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Султангазина И.Ш. 129

2 СЕКЦИЯ ШЕТ ТІЛДЕРІН ОҚЫТУДЫҢ ТЕОРИЯЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ПРАКТИКАЛЫҚ АСПЕКТІЛЕРІ: ТӘЖІРИБЕ АЛМАСУ

СЕКЦИЯ 2: ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ И ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКАМ: ОБМЕН ОПЫТОМ 135

SEMANTIC-PLOT TEACHING AS A METHOD OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY

Abdikalykova Ulzhan Torealikyzy, Amrenova Aigerim Nurtazaevna 135

POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES IN DEVELOPMENT SPEAKING SKILLS IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM THROUGH COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Assem Alimbayeva, Saule Beisembayeva..... 139

USING DRAMA TO TEACH ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Aliyeva-Chinar Minara, Khuspakhan Dinargul..... 143

PROBLEMS IN TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Amirkhanova Balkhiya, Saule Beisembayeva..... 148

DIE ROLLE DER DIGITALEN MEDIEN IM DAF-UNTERRICHT

Avrora Aruun..... 152

TECHNOLOGY OF CREATIVE THINKING IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Assel Assubay, Saule Beisembayeva 156

THE USE OF AUTHENTIC AUDIOVISUAL AND PRINTED MATERIALS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF SEMEY: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Ismailova Gainigul Kabidullinovna, Baitleuova Laura Ayazbekkyzy 161

METHODS WITH PODCASTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

Balaban Aida Fedorovna 167

THE USE OF SONG MATERIAL AS A WAY OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Dina Berdaliyeva, Saule Beisembayeva..... 171

THE INFLUENCE OF ROLE-PLAYING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING

Duisenova Farida Eskeneyevna..... 175

KAZAKİSTAN'DA YABANCI DİL OLARAK KAZAK TÜRKÇESİ, RUS VE İNGİLİZ DİLİ ÖĞRETİMİNDE DİL BİLGİSİ ÖĞRETİM YÖNTEMLERİ

Roşangül Gulamova, Doç. Dr. Minara Aliyeva Çinar..... 178

UNTERRICHTSMETHODEN DES FSU

Ibrahimova Sahiba Mehdi 185

USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN FOREGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Iskakova Shynar, Bissalieva Nurbike, Sibintayeva Aliya 189

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USING DRAMA TO TEACH ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Introduction

From the world statistics it has proven that one out of five people of the world speak English as native or as a second language. In 2021, there were around 1.35 billion people worldwide who spoke English either natively or as a second language, slightly more than the 1.12 billion Mandarin Chinese speakers at the time of survey. Hindi and Spanish accounted for the third and fourth most widespread languages that year.[1] From these statistical calculations it has been derived that world English speaking population will only grow. Therefore, research and exploration to figure out useful and effective teaching and learning methods are one of the most important necessities of educational systems [2]. The main idea of this article is to use drama concept in teaching English to university students. The use of drama in teaching English as a foreign language has its roots in the late 1970s. There are many stories, books and conceptual materials as a text which will be given to students or group of students. Students will make role plays on the stories. While they will be making the role plays, firstly they will have to read, to understand, to memorize, to learn new vocabulary, and to listen each other's speeches and to write their scripts in English. Whole this process will be an intensive lesson which will improve their language level automatically. If all four skills are being used in one lesson, why not to use this method? At the end, it's assumed that learners will become competent, confident, and critical readers, writers, and viewers of the text. This method can be very affective among university students who are very creative and free to work on any dramatical subject. Nonetheless, most academic publications on drama to teach English as a foreign language focus on its use in primary or secondary school and/or on general language learning rather than to university students. Thus, this article will focus on the use of drama in teaching English to University students.

Methodology

Since the ancient eras, humankind has been using the drama actions, gestures to communicate. Even after people have invented many languages, the users of different languages always could and still can use the parts of drama. The word itself drama comes from the Greek language. It means‘ to do ’or ‘to act ’and actors try to portray and reflect the human conditions on the scene. So, when people didn't have

languages or different languages they always could act and show by gestures what they want to say. This have proven that even without words people can express themselves. In many countries this method has been used widely in teaching any language. There have been done so many numbers of articles that outline the effectiveness of drama in teaching a foreign language. Here are some few ones, for instance, given by Sam (1990), Boudreault (2010) and Royka (2002). Stern (1983) examined psycholinguistic aspects, while Gaudart (1990) focused on different formats 'effectiveness in different school types.[4] In a more recent study, O'Gara (2008) examined the effectiveness of drama for teaching verb tenses in a secondary school setting[5], while Kao & O'Neill (1998) tested the effectiveness of process drama for oral communication among adult learners of English as a second language.[6] The tests resulted very positive that this article will be giving further definitions and instructions how to conduct the drama lessons.

Discussion

A widely cited definition of drama comes from the Longman dictionary by Holden where it defines drama as "any activity which asks the student to portray, either himself in an imaginary situation or another person in an imaginary situation"—a definition which can be applied to most formats of drama in language teaching and includes role-play as a form of drama.[7]. In addition to his interpretation, vocal and physical exercises such as articulation exercises or movement games, pronunciation exercises, speed in fluency of speech should also be included. Therefore, as an aim to describe the characteristics of drama lessons more deeply and clearly, here the classification of drama lessons could be given in four ways.

First one can be a short or a long drama game. In this method, the text that should be read or the drama script is given fully. Students do not have to improvise by themselves anything like writing the scripts by themselves. Even the descriptions of the acts are given. It can be short one or can extend over several months if necessary.

Second one can be described as non-verbal or verbal using drama to teach a language lesson. This is very suitable for beginner level students or students of primary or kindergarten students. Because while the use of verbal activities for language learning seems self-explanatory, non-verbal cane also very beneficial to the learners who do not understand the words. So that the actions, gestures, and the mimicry can help learners to understand the missing part of the play or the text. Very good example can be shown here as watching movies in a language that the students is learning with or without subtitles. It should be underlined that movies are also dramas which are already done to watch. In this method both the performers can show by acting that they want to say, and the audience can make out the meanings.

Next one can be assumed as open or closed drama lessons. Open forms of drama lessons will foster creative language use and while they can be used with lower-level learners, they may be more fruitful if a certain level of language competence has already been achieved. Closed forms, on the other hand, are suitable for a focus on accuracy on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar or text-genre practice but they can also be used for the introduction of new linguistic input. Yet, the level of students may not matter, teacher can make the text more difficult with complex vocabulary

(where it will be closed drama lesson) or can also make it easier by using easier grammar and vocabularies (where it will an open drama lesson).

The last type of drama lesson can be underlined as product-oriented or process-oriented drama lessons. Product-oriented forms can be more motivating for learners who prefer working towards a concrete end-product and they tend to be more beneficial for a focus on accuracy.[8] On the one hand, process-oriented approaches are argued to be more creative and liberating for certain learners as fluency is valued over accuracy and there is no (or less) pressure to perform flawlessly.[9] As a result, the process and the product can be connected in drama projects. For example, when students rehearse, they improvise, repeat several times to perform fluently in front of the public, they learn the language during the process and as a result they have the learnt language.

In pedagogical terms, it is widely believed that to make language learning more meaningful and memorable, there should be an engagement between physical and emotional experiments of learning. Using drama will not only improve students' language knowledge but also it will improve their usage of gestures, movement, facial expressions, self-expressiveness, creativity and imagination, improvisation, social and cultural awareness as well as prosodic features such as pronunciation, intonation, pitch, pace, volume and tone of voice. And it is more important to remember that drama is a vast umbrella term that encompasses a great number of approaches and activities, not all of which include a 'performance 'in front of an 'audience'. Many drama activities do not necessarily need to lead to a demonstration of your work. Drama activities lend meaning to language structures by letting students experience the language in concrete situations. Learners are, for example, not simply given a list of phrases typical for meetings to memorize for a vocabulary test but must role-play a meeting situation—and can thus memorize difficult phrases in context.[10] For example, if the theme is cinema instead of memorizing new words all together or alone by themselves students can work in pairs and make dialogues. In this case they can correct each other and explain each other the meanings of the unfamiliar vocabulary. While students dramatize the dialogue it will be easier them to memorize the new words. In general, drama activities involve physical activity and emotional involvement which can lead to improved retention of language structures and vocabulary.[11] Moreover, positive feelings such as enjoying a collaborative and creative atmosphere and pride in achievement will prevail but even if negative emotions such as insecurity or stage-fright are occasionally experienced, the learning will be more memorable than in a neutral, predominantly cognitive setting, as it is set apart from other events. Besides the language learning learners will also have the experience of collaboration that achieved through teamwork will be very helpful in their everyday life. They will also gain self-confidence, a sense of achievement and knowledge from everyday life. Drama activities encourage learners to explore topics of identity and topics from everyday life will motivate them. This can be beneficial especially to the university students who will explore both professional roles and learn about everyday life and negotiate their own professional identity. One more benefit can be that this is a project format learning which is very important in our modern life. Students will learn how to cooperate, and if they are first year students, they will get to know each other and they will be encouraged to learn more.

Results

In this part of paper, there have conducted a small experiment with two groups of university students. This experiment has prolonged for two weeks. English level of both groups is the same. Both groups are first year students of the L.N.Gumilyov Eurasian National University.

First group is the students of the Faculty of International Law. This is a practical group, where actual academic schedule of learning materials has been used only. Students have learnt a lot; book is very informative and supportive. Their level of English has improved.

Second group of students are from the Faculty of Oriental studies. This group is an experimental group where they have been taught by actual academic materials and drama lessons at the same time. Academic book was helpful, students also have learnt a lot, and when we had drama lessons, they had enjoyed a lot and learnt more. Because they were Oriental studies students, they were given Japanese and Korean folktales in English. For Japanese folktales students made group works. They have made groups of five and six people. They studied the material, learnt new words, memorized, practiced, and made a small role play in the classroom. As have mentioned in the theoretical part of this paper, they have made a good teamwork, they have collaborated, they have explored new identities, they found self-confidence and they were creative. To express their roles, they even have made handcrafts like ears of the dog, or clothes of the grandmother etc. It was fun, emotional, physical activity that helped them to memorize more words and to practice their fluency, social and cultural awareness as well as prosodic features such as pronunciation, intonation, pitch, pace, volume, and tone of voice. And of course, they have done many speaking, reading, listening, and writing by themselves. Students had to retell the Korean folktales. For this, they had to read, understand, memorize, and practice their speeches. This gave them confidence in speaking, new vocabulary, flexibility, and adaptability to build fluency.

Experiment was done for two weeks, during six lessons for each group. After the experimental work when they were given mid-term quiz which included listening, reading, speaking, and writing, Group II students of Oriental Studies have scored higher. Besides four basic skills their level of grammar knowledge was higher, they knew almost double more vocabulary than the other group, good understanding of lesson and of course huge amount of motivation and joy from the lessons. They also learnt how to write small stories and retell the stories and practiced role playing a lot. The most important thing is that they have used all new words on the quiz paper writing that they have been learning even if they were not asked to. Please find below the experiment results on Table 1.

Group names	Average points before experiment	Average points after experiment	Difference in results
Group I	80%	85%	5%
Group II	80%	92%	12%

Table 1. The results

Conclusion

To conclude this article, it should be underlined that language learners may accept drama to acquire linguistic and non-linguistic competences for their future professional field. Very good reasons are that this method can be used to teach grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, intercultural aspects, and so-called soft skills such as presentation competence, collaboration, teamwork skills and self-management. Drama classes will be remembered for more time because it improves learners' language-competence, employability, and personal development. Here should be added the words of DeCoursey where he says that: "Damasio [1994] suggests that when there is an emotional response to a perception or a bit of learning, the brain marks it as useful to the organism. So why do drama in the language classroom? In order to mark elements of language with emotion so that students will remember them".[12] Therefore, as a conclusion it should be said that drama lessons may not only exist as a 'fun activity' that can be used to fill the last five minutes of class, where it is one of the most effective and a fully sufficient teaching approach.

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