Before the planned session, three specific students were chosen to begin to discuss the questions to be asked and evaluate later reactions. One video camera, therefore, was fixed on the classroom, while a second hand-held camera, operated by one of the students, was focused on three students: Andi, Arberi, and Julia. Julia never speaks voluntarily, and when addressed, responds only with great difficulty. Andi, by contrast, appears on the surface, to have more confidence, although he could often reveal an unpredictably aggressive attitude which betrays his severe insecurities.

He is kind of "reluctant learner" and was discovered to have gone home and consumed alcohol. He is considered as most "at risk" student. Arberi is considered a "behavioural" student. Sava used to stay alone, always the last to be "put in a group" for activities. She was considered socially awkward by her peers. Students were instructed to create a drama that would teach the students something about the migrant workers' experiences of finding a job in one the EU countries.

Ana, one of the best students began with the story of a friend named Stela whose father left Albania to find a job in UK. After reading the first few paragraphs of the story, the students were asked to draw a picture of what they figured her father's situation looked like. All set about drawing except Kela. She shared a "picture" with the videographer, as well, when he strolled around with the camera. Kela's insecurities, masked by an obvious defensiveness, were apparent in the very first activity.

### **Teacher in role**

(Collecting data about the outcomes)

Teacher working in role serves a unique pedagogical function. The teacher is neither a co-player in the drama, acting like another student, nor is she a performer who uses role to either command attention or entertain like an actor might do. O'Neill (1995) insists that "the initial purpose of using role is emphatically not to give a display of acting, but invite participants to enter the fictional world" (61). The purpose of role for the teacher then is to support student role-playing, invite students to transform the dramatic action as they are moved and challenged to do and otherwise facilitate complex learning using the tools and entry points of dramatic art forms.

Because David slips in and out of role so smoothly he constantly surprises students. This keeps them alert and focused because they are never quite certain of what is coming next: as in life, they are walking on a tightrope trying to adjust to the future. (Richard Courtney, in Taylor, 2000:45) Moving into a whole-group role-play, the teacher could assume the role of Christina, the Italian employer and the students became the workers being enticed to come and work in Italy. Reading the research journal sometime later, there were some evidenced remarks on the initial invitation into role: As the students stood silently, it was initially feared that perhaps no one would respond to the invitation to "ask the employer any questions they might have". After perhaps a minute of silence, one student raised his hand and asked, "Will we be allowed to return home after the construction of the plant is finished?" At that point, there was belief that it would work. A reminder of Gallagher's own comments in her chapter in Booth's (1998) book, *Writing in Role*, she says, "When we are working with drama and writing-in-role, we are interested in engaging the whole of the students in inquiries relevant to her/him. Because of the great security of role, students and teacher can take greater risks. Because you are in safety, you can go into danger" (150).

Teachers often provide students with challenges that demand risk taking on their part (write a story, move around the gym like a president, sing out loud as part of the choir...) while it is merely needed to observe and encourage. In this situation, the students were able to take a risk and enter into role as the teacher was risking alongside of them (Reflective teacher journal, 10 December).

When asked to find a partner, with one playing a recruitment officer and the other playing a worker, the student acting as an officer was to determine whether this would be a suitable candidate for the job of building the plant. When they reported back, Leta was taking her role as officer very seriously and was one of the first to enthusiastically report that she would recommend her partner for the job. After this, the students were asked to get into groups and create a scene of the migrant workers in UK.

For this, each group received a different descriptive excerpt from their text, detailing what life was like for the workers. For this activity, Leta had to be placed in a group, as she was left wandering once the groups had begun working. After some preparation time, the groups shared their work. Era's journal revealed her observations of the students' work: After watching the scenes and listening to the students recite passages it was evidenced that they achieved a greater understanding of the event in a drama class than if they had silently read the entire chapter and subsequently answered the questions. They were actually walking carefully to ensure that the nitro-glycerine strapped to their backs did not explode (Reflective journal, December).

Next, a letter was read aloud to the class, explaining that it had come to Ana from her father. Afterwards the students were invited to write a diary entry- as Ana - after receiving the letter from her father. Neta wrote one sentence and then spent the rest of the time tossing her pen in the air and catching it. Jetmira and Kela, however, seemed consumed by their writing. Ermiona remarked how the sheer quantity of writing was more than she'd seen either of the students had produced before. Jetmira had written: Dear Diary, I miss you so much, my father. He has been gone for two years now. He hasn't seen how I'm growing up. He writes me letters, but every time I read them, I have to cry. I wish I could just see him. Whatever I do, I am always thinking about him, but I got to stop thinking about him. Alma. When I later read Jetmira's reflection on that day of drama, she revealed something important: ...she made it sound real when she was trying to convince us to come over.

She lied about how good it was coming over, but that was what she was supposed to do, to make us come over. We started skits after that. It was evidenced that most of them were good. They shared their letters in a sound collage, and some signalling students were asked to read a chosen excerpt from Alma's diary. Next, students were asked to create a paragraph, using movement and sound, from a dream Alma might have. Kela's group's presentation had a few obvious glitches and she became visibly angry with her group members. She was terribly disappointed that her group didn't "get it right". We asked them to take another run at it, at the end of which Kela explained to the class the details of what they were doing so that everyone could follow the ideas they'd had. She was greatly invested in being understood. I remarked that this investment in being understood was new behaviour for Kela. After we shared the "dreams", we situated their chairs in the room to resemble a train.

Each group created a frozen picture of the migrant workers moving across the country on the train and this image was to be "painted" by Alma. From the four groups, there emerged four different Alma characters who were interviewed about what they had "painted". Neta took the role of Alma within her group and her responses in role were so eloquent that others took note. Instead of giggling, her peers were obviously impressed. While the class sat on the "train" the drama was going towards the end of the story. Finally, the methodology chosen to be used incorporated a complex ethics structure that needed to be employed as part of the process of empowering students to evaluate their own learning.

### **Analysis of findings and validation report**

Stela's final reflection about doing drama was especially revealing. As a student with poor self-esteem, she illustrated a profound understanding of her own abilities as a learner and about learning, in general, for those who are sometimes identified as "learning disabled".



She had written: I thought this morning was fun, the best part was that we didn't get marked on this activity if we did me and Olta would probably have failed! I like doing stuff like that better than having to write notes and learn this kind of thing that way. I think that we have more understanding of the lesson when we do activities like that because when we write notes and stuff, I don't know about everybody else but I know that I can't stay focused and I have a lower level of understanding the lesson. Then again when we do stuff like we did this morning.

I understand better because I had fun and it doesn't look like it but I actually, concentrate and understand better. I think it gets too distracting when we are quietly writing a note because everyone jumps at every little noise! So, it gets really distracting and boring and annoying! In other words, I like doing drama activities better and I think everyone else does too! All the students were happy to reflect on "learning English through drama" after the last session together. The colleagues had hypothesized about drama's special ability to draw "reluctant learners" into the classroom activities. Neta's reaction during the first test she wrote after her experiences of drama was very telling.

### **Reflection which might lead to another cycle of further improvement and dissemination**

The following is an excerpt from Stela's diary:

Test day - I assumed the role of the employer as I handed out sheets. I told them that in Italy we were concerned about our people working as migrants and suffering the consequences of any national discrimination. I understood that some of them had concerns about the future of their families. I asked them to write me a letter explaining to me what their concerns were and what recommendations they would like me to take into account for a better handling of economic situations. Out of role, I explained that they had the option of signing a bilateral agreement, which really applies now with Italy and we have very good positive developments since then in all walks of life. I loved watching them write the test.

Two students were concerned that they hadn't understood the instructions (Do we get to pretend we are migrants?) As I walked past Neta, she said: "This is fun. I feel like I really am a migrant and that I really am angry at my government!" It was silent for 15 minutes as she wrote (Reflective teacher journal, December, 2007). There was a further education for us as we read the reflections of the academically strong students in the class. Some of these "high-achievers" had taken special note, without any solicitation, of the unusual participation of their peers who were normally quiet or unsuccessful in their work. One student explained in her assessment: I suppose that this [doing drama] was less tiring, and more fun than writing notes. I know that I learn just as good by reading, but this was still an interesting idea. I did like the casual atmosphere, and the freedom to express our feelings creatively.

The only thing that could have been improved would be to include more facts and information into the technique. I feel that if this could be met, it would be nearly perfect. Some of the less attentive students may be intrigued by the idea of learning through drama. In fact, they may not even realize that they're learning at all, but the information is more likely to "stick in their minds." Many students in the class had taken note of surprising and new participation from their peers in the drama work and the subsequent breaking of old patterns and dynamics in the classroom.

## **Turning Over a New Leaf**

### **Criteria for transforming data into evidence**

Using drama in process has been convincingly thought to be an effective way of creative teaching English. Referring to notes: Stela has reported that when the class was recently asked to establish their hotel room groups for their big class trip to Rome, Neta was left again without a group. This time, before she could select a group for her, a few of the most popular girls in the class intervened, saying they'd like Neta in their room. A small sign perhaps, but Neta was good at drama and being good at drama had earned her new social status in the classroom. In a lucid description, Swartzell (1996) recalls: Each time we leave a performance, we are reminded that theatre and dance are the most evanescent of art forms, and that what we have just seen can never be beheld again in the exact same way. Even if we should return the next night to repeat the aesthetic process, a second viewing cannot reproduce the reaction of the first because we have been changed, by both the production and by everything else that has happened to us in the interim (Taylor, 1996, 97).

In a classroom where drama has been exploited, there is often, too, this experience of profound change for the participants. For the weaker students we tracked in a particular class, they had the surprising and necessary experience of success and in so doing became different learners and different people. Much educational research confirms that success begets success. What we could not have anticipated is the extent to which this success would change others' perceptions of their peers. For Jetmira, she transcended the limitations of shyness through her writing in the drama.

This reflective writing helped her to validate her own perspective in a kind of dialogue with herself and rehearse what she might say in advance, able then to participate in a way she had not imagined possible. For Kela, she felt able to take pride in her work; to be angry when it did not go as planned. She had come a long way from her initial refusal to draw, masking her fear of failure with a contempt for success. For Neta, drama enabled her to communicate, despite being an outsider to the dominant mode of expression in the classroom. Thus, the key criterion was observing changes in attitude and behaviour that have come about as a result of a dramatic activity or exercise. In our action research, we aimed to take up Gallas' (1994) challenge presented to the research community, that is, to: ...look carefully at the stories teachers uncover and to consider the ways in which teacher knowledge articulates a more complete picture of the teaching community and learning process. In this way, when teachers' stories are weighted equally with the body of knowledge coming from the research community, a larger and more powerful picture of how children learn, and the contexts which best foster that learning, can be obtained (162).

What was learned in these early stages of our inquiry is that action research- with its focus on interpersonal relationships and context- can take in these relationships in classrooms to the extent that the data remain moving and changing phenomena. This research, grounded in the natural setting of a classroom comprised of students engaged in drama, allowed us to observe and critically analyse the negotiation and re-negotiation of power and role that existed both within and beyond the drama worlds.

The drama frame, in other words, afforded students in the classroom - weak and strong alike - the opportunity to re-configure their default settings, to re-frame their classroom relations inside and beyond the world of fiction. What began as one teacher researching her own practice soon became an investigation of the ways in which drama affords academically weaker and often labelled students the opportunity to reinvent themselves. It was amazing to see progression as evidence of understanding and learning as a result of the activity. The students evidenced changes in their own attitudes and learning through drama.

The greatest mark of Stela's success for her was not that Drama became more interesting, but that Ana, Ela, and Leta became learners in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. And as learners, these students had a glimpse again at their own potential, essentially connecting them to what Freire (1998) has called their "unfinishedness". He writes:

I like being human because I know that my passing through the world is not predetermined, preestablished. That my destiny is not a given but something that needs to be constructed and for which I must assume responsibility. I like being human because I am involved with others in making history out of possibility, not simply resigned to fatalistic stagnation. Consequently, the future is something to be constructed through trial and error rather than an inexorable vice that determines all our actions (54).

Freire insists that this awareness of our "unfinishedness" is essential to our human condition. For Stela's "reluctant learners", doing drama renewed their curiosity, allowed them to shed preconceived ideas and rediscover their "incompleteness"; doing drama afforded them that most critical educational experience of becoming - the very antithesis of their fixed and labelled identity. Drama used as a method in the classroom turned even the most disinterested students into active ones and developed their language skills further. The students also experienced cooperative and solidarity feelings amidst each other. Students exhibited a great deal of creative energy. They were being productive, cooperative, sustaining both dedication and commitment to task. The teacher and facilitator found to be really energized with and by them.

### **Suggestions For the Teacher**

The ESL teacher needs to create a file by carefully selecting and categorizing a substantial variety of dramas. In selecting dramas, special consideration must be given to appropriateness of the following: students' language level skills students' ages students' interests. The use of drama in the ESL classroom enables students to explore the linguistic and conceptual aspects of the written text without concentrating on the mechanics of language.

The dramatization process is a powerful tool in stimulating learning while acquiring a second language because the learners become intellectually, emotionally, and physically involved in the target (English language in our case) language within the framework of the new culture. By target language is meant English Language used as a second language. The aim is that students acquire communicative language skills in English through drama activities. To further facilitate the communicative approach to second language acquisition, the ESL teacher can record the dramatizations and improvisations. A great deal of conversation will be stimulated when the students relive their experiences through tape recordings, video recordings, and still photography.

The teacher should plan follow-up activities about the dramatizations and improvisations that allow for individual expression of the cooperative experience. The students can illustrate and write about the activity or poem. Future lessons can also include the dramatization and improvisation of short stories, fables, and plays. The same techniques and follow-up activities should be employed.

### **Outcomes and Findings**

Whether they are auditory, visual or kinaesthetic learners, the staging of a play in a foreign language offers a variety of opportunities for language acquisition. The association of words with their visual representation clearly helps those who see to learn. Finally, there was proof how the expected outcomes had informed practice in:

- Raising motivation and achievement of the students, developing oral and listening skills, giving students an awareness of the importance of transferring skills from one subject to another.
- Providing an atmosphere of experiment in which there is less fear of failure.
- Enabling students to see the importance of all language as an effective tool for communication.
- Fostering increased cooperation between individuals and groups.
- Developing good critical techniques with regard to the work of others.
- Allowing variations in practice to be explored.
- Extending the concept of creativity, relating it not only to the composing of improvisations but also to their interpretation.

Drama—especially improvised drama in the classroom leads to not only more creativity, but also more thinking about thinking. In drama, the art of both inhabiting a role being played and yet maintaining just a bit of distance so one can modulate the performance and not become overly identified with the role is called “role distance.” This reflective process is the equivalent of what psychologists have called “meta-cognition,” and psychotherapists have called, “psychological minded-ness.”

Thinking about thinking—questioning assumptions, the meanings of words (semantics), the emotional power of images (semiotics), the way language and arguments are structured (rhetoric), looking at forms of personal and cultural self-deception (psychoanalysis and propaganda analysis)—this is an unending challenge to learning. Drama can help make learning a foreign language fun, and changing roles and using other dramatic approaches generate types of thinking that reflects greater mental and emotional maturity and flexibility.

Drama in education becomes a way to learn by doing, and educators for over a century have noted that experiential learning is the most effective approach, especially for skill mastery. (In a way, this is one of the components of lure-based influenced, mentioned above. Other elements include encouragement, feedback, group support, opportunities to progress at one’s own pace, identification and respect for individual differences in ability and temperament, opportunities to practice in a supportive context until a sense of mastery is gained, and so forth. For example, as adults are being invited to master the technologies of computers, email, and the like, there are learning challenges through drama that bring back all the old anxieties of learning a foreign language.

*Drama as play makes the mastery of these learning curves easier.*

Improvising opens the mind to the continuing flow of imagery and inspirations from the creative subconscious. Discovering that one has this ability to tap into rich resources of inspiration deepens identity and increases creative potential in Foreign Language learning. This research provides compelling evidence that drama can and do serve as champion of change in learning. Drama was used to boost general academic performance. Findings from the study include effects on the students such as:

- a heightened sense of enjoyment, excitement, fulfilment and release of tensions;
- an increase in the knowledge and skills associated with particular aesthetic values;
- enhanced knowledge of social and cultural issues;
- the development of creativity and thinking skills;
- the enrichment of communication and expressive skills;
- advances in personal and social development;

The encouragement of, and listening to the student voice is central to drama teaching practice, communication and collaboration are key processes in the drama classroom. The main challenge which I confronted in the drama classroom was how to balance the need for clearly structured learning objectives with the kind of flexibility which leads to innovative and creative drama. Using drama in teaching takes you beyond merely transferring knowledge and building skills as it also involves negotiating meaning in order to gain understanding. This is done through the active participation in a fiction. I used drama for specific learning objectives by stepping into teacher in role in particular. In sharing their practicum, teachers also report how the drama work impacts on their class over time. Drama and narrative form work well together if the drama explores the story rather than merely acting it out.

## **Conclusions**

The use of drama in the classroom for learning English as a second language enables students to explore the linguistic and conceptual aspects of the written text without concentrating on the mechanics of language. The dramatization of a certain text is a powerful tool in stimulating learning while acquiring a second language because the learners become intellectually, emotionally, and physically involved in the English language within the framework of the new culture. Drama rich in dialogue provides students with a dramatic script. Drama places the learners in situations that seem real. Learners use English for specific purposes, language is more easily internalized and, therefore, language is remembered.

Drama provides the ultimate multi-sensory learning experience; it is inclusive and it supports the learning of a foreign language. Teachers who engage in action research like I was in using drama in the classroom promote their own development and the development of their practice, as well as contribute to the evolution of their field. Teachers' action research on using drama as a creative method in the classroom can bring new and important knowledge of the teaching/learning process of a foreign language and Clarke and Erickson define teacher inquiry as insider research that critically examines teaching and student development and that this knowledge can improve the effectiveness of teachers.

From the research, it can be affirmed that teaching English as a second language by using drama as a method which differs from technical labour, requires continuous learning about the profession by staying abreast of developments in the field and experimenting with innovations that may lead to improvements in practice. In lieu of maintaining absolute control, drama contexts, conducted in roles of varying status, tend to reduce censorship and encourage authentic participation and greater risk-taking. Another stumbling block for some is the unsubstantiated yet worrisome concern over acting ability (some of my students were afraid of the quality of their performance).

Rather than confine learning to the context of the classroom setting, the pedagogy of drama in education seeks to frame learners within an "as-if" world. Within this context, the teacher creates frames containing scaffolding that allow legitimate peripheral participation of learners in roles that are developmentally appropriate. Christopher Andersen describes a comparative study in which students working within an "as-if" dramatic world achieved greater cognitive gains than students in a traditional classroom environment. For some, these changes in school practices represent reform. During the trials for both resources there were often inspiring and powerful moments of teaching and learning.

They showed what might happen when education wasn't about teaching about things, focused on developing competencies for the future, but instead a space where students as Dorothy Heathcote describes it, "can find out what they didn't know they already knew". The more you play roles, the more you begin to recognize that you are indeed playing those roles, which leads to an increased playing with the way you play the roles. You begin to introduce more variations, become more creative.

Finally, as you get the idea of the game, you become capable of becoming the playwright as well as director of your life, introducing new roles, challenging and removing obsolete role, more consciously revising and creating the very way you think of yourself and the way you live. Working from the meta-role, the part of yourself that observes and chooses which roles you'll play when, and how you'll play them, leads to a healthier sense of self. Interpersonal encounters are more authentic when they involve a broader range of imaginative elements.

Drama thus offers yet another way to counter alienation. Empathy can be developed through imagining what it's like to be in another person's role, and so this process can be used to foster greater understanding and interpersonal skills. Drama contributes to the lives and life stories of university students and argues the need for educators to move beyond the grasp of curriculum and system, to re-consider the 'potential space' of the drama classroom as a site for change and possibility. The topic is rich enough to merit several pages and be the basis for further research.

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