

English Language Acquisition: a Dramatic Perspective

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Much has been written about the efficacy of using dramatic technique to encourage language acquisition and contextual meaning making. A dramatic pedagogical approach to teaching language allows students to actually use the language rather than be told about it. When students improvise dialogue in Drama class, the improvisation requires and supports the development of thought and language. Drama education requires verbal cooperation that includes negotiation between parties in their meaning making. The discussion about the Drama that occurs before, during and after the work is just as important as the work itself and this conversation as well as the drama activity provides the context for the acquisition of new vocabulary. In Drama, the children and the teachers can take on roles that make a wide variety of language and social interaction possible. Dramatic activities must (by definition) include the unexpected, the element of surprise, and the inclusion of tension. These activities tend to inspire and motivate students, to keep them engaged. Scholars such as Glock (1993), Schewe (2002) and Brauer (2002) advocate for role-play and dramatic simulations in the collaborative, communicative foreign language classrooms. I propose to take this conceptual framework a step further and link the acquisition of specific theatrical skills to the acquisition of a foreign language through a sequenced, dramatic curricular framework. Narratives and examples from sessions held with a variety of international students will provide the background for the theoretical discussion.

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