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THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES
OF DRAMA TECHNIQUES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

This article analyses advantages and disadvantages of drama techniques in foreign language teaching. Different pros and contras of using drama and role-play in the classroom are described. In this article the most topical theoretical questions for the subject of dramatization are covered. Following aspects of drama techniques are considered: relevance of language, motivation, language needs, advantages and disadvantages of drama techniques in foreign language and culture teaching. The article also analyses qualities, that a teacher who decided to use dramatic techniques, must have.

Keywords: drama techniques, role play, dramatization, motivation.

The past few years have seen a marked increase in the number of language teaching textbooks and materials which include role-play. But despite this fact some teachers still prefer to stick to the teaching model which was used when they were students themselves, and try to keep innovations away from their classrooms. They apprehend dramatization as something that disturbs teaching process, requires a great deal of time and is unnecessary for students. This delusion results from the fact that they accept dramatization as a mere adaptation of literary works for the stage and its performance at the student theatre (which is kind of dramatization, of course, but at the same time just one of its numerous varieties); or they refer to role-play as to a simple reproduction of dialogues in order to consolidate knowledge of the new words or grammar.

But the notion of dramatization and role-play is much broader; it is not only student theatre performance and not word-for-word reproduction of dialogues at all. Let's be clear from the start what we mean by "dramatic activities". They are activities which give students an opportunity to use their own personality in creating the material on which part of the language class is to be based. These activities draw on the natural ability of every person to imitate, mimic and express himself or herself through gesture. They draw, too, on the student's imagination and memory, and natural capacity to bring to life parts of his or her past experience that might never otherwise emerge. They are dramatic because they arouse our interest, which they do by drawing on the unpredictable power generated when one person is brought together with others. Each Student brings a different life, a different background into the class. We would like students to be able to use this when working with others [3, 6].

Role-play is a technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a managed way in order to develop experience and trial different strategies in a supported environment. Depending on the intention of the activity, participants might be playing a role similar to their own (or their likely one in the future) or could play the opposite part of the conversation or interaction. Both options provide the possibility of significant learning, with the former allowing experience to be gained and the latter encouraging the student to develop an understanding of the situation from the 'opposite' point of view [1].

Before going on, let's be clear what is not meant by dramatic activities – putting on plays in front of a passive audience. The stiff, self-conscious "dramatization" of dialogues and short sketches, as occasionally produced for distraction of language reinforcement, is not what is meant here. Words, other people's words, which have been mechanically memorized, can turn to ashes in the speaker's mouth. They lose their savor even before they are spoken, and this we do not want.

Nor do we want students to feel that dramatic activities are part of the preparation for some great final performance. Their value is not in what they lead up to but in what they are, in what they bring out right now. So, in describing these ideas, we have no audience in mind other than

the people who are taking part. Nobody looks on. This doesn't however exclude the performance by one group for another or even by one group for all the others, if the need is felt.

Lastly, as we see them, dramatic activities are not a substitute for the psychoanalyst's couch. They are not sessions of self-liberation (complexes and hang-ups cannot be cured through them). On the other hand, they will certainly release imagination and energy – and this is hard to do in language teaching. Indeed, this is one of the purely educational objectives that makes us well beyond the limitations of teaching the foreign language as a subject.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Drama Techniques in Foreign Language and Culture Teaching:

Maximum Student Activity: For role play to be fully successful, each student should be active almost 100% of the time [1, 43].

It may be argued that only one student, the one who is speaking, is active at any given moment. This is not true.

Much confusion has been caused by the arbitrary division of language skills into 'active skills' (speaking and writing) and 'passive skills' (listening and reading), as though activity were measured by bodily activity and sound alone.

Coherent speech requires a great deal of mental activity, both in its formulation, in the monitoring of other's reception of it, and in its possible subsequent adaptation in the light of that monitoring. The listener must show understanding or otherwise of the speaker, relate what is being said to his own opinions and needs in order to be able, when he has judged that his turn to speak has come, to formulate an appropriate, acceptable and understandable message.

Few classroom activities require the high level of mental activity suggested above. Oral exercises ('drills', 'pattern practice', 'pair practice', etc.) and most forms of group work, have a set, predictable pattern. During these activities the student, when not actually speaking, need not give his full attention to the exercise. If his attention wanders the 'action' will not be radically held up, as the teacher or other students will call him to task, or ask another student to continue while he again turns his concentration to the exercise. If he makes a mistake he will be stopped and given time to reconsider and re-formulate his utterance, or merely be asked to repeat a correct version.

Usually the language he or she is required to produce is, if not totally predictable, then at least limited to a narrow range of options, and can be produced reasonably quickly and correctly without a great deal of thought.

In most cases such activities are teacher-directed, so that the student, instead of having to use his own judgments, has an authority to appeal to.

None of these features is present in real life conversation, so these activities do not practice everything the student will need outside the classroom. Role play does. This is not to say that such exercises/activities are valueless. We believe them to be an essential part of language learning. It does mean, however, that if they are to be of maximum use to the student, the language play practice must be extended and developed through role play.

Relevance, Interest and Discipline

Teachers of schoolchildren (and sometimes even of students) have discipline problems. This has always been true, but these problems seem to have been increasing in recent years. Teachers who have such problems may well feel that role plays are not, from a discipline point of view, a good idea. If a student's group is unruly when seated, the situation is likely to become chaotic if the students are permitted to wander 'at will' round the classroom. It is not within the scope of this work to discuss in detail the possible reasons for lack of class discipline, but it is relevant to note those points appertaining to discipline and role play.

Quite often students cannot understand why they are required to learn certain things. The subject and the learning aim may seem to be totally unconnected to the students' present needs and experiences. Even when the aim is reasonably clear, as, for example, learning English in Scandinavia (where it is almost a second language and even the youngest children cannot avoid coming into contact with it through the mass media) then the activities and exercises the students

are required to do in class may not seem in any way relevant to that aim.

An extreme, but very common example of this is reading aloud. In a class of, say, thirty students, if all thirty, or only half the class, have to read aloud one or two sentences, then only one student is active at any given moment. The rest of the class need not listen; they have the text in front of them. Having once read, the student knows that he is unlikely to be asked to do anything else for some time, and can therefore think of some other things. Probably the only time this activity will be of any use is in an examination sometime in the future. It does not seem to be relevant to their daily lives, or help them with any contact they may have with the language outside the classroom. It is not unreasonable, therefore, that students become bored during such exercises.

There are, of course, other exercises which are more interesting and require more activity on the part of the student, but many of these are again teacher-directed, and their long-term relevance is often not immediately obvious.

The relevance of a role play which has been chosen to suit the student's interests, experience and needs is obvious. It also gives the student a chance to use the language himself, without the direct control of the teacher. No student who is interested in what he is doing will misbehave. Many language learning exercises require the student to do just that – sit still. If the lesson is not one of the first of the day there are two possible results of this; an undisciplined class or a class of students whose minds are on other things, and are therefore very quiet. In either case the effectiveness of teaching and learning will not be high.

An exercise which is not only seen to be relevant, but also requires mental and bodily activity, will freshen concentration and interest, thus increasing the possibility of effective learning.

Adults do not usually cause discipline problems. They have a greater experience and understanding of education. This means they can look at learning from a more abstract point of view, and will therefore accept a lot of work which does not seem to be of immediate relevance to their ultimate aim.

But for any age group, aim or type of class, whether it is voluntary or compulsory, and every student responds positively to activities which have an obvious practical application. A feeling that what one is doing is relevant and useful is a powerful factor in increasing the motivation to learn; increased motivation leads to increased student involvement in the learning process.

Mixed Ability Groups

As no learning group is homogeneous, teachers are always in need of activities that can be graded to suit a wide range of abilities. Role play is an excellent exercise for dealing with this problem and can be graded in a number of ways [1, 45]:

1.   Roles can be designed with 'faster' or 'slower' students in mind. The type of 'responsible' role is also good for a student who is very dominant in other class activities, the type who knows all the answers, and talks whenever he gets the chance. Giving such a student a major role will often satisfy his need to make his presence felt, and he will use much of his energy in fulfilling the role as well as possible, becoming, as a result, less obtrusive. The shyer student can also be catered for. We do not think that a student who is by nature a quiet person should be required to do as much talking as the others. If he or she does not say much in their mother tongue, then there is little point in trying to make him a chatterbox in the foreign language. The task of the teacher is to improve performance in the foreign language, not alter personality. Roles, then, can be created to fit not only the linguistic ability, but also the personality of the individual student.

2.   Role descriptions can be altered to suit varying abilities. In a role play where the roles require more or less the same type and amount of activity from each student, the students can be given guidance according to ability. If the teacher had judged it necessary to give out role play cards for this role play, they might have looked like this:

Role 1 – card for 'slow' student

You are a parent with children at the school. (How many? How old are they?) Decide if you are for or against the move. Note down your arguments. Be prepared to give your opinions clearly and politely. Remember to use phrases like:

In my opinion…

I think…

Try to agree or disagree with what the other people say, remember phrases like:

I agree entirely…

I'm not sure I agree. I think…

Role 2 – card for 'fast' student

You are a parent with children at the school. Decide whether you are for or against the move, and be prepared to give your opinion clearly and politely, and to counter any arguments against it.

When designing role cards of this type, the teacher should be careful not to give a slow student so much help that the student has no possibility of choosing his own language. This would make the exercises guided dialogue work, not role play.

3. Another possibility is to have students of mixed abilities prepare roles together. In the example above, a 'slower' student could prepare the role with a 'faster' student (in which case only the role card for the 'fast' student would be given out. The 'slower' student could make more detailed notes while the preparation was taking place so that he had some support when in the actual role play situation. Students are often willing to help each other in this way, especially in smaller groups, and should be encouraged to do so.

4. Alternately, students of similar abilities can prepare roles together, and the amount of time given to the groups for role preparation can vary. 'Slower' students might be given the role card for the 'slow' student and, say, twenty minutes' preparation time. 'Faster' students might spend ten minutes of this time on another role play-related exercise and the final ten minutes on preparation. After a little practice in the composition of role plays, teachers will find that there are many ways of relating role cards and role preparation to the abilities of the individual students.

Disadvantages

If the main aim of the class is oral/aural proficiency, then it is difficult, from a pedagogical point of view, to find any disadvantages in using role play as a teaching and learning technique. But there is no doubt that in certain classes, and in certain teaching situations, there may well be some practical drawbacks.

Organization

Few teachers operate in ideal circumstances. The majority work in classrooms which are too small, and with classes which are, numerically, too large. Role play may therefore be difficult from a purely practical point of view. It is useless to suggest that role play groups be placed in extra rooms and corridors if these are not available. Similarly, the noise level produced by a class of forty, divided into eight role play groups in a small classroom, may be so high as to make concentration impossible.

There is little the teacher can do about such problems except choose or design role plays which will adapt to his particular situation. Perhaps two or three role play groups can be arranged and the rest of the class given another, quieter task. Carol Livingstone in her book 'Role Play in Language Learning' provides such an example: a successful role play based on 'asking and telling the way' done in a class where the furniture could not be moved. The aisles between the desks were 'streets' and each desk was a 'building' (town hall, bank, etc.), each 'building' being indicated by pictures [1, 48].

Time: If the time taken for preparation and follow-up work is included, then role play will

take up a lot of classroom time. Neither is it possible to predict how much time will be needed, especially for the role play itself. Some activities can last for more than an hour. Some teachers, especially those who teach classes which lead up to examinations, and therefore have a set syllabus to keep in mind, will argue that it is not possible to spend that amount of time on one activity. Their classes will fall behind with the syllabus, and thus fail their examinations.

This is a valid argument, if the aim of the class is, say, proficiency in the written language, accurate translation, or reading the classics. In general, though, the increasing tendency nowadays both for university classes and individual ones, is to have oral proficiency as their aim. Even Ministry of Education circulars dealing with aims and syllabuses abound with phrases like 'communicative competence', 'functional language skills', 'oral fluency'. If these are our aims, then any time spent on the activity which will achieve these aims is surely wisely spent.

Role play does not exist by itself. All language skills are involved: understanding, speaking, reading and writing. If it is felt that the class needs extra practice in any one of these, then this can be taken into consideration when the role play is being planned, and can form a greater part of the preparation of follow-up phase. Extra writing practice could have been provided, for example, in the advanced role play, by getting the students to write letters expressing different points of view to the local paper, or by asking each group to write a formal report of their discussion. The question is not so much whether we can afford to spend time on role play, but whether we can afford not to.

Two points which can be described neither as advantages or disadvantages of role play, but which have both positive and negative aspects are:

- The problem of the teacher's and the student's attitude towards role play and other related forms of freer classroom work.
- The problem of mistakes.

These are discussed below.

In most role plays the teacher will not take part. If he does, it will not be in his role as teacher. The teacher's role during the role play phase is to be as unobtrusive as possible. There are two ways in which this can be done [1, 50]. The first is when the teacher either sits somewhere where he can hear much of what is going on; or when the role play requires a lot of moving around on the part of the students, the teacher can move quietly round the room.

The second way in which the teacher can observe the role play is by taking a role himself. This should not be a major role, or the teacher may quickly become the dominating personality, and the role play will turn into something resembling teacher-guided group work.

With classes used to role play, and used to discussing teaching techniques and their aims, these subterfuges may not be necessary. Such classes are well aware of what is happening and acknowledge the 'rules' of the whole language learning game. They will therefore not be self-conscious or inhibited if the teacher is seen making notes. They may not even notice it.

The advantage of the teacher's new role, either as observer or minor player, is that he is freed from the task of running and organizing the class. A well planned, well prepared role play runs itself. The teacher is therefore free to listen for mistakes, misunderstandings and problems. From these he can evaluate the effectiveness of his teaching, and decide if further work on certain points is necessary. Role play is the nearest he can come in the classroom to being able to watch his students perform in the foreign language environment.

Most teachers have definite attitudes towards classroom management and discipline. They know how they want their students to behave towards them, the teacher, towards the classroom activities the subject requires, and towards their fellow students. Teachers who are considering the use of role play as one of their regular teaching procedures may worry about the discipline problems that may crop up. A much greater, psychological problem for many teachers is the fact that role play requires, not only in the actual role play phase, but also in many of the preparation phases, a lessening of the traditional authority and classroom dominance of the teacher. For role play to be of maximum effectiveness it must be accompanied by a more open approach to

teaching and learning. This is manifested in many ways [1, 50]:

- Greater student involvement in the choice of materials and learning activities. Students should be encouraged to suggest topics and ideas for class and group work, and to discuss which activities they enjoy and find of most use.
- The use of more 'open-ended' exercises, i.e. the replacing of mechanical stimulus/response drills with exercises which more closely resemble real communication.
- More exercises and activities which require that the students work in groups or pairs, with the minimum of teacher direction.
- Less formal classroom arrangement and management. You cannot have a conversation with the back of you companion's head. Wherever the furnishing of the classroom allow, students should be able to look at each other, if not in one large group, then in several smaller groups. Similarly, it is very difficult to speak naturally if every utterance must be preceded by the speaker raising his hand, or standing up.

Role play is an exercise which gives the student freedom to select and use his own language and accompanying para-linguistic and extra-linguistic behaviour, without the interference or guidance of the teacher. As the student is not yet proficient in the foreign language, it is obvious that students will make mistakes in the execution of such an exercise.

The nature of the activity means that there is a possibility of making mistakes across the full range of the linguistic spectrum: mistakes in structure, lexis, phonology; mistakes in para-linguistic and extra-linguistic features; mistakes in formality and attitude. Sometimes these mistakes will lead to the formulation of utterances which are unacceptable or inappropriate within the given situation.

Mistakes will be made during role plays, no matter how carefully prepared, and, due to the nature of the exercise, they cannot be corrected immediately. To many teachers, especially those trained in a language teaching method based on behaviorism, this is heresy.

During formal language work, whether based on behaviouristic principles or not, the aim is that the language being practiced should be as formally correct as possible. The student's choices are very limited. This limitation of choice means it is difficult for the teacher to be sure that the correct utterance or response is being made because the student knows why it is correct. Correct responses may be made for other reasons [1, 52]:

- The exercises have been so designed as to leave no possibility of making a mistake (as a mechanical stimulus/response drills).
- The student may be reacting to cues given, consciously or unconsciously, by the teacher. If the teacher frowns, the answer must be in some way wrong; if he smiles, it is probably correct. Each teacher has his own, very subtle, cues. These cues may be helpful in formal, controlled exercises, but the teacher cannot always be around to guide the student in this way.
- It may be clear to the student why the response is correct within the framework of that particular exercise, but this does not mean that he understands how it relates to the total linguistic picture he has formed up to date.

If, then, only formal, teacher-controlled exercises are used in the classroom, the teacher cannot be sure that the student can select and use the correct language when the teacher or the textbook is not in control. By giving students freedom in the classroom to try out and experiment with the language in their own, we can find out how much of what they have learned they understand how to use. Any mistakes made can be analyzed by the teacher and used as a basis for further exercises.

The relaxation of teacher control in role play means that the teacher has a chance in the classroom of discovering, and eventually correcting, mistakes and misconceptions, thus minimizing the possibility of the same mistakes being made outside the classroom, where they may cause misunderstanding, or even embarrassment between the student and his interlocutor.

In this article we covered the most topical theoretical questions for the subject of dramatization. We considered the following aspects of drama techniques: relevance of language, motivation, language needs, advantages and disadvantages of drama techniques in foreign

language and culture teaching.

And proceeding from all the abovementioned a general conclusion which enlightens the main problem of drama teaching can be made.

Language teachers sometimes behave like the owners of large estates, putting up high walls round their territory and signs saying 'No Trespassing'. In secondary schools and Universities the foreign language very often becomes a subject on a timetable, and is taught as a subject rather than as a language. As a result, the teacher of English shows little interest in what his or her colleagues might be doing in German or French; he or she may be on nodding terms with the teacher of Mathematics and Economics, and never have met the person in charge of Music or Science.

Drama is like the naughty child who climbs the high walls and ignores the 'No Trespassing' sign. It does not allow us to define our territory so exclusively: it forces us to take as our starting-point *life* not language. And life means all subjects, whether they are on the time-table or not. Drama may involve music, history, painting, mathematics, skiing, photography, cooking – anything. It does not respect subject barriers.

The language teacher will be wise to take advantage of this to enliven his or her work. Once students have discovered that there is another world, much closer and more real than that of imaginary characteras, the problem of 'how to keep their interest' will gradually disappear. And, strangest of all, this other world does not need to be conjured up with expensive equipment – all that is needed is a roomful of human beings.

Hence, a general conclusion can be drawn.

Role-play exercises help to mark off clearly what has gone before from what is to come. They are also intended to put students in a relaxed, uninhibited state in which they are much more receptive than they would otherwise be. This lowering of the threshold of unconscious resistance to learning the foreign language makes for more open, creative working in subsequent exercises. Many of the exercises of such a type lead to the increase in awareness of others, and of oneself in relationships with others. The confidence engendered in this way makes possible the cooperative learning which many of the other exercises demand.

By introducing students to English drama and real literature a compliment to them must be paid that they are capable of enjoying the best that English has to offer. There is an old adage that studying literature is good for one's general personal development, that it makes one a well-rounded person. There is no doubt that the study of literature encourages imagination and creativity. Many people agree that the ability to be imaginative is more important than the ability to memorize formulae.

But teaching dramatically is not an easy job, and it requires special person, a teacher who can and will conform to some 'needs' of these technique.

The need to respond to the class's feelings. For some inexplicable reason, classes – like audiences – do create a personality of their own, a personality which transcends and comprehends all the many different personalities of which they are composed. Of all people, the organizer (teacher, group, leader or 'animateur') is most aware of this. He or she will feel a mood of which the class itself may be unaware. Hence the need to pace the exercises to suit the class's disposition. And therefore to have some exercises 'in reserve'.

What the organizer may easily forget, however, is that he or she – though active – is not participating. And this, at times, makes it difficult to judge how effectively the students are working. It is only natural to want to intervene – or interfere – when a group seems to be 'stuck', as often happens. This desire should be resisted as much as possible, for all students' groups will eventually overcome their own difficulties – and they will feel all the stronger for it. The organizer knows from past experience how a particular exercise could, should or might develop. But if the activities always developed along the same lines they would no longer be drama activities. The unexpected must always be present, and the organizer must allow for this. The words of Stanislavsky are worth remembering here: 'Don't you know that to compose on a theme suggested by somebody else is much more difficult than to invent one yourself?'

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Холмакова Ю. В. Переваги та недоліки використання драматичних прийомів у навчанні іноземної мови.

Ця стаття аналізує переваги та недоліки драматичних прийомів у навчанні іноземної мови. Описуються різноманітні плюси та мінуси використання драматургії та рольової гри в класі. У цій статті розглядаються найбільш актуальні теоретичні питання предмету драматизації. Розглядаються наступні аспекти драматичних прийомів: релевантність мови, мотивація, мовні потреби, переваги та недоліки драматичних прийомів у навчанні іноземної мови та культури. У статті також аналізуються якості, які повинен мати вчитель, який вирішив використовувати драматичні техніки.

Ключові слова: *драматургія, рольова гра, драматизація, мотивація.*

Холмакова Ю. В. Преимущества и недостатки использования драматических приемов в обучении иностранному языку.

Эта статья анализирует преимущества и недостатки драматических приемов в обучении иностранному языку. Описываются различные плюсы и минусы использования драматургии и ролевой игры в классе. В этой статье рассматриваются наиболее актуальные теоретические вопросы предмета драматизации. Рассматриваются следующие аспекты драматических приемов: релевантность языка, мотивация, языковые потребности, преимущества и недостатки драматических приемов в обучении иностранному языку и культуре. В статье также анализируются качества, которыми должен обладать учитель, решил использовать драматические техники.

Ключевые слова: *драматургия, ролевая игра, драматизация, мотивация.*

Швець Г. Д.

МОДЕЛЮВАННЯ НАВЧАЛЬНОГО ТЕКСТУ: ТЕРМІНОЛОГІЧНИЙ ТА МЕТОДИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТИ

У статті порушено проблему моделювання навчального тексту в методиці викладання української мови як іноземної. Зосереджено увагу на подвійному тлумаченні терміна "моделювання тексту" в сучасних педагогічних дослідженнях: створення графічної моделі навчального тексту з метою кращого розуміння його смислу та створення еталонного навчального тексту як моделі реального тексту, включеного у природну комунікацію. Сформульовано принципи моделювання (створення) навчального тексту. Запропоновано класифікацію модельованих навчальних текстів для початкового етапу вивчення іноземної мови.

Ключові слова: *моделювання навчального тексту, модельований текст, науковий навчальний текст, методика викладання української мови як іноземної.*